10 TIPS FOR EFFECTIVELY MANAGING LEADS

AMERICA'S SBDC CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES NETWORK

The Los Angeles Regional Small Business Development Center Network

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So you generated new leads from your target market analysis and your campaigns for attracting new customers, now how do you manage those new leads? Research from Inside Sales and a study published in Harvard Business Review shows that 55% of companies do not follow up on new sales, many times due to failure to return calls or to ask for contact information. How do you know how long it's been since you last communicated with that potential client, how do you know your marketing is working, and how do you measure for effective lead management? Follow the 10 tips below for a few introductory measures to effectively manage leads in your business.

1. **WHO IS YOUR TARGET CUSTOMER — DOES YOUR SALES TEAM KNOW?** Finely tuning the profile of your customer is crucial. Your marketing and sales team's idea of your target customer should be the same, so sharing information with your team about your target is the first step, this should include demographic, behavioral, and lead source information (i.e. where the lead came from/marketing effort or campaign.)

2. **SALES PROCESS.** Work with your sales team directly to determine what a lead is vs. a contact and be sure your marketing and sales teams are on the same page. What happens when a lead comes in? Delegate a sales person to respond to the different type of leads and most importantly, map out your sales cycle from marketing effort to follow up call, to sale close, to follow up thereafter. Develop consistency in sales methods, so you can review what techniques drive results. Remember to integrate leads that are not quite ready yet in your cycle, your sales team can determine the timeline to reengage leads that may be ready later.

3. **SALES AND MARKETING UNITE.** When your sales team receives a lead assure it does not become convention to receive inconsistent or incomplete lead information. Develop a standard for handing off leads. Your marketing team should communicate the efforts that the prospect responded to beforehand and most importantly should advise what product/service is of interest before sending the lead to sales. Developing items like email, call script, and sales qualification templates to assure such information is complete; Docstoc and Gazhoo are great resources.

4. **DECIDE WHAT INFORMATION YOU WANT TO GATHER FROM PROSPECTS.** It's overwhelming to ask for considerable amounts of information initially. If your main method of communication with your prospects is email, then stick to asking for name, company, email address, and which product/service the prospect would like more information about and how they heard about your business. Determine what information is absolutely crucial for you to know when responding to an inquiry.

5. **ASK FOR CONSISTENT INFORMATION ACROSS YOUR EFFORTS.** Once you have determined the information you would like to gather from prospects double check that the information you ask for coincides with your lead generation systems/customer relationship management (CRM) system, as it will make it much easier to pull the right information from your landing pages, online advertising campaigns, email or other marketing efforts. Remember consistency in marketing, lead generation and management is key, otherwise you may find yourself comparing apples to oranges.

6. **CLASSIFY YOUR LEADS.** First, check your marketing effort results regularly for new leads or invest in a lead generation system that sends you notifications. Then, organize your leads as you receive them. Classify leads by their actions, which denote interest. For example, what information is sought, what/how often links are clicked on emails, web pages and the like. Then, organize leads as a contact, a prospect, an active (warm) lead, an active client, extended lead and so on.

7. **FOLLOW UP.** Studies have shown that prospects often buy from the first person that reaches out to them. The referenced Inside Sales study shows that the best time to respond to a lead is within the first five minutes after generation, waiting even 10 minutes means you might be 10 times less likely to have success with this lead. For data from the study explaining the best days and times to make contact click here.

8. **NURTURE YOUR LEADS.** Keep in touch with leads that are not ready to purchase yet, over time you can develop a relationship with these leads that could turn into a sale. A great way to extend a relationship is to be a thought leader on best practices, statistics, research and the like for your industry or products/services to help customers make decisions. Include your own white papers or content on your website, email marketing and landing pages to keep your audience engaged and also position your business as a resource.

9. **GET TO KNOW YOUR CUSTOMERS EVEN BETTER.** Keep track of your learning and continuously tune your lead generation and marketing efforts. In time, this will help identify areas of improvement in your lead management techniques and areas of excellence. Once you have profiled your prospects you can group them accordingly to find out more about their interests or use previous information to target certain content or promotions to key groups, pairing content with the appropriate product/service offering. Be sure to track your marketing efforts closely too, it is important to know what efforts did or did not work and the quality of leads generated by different efforts.

10. **TOOLS.** We included some lead management, CRM, mobile apps and social media monitoring platforms to help you with effectively managing leads.
    - Lead Management and CRM: Salesforce, Insightly, Infusionsoft, Pipedrive
    - Mobile Apps: Base, Intuit QuickBase, Sales Genius, Apptivo
    - Social Media Lead Monitoring: Sprout Social, Radian6, Batchbook.

Stay tuned for the next 10 tips for creative financing methods coming in May and remember the LA Regional SBDC is always ready to assist you with extra expertise at 1-866-588-SBDC.

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