


A CMO'S GUIDE TO B2B LEAD GENERATION



67% of B2B marketers say their primary goal in measuring efforts is better quality leads.

FormStack


More stats: <http://www.ironpaper.com/webintel/articles/inbound-marketing-statistics/>



You would be hard pressed today to find an individual who has not been interrupted by a salesperson's cold phone call or spam email. Finding someone who was willing to engage in the unsolicited disruption is also challenging.

Inbound marketing shifts the dynamic – aiming to attract, educate, inform and delight the target audience instead of focusing exclusively on sales. The lead, a person who has indicated some degree of interest in a product or service in advance of the sales approach, is fundamental to permission-based marketing.

How to actually generate the leads, though, is the question of many frustrated CMOs. To help, this e-book examines the current state of lead generation in B2B marketing and outlines some common mistakes before focusing on best practices and strategies for success.



A CMO'S HOW-TO GUIDE TO B2B LEAD GENERATION

- ▶ What is lead generation?
- ▶ Relevant B2B marketing & lead generation statistics.
- ▶ Common mistakes in lead generation.
- ▶ Best practices.
- ▶ Key metrics for success.
- ▶ Specific lead generation tactics.

93% of the B2B buying process begins with an Internet search.

Pinpoint Market Research

More stats: <http://www.ironpaper.com/webintel/articles/inbound-marketing-statistics/>

What is lead generation?

What It Means for CMO:

There are many different definitions of lead. We consider a lead as an identifiable person who has expressed interest in a product or service in some way. This might include someone who has visited the brand website, filled out a form, downloaded or requested specific company content, subscribed to the blog, or followed them socially.

So what is lead generation? Although there are various definitions, we describe it as the strategic tactics marketers use to attract and convert visitors of the company's website, blog or social media into sales opportunities. Lead generation should be an integral part of any company as leads feed sales growth. Of course, not every lead makes a purchase. This is why focusing on strategies that attract the right leads is crucial. This increases the odds of converting leads into prospects and getting them through the sales funnel successfully.

Many companies place too great an emphasis on trade shows, cold calling, and disruptive techniques, which we believe does more harm than good. For Ironpaper, the Inbound methodology is far more accurate and scalable for lead generation than disruptive methods.

76% of B2B buyers leverage three or more information channels when researching a purchase.

Blue Nile Research

More stats: <http://www.ironpaper.com/webintel/articles/statistics-on-digital-marketing-opportunities-for-2016/>

Common mistakes in lead generation.

Before addressing best practice lead generation tactics, let's first examine some ineffective, antiquated, and off-putting strategies. Avoiding these common mistakes can help B2B marketers better reach and engage with their target market.

Mistake #1: Failing to make a plan first. Attempting to generate B2B leads without a defined digital strategy, content strategy, and budget is not likely to accomplish company goals. Take the time to establish a well-defined strategy according to the core objectives. Then, revisit the strategy regularly to optimize it for the current market environment.

Mistake #2. Buying names, cold calling and sending spam emails to a purchased list. These tactics are disruptive and ineffective. Inbound marketing is far more effective at attracting qualified buyers, prospects, and partners to your company. In a Stop Cold Calling blog, Black cited Huthwaite research noting 91 percent of B2B buyers never respond to an unsolicited inquiry, and 88 percent will have nothing to do with cold callers.

Common mistakes in lead generation.

Mistake #3. Relying on a homepage only. The homepage can help, but it's no longer the single most important page on a site. Users can arrive on the company's website through various entrance pathways they find via search engines, email, social media, advertising, related websites, and other channels. Use marketing automation and analytics to track lead sources and determine where the leads are going — optimize accordingly.

