

B2B QUICK TIPS

Nurture And Recycle Leads To Keep Prospects In Your Sales Cycle

Business-to-business organizations can quickly improve their sales and marketing efforts through the process of Lead Nurturing. In simple terms, lead nurturing means following up and paying more attention to viable sales prospects that may have been overlooked because they don't represent an immediate sale, even though they're generally qualified leads.

As recent economic conditions have caused B2B landscapes to change, it's understandable that most sales people focus their efforts on deals that will result in an immediate sale. That's especially true if you face pressure from your organization to produce revenue quickly.

However, with the complex nature of most B2B products and services, it can be highly efficient to target prospects who have an issue or problem that your organization can solve, even if they're not quite sales-ready. Then you can nurture those individuals methodically until they're actually ready to buy—at which point, you'll be "top of mind" and they'll turn to you.

When you don't nurture prospects, you're leaving revenue on the table. In a B2B selling environment, it's possible that prospects you engage may not be ready to buy a solution simply because they don't even know it exists. If part of your selling advantage is offering ongoing service to your customers, it only makes sense to nurture and cultivate longer-term relationships, so you can serve them more effectively as their business needs grow.

Think of lead nurturing as a mutually educational dialogue with a future customer. Nurture marketing involves multi-tiered, interactive approaches over time, using a variety of tactics to appeal to the prospect at different stages of involvement in the sales cycle.



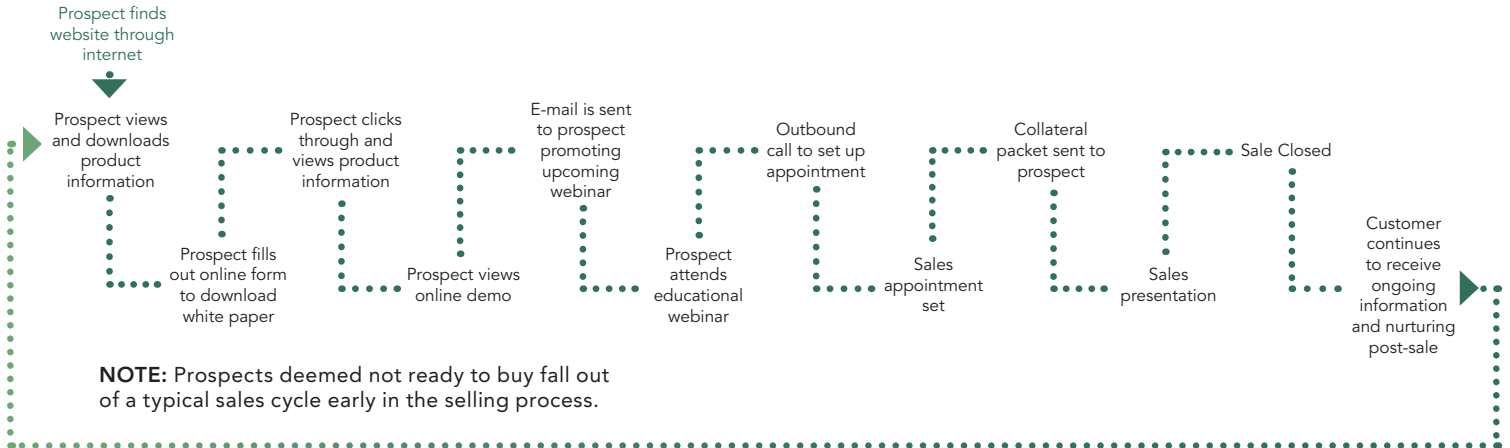
Find the Right Partners and Tools

Fortunately, new technology solutions can effectively automate the lead-nurturing process. Based on your marketing qualification benchmarks, you can enter your "not ready to buy" leads into a categorized tracking program that schedules periodic touch points, including e-mails, webinars, event invitations, direct mail, etc. Educational offers such as white papers or podcasts are also valuable.

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Lead Nurturing 101

An effective lead nurturing process keeps prospects engaged in the sales cycle with solutions-oriented educational messages until they are ready to purchase.



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By getting prospects to re-engage with your company over time, you gain the opportunity to collect more useful information and spot opportunities when they arise. That's known as "progressive profiling." The process can even let you know when it's time to follow up with a personal phone call, or when a lead is ready to turn over to a sales rep to close a deal.

An automated lead-nurturing program also tracks individual responses from prospects—for example, when they follow website links or other calls to action in your marketing materials. By monitoring and documenting a prospects' interaction with your marketing, you can determine which communications are getting and holding their attention, and then you can customize touch points based on an individual's interest areas, response history, job function, etc.

Studies indicate that B2B decision-makers now seek and find their technology vendor in 8 out of 10 cases.¹ Also when making a B2B purchase, 93.2% of decision-makers said they would research the transaction online first.²

Another advantage of an ongoing lead-nurturing program is that opportunities are being generated from existing prospects, rather than having to rely more heavily on a constant stream of new inquiries. Successful lead nurturers understand that just because someone can't be converted right away, it doesn't mean that they're not worth pursuing.

A well-run lead-nurturing program can greatly improve

¹ Marketing Sherpa Business Technology Marketing Benchmark Guide, 05/07

² The Role of Search in Business-to-Business Buying Decisions, Enquiro Research, 06/05

sales performance for your organization, and can actually help shorten your company's sales cycle. A marketing-led, automated approach will allow you to redefine your selling process so that your sales reps focus their activities around closing sales, rather than uncovering and fostering their own opportunities.

To develop your own lead-nurturing program, partner with an experienced organization that can understand all of your unique challenges, opportunities, market segments, etc.

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