Your Definitive Guide to Lead Generation

A complete beginner's guide to lead generation to help your business generate more quality leads online.

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Part 1: An Introduction to Lead Generation

1. Introduction

In today's ultra-competitive online marketplace, many businesses are struggling with business growth and expansion. Lead generation is what business growth is built on, and it's crucial to understand why and how lead generation impacts your business.

Lead generation is the most important aspect of online marketing. It not only applies to acquiring more customers but also retaining them as long-term consumers with a higher lifetime value to your business.

In this guide, you'll learn everything from the very basics of lead generation to proven techniques that you can start implementing today. The guide is broken down into three parts to deliver this business-changing information in an effective and digestible method.

Part 1

(Which you're in now) is a complete introduction to lead generation for beginners and business owners who are looking to take their lead driven results to the next level. You'll learn the basics of leads and how to qualify them, as well as getting a look at what exactly the lead generation process looks like.

Part 2

is the real meat of this guide. You'll not only learn the most effective tactics and proven strategies for driving quality leads and traffic, but you'll also learn how to directly apply them to get maximum results. Additionally, you'll learn about the different platforms that are typically used for lead generation, and how to find the platforms that will work the best for your business.

Part 3

will be a short section discussing how to monitor and track your lead generation results.

Are you ready to achieve the results you've always dreamed of, delivered right to you?

Let's dive into it.

2. What is lead generation and why is it important?

We've talked a lot already about lead generation, but what exactly is it and why should it matter to you and your business?

Lead generation describes the marketing process of developing and capturing interest in your products or services for the purpose of acquiring long term customers. Lead generation in 2019 lives primarily in digital platforms and has evolved significantly in the past few years alone. This is mostly due to the fact that consumers buy products differently now.

The abundance of information and reviews available online has created a more independent buyer. On the other hand, there has been an emergence of new technologies and techniques developed specifically for driving inbound leads in the digital era and ultimately passing them into your sales pipeline.

Why should this matter to my business?

As mentioned above, the buying process has changed. Marketers like yourself need to be armed with the most effective tools and strategies for capturing the interest of your target audience in order to stand out from the crowd.

The days of acquiring loyal customers through huge advertisement campaigns and mass email blasts are long gone. Today's buyers are simply too well informed to make a purchase decision based on one advert or email. Instead of finding buyers, marketers must now focus on being found and building a continuous relationship with their target audience, even before they purchase anything.

3. What is a lead and how are they qualified?

The exact definition of a lead varies from marketer to marketer. It is crucial, however that everyone involved in the lead generation process, and the sales team, are on the same page regarding what a lead is defined as.

Typically, a salesperson, for example, will describe a lead as someone who matches the criteria of the established target audience, and who has both a need and interest in purchasing your product.

Marketers, on the other hand, may define a lead as someone who might match your criteria and has an interest in your product. Additionally, a lead that proves to have qualities that fit the established criteria are referred to as a prospect. The difference between the two will be important as we get into how to qualify and assess leads as they arrive.

Qualifying Leads

From a marketers' perspective, no two leads are created or valued equally. It's important to learn how to qualify leads specifically for your business needs. Some lead sources will deliver a high quantity of "junk" or spam leads which retain little to no value.

Part of the lead qualifying process is determining which have the most potential as long-term customers, so you can then focus on cultivating those instead of spending time on junk leads that won't convert to customers. It's also important to keep in mind, that even leads that can be referred to as prospects, don't always have the same value either.

A prospect turned customer that only makes a single, perhaps spontaneous purchase is much less valuable than a prospect that is drawn to you by your lead generation marketing, and becomes a loyal, long term customer.

