Our tips to Creating a Lead Nurturing System

Your Business Development Team

Contents

This eBook is made up of blogs written by Yafit Davis covering elements of creating an effective lead nurturing system.

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Why consider lead nurturing?

What is lead nurturing and where does it fit in your sales process?

Building relationships is a key part of any successful sales process. Within lead generation, the time spent developing a lead is called lead nurturing. Here is a little more information about this process:

•What is lead nurturing?

It’s an overall term covering the numerous times you will need to follow up in order to turn a suspect into a prospect and then a client.

•Why is it important?

Only 15% of the population can make decisions quickly, which means that you have to follow up a lot before you get an answer. If you are doing it right, you will be nurturing the relationship in the process, thus making a sale more likely.

•Where does it fit in your sales process?

Lead nurturing fits all the way through from when the lead is generated, to when a sale is made.

•Who should be charged with nurturing leads?

Normally Lead nurturing is done by your sales function, be it you or your team. But long-term lead nurturing should be assigned to a skilled telemarketing team either in-house or outsourced. This will free up the sales department to deal with hot opportunities whilst ensuring that leads are not forgotten.

Lead nurturing is not a waste of time....

When it comes to developing a relationship, be it in business or generally, people take their time getting to know and trust the other party. This is why it’s puzzling that, when outsourcing lead generation, many companies expect relationships to be formed within a few phone calls.

Lead generation and lead nurturing are an important part of relationship building, yet many companies I come across seem to ignore this and take the following approaches:

•They don’t do any marketing or lead generation of any form and get all their work from existing business and referrals.

•They tick boxes, do a bit of this and a bit of that but generally don’t keep to any lead generation activities for long.

The problem is that because lead nurturing is not a part of any of the above approaches it is rarely done properly or at all.

There are three key reasons for this:

•Many of us fear rejection or worry we may appear desperate. We therefore consider keeping in touch with prospects and leads, degrading and unpleasant.

•We assume that if someone is going to buy, they will make the decision quickly, so if they take their time, they are not buying.

•There are always more important and urgent things to do.

Lead nurturing is one of those essential but non-urgent activities that we don't do enough of.

Here are a few reasons why:

•According to DISC profile, only 15% of people make decisions quickly, which means that keeping in touch is definitely worth it.

•Many people like to see you working for their business and appreciate your reminders and calls.

•The bigger the deal and the organisation, the longer it takes to make a decision so getting to know everyone involved and understanding the process is definitely beneficial.

Next time you come across a lead and they do not buy from you within sixty seconds, don't give up, keep in touch. Make sure you understand their buying process and time scale so you can keep in touch appropriately.

02

How to ensure success?

Why are funnels key to your sales process?

If you were ever involved in a discussion involving marketing or sales, you would have surely discussed the sales funnel. The correct definition of a sales funnel – also known as the sales-process – is: 'The buying process that companies lead their customers through when purchasing products. A sales funnel is divided into several steps, which differ depending on the sales model'

The reason we liken the process of selling to a funnel has a lot to do with this brilliant quote from Zig Ziegler: "Every sale has five basic obstacles: no need, no money, no hurry, no desire, no trust." This refers to the series of qualifying steps which constitutes the sales process which can take anything from a few hours, a few months or even a whole year depending on the complexity, cost and nature of the product.

Many books have been written about the sales process and how you should manage it through using qualifying questions, regular follow-ups and trust-building activity. The type of funnel you choose to apply, makes a big difference to how many opportunities you identify and most importantly, to your conversion rate. Let's consider funnels more carefully. There are two main types:

•**A short funnel,** or a sieve, is one that only goes as far as one campaign. For example, you might send out e-mails, or publish a blog post and leave it there. The problems with this funnel is that you either don't stick around long enough to make an impact or you end up speaking to people with no need, no money or, more commonly, no real desire.

•**A Long funnel,** or a marble run, is one that follows the process closely through various stages. For example, you might utilize an e-mail campaign, send people additional information, re-target them through additional adverts, connect with them on LinkedIn and follow up on the telephone. In other words, you are following the funnel down, uncovering interest and desire, then developing trust to ensure that budget is found. Short funnels are easy to create but give lead generation a bad name. Long funnels, on the other hand, are harder to create but are much more effective in the long term.

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What does a healthy pipeline looks like?

According to research by Vantage Point, 60% of sales managers say their company does a poor job of managing their sales pipeline. A sales pipeline is a visual snapshot of where prospects are in the sales process. Sales pipelines show you how many deals salespeople are expected to close in a given week, month or year, and how close you are to reaching targets.

If you have a pipeline worth £100,000 in contract value and your conversion rate from lead to sale is 10%, then you can expect to close £10,000 worth of new business.

If your sales target is £20,000, then you will need to convert twice as many leads. This is where pipeline analysis comes in. If you can identify areas of improvement within your pipeline that will help you move more prospects from one stage to another, then you're going to be more successful in your business.

For B2B sales in particular, having a healthy sales pipeline allows you to:

•Improve your sales process

•Forecast future business results

•Analyse different sales strategies for your business

•Review your progress for the current financial year

•Know how far you are from your targets.

A sales pipeline plays a key role in closing more sales deals and indicating the overall health and future direction of your company. Here are a few tips to manage your sales pipeline.

