eBook

Beyond Lead Flow

ENABLING SALES THROUGH MARKETING AUTOMATION

Authored by Steven Woods, *CTO Eloqua, and Author* **Digital Body Language – Deciphering Customer Intentions in an Online World**

ELOQUA

THE POWER TO SUCCEED.

Much of the focus on marketing and sales integration in Business to Business (B2B) marketing has been on creating a steady flow of leads for sales.

However, a new generation of technology is reinventing our understanding of what marketing can do. This paper explores areas that marketing can help sales identify and manage deals in their sales pipeline through technologies and business processes that amplify existing CRM systems.

Beyond Lead Flow

Marketing has long worked to support the sales teams they serve by providing them with a steady flow of qualified leads. The use of agreed upon criteria for defining a qualified lead has resulted in a reduction of historical challenges in lead follow-up, but has yielded high volumes of unqualified leads.

Marketers need to recognize that determining lead criteria is only the first of many steps they can take to enable their sales teams. New enhancements to CRM systems are driving truly evolutionary changes in marketing's relationship to sales. Following are five areas where marketers can employ marketing automation to deepen their relationship with sales and help sales identify, manage and close deals.

1. Help Sales Understand Their Prospects

Getting to know the intentions of a possible buyer has always been one of the great challenges for sales. With today's marketing automation tools, marketers now have something to address that challenge.

1A. Digital Body Language Provides Insight

Each action that a prospect takes on your website or in response to your marketing campaigns provides insights into them as a buyer. To enable your sales team to understand each of their prospects, you can provide them with this information and insight. Each email that is opened or clicked on, each website visit, search on Google, or form submit tells a story.

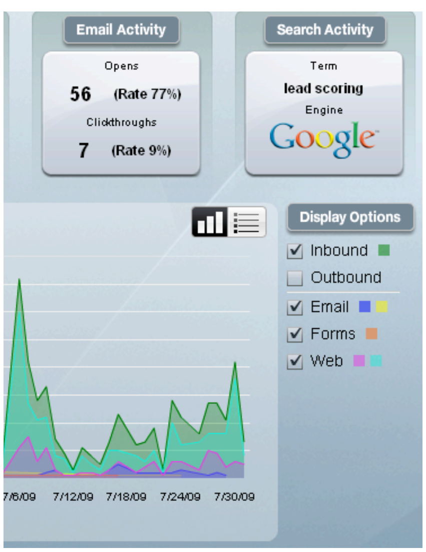
This information in the digital realm, much like each facial expression or body posture in the physical realm, lets us understand the "digital body language" of the buyer. Are they interested, what are they interested in, and what conversation topics will engage them. Providing this information to sales, in their CRM system where they are most comfortable, allows sales to guide each conversation to its best possible outcome.

1B. Social Media Activity Extends That Insight

Today's buyers are becoming more active in social media. Perspectives are gained through reading blogs, ideas are shared on Twitter, topics are discussed on LinkedIn groups. This social media discussion can lead the prospect to interact with your own website or social media properties, and when they do, understanding that interaction is critical. Your sales team needs to know why they visited your site, from where, and what they were looking for in order to better guide their interactions with the prospect.

Again, in order to be valuable, this information truly needs to appear where your sales team spends their time; in their CRM system.

1A. Show Sales Visually



Sales people are generally very visually oriented. They want to be able to understand quickly who is interested and who is not, but have the ability to dig in as needed. To enable a sales team, marketing needs to provide the sales insights that can be gained by combining all email, web, search, and form activity into one view of each prospect's "digital body language", but must do so in a way that fits with how sales people best absorb information.

Trends in activity, spikes of interest, and renewed interest after a long period of quiet are all indicators that a sales team can work with. These can be indicators that internal activities at the prospect's company are driving buying activity, or that a new surge of interest is being driven by changes in the market. These are all crucial things for a sales person to know, and are best conveyed visually to allow quick insights.

2. Help Sales Understand Their Accounts

A deep level of insight can be extended from the prospect level to the account level. As sales works with each account in their pipeline, they need to understand the buying group within that account to the best of their ability. Marketing can assist with this to a great degree.

