

Website lead generation

Lead generation refers to the creation of prospective customers – people who may not be quite ready to buy or join today but who are interested enough to show interest and thus you'd like to keep in contact with so you can let them know why it's worth doing business with you.

Clearly leads can (and should) be generated in a number of ways - print, broadcast media, display ads, direct response advertising, pay per click, PR, word of mouth, referrals – and leads can be generated for sales or communication purposes via a wide range of offer types such as trial software, white papers, research, toolkit, prize draw etc.

But, when it comes to your website how can convince visitors of your value so they give you their permission to keep in contact?



Well before we tackle that let's just get one thing clear – the first thing you have to have is site visitors.

These visitors have to be the right type of people too. Obviously a site for teenage clothing that, in some strange way, got middle class over 55s as their major traffic probably won't do too well. So, obvious point #1: make sure you have good SEO that targets the right audience profile for your site.

Now that you are getting the right traffic though you can't just expect that those people will, just magically, think "wow I better fill in the form on this site or give them a call". No, you have to work at it for them to contact you.

So, ask and answer 10 simple questions:

1. What really matters to possible customers, what are their needs?
2. How important to possible customers is my solution?
3. How do I make things easy to find?
4. How do I make it a 'no brainer'?
5. What can I give them so they give me the information I want?
6. What are my objectives?
7. What information do I need to know?
8. What do I test & measure?
9. How does all of this work with my other marketing?
10. How do I reinforce success and kill failure?

What really matters to possible customers, what are their needs?

Understanding this is the basis of success. Frequently it's a combination of things and all too frequently this has been put into shorthand and the number 1 becomes the 'Holy Grail'.

Thus, in many cases 'the cheapest price' becomes what is promoted even though any reasonable reading of the research of what customers really want is actually 'good prices with fast service and a nice attitude'.

So, challenge preconceptions and make sure you are marketing from the outside in and not from the 'manual of standard procedures'. The ability to see things from a real customer perspective is crucial.

How important to possible customers is my solution?

Let's face it that's what any business does – solve a customer's problem. Whether that's a better way to boil water (kettle) or transfer money (bank) or something more esoteric, it's solving the customers' problem that is crucial – and that includes speaking their language both literally and in terms of age and slang.



Sometimes a business gains a lead because they solve problems a customer 'didn't know they had' (perhaps Dyson with bagless cleaners?) more often not and just as often there is a lot of competition. If the problem is something like a mortgage then it's likely to be pretty important to the customer but if it's say a new piece of clothing then there may be many solutions and, to many (especially men?), it's not exactly the greatest challenge.

You should always assume you are not important to the customer but that what you provide is important.

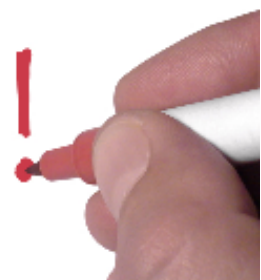
That way you will make your solution easier to find than your competition and the easier you make it to find your solution (e.g. well structured 'one click' navigation, good search facility, simple FAQs, visible terms and costs etc.) the more likely you'll get a chance to be on the buy list.

How do I make things easy to find?

This is 'back to basics' for presentation and navigation.

The overall look and feel of your website is vital to its success.

- Stick to one or two typefaces
- Don't use too many colours
- Use relevant images
- Have clear headlines and subheadings
- Use clear, simple English
- Ensure the site is compatible with most browsers
- Make it easy to contact you
- Ask others for their opinion



The way customers find their way around your site also makes a big difference.

- Navigation panels should appear in the same place on every page and preferably allow one click to anywhere (sometimes just not possible on a very large site)
- Use breadcrumbs to show whereabouts a customer is in a site
- Site maps to make the site structure clearer
- A search facility – particularly useful on larger sites

How do I make it a 'no brainer'?

This is all dependent on your offer. The 'softer' your offer the higher the response rate will be but also the earlier the stage in the buying process your enquirers will be.

A 'soft' offer is one that carries a low perceived risk and a high perceived value, so they generate a higher response rate. But these offers generally require little commitment so response quality is lower. Soft offers are those that say something like "Please send me, without cost, obligation, or commitment of any kind....." They really are no brainers.

A 'hard' offer requires a higher level of commitment and may involve some kind of contact. Hard offers – such as an appointment, a demo, a webinar, a free consultation – have a lower response rate but higher quality and shorter buy times and must be handled fast and with great service.

What can I give them so they give me the information I want?



Focus on what you can provide to respondents to help them determine if they need and can afford your solution. Here are some examples:

- Free trials (demo or restricted level over 30 days for example) can work really well but takers are generally late in the buying cycle so you may not find many. There are also some timewasters as free = no cost to them!
- White papers, research and articles can also be great ways to get people to join your communications list.

These people may not even at the time they join be in the market, but continued exposure to what you do may well convince them to buy.

- Multistep offers can be attractive as they 'draw in' the prospect with say a free guide or white paper with a follow up offer of a free face to face audit or consultation. Those who move on to the second part become a qualified lead.
- Taster 1 – 2 hour seminars, webinars or even a video are great real added value offers. You need to present valuable information about how to solve the problems that your prospects are facing and mention your services 'without selling', but they have a high time cost attached to them.

Don't forget whatever you are offering you have to think through the whole process and ensure that you have covered all the 'touch points'. It's useful to be able to automate as much of the 'mechanical process' using auto-responders and pre-formatted templates but do make sure that people can speak to people and that there is human intervention when and where appropriate.

What are my objectives?

What's this? Objectives 6th on the list? Yep! Think about the customer first then think how you can marry that to your objectives.

For lead generation they are generally pretty simple. You want to get the right number of properly qualified leads and the right cost per response that allows you with a sensible conversion rate to get the right cost per sale to make the customer either immediately or lifetime value profitable.

All jargon but the equation is easy to do.

What information do I need to know?

Hint: The more you ask for, the less likely you are to get anything at all. It's, as ever, the KISS principle. If all you really need is name and email then that's all you ask for.

If you really, really, really do have to ask for a lot of information then split it up so it does not look so daunting and make it clear where someone is in the process. Learn from retail checkouts how this works.

What do I test & measure?



The simple answer is to test and measure everything above – the SEO, the navigation, the page layout, the offer, the enquiry form, all can and should be tested and measured to get you the best results.

Website marketing is no different in concept to traditional direct marketing. It just allows you to do more, more quickly and more effectively.

How does all of this work with my other marketing?

Have a look at our newsletter on [Integrated Marketing](#).

How do I reinforce success and kill failure?

In a world where executives seem to keep their jobs, bonuses and golden parachutes whilst acting irresponsibly and politicians get re-elected based on false promises we have to realise the temptation to reward or reinforce failure rather than success.

We tend to listen to only what we want to hear and filter out evidence that contradicts our beliefs. We think a course of action must either always lead to success or always lead to failure, but real life is more complex, with countless variables influencing business outcomes. Many, such as what our competition do are beyond our control.

So all we can do is look at the numbers and continue testing. Things that didn't work some time ago (e.g. before a recession) might work well now. So believe the numbers and continue to test and measure.