How To Grow And Nurture Your Leads Online

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TABLE OF
# CONTENT

# Introduction

All healthy (growing) businesses have a strong sales pipeline, and more specifically a great lead generation process.

Lead generation, especially online, has evolved over the years into a sophisticated process encompassing all customer touch points - Google Search, Website, Email, and Social Media.

Since many business leaders find lead generation and digital marketing generally intimidating, this white paper will focus more on the lead generation principles, and less on the specific channels and technology.

Finally, after reading the white paper I hope you incorporate some of these ideas into your business.

Cheers,
Aleksandar (Sasha) Radonjic

**About the Author**

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## 1 First Things First, You Should Never Come Across As "Salesy"

Most of us don't like to be sold to; therefore, if your lead generation strategy feels salesy (aggressive, superficial, or cheesy), it will turn off potential buyers. Is your company salesy? If every communication that comes out of your business has the sole purpose of converting a lead into a customer, then you will come across as salesy/aggressive.

We see this across all digital channels (e.g. website, email, social media, etc.). For example, businesses bombarding their audience with product or service offers.

**Tip:** Online lead generation is no different from a face-to-face lead generation. If you come out of the gate talking about your features, benefits, and why your product/service is great, you will most likely lose that lead. Instead, listen to your leads needs and wants.

Your primary goal is to answer questions and provide value.

## Answer Buyer's Questions

## 2

This is where content marketing and SEO (Search Engine Optimization) comes into play. A typical buyer (lead) will have a lot of questions, especially if they are not familiar with the product/service they are buying, and naturally, most of this research will be done online (e.g Google Search).

The first step in your lead generation strategy should be writing down your customers' needs, wants, and pain points. This will help you identify what type of questions they are likely to ask.

The next step is to create a content strategy around those needs, wants, and pain points. Essentially, your objective is to prepare and create articles, blog posts, white papers, social media posts, and how-to videos around their

possible questions.

These first two steps are extremely important because they will 1) attract the right buyers to your business, 2) show the potential buyer that you understand their situation/need, and 3) demonstrate your expertise.

Let's look at an example to illustrate this point better. A lawn care products business (selling grass seed, weed control, turf builder, etc.) would write down all the possible questions that a potential buyer may have.  For example: "When is the best time to reseed in Southern California?", "Does turf builder halt crabgrass?", and "How do I fix a brown patch in my lawn?".

By answering these kinds of questions (using long-tail keywords) we will attract potential buyers to our lawn care business. Obviously, the higher you are ranked in Google, the more traffic/leads you will attract.

## 3 Don't Give Your Lead A Reason To Leave

At this point, you got a potential buyer (lead) on you website. Irrespective if they landed on your content page, landing page, product page, or a home page, your potential buyer will only take 3 to 10 seconds to assess if they should stick around or leave. This is why it's essential to have a modern, responsive (mobile friendly), and easy to use website, because if you don't you will lose a vast majority of your leads at this point - before you've had a chance to demonstrate your expertise or provide any value.

**Related**: 7 Signs your Website is due for a Redesign

# Demonstrate Expertise

Assuming your website is modern, responsive, and easy to use, your next objective is to demonstrate expertise and exchange value. How do you do that? The easiest way to show expertise is by having in-depth and well-written content.

**Related**: Build Trust and Create Brand Loyalty with Content Marketing

## **5** Exchange Value

Going back to our lawn care business example, we can exchange value by offering a lawn care calendar in exchange for an email address. Think of different ways that you can exchange value with your potential buyer. Just remember, the "value" has to exceed the "ask." Also, the higher the value, the more you can ask in return. For example, if you are giving out free samples, it's perfectly reasonable to ask for more information (full name, phone number, city or address, and so on). On the other hand, if we are selling a digital product (or SaaS solution), you can ask for a name, email, company name, role, and phone number in an exchange for a 7-day free trial.

Regardless of the industry the principal of exchanging value is critical in lead generation. That being said, do not bombard them with aggressive call-to-actions. For example, the likelihood of someone buying our lawn care products on the first website visit is unlikely (unless you are a well know brand like Scotts); therefore, in this early stage, your objective is to demonstrate expertise, exchange value, and keep communicating.

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# Don't Spam Your Leads

This should be common sense. If your new lead gave you permission to communicate with them (via email or social media) do not spam them. This "don't spam" your leads message is often misconstrued because we often get asked "Am I spamming my leads by emailing them x times a week?" or "Am I spamming my social media followers by posting multiple times a day?". The frequency is often not the issue. Some businesses spam their leads once a month, and some never feel like spam even if they are communicating with their leads every day.

**7**

# How Frequently Should You Communicate With Your Leads?

It all comes down to this question - "How often can you provide useful, interesting, or helpful content?". If we go back to our hypothetical lawn care business - can we provide useful, interesting or helpful content every day? Unlikely, so trying to communicate with our leads every day (via email or social media) will result in repetitive and irrelevant content - spam.

