A Strategy for

EFFECTIVE LEAD GENERATION AND LEAD MANAGEMENT

There can be more than a few bumps in the road on the way to B2B lead generation and lead management — a miscommunication between sales and marketing, an ill-timed jump into the sales pitch, a misinterpretation of user data (to name a few).

Then, before you know it, the sale is lost. And without better preparation, this becomes a recurrent frustration.

While it's impossible for an organization to expect to close all of the leads that come through your website, there is a way to reduce the number of avoidable errors that impact the marketing team's abilities to generate leads and the sales team's abilities to close them.

The key is a thoroughly thought-out, well-executed lead generation and lead management process.

Align the Sales and Marketing Teams

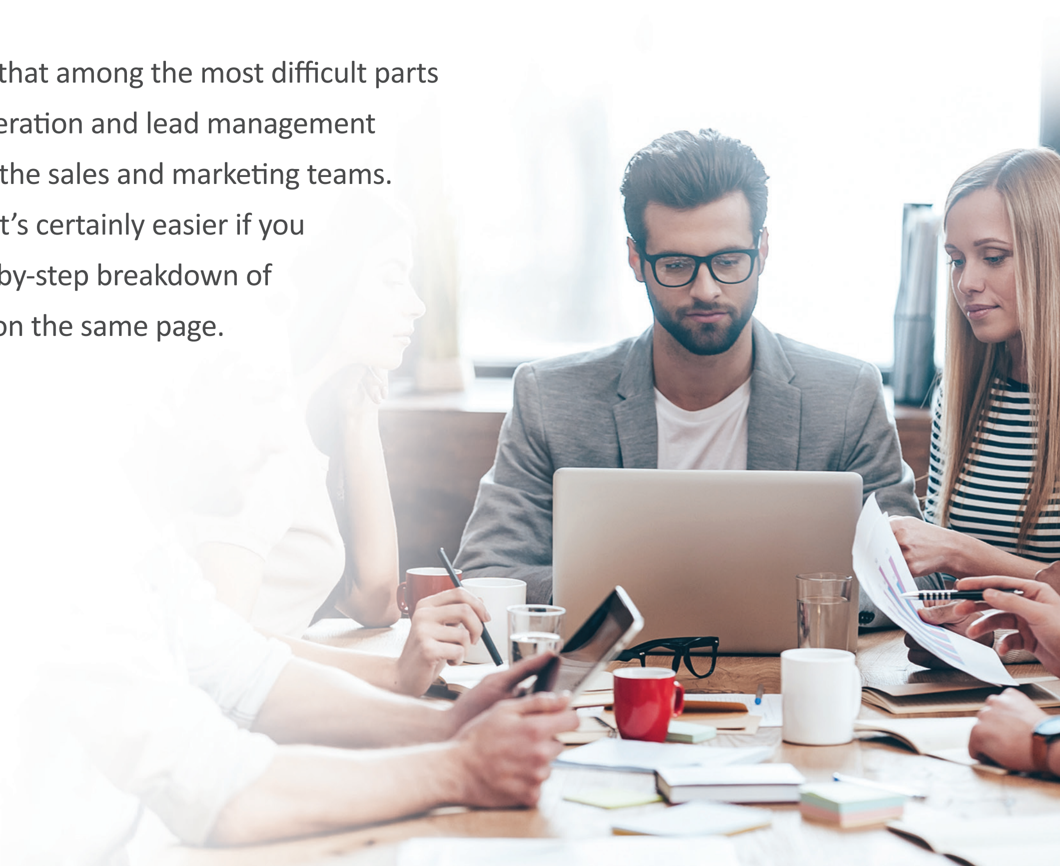
Agree on Goals, Qualification, Processes and KPIs

When you consider the fundamental difference between selling a product or service and marketing a product or service, it's easy to understand why (almost universally) sales and marketing teams are at odds with each other.