Follow up, follow up, follow up

Buyers today have more choice than ever before and often need more help to make the right decision about which product or service to choose. The best salespeople make sure that they keep following up on opportunities until they get a definitive answer.

Focus on the best leads

Concentrate your efforts on the best, most sales-ready, high value leads. Sort your sales prospects from high to low instead of by date so you can instantly see which leads are most valuable and identify which prospects are the most engaged.

Let go of the dead leads

It is important to know when to let go of a lead. A lead is dead when they clearly tell you they're not interested. If you can't contact them, or you've spoken to them repeatedly but have not been able to move them forward that also suggests that you need to move on.

Recognise these dead leads quickly so you can move on.

Regularly monitor your pipeline

Your sales pipeline is changing all the time so you need to monitor the key sales metrics. This includes:

•The number of deals

•The average size of the deals

•The average percentage of deals that you win (close ratio)

•The average lifetime of a deal before it's closed (sales velocity)

These metrics give you an 'at a glance' view of the health of your sales pipeline and your business.

Review pipeline processes

The best sales organizations regularly review their sales pipeline and techniques to make sure things are optimized to ensure maximum efficiency and success.

When it comes to the sales process, each stage can be looked at and adapted/improved over time.

Keep your pipeline updated

Don’t let your sales pipeline get messy and confusing.

It is important to keep details up to date on every single lead by adding regular notes and information for each stage of the sales process. This does mean more admin time but if you use this time to remove dead leads or update outdated contact information it is time well spent.

03
Additional consideration

What is your follow up style?

A lot has been written about personality styles. Broadly speaking, these models measure people's personalities by evaluating communication styles and decision-making tendencies. Both of these elements are key when it comes to selling in general but particularly for following up.

So, what constitutes getting your follow up wrong:

•Not following up at all

•Following up too soon

•Following up too often

•Pushing too hard for a decision

•Not pushing at all

Based on this, you could say that there is a big chance of getting it wrong because it's impossible to find a one-size-fits-all process. So, how do you create a follow-up system in your business?

Here are a few ideas you might want to consider:

1-Before you submit a proposal, agree a suitable time to follow up with your client.

2-Call to confirm receipt of your document and reiterate when you will speak again.

3-When you call for an update and your prospect has yet to make a decision, clarify their buying process and timeline. Make a note and call again based on this timeline.

4-Use a variety of touches for your follow up, including telephone, e-mail and LinkedIn.

5-Allow your prospect to give you feedback and tell you how to continue speaking to them.

6-Continue following up until you have a definitive answer but make sure you give your prospect space as most decision-makers are busy people.

04

Setting up your lead nurturing system

What are the key buying patterns and why are they key to sales success?

I have spoken earlier about this information but it is worth repeating: Research undertaken by Disc states that only 35% of the population are likely to make a buying decision quickly. The remaining 65% like to take their time, which could be anything from days to months depending on the product.

This means two important things to a sales director who wants his team to succeed:

•Identifying early adopters is key to getting some sales in quickly and keeping senior management happy.

•Keeping in contact with the rest of the medium to late adopters through structured follow-up is as important.

So, how to go about doing this? Read up on buying styles. There are a quite a few theories and numbers. I like the Disc approach, which identifies four styles:

The Decisive: These buyers have a clear picture in their mind of what results they want. They are more often interested in "winning" or "promoting their own agenda" so they like to buy when they feel they have "gotten their way" so to speak. They are attentive to actions or communication that will speed up those results. Discussions about details and minutiae are distracting to these individuals. They prefer to discuss top-line, big-picture concepts when considering the value of any offer.

The Interactive: These buyers want to shape events and enjoy "getting their way" when it comes to negotiations or buying something. They are interested in people and like to interact with others. They are most receptive to making a buying decision when they feel a sense of connection with the person, are in a more social environment and have had the opportunity to express their emotions about the offering first. This person is also particularly inattentive to details, preferring to stick to the big-picture and emotional benefits of the solution.

The Stabilizer: These buyers are more passive and introverted and interested in the how and why of a solution. Their primary interests are in maintaining stability within themselves and whatever situation they find themselves in. Messages that don't address the specifics, or that champion radical change, are likely to alienate rather than resonate. They prefer to "take their time" more than any other buying styles so any offering should give them plenty of time to decide.

The Conscientious: These buyers are also more passive and introverted. They too take a much more detailed and accuracy-based approach to their buying habits. Without sufficient data to prove any statements made to them, you will fail to achieve their buy-in. They are therefore receptive to offerings that provide proof that the solution works and proposals that are meticulously detailed.

The next thing to do is to make sure that you are able to identify the type of buyer hiding in new leads coming in as quickly as possible. This will allow you to ensure that they are approached correctly for the best outcome.

Your sales team should be hot on the heels of early adopters whilst the medium to slow adopters should be followed up appropriately. This sometimes means taking it away from your eager and impatient salespeople. Often, everyone in your business is very busy and as a result non-urgent, but essential, activities such as lead nurturing and systematic follow up, get put to one side.

We hope you found this eBook useful and practical. More importantly, we hope it inspired you to have a go at improving your lead nurturing system.

If you are ready to carry on with your business development journey, you should download our next eBook:
Our Tips to Increasing Lead Conversion

Part 4 - Lead conversion: Download Here

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