



A Guide to Lead Nurturing
 **active internet marketing®**

Introduction



Sales are the lifeblood of any business. Without customers, you won't be a business for very long. Marketing creates the leads that turn into sales. Taking a new lead from that initial contact all the way to the final sale is a process called lead nurturing – and it's critical for your company.

We all know, on some level, that lead nurturing is important. But do you realize just how important?

That means almost 2/3rds of the leads you get from your latest hotshot marketing campaign are actually ready to make a purchase or hire your company. The other 73% of those leads need to be nurtured – through phone, through text, through email, and sometimes even face to face. You have to make a plan, create a process, and track results. Marketing is step one of growing your business. Lead nurturing is next. Without a detailed plan, you aren't going to see the results you want.

ONLY
27%

**OF B2B LEADS ARE SALES-READY
WHEN FIRST GENERATED.**

So, before you set the sales team loose on the latest batch of contacts that filled out your awesome optimized conversion form on your website, take some time to think of how you're going to move them from a semi-interested prospect to a new customer.

This guide will take you through the process of lead nurturing. In the first chapter, we'll learn about the fundamentals of lead nurturing. You'll gain new insight into how valuable a good nurturing program can be, and the basics of a lead nurturing process.

In the next chapters, we'll help you put together a nurturing plan for three specific channels. We'll look at email, text messaging, and phone calls.

Finally, we'll put it all together with a sample plan for nurturing that you can tweak and apply to your business.





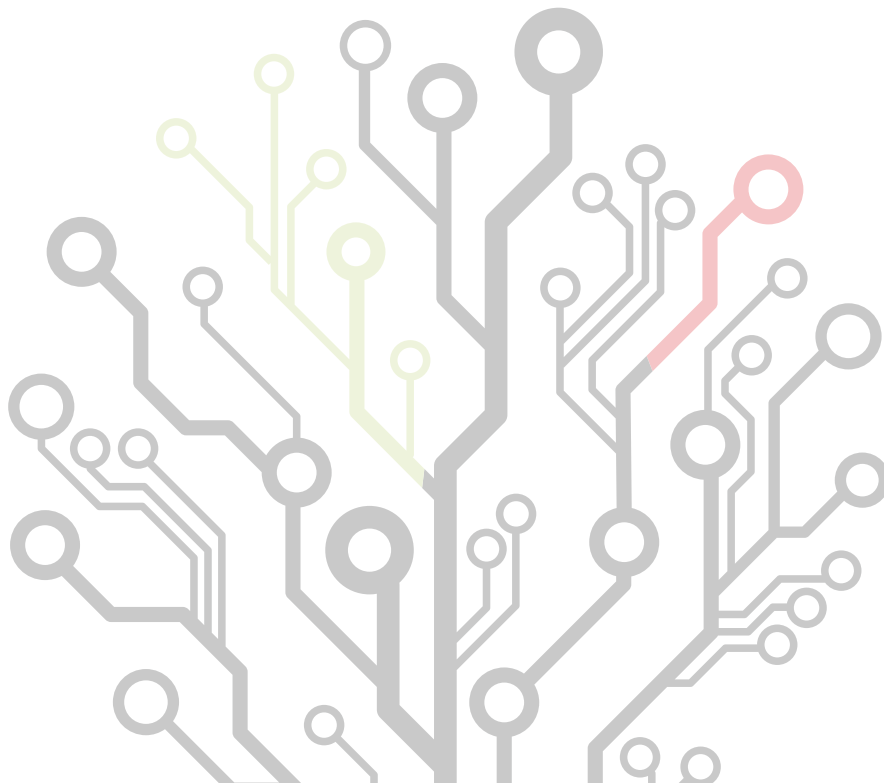
Your marketing team just put together a thoroughly researched, well-designed, appealing ebook related to your services. Everyone is proud of the work. It's launched on your website and you have a detailed promotional plan that props it up. You get hundreds of new visitors to your website, and many of them fill out the contact form to download your piece.

But... you've only got two sales people on staff. And now they have dozens of new leads.

Now, you could have them get on the phone right away. Sales script in hand, they start dialing. After a few calls, it becomes obvious that many of the people who filled out the form aren't exactly ready to buy your service. They were doing research. Or they are a competitor looking at what you are doing. Maybe they needed it for a piece of their own.

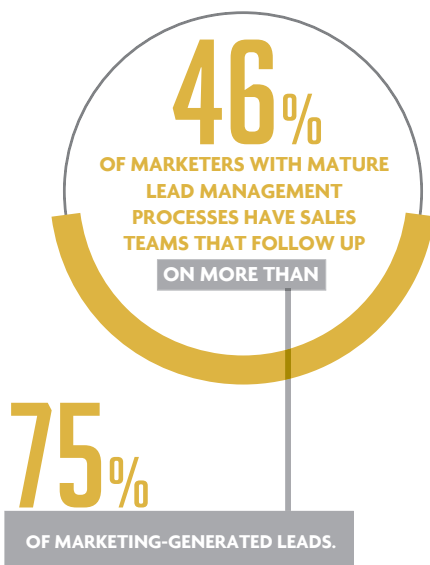
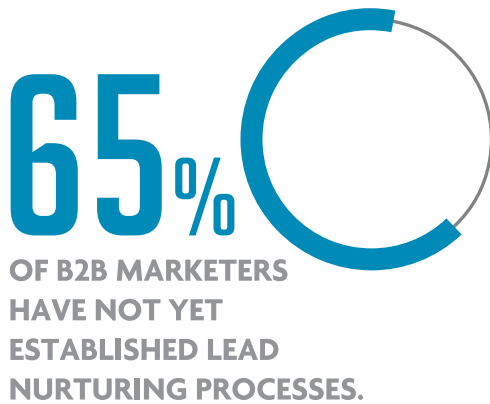
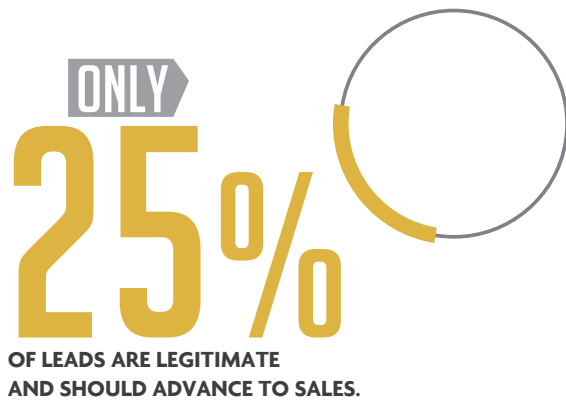
Whatever the reason, your sales team has spent precious time entering info, doing a background check, and talking on the phone – with no result. And the lack of result doesn't even have anything to do with their sales ability, because these are leads that simply weren't going to buy today. This strategy can work. You might get lucky and hit a couple hot leads. You might have enough time and bandwidth to make this profitable. You might get some sales. But “might” isn't exactly reassuring, and it certainly isn't optimal.

A properly implemented lead nurturing plan takes all those leads and refines them – so that your sales team doesn't have to on the fly. With a little planning and a little more communication, your team can have a list of actionable leads, and the information they need to slowly turn the rest into hot leads themselves.



Lead Nurturing Stats You Need to Know

A story is great. Numbers are better. Let's take a look at some lead nurturing statistics that hammer home the importance of this process:



Lead Nurturing Basics

You've got a pile of leads from your latest marketing campaign. You aren't going to repeat previous mistakes and send the sales team chasing after everyone with no plan and no direction. You're going to nurture these leads, qualify them even more, and attack with a real strategy. How do you do that?

Lead nurturing is much more than simply contacting your leads and giving them some generic preparation before your sales rep reaches them.

A simple definition is:

A process of building relationships by creating a two way dialog – and ensuring all expectations are met and a clean hand-off to sales is done and done at the right time.

We want every interaction with a lead to have a purpose, and build towards a sale. Whether it's a text or a phone call, there needs to be a goal. Maybe it's to get them scheduled for a demo, maybe it's to get them to bring in a higher level decision maker – whatever it is, it needs to be defined, and it needs to be advanced each time you reach out. That's the goal of lead nurturing.

Fundamentals of Lead Nurturing

Get all team members on board – Lead nurturing is based on trust and consistency, therefore getting your entire management and sales team on board is crucial to the overall success of your strategy. You won't be able to get your lead to the decision-making process if they do not trust who they are communicating with or haven't had a constant dialog. Make sure that everyone understands the reason for the program, and the reason behind each step.

