

# WHITEPAPER

## GUIDE TO LEAD NURTURING

By: ActiveConversion

## Introduction

Industry surveys indicate that only 10 to 25 percent of all leads are sales-ready, meaning prospects are interested and ready to buy. A similar percentage of leads are not qualified at all. This means 50 to 80 percent of all leads generated are potentially wasted if no appropriate action is taken.

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Typically, prospects begin to research potential vendors online long before they buy. Prospects may be interested in your product or service, but they are in the early stages of their investigation. Obliging your sales reps to engage these leads before they are ready can be costly. Sales reps are most productive when they can spend more time closing sales instead of spending time qualifying. Hot leads close in 30 days or less but not all leads fall into this category.

Lead nurturing is the process of communicating with prospects who are not yet ready to buy. A lead nurturing program must identify a prospect's position in the sales cycle and transition that prospect through the cycle with timely and relevant information.

## Why is Lead Nurturing Important?

B2B marketers recognize that lead nurturing is not new. However, before marketing automation solutions emerged, it was a costly activity that fell in the divide between the sales and marketing functions.

More often than not, it was an activity that simply fell through the cracks and wasted leads. Marketing automation solutions like ActiveConversion automate this process and reduce the cost while providing valuable metrics. A significant function introduced with these systems is the capability to alert the appropriate sales rep at the moment any lead becomes sales-ready. In addition, since a marketing automation solution is a system with continuous feedback, it can evolve and realize adjustments as more and more data is gathered.

**Imagine if you successfully convert just one out of every five of those remaining leads. That's like doubling the number of sales-ready leads overall.**

With modern marketing automation solutions like ActiveConversion, today's B2B marketers can realize outstanding return on investment. Imagine if 15 percent of your leads are sales-ready and another 10 percent are unqualified. That leaves 75 percent of your leads that could be nurtured into sales-ready status. Now imagine if you successfully convert just one out of every five of those remaining leads. That's like doubling the number of sales-ready leads overall.

Another way of looking at it, that's the functional equivalent of doubling your raw website traffic. The ROI of implementing lead nurturing compares very favorably when compared to other online marketing investments.

## How to Nurture Leads

Lead Nurturing is about communicating and keeping your company top of mind with the prospect. Content is critical. Your content must be engaging, relevant and informative while subtly reinforcing your marketing messaging. It's not about bombarding prospects with warmed-over product briefs.

Your lead nurturing content should be guided by three principles:

# 1

**Develop trust through credibility.** Your goal is to become a valued advisor who can help prospects solve business problems and achieve goals. Communications should have a consultative tone and generously offer useful information that will help prospects do their jobs better. In the mind of your prospects, this will enhance your reputation

# 2

**Target each of your market segments.** Prospects are more engaged when content is relevant to their own business issues. Each nurturing track should have its own tailored content. Good lead nurturing is essentially an extension of good marketing.

# 3

**Nurture your prospects** according to the stage they are in the cycle. In the first stage, you must reinforce the notion that the prospect needs your product or service. In the second stage, the prospect buys into the need but requires more detailed information. In the third stage, the prospect usually chooses a short-list of vendors. After that stage the prospect is usually prepared to engage the vendors' salespeople.

Now you're ready to develop content such as whitepapers, eBooks, how-to's, videos, demos, product tours, case studies and webinars.

A white paper is an authoritative report or guide that examines problems and possible solutions. White papers are used to educate prospects and- help them solve problems. For prospects that are in the first stage of their investigation, this is the starting point.

As your prospect moves into the second stage they will require more detailed information about your product or service. How-to's, eBooks, videos, demos, product tours, case studies and webinars will appeal to those prospects in this stage.

## **The foundation of lead nurturing is a series of communications that contain invitations to access more information.**

The foundation of lead nurturing is a series of communications that contain invitations to access more information. By offering content that elicits an action (such as visiting a web page, downloading a document or replying to email), you will receive valuable feedback on the status of the lead. In the third stage of the cycle the lead is approaching sales- ready status. Much of what you know about the lead will be encapsulated in the lead score.

Before examining lead scoring in more detail it is worth noting that smart B2B marketers can include blogging in their lead nurturing process. Prospects can increase their lead score by reading a blog post in the same way they increase their lead score by clicking through on a link or downloading a white paper.

