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**THE COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO QUALITY  
LEAD GENERATION**

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# Quality lead generation From attraction to conversion

Lead generation has come a long way. From cold-calling potential customers to the rise of the first social media channel, lead generation has evolved and become more precise and targeted as marketers constantly search for new ways to reach out and connect with new customers. In this guide, we'll look at the refinement of lead generation and how it has changed from a one-way conversation to an ongoing discussion.

## THE OLD 'SPRAY AND PRAY' MARKETING TECHNIQUE

Lead generation is essentially the process of attracting and converting prospects and has been used since the earliest days of marketing. In the past, marketers relied on traditional forms of marketing and advertising including direct mail, newspaper and magazine ads, billboards, and radio and television advertisements.

A campaign was mass-produced and delivered to the public in the hopes of growing the brand and creating loyal, lifelong customers. As digital technology evolved, so did the 'spray and pray' marketing techniques. In addition to being inundated with irrelevant television ads, prospects were the unlucky recipients of email blasts all following the same script.

The problem with this generic form of marketing is that it no longer works – for a variety of reasons:





### 1. A NEW TYPE OF CONSUMER IS BORN

Millennials, born between 1980 and 2000, are the biggest and most influential generation of consumers ever and according to [Forbes](#), they represent about a fourth of the entire population, with an annual buying power of \$200 billion. They are the driving force behind today's economy, yet marketers are failing to reach them because they 'don't want to be talked at.' Millennials expect more value and less disruptive experiences from ads.



### 2. THE EXPLOSION OF INFORMATION

Today's consumers are bombarded with vast amounts of marketing messages competing from a multitude of channels and sources. According to [Nielsen](#), 27 million pieces of content are shared every day. Instead of engaging with these, consumers have learned to tune content out. They use spam filters, change television or radio channels, toss out direct marketing and ignore emails.



### 3. THE RISE OF TECHNOLOGY

People are spending hours each day on their mobiles, tablets, and laptops. In fact, millennials are spending as many as [18 hours a day](#) skimming the Internet, texting, playing online video games and using social media. As a result, brands have had to look for new ways to connect with their prospective customers through multiple devices, and in real time too.

*The result has been an evolution in both inbound and outbound lead generation marketing*



# Outbound marketing generating leads at the top of the funnel

Many brands use outbound marketing techniques to generate leads and fill the top of their sales funnel. Outbound marketing is called 'outbound' because marketers use methods like cold calling, outsourced telemarketing, email marketing, trade shows and direct mail to push their message out far and wide, hoping to resonate with their prospective customers. The goal of outbound marketing is lead generation, and for many companies, it is often the most effective way to reach the widest possible audience in the shortest amount of time.

## WHO DOES OUTBOUND MARKETING RESONATE WITH?

Outbound marketing tends to resonate with older 'pre-millennial' consumers who are used to more traditional forms of marketing. They still listen to the radio every day and make a point of scanning newspaper ads and flyers when they are ready to buy. With the arrival of the Internet and mobile devices, outbound marketing has lost some of its traditional appeal, but many companies still continue to dedicate as much as [90% of their marketing budgets towards outbound marketing](#).

Outbound marketing is also very useful in business-to-business (B2B) marketing, especially with transactions that involve higher-end products. Although much of outbound marketing involves spreading a message, the best outbound marketing strategies are targeted to some degree.



## OUTBOUND MARKETING STRATEGIES THAT WORK

Many outbound marketing strategies have fallen by the wayside (like displaying an ad in the Yellow Pages). That said, some still play a significant role in lead generation. These include:



### PAY-PER-CLICK (PPC) ADVERTISING:

PPC advertising is an Internet advertising model where advertisers pay a fee each time someone clicks on their ad. Search engine advertising is one of the most popular forms of PPC. By paying to advertise on search engines like Google and Bing, your message can be seen by potential customers who are searching using keywords that relate to your business. PPC ads are typically placed on the side and top of organic search results and use targeted ad copy to encourage leads to click on the ad. PPC advertising also includes banner advertising across multiple websites including social channels.

PPC can be a very effective means of outbound marketing when you need to drive traffic to your site. And it's relatively straightforward to do. If you bid the maximum amount for a keyword or phrase, you have a good chance of ranking number one, so potential customers see your ad first. If you're using Google AdWords, you can generate targeted traffic within a few minutes of opening your account. If your ad is especially well-written, you should get clicks the moment it's activated. Today, businesses make an [average \\$3 in revenue for every \\$1.60 they spend on AdWords](#).