Here a few best practices that will help you determine the quality of your leads, and which ones are worth following up with:

■ Qualifying Questions

Qualifying typically starts with asking a few basic questions. These questions should be designed to determine whether the lead matches the criteria you have established. For example, if you're selling automotive insurance, then people who don't have cars or don't have a need for a car (live in a city, takes public transportation, etc.) will not qualify as prospects. Therefore, the questions that you design to ask should be able to quickly identify car owners and the interest they may have in purchasing your specific insurance packages.
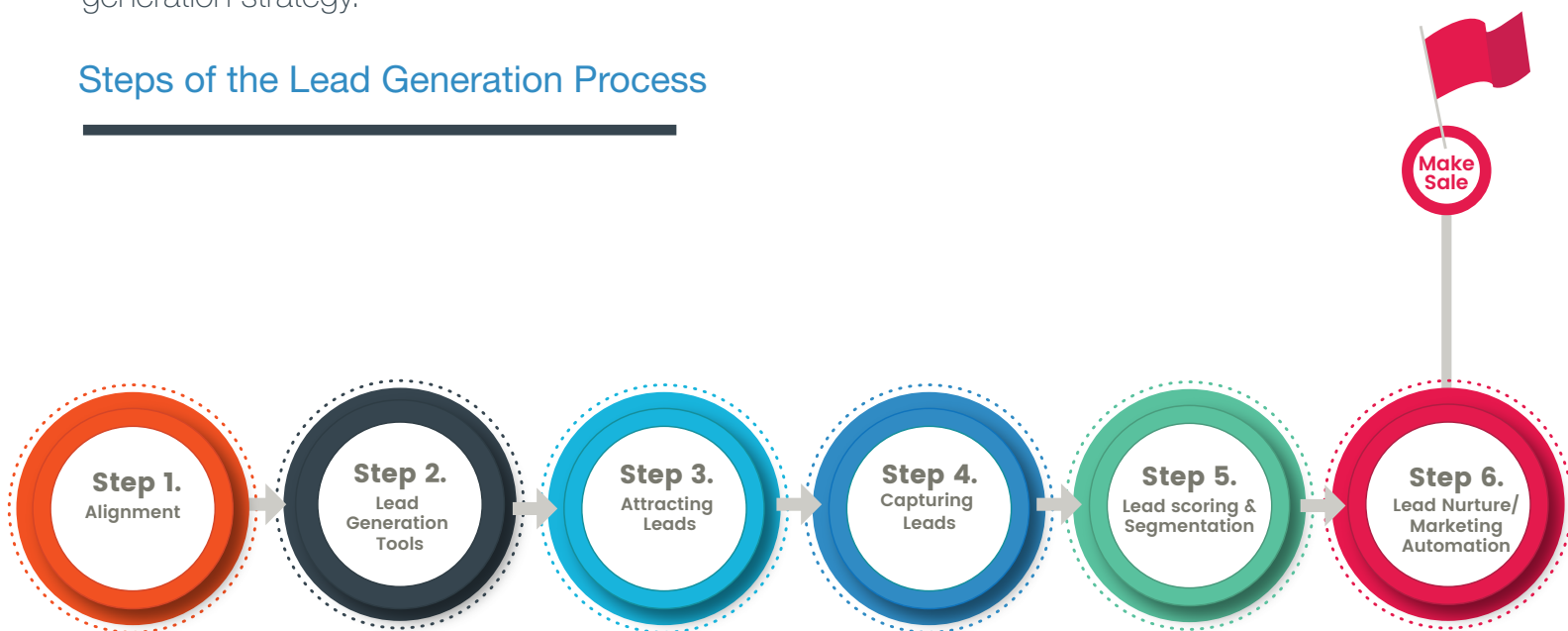
■ Determining Interest

At the very base level, determining a leads' potential interest in your product or service is the minimum for qualification. A deeper level of qualifying interest would be determining how much a lead is willing to spend on your product if there are any restrictions in place, and if they are a person with buying ability (applies when selling B2B products).

Another important aspect of this process to keep in mind is when qualifying actually happens. Typically, the initial qualification of leads occurs during cold calls, sales presentations, or both. The reason that some salespeople like to qualify during a cold call, is to gauge whether or not a follow-up conversation will be likely to yield any results.

4. The Lead Generation Process

What does the lead generation process look like? In this section, we'll go through each stage of the lead generation process and show you the best tactics for planning your own lead generation strategy.

Steps of the Lead Generation Process

Step 1. Alignment

Step 2. Lead Generation Tools

Step 3. Attracting Leads

Step 4. Capturing Leads

Step 5. Lead scoring & Segmentation

Step 6. Lead Nurture/ Marketing Automation

Make Sale

Alignment

As mentioned in the previous section, getting all departments involved in lead generation and sales to agree upon a definition is the first step to starting the lead generation process.

