

# A B2B Marketer's Guide to Lead Generation and Nurture

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# INTRODUCTION

## A starting point: generating leads in a digital world

Lead generation is the backbone of any successful marketing strategy. It's essential. And B2B marketers know that inbound marketing builds businesses, and generates **three times more leads** per dollar spent than traditional methods (DemandMetric, 2019).



Yet, despite its obvious impact, [61% of marketers said generating traffic and leads is their top challenge](#). Plus, the current economic uncertainty may feel like a stumbling block, as fewer companies seem willing to seriously invest in marketing.

A 2020 marketing report by the [Influencer Marketing Hub](#) revealed that only 25% of companies in the United States will increase their spend for marketing endeavors in general. And a minority — just 41% — of the American businesses surveyed were willing to increase their ad spend.

Probably, your leads are more risk-averse than usual at present. But while many marketing budgets may face cuts, the digital landscape continues to grow.

We live in a world when the average person touches his or her smartphone more than 2,000 times. Every single day. And, according to [GlobalWebIndex](#), a market research company, this habit isn't going away. They report that, in 2020 so far, there has been a 21% leap in social media usage.

The takeaway? Now is an opportune time to address lead generation in the digital realm.

This whitepaper will provide marketing professionals with the best and most up-to-date lead generation practices to enhance conversion rate, improve campaign performance and boost the ROI of demand generation programs.

It will serve as a guide for all those navigating the murky waters of B2B lead generation in today's current climate — covering everything you should know to build long-lasting relationships with buyers, from best practices to lead scoring.

## **PART 1**

### Lead Generation

The most successful omnichannel campaigns center on implementing strategies that not only generate, but also nurture leads. With an omnichannel approach, companies have the opportunity to stay in front of potential clients longer, and engage with them along the sales funnel toward making a purchase.

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## Know your audience: targeting the right people

Understanding your audience is one of the most effective marketing tactics. In fact, [HubSpot](#) revealed that 90% of B2B marketers say the leading attribute of content marketing effectiveness is 'audience relevance'.

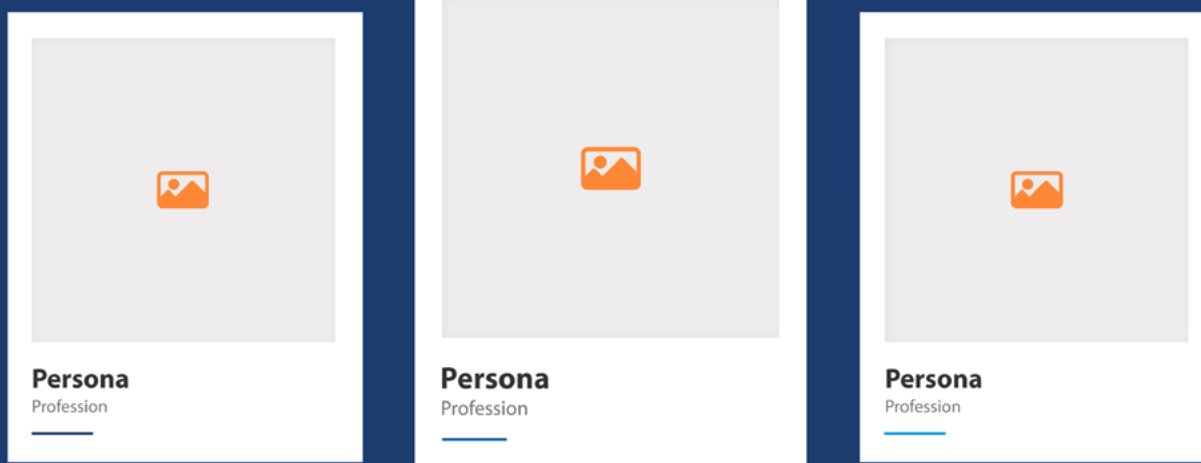
You must know your customers' needs, preferences, what's important to them and the solutions they're after. Because giving your buyers what they want – in terms of content and customer experience – pays off.

In fact, a recent [CMO report by Gartner](#) revealed that 62% of buyers say they can make a business decision based on online content alone. And 45% of website users say they look exclusively for personalized content portals.

So: how can you give customers exactly what they're after?