Don't put your eggs all in one basket – Simply put, you want to establish lead nurturing programs with multiple media types and channels of communication. You might find that a certain channel, like email, performs far above other channels for your industry. Perhaps your potential leads are highly engaged with social media, and Twitter follow up works for you. The key, again, is tracking. See what performs best, and don't be afraid to experiment. There's always room for improvement.

Find the balance between “too often” and “not often enough” – Figuring out the right amount of contact for a new lead can be challenging. Depending on the media type used, this can be different. You need to be flexible and willing to adjust your frequency and content relevancy as needed. This is where robust tracking software can help. Relying on your instincts and your experience is great, but having hard data is even better. A good CRM can measure each step of your program and provide valuable feedback on how your nurturing is really working. Buy-in is critical again here – if the sales team doesn't accurately track interactions, your data isn't going to work.

Not all leads are worth nurturing – In other words, you need to create a priority filter with all leads coming in and properly funnel them based on that priority level. This will not only save you time, but will also keep you on budget. As you gather data and experience, you'll be able to better pre-qualify a lead and determine how much effort should go into winning them over.

With that information in mind, it's time to work on specifics. You need to determine how often to contact, through what channels you are going to reach out, and what information or content you're going to communicate with.

How Much is Too Much?

As we learned above, lead nurturing is a type of automation focused on leads that are not yet ready to buy. Developing lead nurturing campaigns adds a sufficient value to your leads that establishes a greater brand preference. The tough part is determining the right amount of lead nurturing and coordinating concurrent campaigns.

Each business model is different, but it is said that there is a sweet spot between 5 and 10 campaigns being run concurrently, depending on your business size and number of leads being generated. More than this has been documented to be too overwhelming and distracting.

5 Steps for Creating a Success

1. Define Your Audience or Segment

You first need to know who needs lead nurturing and who your campaign is going to target. If you are running 5 different campaigns, this step is crucial so targeted leads are not being overworked.

First, you need to know who you are targeting. You might already have personas and demographic details on your customers. If you don't, you need to get to work on creating them. Knowing your customers will help you develop campaigns that work. If the majority of your leads aren't especially tech-savvy, you might want to shy away from social media or text messaging campaigns. If you have worldwide leads, a phone campaign might be logistically challenging.

Don't assume that you know everything about your audience based on your experience. The human mind isn't always the most reliable indicator of reality. Do the necessary research, gather the data, and compare it to what you think you know already. The true picture might surprise you.

2. Offer Something of Value First

We are nurturing a lead, not closing a lead. If the customer isn't ready to buy, the hard sell isn't going to work. You want to guide your lead from generalized interest to true desire for your product or service. Keep your content informative and helpful, and don't get too salesy to start. People want to know what you can offer them, not the other way around.

A good nurturing tactic would be to send a personalized email with some more information on the topic that got them into your system in the first place – maybe another ebook or a PDF, or an informative video. Something that expands on what they were interested in originally, with a personal touch.

A poor nurturing tactic would be to send a text asking them what you can do to get them to buy today. That type of hard sell might work on a car lot, but is easy to ignore via email or text.

3. Set Objectives and Goals

Determining an overall goal for your campaign and an objective for each touch should be outlined prior to contact. Pick offers and messaging that will apply to your desired target.

If your goal is to get them to have a phone conversation, make sure you mention that. Offer something of value, and offer to walk them through it with more insight. Suggest a time to chat. Do something, somewhere, in your contact that moves you closer to that goal. If they resist, it's ok. They might just need some more nurturing.

Contact without a purpose won't move your lead further along the process. Make sure you've developed a call-to-action, and centered your message around achieving that goal.

4. Set a Timeline for Each Contact

Setting a timeline, or a roadmap, is important to the overall success of your campaign. You will want to space out your touches within the overall timeline and goal to point of sale. Patience is important to all lead nurturing campaigns.

Devising a timeline will help you visualize the entire nurturing process. It will also keep your team on track. With an automated solution, you can program in contacts like texts and emails to happen automatically, with your team reporting on the results when they come in. If you are doing everything manually, your timeline will keep the process moving smoothly through the weeks.

One of the main goals of lead nurturing is to make sure that leads who aren't ready to buy right away are turned into customers – and a timeline makes sure that your team reaches out to them as well, instead of spending all their available time on what they view as prospects closer to a sale.

5. Evaluate Your Success, Modify as Needed

Before you move on to the next campaign, you will want to evaluate the one you just finished. Re-work types of contact (email vs. text message, etc.); re-work headings and verbiage as you find out what worked and what didn't. Lead nurturing campaigns are very effective if done correctly, which makes this step the most important.

This is where tracking and analytics really shine. With a good analytics solution, you'll be able to see who opened your emails, who clicked on links, what pages they visited, how long they spent reading, and tons of other juicy details. With that type of insight, you can refine even the most successful campaigns into something better.

Chapter One Summary

Now you know the importance of lead nurturing, what it can add to your business, and the best practices for creating a campaign. Remember, nurturing leads can be different for every business model – the important thing is to create a good strategy that fits your business.

Text messaging, emails, phone calls, newsletters and social media are only a short list of tools in your tool belt that could be used to properly convert your leads to sales-ready. Over the next three chapters, we will look at how to use these channels to reach out to prospects and move them one step closer to a sale.





The days of following up with a direct-mail piece or a simple phone call are fading fast, if not completely extinct. In today's fast paced world, people expect immediate gratification, and this affects the way we market and respond to leads. People do not have the time, nor will they take the time, to sit on the phone for 30 minutes discussing the pros and cons of your business without some nurturing.

Texting is no longer the province of bored teens. With the rise in smartphone ownership, it's becoming a standard method of communication for all generations. Incorporating text messaging into your lead nurturing plan can be a big boost.

Texting: A New Way of Sales and Lead Nurturing

Texting has become a major communication channel for both business and personal issues over the past few years. For instance, did you realize that 68% of people have sent a love note via text in the past year? Did you know that 62% of marketers using or planning to use automated text messaging in the next 12 months? Texting isn't just for kids, anymore – it's a viable way to grow your business and nurture relationships with prospects.

With that kind of participation, it's no surprise that marketers have become interested in the channel. What does this mean for lead nurturing campaigns?

Since the text is a bit more personal than an email, you need to be doubly sure that the content you are providing is actually valuable. You need to make sure that your prospect is at least open to receiving the communication, and you need to be sure to not over-communicate in this channel. You don't want to turn a potential sale into an enemy because you couldn't stop spamming their cell phone inbox with witty text messages.

In today's fast paced world, it is very convenient for your prospects to communicate with you via text message and/or email as most people have some sort of smart phone or tablet with them at all times. But how do you get started incorporating texting into your campaigns? Let's turn to the world of dating and relationships for some pointers on an effective text marketing campaign.

For many people, it is simply more convenient to receive a simple text message with small amounts of data than a lengthy email or clearing the time for a phone conversation. This does a few things, it allows them to respond as they have time as well as review when it is convenient for them. In addition, it gives your lead a way to receive information immediately, making them feel important and like you truly care. This builds that trust and two way dialog between you and your prospect.

In this chapter, we'll examine how to effectively add a text message component to your lead nurturing campaign. We will look at stats that show the popularity of texting for business communication, the best ways to send an effective text, and how to work that into your overall strategy.

9.6
TRILLION
ESTIMATED TOTAL
MESSAGES SENT
WORLDWIDE IN 2012



Dating vs. Marketing/Sales

It may seem awkward to compare dating and sales, but it's actually astonishing to see how similar the stages really are. Courting a new customer and courting a new romantic partner might seem unrelated, but they both involve a series of careful moves, some healthy skepticism, and a bit of back and forth to achieve a result.

Below are the stages of both dating and text messaging (marketing/sales). Laugh along with me as you read through them.

Get Permission –

With dating you usually get a verbal commitment or another sort of confirmation before the date is set. Likewise with sending text messages, your prospect should definitely have the option to opt-in to your communications. Sending unsolicited marketing texts to a prospect can end a potential business relationship before it even starts – just like receiving a message from a potential mate that you didn't even realize had your phone number might be a tad on the creepy side.

Keep it Short –

52% said “thinking of you” is the most common text message while first dating. Likewise it is recommended for a marketing campaign to keep the texts concise. “Thinking of you” might be an awkward choice for a business communication, but the general point stands – use text to send short messages that keep you top of mind but don't overwhelm your prospect. You wouldn't send an “I love you” manifesto after a first date, so don't try to hard sell your prospect in the first week through a text barrage.