Without the shared consensus of what a lead or prospect means for your business, there's bound to be some confusion down the line when trying to evaluate leads or pass them on in the sales pipeline.

Lead Generation Tools

Once aligned on a definition, the proper lead generation tools need to be set up across your business. What do these tools look like? Chances are you already may be using them; these are the must-have tools you need to get:

- Email Marketing
- Marketing Automation
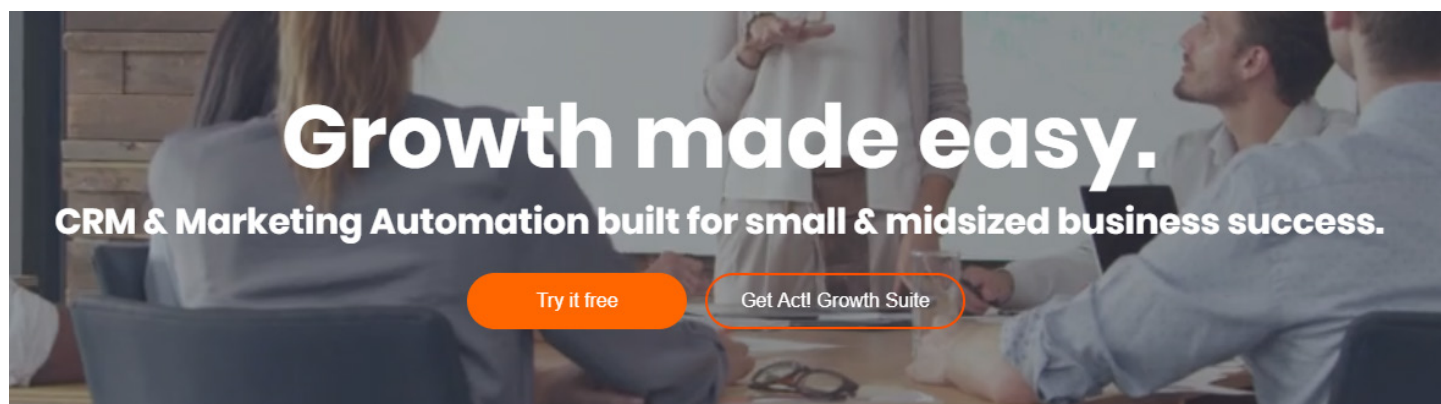- CRM (customer relationship management) Integration

All of the above tools are great for lead generation, as the customers who you would be using email marketing and CRM's to engage with, typically already know about your product or business, even if they haven't turned into a customer just yet.

Making sure all of these channels are set up properly is a key component to actually begin to generate leads as you push out email campaigns, content, and more.

Attracting Leads

How are you going to attract possible leads to your website?
The answer lies in creating an irresistible offer that drives potential leads off your ad, blog post, or social media content and to your website, where they can be added to your funnel. This involves creating a CTA (Call to Action) that feeds off your lead's interests and needs and brings them to you.
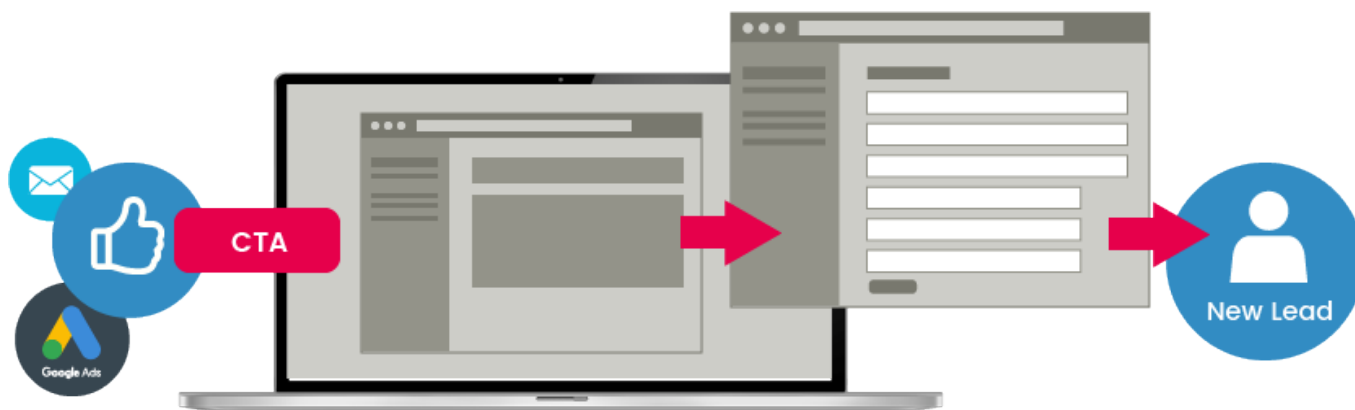
Lead Generation