One way is to create buyer personas. By leveraging market research, you can identify your best customers and create a composite of their common traits and behavioral trends. Such an amalgam of your customers allows you to better understand what they want by better understanding who they are.

Yet many B2B companies aim to reach an unsegmented audience; these efforts very often fail to address their target market. But, by combining demographic and psychographic data, you can build much more sophisticated consumer profiles.



This is where **social listening** comes in. There are a lot of insights you can gain from monitoring social media accounts, so you can see what your target personas are interested in, how they interact with brands and what events they're attending. Essentially, social listening helps you target their pain points, trends, preferences and habits so you can truly get to know your audience, and personalize your content.

With tools like Mention or Talkwalker, you can hone in on information by searching for specific keywords, and listen to conversations happening in real time on platforms like Twitter or LinkedIn. These kinds of social listening tools also help you analyze and synthesize this information into actionable reports.

That way, you can peer into your customers' minds. You can understand what motivates them. How they feel. What matters to them. And what makes them unique.

To reach the people who will care about — and engage with — your message, you first need to know who they are.

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But where do your leads come from? While [HubSpot](#) found that SEO, email marketing and social media are the most popular resources for generating B2B leads, 1 in 5 leads still comes in from an unknown source. Over time, that figure adds up.

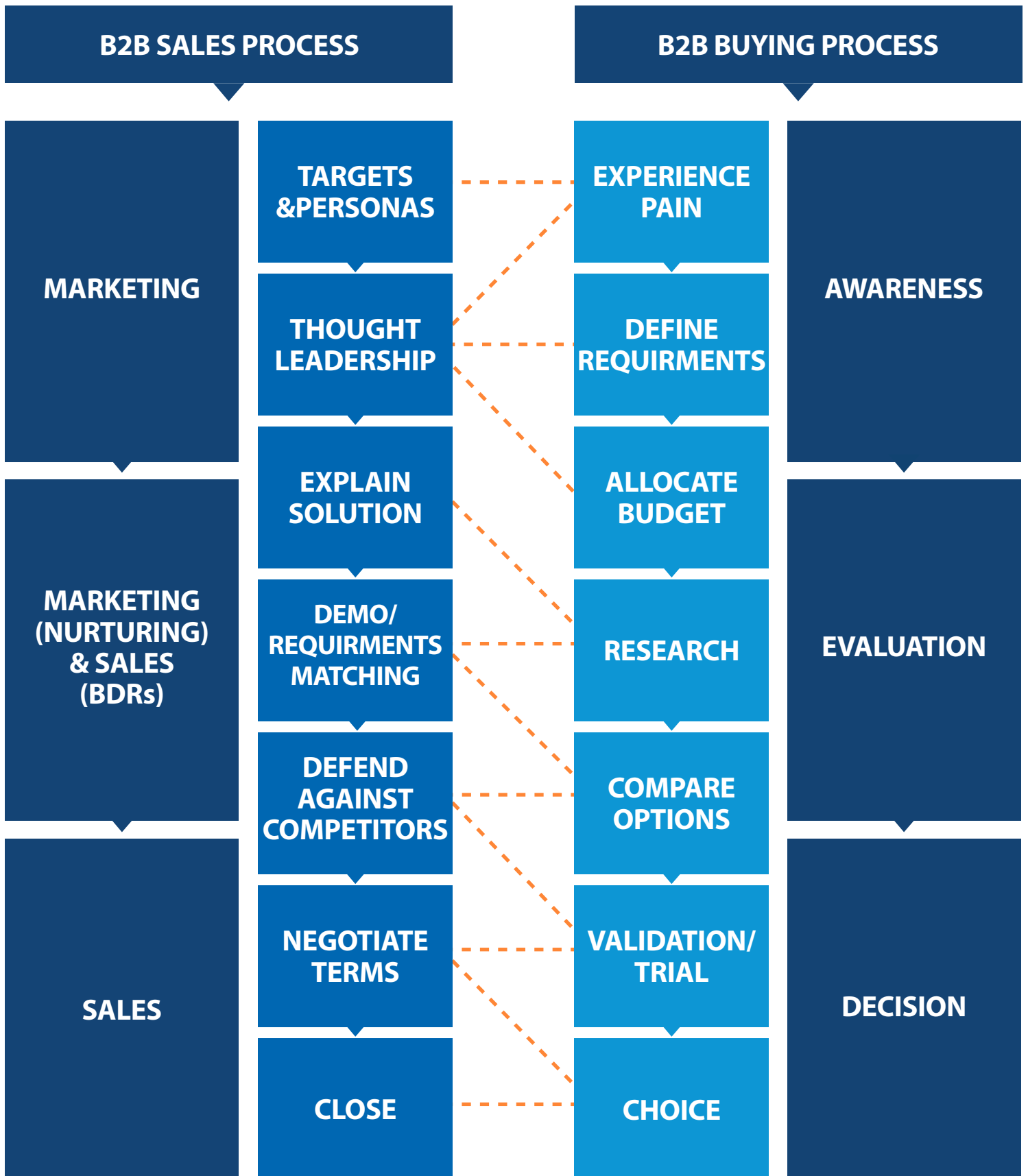
So, to understand where your leads come from, you first have to understand your buyer's journey.

