



# FROM LEAD GENERATION TO REVENUE GENERATION **THE FUTURE OF SALES AND MARKETING**

**LEADG2**  
inbound • sales • results



The way consumers are making purchases has changed drastically over the past few years. It continues to change rapidly with the addition of new technologies, social media sites, and search engine algorithms, as well as the ever increasing accessibility of information and answers at our fingertips, with more and more people treating their phones as tiny portable computers.

The good news is, business owners have the ability to understand their buyers' path to purchase much better than they have in years past. Today, there are all kinds of tools to measure, track, and understand the path better than ever.

### **But there's a problem.**

Most sales organizations haven't kept up with this rapid change. So, even though the path to purchase is vastly different today than it was even five years ago, their process hasn't evolved.

### **The new path to purchase isn't linear.**

It's not even dependent on one form of research. There are multiple devices, platforms, and touchpoints that consumers use to make more informed decisions about everything they buy.

That's great for the consumer.

### **But it is more complex than ever for B2B and B2C marketers to close the sale.**

It's important to understand what has changed and what you can do about it.

You can increase sales and create new revenue streams despite the changing landscape, but you have to shift the way you generate and approach new leads, and your salespeople have to change the way they're connecting and engaging with qualified prospects.

Most sales organizations haven't kept up with the rapid change. Their process hasn't evolved with the purchase cycle.

## **THE FIRST STEP IS ADMITTING THERE'S A PROBLEM: WHAT SALES ORGANIZATIONS ARE FACING TODAY**

Some of the most common challenges that we find businesses to be facing aren't unique to their organization or their industry, or really even between B2B and B2C. While your specifics are unique and your marketing plan should be customized, we've found some very common trends amongst businesses.

### **TREND 1: INCREASED COMPETITION**

In almost every industry there has been an increase in the number of "other guys" out there. Whether it's the top dogs you're up against, or the price cutters that have popped up around every corner, consumers have more options than ever before and the numbers are showing no signs of stopping.

The competition isn't just with others in your field, either. Consumers have the upper hand when it comes to information, and can easily research and find solutions to their problems. From review sites to social media referrals, to Google searches — there are a lot of opportunities for you and your competitors to make an impact, both good and bad. If your presence online is smaller than your competitors', your business is essentially invisible to prospects looking for your product or service.

It's hard to be competitive when your prospects find your competition first.

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## TREND 2: THE RELIANCE ON SALESPEOPLE TO DEVELOP MOST (OR ALL) LEADS

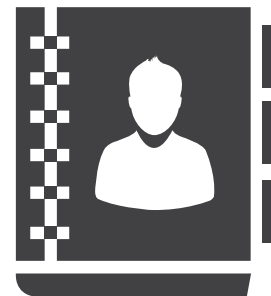
Many B2B organizations continue to rely heavily on their salespeople to find and select potential prospects; while also being responsible for setting appointments, defining needs, delivering solutions, presenting, and closing the deal.

Your salespeople are qualified to close the deal, but should they be responsible for the entire sales process all of the time? Is this the best way to utilize their skills and talents? In some cases, yes,

but oftentimes you might have better results if they can spend more time doing what they do best... selling.

## TREND 3: FEWER QUALIFIED, READY-TO-BUY LEADS

While salespeople are expected to uncover qualified leads that are in the right position to talk to a salesperson and make a buying decision, timing is the biggest obstacle. From not knowing budgeting times to getting stuck with gatekeepers, finding that needle in a haystack has become tougher than ever before and more time-consuming (i.e. costing you precious time that could be spent doing what they do best... actually selling).



## TREND 4: BUYERS DON'T NEED SALESPEOPLE ANYMORE

Business decision makers, like all consumers, have come to expect a wealth of information available on the products or services they are researching or planning to buy. A simple Google search from their smartphone during a business meeting could be the first step in exploring options for their needs.

The question for most organizations is whether they are actually being found when those hot prospects are searching for answers and resources on a particular topic related to their industry. The need for a salesperson has become almost non-existent until it's time to "close the deal." Many consumers even view salespeople as simply price negotiators or a dreaded step they have to go through to get a quote or proposal.

The plethora of online resources available at their fingertips allows them to be much more knowledgeable and informed prospects when they are ready to talk to a sales rep.

## TREND 5: A FOCUS ON BRANDED AND BOTTOM-OF-THE-FUNNEL SEARCH TERMS

Many companies have put a lot of money and focus on pay-per-click (PPC) and Google Adwords campaigns. This can be a wise investment but it can also be detrimental to many businesses if it's the only way you think about search results.



