



Human Touch in a Digital World

How appealing to emotions creates
lasting relationships in B2B lead generation

by Jeff Kalter, Co-Founder and CEO

3D2B 
BUILDING THE BRIDGE TO SALES

New York
3D2B Inc.
80-02 Kew Gardens Road
Suite 903
Kew Gardens, NY 11415

Tel: +1 718-709-0900
email: sales@3d2b.com

Rome
3D2B Srl
Piazzale Luigi Sturzo, 15
00144 Rome
Italy

Tel: +39 06 978446 60
email: sales@3d2b.com

Perhaps the greatest fault in relying on technology to generate leads is that it fails to provide the all-important human touch. It can be easy to lose sight of the fact that search engines and social media apps don't purchase products and services; people do!

Human Touch in a Digital World

How appealing to emotions creates lasting relationships in B2B lead generation

Executive Summary

Now more than ever before, technology holds great promise in improving the effectiveness of B2B marketing organizations. Social media, marketing automation, email marketing, search engine marketing, and mobile marketing all offer great potential in efficiently generating a high-volume of leads.

Yet despite the opportunity afforded by technology, B2B marketing organizations claim that the basic task of lead generation is their greatest challenge. According to Marketing Sherpa, 74% of marketers say that generating high-quality leads is their greatest challenge, and 49% report that generating a high volume of leads is a challenge.¹

Perhaps the greatest fault in relying on technology to generate leads is that it fails to provide the all-important human touch. In the fervor behind marketing technologies, it can be easy to lose sight of the fact that search engines and social media apps don't purchase products and services; people do! With this in mind, lead generation must be focused on an effort to establish relationships and use the face and voice of the brand to do so. It's all about connecting human beings with other human beings and not letting a computer screen get in the way.

Certainly, technology has a place in B2B lead generation. But as we'll show in this white paper, B2B telemarketing offers the potential to connect two people and create the human touch that is so desperately needed in lead generation today. Ultimately, telemarketing enables B2B marketing organizations to cultivate lasting relationships with their most valued customers and prospects, resulting in increased sales and business growth.

Market Drivers

Human Touch Drives Buyer Behavior

Marketing organizations across the globe study buyer behavior to determine how best to generate leads and increase sales.

¹ 2012 B2B Marketing Benchmark Report, Marketing Sherpa, 2011.

Despite the great effect of the human touch in influencing buyer behavior, the marketing industry seems to be headed in the opposite direction. Gartner Research claims that by 2020, customers will manage 85% of their relationship with a business without talking to a human being.

Market research and independent studies offer a very scientific approach to examine what makes people buy. With their long sales cycles and complex pricing models, B2B organizations in particular tend to spend great time and money on the study of buyer behavior. This trend is certainly reasonable given the way in which the Internet has dramatically transformed buyer behavior.

Yet most fundamentally, buyers are simply people who are searching for the product or service that best suits their needs. What's more, people often make decisions based on their gut reactions. These gut reactions, clearly difficult to examine, are centered on whether a buyer likes the brand or the person representing the brand.

Consider two companies that offer a similar product. One company spends great resources on market research, marketing automation, and search engine marketing. The other spends its resources appealing to the human, emotional side of the buyer. When done effectively through telemarketing and in-person meetings, the company that provides the human touch will have the edge. Despite the great effect of the human touch in influencing buyer behavior, the marketing industry seems to be headed in the opposite direction. In fact, Gartner Research claims that by 2020, customers will manage 85% of their relationship with a business without talking to a human being.²

What's more, many B2B marketing organizations are taking notice of the great advances in marketing automation. A study by Sirius Decisions claims that the adoption of marketing automation technology is expected to increase to 50% by 2015.³ Marketing automation helps define lead generation activities and can certainly aid in the process of nurturing leads, but still there is no human element involved.