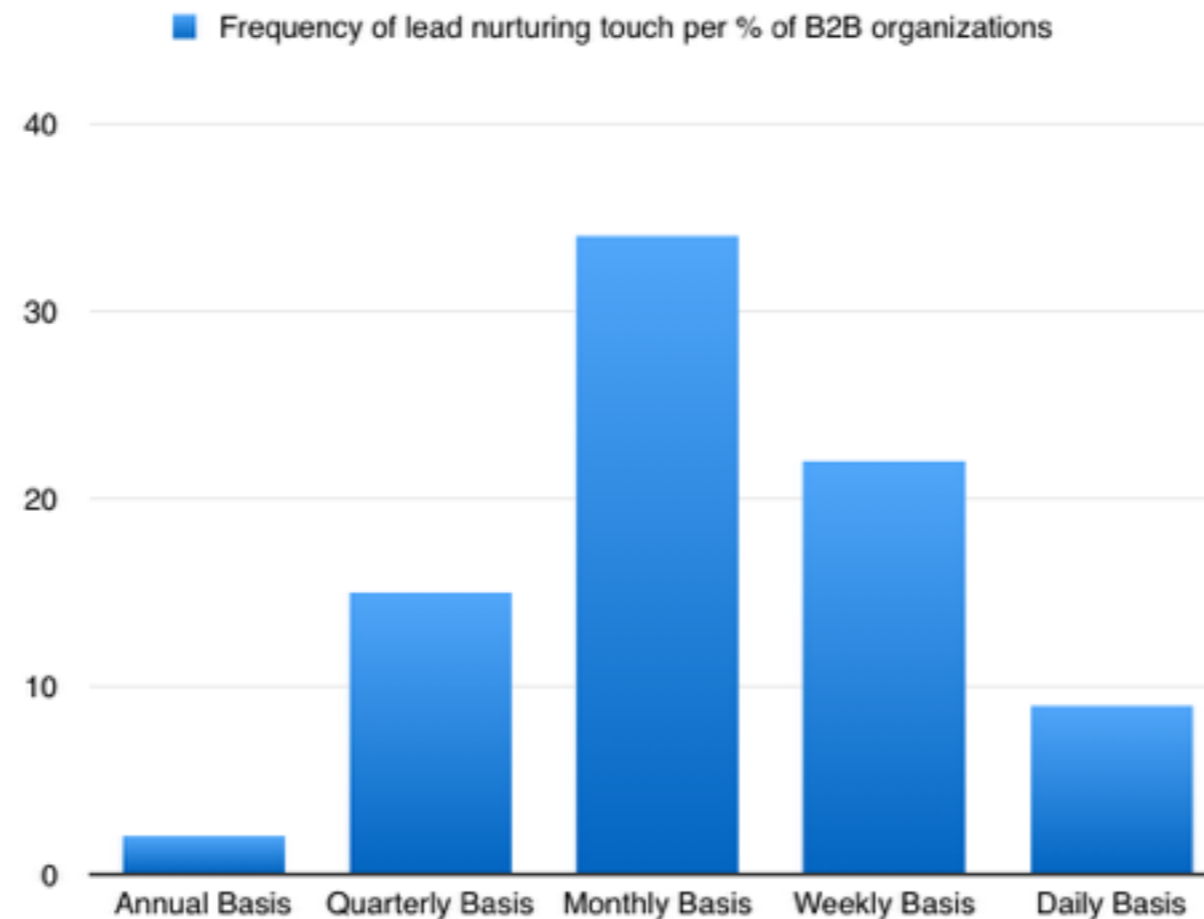
“Companies that automate lead management see a 10% or greater increase in revenue in 6-9 months.” — Gartner, cited in Wilson.

Mistake #4: Underutilizing organic inbound channels. Social media, search, and content are an excellent opportunities for a B2B to demonstrate its expertise, build brand recognition, broaden reach, educate prospects, support customers, and attract qualified leads. You don't always need to pay to play.

64% of B2B marketers have generated leads via LinkedIn, 49% through Facebook, and 36% through Twitter. — Pinpoint Market Research

Common mistakes in lead generation.

