

# TURNING LEADS INTO SALES

The Content Coms  
**9-Step Plan** for Sales Success



**CONTENT**  
communications  
associates limited

# The Content Coms 9-Step Plan for Sales Success

It's a familiar complaint: "marketing's all well and good, but I want sales!" Indeed, making the leap from marketing activity to actual sales has often been accompanied by an attitude of 'hold your breath and hope'. Well, hopefully that press release will lead to sales... well, hopefully that e-blast will do the trick...

'Hopefully' is hard to stomach, however. So it's little wonder that lead nurturing is growing in popularity as a way to bridge the gap between marketing and sales. Lead nurturing simply means taking a prospective buyer, whose details have been collected during the marketing process, and warming them up, until they're red hot and ready to buy.

But what does the lead nurturing - and the wider process of lead management - look like in practice? And how can you make sure your leads stay suitably warmed-up?

## 1 Identifying the lead

The first stage of the lead process is, quite obviously, getting the lead! Usually, when you get the details of a prospective customer, they are either passed straight to the sales team, or - be honest - left to gather electronic dust in a spreadsheet somewhere. Instead of doing this, however, think about nurturing that lead first, which begins with...

## 2 Gathering intelligence on the lead

'Gathering intelligence' might be as simple as asking a few pertinent questions. Where did the lead come from? What's their job role and other demographic information? How good is the data you have associated with the lead?

## 3 Understanding the lead

Once you've answered these types of questions, you'll be closer to actually understanding the person behind the lead. And, often, you'll be able to build up a profile of the lead, based on past experience.

It's likely that you only have a handful of customer 'types': customer groups that all have similar motivations and concerns. In order to really understand your leads, it may be necessary to take a step back and consider in depth what each type of customer is likely to be thinking.

We in the marketing business refer to this as 'defining customer personas'. It could involve brainstorming everything you know about each customer type - their level of awareness of the sector; what they're seeking to achieve; the 'pain points' that your product or service could help to solve; what their objections might be (and how you could overcome those objections). Knowledge is power and, the better you understand your lead, the better you'll be able to nudge them closer to a sale.

## 4 Scoring the lead

Based on what you've learned during stages 2-3, you'll be able to classify and prioritise your leads. Is the lead cold or warm? Is it ready to be passed to your sales teams yet? Scoring your leads - figuring out which ones are ready to go and which ones need more nurturing - ensures your sales teams don't waste time pursuing people who don't want to know.

## 5 Nurturing the lead

Here's the tricky part - you need to keep the lead warm, but if you push too hard, you'll risk alienating the person. After all, no one wants to be bombarded with salesy content that sounds like it came straight out of an infomercial. When making a sales pitch in person, the key is to be interesting and engaging - to make yourself genuinely worth listening to. The same applies to the lead nurturing process.

Giving your lead valuable content to read or download is a way to interest and engage the person behind the screen. What is 'valuable content', though? It could be what Facebook calls a thumbstopper - an article so interesting-looking it stops the person as they're scrolling through their smartphone. It could be a guide or an executive briefing that seeks to educate the reader about a particular scheme, initiative or piece of legislation.

A lead nurturing campaign may encompass many types of content - articles, briefing documents, blog posts, e-blasts, web videos and more - but what the content has in common is that it is all interesting, informative and tailored to the needs of your prospective customer.

Often called in-bound or **content marketing** activity, this kind of content is designed to demonstrate to your prospective customers that you understand their needs, which, in turn, propels them through the sales cycle.

## 6 The lead is passed to the sales team

Your prospective customer should emerge from the lead nurturing process a little more educated about your sector, a little more interested in your product or service, and a little more impressed by your company. Good content marketing builds trust in your brand.

Ideally, at this stage, your lead will have been so well nurtured that they will be on the edge of a decision. Therefore, it's time for the lead to land on your salesperson's desk. And everything that's come before should reduce the time and difficulty involved in turning the lead into a sale...

## 7 The lead becomes a customer

Get out the party poppers and novelty hats, because you've made a sale! But wait, this stage isn't the end of the lead management process...

## 8 Keeping the customer in the loop

A lead is still a lead, even after they become a customer. In fact, existing customers can be the warmest of all leads. They already know your company, they've bought from you before, so they're likely to buy from you again - but only if you keep the dialogue going.



Continue to nurture your customers as leads, and put in place a 'trigger' system, to be sure you keep in contact – a week, a month, a year after the initial sale – with e-based communication. If you continue to engage existing customers with interesting content, as per stage 5, you'll stay visible. This should strengthen your working relationship, making them more likely to become a repeat customer.

## 9 Turning happy customers into advocates

Always remember: a happy customer is your best salesperson, willing and able to advocate for your products and services. They will talk about their experience with your company across their own network – and this is your chance to tap into a completely new set of leads.

A happy-customer-turned-advocate is likely to 'share' your content (via email or on social media) with their associates – but only if they find that content interesting and informative. Making sure you produce valuable content on a regular basis once again plays a key role in the lead management process.

If they're nurtured in the right way, happy customers can be a significant source of new leads, which takes the whole cycle back to the beginning...

## Closing the loop

Lead management – including that crucial stage of lead nurturing – is often overlooked in marketing. And, inevitably, if you don't keep a lead warm, it's likely to go cold and never turn into a sale. Overwhelmingly, companies find that they're already doing parts of the lead management process, but there are gaps in the cycle.

When it comes to leads, you can either continue to hold your breath and hope – or you can try to fill those gaps and close the loop.

**Want to learn more about the content that goes into the lead nurturing process?**

**Read our take on the subject: [Content is king: the rise of Content Marketing](#)**



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