

EBOOK

HOW TO CONVERT MORE LEADS INTO CUSTOMERS

ACT-ON SOLUTION GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

Getting prospects to land on your website and take action is an extremely demanding task for two reasons:



Optimizing your website for search engines requires a lot of resources and presents major technical challenges, as Google and its counterparts continue to update and modify their algorithms.



Even if you are able to drive traffic to your website consistently, converting prospects to qualified leads is becoming more difficult as consumers are becoming more familiar with demand generation tactics — and thus less likely to part with their contact information unless they have a strong incentive to do so.

Since generating those precious leads is so challenging, it's very important that you make the most of your opportunities by converting them into customers at a high rate. To do so, you need to create, segment, and nurture your leads with personalized content as you guide them through a comfortable and compelling customer journey.


Yet, while the blueprint for success is relatively straightforward, many marketers find that building successful lead nurturing campaigns can be extremely difficult. In fact, 50% of marketers report that increasing lead-to-customer conversions is their biggest challenge and top priority (1).

In this eBook, we're going to review the most effective strategies to convert leads into customers. As we do, we'll define important terms, identify key performance indicators, and provide statistics that reinforce the importance of segmenting, nurturing, and distributing useful content that converts promising leads into loyal customers.


LEAD SEGMENTATION

Dividing your aggregate list of leads into smaller groups for more targeted campaigns and communications based on pain points, engagement and behavior, and core demographics.

Possible segments might include:



Repeat website visitors



Content downloaders



Age, gender, and location



Title and company size



Prospects who purchase from your competitors



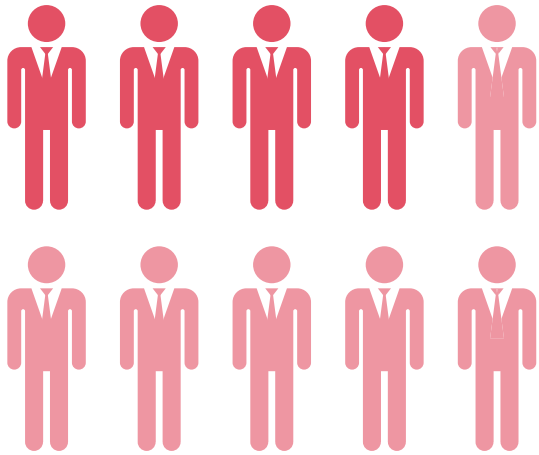
Prospects who are eligible for certain discounts

The possibilities are endless and vary greatly by industry, but the key is to identify distinct groups of consumers to tailor and deliver more personalized and effective messaging.

Four Best Practices for Effective Segmentation:

- 01 Develop useful buyer personas:** Using both objective and subjective data, identify the pain points, motivations, characteristics, and behaviors of your primary audience segments to create buyer personas that help you understand who's engaging with your brand and who's purchasing your products and services.
- 02 Start small and scale gradually:** With a few of those personas in tow, you can begin building segments. Start simple with 2-3 segments (e.g., website visitors, content downloaders, and existing customers) and then, as you uncover more customer insights, move toward developing in-depth segments that reflect your distinctive audience groups.
- 03 Continually gather critical information:** By implementing progressive profiling, you can increase conversions with shorter forms that ask new questions with each new visit following a form completion. Start basic by asking your visitors for their name and email address, and get more detailed over time to learn actionable insights such as company size, industry, budget, etc.
- 04 Test and optimize consistently:** Review the key performance indicators listed below and monitor how your campaigns are performing at regular intervals. Based on your results, you'll likely want to add new segments, update existing segments, and alter your messaging across audience groups. This practice will help you develop even more personalized campaigns that resonate with your audience.

THE NUMBERS TELL THE STORY



39%

of email marketers
that practice list segmentation
report better email open rates

Source: Data Markering & Analytics

56% OF PEOPLE
unsubscribe from emails
due to irrelevant content

Source: Chadwick Martin Bailey

OPT-OUT 

Segmented campaigns can lead to a

760%

increase in revenue



Source: Data Markering & Analytics

24%

of email marketers
that practice list segmentation
see an increase in sales leads

Source: Neil Patel



LEAD NURTURING

Building relationships with existing leads as you guide them through a carefully constructed buyer journey that reflects their primary pain points and offers useful solutions to these challenges. Lead nurturing often includes remarketing advertising, intelligent content and product recommendations, and automated email drip campaigns.