What it boils down to is sales is a money-in process, and marketing is money-out. But the truth is, while both teams may be taking different routes to get there, they're still heading toward the same goal: increasing revenue.

The more qualified leads marketing can generate, the more profitable deals sales can close. And the more profitable the company is, the more budget it can to dedicate to marketing. And the more budget the marketing team has, the greater they can expand and improve their efforts. And so on.

But this doesn't change the fact that among the most difficult parts of creating an effective lead generation and lead management process is the first step: aligning the sales and marketing teams. While this task isn't impossible, it's certainly easier if you have a game plan. Here's a step-by-step breakdown of how to get sales and marketing on the same page.



1 Mutually identify the target buyer persona(s) and their frustrations, needs and challenges.

Questions to answer:

- What are the persona's professional goals?
- What issues are they trying to resolve?
- How will they measure success?
- How can your company help them achieve their goals?

2 Define the criteria for leads, marketing qualified leads (MQLs), sales qualified leads (SQLs), sales accepted leads (SALs) and opportunities.

Questions to answer:

- What actions must a user take to ...
  - Be added to the sales and marketing database? **(Lead)**
  - Indicate they have an active interest in the company and should be nurtured? **(MQL)**
  - Show they're ready to be contacted by a sales rep directly? **(SQL)**
  - Prove they're a qualified buyer and worthy of pursuit? **(SAL)**
  - Demonstrate they have a high probability of being closed after being engaged by a sales rep? **(Opportunity)**
  - Be designated as a closed-won sale, excited to conduct ongoing business with the company? **(Customer)**

3 Establish key performance indicators (KPIs) and goals.

Questions to answer:

- What are the weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual objectives?
- How will success (or failure) be measured?
- How can the marketing team support the sales team's goals and vice versa?

4

Develop the lead generation and lead management process.

Questions to answer:

- How will sales and marketing capture more qualified leads?
- How will leads be transferred to sales from marketing and vice versa?
- How will these leads be nurtured through the sales funnel and into opportunities and then customers?
- How will the sales and marketing teams review results and make adjustments to improve them?

5

Build analytics dashboards and performance reports.

Questions to answer:

- Which data sets are available and how valid are they?
- Which reports offer the best insight?
- What information is most important to the sales and marketing teams as well as the C-suite?

The Benefits of Aligning Your Sales and Marketing Teams

- Agreement on goals and processes
- Fewer missed opportunities
- More qualified leads are generated
- Improved sales efficiency
- Proven ROI for sales and marketing
- Increased revenue

FACT: Aligned organizations achieve 19 percent faster revenue growth and 15 percent higher profitability.[1]

Invest in Sales and Marketing Technology

The Sales and Marketing Teams Need These Tools

Email is still an essential part of the lead generation and lead management process. Whether it's marketing emails to prospective customers or one-on-one correspondence between a sales rep and a buyer, a business simply cannot scale without email.

While email is powerful, there are execution limitations. Any business that plans to grow will find attempts to generate and manage leads exclusively via this channel woefully inefficient once the company has reached a certain size.

Where that threshold exists is different for every company, but if you'd prefer not to find out, your organization must invest in a customer relationship management (CRM) system. **If you don't, you're missing out on five critical capabilities:**

- Account management and reporting
- Deal management and reporting
- Lead management and engagement
- Prospect and customer database
- Sales rep activity monitoring

Maybe you've already invested in a CRM solution, but are you making use of all it has to offer? Many companies use their CRM as a sales communication and tracking tool, but they may not consider the context of a sale: What prompted a buyer to reach out to sales? What actions did the buyer take to learn more and make a decision? How can that information be leveraged to increase sales?

There are many CRM, MAS and CMS systems on the market today. We recommend HubSpot, as it's currently the only system that is both integrated and easy to use.

This is why smart businesses invest in the sales and marketing technology trifecta: CRM software, marketing automation software (MAS) and a content management system (CMS).

Just as with a CRM solution, marketing automation platforms offer benefits that, following implementation, can make your sales and marketing teams wonder how they ever lived without them. For example ...