#### PPC marketing is ideal if you're looking to:

**Grow your customer base:** By using PPC advertising, you can connect directly with potential clients who are actively searching for your products and services.

**Generate leads at a low cost:** A well-designed PPC campaign will send a high number of interested leads to your page at a relatively low cost. According to Google, businesses make an average of [\\$2 for every \\$1 they spend in AdWords, which is an ROI of 50%!](#)





## COLD CALLING/OUTBOUND CALLS

An outbound call is one initiated from a call center agent to a lead. Typical outbound calls include sales or fund-raising calls as well as calls for contact list updating, surveys or the verification of details. Cold calling isn't as chilly as it once was. Sales agents can now use search engines to research their prospects before they call them, which results in a more personal connection and helps initiate conversations that can facilitate lead conversion.



## PURCHASED LISTS

Email marketing is the cornerstone of many marketing campaigns, and according to [MarketingSherpa](#), is still one of the most used lead generation tactics with 81% of the marketers surveyed citing it as their most effective channel.

A lot of companies buy email lists in the hope that their emails will make it through the clutter and result in a return on investment. Unfortunately, this can have a negative result as buying lists to send mass emails today is considered as spamming.



## DIRECT MAIL

Many people mistakenly believe direct mail is a thing of the past, but it can still be very effective if used for targeted communications. If you are trying to reach an exclusive set of people, such as senior executives who aren't spending their day trawling the Internet, a highly targeted piece of direct mail can be a powerful tool to attract the attention of your prospective lead. For this type of direct mail to be a success, time and effort must be spent on crafting a relevant message that's professionally designed and presented.







## EVENTS

Event marketing is an integral part of the lead generation mix. Whether you are hosting a small, exclusive private function or a large trade show, events give you the opportunity to tangibly represent your brand and establish close, personal connections with prospective customers. Many marketers across the US cite live events and experiences as one of their most effective lead generation tactics and according to [MarketingProfs](#) and the [Content Marketing Institute](#), 77% of B2B marketers use in-person events as part of their content marketing strategies.

Events allow you to personally convey your company's messaging, values and philosophy on a one-to-one basis or via the delivery of a planned speech. Also, if your business is present at an accredited, well-respected event, it positions itself as a trusted industry leader and helps raise your business's brand equity in the eyes of prospective customers.



## CONTENT SYNDICATION

Content syndication is a content sharing strategy that you can use to promote your whitepapers, articles, news releases and the like via other people's websites for greater reach and engagement. By using content syndication, you can help drive prospective buyers who typically wouldn't end up on your site, onto it.

Done correctly, content syndication is a great way to increase your visibility and develop your reputation in the online space. An important point: if you decide to go this route, make sure to syndicate to sites that have an audience relevant to your business. It also helps if the site has a higher authority than your site, as this will reflect positively back on your business.

The general rule of thumb when syndicating content is to choose content that will be of interest to the site's audience. The amount of content you decide to syndicate depends on your budget. If your business is in its infancy, you can choose to aggressively syndicate until you are regularly generating your own traffic. Then, cut back on your syndication and keep the higher quality content for your own site.





# Attract, nurture, convert and delight with an inbound marketing strategy

Today, as the buying power shifts into the hands of the millennials, many of the traditional lead generation strategies fall short of the mark. Instead, businesses are developing on-going relationships with prospective customers across multiple integrated channels. This is called inbound marketing, defined by [Hubspot](#) as “creating quality content that pulls people towards your company and product, where they naturally want to be.” The secret is to align your content with your customers’ interests to naturally attract inbound traffic that you convert, close and delight over time.

## INBOUND MARKETING: APPEALING TO THE MILLENNIAL MINDSET

Inbound marketing uses customer-centric marketing and sales techniques that focus on the needs and wants of your prospects and customers.

Instead of using outbound marketing techniques like cold calling, Inbound marketing focuses on earning trust, by providing prospective leads with valuable educational content – content they actually want to consume and absorb.

