

THE REBIRTH OF B2B LEADS




WHY B2B SALES NEED TO RETHINK LEAD NURTURE

The B2B buyer journey has fundamentally changed, and B2B communities have been increasingly panicked about it. With 70% of the buyer journey now complete before a prospect opts to engage with vendors, many have declared ‘the death of the B2B lead’. But research suggests this is mostly hype.

As we demonstrate in this report, B2B lead generation is alive and well - it simply has to adapt. 64% of sellers no longer expect C-suite buyers to fill out forms, but 87% of marketers are confident they can hit their marketing goals without traditional form-fills. Instead, sales teams will increasingly carve out their own unique approach to lead generation, scoring and nurture - and likely see better results as a result.

READ THE
REST OF THIS
REPORT TO
FIND OUT HOW

KEY TAKEAWAYS



1

B2B GENERATION IS ALIVE AND KICKING...

Claims that 'B2B lead generation is dead' are vastly overstated. In fact, 62% of sellers say leads will never become obsolete, and 17% of marketers say thought leaders have 'left them confused' about whether leads still matter.



2

...BUT A NEW APPROACH IS NEEDED

89% of marketers and sellers do believe that quality leads are now harder to come by though. Just 44% of MQLs pass through sales as a potential good fit, leading to a huge amount of waste.



3

SALES AND MARKETING MUST BE FULLY ALIGNED...

There is no longer a single 'handoff' point between marketing and sales. 83% of marketers and sellers find it difficult to engage the entire buying committee, meaning individual decision makers move through the funnel at different paces.



4

...AND EMPHASISE LEAD NURTURE, NOT LEAD GENERATION

The solution is to recalibrate both functions' approach to leads. Instead of pushing for great volume, they should focus on building relationships - and even recirculate 'dead' leads if they were once deemed a good fit.

WHY B2B LEADS STILL MATTER

THE 'DEATH' OF B2B LEADS IS JUST SEMANTICS

The majority of reports that claim B2B lead generation has come to an end are sensationalised. They typically argue that traditional form-filling is no longer as effective (which is true), but cannot credibly suggest marketing and sales no longer need 'leads'.

Instead, they tend to argue for a semantic distinction between traditional 'lead generation' and some new method. But this creates confusion. In fact, 17% of marketers recently said they were 'confused' by thought leaders talking about the 'death of the lead' - which cannot be a good sign.

A simple reality underlies all of this: **B2B brands will always need to connect with new prospects** - and whether we call that 'lead generation' or some other buzzworthy word salad is really besides the point.

A recent McKinsey report implores companies to "fix broken incentives by replacing marketing-qualified leads (MQLs) with measures of a customer's readiness to have a conversation, and combining marketing and sales forces to give the customer a frictionless experience."

This is great advice, and insisting on a new term for 'lead' only obscures the wisdom.

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WHY B2B LEADS STILL MATTER

THE FUNNEL WAS ALREADY BROKEN

Most B2B businesses operate within a relatively small market. There are only so many companies for whom your product or service is a good fit. Which means the standard marketing and sales funnel - built on an assumption of high volume lead generation and high churn - is flawed anyway.

Put simply, **the traditional approach to lead generation so many declare dead was already not fit-for-purpose**. It focused on quantity over quality; there are lots of reasons a person might fill in a form, and very few of them have anything to do with becoming your customer.

A NEW APPROACH WILL BETTER SERVE B2B SELLERS' REAL NEEDS, AND CAN EVEN LEAD TO A NEW AVENUE OF GROWTH.

RESURRECTING LOST LEADS

THE 'DEATH' OF B2B LEADS IS JUST SEMANTICS

Not only is the concept of 'leads' not dead - many individual leads that are considered lost can be revived with the right approach. **Given how hard quality leads are to come by, companies should be far more resistant to declaring them dead.**

There are good reasons to give up on leads, of course. With limited time and budget, sales teams are often laser focused on leads that hold the greater promise for imminent payoff. But this kind of short-termism may be the root of all of their problems, as it leads to a pushiness that is out of kilter with the new B2B buyer journey.