Mistake #5: Letting generated leads drop off by not nurturing them. High-quality, educational content is key to driving traffic and incentivizing prospects to convert to leads. Rather than blogging about the company's latest news or press releases, give potential buyers content they'll find interesting.



A person is seen from behind, sitting at a desk and working on a computer. The computer monitor displays a website with various content. The person's hands are on the keyboard. The entire scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue layer. On the right side of this blue layer, there is a large white quote in all caps.

**“THE CONTENT MARKETING
REVOLUTION SIGNALS MORE THAN A
MERE MARKETING FAD. IT MARKS AN
IMPORTANT NEW CHAPTER IN THE
HISTORY OF BUSINESS
COMMUNICATIONS: THE ERA OF
CORPORATE ENLIGHTENMENT
WHERE BRAND PUBLISHING HAS HAD
THE MOST PROFOUND IMPACT IS IN
EMPOWERING ORGANIZATIONS TO
CREATE, FACILITATE, AND LEVERAGE
THE OWNERSHIP OF IDEAS.”**

— Harvard Business Review

Best Practices

Lead generation strengthens the sales pipeline. Bringing the right prospects to the B2B's digital channels and converting them into sales qualified leads (SQLs) takes work. Consider this broad overview of best practices. We will get into more specific detail deeper into this book.

Step 1: Determine a value proposition.

A value proposition underpins the B2B marketing efforts. This singular, concise statement, describes the offering, why that offering is best in the B2B market, and how the company will deliver on that offering's promise. A clear value proposition resonates with customers and quickly communicates to the audience that they have found the company with the solution they seek. Communicate this unique value using descriptive copy, high-quality images, and a specific headline.

Step 2: Define marketing strategy.

A strong content marketing strategy helps the marketer build trust with potential buyers, drive more leads, and help convert leads to sales. Identify the themes your content will address, target audiences, the process you will use, and make a content calendar or publishing schedule. Then, stick to it and measure key performance indicators to be able to act and react on previous results to drive future success.

Best Practices

Step 3: Ongoing website optimization.

Strong, impactful web design is an essential part of inbound marketing and lead generation. The website gives a first impression, supports the content marketing plan, and helps achieve marketing goals. Don't rely on a set and sit website; ongoing optimization for design, SEO and overall strategy will improve customer engagement and lead generation overall. Website optimization needs to be an ongoing task.

Step 4: Align marketing and sales.

Misalignment of marketing and sales translates into lost revenue. These two teams should develop common definitions, share goals and lead tracking methods to move lead generation forward.

Step 5: Establish metrics for success.

Once the marketer determines what goal to reach, the next step is to determine how to measure progress. Identify metrics that can be used to show impact. This one's important enough it gets its own section. Turn the page (or keep scrolling down).

70% of people would prefer to learn about a company through articles (rather than an advert)

Content Marketing Institute in HBR

More stats: <http://www.ironpaper.com/webintel/articles/statistics-on-digital-marketing-opportunities-for-2016/>

Key metrics for success

Defining key metrics.

Inbound marketers know to set SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound) goals around website traffic, prospects, leads and customer acquisition and more.

In terms of lead generation, key metrics to track include:

- Conversion rates for leads and sales-qualified leads
- Landing page conversion rates
- Conversion assists (What content assists in converting leads?)
- Leads generated per week, per month, per quarter
- Sales qualified leads generated per week, per month, per quarter
- Sales opportunities by marketing channel

Measuring conversion assists, prospects, leads, sales-readiness and customer acquisition is even easier with marketing automation.

Diving deep into the data, can help the marketer better adapt to trends, optimize existing campaigns, and identify when to move in another direction. Metrics also help a CMO justify budget to other department heads.

Websites for Lead Generation

The website should be the brand's best lead generation channel. But don't focus on the homepage alone; all pages need to be optimized to convert various buyers.

