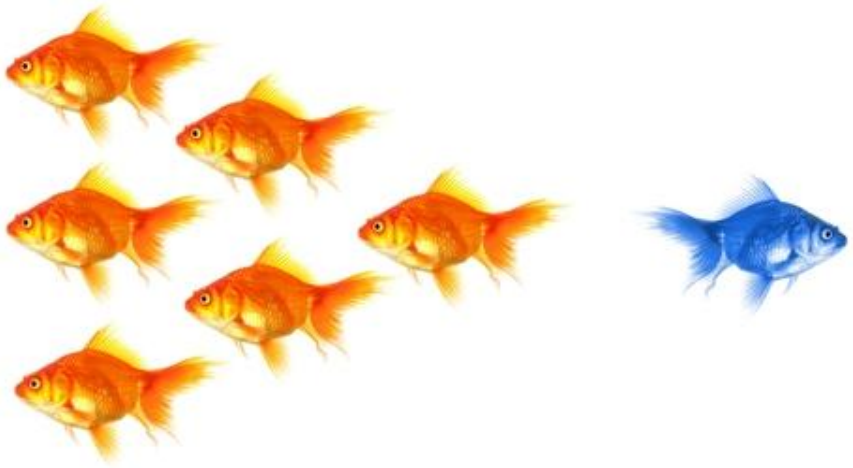
Top Ten Tips For Effective Lead Nurturing

An Exclusive White Paper From Optimum Resource Group

'The Differences Which Make All The Difference'



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Generating sales leads can be really difficult. You therefore owe it to yourself and the prosperity of your business to try and get the most from each and every one, and the way to do this is through lead nurturing. The days of simply generating a lead and then bombarding them with phone calls and emails is over. Today's market place is all about taking a sales lead, what is essentially a brand engagement opportunity, to a point where they trust you and believe in your product or service to such an extent that they contact you to make a purchase.

The modern business environment is all about personalisation and catering to the needs and wants of individual clients. This is the difficult bit. How do you find out what a potential client wants and how do you give it to them? The answer lies in a business's ability to conduct and implement a well thought out and comprehensive lead nurturing programme from the moment a lead is generated all the way through to purchase.

This white paper offers 10 essential tips which could help you create a better lead nurturing programme that should not only see Sales and Marketing work better together, but also see your lead conversion rates soar. Read on to find out more.



1 - Do it properly (or don't bother)

There's no point in nurturing leads unless you commit to it. Generating a sales lead can be very difficult, but discovering exactly what a prospect wants and what their motives are can be more so. To find out, you're going to have to nurture. This is the point at which your relationship with a potential customer starts, so you have to get it right. Lead nurturing will not work if it is done half heartedly or without the proper level of planning. Nurturing starts the moment a potential client takes an action. This could be signing up to receive your online newsletter, downloading a brochure or paper, reading and commenting on a blog article or even watching a video. At this point the potential client has stated, 'I am interested and I want to find out more.' But be wary, potential clients can be easily scared off and nurturing has to be done with care and consideration.

2 - Plan it out

Book a room, grab some paper and come up with a strategy. Plan what you want from a nurturing programme, how it will be implemented, what the steps will be in the programme, what you want the lead to do at every stage and finally make sure everyone in the business is on board. At this stage, it is a good idea to brainstorm potential ideas but also think about various challenges of the strategy and how to overcome them.

Any successful lead nurturing programme has to involve the sales team so make sure they are involved and briefed well in advance. All sales people love to get straight on the phone and start selling but a properly implemented nurturing strategy has to take the entire sales team along and explain to them why it's important and what the benefits will be for them. It's important that your nurturing plan has buy-in and is ready to be followed before you start.

3 - Give to receive

Giving acts as a catalyst for the beginning of a relationship and is what lead nurturing actually is: the process of developing interest and encouraging engagement with your business through the use of content.

The most effective way to do this is to provide content that is relevant and informative to them. Know your customer and know what turns them on. Write downloadable white papers, pull together engaging articles and create educational videos to watch. The content should be free and create excitement. Giving away free content helps to build trust in your business and helps to win potential leads over to your products or services.

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4 - Nurture me all-over

To make a lead nurturing programme a success, you have to track which channel a lead came from. That way, you will be able to tell how they like to consume information and content. For example if a lead came from an email campaign, you can be pretty sure they would be happy to receive content and information through email.

But don't neglect other channels, just because that lead came from an email campaign, doesn't mean they wouldn't also be engaged through a direct mail campaign. One way to find out which channel works is to use a trial and error method. Test to see what works. On the other hand, using marketing automation software is a pretty good way of finding the best channel.