How does a lead initially generate for your business? First, a visitor discovers your business through one of your established marketing channels, such as your social media platforms, website, blog post, or ad.

That visitor then clicks on your CTA which, described in the previous section, is what drives potential leads to your website or landing page, which is a business page designed to collect potential leads in exchange for an offer.

An offer is what is being proposed on the landing page that has value to the potential visitor. Examples of this are endless but can include E-books, case studies, guides, sign-ups to a free webinar, etc.

Next, your visitor will be taken to a form that collects your visitor's information. These types of forms are typically hosted on landing pages; however, they can be implemented into your main website with a simple button. Once a visitor fills out your form in exchange for the offer, congrats! You have a new lead.

Lead Scoring and Segmentation

Lead scoring is a method used by both marketers and salespeople for ranking leads to determine their readiness for the sales pipeline. Scoring leads is based off a few different factors.

The first being how much interest a lead has expressed in your product or service. Leads who have expressed little to no interest upon initial communication won't be qualified as sales-ready. Next is their current position in the buying cycle, and their fit with your business. If a lead doesn't have the buying power necessary to actually make the purchase, or if their needs/interests don't match your established criteria, they would not be high scoring leads.

Lead scoring helps marketers know whether their leads are ready to be pushed into the sales pipeline, or if they need more time to nurture and develop into stronger prospects. This methodology not only helps effectively drive more ROI (return on investment) in your marketing efforts but also helps to better align your sales and marketing teams.

Lead Nurturing

Lead nurturing is the process of developing relationships with potential buyers when they are not sales ready yet. On average, 50% of inbound leads are not ready to buy yet.

If, after scoring a lead, it's determined that it is a fit for your business, but there is not enough interest yet in your product, then that lead needs to be nurtured.

Leads can be nurtured through several tactics, such as segmented content marketing, automated marketing through email, and social media platforms.

Part 2: Lead Generation Tactics

In this section, we'll be covering all of the most effective lead generation tactics in detail, along with how to decide which will be the best fit for your individual businesses' needs.
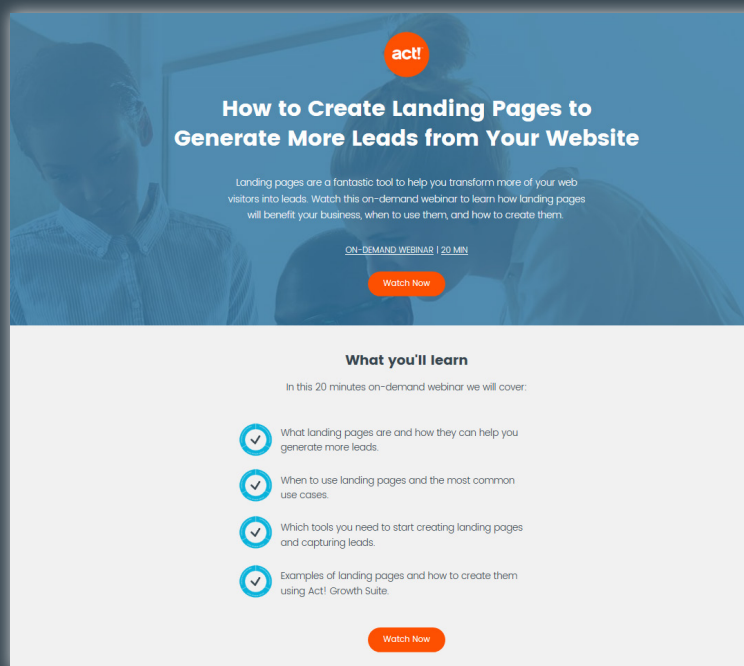
1. Landing Pages

In the previous section, we briefly mentioned an example of how a landing page could help you collect a lead. Now, we're going to go more in-depth into landing pages; what they are, why they're important to lead generation, what elements to include while building yours, and optimizing them for conversions.