Timing is Everything –

24% say that a slow response time for text messaging is a huge turnoff while dating. Likewise, timing your text messages after another form of communication or to follow-up are the best use for text campaigns. You could set up your program to send a text after someone signs up for a download, as a confirmation. Or you could automatically send them a certain number of hours before a scheduled interaction as a reminder. You could send them as quick follow-up to a meeting. Use your analytics to examine and track when the messages are best received and read, and adjust from there.

Set the Stage –

34% of texters who are dating say they prefer to get a confirmation of the date via text message. Likewise, texting during the sales process allows your prospect to confirm data and/or appointments. Use this channel for a quick check-in to make sure the demo is still on for Thursday or to see if they received your latest collateral piece – don't use it to try and setup important meetings or communicate a lot of vital information. The semi-formal nature of texting makes it less than ideal for serious business communication, but great for confirmation and check-ins.

Make it Crystal Clear –

84% believe that it is common to misunderstand a text message from your date. Avoid this same miscommunication by keeping your messages clear and to the point. Don't use abbreviations that might confuse a prospect. Re-read your message to make sure there's no way to interpret it differently. If you are making an offer, make that offer clear. If you have more information available on a topic, include a link that expands on the offering. Whatever you send, make it as simple as possible.

Tips for Using Text Messaging to Nurture Leads Properly

We've learned the basic tenants of text messaging, so let's dive into some of the more specific points your team needs to keep in mind while they create your text messaging lead nurturing campaign:

Keep it simple – So important that it makes both lists. A text message is not a newsletter, or even an email. Content needs to be short and to the point. You want to acknowledge your lead without overwhelming them. Try to stick to a message that is less than 140 characters. That will work out to one or two quick sentences. If the point is too complicated to be explained in that length, then it's probably too important to be relegated to a text message. Hop on the phone or write an email instead.

Require sign-up and offer unsubscribe feature – Text messaging, like other forms of communication, should be something your lead subscribes to. It shouldn't be something you buy lists for and spam people with. There are cost associated both for you as a business and for them as a consumer. In order to properly nurture leads with text messages, they should be leads who come to you and sign-up for your communications. Unsolicited text messages are spam, plain and simple. If they didn't request to be included in your list, don't even bother.

Stay top of mind –Text messaging is different than other communication and can be more frequent if done correctly. For example, some customers get text messages from a bank on a daily basis telling them about account balances and possible offers. Customers willingly sign up for this service and aren't bothered by the regular messages. Your prospects may not be as willing to sign up for marketing messages on a daily basis, but if you add value to their life, they could be.

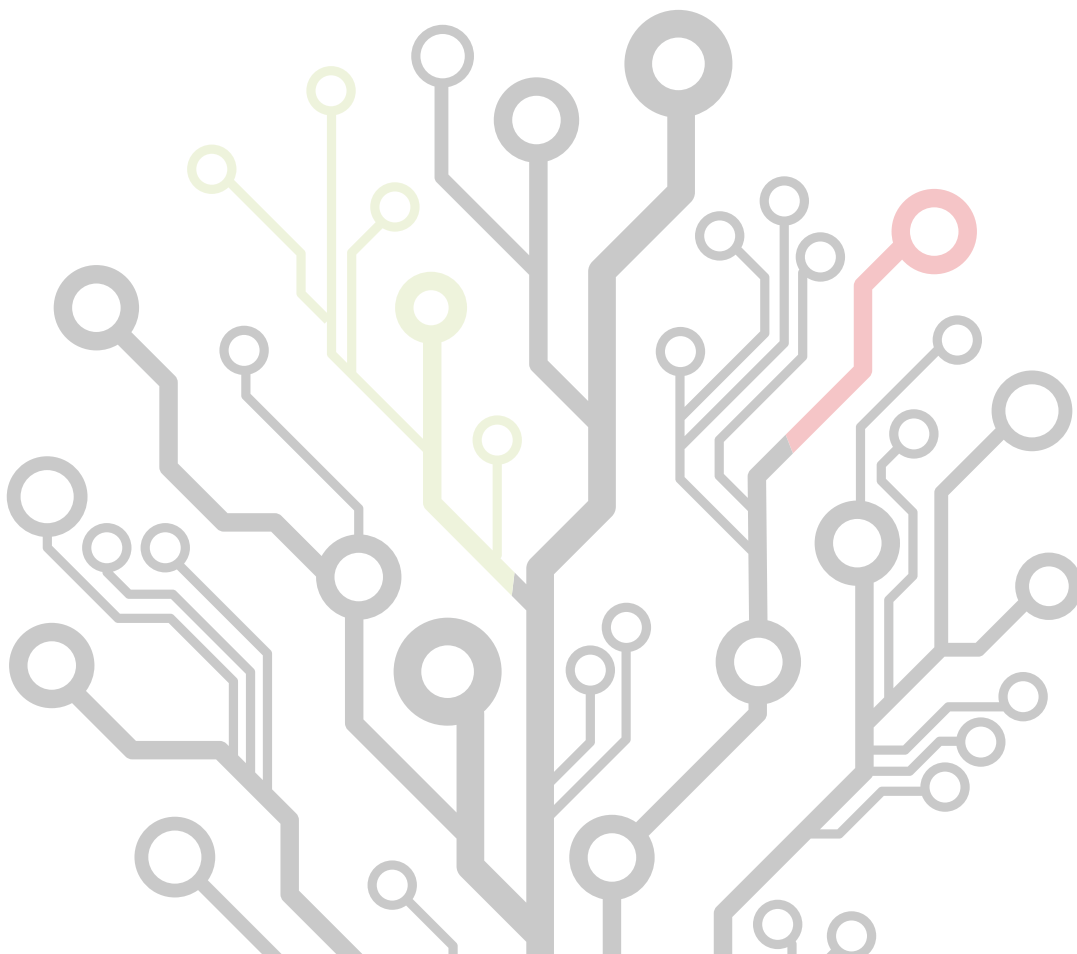
Don't oversell, let your company sell itself –This is easy - don't brag and show off every good thing your company has done. Relate to your new lead and answer the questions they need. There is no reason to bombard them with all of your successes for the past 10 years. Keep it relevant, and in a word, "simple". Your lead likely doesn't need a text from you informing them of the deal that just closed or an alert for every new post on your company blog. Keep the information targeted to them and their needs, and how you can help make their life easier.

Pre-populate quality content –Based on each level of interaction with your new lead, you will want to have pre-populated content so your team is not only consistent between team members but also able to respond quickly and in timely manner. Some companies will invest in a software system to do this for them and minimize the time their sales agents spend nurturing leads. Think of common scenarios where you're going to use a text, and then craft some standard messages. Leave a little room for personalization, but remember that the goal is short and clear communication – so there isn't much room to get too personal.

Summary

The rise in popularity of lead nurturing is no surprise to most in today's struggling economy. There doesn't seem to be the same amount of low hanging fruit to grab, so marketers have had to get more creative and more diligent with building relationships to make their leads or prospects sales ready. Sales cycles have increased due to worries about future economic growth and a general trend towards more responsibility in spending. Your typical time from initial contact to final sale might have gone up by months over the past decade. You need to find a way to keep your product and services in the minds of buyers during these long cycles, and texting is one new way to do that.

Text messaging is one of those new and innovative ways to do just that. It is not a stand-alone lead nurturing technique though; it is one that needs to be paired with your other lead nurturing tactics. Aligning text messaging with your other efforts will help give you the success you are looking for (for less money) in the long run.





Think about your typical day. You probably check your personal email within a few minutes of waking up in the morning, before you head to work. You scan for anything that actually looks personal or important, and send a few blasts or newsletters to the archive.