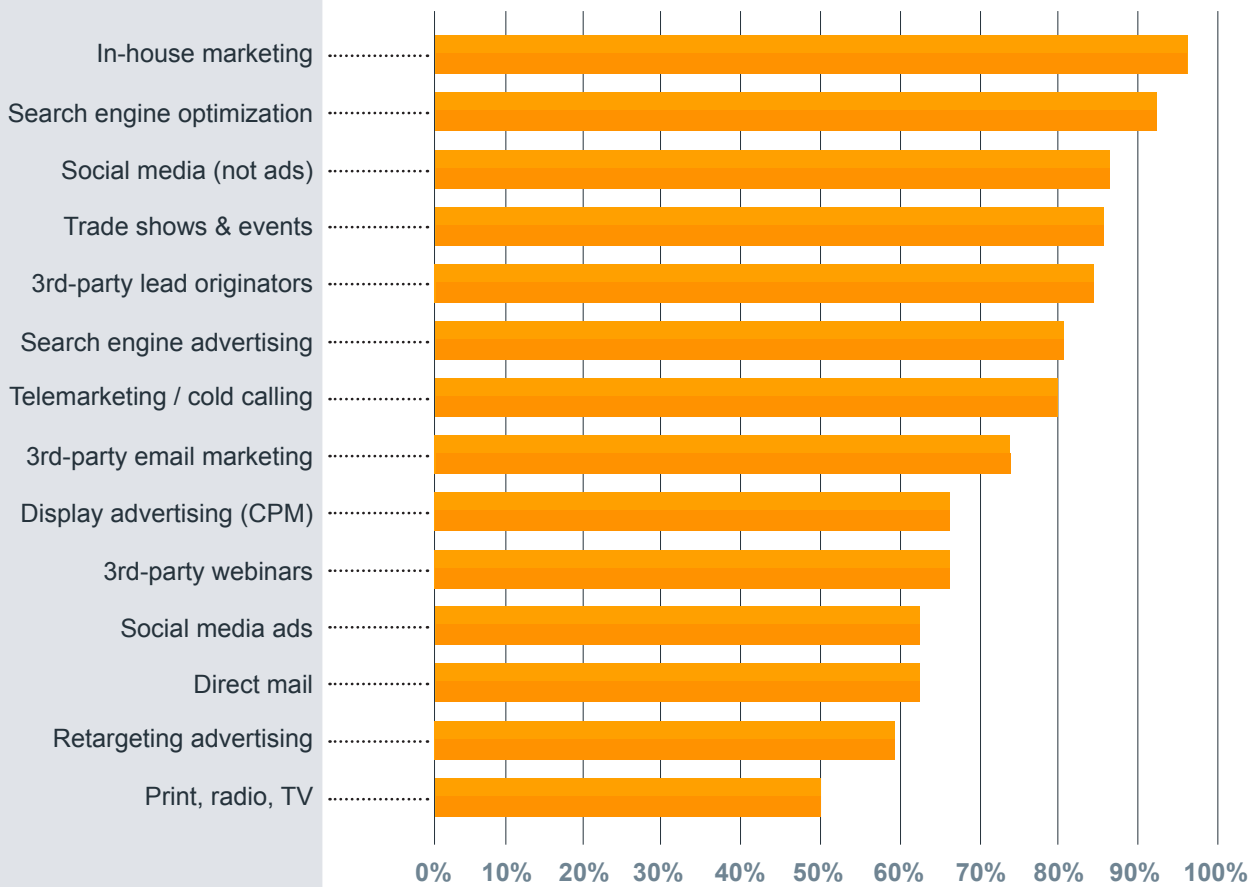
Many marketers claim that social media marketing offers a human touch. Social media marketing's most outspoken proponents claim that Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn all offer the ability to cultivate relationships and nurture leads. This is true, however, these relationships lack an individualized, human element. There is little emotional appeal for a buyer interacting with a computer screen. And really, how emotionally attached can you get with 140 characters?

² Gartner Research

³ Sirius Decisions

A study titled B2B Demand Generation Benchmark Survey illustrates marketing's trend toward technology and away from traditional channels that include a human touch. When asked what channels they use for lead generation, marketers listed in-house email marketing, search engine optimization, and social media, in that order, indicating a clear preference for digital channels.⁴

Marketers Place Priority on Digital Channels



Source: B2B Demand Generation Benchmark Survey, CMO.com, et al, 2012

Considering that lead generation is the B2B marketer's greatest challenge, perhaps marketing organizations would be wise to tame their investments in technology in favor of marketing activities that generate a human touch. The focus should not be on the technology, but on building lasting, memorable relationships on a human level.

