

Multifaceted Lead Generating Tactics

When I think marketing and sales, I see a military operation where all the units have a focused goal. To me, marketing is strategic in nature, determining who, what, why, where, when, & how to attack; the generals. Marketing is also the planning and support element. Sales on the other hand, is the tactical side or engagement element; the frontline soldiers. Generals cannot win a war without well informed, supplied, and objective oriented soldiers. But soldiers are not without responsibilities, they must also collect real-time intelligence, or leads to what is happening on the battlefield (market). Corporate marketing and sales are in a competitive war for market and customer share, and need reliable leads to win.

Lead generating is a key prospecting function and of strategic importance to any business; so never let lead generation to chance, should you, the chances are your company will flounder in the process. To my way of thinking, there are three vital "make or break" points to having an effective lead generating program or action plan. They are: 1) make it formal, written, and well organized, 2) make it a companywide, integrated team effort, and 3) make it results oriented.

Start by bringing together an ad hoc team comprising people from marketing, sales, and other departments; also consider including an outside third-party to have a well-rounded lead action plan, LAP, development team. Do not use the word COMMITTEE as it creates an image of bureaucracy, whereas the word TEAM aligns itself more with action. Give the LAP team thirty-days to meet, create, and submit a formal, written lead generating program. Such a program should include a lead generation role for each position in the company, explaining who, what, why, where, when, and how they participate in lead generation. Revise job descriptions to reflect a lead generation statement. Next, communicate the lead generating strategies and action plan to all employees. Listen; be receptive to feedback and revising the LAP as necessary. Now you have a lead action plan that has been created and accepted on a companywide basis. However, it is important to remember that the core of any lead generating program is to deliver desired results in the form of qualified and useable leads for your salespeople. An unqualified lead is more often than not a useless lead. This is critical if you want your salespeople to believe the lead in their hand is worth a hundred cold calls. Once leads lose their perceived value, salespeople ignore them and quickly migrate back to less efficient and effective prospecting from which they came.

With all of that in mind, let us get to the nitty-gritty, lead generation opportunities. There are many ways to generate leads, some better than others in one industry and less effective in another. In time, a good lead tracking mechanism sorts out the most effective approach to lead generation, thus providing valuable insight into what works and those efforts that should be abandoned. As expected, a lead strategy needs tactical execution, this is where marketing and sales need to become as one to achieve maximum success. When creating your lead generating program consider integrating as many of the 27 following elements as possible into your tactical approach. Keep in mind the list presented is not all inclusive, needs your fine-tuning, but should get your creative juices flowing in the right direction.

1. Get all company employees involved in lead generation by telling them what a lead is, how to qualify it, and how to report it and to whom
2. Use well trained telemarketing people to outbound call or secure the services of a outside telemarketing company. Use both if you are not sure which one would produce the best results; review their results after a month or two and make your final decision
3. Dedicate one or more of your salespeople, account managers, or order takers to make outbound prospecting calls; rotate salespeople who make outbound calls
4. Engage in a formal, direct mail campaign coordinated by marketing with sales and customer input, especially the latter
5. Have your salespeople engage in an informal, direct mail effort using personalized, handwritten cards that supports the formal campaign by sales
6. Start an aggressive public relations effort that keeps your name and services in the public domain with consistency
7. Use existing or purchase opt-in e-mail lists to solicit leads; merge with your own list
8. Purchase, copy, or write a whitepaper that best positions your products or services to meet the interests of target audiences; keep it truthful
9. Identify and approach luminary within your target markets and among potential buyers to provide lead generating charisma and testimonials
10. Draw potential leads to "magnet" events and functions at your location that are oriented around the target set's interest
11. Marketing needs to identify potential purchasers, and salespeople need to "target" network to get in front of them
12. Host an open-house or give facility tours to draw prospects to your place of business, have dedicated tour guides; never let a salesperson give a tour, their job is to observe the potential purchaser (s) and integrate tour with total sales presentation
13. Sponsor continuing education programs and conduct "interest" based seminars for the target set; provide pass-through training, the concept where you pay for a trainer to train your customer base and potential purchasers in areas of their interest
14. Identify multipliers, people or organizations that are constantly in front of your target set; then build multiplier relationships to get your word-of-mouth message out
15. Engage in tag along advertising with a multiplier, as an example, advertise on a pizza box or provide a stick-on advertisement, share a billboard
16. Attend, sponsor, or produce a trade show of interest to target sets
17. Create a dynamic website that is magnetic, interactive, and acts as a valuable resource and not an e- nuisance
18. Employ "targeted" newsletters, newscards (one-page, heavy stock, double sided mini newsletter), or better yet, a "You-letter" a newsletter of interest about them and not you
19. Turn the reading local newspapers and business journals into a lead hunting experience, do it as a team exercise
20. Join associations that your target sets join, get involved, serve on the board; sponsor an association lunch, program, or event
21. Turn your vendors into lead generating machines by telling them who your target set is, how to qualify them, and how to report it and to whom
22. Join the local chamber(s) become active, an ambassador, sponsor, and a board member

23. Get known by those in the know via networking, advertising, and community service
24. Write a column for a magazine or trade/business journal and give away additional information if the reader calls your company or visits your website
25. Sponsor a children's sporting event, team, or award show

Now, that is just for starters to help you brainstorm for more lead generation tactics. I believe that all employees need to know how your company makes and loses customers, revenue, and profits. The same philosophy holds true for generating leads, as all employees are in marketing and sales, and to some degree impact a company's success. It's simple; companies that hold lead generation in strategic importance and act accordingly, tend to lead their industry. Your Lead Action Plan needs to also be part of your branding efforts. I didn't forget, 26) Go to www.bestbusinesscards.com and have business cards made that include a photo on it; use both sides of the card, 27) Ask your current customers for leads to potential purchasers, create a lead content with worthy prizes. In a nutshell, out of sight, out of touch, out of mind, and out of customers; and defiantly out of leads.

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