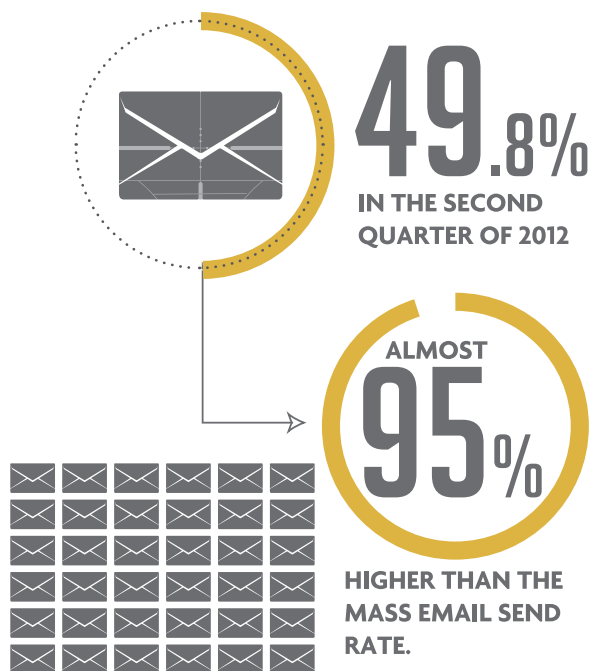
You head into work, and check your inbox for urgent matters. Emails from clients, notes about projects – the messages you need to read to provide the best service possible to your customers. You probably also skim over some pieces from lists that you joined many moons ago, some you might not even remember joining. If you're motivated, you might unsubscribe from a particularly annoying campaign, but that assumes you can find the unsubscribe function in the first place.

In some ways, email has replaced the phone as our go-to form of communication. Telemarketing, hampered by Do-Not-Call laws and caller-ID, is not near the scourge it

once was. These days, we get spam emails that ask us to accept bank transfers from foreign countries, reminders from message boards we don't remember joining, free offers from companies we have never heard of, and so much more. Like a phone number, your email address is bought and sold by marketing companies looking for leads. And like unsolicited telemarketing, unsolicited emails don't endear you to your clients.

That doesn't mean email isn't a viable way to grow your business and nurture leads. Email is still an effective communication channel and still should have a piece of your marketing plan. The key to email lead nurturing is simple – you must provide value. Your messages must have a point. You must be working to a goal. In short, you must make it worthwhile for your team, your business, and your lead. Email is a powerful lead nurturing tool, but you have to execute.

5 Vital Email Marketing Statistics:



Email lead nurturing is a process by which leads are tracked and developed into sales-qualified leads through the process of using content rich emails. The objective of lead nurturing with emails is to guide prospects on an educational journey that moves them to a qualified state, in which they are sales- ready, to be shipped off to your sales team. Let's take a look at the best practices for your email lead nurturing campaigns.

Best Practices for Email Lead Nurturing

Setting up an automated lead nurturing campaign that uses email is a standard practice for many businesses. It's easy to do, and there's plenty of evidence supporting its effectiveness. However, you'd be shocked by the number of companies that are just plain doing it wrong. Whether it's poorly constructed emails, bad timing, or a lack of value, they aren't getting the return they expected. Following these best practices will help you create a campaign that adds to your bottom line.

Process and Approach

In order to build a proper email lead nurturing strategy, you need to hone in on your buyer's cycle. You will need to map out your typical buyer in the form of a persona, giving you the framework to lead prospects through the proper sales cycle. Your approach moving forward will reflect what you learned in your typical buyer's research. Examining the buying cycle can give you better insight into your marketing as a whole – allowing you to tailor your efforts to how people actually interact with your business.

Personalization

A real person should be designated to handle all incoming emails for your company to ensure that prospects can actually reply and start up a dialog. Automated solutions can help with making sure that emails reach a person who can respond in person, speeding up the process without removing the person touch.

In addition to assigning a real person, you want to also personalize each email before it goes out. A “personalized” email can still be a bulk email. The customization comes into play by sorting your prospect lists prior to sending. Even adding the prospect name in a natural manner to a pre-written email can add a level of authenticity that a form email wouldn't normally reach. Taking the time to add non-boilerplate content to the email can really up the interaction level. People see so many “personalized” automated emails that it isn't terribly difficult for them to discern between a reply that took some effort on your part and a reply that is just using a form.

Tone

The first set of emails that go out to a prospect should have a friendly and authentic tone. They should not be pushy, salesy or too informative. You probably aren't going to close the sale in your first email. Trying to close right away can push away the prospect and submarine a potential deal long before the negotiation phase of the process.

Make sure that your initial emails get across your services and excitement about working with them, but don't push so hard they feel pressured. Your time to close isn't now. This is the time to start moving your lead to the points that you want them to understand.

Content and Message Consistency

The key to nurturing success is great content and message consistency. Great content urges a response and gets one. The content needs to be inviting yet informational, which can be a hard balance to find.

In order to create consistency, a developmental content plan should be put in place to map out your entire thought process before you begin. This way you will be certain all campaign efforts align. Look for inspiration in your own inbox. Is there a company that nails it? Is there a company that sends blasts and newsletters that you actually enjoy seeing? Examine these effective messages and think about how those techniques can be incorporated into your campaigns and adapted for your market.

Timing and Frequency

This aspect is crucial to the overall success of your email lead nurturing campaign. You need to find a balance between “too much” and “too little” when lead nurturing. You don’t want someone to get overwhelmed with emails, yet you don’t want them to forget about you either. There is a delicate balance to find and it could take a few tries to maximize your results.

Use your analytics and tracking to determine the best time for emails. Perhaps sending them first thing in the morning gets you a higher open rate. Maybe holding off until afternoon makes them stand out more. Use the tools you have to find the best way to reach out to your customers – and make segments if there are differences. There’s a million ways to track, optimize, and report on automated email campaigns, so don’t be afraid to use them.

Getting Started with Lead Nurturing Emails:

- Email lead nurturing can be, and often is, implemented incorrectly. The number one rule in any lead nurturing campaign is that “It’s not about you” – it is about the buyer.

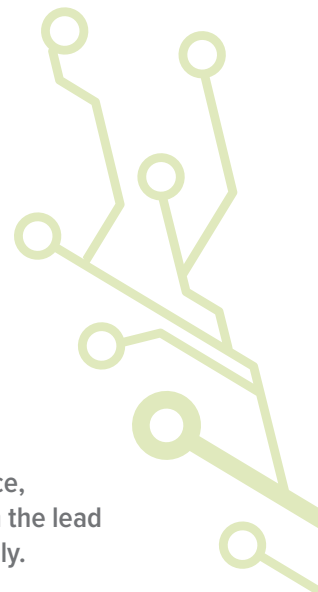
Develop and analyze your buyer’s cycle, set up the framework and then evaluate with your sales team. All of these steps should be done with the buyer in mind, not what is best for the business or bottom line.

- Focus on content and what your buyer wants to see and learn. Good quality content that is delivered in a timely and dependable fashion will be taken more seriously. If you don’t put real effort into your messages, your lead won’t put real effort into reading them. If you provide legitimate value, your lead will appreciate it.

Creating quality content will also help you develop a level of trust and rapport with your prospect. They will see you as an authority and as someone with a real knowledge about your product and space, and that helps you down the road when it’s time to close the sale. Remember that every interaction in the lead nurturing process builds up that trust and relationship, and structure your email campaigns accordingly.

- Marketing automation software can offer you a great deal of flexibility and configurability when it comes to designing and implementing an email lead nurturing program. You can have an email sent when the lead responds to a message, fills out a form, or at certain time intervals. The amount of customization and segmentation is amazing.