## Understand your buyers' journey: a nonlinear loop

So now that you know who your ideal customer is, and what they're after, it's time to prove your value as a company by giving them what they want as they move through the different stages of the buyer's journey.

Generally speaking, there are three stages that make up the buyer's journey. The first is **awareness**. The buyer knows they have a problem, and this is your opportunity to make them aware of your brand. After this comes the **consideration** stage, where the buyer will research different pieces of content you've put out. Finally there's the decision stage, where you will have convinced them through your omnichannel approach that your brand will fulfil their needs.

The problem is that nowadays, this journey isn't straightforward. The [CMO survey by Gartner](#) revealed that 90% of buyers no longer progress through a clear sales funnel, but **loop back and repeat different tasks more than once** throughout the whole process.



B2B marketers struggle to provide content that hits all the stages along the sales funnel. As a result, they miss huge opportunities to target customers at each point of need. What's clear is that consumers crave more online content to guide them. According to a 2020 survey created by [FocusVision](#), 75% of B2B buyers said they relied on online resources for research more heavily, and consume on average 13 pieces of digital content before reaching the decision stage. The survey indicated that these pieces are primarily made up of **videos, blog posts, whitepapers, customer testimonials, reviews and analyst reports.**



Essentially, every piece of regular content you post should be viewed as a touchpoint in the buyer's journey. While content such as landing pages, ads, videos, infographics and blog posts serves to initially attract your lead, other content such as whitepapers, reports, e-books and case studies will serve to further educate them. And follow-up content such as surveys, special offers, giveaways and emails will keep customers engaged once they've already purchased your product.

This leads us to content marketing.

## Shape your success with content marketing

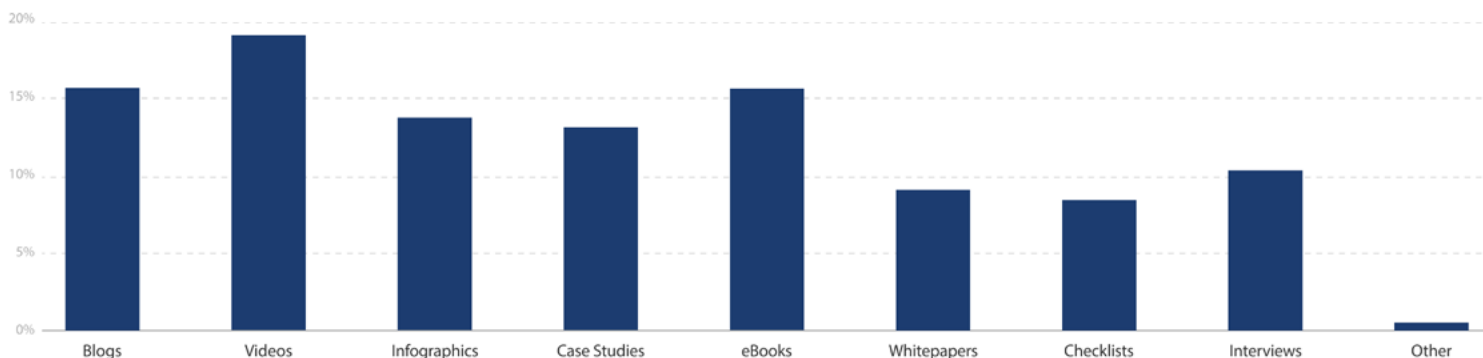
Content marketing is one of the most effective tactics to generate brand awareness – which in turn helps generate leads. Yet according to a report by the [Content Marketing Institute](#), only 69% of B2B marketers have a documented content marketing strategy in place. And those that do, most create content for audiences early on in the customer journey, instead of nurturing relationships down the line.