Landing pages are any web page that a visitor "lands" on after clicking on a Call to Action. This could be from anywhere such as an email, PPC ad (pay-per-click ad), social media, or blog post. Landing pages are important to lead generation since they give you a channel to capture a user's information through offering something valuable enough for a visitor to exchange their information for.

Creating a Landing Page Built for Conversions

Creating a well-designed landing page is one thing… creating one that converts consistently is another. Below are tips that you can implement today and start to see higher conversion rates.

- A killer headline
- Descriptive subtitles
- Striking visual imagery
- A perfectly clear offer (value exchange)
- Give a "paint point" (Something the visitor will lose from not taking action)
- Clear contact form for lead collection

2. Content Marketing

This section will outline the different ways that businesses can use content marketing to generate leads.
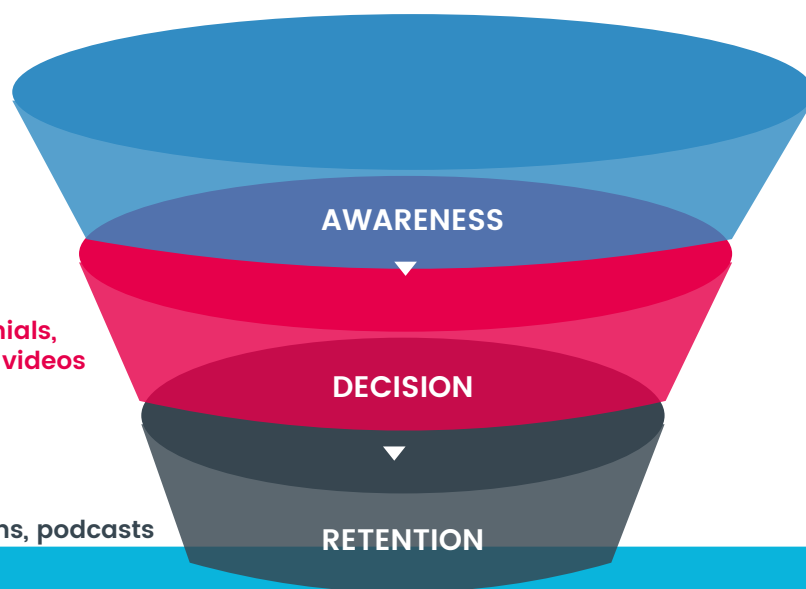
Content marketing is the foundation of lead generation as it's the fuel to all your marketing campaigns from email to social media. Creating good content is essential to building your audience's trust, and will go a long way in bringing in more leads and prospects.

In order for your content to actually strike a chord with your audience, you'll need to know what your audience is looking for. This is where industry research and buyer personas come into play.

Put yourself in the shoes of your target customer and create a persona based on everything that person might be interested in, what they search for, what communities they're apart of, etc. It can also be helpful to do research on your competitors to see which types of their content are performing best, to better tailor your own content to your audience's interests.

Additionally, different types of content work best for different stages of the lead generation funnel. For example, general blog posts might get your foot in the door with potential leads, while more customized content such as downloadable guides on your landing page will seal the deal. This is important to think about when planning to integrate your content marketing strategy, with your lead generation strategy.

- **Blogs posts, email marketing campaigns, white papers, research papers, guides, social media content, infographics, educational webinars, checklists**

- **Case studies, reviews testimonials, product webinars and demos, videos**

- **Blog posts, upselling and nurturing email campaigns, podcasts**

AWARENESS

DECISION

RETENTION

3. Social Media Marketing

Before discussing the ways social media can be used for lead generation, let's first touch on what it means to have a strong social presence, and what that looks like.

