

Lead Progression Programs: The Powerful Payoff





48%* of businesses say most of their leads require “long-cycle” nurturing with many influencers.

*State of Lead Generation Survey. Ascend2 and Research partners. Aug 2016.
<http://ascend2.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Ascend2-2016-State-of-Lead-Generation-Survey-Summary-Report-160808.pdf>

Leave No Money on the Table

In the ongoing pursuit of new qualified leads and sales-ready prospects, marketing and sales teams often push other considerations aside. As a result, many companies' pipelines are already full of leads that warrant attention but that do not get it. Instead, we focus on only the lowest-hanging fruit.

This tendency to go for the fast score persists even though businesses know very well that most leads take time to pay off. So exactly why are so many attention-worthy leads not getting any love?

Often, leads are missing a key characteristic that would usually spur us into action. Maybe their buying intent is ranked low, or maybe their purchase time frame is too far off. Whatever the reason, data shows that these long-term prospects can represent more lucrative deals than those that move quickly through the sales funnel.

That, in short, is money being left on the table.

Keep Moving Toward the Money

To get that money, we deploy a range of lead progression/acceleration tactics that will maintain engagement with the leads and kick-start interest on deals that have stalled.

Finding cost-effective ways to revive latent deals through lead nurturing is, therefore, a cornerstone of modern marketing strategies. For example, many companies are turning to proven approaches, including teleprospecting, to refresh pipeline data and fuel engagement activities, such as driving event registration.

And while social media has opened up a range of new venues for engaging with prospects, communication initiated by expert telesales professionals remains effective. One poll¹ of decision-makers found that 78% have taken an appointment or attended an event that came from an email or cold call.

With a focus squarely on progression and nurturing to improve pipeline velocity, companies are actively seeking ways to implement these tactics. Here, we will look at lead life cycle management approaches that nurture longer-term deals to close.



¹ MarketMakers: Benchmarking Report: What you should expect from a telemarketing provider in 2017

Accelerate Leads Through the Funnel

B2B research company SiriusDecisions divides the sales funnel into five stages. Zero represents the top, where sales accepts a marketing-generated lead. Five represents the bottom of the funnel, or close of that lead. SiriusDecisions also identifies three “acceleration zones” within the funnel, where lead progression can have its greatest impact. They are:

- » **Rapid Entry Acceleration (stages 0 to 1):**
Creation of high-propensity leads that get to Stage One status more quickly.
- » **Intra-Pipeline Acceleration (stages 1 through 4):**
Programs and enablement developed to move stalled deals between the pipeline’s early and middle stages.
- » **Last-Mile Acceleration (stages 4 and 5):**
Programs and enablement developed to push late-stage deals across the finish line.

The market research firm Aberdeen Group offers another take on acceleration: The PACE model. This refers to Pressures, Actions, Capabilities, and Enablers and is used to segment companies into three distinct performance classes based on infrastructures that deliver quantifiable superiority, or demonstrate its absence. The ability to accelerate leads, and the importance placed on it, is embedded in the PACE equation.

Maximizing the return on your lead-generation investment, therefore, requires accelerating the progression of the qualified customers already in your pipeline in order to convert them.

HubSpot, an inbound marketing software platform, focuses on the buyer’s journey, which is the process by which a customer decides what he or she is going to buy, from the customer’s perspective. Its ideology suggests that the buyer’s journey reflects a customer-centric perspective rather than a lead-progression perspective; however, the insights from the buyer’s journey model can inform and enhance the activities that lead to smooth lead progression. This is because the different stages of the buyer’s journey—Awareness, Consideration, and Decision—have analogous stages in lead progression, roughly corresponding to above-mentioned acceleration zones.

92 to 1*
***For every \$92 spent
acquiring customers,
only \$1 is spent
converting them.***



*Conversion Rate Optimization Report 2016. Econsultancy.
<http://info.redeye.com/hubfs/White%20papers%20and%20Reports%202016/Econsultancy-Conversion-Rate-Optimization-2016-Report.pdf?submissionGuid=3029f099-297f-4877-b98b-03dafa6f20bf>

Adapt to Changing Buyer Behaviors

Accelerating leads to conversion can become more difficult when markets evolve and buyers change their buying behavior. For example, one study² found that 60% of millennials prefer watching a company video over reading a newsletter, and 80% of millennials find the information in promotional videos helpful during initial purchase research. Marketers whose target demographic incorporates a significant millennial component adjust their marketing mix accordingly. But accelerating leads also means adapting to relatively short-term changes in buyer behaviors.

"In downturns, for example, we see a variety of behaviors," said David English, president of TSL Marketing, an integrated marketing firm. "Some customers get scared and pull back. Others delay purchasing. But marketers consistently aim to create new sales opportunities."

The goal of identifying new sales opportunities requires businesses to adapt to changing market dynamics. "Some of our clients will recreate their value propositions for segments that they hadn't previously sold much to," English added. "The experience requires companies to be flexible, nimble, and to listen to what their customers are saying."

Whether the focus is pipeline acceleration or nurturing, lead progression is fundamental for marketing teams trying to maximize every opportunity. In cases where nurturing and progression programs are outsourced to strategic partners (with a mix that includes teleservices), data shows that companies can outperform competitors, add value to relationships, and utilize external bandwidth for a variety of sales and marketing needs.

Driving the rise in nurturing and progression activities is the fact that marketers are always under the microscope to show an ROI. As departmental lines blur, the C-suite will watch marketing's contribution to pipeline and conversion rates more closely. Marketers, accordingly, are turning to technology and teleservices to help them make more informed choices.



² Millennials love video marketing & you should too. <https://www.impactbnd.com/blog/millennials-love-video-marketing-you-should-too-infographic>

Almost 2/3* of enterprise B2B marketers use buyer personas, and another 22%* are in the planning stages.



*2016 Enterprise B2B Demand Generation Study. Annuitas. 2016. <http://annuitas.com/resource-library/demand-generation-strategy/2016-demand-generation-study/>

Know the Buyers in the Funnel

"Our mantra [is] 'Know your buyer,' English observed. "One of the most valuable steps in engagement with our clients is refining and crystallizing their buyer personas—or, if the client doesn't have them, creating the buyer personas. In the era of big data, analytics are vital, but understanding the analyses you generate requires framing the data in a meaningful and actionable context. Hence, personas."

Since the day we were founded in 1999, TSL Marketing has been building expertise and amassing experience in lead progression for channel marketers. This allows us to deliver optimally effective channel marketing.

Our unique model of cross-campaign management means that your B2B creative services execution, tactical implementation, and lead generation/progression happen seamlessly, with results wired into our processes.

Running comprehensive campaigns from a single source saves you time and money and ensures one-source accountability. We are a results-oriented marketing firm, and we provide that single point of accountability you need.

We make it easy for you because there's little learning curve getting in the way of executing efficiently on your behalf. While we serve several of the world's elite IT firms, our scalable solutions mean that we can engage with companies of any size and partner with them as they grow.