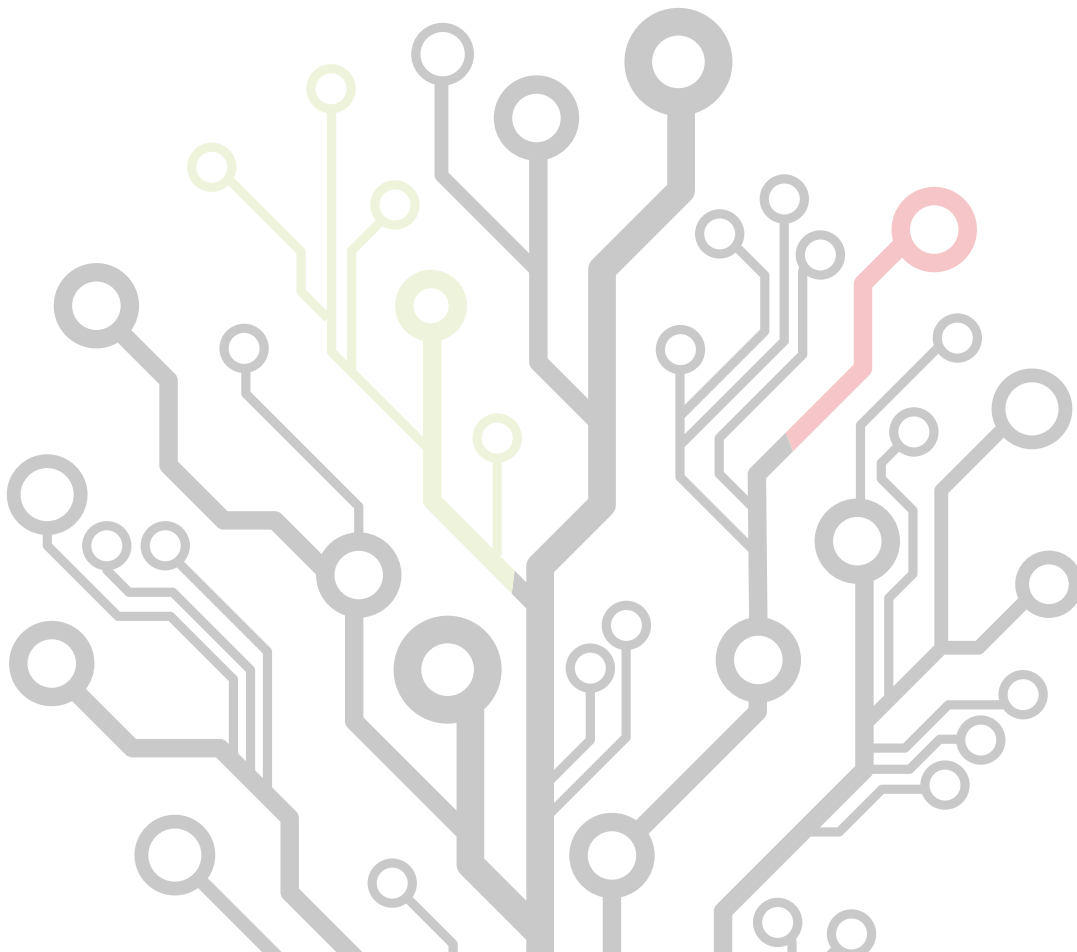
However, with that said, you need to develop your pipeline and framework ahead of time. Technology can be an enabler, and if your due diligence isn’t done ahead of time, it is not of any use to you, your sales team or your prospect. Automation can go overboard, as well. You don’t want to bombard a prospect with a message every 3 hours just because you can. You need to analyze your frequency and content to make sure that what you are sending makes sense.



Summary

Email lead nurturing is an important part of your overall lead nurturing campaign and should be used along with other tools such as text messaging and phone calls.

Develop a campaign that fits your business model and your typical buyer's persona. Provide value and analyze your campaign for effectiveness. Do these two things right and you will begin to see success and an increase in sales-ready leads.





Text, email, remarketing, PPC, SEO – there’s a lot of ways to reach your prospective clients and leads in this day and age. When it comes to lead nurturing, it’s easy to get wrapped up in fancy automation and targeted messaging – but you shouldn’t forget the old-standby of sales: the phone call.

A phone call builds relationships. You hear your customer speak, they hear your confidence, and you have a chance to build some rapport with each other. It’s personal, it’s highly targeted, and it’s an opportunity to really get to the bottom of what is driving their decision in a one-to-one conversation.

The phone is also easy to overlook or misuse. It’s tempting to jump into a hard sell, or get distracted and not give full attention to your lead. Listening is a valuable skill, it’s critical to a successful phone call, and it’s not something everyone is inherently good at.

The phone call is a chance to unlock a wealth of information about your lead. It’s a chance to reassure them you can provide what they need, and it’s a chance to build a lasting relationship. But to make it work, you need to follow the fundamentals.

Lead Nurturing Phone Calls & Fundamentals

Nailing the basics is crucial to a lead nurturing phone call campaign. Yes, that means getting the name and number right – but so much more as well. Here are the fundamentals of lead nurturing through the phone:

1. Offer Before You Sell

Don’t start the phone call with the hard sell. You want to offer your lead something of value before you attempt to get them to sign on the dotted line. Consider offering more information on the topic that brought them into your pipeline. You could talk about their business and what challenges they face.

2. Listen

When you are on the phone with a prospect, it’s a great opportunity to learn more about exactly where they stand in the buying cycle. You can listen to their troubles and pain with their current systems and hear, first hand, any objections they (or their superiors) have to the product/service you are offering. You can lend a sympathetic ear, commiserate on challenges, and build a relationship while proving that your main goal is to make their life better. Easier said than done? Sure. But with practice and technique, listening is a huge boost to your sales effort.

3. Track

Make sure to note the result of the call, any interesting comments, and a next action in your CRM of choice. This information helps you score the lead and the call and determine a future course of action.



Following those basic steps gives you a great chance at a productive, nurturing phone call. It's also critical that you catch your lead at the right time, which brings us to our next section.

Know the Right Time to Call Your Lead

Implementing a strategy for lead nurturing phone calls is not a stand-alone solution. Not all leads will be responsive to a phone call. It also matters when that phone call is made. A series of emails and/or text messages may need to be a lead in for your phone call. This can only be determined by you and your team and is something you will discover and develop in the beginning stages of creating your lead nurturing campaigns.

Timing is everything. In addition to the time of each of the above outgoing communications, the time of day you call your lead or prospect is very important. Your sales team will need to be staggered to help cover the different time zones. Below is a recommended schedule for contacting your leads for the best conversion rate:

- Target East Coast: 8 am – 10 am
- Target West Coast: 11 am – 1 pm
- Target East Coast: 4 pm -6 pm
- Target West Coast: 6 pm – 8 pm



Knowing What to Say for Each Call

“If you have an important point to make, don't try to be subtle or clever. Use a pile driver. Hit the point once. Then come back and hit it again. Then hit it a third time-a tremendous whack.”

Winston Churchill

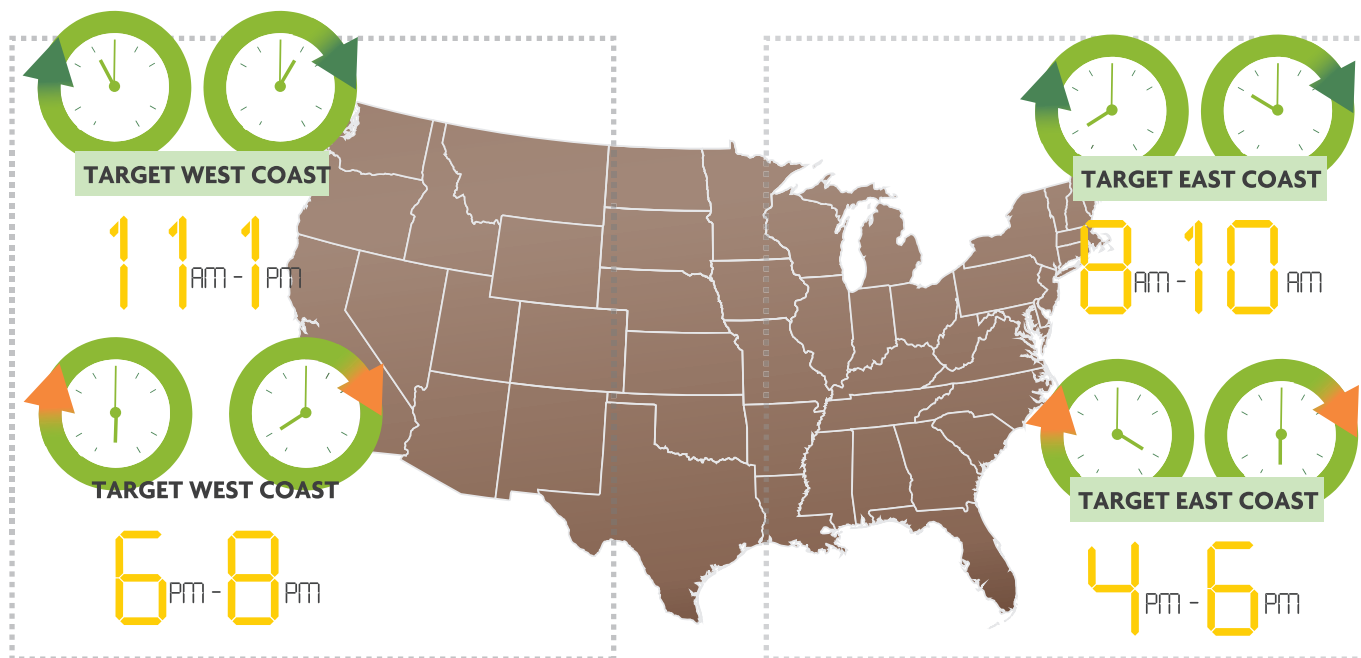
Ok, so you shouldn't actually do as the above quote states, but you do need to make a point and stick to the basics for each call. As far as knowing what to say in general, you and your sales team will need to develop a common script or common material for each communication attempt. If each team member is on the same page, it will ensure consistency and an overall connection with your leads.

