

Tips for Establishing an Effective Lead Tracking Process — *Don't Start Your Campaign Without One*

by Mary Gospe

True Story: *A VP of Sales fired a telemarketing firm he'd recently hired to generate leads for "lack of results." When the firm pressed for more details, the VP finally admitted that he never had the time to review the leads and distribute them to his sales reps!*

A critical component of any lead generation program is a process to effectively disseminate and track leads through the sales cycle. Often, companies do not have an efficient system in place (process, training, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) application) to route the leads and determine their status. This information is vital for two reasons: 1) to provide feedback to telemarketing/sales development reps during the campaign so that adjustments can be made to call guides, messages, and offers, and 2) to measure results against program objectives and ultimately calculate program ROI.

Unfortunately, many telephone-based lead generation programs are cancelled shortly after they begin due to anecdotal feedback from sales reps. The statement "these leads are a waste of time" often results in the sales VP scrapping the campaign prematurely. Starting and stopping campaigns is time-consuming and costly. It is better to make adjustments to your program, experiment with integrated methods (email, direct mail, webinars, etc.) and keep an ongoing lead generation engine in place if you want to have a healthy, sustainable sales pipeline.

Before you launch your campaign, follow these tips:

1. **Gain commitment from *both* marketing and sales leaders** to visibly support the lead gen program.
 - This includes consensus on program objectives, metrics, timeline and a commitment to implement a closed-loop lead tracking system.
2. **Clearly define the objectives of the campaign.**
 - Quantify the optimal number of qualified leads for each sales rep or region.
 - Define the desired number of registrations and attendees for webinars and other events.
3. **Establish and document the sales process.**
 - Clearly-define the lead qualification criteria. Gain Sales buyoff on the definition of the lead: hot, warm or cold.
 - Map the flow of leads through the sales cycle. How will hot leads be handled? How will warm leads be nurtured? Where and when will the handoff to Sales occur?
 - Train your callers and reps on the process. Begin early to seek their feedback and suggestions on the process.

4. **Provide incentives for Sales feedback.**
 - Use time-based campaigns and spiffs to increase participation among the callers and sales reps. Make the campaign fun and forge some healthy competition to boost results.
 - Incorporate lead source and lead status into the weekly forecast. Sales reps must update their forecast and this will increase campaign visibility and results among the executive team.
5. **Assign an owner to actively manage the campaign**, including disseminating leads and tracking results.
 - If you are in a start-up with limited resources, don't expect the VP of Sales to have the bandwidth to effectively track leads. Hire an outside resource on a consulting basis, if needed.
6. **Prepare your CRM system to track leads and metrics.**
 - Be sure to use a CRM system that is accessible by all sales reps.
 - For channel reps without access to your CRM system, have your lead disseminator gather feedback and enter it into the CRM system.

Once the campaign is in motion, you'll want to measure results against program objectives and adjust lead qualification criteria, messages, offers, etc. as needed to improve results. Remember, that with long sales cycles, a lead generated from your campaign may not close for 6-9 months. It often takes multiple touches (phone calls, email, mailings) to move the buyer through the sales process.

For more information about setting up an effective lead tracking process and establishing an ongoing "lead generation engine", contact Mary Gospe at maryg@kickstartall.com. Successful lead generation is vital to helping your company achieve sustainable revenue growth.

About the Author:

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