- Reaching more buyers with relevant, timely messages
- Monitoring visitor and prospect behavior as they engage with your website
- Helping buyers find the right information to make a decision in your favor
- Pre-qualifying leads before the first sales call

The final piece of the puzzle is the CMS. The most effective marketing campaigns use many types of digital channels or content types—for example, websites, landing pages, blogs, social media, emails and calls-to-action (CTAs). Each asset should be updated frequently as results are analyzed and the marketing strategy evolves to match buyer personas and the buyer journey. Managing this dynamic set of marketing content without a CMS is difficult at best.

Integrating the CRM Software, Marketing Automation Solution and CMS

So you've implemented the sales and marketing technology trifecta. Great! But are they integrated? They need to be.

When all three systems and databases are integrated, your sales and marketing teams have access to the same information for every lead from first touch through closing. The teams can evaluate which types of content and messaging are effective as well as which pages are visited most frequently. They can work together to develop triggers that automatically assign and notify sales reps. Sales and marketing can review the entire sales process together and develop winning strategies for improving results. By using the same tools and data, they can better understand the others' needs and improve collaboration. Without this integration, you have a set of siloed systems (potentially with conflicting information), resulting in efficiencies and potentially lost sales.

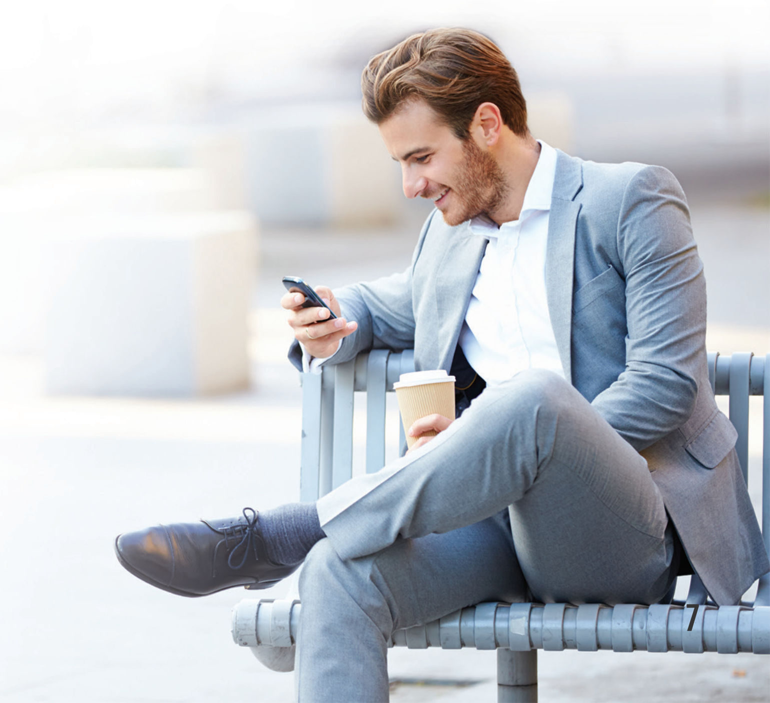
Use Demand Generation to Support Lead Generation

Attracting and Converting Qualified Leads Through Paid Channels

A common misconception about demand generation (aka paid media campaigns) is that they are only useful for driving website traffic, raising brand awareness or selling products and services directly. What's often overlooked is the potential for using demand generation to drive and nurture leads and shorten the sales cycle.

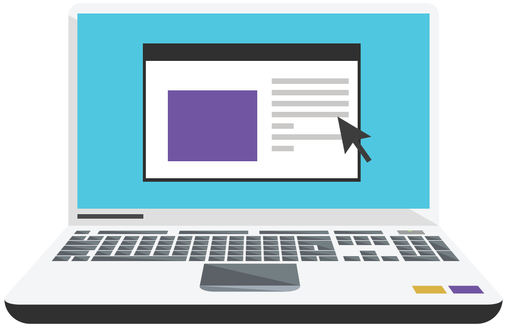
When executed well, demand generation campaigns can greatly improve the success of lead generation campaigns. By targeting specific buyer personas with relevant content and meaningful ads, you can drive not only new visitors but also qualified leads to your website.

