

Chapter 1

Beginning Your Lead Generation Journey

In This Chapter

- ▶ Getting started with lead generation
 - ▶ Understanding the changing landscape of the marketer and buyer
 - ▶ Amplifying your marketing with lead generation
 - ▶ Forming a complete lead generation strategy
-

According to Google chairman Eric Schmidt, “There was 5 exabytes of information created between the dawn of civilization and 2003, but that much information is now created every two days, and the pace is rapidly increasing.” It’s incredible to think about the amount of information that your customers and prospects are seeing each and every day.

In fact, SuperProfile states that “on any given day, the average customer will be exposed to 2,904 media messages, will pay attention to 52, and will positively remember 4.” The buying process has drastically changed too. No longer are buyers relying on Joe the local car salesman to help them make a decision. Instead they are doing their own research and educating themselves throughout the buying process: Think review sites, social channels, Google, and more. By the time a buyer walks into your business, she is armed with information and likely has already made a decision.

What’s more, buyer expectations are much higher. If I get back to my desk at work and discover that Chipotle has messed up my order, I don’t hesitate to send them a tweet to let them know. You would be surprised how quickly they respond. And if they don’t, I send them another tweet to let them know I am disappointed at their lack of response. As a company, you need to learn to build trust and create relationships with your buyers. If you break that trust, your buyers won’t come back. Or worse, they will tell everyone about their bad experience.

All of these factors put marketers in a complicated situation. How do you find these leads, break through the noise, and create relationships? How do you make sure *your* messages are heard and resonate with your audience? And how can you help your customers educate themselves through the buying process so that they ultimately choose you and your company? It's a lot to think about!

Lead generation is your answer. *Lead generation* describes the marketing process of engaging and capturing interest in a product or service for the purpose of developing a sales pipeline and ultimately gaining new customers.

Lead generation has become an increasingly popular strategy to create demand and help your marketing messages be heard across multiple different channels. Lead generation helps your company increase brand awareness, build relationships, drive more qualified leads into your sales funnel, and ultimately close deals. Sounds pretty great, right?

In this chapter I cover how lead generation can help your business grow by enabling you to find more leads, enhance prospect relationships, maximize your marketing spend, and ultimately, be a more strategic marketer. Plus, I go into detail on the ways lead generation connects with various marketing channels and strategies (some that you might be using today, and others that you might not have tried yet).

Growing Your Business

Whether you are a small five-person technology company just starting out, or a huge multibillion-dollar enterprise corporation, you want your business to grow. A lot. And as a marketer, you might be finding that it isn't enough anymore to purchase an ad in a print magazine, buy a list of leads, and have your sales teams sit in a room and call on a bunch of cold prospects. In today's multichannel world of mobile devices and social media, you need to do more than cold call to close a sale. Plus, having your sales teams call leads that are never going to buy is a huge waste of time and money.

Marketing has changed. In order to grow your business, you need to reach your buyers through many different marketing channels, such as social media, search engines, your website, events, and more. And by creating a well-thought-out lead generation strategy that maps to business priorities, you can effectively grow your business by generating more leads for your sales teams to call. The beauty of lead generation is that it covers a lot of ground if you incorporate multiple channels into your strategy.

And not only are you generating *more* leads, but you're generating *better* leads. By better leads, I mean warmer leads. What are *warm* leads? They are potential customers who are very close to purchasing by the time they reach your sales teams — which means happier sales executives, happier marketers, and more customers.

But how are you going to grow your business through lead generation? Stay tuned.

Finding more leads

Let me take a step back and talk about finding leads. Every business could use *more* leads. More leads mean more potential customers ready to buy your product or service. Finding an abundance of leads is hard — really hard. And it has become even harder and more complex due to the changing nature of the Internet and the rapid pace at which today's businesses are expected to grow.

Marketers of yore tried to generate leads through many outbound (and often aggressive tactics) such as cold calling, batch and blast email tactics, trade-shows, print and radio advertising, and list purchasing. Although outbound techniques certainly have their place and are indeed part of a well-rounded lead generation strategy (as I discuss later in this book), used alone, they can be a turnoff to many of today's buyers.