2A. Show the Key Players

Account Name: Arrow Electronics Inc (7 records)		
Outlook Email Viewed: RE: Eloqua vs. Other systems	3/27/2009	Ben
Email Viewed: Pre-demo survey email	3/17/2009	Ben
Website Visit	3/17/2009	Ben
Email Viewed: Survey e-book response and link	3/17/2009	Ben
Website Visit	3/17/2009	Ben
Outlook Email Viewed: Reschedule Eloqua call	4/7/2009	Judy
Website Visit	4/6/2009	Judy

By tracking the interest profile of each buyer and then presenting an account-level view of the activities of each person in an account to the sales team, marketing provides sales with an ability to understand that organization. Sales can see who is most engaged, who is not engaged at all, and who might be showing signs of interest but not currently part of the conversation.

A sales team that is enabled to better understand the accounts they are targeting can better drive deal processes within those accounts by knowing how to navigate the choppy waters of internal politics and unknown motivations.

This view, presented in the CRM system where sales people spend their time, gives sales immediate guidance on how to work with a deal and manage the personalities and motivations involved.

2A. Identify more Key Players by Role

Often, in a B2B buying process, the person doing the bulk of the research may not be the ultimate buyer. The fact that detailed research is being done, however, does indicate that there is likely a buying process under way at that organization. As a marketing team, you can enable your sales team quickly and easily by working with a role-based name discovery service to automatically discover the key individuals in the buyer's role within an organization that is showing buying interest.

Understanding which organizations are active on your website allows you to identify the organizations to target. The role-based discovery services then provide your sales team with the most likely decision makers, which allows your sales team to more effectively manage the sales process.

3. Help Sales Understand Their Territories

As a sales person works with his or her territory to understand which companies might be interested in purchasing, they need insight into which companies might be starting to do research due to internal business events. This can be hard to determine through normal means, but marketing automation makes this process easier and more efficient.

3B. Highlight Key Accounts

My Accounts by Activites (last 90 days)

Account Name	Record Count
NIIT Technologies Inc	57
Cytec Industries, Inc	41
Checkfree Corporation	32
Sage Software Small Business, Inc	29
MECLABS Group	28
Tekelec Corporation	27
Firefly Communications	21
PMSI	20
Recall Corporation	20
Cox Target Media Inc (aka Valpak)	17
North Highland	17
BGT Partners	16
Visiprise Inc	16

The marketing team, which scores leads based on the level of buying activity, can roll up this scoring to the account level, offering up a view of which accounts within a sales person's territory are showing coordinated buying activity.

Marketing can take this insight one step further by putting it into a territory dashboard that quickly highlights active accounts and shows sales which accounts they should be spending their time with, and whether there are any accounts that have begun to show activity after a long period of inactivity. Much of sales success is determined by spending effort on the right accounts. Sales teams that can quickly determine the right accounts through a dashboard will consistently perform well.

3B. See Which Companies Are Starting to Look

Today's buying organizations, for the most part, do their own research and are guided by business events within their own companies that establish priorities. This can lead to there being an active project at a potential prospect without your sales team having any knowledge of it. Even before individuals from that company have identified themselves to your marketing team by signing up for an event or downloading a whitepaper, they may be on your website doing early stage research.

Company	Visitors	Visits	Most Recent Search Term
Eloqua Corporation	80	8072	lead scoring
SCANSAFE	9	1151	eloqua.com
IRON MOUNTAIN	36	358	
Internet Identity	7	264	eloqua corporation
Bull Dog Solutions	4	241	marketing operations manager

However, as a marketing organization, if you are providing valuable content on your website, chances are that the prospect may be visiting your website as part of their research. Providing your sales team with knowledge of which companies are on your website, how many visitors from each, and what they are searching for can give them invaluable insight into new opportunities they need to engage with.

4. Help Sales Build Trusted Relationships

Sales is still highly dependent on relationships. When buyers reach the later stages of their buying processes and begin to negotiate terms and finalize agreements, your sales team needs to be seen as trusted advisors. To do this, they need to have been helping the prospect learn, evaluate, and plan since the early stages of their buying process.

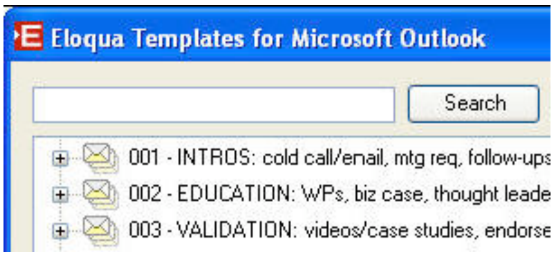
As an individual sales person, helping early stage buyers over long periods of time is not something that scales easily. However with marketing's help, your sales team can establish these trusted advisor relationships without significant effort.

