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Making Sense of Lead Management

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What is lead management?

Lead management is the process of identifying, qualifying, engaging, and managing potential buyers.

A comprehensive B2B marketing strategy always includes a game plan for lead management.

Lead management starts with lead generation, which happens when prospects indicate interest in your brand's products and services. From there, marketing teams nurture them until they become customers.

The lead generation process involves various marketing tactics, such as social media, blog posts, technical papers, advertisements, and webinars. Potential customers respond to your marketing by giving their contact information in exchange for information. At this point, they become a sales lead.

Lead management programs focus on building prospect interest and engagement as leads move through the sales cycle and combine two vital aspects of sales and marketing: lead scoring and lead nurturing.

Lead scoring is an objective ranking of one lead against another according to how interested or close they might be to making a purchase. It helps marketing and sales professionals identify where each prospect is in the buying process and follow up accordingly.

Lead nurturing helps you develop relationships with your prospects. When you execute the process successfully, you establish buyer preference for your solutions while you gain an understanding of buyer timing. But this will only be possible if your lead nurturing programs deliver content of sufficient value and interest to prospects throughout the sales process.

32%
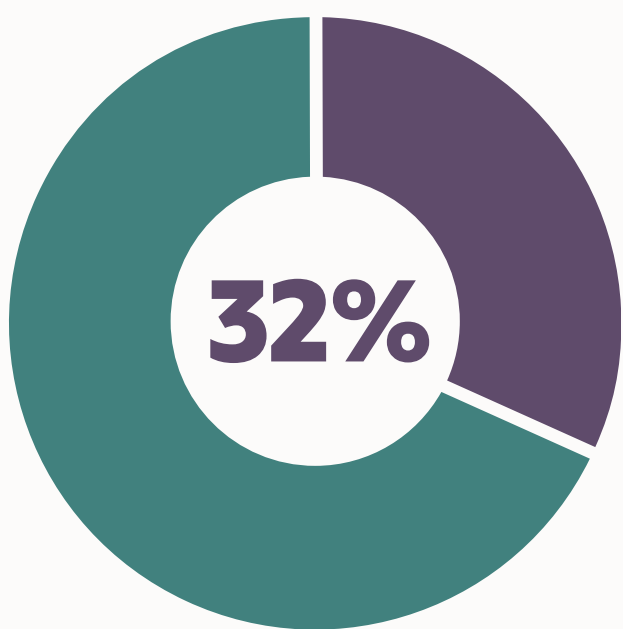
32% of B2B marketers say driving more leads is a primary objective of their digital strategy, and 31% of B2B marketers say delivering quality leads is also a primary objective.[1]

This guide will help you understand the benefits of lead management, basic principles and best practices for lead scoring and nurturing, and how to get started on building a successful lead management program.

Why lead management matters today

38% of B2B marketers face challenges managing and tracking leads.[1]

Prospects show interest in your brand in various ways. They download white papers and case studies, follow brands on social media, subscribe to newsletters, attend virtual events, and more.

A successful lead management program records every interaction a prospect makes with your brand to qualify and nurture leads. This provides sales teams with information on where a prospect is in the buying cycle and indicates which marketing campaigns and programs are successfully generating and nurturing leads and helping make conversions.
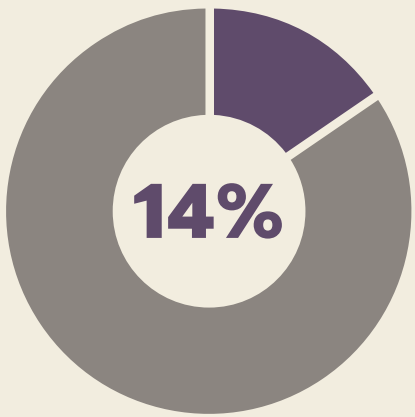
Why is lead management important? A recent survey finds that marketers are currently facing lead management challenges.

46%
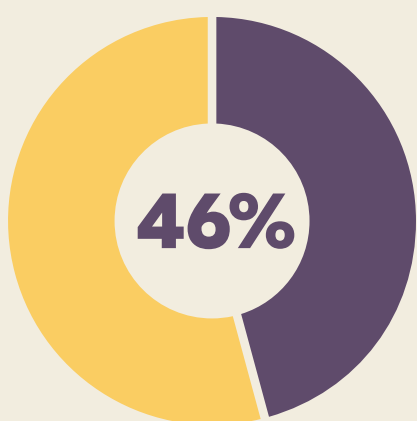
46% of marketers say fewer sales opportunities are being generated.[2]

21%
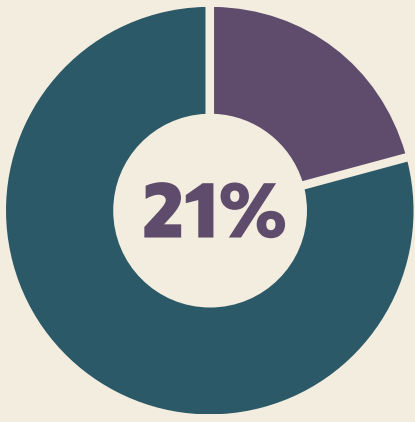
21% say marketing is generating fewer leads.[2]

14%

14% say marketing leads are not converting as well.[2]

Investing in lead management allows marketing and sales teams to

- **Focus on the right leads**
  Place your focus on capturing and engaging high-quality leads.