By retargeting previous visitors with new offers that match their behavior on your site (for example, visited pages and emails opened), you can encourage additional visits and conversions—an effective way to nurture leads.



This insight can now be used to guide your lead generation strategy. For example, if you see a particular blog post or infographic is driving a lot of traffic, you can create a gated eBook and a demand generation campaign on the topic and start capturing targeted, qualified leads. Or if you see many visitors are accessing your content via a particular channel, you can target those channels more heavily with pay-per-click (PPC) campaigns or social media advertising.

If you notice certain topics don't seem to be bringing in traffic (or are attracting low-quality traffic, indicated by high bounce rates and low visit duration), do some research and see if the subject has already been driven into the ground. Rather than waste considerable time and resources designing content and campaigns about a topic dozens of other brands have covered ad nauseam, you can dedicate your efforts to creating more innovative content that's more likely to interest your audience.



A good rule of the thumb is to make sure every piece of content you create follows the four Es: engaging, educational, entertaining and empowering.

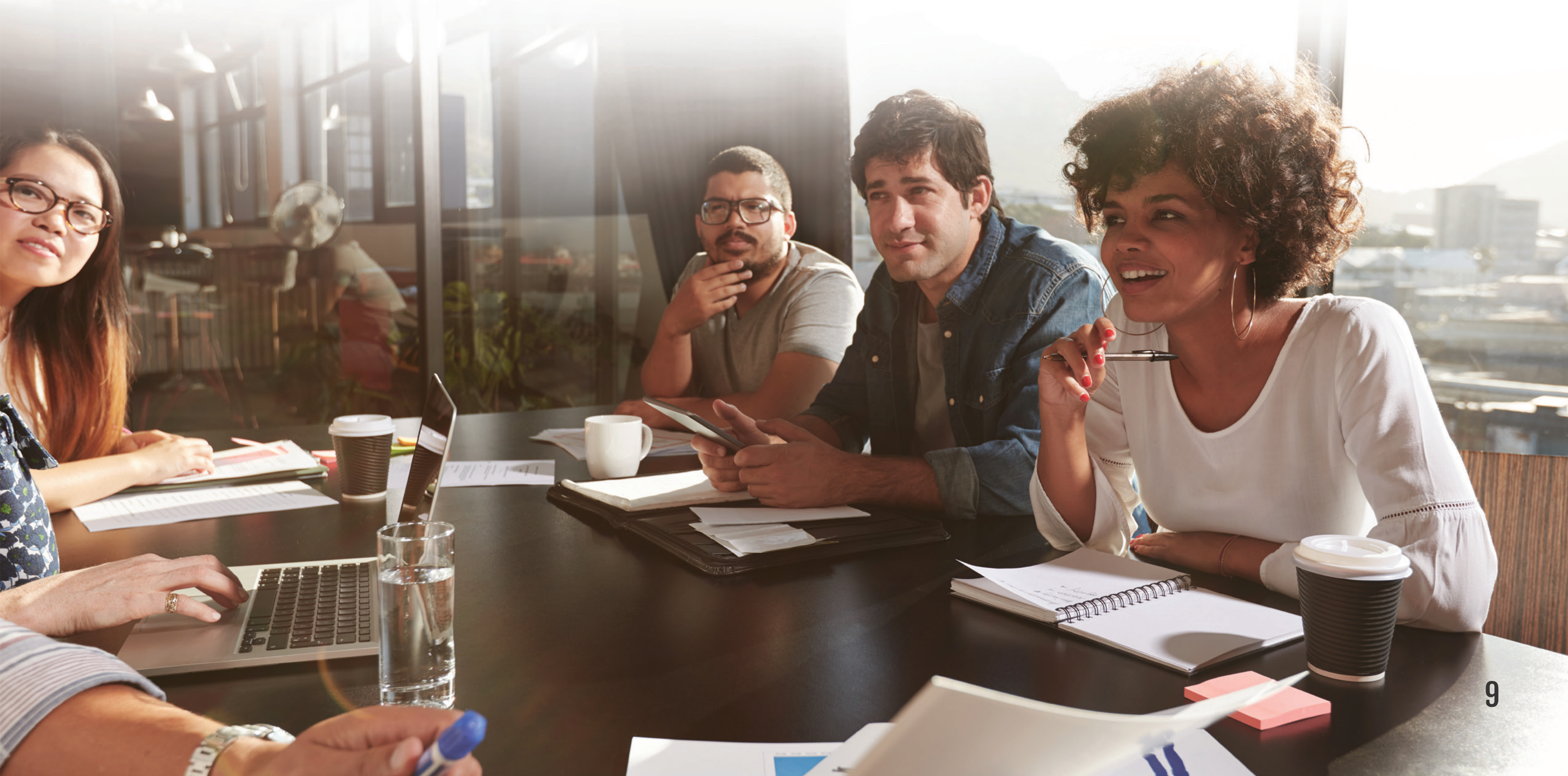
Target and Engage More Qualified Leads

Use Lead Segmentation, Scoring and Workflows

At the beginning of the lead generation and management process, your sales and marketing teams should have agreed on criteria for qualified leads, such as demographics, company size, industry and region as well as behavioral factors such as pages visited or content downloaded.