Social Media Marketing and Content Marketing go hand in hand, as you really can't have one without the other. Good content is what fuels your social media platforms, whether it be digital art, professional photo or videos, infographics, or more.

When assessing your current social media efforts, the one most important thing to look for is consistency. While you want to be publishing different types of content on different platforms (Ex: informational videos on YouTube, promotional videos on Instagram), it's crucial that your brand messaging and CTA's are consistent across each of your platforms. Therefore, whatever platform your target customer is on, you'll already be there, ready to convert them into a potential lead.

In regards to lead generation, social media has also proven to be a very effective method, as it allows you to communicate directly with your target customers with little to no barrier. There are countless ways to collect leads from social media, some of the more popular and effective methods include monitoring and listening to keywords posted, running giveaways and contests through social platforms, and offering freebies or special gifts to existing followers.

All of the above methods and more are aligned to the goal of driving traffic and "followers" from your businesses' social media platforms to your landing page or website, where followers can turn into legitimate leads and long-term customers.

In addition to popular social media platforms like Instagram®, Facebook®, and Twitter® that are great marketing channels for B2C businesses, LinkedIn® offers a similarly effective social media solution for B2B businesses.

LinkedIn® is an extremely powerful lead generation platform as it allows you to qualify leads on the spot, by looking at their profile or messaging them. You can easily segment your audiences that are brought in via the short form blog content that is standard on LinkedIn®. Additionally, the ability to speak directly with the people that have ultimate buying power saves you both time and money through the lead generation process.

4. Email Marketing

Here, we will discuss the power of email marketing and how to effectively leverage email campaigns to boost lead gen.

Email marketing is effective for lead generation, as it's directly reaching the people who are already familiar with your business and offers.

It's a much easier sell to get them to complete a call to action since they've previously opted into your mailing list, showing initial interest and a want/need in your product or service. These days, the typical consumer's inbox tends to be very cluttered. To be heard through the email clutter, it's necessary to craft CTAs that have a compelling copy and an eye-catching design to grab your subscriber's attention and give them a reason to take action right then and there.

In order to most effectively run email marketing campaigns, best practices include crafting personalized emails that are addressed directly to each subscriber, weekly newsletters that provide value not just filler content, exclusive offers that aren't found on your website or social media platforms.

In regards to optimizing email marketing for lead generation, the secret is in the details. Pay extra attention to the user behavior of your email campaigns, which can be seen through industry standard tools like Act! Marketing Automation. Utilizing tools like Act! will allow you to optimize the life cycles of potential leads (email subscribers) through automated drip or mass email campaigns, all with customized CTA's.

Additionally, observe which subject lines are delivering the most open rates, see what types of linkable content in your emails are driving the most clicks, then double down on the results that are working best. Like all marketing channels, email marketing is one that is constantly evolving and needs consistent experimentation and monitoring in order to be most effective, especially as part of a larger lead gen strategy.

5. SEO and Website Conversion Optimization

In this section, we'll be focusing on optimizing your existing websites for conversion, as well as how to integrate SEO (Search Engine Optimization) as part of your lead generation strategy.

Regardless of your search rankings, chances are you're still getting monthly traffic driven to your website from search engines like Google. However, how much more conversions could you be receiving if you optimized your traffic?

By placing strategic opt-in forms throughout your website, tied to value offers (think the same strategy as landing pages), the traffic your website is receiving will be 10x as valuable. What will ultimately drive people to follow through with opt-in forms (AKA become leads), is a captivating call to action. Like all the other Call to Actions we've referenced in this guide, CTA's on your website need to be striking, clear, and concise.

What exactly are you offering your visitor and how does it solve their specific problem that they're on your website for. Additionally, make the CTA's visible and visually appealing somewhere on your website where you typically get the most eyeballs (this could be the header area, the bottom near contact information, or spread throughout on various pages). It's important to experiment with different CTA's and placements to determine what is yielding the most lead conversions.

An important note to keep in mind when writing copy and content for your website is writing for both SEO purposes and your audience. While it's important to include industry-related keywords and search terms in your content to rank high, you also want to avoid watering down your content for actual visitors that read it. It takes a balance of both strategies to be ultimately the most effective, and it is another method that needs to be consistently tweaked and monitored for best results.