The reason content is so important to inbound marketing lead generation techniques is the Millennials’ demand for ‘authentic content.’ To understand why content is so relevant to this generation, consider the following:



- Millennials spend an average of [25 hours per week online](#), engaging with content-driven media from websites to blogs to social media.
- 33% of all millennials rely mostly on blogs before they make a purchase. According to a [leading study on millennials](#), 73% say it's important to read others' opinions before they buy.
- Millennials won't purchase goods or services without the input from others, and according to the survey cited above, 51% of Americans look for user-generated content before they make a purchase. They hunt for feedback from experts and people with similar interests and challenges before making a purchase.
- Millennials want to be part of a conversation with companies. In fact, [53% of them believe](#) companies should offer more ways for them to engage with brands online in the future.

To connect with this audience, your inbound marketing needs to be focused where they're shopping, which these days is online. According to [Forrester](#), 93% of B2B buyers prefer to purchase online after doing their research, rather than contacting a sales rep. The trend continues to the B2C market with [McKinsey](#) reporting that by 2017 almost two-thirds of all US retail sales will "involve some form of online research, consideration, or purchase."



## **INBOUND MARKETING TECHNIQUES: GENERATING LEADS THAT LAST A LIFETIME**

To reach and connect with your prospects and customers you need to deliver tailored, digital content that directly engages them and meets their immediate needs.

### **Get under the skin of your prospective leads**

Your content is the foundation of all your inbound marketing efforts – from email to social. You need to create content that is impactful, appeals to your audience and drives sharing. Search engines equate high-quality content with high-quality websites; the more engagement you get, the more Google considers your content to be of high value and boosts your SEO rankings accordingly.

### **Ways in which content generates leads:**

- The right content attracts your target market to your site
- Engaging content compels visitors to relinquish information about themselves in exchange for more content
- Once your visitors have become leads, you can keep them engaged through targeted lead nurturing emails until they eventually become paying customers
- You can use your content to generate social shares, and inbound links to attract an even bigger audience
- The right content positions your brand as a thought leader or driver in its industry space, which positively influences future purchases



## HOW TO CREATE CONTENT THAT GENERATES THE RIGHT LEADS



### Create 'fully fleshed' personas

To attract the right leads, you need to get under the skin of your target audience by creating buyer personas – virtual representations of your prospective audience, their goals, their and their challenges.



### Choose the right channels

Decide where you will be placing your content. Once again, this will depend on where your lead is sitting in the sales funnel. You could use social channels, blogs, newsletters, video or downloadable assets. Whichever channel you choose, it's important that the content resonates with your audience and is worth them giving up their email addresses for.



### Use keyword-optimized content

Focus on the pain points and challenges your personas face. They will be searching for answers, so if you have your keywords correctly optimized, and your content answers their questions, you'll be positioning yourself as a thought leader in this space. A good tip is to use long tail keywords that your prospects are most likely to use. These consist of a highly-targeted search phrase that contains three or more words. Long tail keywords will help you rank quicker due to less competition; cost less regarding pay-per-click, and will ensure you receive higher quality leads.



### Constantly measure your content

The only way to ensure your content is generating leads is to measure its results. [The State of Inbound 2015](#) reports that marketers who check their metrics three or more times a week are 20% more likely to see a positive return on their investment. If you see a particular type of content is working and generating leads, you can focus your content creation in this direction. Similarly, if certain types of content or distribution channels are not working for your business, you can implement alternatives.

Once you've attracted your audience's attention with and driven them to your website, you need to optimize your site for lead generation.





## Convert visitors to leads with the right website

Your website plays a huge role in lead generation. The design, layout, usability, and technical infrastructure of your website all have an enormous impact on the overall success of your inbound marketing program. Not all your web pages generate the same amount of traffic, and as such, you shouldn't treat them the same. When looking at your site, you'll probably find your home page, and contact page receives the most traffic. Because people are landing on these pages, it's important to create opportunities for them to convert on these pages.