During the developmental stages of your phone lead nurturing campaign you will develop a content and timing outline. Each sales person will need to follow this outline as they begin and work through the lead nurturing process. The type of lead and product will help determine the overall flow and content of each conversation.

The outline created will help avoid these common pitfalls of phone communication:

- Not knowing what to say.
- Not actually answering the questions your lead or prospect desires.
- Noting having the right information in front of you.
- Talking in circles or too fast for the lead to understand you.
- Giving information that doesn't align with other sales people or the overall campaign.





Implementing Your Phone Lead Nurturing Campaign

After taking the above information into consideration, and also reading from my previous lead nurturing posts on text messaging, email, and fundamental principles, you should have the skills needed to implement phone calls into your current or new lead nurturing campaign. To begin, keep it simple and follow these basic steps:

1. Define –

This stage ensures that you clearly define and understand each member of your organization and their role with each campaign. Second, it requires you to define your audience, content; framework and overall hierarchy of your phone lead nurturing strategy.

2. Create a Clear Objective –

Include your organization and team members in this stage as well as your prospects. The goal here is to ready your sales team and your prospects for the purchasing stage.

3. Establish an Approach –

Keep it simple, focused and easy to understand for all involved. Content will be optimized as long as it is relevant, measurable and meaningful; aligning with your buyer personas.

Summary

The phone can be a powerful tool for turning an interested prospect into a buyer. If you follow a well-defined plan, listen to your lead, work to a goal with your conversation, and track the results you will be well on your way. In an age of technology, it's easy to overlook the personal touch of a phone call. Keep this tool in your lead nurturing arsenal and you'll see results.



Social media has exploded in popularity. Networks like Twitter and Facebook have become ubiquitous presences in our world. It's clear that social networking is not a passing fad, and it's becoming clearer every day that it has a place in your marketing plan. Social networking provides another avenue for your business to reach customers and connect them to your brand. From offering deals to, yes, lead nurturing, social is fast becoming an integral part of any good marketing strategy. According to EConsultancy,

64 percent of businesses now see social media as a major part of their marketing and business plans.

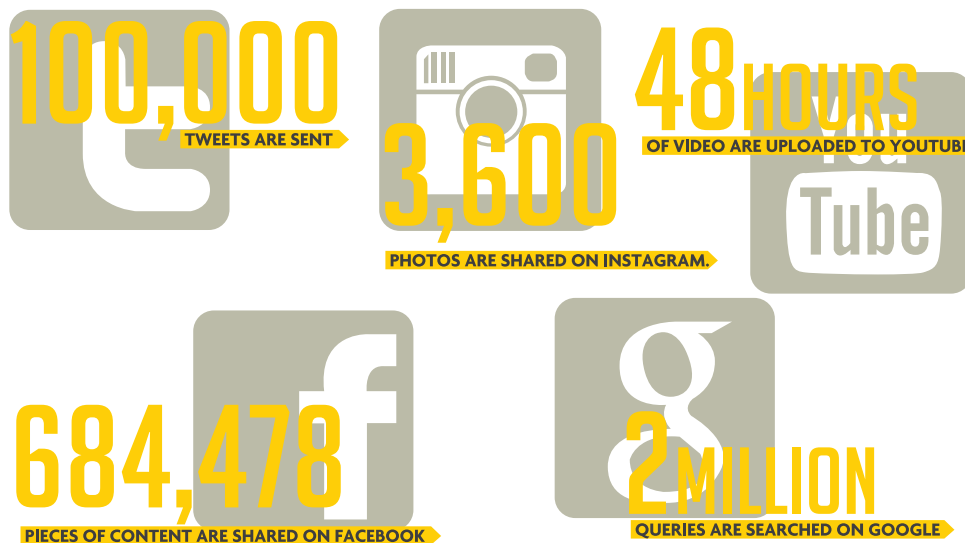
All lead nurturing plans need to be versatile and diverse. This is why social media should be a part of your overall lead nurturing plan. There will be times to use emails or make a phone call, but nothing can replace the effectiveness of a great social media plan.

Why Use Social Media?

As we have learned, lead nurturing is just sharing relevant content with targeted leads. What better way to share your information with them than social networks such as; Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Google+ and other network sites. Social media gives you a platform to host and promote all relevant and important information with your prospects and clients – building your brand and increasing conversion rates.

Social networks have grown tremendously in the last year; in fact 40% of people socialize more online than they do face-to-face. Given the recent stats on social media in 2012, incorporating social media into your marketing plan seems like a must.

In fact, every minute of every day:



Social media is here to stay and is drastically changing how we interact with one another; both personally and on a business level.



How to Use Specific Lead Nurturing Social Media Channels

Facebook:

Many companies have expressed concern with whether or not Facebook can actually work as an effective marketing tool, but we know different.

It does work, if done correctly. Facebook is a great channel for lead nurturing because of its many built in features, including messaging, measuring fans, page interactions, sharing, and more.

6 Tips to Leverage Your Facebook for Lead Nurturing

1. Use fresh and interactive content. An Exact Target and CoTweet study found that over 90% of consumers have stopped following at least one brand on Facebook due to irrelevant or boring marketing messages. So keep in mind that all messages you post on your page will show up in your fans newsfeeds, and don't repeat content or include spam messaging. Keep it interesting and newsworthy.

3. Leverage Facebook's Page Insights. Page insights are methods by which Facebook Platform developers can access underlying data that is presented. Admins can gain these insights directly from their pages wall. Using this data is a great way to discover and track trends among your fan base. It is also important so you can learn about what content is working and what is not.

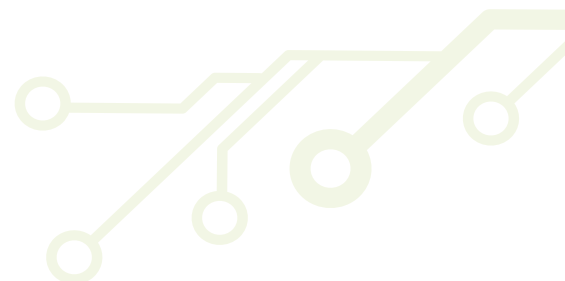
5. Engage with your fan base; use discussion boards & Facebook Questions. Take advantage of all the features Facebook offers for interaction. Join in on conversations between users and blog posts. Don't just post to post though, put thought into each response and be "engaging."

Also, use Facebook's Discussion Boards and Questions apps. They can be found alongside the other share options on your Page's wall. These are great tools to interact with your fans. This information is also archived and then able to be filtered. Facebook Questions tool is a great way to poll your fan base and get them interacting.

2. Connect your blog RSS feed. It can take a lot of your time to manage multiple social channels at once. Take advantage of free third-party applications to monitor it for you. The RSS apps can help guarantee up to date content is being sent to your page as long as you are creating it on a regular basis. Some apps to look to are Social RSS, Blog RSS Feed Reader or NetworkedBlogs.

4. Add the Events app to your page. Facebook has their own Events app for Pages, however there are also many third-party ones you can get as well. These apps are a great tool to promote webinars, promotions, conferences, trade shows, and other events you may be hosting or attending. Just another way to interact and nurture your fan base.

6. Add your other social networks. No matter which social channel you are using, you want to take advantage of adding them to each of the other channels. If you have a Twitter and YouTube account, you want to be sure to add them to your Facebook as well. Adding different networks gives you a sense of depth and legitimacy. Cross promoting is a good way to take advantage of all avenues available to share with.



Twitter:

Twitter, like most social networks, is about conversation and content. Most people don't want to get bombarded with marketing promotions and messages. Try to keep your end user and the buying process in mind - rather than the sales process - when nurturing with Twitter.

5 Goals When Using Twitter to Nurture Leads:

1. Create leads. Twitter is about relationship building. You want to plan and outline the content you use, cultivating a group of people who are interested in learning more about you and your company; learning about the knowledge and expertise you have to offer. Your goal is to inspire these people enough to want to share your information with others outside your network. It is important to generate leads, and you want to have more people following you than you are following. This gives your followers a sense of trust.

3. Use engaging content. It is fine to tweet about your newest product launch or a new service you are offering, but don't overdo it. Your followers want to see content to help them build their knowledge about the specific topic. Include links to the type of content that will help them do so. Engaging means you want your followers to interact back with you so include a call-to-action. Ask people to respond or retweet if they feel the information is valuable.

