

Five Keys the Marketer Needs for Sales To Work Their Leads

Perhaps one of the most frustrating things in the life of a marketing manager is trying to solve the riddle of how to get a sales rep to follow up on a lead that they generated. In many ways, it's like giving a gift to someone that they never open.

Think about it...

- You've thought about the person and perhaps asked what they would like.
- You've done research on the best kind of gift to get.
- You've figured out where to go and get it.
- You've even wrapped it and presented it directly and specifically to them.

And then they don't even bother to open it or tell you if they liked it (and let's not get into the 'thanking' part). Isn't that how it often seems to work with sales leads? The marketer...

- Solicited feedback from the sales team about the kind of leads they need.
- Created messages that speak directly to generating interest based on sales input.
- Executed market research to find the best places to reach this audience.
- Put in place a lead distribution process to get the lead into the hands of the rep.

And then the rep either doesn't bother to follow up on the lead or report the result. So how do you fix this? It's a question I'm asked on a daily basis, and my answer is simple, and the five key components are the same regardless of industry or even channel type.

1. You must promise, and then deliver, QUALIFIED leads to sales. If you are simply collecting names and numbers with little other information or buyers with no interest or budget, you are not just wasting your time and money. You are hurting your credibility with sales. Spend time finding ways to get only the best leads out to sales and nurture or "re-market" to the rest to get them qualified.

2. You must not only have an efficient lead management solution in place, it must be SIMPLE for the reps to use. If it takes a rep longer than 30 seconds to view their lead, chances are low that they are going to follow up and even lower than they will report what happened.

3. Make the statistics of your lead generation campaigns VISIBLE to everyone. Everything from who received leads to % of follow up to leads sold. There will be pressure to follow up but there will also be good visibility to the value that you are delivering to the sales group.

4. Implement programs to check in with sales reps on leads that are no being worked. Sometimes this is as simple as sending reports to sales management on status or as involved as reassigning leads that are unopened after a period of time. Lead management companies should all have strategies and programs that assist clients in making this happen.

5. Last, but most important of all, you must SELL the reps on the fact that the better job they do on following up with leads and reporting results, they are in fact helping themselves receive better (and possibly more) leads in the future. How? Their reporting tells the marketing team what kinds of leads are valuable and where they are coming from. Marketing can then focus more dollars on those sources as well as tweak and improve qualifying mechanisms. These two crucial items contribute directly to better leads. So, the reps are actually helping themselves by closing the loop.

Lead management is not an easy task and perhaps one of the biggest issues a marketer must consider and plan for is how to gain mind share with the sales group. This starts during the evaluation and selection process of your lead management partner. Involving sales leadership up front will result in their support and endorsement when roll out time comes. Additionally, their input in developing things like qualification criteria and question and answer sets can be vital for assisting the marketing teams in putting out campaigns that deliver the specific kinds of high quality, high value leads you are looking to deliver.

About SmartLead and AdTrack

Since 1981, companies have relied on SmartLead's customized lead management systems and best practices to smoothly and seamlessly manage leads from the moment the leads are generated, through qualification, ranking, nurturing and distribution to sales people or channel partners.

SmartLead is the only full-service lead management company with:

- Dedicated account managers to advise clients on best practices and implement their programs
- Web-based lead management, sales force automation systems
- Insightful analytics system
- In-house marketing services: contact center, direct mail, email, printing, web hosting, and fulfillment/warehouse.

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