To create a lead-generating website, you need to consider the following:

- **Fast engagement is a priority:** According to [KISSmetrics](#), you have less than eight seconds to persuade your audience not to leave your site, so it's crucial that your content and design holds their attention.
- **Your need effective lead-capture forms:** There's no point attracting visitors if you can't convert them. Finding the right balance between too many form fields and too few can be tricky. A short form is attractive to many people and will increase your lead numbers, but you'll get very little information from it, which means you'll convert fewer leads. This begs the question, what's the right amount of form fields? An [A/B test of short forms versus long forms](#) performed by Marketo found that short forms with approximately five fields have the highest conversion range (13.4%), as opposed to long forms which typically have a conversion rate of 10%.
- **Create convincing calls to action:** The only effective call to action is one that results in clicks. Ensure all your calls to action are enticing and give your visitors a valid reason to click on them.
- **Design your site for optimum usability:** There's no point having a site if your content is not easy to read. Make sure it is scannable, by including lots of headings and lists to ensure relevant content stands out.





## INCREASE CONVERSION WITH EXIT-INTENT POPUPS

Exit-intent popups detect when a visitor is about to leave your site and then pop up to present them with a message encouraging them to stay. Exit-intent popups are currently very popular when it comes to conversion optimization, because with a well-crafted message or question, you have a second chance at communicating something important to your visitors before they leave your site. They are also far superior to regular popups because they don't interrupt your visitors and prevent them from browsing or scanning your site – they only appear when the visitor is about to leave.



## REMIND VISITORS WITH RETARGETING

Retargeting is a great way of reminding your prospective leads about what they were looking at when they visited your site and encourages them to return and look a little deeper. Once a visitor visits your website, a cookie will be dropped on their browser. As they continue to browse the Internet, they will see your banner ads that are on the Google Display Network. This keeps your business top-of-mind and is a very efficient way of converting a browser into a buyer. In fact, [70% of visitors who are retargeted with display ads](#) are more likely to convert on your website!



## SET UP CONVERSATIONS ON SOCIAL PLATFORMS

Regarding lead generation, the primary role of social media is to distribute and promote your content to bring targeted traffic to your website. Social networks are an essential part of millennials' digital lives. In fact, [Pew Research](#) reports that over 72% of Internet users use Facebook and that the social media platform has the most engaged users – 70% log on daily and 43% log on several times a day! If you are engaging your visitors on social media with your content, they are more likely to share it, enabling you to extend your reach to an even larger network of prospective customers.



## USE PAID SOCIAL ADS

Social media ad spending is likely to exceed [USD \\$35 billion in 2017](#), which shows the significant impact social media advertising is having. It has maintained consistent growth for nearly half a decade because it reaches consumers in the online spaces they're already spending time in. Use your social paid ads to create content that people love to read and connect with and in doing so, you'll strengthen your inbound campaign.





## MAINTAIN ENGAGEMENT VIA AUTOMATED EMAILS

More and more companies are using a lead nurturing strategy to successfully generate more leads and sales. Lead nurturing plays an essential role in enabling businesses to inform, educate and build stable relationships with middle of the funnel leads (or even 'lost' leads) and push them towards the bottom of the funnel and conversion. According to [MarketingSherpa](#), 79% of leads never convert into sales and lack of lead nurturing is the common cause of this poor performance.

Automated lead nurturing is a great way to maintain engagement when a lead has already reached out to make contact with you. If that lead stops visiting your site, then your lead nurturing tips will help to remind them of your business. Once you have setup your automated system, your emails will be sent out automatically as new leads come in. These emails will do your nurturing for you, helping to qualify your leads and push them down the sales funnel, faster.



## STAY TOP OF MIND

The major advantage of lead nurturing is that it helps you to build relationships and establish your business as a thought leader in your industry. People are far more likely to engage with companies they trust and whose opinion they value. Lead nurturing also enables you to maintain consistent communication with your leads. According to [Hubspot](#), 66% of buyers indicate that “consistent and relevant communication” provided by companies is the key factor when choosing a solution provider.





# Balance inbound and outbound to reach your marketing objectives

An effective marketing strategy is not necessarily about 'all or nothing.' You might find you need a combination of both inbound and outbound marketing techniques to generate and convert your targeted number of leads. [Xurli](#) offers a free marketing analysis to ensure you are using the right marketing combination to generate more leads and more customers.

Whether you are looking to improve your online performance and create more qualified leads for your business, or attract local customers, Xurli's range of services can help you meet your targets. These include:

- Content creation
- Lifecycle Marketing & Analytics
- Marketing Automation
- SMARTsites
- Growth-Driven Design
- Reputation Management
- Full suite of digital agency services

For more information about how Xurli can assist you with your lead generation, [contact us today for a free consultation.](#)