Armed with that information, you can filter (segment) your database into targeted lists based on one or more of these criteria. Then you can craft targeted demand generation, email marketing and social media campaigns that match these criteria and have the highest chances for meeting your goals.

You can develop an algorithm that segments leads based on criteria deemed important by both the sales and marketing teams. This enables your sales team to quickly assess lead qualification prior to a sales call or when they're in the process of developing prioritized call lists.



Examples of Criteria to Use for Segmenting and Scoring Leads

Explicit (Demographic) *For B2B Brands*	**Implicit (Behavioral)** *For B2B and B2C Brands*
• Industry • Geographical Location • Title/Role • Company Size and Revenue • Product Interest • Buyer Persona	• Interests • Purchasing Behavior • Online Behavior • Social Sites • Ad Engagement • Demographics

Pro Tip: Apply negative lead scores for undesired criteria, such as competitors, low-ranking job title, incomplete or bogus data, invalid email, wrong industry or other factors that sales reps would use to disqualify a lead.

The Benefits of Lead Segmentation and Lead Scoring

Lead segmentation and lead scoring allow your sales team to:

- Automatically qualify and prioritize leads
- Automatically assign lead lifecycle stages (lead, MQL, SQL, SAL, opportunity or customer) and monitor progress through the sales funnel
- Instantly receive notifications when a lead is ready for a sales call or has taken the next step in the sales process

… and your marketing team to:

- Create targeted campaigns that promote high levels of engagement and increased conversion rates
- Determine thresholds for sales readiness and automate handoff to sales reps
- Identify the content most likely to help move leads along the buyer's journey