As we've pointed out in the buyer's journey, content marketing is any media – from videos to case studies to articles – that informs or entertains first and promotes second. Providing these sorts of materials helps create a strong connection between you and your buyer. And studies show that when your business invests in content marketing, you improve your ability to engage your buyer personas, convert more leads, boost brand awareness, and connect with your audience.

Essentially, good content marketing gains consumers' trust and establishes your brand as a thought leader in a single gesture.



### What are the primary forms of media used within your content strategy?



### Here's a look at the top trends within successful content marketing strategies:

#### ➤ Blogs buy you more buyers

Blogs are among the primary three forms of media used in content strategies today, marketers who prioritize blogging efforts are 13 times more likely to see positive ROI ([HubSpot, 2020](#)). Plus, blogs are the most shared types of content online. On average, companies with blogs produce 67% more leads per month than those without ([DemandMetric, 2019](#)).

#### ➤ Audio and podcasts give you a voice

Podcasts are booming. According to [Podcast Insights](#), as of April, 2020, there are over 30 million podcast episodes in existence, and over 75% of Americans now listen to them. This increasingly popular aural format presents a new opportunity for companies to position themselves as thought leaders.

#### ➤ Infographics break down your facts

Whether it's static or animated, infographics are an essential part of modern day content marketing. And, as 43% of readers skim blog posts ([Hubspot, 2020](#)), it helps to highlight important data points and transform that data into bite-sized, visually pleasing information in a way that's more likely to stick.

#### ➤ Videos show off your brand

Videos are now the most popular content format in marketing, having overtaken both blogs and infographics. Usually, these videos are used for subtle promotions or for brand storytelling, both of which boast a remarkable success rate. [Aberdeen Group](#) says marketers who incorporate video into their strategy get **66% more leads per year**. And, 90% of customers say video helps them make buying decisions.

#### ➤ Case studies, e-books and whitepapers are hard evidence

These types of content helps place you as a thought leader within your niche, and they form an important part of the buyer's journey. They're hard evidence of what you do as a company, and what sort of solutions you can help provide. These are the pieces that your B2B buyer will be interested in reading once they've gone through the top of the funnel, and demonstrate a heightened interest in buying.

### ➤ **Webinars, virtual and augmented reality**

Right now, event marketing is on pause. But you can get creative. Real-life events can be supplemented with virtual ones, including webinars, interactive content and virtual reality programs.

Studies show that such digital gatherings are effective. A recent [Demand Metric](#) report, for example, found that interactive content was 93% effective at educating buyers. And 88% of those surveyed were able to distinguish a brand that produces such content from its competitors.

### ➤ **Influencer Marketing**

Influencer marketing is a strand of social media marketing that uses endorsements and product advertising from 'influencers,' which are social media users with a large following who are viewed as experts.

Leaning on these endorsements can drive leads, as an influencer's followers have already established trust.

**Essentially, good content marketing gains consumers' trust and establishes your brand as a thought leader in a single gesture.**

## Measuring & metrics: quantifying your content success

The most common measurement of success for content marketing is total sales, followed by web traffic, followed by generated leads. Content marketing is a long-term strategy. The top metrics for determining success for lead generation purposes include the quality and quantity of sales leads that can be attributed to online content.

Failing to capture these metrics does not indicate a failed strategy, however. Metrics that evaluate traffic, interactions, email engagement, social media engagement, search rankings, engagement time, website traffic and linking should also be part of the lead generation process evaluation, as they are good initial indicators of success.

## A killer landing page is key

Website visitors may arrive through organic search, paid search or via links from other content sources. But your landing page is where it all really begins. It's the perfect opportunity to convert leads into buyers with the right look, the right information, and the right feel.

Your web page is the start of most sales funnels. And the first touchpoint connecting a lead with your brand is critical.