⁴ B2B Demand Generation Benchmark Survey, CMO.com, Eloqua, Software Advice 2012

Challenges

Human Touch Drives Buyer Behavior

Generating a human touch requires great strategic focus and attention to customer demands. Yet for many marketing departments in a weak economy, the phrase “do more with less” has become a dominant theme. In fact, a MarketingSherpa study notes that as many as 62% of B2B marketers claim that a lack of resources is their greatest barrier to success.⁵

Barriers to Success in Marketing



Source: 2012 B2B Marketing Benchmark Report, Marketing Sherpa, 2011

⁵ 2012 B2B Marketing Benchmark Report, Marketing Sherpa, 2011.

The human touch enables a B2B organization to break through the clutter to establish a true connection, build trust, gain credibility, and maintain valuable relationships over time.

As a result of the recession, marketing teams have shrunk, and many marketers simply don't have the resources to call customers and prospects. And when a marketing team is stretched to its limits, the efficiency that technology affords is very appealing.

This is perhaps one of the greatest reasons that social media marketing has generated such hype in recent years. The ability to connect with multiple prospects in one blog post or one LinkedIn campaign can be a very efficient way to generate leads. And while social media marketing is more personalized than the average direct mail or advertising campaign, it still lacks a human element. Social media marketing experts say to add a human touch with photos, videos, and live chat. Nonetheless, a computer screen is still involved, and these activities are mostly one-way. They simply cannot offer the individualization and spontaneity of a live phone conversation.

Some marketing organizations do realize the value in calling customers and prospects to build relationships. Yet, the typical in-house telemarketing effort is expensive and ineffective. Calls are often made informally with no supporting plan or campaign. And junior team members are often assigned the task of making calls, yet they often cannot fluently communicate the marketing messaging. What's more, an ill-suited caller will be discouraged by rejection and find anything else to do. Despite their best intentions, what often results is an unfocused effort that fails to produce



Solution

B2B Telemarketing Offers a Human Touch

The power of the human touch

When a B2B marketing organization reaches its most prized customers and prospects on a human, emotional level, the effects are powerful. The human touch enables a B2B organization to break through the clutter to establish a true connection, build trust, gain credibility, and maintain valuable relationships over time.

An Inc.com article titled 5 Ways to Get People to Listen to You discusses the power of emotion in connecting with buyers: "Facts and statistics may tell a story, but if you truly want to effect change and influence the way your audience thinks and feels, you will have to go beyond straightforward communications. The key to really getting people to listen—and act: Touch them on an emotional level."

Criteria for Human Touch

- Direct and honest
- Memorable
- Relevant

In the same article, Helio Fred Garcia, author of *The Power of Communication*, said, “Humans are wired to connect with each other. And we connect with one another by feeling, not thinking. ...Emotion is now increasingly recognized as the key to moving hearts and minds.”⁶

Establishing a human touch requires that both parties to enter into conversation that is defined by several criteria. The conversation must be direct and honest, memorable, relevant, and individualized. It must also be two-way, with both buyer and seller contributing to the conversation. Let’s examine these criteria in greater detail:

Direct and honest. Being direct and honest in conversations with customers and prospects goes a long way toward establishing a human touch. Personable conversations make buyers feel valued.

Memorable. A live, two-way conversation is much more individualized and memorable than any email or blog post can ever be. Being memorable improves the likelihood that the prospect will remember the company when it comes time to buy.

Relevant. There is nothing more frustrating to a buyer than fielding calls from organizations that offer nothing of value. On the other hand, being relevant can pique a prospect’s interest and engage him or her in an informed conversation. In fact, MarketingSherpa claims that 92% of B2B buyers are open to cold calls if the messaging is relevant.⁷

Individualized. Any sales or marketing executive engaged in a conversation with a prospective buyer must be well-versed in the industry and be prepared to address the buyer’s specific needs and challenges. Buyers don’t want to hear a company boast about its products and services. They want to know how those products and services will solve their greatest challenges.