Four Best Practices for Effective Lead Nurturing:

- 01 Create and share content for each funnel stage:** Remember, nurturing is all about the big picture. You don't want to scare off your prospects with overtly sales-oriented content, so you have to deliver useful messaging at the right time to guide them through the funnel. This means delivering a nice mix of top, middle, and bottom-of-funnel messaging and content at each progressive touchpoint.
- 02 Take advantage of trigger opportunities:** Whenever a prospect becomes a genuine lead (i.e., unknown to known), you need to follow up as soon as possible. To do so, create trigger emails that fire off whenever someone on your website, social media outlets, or other digital properties takes a desired action — and make sure that the messaging of your trigger emails and collateral assets is relevant to how you're grouping this new lead in your segments. You can also launch remarketing campaigns that trigger whenever a prospect becomes a lead or whenever a lead takes progressive steps through the sales funnel.
- 03 Be consistent:** Modern consumers are a delicate bunch who don't want you flooding their inbox or placing hundreds of ads on their screen every day. So you need to be deliberate with your outreach, making sure not to bombard their digital space. The best way to do this is to establish a regular cadence that includes 2-3 touches per week (at most).
- 04 Align your sales and marketing efforts:** Despite the issues Sales and Marketing have had in the past, when it comes to nurturing your leads, the two teams need to make peace. You don't want to send mixed messages to potential customers, so make sure you have a clear hand-off strategy. If you have any messaging overlap prior to that hand-off, review each other's messaging to make sure that you're telling similar versions of the same story

THE NUMBERS TELL THE STORY



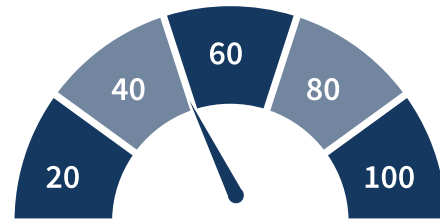
50%

of leads are qualified but not ready to buy

Source: Gleanster

80% of LEADS
never convert to sales,
mainly due to lack of
NURTURING

Source: Marketing Sherpa



Companies that excel at lead nurturing generate
50% more sales-ready leads at 33% less cost

Source: Forrester

Nurtured leads produce a
20% increase in sales opportunities

Source: CSO Insights



CONTENT MARKETING FOR CUSTOMER CONVERSION OPTIMIZATION

Four Best Practices for Effective Content Marketing:

- 01 Personalize your content:** If you're properly nurturing to accurate audience segments, you should know exactly what your leads want to learn about, when they want to learn it, and through which channels. This is your best opportunity to provide highly relevant, highly personalized collateral assets on multiple channels, so make sure your buyer personas are up to date and that your content speaks directly to each unique segment.
- 02 Create an even marketing mix:** Remember, when you're nurturing a lead, you're guiding them through the sales funnel gradually to engage, inform, and convert. Therefore, you need to have an equitable mix of content that satisfies every stage of the funnel.
 - **TOFU:** Blogs, eBooks, Infographics
 - **MOFU:** Case Studies, Checklists, Templates
 - **BOFU:** Product Demos, Comparisons, Webinars

Notice how the content proceeds from thought leadership to proof points to product-centric content?

Creating and distributing content that educates, entertains, and arms existing leads with the information they need to make informed purchasing decisions as they progress through their unique customer journey. Modern content marketing focuses on providing high-value thought leadership assets rather than sales-heavy promotional materials.

03 Set expectations early on: Your primary nurturing source is likely an email drip campaign. If so, you want to set expectations from jump street to avoid the Spam folder or unsubscribes. This means using value-based, concise email copy without jargon that clearly explains why you're emailing the lead, the purpose of the CTA in your email, and how often they can expect to hear from you in the future. Better yet, briefly outline the entire cadence (usually between 3-7 emails) to get them excited about what's coming down the pike.

04 Test and optimize your efforts: You can't know if your customer conversion campaigns are working if you're not properly tracking them from start to finish. Whenever you're A/B testing, be sure to only track one variable at a time to ensure accurate, actionable results. The most common element marketers test is the email subject line because achieving high open rates is fundamental to everything you want to achieve when email marketing. However, smart marketers test other elements once they have achieved success with their subject lines.

We recommend testing:

- Email copy
- CTAs
- Media types (images, gifs, memes, videos, podcasts)
- Form type and length
- Headlines
- Proof points

From there, gather the data and swap out new material for the losing variant. Continue to repeat the process throughout the lifetime of the campaign.

THE NUMBERS TELL THE STORY



Personalized subject lines increase open rates up to

50%

Source: Yes Marketing

Content marketing costs **62% less** than traditional marketing and can generate up to **3x** as many leads

Source: Demand Metric

The ideal blog length is **7 minutes** which is the equivalent of about **1,600 words**

Source: Buffer

Email marketing has an ROI of \$40 for every dollar spent



Source: Smart Insights

HOW SOCIAL PLAYS A ROLE IN LEAD CONVERSION

Building relationships with existing leads as you guide them through a carefully constructed buyer journey that reflects their primary pain points and offers useful solutions to these challenges. Lead nurturing often includes remarketing advertising, intelligent content and product recommendations, and automated email drip campaigns.