6. Paid Search Ads

The last tactic we'll be discussing is paid search ads, and the best ways to utilize them for lead generation.

With Pay-per-Click (PPC) ads you pay for each click on your ad which is displayed on search engines like Google and other applicable websites.

On search engines, your ads show up as sponsored results on the top and side of the organic search terms. PPC ads are a great way of driving traffic to your latest content or service offerings.

PPC ads can be highly targeted so they have the potential to generate very high-quality leads. For high converting Search Ads, place a heavy emphasis on keyword phrases relevant to your established target audience. Basically, step into your customer's shoes, and think of the search terms that describe the problem they want to be solved, or need they want to be filled.

Part 3: Monitor and Optimize

This will be a short section where we'll be discussing how to effectively track and optimize your lead generation efforts.

1. Tracking Results

None of the hard work you put into your lead generation efforts will be worth it if you're not consistently reviewing and finding ways to improve. It's completely okay to not have perfect results at first, as you'll only be able to learn and grow from the experience.
After your first month of integrating a lead generation strategy, it's important to sit down with everyone involved and spend time reviewing all of the relevant information.

When reviewing sales analytics after lead generation, maybe you'll realize that the leads weren't fully developed enough before passing them onto sales.

Maybe the content that you've been publishing across your marketing channels haven't been converting clicks back to your landing page or website.

Or maybe not enough visitors are finding your offers valuable enough to exchange their information for.

There's bound to be small problems and improvements to be made, especially after your first lead generation campaign, and it's nothing to worry about. Everything that involves lead generation can be optimized and improved, it's all about finding what works best for your business.

In regards to actually tracking and managing leads, it's important to keep tabs on all platforms that leads may be coming through.

2. Opt-in Forms

The easiest leads to track and follow up with, are the ones that come in through opt-in forms on your landing page or website. Depending on the form management tool you're using, it's relatively simple to keep track of the leads that come directly in, and where they're being led from.

3. Social Monitoring

Chances are, you're being talked about somewhere on Social Media. By not tracking or following up with conversations that involve your business, you're missing out on high-quality leads. The easiest way to track social leads is by using a social media monitoring tool that will actively listen for keywords (such as your business name or product) and will alert you whenever it's mentioned. Due to the high accessibility of communication via DM's, it's easy to answer basic questions about your brand instantly and track leads that way.

4. Email Marketing

Like most other marketing channels, the easiest way to track the efficiency of an email marketing campaign is to track the clicks on your CTA that bring leads further into your sales funnel. You'll be able to see which CTA's are working, which aren't producing results, and which need slight tweaks.

5. Optimization for ROI

Successful lead generation campaigns don't end with funnel conversions—they end with sales. When reviewing and tweaking your lead generation strategy, it's important to be optimizing with ROI in mind, not Cost Per Action. This applies to not just paid ads, but content efforts, email campaigns, and virtually all other marketing channels that will be driving traffic back to your offers.

Lead Generation strategies are never finished… As you dive into this marketing journey, you'll learn more about your target customers, your internal sales process, which of your platforms work the best, and more. It's crucial to constantly be keeping tabs on what is and what's not working, to maximize your efforts on all fronts.

Conclusion

If you've made it this far, pat yourself on the back for taking a serious look into your lead generation strategy. Whether you're starting from scratch, or have been tinkering with campaigns, you now know more about the fundamentals of running and optimizing lead generation campaigns **that work**.

Everything mentioned in this guide was broken down from a very top level view. To go in detail about every lead generation tactic and method would require hundreds of more pages that honestly aren't necessary to get started generating more high-quality leads for your business. As a business owner or marketer, the best thing you can do for your business's leads is to follow the outline in this guide, keep creating killer offers, refine your CTA's, landing pages, forms and promote them via your highest performing marketing channels. Keep your sales and marketing teams in close contact, as things can get messy when internal communication is lost.

Last but definitely not least, never stop testing. The best part about online marketing, and lead generation specifically, is that you can always do better. It's all about finding the perfect recipe for success, then continuously tweaking and adding to it.

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