As humans are highly visual, design is critical to the impression the marketer is making in the B2B arena. Best practices include:

- **Avoiding sliders on the homepage.** Sliders are a popular and widely used design feature — but they don't convert. Visitors ignore them and/or find them annoying. Instead, utilize the Hero Layout, which involves using a single content section with one clear and easy-to-understand goal that comprises the entire first fold of your homepage.
- **Declutter.** A streamlined, clean design converts better. Make sure there is a very visible CTA, high-quality images, and a clearly highlighted value proposition.
- **Be mobile responsive.** Mobile websites need to load faster, contain less content, have a streamlined navigation, and contain appropriate calls-to-action (CTAs). Optimize the site's layout, load time, content, and CTAs to ensure that mobile users have a great experience and take action.

Design is Changing

Design is always evolving. What are the trends in web design today?

- ▶ **Sticky CTA.** — A single, button-shaped call to action that is always visible as the user navigates your page. Positioning it in a header or footer without other distractions can help increase conversions.
- ▶ **Background Video or Animation.** — Animated or video backgrounds can add dimension and enhance visibility and credibility.
- ▶ **Streamlined Navigation.** — Users are more likely to convert when they can find what they need. Today's navigation is often streamlined with only priority options available on the main men. Secondary navigation is accessed via an additional hamburger menu icon.
- ▶ **Attractive Minimalism.** — Design is moving to a stripped down, more minimalistic approach. This is seen in site typography where designers are limiting the number of typefaces employed, and in the shift to a single, large image or curtailed color palettes.
- ▶ **Modular (card-like) interfaces.** — Blame (or credit) Pinterest and Microsoft, but instead of sliders, more designers are moving to cards as a way to present information colorfully and quickly.
- ▶ **Optimize for Speed.** — Delays deter visitors. With only five seconds to engage a visitor to your site, a mere second delay can mean loss in conversions (7%), fewer page views (11%) and decreased customer satisfaction (16%). In fact, 1 in 4 people will abandon a website if it takes longer than four seconds to load — and that's from a 2014 study. Imagine how much sooner they click away today.



Companies that automate lead management see a 10% or greater increase in revenue in 6-9 months.

Gartner, cited in Wilson

More stats: <http://www.ironpaper.com/webintel/articles/statistics-on-digital-marketing-opportunities-for-2016/>

40% of consumers abandon a website that takes more than three seconds to load.

KISSmetrics

More stats: <http://www.ironpaper.com/webintel/articles/statistics-on-digital-marketing-opportunities-for-2016/>

Landing Pages

Lead generation landing pages are most often used to capture leads by offering premium, branded content in exchange for visitors' contact information. The content on these pages is written specifically to persuade prospects to fill out a form and download the content, at which point they become qualified leads. A generic landing page won't attract and convert. To achieve lead generation goals:

- **Focus on relevant, important information.** With just seconds to grab the visitors' attention, a landing page should only contain enough information to intrigue prospects and inspire them to download the content.
- **Enable easy reading.** Keep text succinct, use bullet points, and leverage bolded text. Incorporate headings and high-quality images. Conversely, too little content will irritate a user that can easily move on to another website to get help.
- **Communicate value.** Quickly communicate what sets the company and the content apart. The page should consider benefits, ROI, and might incorporate customer testimonials.
- **Grab attention.** Use very specific headlines that reflect the landing page's content. Convey your message but don't confuse audience. An example of a strong headline is, "FREE DOWNLOAD: The Complete Guide to Lead Generation for B2B Companies".
- **Test.** Testing landing pages provides invaluable insight into what's working and what's not. Create several landing pages with different market ideas, layouts, and wording to determine which formula gets the most conversions.

68% of B2B businesses use landing pages to garner a new sales lead for future conversion.

MarketingSherpa, cited in Hubspot.