PPC is most effective when you're targeting branded and bottom-of-the-funnel keywords. However, in order to show up in organic search results you have to think much bigger than that... and much earlier in the sales process. Most B2B organizations have trouble understanding what their prospects are searching online for, and how they can show up in those results.

**Those who understand how their prospects and customers use the internet to research their industry and services, have the upper hand on those who don't.**

## TREND 6: INABILITY FOR SALES TO FOCUS ON LONG-TERM LEAD NURTURING

As mentioned above, salespeople are typically responsible for a variety of (or all) steps throughout the sales process. They must find and identify prospects, bring them through the entire sales

process, and then close the deal — and often, become account managers after the sale has closed.

What this means is that salespeople are so busy with the day-to-day that they don't have time to think about the future, especially the distant future. Their focus is on this month's budget and the current promotion or goals.

Let's say your average sales cycle is two to three months. When you come across a hot lead that fits perfectly into your Ideal Customer Profile, but they're just NOT ready to talk due to other priorities or bad timing... what's the plan?

Salespeople are so busy with the day-to-day that they don't have time to think about the future.

Ideally, you'd continue to stay in touch, follow up consistently with valid business reasons to make contact, continuing to nurture that lead until the time is right, staying top of mind along the way. However, many great qualified leads don't get that kind of attention, and when they are ready to buy, they'll research their options again and find someone to buy from (without feeling loyal to someone who continues to follow up).

**These challenges aren't unique to today, but the opportunities to overcome them are more abundant than ever before.**

The implementation of an inbound marketing program, paired with a Sales and Marketing Service Level Agreement (SLA) can remedy most of these problems.

## YOUR CURRENT B2B MARKETING AND SALES STRATEGY NEEDS TO CHANGE

From our experience at LeadG2 working with a variety of industries ranging from media to staffing companies, industrial manufacturers to IT consultants, and everything in between, we've come to realize that there are some **common missing components in most sales organizations marketing and sales strategies**. These include:

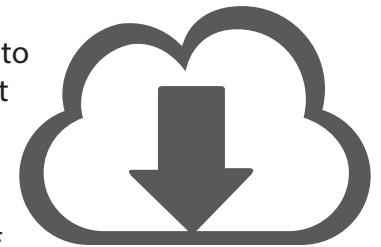
- » You haven't defined in writing what your Ideal Customer Profile looks like and what deems a lead marketing qualified or sales qualified
- » No active plan for generating new leads beyond salespeople or outbound methods (like tradeshows, buying lists, etc.)
- » Lack of a website, or a mediocre one, that:
  - Doesn't speak directly to the problems you solve
  - Isn't optimized for mobile
  - Doesn't show up in search engine results for target keywords
  - Doesn't provide educational resources and content for prospects and customers to learn more
  - Isn't providing a variety of calls to action that appeal to prospects in different stages of the buying process
  - Isn't effectively capturing lead information via forms throughout your website
- » Your sales and marketing teams aren't communicating properly and don't actually know how the other department helps them achieve their personal goals

- » You're not using a CRM or any lead intelligence tools (at all or effectively) to help save salespeople precious time in determining where to focus their efforts and how to customize their communication with prospects based on real needs
- » No clear Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) or goals are set (or shared openly) that affect both your B2B marketing and sales teams

## THE TWO-STEP SOLUTION TO CLOSING MORE BUSINESS:

### 1. INTEGRATE INBOUND MARKETING INTO YOUR EXISTING MARKETING STRATEGY

Assuming that your organization could benefit from more qualified leads and more leads in general (who couldn't?) then thinking about how leads are generated within your organization is the first step to increasing revenue. Adjusting your process and strategy to better fit the B2B buyers journey that is taking place in today's marketplace means you are not only easily found online, but that you are creating and distributing a wealth of information for your prospects and customers to find when they start searching online.



## How does an inbound approach change the way you do business?

As an example... When you sponsor or speak at a trade show, create a landing page where attendees can download a whitepaper or copy of your presentation instead of simply providing your contact information or handing out business cards - that's the inbound approach. This type of thinking will help bring offline leads to your website, and get them into your sales cycle.