Four Best Practices for Effective Social Media Nurturing:

- 01 Be authentic to make real connections:** Modern marketers know that crafting compelling and genuine stories will generate more business, so focus on creating connections rather than filling a posting quota for the day. And when your prospects and customers reach out (good or bad), respond! This is a great opportunity to showcase your brand personality while engaging with customers and resolving issues on a very public forum.
- 02 Provide useful information:** Thought leadership content inspires trust and positions you as a credible source of truth in your sphere. Creating and distributing top-of-funnel gated content will help you capture valuable contact information that you can use to nurture prospects through email and remarketing campaigns. This will turn warm prospects into hot leads that you can then pass to Sales to close the deal. It's a win-win for everyone!
- 03 Don't promote, present:** Modern consumers are more equipped and likely than ever to perform thorough research and conduct their due diligence before any transaction — especially in the B2B space, where sales cycles are typically longer. This level of transparency and access also means that the days sales-heavy self-promotion are over. When creating your social campaigns, you should focus on helping your end users find effective solutions to their pain points — not “We're the best!” but rather “We're here to help!”
- 04 Stay on brand:** Brand consistency is more than your name, slogan, and logo (although those are the centerpieces); it also includes the positioning of your brand. Your tone, voice, promise, and values are all elements of your brand positioning, and they should be consistent across the board. For instance, your verbiage can be more playful on Instagram than LinkedIn, but the message you're trying to convey should be steady on all your social channels. Compelling and consistent branding make companies memorable, which translates into more visibility, more opportunities, and more sales.

THE NUMBERS TELL THE STORY



83%

of people who Tweet a company and receive a response are more likely to do business with them

Source: *Twitter for Business*

LinkedIn accounts
for over 80%
of all B2B social
media leads



Source: *LinkedIn for Business*

37% of consumers
ranked social media as
their go-to source for
purchasing decisions

Source: *Price Waterhouse Cooper*

71%

of consumers who have had a positive experience with a brand on social are likely to recommend the organization to others

Source: *Ambassador Academy*



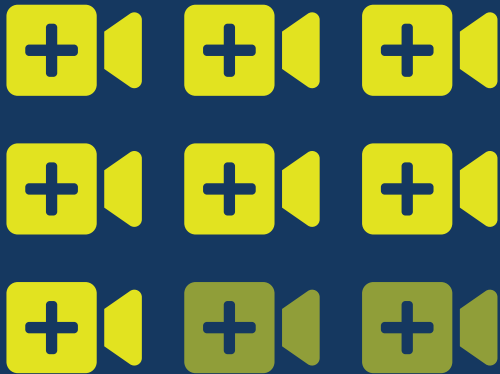
USE WEBINARS TO EDUCATE AND IMPRESS

Four Best Practices for Using Webinars to Nurture Leads:

- 01 Ensure attendance:** The average marketing webinar attendance rate across industries is only 36% (2), which means you have to nurture your registrants after they've committed to the webinar in order for them to attend. Once the individual registers, send a trigger email to thank them for registering. Then, stop the invite cadence and drop them in a new automated email nurture campaign that reminds them of the date, time, and benefits of the webinar over a similar timeframe as the one above.
- 02 Repurpose the content:** Producing a webinar takes a ton of work (writing, designing, promoting, logistics, etc.), so you might as well make the most of these valuable content assets by hosting them as gated assets across your marketing channels. Share your webinar on social media. Post webinar CTAs throughout your website on relevant pages. Update the callouts in your blogs to include links to your new material. Better yet, include the webinar as an email CTA in your automated nurture campaigns!
- 03 Drop webinar leads into relevant automated email campaigns:** Every webinar should have a distinct topic. And if a given topic is deemed important enough to have its own webinar, you likely have some additional content around that topic. If so, you should build email nurture campaigns around the webinar. First, send the webinar in your initial follow-up email, and then send 3-4 more emails with related material (eBooks, blogs, infographics, other webinars). Your final email should thank them for their interest, include links to every asset you've already provided, and invite them to make a purchase, secure a demo, or complete a handraiser form.
- 04 Retarget webinar registrants and attendees:** Once you have a lead's contact information via webinar registration or attendance, you should reach out to them on multiple channels to nurture the lead into a customer. In addition to social and email, you can retarget these leads through paid social, Google Ads, and Microsoft Advertising (formerly Bing Ads). Retargeting allows you to segment your ads to key audience groups and also keeps your brand top of mind with key decision makers and consumers. Two important things to remember: 1) keep your ads relevant for each recipient, and 2) don't oversaturate their online experience with too many ads and touchpoints. Basically, stay on message and use your best judgment.