Nurture Leads

Lead Nurturing, Defined

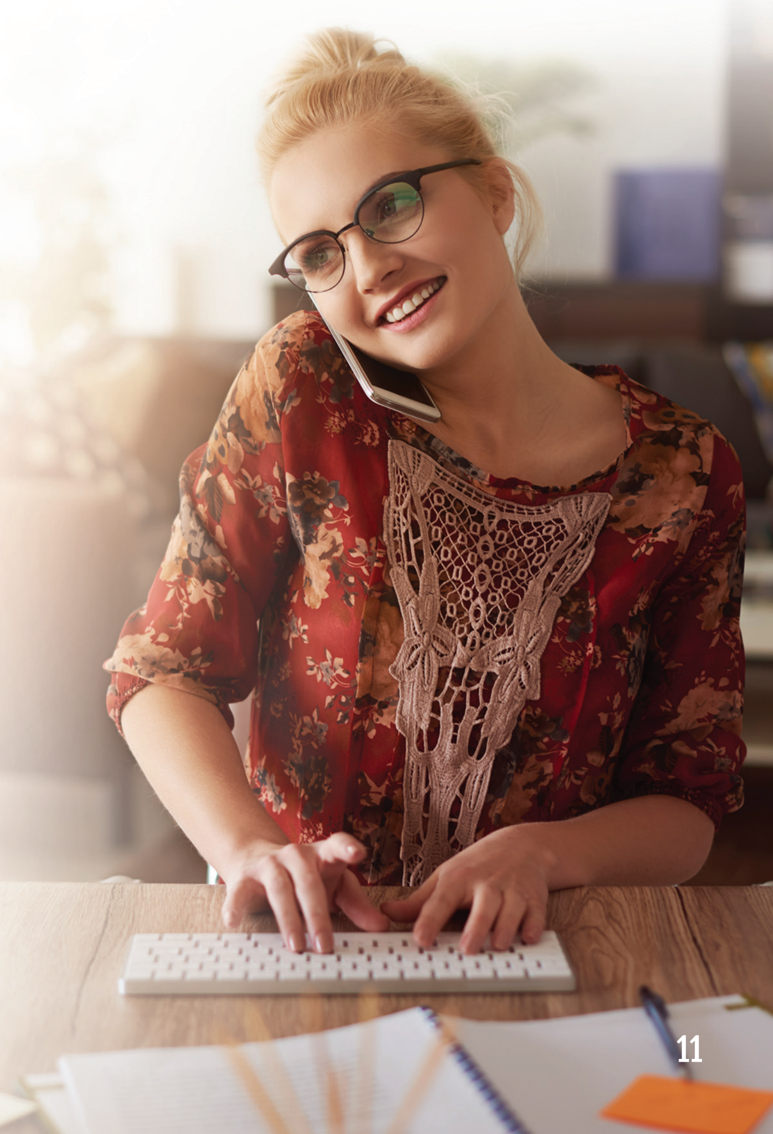
According to most sales and marketing surveys, prospects today have completed about 80 percent of the buyer's journey before they reach out to a sales rep for the first time. This means that by the time they contact you, they are already close to a decision.

Lead nurturing is how you get them to decide in your favor before that first sales call. By targeting qualified leads with your campaigns and then continuing to provide leads with helpful, relevant content as they engage with your website and campaigns, you can answer the lead's questions, earn their trust and help them understand why they should buy from you.

The Benefits of Lead Nurturing

Lead nurturing is a softer approach than traditional sales strategies. It allows leads to move down the sales funnel at their own pace. Lead nurturing is the exact opposite of high-pressure sales tactics, which can deter high-quality prospects instead of attracting them.

In addition, lead nurturing helps the sales team qualify leads based on their interactions with the brand and determine whether to continue pursuing the lead or focus their efforts elsewhere.



Assign Leads to Sales

When Should Leads Be Transferred to Sales?

The guidelines for when a lead should be handed off to a sales rep are determined in the sales and marketing alignment step of this process.

Depending on the rules agreed upon by the sales and marketing teams, the trigger could be the lead completing an action (or series of actions) that indicates a high level of interest. Or it could be when the lead reaches a certain lead score and is identified as a potentially valuable customer. It depends on whichever criteria the sales and marketing team set for determining MQLs and SQLs.

One of the most obvious signs a lead should be transferred to the sales team is if they signed up for a bottom-funnel, sales-ready activity, such as requesting a consultation or demonstration.