Modern marketers also need to employ tactics like social media, content marketing, SEO, and similar strategies to generate more (and warmer) leads for their sales teams.

In fact, the marketing team at Marketo (a leading marketing automation software provider that also happens to be my employer) generates about 80 percent of their sales pipeline. That's pretty impressive and certainly a stat that many companies aspire to. The marketing machine generates enough leads that the sales teams can focus more on selling and less on prospecting. To grow your business, this is what you want to do, and where lead generation can really make an impact.

Enhancing prospect relationships

Even more important than generating a ton of leads is generating a ton of *qualified* leads that are interested enough in your product or service that they could potentially become customers. Generating leads like they are going out of style won't matter if they are bad leads, so take care. As I mentioned

earlier, today's buyer self-educates. And because of the open nature of the Internet, he has high expectations for customer service. Additionally, today's buyer values relationships and trust, and likes to interact with brands on a more personal level through social channels such as Facebook and Twitter. He wants to be spoken *with*, not spoken *at*.

Companies today need to focus on creating relationships with leads so that when a buyer is ready to purchase, your company is top-of-mind. This is done through engaging leads with educational content, being active on social channels to develop a following, face-to-face interactions at events, and other relationship-building lead generation tactics.

Remember, the days of the faceless corporation are over. Your buyers want to engage with you as they would engage with a friend. Consumer companies like Coca-Cola, Nike, and Apple do a great job creating relationships with customers through storytelling, great branding, and creative lead generation tactics. Appealing to your buyer creates brand ambassadors, ultimately helping you grow your company and generate more high-quality leads.

Maximizing your spending

Lead generation enables you to maximize your spending as a marketer and ultimately gain greater credibility within an organization. Marketing has been increasingly pressured to produce metrics and be accountable for a budget, and is often scrutinized for wasting expensive sales resources calling on bad leads that are not qualified in any way. Because lead generation provides you with the framework for measurable campaigns, return on investment (ROI) becomes easier to report on.

Lead generation helps you focus on program ROI, evaluate leads to determine sales-readiness, and nurture leads that are not quite yet ready to buy. By being focused and strategic with your lead generation strategy, you can truly begin to maximize your marketing spending while making sure you are focusing on sending qualified leads to sales.

Additionally, tactics like social media, blogging, content marketing, your website, and SEO give you a huge bang for your buck. Instead of renting attention, as you would in paid programs, you are owning your own attention. What is the difference? Well, *renting attention* is paying someone to borrow their audience — like an event or a paid ad. *Owning attention* is the ability to develop your *own* following through content marketing and social media. And when you combine these techniques with paid programs such as events, email marketing, and inside sales, you can truly maximize your spending.

Being more strategic

Creating an integrated lead generation strategy for your business enables you to capture and nurture leads in a more strategic way. Many companies lack a lead acquisition *strategy*. Marketing managers may place a few ads, start a Facebook page, or create a three-page ebook, but they think of lead generation as a tactical part of marketing. Instead, you need to think of lead generation holistically and strategically in order for it to be effective. Integrate many facets of your marketing department including events, email marketing, social media, paid programs, lead nurturing, and sales to thematically concentrate and maximize your overall efforts.

Tying It All Together

Lead generation strategy is a combination of many different tactics that are interconnected to create a multichannel plan of attack. To be successful and grow your business, you can't just focus on one tactic and ignore the rest. Budget is always a concern, so do what you can and be strategic in what you choose to focus on. But not doing that one webinar per year or creating a half-baked Facebook page and forgetting about it immediately aren't going to yield the results you are looking for.

This book takes an in-depth look at all of the different lead generation tactics you can employ for success, but before you embark on a journey towards lead generation awesomeness, it makes sense to get a lay of the land. What types of marketing channels exist and how do they relate to lead generation specifically? Read on.