So far we've addressed how to attract leads with content marketing, how to open a line of communication, and we answered questions on spam and frequency. The next step is to raise the level of commitment.

# Raise The Level Of Commitment

Up to this point, you asked your leads to consume your content (e.g. read a website article) - low commitment. Also, you asked them to sign up to your email list - medium commitment. The next level of commitment should be designed to identify qualified leads (expressed interest in buying your product/ service). For example, ask your leads to sign up for a product demonstration or a webinar - this step will help you identify qualified leads.

## 9 Good Marketing Will Close The Deal For You

Different businesses have different ways of nurturing qualified leads, but let's assume all qualified leads go to the sales team, or the person responsible for closing the sale. This is usually when the sales team takes over, and when numerous businesses think the job of marketing is done. However, this can't be further from the truth.

During the sales process, your qualified lead will intensify their research. They will start looking for social proof (reviews, ratings, testimonials, and endorsements). They will look for supporting material (manuals, white papers, how-to videos, and training materials). In essence, they are doing their due diligence. This is especially important if you are selling high-value goods or services that require multiple decision makers.

"Marketing assets like your website, social media, email, and videos all play a vital role in helping the sales team close the sale."

## Nurturing Your Leads

**10**

Pushing a lead down your sales funnel is appropriate if your lead is ready to buy. However, the vast majority of your leads are probably not ready to buy just yet. This is where lead nurturing comes into play.

Most businesses we come across do not have an adequate lead nurturing process in place - there is a lot more to lead nurturing then creating an entry in the CRM and emailing your leads from time to time.

A common mistake that we see is when companies group all of their leads into the same group/category. Consequently, they blast their leads with the same generic messaging - emails, website content, etc.

This type of approach doesn't work, because it completely ignores the

customer buying cycle and paints everyone with the same brush. For example, a lead that is at the beginning of the customer buying cycle (e.g. awareness) is not ready to commit/buy; therefore, start with easy call-to-actions / CTAs (e.g. ask for an email address), don't immediately push them towards an engagement that requires more effort (e.g. sign-up for webinars, attend product demos, etc.)

On the other hand, if your lead is toward the end of the cycle (e.g. consideration of purchase) then serve them material/content that will push them closer to the purchase. For example, a free-trial, promotional offer, or a product demo are all appropriate tactics for a lead that is at the end of the customer buying cycle, not at the beginning of it.

## **Personalize The Experience**

**11**

At this stage you are probably thinking 'how do I distinguish between leads that are at the beginning of the customer buying cycle and the ones that are at the end?' If we take the website as an example, we can use a combination of analytics and personalization tools to identify where a lead is in the customer buying cycle, and more importantly, serve them with relevant content.

With personalization tools, we can track what type of content the website visitor is consuming and then automatically update the website to meet their needs. For example, let's assume we own an online pet store and are selling pet food and accessories. A website visitor that is reading our "How to help your Labrador puppy adjust to a new home" article tells us a few important things. 1) They have a dog, 2) It's a puppy and 2) Dog breed is Labrador. With this information, we can automatically update our website with Labrador specific images, product recommendations, testimonials, how-to videos, and so on.

The owner of a Labrador puppy doesn't care that we sell cat accessories, or that we have a new line of dog food for small breeds; all they care about is their Labrador puppy.

Let's assume their next action on our website is to search for "Blue puppy food." By this action alone they are telling us that they are at the end of the buying cycle (they are ready to buy). How do we know this? Because they are searching for a specific brand. They already did the research and decided on the brand, so this is the right time to offer a discount and get them across the line to purchase.

With personalization tools, we can tailor the website experience to a specific group of visitors/leads. For example, we can provide an offer (e.g. discount) to leads that match specific attributes (e.g. New Puppy, Labrador, Blue - Product line).

**Tip**: The key to a high conversion rate is personal, relevant, and timely content.

# Final Thoughts

**12**

If you are overwhelmed at this point you are not alone. In today's world lead generation and nurturing is more science than art, because it requires a good understanding of the technology, data, analytics, optimization, and UX (user experience).

The good news is that most of these tools are relatively inexpensive, so the cost of the tools themselves are not the biggest hurdle. However, the knowledge and experience required to create a sophisticated and high performing lead generation process is.

If you have an internal marketing team (or a person), you have to invest in their digital marketing development. They have to understand digital channels, technology, data, analytics, and optimization.

Alternatively, look for a digital marketing company or an expert to help you set up the lead generation strategy and process.

**Related**: How to find a great digital marketing expert

As we mentioned at the beginning, all healthy (growing) businesses have a strong sales pipeline, and more specifically a great lead generation process. The question is, are you willing to take the necessary steps to build a high-performing lead generation process, and more importantly, grow your leads, sales, and revenue?

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