Human touch offers business intelligence

In addition to holding honest, memorable, relevant, and individualized conversations with customers and prospects, the human touch is powerful in its ability to glean valuable business intelligence. In this way, the human touch isn’t about talking; it’s about listening.

⁶ *Ways to Get People to Listen to You, Inc.com, October 15, 2012.*

⁷ MarketingSherpa

Specifically, a B2B marketing organization can learn:

- All about the prospect's challenges and business problems
- How the decision process works in the prospect's individual organization
- Any objection a buyer may have, which the seller can effectively and thoroughly address
- Other factors that may affect the sale like budget, timing, purchasing authority, the size of the solution, and more

When done right, engaging in a conversation with a prospect can directly and immediately gauge interest in or need for a particular product or service. When speaking directly to a prospect, the organization can ask questions to ensure the relevance of their product or service. Plus, the organization can make sure the prospect fully comprehends the merits of any technical or complex product offering.

The versatility of the human touch

Considering the great power that the human touch brings to lead generation, it proves very versatile and can be effective at many stages of the sales cycle. For example, a marketing organization may engage a prospect in conversation after the prospect reaches a set score during inbound marketing campaigns. In this way, inbound and outbound marketing activities work hand in hand.

The human touch is also effective for:

- Periodically following up during lead nurturing campaigns, either when the prospect is most interested or at set time periods
- Following up on targeted email or direct mail campaigns
- Responding to inbound web or email requests
- Inviting prospects to tradeshow, webinars, and other events
- Following up after a prospect attends an event
- Ensuring the prospect's needs are addressed during the normal sales cycle, particularly when it's long
- Performing a customer satisfaction analysis after the sale is complete (win or loss)

When integrated with inbound and outbound activities, the human touch amplifies marketing effectiveness and is especially beneficial in attending to the prospective buyer's every need. Such keen attention establishes trust in the mind of the buyer and builds great credibility for the organization.

Building the human touch with B2B telemarketing

Individualized relationship building

Like no other method, telemarketing proves effective for its ability to develop a rapport with individual prospects. Connecting with a prospect in a one-on-one, back-and-forth conversation carries a psychological appeal that many social media marketers attempt to harness. Psychologically speaking, buyers are much more likely to listen to a sales pitch if they have previously developed a relationship with the company.

What's more, when a marketing organization hires a B2B telemarketing agency, the agent making the calls should act as a representative of the company and never mention that they are calling on the company's behalf. This lends to the credibility of the company and the conversation.

Like no other method, telemarketing proves effective for its ability to develop a rapport with individual prospects.



Case Study

Software Company Rebuilds Reputation through Human Touch

In May 2012, a large, multinational software company contacted 3D2B for assistance with rebuilding customer relationships in the face of a major acquisition. The software company needed a partner who would interact with customers on the phone to reestablish rapport and rebuild brand strength. The one-on-one human touch of B2B telemarketing proved to be a highly effective method.

The company assigned several primary objectives to 3D2B. Chief among them was to qualify leads from a list of lost and dormant customers and increase sales opportunities. In the end, the company found overwhelming success with the project and felt that 3D2B provided the business intelligence and leads they needed to strengthen their sales and marketing endeavors—and ultimately rebuild the brand's reputation.

Connecting a buyer and seller over the phone is much more effective than any direct mail or social media campaign can ever be. No computer screen or text-laden mailer will replace the sound of a person's voice or the spontaneous conversation that ensues.

What's more, when a marketing organization hires a B2B telemarketing agency, the agent making the calls should act as a representative of the company and never mention that they are calling on the company's behalf. This lends to the credibility of the company and the conversation.

Real human beings interacting with other human beings

Connecting a buyer and seller over the phone is much more effective than any direct mail or social media campaign can ever be. No computer screen or text-laden mailer will replace the sound of a person's voice or the spontaneous conversation that ensues.