5 - I am a robot (but you'd never know it)

If you've got marketing automation software, this is where it comes into its own. There is plenty of automation software out there and they all work in pretty much the same way. The point of all this automation is to help you find out invaluable data about your leads and how to nurture them properly.

Using automation software, you can find out useful data such as where a lead came from, what their interaction points where, what actions did they take, are there any observable wider trends to sets of leads and some software even gives you the ability to score a lead and measure the actual level of interaction through a weighted scoring system. Use everything you can to enhance your lead nurturing process. If you haven't got an automation software, use the tools you do have (analytics, email tracking etc.) to review and improve response.



The diagram above shows the steps in an effective lead nurturing programme. The first step in the process is to inform potential leads of the offer and your business. The second step is to educate your leads using messages that will connect with them on a personal level. Next is to involve leads with your business's products and services and engage them with targeted incentives and offers. Then validate your leads to ensure that they are ready to be sold to. At this point actively engaged leads can be converted and sold to and will turn into customers. Finally use a follow up programme to keep the leads alive once they have bought from you to ensure that they buy from you again in the future.

6 - Nurturing is an art form

Lead nurturing isn't an exact science. It is all about testing to see what works. Use data to help you make predictions and score leads in the nurturing programme. One way to make nurturing a success is to show potential customers that your business has authority, is relevant and trustworthy.

Demonstrate that you know what you're doing, using the right messages sent to the right people, and that they can have confidence in what you do: they'll be eating out of your hands. Developing authority can be done through various means such as writing articles in relevant magazines or newspapers, giving talks at seminars and workshops or even writing a blog that is widely read. By giving people the messages they ask for and making them relevant is a great way to show that you know what they want to consume and this will make people appreciate the content that is being sent to them. If you can get these two points right, people will start to trust your business and will look forward to doing business with you.

7 - We're not just talking about thought leadership

The best lead nurturing programmes use a blend of thought leadership pieces, mixed with product information, case studies and incentives. The key is to use the right pieces at the right time, much like in the original lead generation phase.

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The best way to do this is to test your message. Always be testing. Over time, you will find that certain groups of leads respond better to certain methods and you can use that to enhance the nurturing programme and give potential clients even more relevant and engaging content.

8 - Messaging

It's vital that in any message, be it a white paper, a blog article or even an email you're not being overtly 'salesy', especially early in the process. This has the potential to turn leads off at an early stage and it is extremely hard to win them back once they have switched off.

Find your voice and make it a mixture of education, information and sales. Everyone knows that they will get sold to when they interact with a business. The trick is to send them relevant messages to get them to a point where they are happy to be sold to.

9 - To score, or not to score

Scoring a lead based on what they've done and creating a threshold for when they get passed to sales is a very powerful tool. It is hard work though. Some nurturing software out there can take care of this for you but you can also set one up for yourself. Score leads based on different actions they take with your business and only pass a lead that is hot enough onto the sales team.

But be warned handing a lead over too soon can end the relationship before it has even started, hand it over too late and the lead has gone cold. A robust scoring system will stop this from happening and again test to see what the sweet spot is for your business.

10 - Track it all

Track and record everything that your prospect does. Not only will this help your sales team when it comes to actually converting them into revenue, but it will also ensure that all your efforts are recognised with a high ROI.

This will give you invaluable data to be able to enhance and improve the nurturing programme and give you the ability to score a wide range of methods of engagement with potential clients.

Lead nurturing programmes are not easy to implement and run but once set up and working, the results will be worth all the effort and you will wonder how your business ever got on without it in the first place.

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Optimum Resource Group specialises in B2B sales lead generation, which includes B2B demand generation, B2B telemarketing (lead generation/qualification), B2B lead nurturing, business development consultancy and marketing related market research.

Using a combination of telemarketing, email marketing, social media and content we deliver multi-channel UK and global targeted lead generation campaigns to help businesses to increase sales and ensure the right strategies, activities and supporting processes are in place to deliver ambitious and sustainable sales growth.

We have the resources and experience spanning many years as a team, to plan and deliver an effective multi-channel sales lead generation campaign.

Through our seamlessly integrated services we deliver BANT qualified (decision maker has: Budget, Authority, specified Need & Timescale for need) sales leads geared towards increasing your sales, improving your processes, reducing your costs, saving you time and introducing clearly defined step change to your company in the process.

Optimum Resource Group | 0845 305 8145 | info@optimumresourcegroup.co.uk