Webinars help you position your organization as a thought leader while also adding a more engaging and interactive content element that you can repurpose to convert leads into customers. The goal here is to provide value, so focus on positioning yourself as a thought leader within your space rather than attempting to deliver the hard sell.

THE NUMBERS TELL THE STORY



73%

OF B2B MARKETERS

and sales leaders say webinars are the best way to generate high-quality leads

Source: BigMarker

email drives **57%**
of webinar registrations



Source: GoToWebinar

30%
of webinar attendees become
qualified leads

Source: ReadyTalk

29%

OF ATTENDEES

don't register until the day of the event







Source: Medium



KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Social media marketing provides another channel for Gathering and analyzing key data points will help you establish a baseline of success, identify areas for improvement, and continue to make the case for further lead nurturing with key stakeholders at your organization. But you need to know which numbers to pay attention to separate the vanity metrics from the actual key performance metrics.

This list will help you evaluate the success of your campaigns.

-  **Open Rate:** The number of emails opened divided by the number of nurturing emails sent. Good email open rates are usually reflective of quality subject lines, subscriber familiarity and trust, and a low spam rate.
-  **Click-Through Rate (CTR):** The number of clicks divided by the number of nurture emails sent. This is a great indicator of how your lead nurturing campaigns are performing over a defined period of time. This metric tells you if your subject lines are working and how relevant your copy and CTAs are to your subscribers.
-  **Click-to-Open Rate (CToR):** The number of clicks on the calls-to-action (CTAs) within your nurture emails divided by the number of opens. CTR is where the rubber really meets the road because it means that your subscribers are interested in what you're offering, what you're saying, and how you're saying it.
-  **Unsubscribe Rate:** The number of people who choose to unsubscribe from your nurture email list divided by the number of emails delivered. This is an especially crucial KPI because it lets you know if your recipients aren't finding your emails useful or valuable, motivating you to improve your nurture campaigns.
-  **Spam Rate:** The number of nurture emails sent to the Spam folder divided by the number of nurture emails sent. When an email is sent to the Spam folder, it triggers a message to your email service provider. Over time, consistent Spam complaints can seriously damage your email reputation and deliverability, which can decimate your lead nurturing efforts.
-  **Conversion Rate:** Along with low Spam and Unsubscribe rates, a high conversion rate is one of your greatest indicators of success. It measures the number of conversions resulting directly from your email nurture campaigns divided by the number of nurture emails sent. Depending on your goals for your lead nurturing campaign, a conversion could mean several different things: a purchase, free trial sign-up, event registration, product demo, or content download.

WHY IS CONVERTING LEADS INTO CUSTOMERS SO IMPORTANT?

As marketers, we work extremely hard to convert prospects into leads, which is why it's so mind-boggling that so few organizations focus on converting those leads into customers through lead segmentation, lead nurturing, and conversion-optimized content. Instead, they alert and activate their sales team far too early in the process, and this over-aggressive approach leads to unanswered phone calls, emails, social media messages, smoke signals (you name it) — effectively eliminating any chance for converting solid leads into loyal customers.

Effective omnichannel marketing is about patience, persistence, and process, but if you're not working to earn your prospects' trust throughout the sales cycle, you're not adhering to any of these tenets. What's the point of all that hard work gathering those leads if we're not going to guide them through the funnel to get them more interested before unleashing the hounds?

Odds are that leads that are passed to Sales rather than nurtured properly either won't get worked effectively or they won't get worked at all and be sent back to Marketing. But by now, you've wasted your opportunity to get in front of those leads in a timely fashion, and they're likely already researching and considering your competitors!

If this sounds familiar, we strongly recommend you take our advice above to heart. Nurturing your leads is not only a more effective path toward gaining new customers, but it's also a far better use of your resources, as it allows your sales team to focus on more promising leads and your marketing team to focus on automating personalized campaigns with a greater degree of creativity and passion.

Or, if you're not quite ready to have that level of conversation yet, you might be interested in our companion eBook, "How to Win More Deals," which covers the entire spectrum of generating organizational revenue — from demand generation best practices to how marketing automation bridges the gap between Sales and Marketing for better visibility, teamwork, and lead handoffs.

If you're interested in converting promising leads into loyal customers, you might also be considering a marketing automation platform that is easy to use and known for delivering fast time to value. If so, [please schedule a demo](#) with one of our marketing automation experts!



ABOUT ACT-ON SOFTWARE

Act-On Software is the world's growth marketing leader, offering solutions that empower marketers to move beyond the lead and engage targets at every step of the customer lifecycle. Act-On makes customer data actionable so marketers can strategize smart, effective solutions to grow their businesses and generate higher customer lifetime value – all with the fastest time-to-value.



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