

The Secret to Boosting Conversion Rates

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Here's the problem. It's not lead generation. Marketing does that well, but in many companies the critical step of qualifying them fall in no man's land—somewhere between the borders of the sales and marketing departments.

However, if you can create a process that assures sales people receive qualified leads, they'll be chomping at the bit, ready to take them to the finish line.

The Confetti-Creation Conundrum

The lead generation problem of 2013 is not that there are too few leads because there are so many ways for marketing to generate leads through the Internet. People sign up for white papers and click around on your website, indicating they're interested.

The lead generation problem is qualification. Are these leads just window shoppers? Do they have a budget? Is this person a decision maker? Perhaps they're competitors. Maybe they're doing research for a possible purchase twelve months from now.

How do you find out? Even in 2013 you have to go back to a tried and true, old-fashioned sales technique. Talk to them! That means getting on the phone, and having a conversation.

Burying the Good, the Bad, and the Not-Quite-Ready Leads

When you pass on leads before you've defined the opportunities better, you end up throwing out the good leads with the bad. Why?

- **Sales loses faith in the lead generation process**, doesn't have time to separate the golden-nugget leads from the mud and rocks, and simply lets 70% of the marketing leads go to waste.
- **Lukewarm leads need to be nurtured**, but sales people are motivated by the here and now. They're not farmers—they're hunters. So even if a sales person follows up on these leads once, they're unlikely to provide the nurturing they need to turn them into sales.

Using Telemarketing to Qualify Leads

By sorting through your leads, and talking with them on the phone, you find the hottest sales prospects, regain the salespeople's trust, getting them fired up and

ready to work on the next round of leads.

You will also be able to nurture leads that have a longer buying cycle, and make sure they're not handed off to sales before they're ready.

But there's a hitch to this solution. You have to make some phone calls and reaching a business person on the phone is a lot more difficult than it was a decade ago. What has changed? Companies have purchased databases, given names and phone numbers to unqualified telemarketers, who have bombarded business people with rote one-way messages. In reaction prospects have closed the doors. With a quick glance at the caller ID, the call is diverted to voice mail. At the same time, receptionists and administrators have reinforced defenses.

So getting through on the phone to ask key questions takes a skilled telemarketer. You're guilty until proven innocent on the phone and the first 30 seconds can make or break your chances of success. You need to engage with the administrative assistants to show that what you want to discuss has value, and you are not the typical telemarketer. Ask them if you can schedule a time to talk with their manager. Treat admins with respect because they likely know a lot more than you think, and can be influential. Or talk with a manager lower in the hierarchy to your target. They may say that you need to talk with their superior. Which is, of course, exactly what you want to do...and now you can drop a name.

It's a Conversation, Not a Sales Pitch

Once your telemarketer reaches the individual they're interested in talking with, they have to treat the call as a peer-to-peer business conversation where they are there to help, not to sell. I believe it's all about your intentions, and your real curiosity to understand the customer. So don't look at the customer as an object, but as a person with needs. You're there to help them.

The Bottom Line: Less is More

It's easier to get leads now, but lead conversion tends to be lower. So save you sales people's time. It's better to send 10 qualified leads a month than 100 of unknown value. Build a pipeline of leads that your telemarketers nurture and call back—when the leads are ready to be called. This is important because it means you will always have leads to hand to sales—but only when they're ready. Only send the golden-nugget leads—no more mud and rocks. This way you'll build a strong foundation of trust and teamwork between sales and marketing.

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