- **Add relevance when engaging with leads**
  Sales reps can have meaningful, contextual conversations and engagements with leads when they have access to lead behavioral data.

- **Improve productivity and maximize ROI**
  Robust lead management systems automatically assign leads to the right sales rep so they can focus on closing the sale.

Why lead scoring matters

According to a recent survey of B2B marketers, 40% of sales teams complain about lead quantity, and 47% complain about lead quality.[1]

Marketing and sales agree upon a lead scoring process for defining lead quality, sales follow-up, and cross-departmental collaboration. An effective lead scoring model prioritizes quality interactions or activities that demonstrate high prospect interest and delivers hot leads to the sales team for follow-up.

An established lead-scoring practice gives you greater control of your pipeline. The better you measure and understand the quality of your leads, the more predictable your pipeline and revenue forecasts will be. It becomes easier to see projected shortfalls in revenue by territory, product line, and business unit. This allows marketing and sales teams to react appropriately by concentrating resources where they'll have the greatest impact.
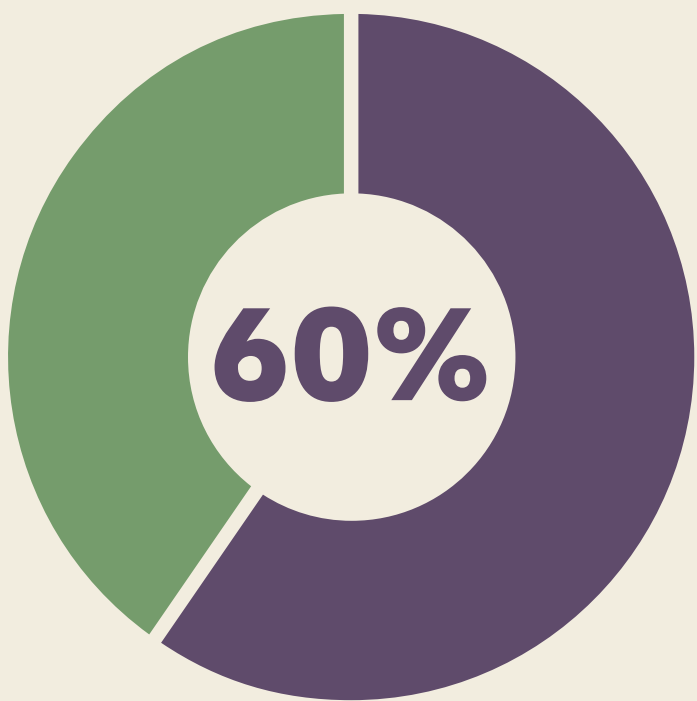
Why lead nurturing matters

Not every prospect is ready to buy right away. Some require more time, relevant content, and information before deciding to purchase.

Lead nurturing focuses on converting contacts that are already in your database. Organizations without lead nurturing processes see a considerable drop-off in the number of leads they're able to generate for their sales teams. Following up with and nurturing these leads should rank as a high priority.

Also, note that lead nurturing can help upsell and cross-sell to existing customers. Since you already have an existing business relationship with them, it's often easier to nurture a customer than a prospect.

60%

60% of B2B marketers believe their lead nurturing strategies have increased conversion rates and sales.[3]

The basics

Generate high-quality leads and maximize sales opportunities

Investing in lead scoring and lead nurturing can improve marketing and sales alignment, increase lead quality, drive conversions, and enable your sales team to be more efficient and effective with their time.

Lead scoring basics

What criteria should you use to score leads? It's best to keep it simple. Scoring too many criteria can make it difficult to determine which values define the score.

Start with two of the most commonly used scoring dimensions and add more criteria as needed:

- **Prospect identity:** The prospect's job title, position, industry, and geography

- **Prospect interest:** How many times have they visited your website, clicked through on your emails, registered for and attended your events, downloaded content, followed your brand on social media, and so on

Then consider

- **Documenting how likely** the lead is to become a customer

- **Determining the factors** that define a sales-ready stage of qualification

- **Defining how important these factors are** in relation to one another

- **Assigning a tiered set of corresponding values** for each factor

Score a lead based on their level of engagement. If it's high enough, it goes to sales. If a lead isn't ready to buy yet, nurture them until they are.