How to Automatically Transfer and Assign Leads to Sales Reps

The sales and marketing teams should develop common scenarios for lead management:

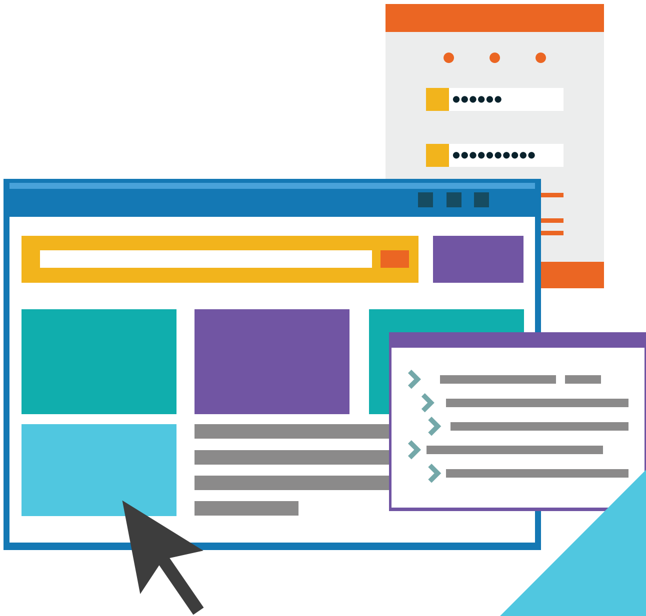
- When does a lead reach the sales-ready stage (for example, SQL)?
- What are the next steps after they've reached this stage?

Sales statistics show that the first sales rep to contact a sales-ready lead often closes the sale. With that in mind, you want to assign new SQLs immediately and notify the sales rep to make that all-important connection call.

There are many possible ways to automate the assignment process using workflows, including:

- Place new leads in a queue, then assign them in rotation to the next sales rep in line
- Assign leads to reps based on territory or product line
- Assign leads based on buyer persona or industry
- Assign leads by content interest or expertise

By automating much of the lead management process, the sales team gains faster access to high-quality leads and can respond immediately. Thus, they can reduce the sales cycle and increase closed-won rates as well as revenues.



Analyze and Report on Performance

Progress Toward Goals and Process Improvement

During the process of aligning sales and marketing, one of the steps was generating dashboards and reports based on agreed-upon KPIs. These dashboards and reports are critical for the sales and marketing teams as they provide visibility into their progress toward shared goals, enhance transparency and promote improvement at the individual and team levels.

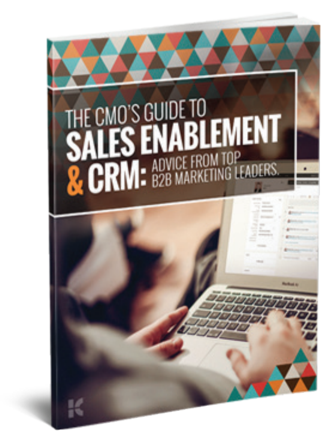
The analysis of sales and marketing performance data shows the sales and marketing teams where the lead generation and lead management process can be improved. For example, one action or property may have been assigned too high of a value in the lead scoring system and, as a result, leads are being assigned to reps before they're actually ready to speak with someone. Or maybe an industry your company thought was a good vertical to target hasn't performed as well as you would like. Regularly analyzing the data helps your teams continuously improve upon the process as well as better optimize their lead generation and lead management strategies.

It's important to remember the sales and marketing teams should continue to monitor a customer's engagement even after the contract is signed. Observing the customer's interactions with the company allows the teams to maximize retention and identify upsell opportunities.

The lead generation and lead management process can make or break an organization. And the companies that build their process from the ground up using these steps (or those that follow this procedure to refresh their existing strategy) tend to find it easier to reach revenue targets and increase profitability.

To improve your lead generation and lead management process even more,

read our free guide, **[The CMO's Guide to Sales Enablement and CRM]**, featuring expert advice from top B2B marketing leaders.



Get the Guide!

1. "Building the Aligned B-to-B Infrastructure," SiriusDecisions