5. Be responsible with your tweets. We've already touched on this topic some, but it is important to all social networks. When lead nurturing, you will want to be respectful of how often and when you Tweet. You will also want to be considerate to who you follow; don't be a creeper.

2. Nurture your leads. Use quality content to interact with your followers. Keep your tweets up to date and useful. Knowing what your end user wants to see and hear from you helps. Do your research ahead of time; learn what your followers want to see from you. Lead nurturing is all about building a dialog and conversation with your prospect or customer.

4. Track results with technology. There are many tools you can use to track your results, some are free and some you would pay for. The one you want to use will depend on your overall goals and ambition with Twitter lead nurturing. At minimum, you will want to track all outbound links from your tweets and monitor your web assets for referred visitors. Your conversion goals may be different from someone else's; establish your goals and make sure they align with what's currently happening with your Twitter activity.

LinkedIn:

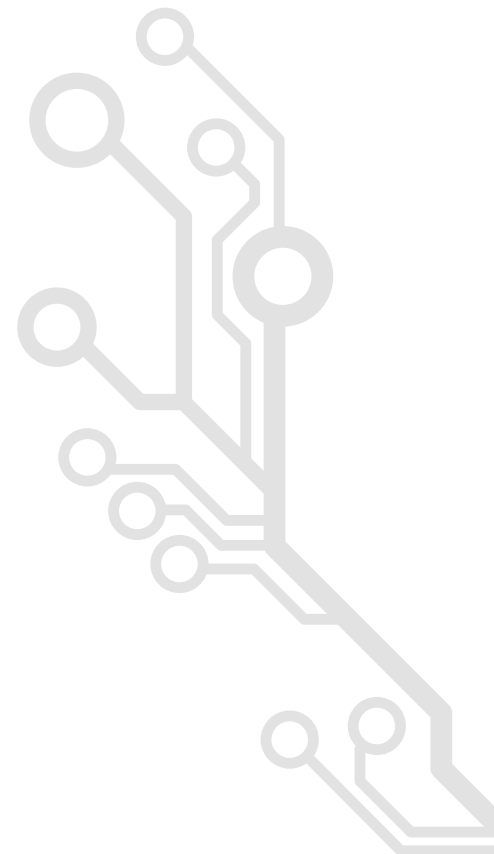
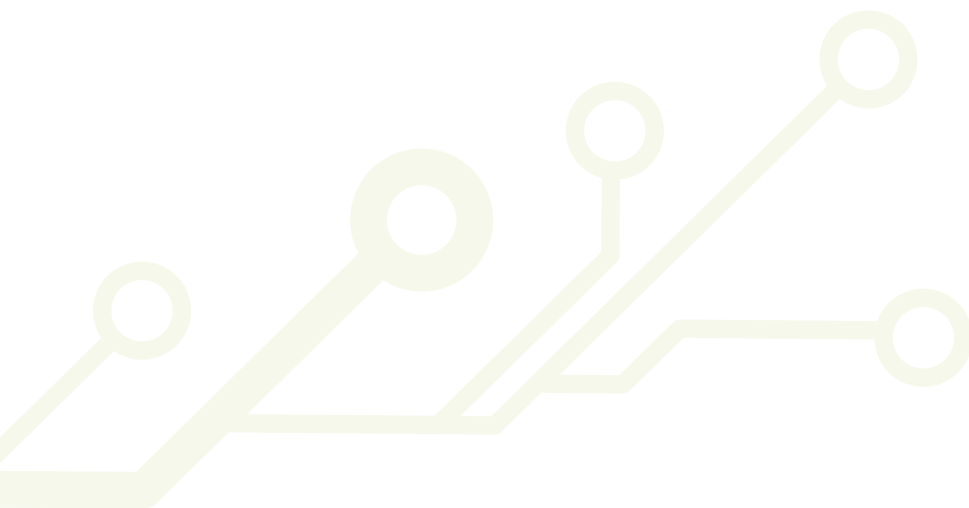
LinkedIn is a little bit different than other social networks. It is very easy to grow your network by simply sending a connection request to someone in your network. The next step; moving them down the sales funnel is the hard part. People on LinkedIn have a much different purpose than those on Facebook or Twitter, as it tends to be less social and more connection based.

The Basics of Using LinkedIn to Nurture Leads:

1. Export Your Leads to Nurture. Did you know you could export your LinkedIn contacts email addresses? Most people don't. You can export them into an Outlook or other email platform and set them up for an email lead nurturing campaign. This is a great way to segment your email campaigns with new criteria. For best use, individualize your emails (which still can be automated) and then let the nurturing begin.

3. Promote Your Social Networks and Quality Content Sites. Utilize the contacts from LinkedIn to strategically promote your other social networks and quality content you produce. Keep in mind you still do not want to think with a "salesy" approach - you want to think like an end user and what information they want from you. To do this, you can simply plug in your Facebook or Twitter links, refer and link to articles or content you produce, etc. Basically you want to incorporate it into your content strategy so it is seamless and one with your overall plan. You don't want to look like you are trying to force it; it needs to be natural.

2. Outline & Plan Your Nurturing Campaign. Before you can begin to nurture the contacts you just exported from LinkedIn, you need to come up with a tactical game plan. Your content schedule and material will need to be meticulously thought out to fit your overall business model and marketing efforts. Think of unique material such as; whitepapers, webinars or video you can link to and incorporate within your campaign. By keeping your content interesting and on topic, your contacts are more likely to want more and also share with others.



Pinterest:

Pinterest is a new era to social marketing and lead nurturing. Pinterest is a social network that allows users to visually share, create and discover new interests by posting (AKA Pinning) images or videos to their own or others boards. People can browse what other users have pinned and even search by a common word or phrase. The goal of Pinterest is to connect everyone in the world through their common interests.

For business, this opens up a great way to socialize and nurture your current customers and prospects. However, for business, the number one rule of thumb is not to “Self Promote”. Does this mean you can’t post your latest project, service or promotion? No. It just means you want to post information in a non-salesy or forceful way.

5 Ways to Utilize Pinterest for Lead Nurturing

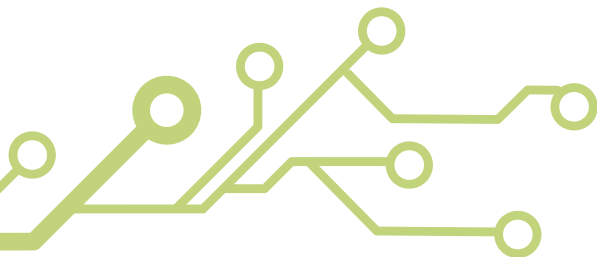
1. Build Your Following. First things first, you need to build up a following. In order to do this, you will need to start with a few basic Pinboards before starting. By doing this, new followers will have a reason to follow your pins. To jumpstart this process, you will want to add the Pinterest follow button to your website and other campaigns. You’ll also want to use your other social networks; Google+, LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter to promote your pins. Another good way to launch your Pinterest is by holding a contest or giving away something free. Lastly, start following other users you think that would add value to your page and who would want to follow you back.

2. Feature Your Visual Content. Visual content is the core of all things Pinterest. So if your business doesn’t currently produce a lot of visual content, they should start. Infographics or data visualizations are great ways to market content and your business. Be sure to maximize the visual appeal, your followers will turn into leads if you’re producing quality visual content.

4. Drive Pinterest Users Back to Your Website (and Track Results). Pinterest may not be for every business model, therefore if you do try it, be sure to track your results. Include links back to your website and landing pages in your pins to drive traffic. Keep track of all referrals you get and all leads in general from Pinterest.

