

B2B Sales Lead Success Checklist

By M. H. "Mac" McIntosh

You've spent a great deal of time, effort and money putting together your business-to-business sales lead generation program. But how you handle the leads once you get them will make the difference between a happy sales team and new customers, on the one hand, or an unhappy sales team and lost sales on the other.

Here are six key questions to determine if you have the best chance of being successful with your sales lead programs, and a checklist to help ensure it:

#1. Are you prepared to send requested information immediately?

Prospects have their own agendas and timelines, so you need to be efficient, and strike while you have the opportunity. You need to respond to inquiries quickly — the faster, the better. Here are some recommendations:

- π Know in advance what to send in response to different types of inquiries.
- π Have electronic versions of your collateral material for those who want the information by e-mail or via downloads from your Web site.
- π Keep on hand adequate supplies of printed materials, in addition to e-versions, for those who prefer them.
- π Prepare people, systems and processes to get the requested information out the door ASAP.

#2. Are you prepared to capture all inquiries in a database for ongoing nurturing and qualification efforts? B2B companies with computerized marketing databases can track and measure results quickly and accurately. Also, because database marketing programs enable you to talk directly to your targeted audience, you get a higher return on your marketing investments and can scale back on overall lead generation activities. Therefore ...

- π Have your database ready to go.
- π Make sure your data-entry people are ready to input all inquirers into the database.

#3. Do you have a universal, agreed-to definition of what a qualified sales lead is before sending names to your salespeople, reps, dealers or distributors? When everyone — marketing, sales and management — agrees on what constitutes a qualified sales lead, marketing stands a better chance of generating leads that will be valuable to salespeople. Thus ...

- π Consult with sales management on the questions to ask that will identify which leads are qualified.
- π Have proactive programs in place to contact and qualify your leads.

#4. Do you have a process in place for distributing qualified leads to sales? Leads aren't any good unless you get them into the right hands quickly. So ...

- π Try to eliminate time-wasting bottlenecks in your lead distribution process.

π Make the lead-distribution process easily accessible for salespeople, reps, dealers and distributors. For example, consider making leads available over the Internet or company intranet.

π Integrate this process with your existing contact management or e-mail systems.

#5. Do you have a program in place to nurture or cultivate your not-yet-qualified leads? Salespeople generally focus on those one-in-four sales leads who are ready to buy soon. However, research shows that three out of every four sales come from the longer-term prospects who are frequently ignored by sales. In this case ...

π Establish a marketing-driven prospect-relationship program to keep in touch with these longer-term folks. You can use e-mail, fax, mail and phone until you discern they're ready for sales attention.

π Make some well-chosen calls-to-action designed to generate responses, further identify prospects' needs, and move them closer to a sale.

π Consider the frequency of contacting these prospects in order to keep in sight and in mind without becoming a pest.

#6. Do you have a program in place to measure and track the results of your various sales-lead generation, cultivation and sales follow-up programs? If you can pin down your successes in increasing win rates and incremental sales and cutting marketing costs or increasing ROI, senior management will no longer doubt marketing's contribution to the company's success. Therefore ...

π Determine your cost per lead, cost per qualified lead and cost per sale.

π Know which lead programs generate the highest return on investment.

π Identify which nurturing techniques worked and which didn't.

π Measure how your lead-generation programs are paying off in increased sales and market share.

Never lose sight of the importance of your sales lead generation and development processes. Leads are the life blood of your sales organization, so always remember to keep your lead program as healthy as possible.

[M.H. "Mac" McIntosh](#) is one of America's leading [B2B marketing consultants](#) and considered to be an expert on [sales lead generation](#). He can be reached at mcintosh@sales-lead-experts.com.