Methodical approach

While the best telemarketing conversations seem natural and unprompted, marketing organizations appreciate that they can be made with a methodical approach. Every resource for every call is being used effectively and in support of a larger vision or campaign.

Highly educated agents carry unscripted conversations

Nothing will ruin a company's credibility faster than an agent speaking monotonously from a script. Human touch can only be established through a natural, unscripted conversation. The best telemarketing agencies employ college-educated agents who can carry an intelligent conversation without prompting.

Agents have deep industry experience

As important as hiring highly educated agents is ensuring they have deep industry experience. The best telemarketing agencies provide their agents with in-depth industry training and continue to build on that experience by assigning them to companies within that industry. In this way, agents can understand all of the industry's acronyms and buzzwords, as well as speak intelligently about the prospect's needs, challenges, and objections.

Agents speak only their native languages

Telemarketing has earned a bad reputation from the many organizations that outsource their telemarketing services to countries where agents don't speak the native language and who do so with heavy accents. The natural conversations that build the human touch can only be had when both parties speak the same language natively. It ensures that no language barrier gets in the way of the conversation or the brand's integrity.

Conclusion

For many of today's B2B marketing organizations, technology holds great promise in bringing efficiency to lead generation. Such efficiency has become a necessity as a result of the recession and ever-shrinking marketing teams and budgets. Yet these technologies have been adopted with such fervor that the art of connecting with prospects on a human level has been lost.

Considering that generating high-quality leads is the B2B marketer's greatest challenge, these organizations would be wise to complement their technology with marketing activities that offer a human touch.

Specialized telemarketing services enable B2B organizations to carry honest, relevant conversations that lead to lasting, memorable relationships. And once those relationships have been established, the organization can effectively close sales to ultimately increase revenues and drive business growth.

About the Author

Jeff Kalter, Co-Founder and CEO

Jeff Kalter is the co-founder and CEO of 3D2B, a B2B telemarketing firm that helps sales and marketing organizations across the globe generate qualified leads, cultivate relationships with targeted buyers, and grow existing customer accounts.

Jeff co-founded 3D2B in 2003 after recognizing a need for high-end global telemarketing services for B2B companies. What started as a small, two-person company has grown to a multinational business with more than 100 employees. Today, he leads the company in all strategic endeavors including marketing, business development, and operations.

Before founding 3D2B, Jeff held key positions in advertising, marketing, and sales for companies in high-end apparel, industrial waterworks, and technology. This experience includes the companies Bruce Supply Corporation, Central Foundries, which he co-founded, Toshiba, Cisco Systems, 3Com, and ESCADA in Germany.

Jeff earned his bachelor's degree in architecture from New York Institute of Technology. His background includes experience in graphic design, and he is a certified Salesforce.com administrator.

Happily married since 1995, Jeff devotes his free time to his passion for animals, cooking, skiing, scuba diving, and all things techy. Born and raised in New York City, Jeff currently resides in Rome, Italy and New York City.

About 3D2B

Established in 2003, 3D2B provides B2B telemarketing and lead generation services to help foster customer relationships and boost sales across all industries. With offices in Rome and New York, 3D2B assists sales and marketing organizations across the globe.

Founded on the principle of providing quality, specialized B2B telemarketing and lead generation services, 3D2B prides itself in the fact that its agents are highly educated, natively speak the languages they cover, and have industry-specific experience. For more information about 3D2B, visit www.3D2B.com.

Learn More

To learn more about how 3D2B can help you generate leads and improve the effectiveness of your sales and marketing organizations, contact us at **+1 718 709 0900** or **+39 06 978446 60 (EMEA)** or visit us at **www.3D2B.com**.

Contact

Rome
3D2B Srl
Piazzale Luigi Sturzo, 15
00144 Rome
Italy

Tel: +39 06 978446 60
email: sales@3d2b.com

New York
3D2B Inc.
80-02 Kew Gardens Road
Suite 903
Kew Gardens, NY 11415

Tel: +1 718-709-0900
email: sales@3d2b.com