More stats: <http://www.ironpaper.com/webintel/articles/responsive-web-design-statistics-that-matter/>

Calls-to-Action

The call-to-action (CTA) drives prospects further into the conversion funnel. To boost conversions:

- Make CTA language specific in terms of action. Examples of specific CTAs are “start your free trial” or “download your free guide” or “sign up for a demo.”
- Align CTAs with the brand value proposition and purposeful education content.
- Test and iterate different CTAs during a campaign to ensure efficacy. Measure their contribution to lead generation using conversion funnel tracking.
- Do not link call-to-actions to your website’s homepage

Forms, too, need to be accessible and visible. Pay attention to these form details:

- Discuss in advance what fields will be used to prompt lead nurturing touches.
- Embed forms on lead generation pages. Visitors will be more likely to submit a form that is easily accessible.
- Integrate the form into automated workflows to generate more actionable data and cue triggers.
- Leverage progressive profiling to capture important, secondary information as the visitor returns for additional content.

Providing an incentive in the form of gated content, increases opt-in form conversions by 300%.

Thomas, JustUno

More stats: <http://www.ironpaper.com/webintel/articles/responsive-web-design-statistics-that-matter/>

Gated Content

Offering gated, premium educational content, such as an e-book or a white paper on a related but more in-depth topic, can convert visitors into leads by requiring them to enter contact information to gain access. Once the form is completed, the company can better nurture the lead with continuous, targeted communications.

Since 80% of B2B content marketing assets are gated, according to Starfleet Media, focus on creating valuable gated content:

- Make content exceptionally helpful or run the risk of damaging lead relationships and eroding credibility.
- Make the gated content landing page shareable.
- Feature and promote the gated content to let the target market know the content is available and its value.

An amazing blog starts with dedicated readers.
Determine the exact group you're targeting and deliver.

Patel, Content Marketing Institute

More stats: <http://www.ironpaper.com/webintel/articles/responsive-web-design-statistics-that-matter/>

Blogging

Blogging helps attract leads and prospects to the brand. Strong blog content will appeal to the target audience, build trust with potential customers and promote and amplify the brand.

- Build quality content that helps engage users on multiple levels and throughout the sales lifecycle. (This includes post-sales)
- Establish measurable goals focused on brand engagement and relationship building.
- Be consistent. Try to maintain a schedule with an even pacing to build momentum.
- Make content easy to read online. Employ headlines, bulleted text, quotes, data and statistics, lists, high quality images, video, media and more to break up the text.

Social Media for Lead Generation

Social media channels can attract and engage B2B buyers. To get started, identify the most industry-appropriate channels. In general, B2B companies will fare well on LinkedIn, Facebook, Google+ and Twitter:

- LinkedIn users typically ask questions and look for peer recommendations. Engage by offering advice, posting helpful content, answering questions and participating in industry discussions. LinkedIn has evolved into a media site, where authors can post articles and find a relevant business audience.
- Facebook users comment about industry-related topics and seek out peer advice. Gain notice by answering questions and sharing links to interesting content.
- On Google+ grab attention by being a trusted source the buyer can turn to for industry-related news, trends and information.
- Since sharing technology and industry-related news and articles is the primary action of B2B buyers on Twitter, take the time to comment on tweets, share content and comment on trending topics.
- Paid social can be helpful for targeting appropriate and specific audiences. Paid social is an appropriate channel for improving demand generation and converting leads from content offers.

Conclusion

Sales guru Zig Ziglar was in his prime well before the days of inbound marketing, but his thinking resonates still today: “You are out of business if you don’t have a prospect.”

Inbound marketing relies on drawing prospects to the brand’s digital channels and converting them to leads. The best marketers focus their efforts on generating inbound qualified leads to feed to the hungry sales teams. This guide has aimed to help reduce barriers to lead generation success and identify specific strategies to attract quality leads that can be nurtured to convert into sales opportunities.

Continue reading: B2B lead generation statistics: <http://www.ironpaper.com/webintel/articles/b2b-lead-generation-statistics/>

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A Results-Driven Digital Agency.

555 8th Ave, 15th Floor
New York, NY 10018
212-993-7809

2108 South Blvd #104
Charlotte, NC 28203
980-255-5100



ironpaper.com



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