



SHARING OUR  
**THOUGHTS** AND **BEST PRACTICES**



A recent survey from KnowledgeStorm and Sirius Decisions of marketing executives from 250 business-to-business technology executives revealed that 58% rated their marketing department's lead development capabilities as "fair" or "poor". Only 6% of executives polled rated their in-house lead development capabilities as excellent.

In this economy, everyone wants and needs great sales leads. If your business is relatively small, or if it is a service business, you can do a number of things to boost your demand creation results, from cold calling to local advertising to small-scale seminars and, that age-old favorite – networking. However, if you have a complex sales process, you will need a different approach.

Based on our experience, in mostly any industry 3% to 8% of a market is in a buying mode for your type of solution, what do you do with the others 97% to 92% of your potential market?

### Nurture them

The secret is to implement a process for detecting and nurturing buyers through their buying cycle. A process that goes from the beginning (identifying the market you want to reach) to the end (closing the sale). And it is a secret, because very few companies commit to such a process.

More commonly, businesses look to marketers to generate leads for the sales department. They attempt this through a number of demand generation projects, such as telemarketing, direct mail, email, trade shows and the like. But what they normally generate is responses, not leads, because it is rare that a willing and able prospect is waiting for you to sell them your expensive product. Even so, marketing thinks that they have generated leads and they are happily delivered to sales.

So, what does sales think about the leads? Just ask, and you will likely hear the familiar refrain: "the leads are poor", "there are too few leads", and so on. Of



course, this comes as news to marketing, which claims that they never hear from sales and that the leads go into a black hole.

### The Chasm between Sales and Marketing

Clearly, there is a problem in the lead development process – No one has responsibility for developing responses into qualified leads.

Developing prospects, or nurturing them, requires a process, not a person. Part of the process is a platform to support the nurturing activities, which will include timely phone calls, email and other type of touch points throughout the buying cycle. If an executive at a large company gets a cold call from someone selling enterprise software, unless that executive is in the buying window of opportunity, would that executive be ready to buy? Definitely not. Would that executive want to meet face-to-face with a sales person? Probably not. Would that executive represent a future sales opportunity? Absolutely.

Therefore, to make sure this future client becomes yours and not your competitors, it is necessary to implement a nurturing process that will ensure a steady stream of qualified opportunities at various stages of the buying cycle, eliminating the peaks and valleys of leads that result from traditional marketing programs. To turn your responses into a demand creation engine, it is important to follow these important instruction steps:

1. ***Assign ownership to the prospect-nurturing program.*** Someone has to be responsible for the results.
2. ***Hire or outsource a team of Business Development Reps (BDRs) to nurture the prospects.*** Initial and ongoing training (product, sales and soft skills) will be crucial to their success.
3. ***Support the team with a platform that makes their job easy.*** Unfortunately, most of the CRM applications are poor at facilitating customer acquisition, but there are other solutions. The solution needs the ability to map the relationship between members of the same prospect company, store an easily accessible history of communications with the prospect, be completely web-based, have the ability to score and distribute sales leads and measure results.
4. ***Build a central prospect marketing database.*** Have some BDRs enter responses from trade shows, business reply cards, web hits, etc. into the database.



5. ***Set up an outbound telephone program*** It is important to contact these responders, enter into a dialogue, collect relevant information and provide them with the information that they want.
6. ***Do not have a "hard" hand off of leads to sales reps.*** Get the BDRs work with the sales rep, so the prospect can transition from the BDR to the sales rep.
7. ***Have clear agreement with sales on the definition of a qualified lead.*** You will need a clear definition to eliminate any disagreement on what is and what is not a lead.
8. ***Make sure you have an easy way to quickly get qualified leads to sales.*** If you are using a CRM system, then you will just need to interface with that system. If not, your customer acquisition system will need to assign, route, distribute and track the lead.
9. ***Make sure you get feedback on the status of every sales lead.*** This is the only way to measure the ROI of your customer acquisition program, and that is what this is all about. It needs to be easy for sales reps to provide this feedback, and they should do it if you are producing a steady stream of qualified leads for them.
10. ***Have the discipline to do this constantly.*** This is a continuous process, not a stop and go process. You need the discipline to be effective and to obtain the results. You have to think, will this be better manage by an outsourcer, than by my internal resources who may get assigned to other projects.

The creation of an effective demand creation engine is not as difficult as it appears, but, it is rarely done right and with discipline. By following these few instructions you will be on the road to solid revenue growth for years to come.



## What VSM can do for you

As experts in client acquisition and strategic account intelligence, VSM has a single focus - building strong sales pipeline for B2B companies. Over the past 13 years, we have developed cutting-edge expertise to support our clients' sales team and have achieved an outstanding customer satisfaction rate.

- We become an extension of your marketing and sales force, we can outsource the telesales function
- We specialize in selling business solutions and have over 45 employees at your service
- We offer business-to-business services in English and French, allowing us to cover all of Canada and the parts of the United States
- We serve local, national and international companies and have the necessary flexibility to extend our coverage area quickly
- We successfully undertake more than 150 projects per year

We help you put the power back into your demand creation engine to increase your sales funnel.

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