Lead nurturing basics

Now that you understand the benefits of lead nurturing, consider using these tactics to cultivate more meaningful conversations with leads:

Collect data
Design multichannel marketing experiences with enough touchpoints to capture prospects' behavioral information, allowing you to tailor your marketing towards their needs, interests, and preferences.

Segment your leads
Building lasting relationships based on trust requires extensive knowledge of your prospects. Only then can you provide engaging and relevant content, messaging, and offers. Segmentation allows you to personalize by title, role, industry, or sales stage in your messaging.

Personalize
Personalize whenever possible. Respond to buyer signals and provide relevant content for every stage of the cycle.

What's next?

Now that you understand the basics of lead management, lead scoring, and lead nurturing, there are some steps you can take to optimize your approach for better results.

Here are some ideas and techniques you can apply to up your lead management game.

Increase awareness of prospect influences

Prospects receive more messages, information, and education during the buying process than ever before. And peer-to-peer channels will continue to grow in relevance. Understanding how and where a prospect discovered a message should influence your lead scoring and nurturing programs.

Experiment with scoring

Looking at different ways of scoring leads can unlock powerful opportunities. You might try:

- **Content-based scoring**
  Focusing on white papers, product information, and customer testimonials instead of download activity.

- **Account-level scoring**
  Scoring leads to pinpoint when a certain role is appearing in the buying cycle.

- **Customer scoring**
  Analyzing all customer touchpoints to identify opportunities and risks throughout the lifecycle.

- **Opportunity scoring**
  Analyzing a lead's behavior through the middle of the pipeline to predict the likelihood of an opportunity closing.

Adopt predictive modeling

Your lead-scoring model must remain closely aligned to your sales and marketing processes (even as they evolve). Predictive modeling tools allow you to constantly monitor prospects' behavior and understand how your model may need to change.

Deliver customized multichannel experiences

Nurture leads on their preferred channels and create a consistent experience across multiple channels if the lead responds best to this approach.

Drive the conversation with data

The more you know, the more relevant your conversation will be and the better the chance of converting your prospect to the next stage. To help, aggregate insights from various sources (including CRM, LinkedIn, and marketing automation systems).

Automate the buying cycle

Leveraging marketing automation and CRM technology makes you more adept at tracking buying-cycle stages, reach leads with a message that resonates, and offers insights to help with their pain points.

Practical solutions

Now that you understand the basics, learn how to run an effective lead management program.

A three-step approach can set you up for success with the technology, people, and processes needed to make lead management work.

1. Align sales and marketing

30% of B2B marketers list marketing and sales alignment as a top challenge to their overall digital marketing strategy's success.[1] Align marketing and sales teams by agreeing upon a sales process, defining the buying stages and lead qualifiers, and establishing performance metrics and goals.

2. Capture lead data

Fuel the lead manage-ment process by keeping a record of every prospect that engages with your brand. This can be done by importing lists and auto-matically capturing lead information through form fills and subscriptions, social media channels, and integrated applications.

3. Track performance and optimize

Leverage marketing automation to score and validate leads and route them appropriately. Measure the effectiveness of your lead generation, scoring, and nurturing programs by tracking where leads are coming in from, analyzing campaign results, and reviewing associated pipeline and revenue. Using this insight, make the necessary updates to optimize your lead generation and nurturing campaigns.

Are you ready to spark your lead management program? <u>Visit us</u> to learn more.

To the experience-maker who's always moving forward

At Oracle, we know great experiences come from great inspiration, and we're providing the spark for your next idea. Packed with powerful info, the Spark Series will get you up to speed on core CX concepts—such as product content management—quickly.

Think of it as a way to hone your understanding before turning your eyes toward a new strategy. Because if anyone's going to create CX gold, it's you.

What will you discover next?

- Analyst report: Gartner Critical Capabilities for CRM Lead Management

- DataSheet: Oracle Eloqua Marketing Automation

- Blog: 4 Principles for Effective Lead Management

About Oracle Advertising and CX

Make every customer interaction matter by connecting all your business data across advertising, marketing, sales, commerce, and service. Oracle Advertising and Customer Experience. (CX) is a connected suite of applications that goes beyond traditional CRM to help you create and nurture lasting customer relationships. Build a complete view of every interaction and every customer, no matter how and when they engage. Empower your entire business to deliver exceptional customer experiences—from acquisition to retention—and everything in between.

Sources

1. 2021 State of B2B Digital Marketing: Capitalize on Increased Budgets & Post-Pandemic Opportunities, WPromote (Complete form to download)

2. 2021 B2B Marketing Trends Report: How to Augment the Marketing Organization for a Digital-First Future, On24 (Complete form to download)

3. Lead Nurturing Survey Report, Demand Gen (Complete form to download)

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