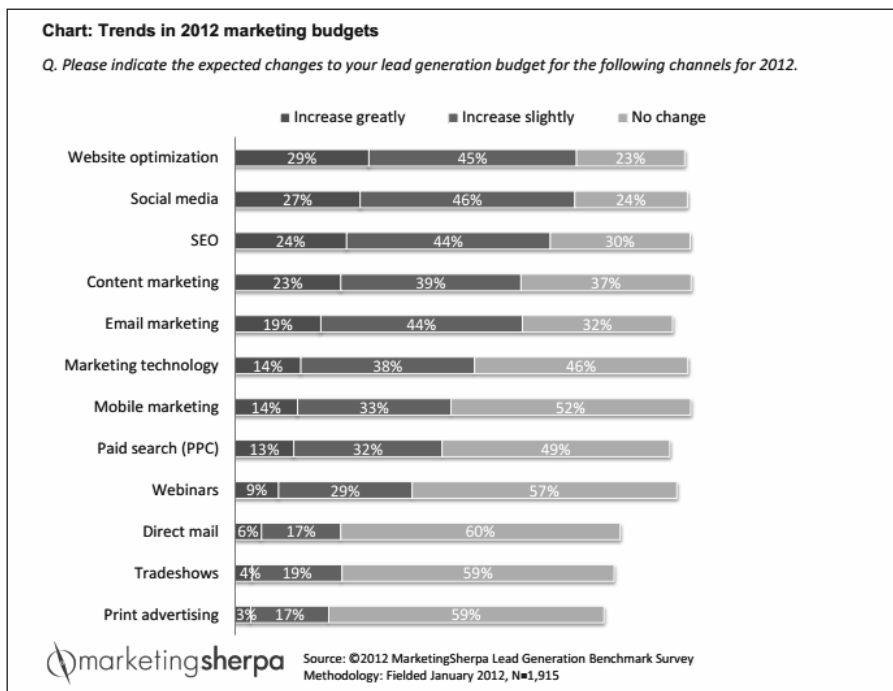
Inbound marketing

According to Jon Miller, VP and cofounder of Marketo, *inbound marketing* is “the process of helping customers find your company — often before they are even looking to make a purchase — and then turning that early awareness into brand preference and, ultimately, into leads and revenue.” Inbound marketing is a critical component to lead generation.

Why is inbound marketing important? According to Forrester Research, buyers seek out three pieces of content about a vendor for every one piece sent by a marketer, and for every one piece sent by sales. Therefore, you need to make sure those three pieces of content are from your company.

Inbound marketing tactics such as content marketing, social media, SEO, and website optimization are truly leading the pack when it comes to where marketers are spending their lead generation budgets, as you can see in Figure 1-1.

Figure 1-1:
A
Marketing-
Sherpa lead
generation
benchmark
survey for
2012.



Content marketing

Content, which often takes the form of an ebook, video, infographic, or slide deck, is the fuel for most (if not all) of your lead generation campaigns. No matter what channel you choose — whether it's your website, blog, or email marketing — you need a high-value offer to pique the interest of your lead. Quality content that shows a true understanding of the lead's business challenges is the perfect way to grab the customer's attention, begin building that needed brand awareness, and entice her to fill out a form at the same time.

Website

Your website is where you want to drive all of your lead generation efforts. It is your home base and where a lead can find everything he needs to know about your company. Your website is also where you house your contact

information for leads that you want to contact you right away, and where you can attempt to capture lead information through forms. If it's done well, your website can really show your personality and attract the attention of your prospects.

Blog

Your company blog is where you get a chance to inject your personality and build credibility as the thought leader in your space. By leveraging subject matter experts from within your organization, your blog can be a destination spot for potential customers looking for best practices in your industry. Your blog is also a great place to capture lead information by prompting them to subscribe to an RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feed or engaging with them through the comment feature of your blog. Be careful though. If you have no subject matter experts on your team, don't try to fake it with a bunch of buzzwords. Instead, work to train them on becoming experts and encourage them to follow industry blogs and their own research. Remember, it's about establishing your company's expertise in the space.