Think of your landing page as your shop window. Your company's product should be immediately clear to your target audience. It should help guide them in the right direction toward initial purchase.

To make this happen, you need to carefully consider UX. That means a 'friendly' design, one that is easy to navigate with clear CTAs. You should also tell a clear story with high-quality visuals, incorporate reviews and link to your company's social media accounts.

## Additional data suggests that landing pages have a higher conversion rate when you:

### ➤ Implement a chat system

A study by [J.D. Power](#) found that 42% users prefer live chat to solve queries

### ➤ Run A/B tests to monitor performance

[Accenture](#) revealed that the companies who experiment most are more likely to exceed product fit

### ➤ Add videos to your site

[Eye View Digital](#) revealed that videos can improve conversions by 86%

### ➤ Ensure your web page is mobile-friendly

[Statista](#) revealed that 56% of all website traffic worldwide in 2019 originated from mobile devices

## More ingredients for success

### ➤ Social media marketing is at an all time high

According to [HubSpot](#), social listening is the number one tactic used by marketers. Statista says that improved traffic, lead generation, and growing fan loyalty are among the top reasons marketers see value in employing social networks in their campaigns. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are the top three social channels used by marketers that deliver the best ROI.

### ➤ Email marketing has made a comeback

Email marketing platforms offer a valuable way to measure lead generation opportunities. Research conducted by [HubSpot](#) found that roughly 70% of marketers have seen an increase in email engagement during the past 12 months. And, according to the Direct Marketing Association (DMA), email marketing has an incredibly high ROI: 4,300%.

### ➤ Content syndication is key for a solid online presence

Content syndication is the process of republishing your content on third-party sites. It's a valuable two-way street that helps B2B marketers' campaigns flow through different sources. (RSS feeds on a client or non-competitor's site are most commonly used.) Often, this translates into free exposure and additional leads. Pitches for syndication should highlight why an external site would find the information relevant and offer added value to the host.

### ➤ Tailor ads to your audience with programmatic campaigns

Programmatic advertisements are those that are personalized to suit a particular consumer's interests or behaviors. It enables marketers' messaging to reach the most desirable markets and demographics. Partnering with a programmatic specialist can improve the number of interested prospects a company receives. With an effective targeting method, these campaigns can help you make intelligent connections, generate insights and optimize results.

### ➤ **Look at paid search and organic traffic as viable options**

Today, most B2B consumers start looking for a product online. While persona research and profile building is the first step to creating an organic SEO strategy, gathering that data helps build a PPC tactic. In fact, by identifying worthy targets first, paid traffic is much more likely to generate purchases than organic traffic.

### ➤ **Optimize mobile content & apps**

Informational apps are becoming more widely used by B2B marketing campaigns. Including a demo app for leads to improve their understanding of a product at their leisure. All app interactions are highly measurable, and the number of downloads will impart valuable lead information. Plus, in 2018 Google launched mobile-first indexing, helping mobile-friendly content perform better in search engines.

## **PART 2**

### Lead Nurture

#### **What's next for your leads?**

Once you've got a solid lead — and congratulations, by the way — your job as a marketer is still far from over.

To keep your leads engaged and interested, you've got to make things easy for them. To this end, and as we've already mentioned previously, an omnichannel marketing approach is essential.

Once you've made contact with a customer, the next time you interact it should feel like you're carrying on your last conversation. By streamlining all interactions with a customer, under a single omnichannel banner, you can provide consumers with an experience that feels personal and easy at once.

To illustrate this point, consider that, according to the Harvard Business Review, 73% of consumers shop on more than one channel. Moreover, according to Google, 85% of digital consumers start the purchasing workflow on one device yet finish it on another.

Here's where there's a disconnect. Research from the [Tempkin Group](#) found that while 60% of companies believe they provide a good mobile experience, only 22% of consumers agree.

Once you've got a lead, it's time to build the relationship through lead nurturing. To start, it's important to meet their expectations — some of which we've just outlined.

In 2018, [62% of American customers](#) contacted customer service at some point during the year. And, according to [research from Microsoft](#), it's important these interactions go well, as 96% of those surveyed said customer service was an important factor for being loyal to a brand.

