



Are You Generating Demand?

by Erika Schwartz, Contributing Editor, June 2009

Demand generation has most recently been touted as the evolution of lead generation – a response to increased pressure on marketing departments to deliver results measured not just by communication touches and leads delivered, but by the number of qualified pipeline opportunities and closed deals. Demand generation can certainly serve an integral, measurable role in driving qualified opportunities into the sales pipeline, but not if it's perceived to be simply the new and improved version of lead generation, and especially not if it isn't recognized to be the responsibility of both sales and marketing.

In the most traditional sense “demand generation” is about building awareness and thereby demand for your products and services. Wikipedia describes it as the focus of targeted marketing programs to drive awareness and interest in a company's products and/or services.

When you're selling complex solutions to the capital markets, it's not enough to simply drive awareness around your firm and the solutions you have to offer. What if your prospects don't know that they have a problem in the first place?

Let's take a step back and redefine “demand generation” as targeted marketing and sales programs that engage your prospects at every stage of their buying cycle to drive needs awareness and gain an understanding of their business needs.

Marketing and Sales can do a great job making prospects aware of your company, brand, and services, but if your prospects are not aware that they have a business need to be solved, or they're unaware of how they can solve that need with your products and services, then you're not going to generate the right kind of demand. Your goal, whether capturing them at the very start of the buying cycle, or after they've begun looking for a solution, is to help your prospects understand their needs, create a vision for how your offering will solve those needs, and maintain that vision throughout their buying cycle. So from lead generation, to lead nurturing, to sales calls, to closing the deal, both Sales and Marketing should focus on driving awareness in alignment with your prospects' buying cycles. In this way, your pipeline will be filled with sales-ready leads that are aware of their needs and are demanding your offering as the solution.

Understanding the Buying Cycle to Generate Demand

In last month's lead nurturing article, we explained that all buyers go through a buying process, which usually begins with them being unaware that they even have a problem or need – or possibly just unaware that there are solutions available. Once aware of their need, they begin looking for possible solutions and establish a vision for solving their problem. They then evaluate their options, select a solution, manage risk, and ultimately make a purchase.

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“ 90% of demand generation programs don't create awareness of prospects' underlying business needs. ”

You can nurture demand at each of these stages in the buying cycle. As your prospects start to explore solutions, you can begin positioning your firm's offering to their needs, and frame their expectations of what the ideal solution should include. In other words, create recognition of their need, make them aware that your company has the solution to resolve their needs, and then stay with them, delivering relevant sales and marketing messages throughout the buying process.

The Building Blocks of Demand Nurturing

So now that we've redefined the notion of "demand generation" and discussed the importance of nurturing demand in alignment with the buying cycle, there are a number of best practices that should be applied to your sales and marketing efforts in order to ensure strong results:

Lead Generation Activities – 90% of the lead generation programs and tools that we've evaluated for our customers (websites, emails, banner ads, etc.) create awareness of a solution, but not the underlying need. To generate truly qualified leads and demand for your offerings, your lead generation programs and content should focus first on your target audience's business needs, and also employ these powerful tactics:

- Set your strategy: define/segment your target audience, create relevant content and offers for each segment, and decide upon your objectives for conversion.
- Deliver multi-touch needs-based marketing and sales communications via highly targeted emails, web content and advertising. Implement SEO best practices (Search Engine Optimization) to drive leads to your company website and campaign pages.
- Articulate clear, compelling calls-to-action and strong, relevant offers via every form of communication.
- Create custom campaign landing pages on your website for each campaign/target audience, along with online tools for retaining visitors and capturing information that will help make subsequent messaging more and more relevant.

PropelGrowth Tip: Keep your offers fresh and relevant to your target audience to avoid unsubscribes/opt-outs. And for best practices on SEO, call us to request the free white paper: [Five Facts About SEO and PPC That Every Businessperson Should Know](#) from SEO expert, Heather Lutze.

Lead Nurturing – A key benefit of effective lead nurturing is that you can learn so much more about your prospects and where they are in their buying cycle. This is where marketing can add the most value — by not only knowing when leads are sales ready, but also being able to offer Sales crucial information about those sales-ready leads to help them get in the door and drive the sale forward:

- Discover your leads' interests, their pains, and where they are in the buying cycle.
- Deliver more targeted, needs-driven messaging, offers and calls-to-action that nurture their demand for your solutions with increasingly more relevant information at the various stages of their buying cycle.
- Frame your leads' vision and expectations so that your company – not the competition — is consistently top of mind as the ideal solution.
- Apply a lead scoring process that is aligned with sales and marketing's agreed-upon criteria for "[sales-ready opportunities](#)."

PropelGrowth Tip: Each subsequent communication in your lead nurturing campaign should become more relevant/targeted as you learn more about each prospect.

Sales/Marketing Alignment – A common debate between Sales and Marketing is that Marketing turns over hundreds, even thousands of leads, only to see them ignored by Sales. In turn, Sales says they're not getting the kind of leads they need to reach quota. There is a solution to this. Before launching any program or campaign, Sales and Marketing should sit down together to align their strategy and objectives for each quarter:

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- Agree to the criteria that qualifies a lead as a sales-ready opportunity. In other words, the criteria a lead must meet before Marketing hands it off to Sales for follow-up.
 - Share information back and forth about prospects – information should be shared consistently and promptly as it becomes uncovered through lead nurturing activities and sales calls.
 - Develop consistent communications so that prospects get the same messaging from both Sales and Marketing.
 - Recognize that it is both Sales' and Marketing's responsibility to generate demand.

***PropelGrowth Tip:** Creation of demand starts with marketing programs that help you and your prospects to discover needs, but the momentum created by Marketing must be maintained by Sales. Just as Marketing shouldn't target cold prospects with promos focused strictly on product offerings, Sales shouldn't start a sales call by going right into a demo.*

Armed with the right tools and the right strategy, you can reach your prospects to create awareness and generate and nurture demand at every step of the buying process. So when they're ready to make a purchase, it's your company whose solution they want to buy.

PropelGrowth Can Help

Our team of experienced professionals will nurture your leads that aren't ready to buy yet and help keep your company top of mind. We'll also run high-touch opportunity generation campaigns to generate a steady stream of sales-ready leads for you. Unlike other lead nurturing companies, we are experts in the Capital Markets and will help you to achieve competitive advantage in the space. Contact us today for a free executive briefing.

Call us at 212-738-9445 or e-mail us at cedelen@propelgrowth.com