## How Lead Scoring Works

The same lead scoring system that presented your lead to the nurturing system must seamlessly continue to score the lead as they are nurtured. With each online encounter, the system will assign a new lead score for that prospect. It then compares the lead's cumulative score to a predefined threshold. Leads that exceed the threshold are "sales-ready" and sent to sales. The threshold is set according to business rules developed through collaboration between sales and marketing. A how-to on Lead Scoring can be found at [www.activeconversion.com](http://www.activeconversion.com).

**That's why it is important that your marketing automation solution automatically and continuously scores prospects according to their online behavior.**

For some B2B marketers, lead nurturing is synonymous with an email drip campaign. However, to be successful, any lead nurturing system must be bidirectional. It may be obvious that you must communicate with your prospects but it is equally important that your prospects communicate with you. While prospects can communicate with you explicitly by responding to a question they can also communicate with you implicitly with their online behavior. That's why it is important that your marketing automation solution automatically and continuously scores prospects according to their online behavior.

Your communications should always contain an invitation to increase lead score. That means offering content that elicits an action (click-through, download) that will be an indication of where the prospect is in the cycle.

## Conclusion

With lead nurturing B2B marketers can realize significant benefits. Leads that are not sales-ready are not lost and significant online lead generation effort is not wasted. Automation of lead nurturing increases the ROI of all online marketing activities. Moreover, the ROI of lead nurturing itself compares very favorably when compared to other online marketing investments.

Content is critical to the success of any lead nurturing program. Communicating with consultative tone increases credibility. This in turn leads to thought leadership and ultimately trust.

Prospects are more engaged when content is relevant to their own business problems. A superior lead nurturing configuration has tailored nurturing tracks with customized content for each segment.

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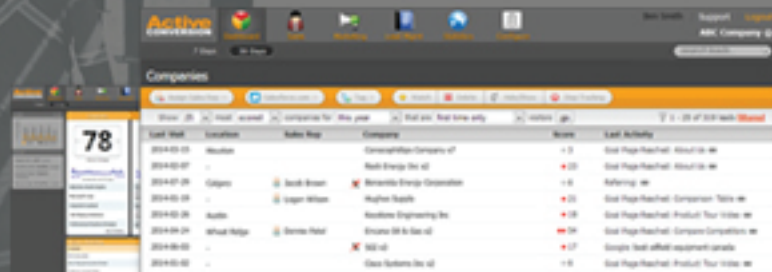
Prospects' information requirements vary according to the stage they are in the cycle. The type and frequency of communications should account for each of three distinct stages.

All communications with prospects should contain an invitation to increase their lead score. By offering content that elicits an action (click-through, download) and automatically scoring that action, a lead nurturing system can determine when that lead is sales-ready.

A marketing automation solution like ActiveConversion incorporates a scalable, low-cost information exchange that nurtures leads until they are sales-ready. A key component is the capability to alert the appropriate sales rep at the precise moment any lead becomes sales-ready.

## A RESULTS-DRIVEN SALES AND MARKETING SYSTEM

UNIQUELY ENGINEERED  
FOR YOUR INDUSTRY



Lead	Location	Subs. Rep.	Company	Score	Last Activity
2014-01-01	Houston		ConceptWorx Company of	-1.0	Get Page Reached: About Us de
2014-01-01			Next Energy (Inc) d	+2.0	Get Page Reached: About Us de
2014-01-28	Chicago	Jack Brown	Shenandoah Energy Generation	-1.6	Referring: de
2014-01-28		Logan Wilson	Wagner Supply	+2.0	Get Page Reached: Comparison: "Site de
2014-01-28	Austin		Rockwell Engineering Inc	+2.0	Get Page Reached: Product: "Your Video de
2014-01-21	Wheat Ridge	Shirley Reed	Shenandoah Energy Generation	+2.0	Get Page Reached: Comparison: "Site de
2014-01-01			MSI d	+2.7	Simple: "Get off! equipment Canada de
2014-01-01			Case Systems (Inc) d	-1.6	Get Page Reached: Product: "Your Video de

### About ActiveConversion

ActiveConversion specializes in developing repeatable online sales and marketing systems for industrial companies. Our technology-based system employs best practices in online marketing and lead generation, and delivers measurable results to our customers. Since 2004, we have completed more than 500 successful projects to help companies succeed online. For more information, visit [activeconversion.com](http://activeconversion.com) or call 1-877-872-2ROI.