### 8 Ways Inbound Will Change the Way You Do Business

- 1 Marketing can focus on generating leads, while Sales focuses on closing new business.
- 2 Salespeople spend less time calling on unqualified, or not ready, leads.
- 3 Marketing helps nurture these leads through the sales funnel, handing them off only when they are ready to talk or "raising their hand."
- 4 Sales becomes better equipped with valuable lead intelligence to determine engagement of prospects, commitment to the process, and general interest in particular topics and needs.
- 5 Sales no longer wastes anyone's time with "checking in" and instead uses content and lead intelligence to create effective and valid business reasons to make contact each time.

6 Marketing better understands who your prospects are, and creates marketing assets and creative that is more effective and results-oriented.

7 Sales becomes more than an order-taker, and becomes a consultative, valuable resource for both prospects and customers. They are seen as thought leaders and partners, as is the company as a whole.

8 Marketing and Sales work together toward shared goals, and utilize each other for their expertise. For example, Sales shares common questions from prospects on a regular basis so Marketing can create content around it.

### 2. CREATE A SALES AND MARKETING SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT (SLA)

The next step to building a successful sales and marketing plan is to make sure you have a clear understanding of everything involving sales and marketing for your business.

Your marketing and sales teams should never function as two separate divisions. Instead, they are two halves of a whole. As such, they should help each other, communicate regularly, understand clearly each other's roles, and work collaboratively toward the same goals.

Your marketing and sales teams should never function as two separate divisions.

When we conduct our Sales and Marketing Alignment Workshop, we cover the following:

#### » **Define Roles & Responsibilities**



Everyone should understand their role within the company (obviously) but it should also be very clear how different people and different departments can help with particular marketing and sales initiatives. The more marketing helps sales, and the more sales helps marketing, the more effective the entire organization can be.

What's really important to achieve here is transparency, understanding, and collaboration between the two teams.

#### » **Lead Definitions**

How do you define your ideal customer? What, exactly, does a "good lead" look like in order to hand it off to sales? You'll want to make sure it's very clear, and that everyone agrees upon the definitions for a lead, a marketing qualified lead, a sales qualified lead, and an opportunity.

This helps drive important decisions such as when a lead will be handled by marketing or sales, what questions you'll ask in a form, and whether you are actually generating qualified leads with your marketing.

#### » **Set Clear Goals and Expectations**

When it comes to any marketing or sales initiative, you want to be sure that team goals, long-term goals, and individual goals are all

clearly laid out and understood by everyone involved. There is no reason that these goals should be kept secret — it's important for that everyone respects each other's role in getting to the end goal.

Sales goals should go beyond the obvious of monthly budgets. Think about how often you expect the sales team to share content with prospects or make contact with a lead, the percentage of sales qualified leads you expect to be turned into appointments, and the kind of feedback on leads that is expected so the marketing team can do their jobs.

The marketing team should be directly responsible for generating X number of leads each month, and making sure a percentage of those are marketing and/or sales qualified leads. They should have goals around number of visitors, traffic from particular sources, number of keywords you're ranking for, and the amount of new or recycled content published and promoted each month.

What's really important to achieve is transparency, understanding, and collaboration between the two teams.

#### » **Have a Clear Follow-Up Process**

Everyone should be on the same page when it comes to the process that will be followed when leads come through the website (or any other form of lead generation). Even for those



team members that aren't directly in the process, it's important to communicate how leads are being qualified, tracked, and followed up with to ensure consistency.

This, again, goes back to the idea of transparency. It also will prevent any mistakes from happening or from any leads falling through the cracks because someone thought they were being handled by someone else.

### » **Hold Monthly Sales and Marketing Meetings**

A huge part of aligning your sales and marketing efforts is to have periodically scheduled opportunities for feedback. We suggest a monthly SLA meeting that is organized and includes a set agenda and opportunity for conversation and collaboration.

### » **Automate (Some) Steps of the Sales Process**

If you're using any type of marketing software, you should have some capabilities to automate parts of your sales process. Maybe you want to set up a workflow of automated emails to go to top-of-the-funnel leads. Or maybe lead scoring would help your marketing team from spending too much time going through every single lead. The more time you can save your team members in the long-run, the more successful they'll be in closing in new business.

## IN CLOSING...

The sales process has changed. Buyers have more power, more information (which is also power), and more control over the sales cycle than in any other time in history. But if your organization can adapt with the times rather than fight against them, you can position your organization to come up when a prospect searches for your solution online. Aligning your sales and marketing teams is the first step toward increased revenue and collaboration for years to come.



Interested in learning more about aligning your sales and marketing teams? [Click here](#) to contact us.