## Lead validation: making sure your lead has real interest in buying

Before you can start building a relationship with leads, you need to determine which of them are most worth pursuing. What lead validation does is highlight those potential customers who have visited your webpage or digital asset and have also interacted with it in a way that suggests they may be seriously interested — or have serious potential to be interested, like submitting their contact details via a form fill.

Essentially, once you've gathered data on potentially interested buyers, lead validation is sifting through that data to separate those visitors who aren't likely to make a purchase.

But once you've highlighted who is worth chasing with lead validation, you can sign off a lead to your sales team, who can make sure their time is dedicated to chasing the right folks. This provides higher returns by reducing the amount of time spent fruitfully trying to sell something to uninterested parties.

## Lead scoring through a CRM System

Once a lead has been identified in a marketing channel, shown real interest in buying but does not want to yet follow up with a conversation, these should be scored, and either moved further down in the buying process or continue being nurtured.

If you're in search of a handy lead helper, a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system takes the cake. These platforms analyze customer data to improve relationships with them.

The best CRM platforms integrate your email marketing, social media channels and events in one place. That way, your sales team can tag an individual they've interacted with to make a note of his or her interest. Or, a recipient of one of your emails who clicks through the links you send can similarly be tagged. Then, all this information is compiled together in a centralized hub.

## Outsourcing lead validation saves you time – and that saves money

Many companies outsource lead validation for a campaign that may be wrought with false information. Outsourcing also saves valuable time that can be used to focus on reliable leads that have been garnered through organic searches. Outsourcing lead validation is beneficial for companies who are running large marketing campaigns.

A company may receive hundreds of emails, names, phone numbers, or some combination of the three. Those partial contact cards will need to be fleshed out by a reliable source. Companies who work specifically in lead validation have access to databases that contain reliable and up-to-date contact information.

## From nurture to network: building long-term relationships

Top of the Funnel leads, or those that aren't sales-ready, require nurturing over time through repeat engagement before attempting to enlist them into a sales talk. This process also aligns marketing and sales to properly lead buyers through the sales funnel.

This can be one of the most challenging steps. According to the 2019 [Lead Nurturing & Acceleration Survey](#), 60% of respondents gave their nurturing a failing grade.

To avoid losing your quality leads, you need to provide your leads with targeted content (see [buyer's journey](#)) to maintain interest in your product. As part of the nurturing process, you'll need leads scoring, conversion events, workflow enrollment and personalized emails in your toolkit.

- Researching the account and providing insight via high-value content
- Matching your solution and your subsequent touches to their needs
- Helping them learn more about your offerings and value proposition
- Analyzing content engagement & consumption to monitor where they are in the buyer's journey
- Scoring leads following additional engagement
- Wait to call them until they score high enough to benefit from an appointment



## CONCLUSION

### Last but not least: the takeaway

Every lead generation strategy requires the use of predictive behavioral analytics, automatically adjusted nurturing streams, deep CRM integrations, and a convergence and coordination of online and real world tactics.

#### To summarize, every B2B marketer implementing a lead generation strategy should:

- Define their company's purpose, values and solutions they can provide to customers
- Integrate a detailed content marketing approach that works for their company
- Create solid buyer personas so they can target quality leads and personalize content effectively with psychographic and demographic data
- Understand the process buyers go through in the sales funnel
- Identify where current leads come from to identify and expand on channels
- Use metrics and analytics to measure the success of content by leads generated
- Create UX friendly landing pages with additional measures to convert leads
- Make sure that social media, videos, podcasts, webinars, email marketing, content syndication, programmatic campaigns and apps are part of the overall strategy.
- Separate high quality leads from those who are less likely to commit with proper lead validation measures, including CRM validation or outsourcing.
- Nurture quality leads throughout the nurturing process, incorporating sales and marketing to ensure long-lasting business relationships.

INFUSEmedia is a fully integrated, data-fueled, demand generation engine that offers a host of industry-leading solutions designed to help B2B organizations drive quality interest and generate quality leads through content marketing, ABM, intent-driven marketing, brand amplification and event promotion.

## CONTACT US

[www.INFUSEmedia.com](http://www.INFUSEmedia.com)

One Gateway Center  
300 Washington Street, Suite 850  
Newton, MA 02458

[info@infusemedia.com](mailto:info@infusemedia.com)  
Phone: +1 (617) 459-4500

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