4A. Establishing Relationships Through Communication

As buyers progress through the early stages of their buying process, they will be receiving and reading lots of information. Each time they do, there is an opportunity to build a small amount of relationship trust. Marketing can assist with this by automating campaigns to send educational information, evaluation guides, thought leadership writings, and other materials ***on behalf of*** the salesperson associated with each account.

Over time, this personal, rather than corporate, approach builds familiarity and allows a relationship to grow. When the sales person engages directly, they are more likely to be seen as a trusted advisor, due to this longer term relationship that marketing has enabled.

4B. Establishing Relationships Through Content



Similarly, for situations where your sales team is already working directly with prospects, marketing can enable them with appropriate content for individual prospect communication. This can be used by sales as conversation starters, nurturing, or even miniature marketing campaigns targeted to a small group of prospects.

Many marketing teams are worried about control over content, in order to maintain brand and message consistency. Their hesitation is that sales has a history of using outdated content, poor phrasing, and inconsistent branding in their self-created content.

This worry is not unfounded, however, by providing sales with great content as a starting point, marketing ensures brand and message consistency. By allowing sales to quickly send the email content in a manner that they are familiar with (such as through Microsoft Outlook), the sales person will not need to create their own content, and is able to directly build relationships with future buyers.

5. Maintain Top-of-Mind Presence

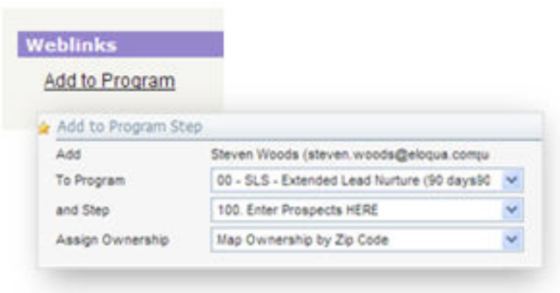
Nothing is harder on a sales person than a cold call. A prospect with no familiarity about the sales person's company or why their company's services might be of interest is a tough sell. Marketing can make this situation much better for the sales team by continued lead nurturing throughout the early stages of the buying processes.

5A. Consistent Nurturing

Buying processes today are lengthy and complex. They involve multiple buyers, and may extend over many months or quarters. Sales may only be involved towards the final stages of the buying process, as the buyers near their decision. However, by that point, many factors in their decision making will already have been established. What potential vendors are on their long and short lists? What are the key criteria on which they are evaluating the vendors? What is the general market reputation of each of the vendors?

Marketing can enable sales to succeed by consistently nurturing potential buyers throughout the early stages of their buying processes. Nurturing should both maintain top-of-mind presence, and also establish key buying criteria in the prospect's mind as it educates.

5B. Nurture Options For Sales



However, nurturing as a concept can be taken one step further. A sales team can be presented with nurture campaign options that they can quickly and easily drop prospects into. This allows sales to free up their time to close deals, while behind the scenes prospects interest is being nurtured and top-of-mind presence is being maintained.

For leads that are passed to sales that are not yet ready to purchase, this allows sales to effectively disposition the lead in a way that does not allow it to go into a dead lead pool. Marketing can create situation-specific nurture routines that are relevant to the top 5 objections that sales faces when they encounter a lead that is not yet ready to purchase.

Giving sales access to thought-leadership nurturing programs allows them to continue to build their relationship with prospects without consuming valuable time in the field.

Conclusion

Today's marketers have a unique opportunity to enable the sales teams they serve through more than just a steady flow of qualified leads. By harnessing new capabilities in CRM system, marketing can provide insight about individual prospects, the accounts they are part of, and the territories those accounts make up.

Marketing also can provide sales with the insights they need to understand which accounts to spend their effort on, who the key players are within those accounts and what topic areas each key person is interested in. This insight directly drives revenue through better targeting and managing of each sales opportunity.

Likewise, marketers have an opportunity to enable the sales teams they serve through the top part of the buying funnel. By intelligently nurturing prospects and providing education, while at the same time building the prospect's familiarity and relationship with the sales person, marketing is able to facilitate the development of a trusted advisor relationship. This relationship leads to a significantly increased ability for the sales person to manage and complete the deals they are working on.

For further writing on these topics, visit http://digitalbodylanguage.blogspot.com.

About Eloqua

Eloqua is the category creator and leading provider of demand generation applications and best-practice expertise for business marketers around the world. Thousands of customers rely on the power of Eloqua's products and services to execute, automate and measure programs that generate revenue. Eloqua is headquartered in Vienna, Virginia, with offices in Toronto, London, Singapore and throughout North America.

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