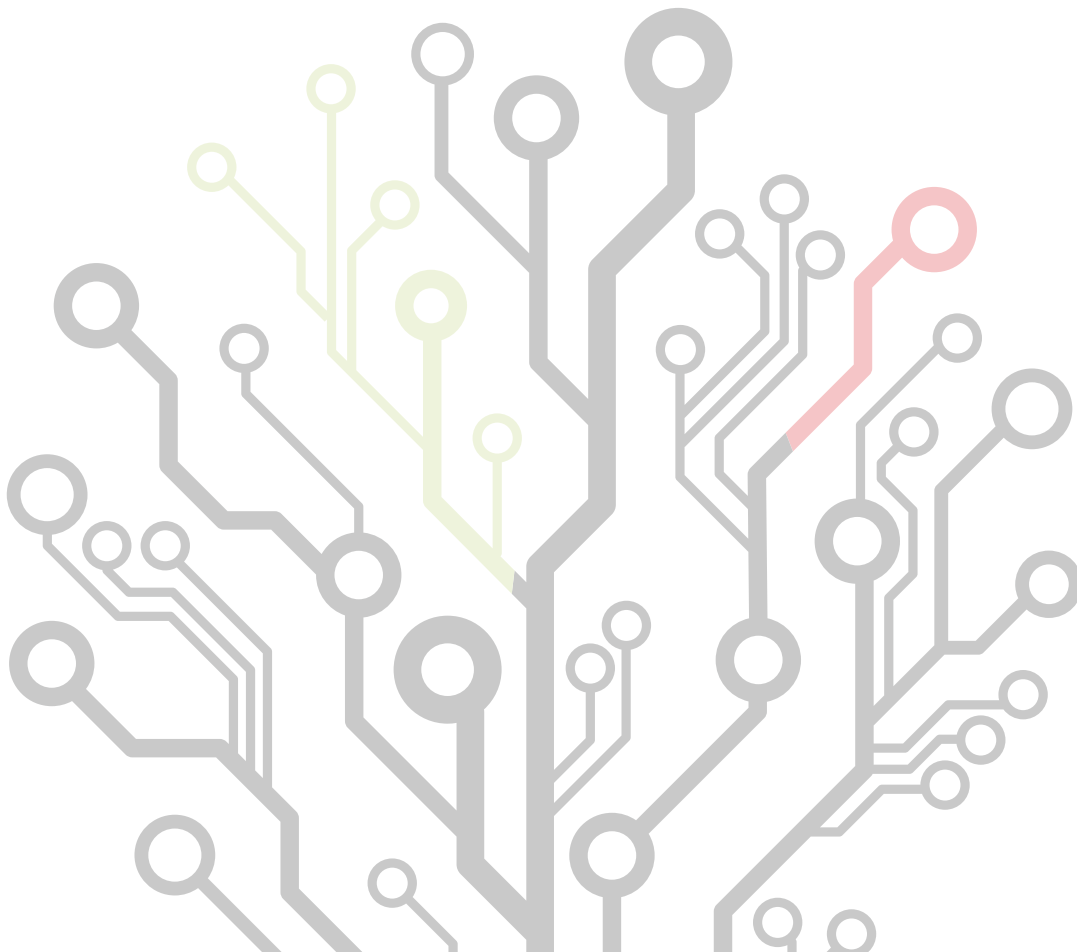
3. Add the Pin-It Button to Your Website. Even though this is a fairly simple step, it is very important to the overall success of your lead nurturing campaign. By placing the Pin-It button to your visual content on your site, you are exposing your brand to a new audience and showcasing your versatile social media presence.

5. Become an Expert. You don’t just simply want to “exist” on Pinterest; you want to stand out as an expert within your subject matter. Whatever your business may be, you want to be the go to board people refer to when researching their specific topic of interest. For example, if you are a Marketing Consulting company that specializes in the drug and rehabilitation industry, you could create a Pinboard of Infographics with awesome drug and alcohol statistics and images. For that matter, you could create a Pinboard of each industry that you specialize in and branch off of it as you build up your following.



Summary:

Just like all types of marketing, there is no magic formula to be given for social networking. Using social channels for lead nurturing will take time and thought. Those willing to utilize the technology that is available and incorporate social networks into their lead nurturing campaigns will have success, if done correctly and in a way that aligns with their business model.





Specifically, we are talking about nurturing leads with E-Newsletters, which are drastically different than the old-school print pieces we use to mail to our customers and prospects. Creating an ongoing e-newsletter campaign can be very effective and beneficial because you are constantly providing your audience with relevant and up-to-date information.

E-Newsletter Statistics

E-Newsletters can be a very effective. There is some evidence that small to medium size lists, of 25-499 members, are more effective than large campaigns:

According to a study, the average open rate for 25-499 member email newsletter lists was 28%. When the list grew to 500-999 members the open rate was 22.3%, and for 1000+ members was 12.2%. Small to medium lists tend to be more targeted, yielding messages that are more relevant to the recipients.

In the 25-499 member lists, transportation, retail, and religious newsletters had the highest open rates. This makes intuitive sense – people are interested in retail sales, news about transportation schedules and delays, and devoted to religion. Companies in these sectors know that consumers want up to date information and news, and the stats bear that assumption out.

Best Practices for E-Newsletters in Your Lead Nurturing Campaign

A newsletter design and structuring should align with a company's brand and image, as well as core values. Each component of the newsletter needs to be worked out in order to entice and encourage your desired reader to open and read it. Some best practices are listed below.

1. Use Engaging Content – Most business professionals don't have all day to read your newsletter, so make sure your content is easy to digest. Display content as bullet points or in short paragraphs. By adding "read more" buttons, you are giving your reader more usability and the option to dive in further – if they want to. Using pictures or graphs to get your point across are also great ways to keep things simple for your reader. Finally, you will want to include engagement tactics such as voting, games, videos, polling or forum replies.

2. Keep Design Simple (Including Subject Line) – The overall layout and aesthetics of your newsletter does matter. A lot of people think all e-newsletters are created equally and should have the same treatment, but they are wrong. Keeping your layout simple includes doing the following:

- Feature the company logo on top
- Include images to explain your content
- Align content and images among each issue
- Maintain a portrait orientation
- Provide social media share options and subscription pages
- Provide URLs to read the newsletter online
- Follow a consistent theme for each issue of the newsletter
- Consider all screen resolutions and browsers for visibility
- Separate content with clear and defined sections



3. Create Permission Based Email List – Simply put, ask for permission before you spam your potential and current customers. In addition to asking for permission, it is important that readers always have an opt in/out option. Finally, don't share your contacts information with others. They have given you it with the trust that you wouldn't share. By sending your newsletters to only those who want to see it, you are ensuring a higher chance it will get opened, read and responded to.

5. Provide Unsubscribe Options – Not only do you want to provide your reader with the option to unsubscribe, you also want to make it user friendly. Don't make them dive through multiple steps to do so. In addition to unsubscribe options, some business professionals are offering a SNOOZE option now. This simply means they can stop receiving your communication for a set period of time, (days, weeks, months, etc.), yet not forever.

4. Let Your Readers Know What to Expect – Once your readers have subscribed to your newsletter, keep them informed and let them know what to expect now and in the future from your communications. You will want to communicate the following to each user:

- Frequency of newsletter
- Content sections they can expect each issue
- Privacy policy
- Send a welcome email to each subscriber to give confirmation or acknowledge the subscription in some format

6. Calculate Performance, Test & Troubleshoot – Knowing your newsletter performance metrics can be a real eye opening experience. At minimum you will want to know the deliverability rate, open rate, click-through rate and the overall conversion rate. Knowing these key metrics will help you develop new content and grow your newsletter.

7. Offer Social Sharing – Lastly, you will want to easily get the word out about your newsletter. Social sharing is the number one way to do so. Using social sharing networks allows readers to share with peers, groups and other connections. To make it easier to do so, simply:

- Add call-to- action buttons like “Subscribe”, “Join”, “Add” on your home page and other landing pages.
- Keep a link to all archived newsletters within each issue
- Add sign-up links and downloadable content for viewing
- Entice them with something free; maybe an eBook or free subscription

Summary: What's Next?

You have your content outlined and written, your newsletter template created and your overall structure themed and created. So what do you do next? You now need to implement your lead nurturing strategy. Just like we have discussed with other mediums (phone, email, text messaging, etc.); you have to properly outline your campaign to nurture your lead or customer. Follow the steps in the Lead Nurturing Fundamentals Section from Chapter One to properly understand setting up your campaign.

Like any other lead nurturing technique, initial setup is the hardest part and if done right will pay off in the long run.



A well-executed lead nurturing program goes a long way towards generating a good rapport for a company. Buyers enjoy and appreciate receiving information in a timely fashion, which of course adds value and gives them a feeling of being in control during the overall purchasing process.

After you believe you have successfully implemented a successful lead nurturing program; you will need to track your results to see if you are meeting the outlined goals. Questions to ask yourself and your team:

- Are your leads converting to sales?
- Is the sales department receiving an acceptable number of qualified leads?
- Is management happy? Do they believe the leads are valuable?

If your program isn't delivering in these key areas, you will need to adjust your definition of a sales-ready lead and how the overall campaign aligns with that definition.

Remember, a successful lead nurturing campaign creates a dialog with your prospects by way of frequent and consistent content. Your content should resonate with your audience and move them towards a desired action.

We hope this eBook has helped you define and start implementing a lead nurturing program.