Customers everywhere describe suppliers as "too frantic" about trying to meet in person. Instead, they should focus on a more consultative - and much softer - approach to lead nurture which accepts that gains are made gradually - and buyers' situation and needs often change.

When that change occurs, a lead which previously appeared lost may be desperately seeking exactly what you offer. And those that have continued to nurture the relationship will be top of mind - and discover a whole new avenue of growth.

**THE REST OF THIS REPORT
WILL EXPLORE HOW SALES
AND MARKETING SHOULD
ALIGN TO ACHIEVE THAT
GOAL.**

FOUR ESSENTIAL ACTIONS



DEVELOP A NEW LEAD SCORING SYSTEM

The first step is to fix the disconnect between marketing and sales' attitude towards leads. A key problem is measurement: while marketing is often judged on a quantitative basis (how many leads they produce), sales teams are responsible for delivering on pipeline - which uses primarily qualitative metrics.

Fixing this requires a unified model for how prospects are generated, nurtured and turned into customers. Research finds that 60% of B2B sales reps are more likely to follow up on MQLs if the qualification criteria is agreed on in advance. But given how much the buyer journey has changed, care should be taken developing the right criteria.

There is no 'one-size-fits-all' prescription for this. Instead, each business should consult its historical data, its field reps and its marketing experts to determine the process that will lead to the highest quality (and volume) leads.

Organisations that prioritise sales and marketing alignment are nearly 3x more likely to exceed new customer acquisition targets.



2

QUALIFY COMPANIES, NOT INDIVIDUALS

One very credible critique levelled at traditional lead generation is that it doesn't account for group dynamics. While leads are generated and nurtured individually, buying decisions are made as a collective - with an average of 6.8 people involved in any high-valued B2B purchase.

This can obscure a sales team's capacity to estimate the likelihood of a sale. Marketing and sales must therefore work together to both reach more of the decision making group and pattern match company specifics to their previous buyers - to create a more accurate perspective on the quality of their leads.

Traditional email campaigns typically reach around 30% of the buyer group.



3

EXPAND LEAD YOUR NURTURE CAMPAIGNS

As buyer journeys become longer, more complex and less linear, nurture takes on greater importance. Leads are less likely to fill out forms, but they are far more likely to consume content - and prefer vendors that produce high-quality information.

Nurture has therefore grown in stature; it is no longer a transitional stage but an essential glue that holds the entire chaotic buyer journey together. Companies that are concerned about fewer form-fills or lead generation slowing down would be better off focused on expanding their nurture programs than trying to regain ground.

15% of B2B organisations don't include nurture in their marketing and sales process at all.



CHANGE ATTITUDES TOWARDS 'LOST' LEADS

Recalibrating your rating system presents the opportunity to rethink how 'lost' leads are treated. Companies fear wasting money or irritating uninterested buyers, but the potential revenue they lose by declaring leads dead too quickly should scare them more.

The solution is twofold. First, sales teams should develop a system for re-circulating and reviving lost leads. When a lead is declared dead, a plan should be put in place to dictate when and how the lead could be recontacted - based on their previous behaviour and needs.

Second, lead nurture campaigns should be extended to include these leads. Rather than seeing nurture as a way of moving prospects through a linear journey, it should be seen as an always-on function that ensures consistent contact with every lead you generate - even those that are deemed unlikely to buy.

B2B retargeting outperforms B2C by almost 150%.

NEED HELP REINVIGORATING YOUR B2B LEAD NURTURE AND LEAD GENERATION STRATEGY?

GET IN TOUCH TODAY FOR A NO-OBLIGATION CHAT
WE MAY JUST GIVE YOU THAT GOLDEN IDEA YOU'VE
BEEN LOOKING FOR.

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