Social media

Social media is a great platform for you to share your voice and spread the word. There are many channels to choose from, like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Google+, and each one enables your business to build an organic following and attract brand ambassadors. Social channels are a great place to share your content, blogs, and other product or service-specific information, while also adding your brand's personality to the tone of the message. Paid advertising on social channels enables you to collect lead information and get your message seen by many, based on specific targeting criteria.

Search engine optimization

SEO (search engine optimization) plays a crucial role in attracting potential leads to your website through organic searches on search engines such as Google, Yahoo!, and Bing. By choosing to set up business-specific keywords, you can optimize and build your website so that when a lead searches for one of your keywords on a search engine, your website pops up on the first few pages of Google. This may help a lead find your company, but as I stated previously, you've got to present her with knowledgeable content in order for that visitor to go deeper into your website and keep coming back.

Outbound marketing

Although inbound marketing is getting a lot of buzz, the key to successful lead generation is a well-rounded marketing mix. This includes both inbound and outbound techniques. Through outbound marketing programs, you actively go out to find your customers, often via paid channels. Another distinction to make is that inbound marketing works for broad lead generation activities, but outbound is good to amplify your inbound efforts and target specific opportunities. And in many cases, outbound techniques can have that “wow” factor to make your company stand out since these strategies are often highly targeted with an obvious call-to-action. As a result, good outbound marketing can lead someone down your sales funnel, as discussed in more detail in the next chapter, at a faster rate, assuming he is a good lead.

PPC (pay-per-click) advertising

By paying to advertise on search engines such as Google, Yahoo!, and Bing, your message can be seen by leads searching for keywords specific to your business. Pay-per-click (PPC) ads show up on the side and top of the organic search results and use targeted ad copy to tempt leads to click a high-value offer such as a content piece that relates directly to a search term. PPC ads also take the form of banner advertising on many websites and can be found on social channels such as LinkedIn.

Content syndication

Content is the fuel for your lead generation efforts. But it's not enough to merely put content on your own website: You also want to make sure it is seen by thousands (or millions) of potential leads. Content syndication can take the form of both paid efforts, selecting websites that will host your content, and nonpaid efforts, like writing a guest blog post on an industry association's website, or sharing your content through RSS feeds and social media. Many content syndicators require that leads fill out a form asking for contact information such as email addresses, address, company, and so on, adding more qualified leads to the database.

Direct mail

Although there are many views on the effectiveness of direct mail, when combined with the other efforts listed here, direct mail can be a highly effective way to reach and engage your target audience. By focusing on sending creative and targeted communications, you can grab the attention of someone who has previously not responded to other lead generation efforts.

Event marketing

Event marketing is a fantastic way to generate leads, create lasting relationships, and engage with current customers for upsell and cross-sell opportunities. Events often take the form of webinars, conferences, tradeshow, or seminars and offer your company a chance to meet your leads face-to-face and form a lasting impression. This helps you cement relationships and top-of-mind when your lead is ready to make a purchase decision.

Inside sales

An important part of being successful with your lead generation efforts is the ability to turn marketing leads into sales pipeline. Your inside sales team can help you with this. Inside sales takes marketing-generated leads, calls and qualifies them, and then hands them off to an account executive or a more experienced sales person to close. The team is often considered part of the marketing function because without its help, marketing leads often don't get called and can dry up — you definitely don't want the fantastic leads you have worked so hard to generate sitting neglected in the dark.

Email marketing

Email marketing often uses leads already in your database or leads from a list. By creating emails to promote content pieces, events, new product launches, and so on, you can create additional buzz and demand for your company. Email marketing attracts leads to your website, blog, social channels, events, and webinars, making it a fantastic channel to move leads through your sales funnel.

Lead nurturing and lead scoring

Many marketers forget that lead generation is *not* finished after the lead has been acquired. Instead, it's just beginning. Many of the leads you have generated and brought into your database are not quite ready yet to buy. So through lead nurturing, systematically sending emails that move a lead closer to a purchase, you can help turn your lukewarm leads hot. And by assigning leads scores based on how closely they fit your buyer profile and where they are on their buyer journey, you know exactly when a lead needs to be sent to sales. You don't want a hot lead that is itching to make a purchase going cold because no one is calling him.

