



Lead Generation in 2018

Five Keys to Success

New Year, new objectives and new growth targets! For any B2B company, a solid sales pipeline starts with a solid lead generation program. Advertas has been helping technology companies grow the quantity and quality of their leads for 15 years. Over that time, we've found that the lifeblood of a sustainable effort is the marketing database. Let's assume for a minute that a.) you keep a marketing database, and b.) you actively maintain it. If that's not the case, that should be Task #1 on your things-to-do in the new year. There are several CRMs on the market that do a fantastic job of enabling collaboration between sales and marketing, together with marketing automation. (*FreshSales, Hubspot, Marketo, and Sugar*, to name a few.)

With that, here are some building blocks to help you formulate a successful plan for 2018:

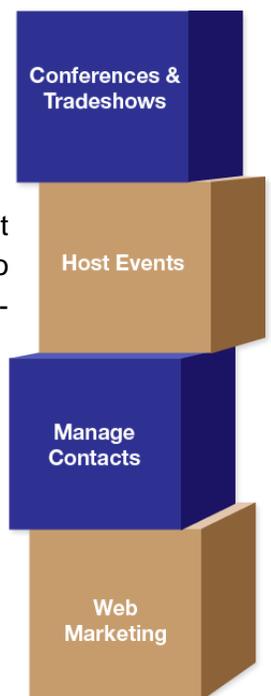
1. Get creative with ways to build your database

Be diligent about capturing leads from conferences and tradeshows. We've seen companies from the very large to the very small all fall victim to not getting the full value from a tradeshow. They spend a small fortune on booth space, construction, and services, talk to people, exchange a few business cards, and then come back with a handful of "leads". Remember that tradeshows are a great opportunity to reach members of the industry that may never attend events you host or open an email you send. Think about your booth in terms of being a tool used to drive traffic. in terms of driving traffic to it. Skip the cheesy throw-your-business-card-in-a-bowl trick, and instead opt for a draw of more value to your customers. Promote and give high-quality presentations. Invest in the show's electronic badge scanners, where it's available, to make sure you capture each person who comes by the booth.

The second-most effective strategy we've found to build a marketing database is to host events. Whether these are in-person lunch n' learns, or online-only webinars, we've found that with every event we have, it not only provides value to our current database and keeps our name fresh, but they forward the invite on to new people and we find the database grows organically with high-quality leads.

Create a culture of diligence among your sales and marketing team in entering their interactions with contacts in your CRM. If you can't track and manage a lead, it often falls through the cracks in follow-up. Just because a contact isn't in a buying phase right now, doesn't mean they won't be in six or nine months. Create drip campaigns of value to keep your name in their forefront of their minds.

89% of B2B sales start with online research. That's a dramatic statement that has a litany of implications for your marketing program. However, in terms of building your database, that automated connection between your website and social media and your marketing database is crucial. When leads are looking and find you (which took some hard work to get to that point — congratulations) — don't let those inquiries slide by.

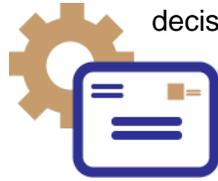




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2. Automate the follow-up.



So, you've got this great marketing database filled with just the right influencers and decision-makers. How do you distill out the most active leads? How do you best apply your time where it will make the most difference? This is where your marketing automation system really comes into play. By tracking which emails your audience is responding to, you can reach them with just the right messaging. By tracking web visits or downloads, you can immediately identify which contacts are entering various stages of the buying process. Using this intel, set up automatic, customized emails to cut through the noise, speaking directly to the challenge your prospect is facing.

3. Provide abbreviated content with real value

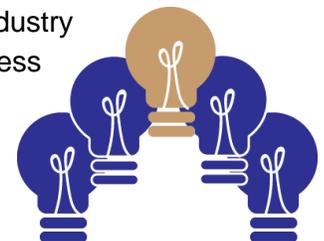
The days of bombastic, long-winded marketing copy, stuffed full of keywords is over. Algorithms are smarter and buyers have less patience to wade through miles of copy. The best way to elevate your search engine standing and attract "hand-raisers" is to provide actual solutions to real problems. And it can't all be for sale. Offer help or consultations for free. Become a trusted advisor. However, you choose to disseminate information to your database — whether it's via webinar, ebook, blog posts, short videos — it should be short, to-the-point, and provide ample headlines, bullet points, and graphics to skim.

4. Track interactions (and let it define the quality of the lead)

In today's world of information overload, we can know a great deal about customers' online behaviors. However, translating all the data into meaningful, useable information is the crux of knowing (and influencing) how those behavior translate into real-world decisions. Integrating the variety of tracking mechanisms you've implemented and understanding the resulting information is key. Many of the popular CRM platforms offer a "Lead Score", which assigns points based on tracked activities (visiting web pages, registering for an event, visiting the booth at a tradeshow, responding to an email, etc.) and in this way, the more interaction a contact has with the company, the higher their presumed level of interest, and naturally — the better placed the sales effort is with them.

5. Demonstrate Thought Leadership

Establishing your corporate stakeholders as thought leaders in the industry - trusted sources of technology and process advancement provides less immediately-tangible benefits, but we've seen it consistently pay dividends over time. Your team is in the trenches with the problem and the technology. You, together with your customers, are best suited to address long-term needs and direction. It takes effort, but the time investment is worth it.





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Develop papers for publications. Peer-reviewed publications, if it's applicable, are always preferred, but any full-length feature article is "good ink". Co-author with others in your industry — it gives your work more credibility and avoids a "sales-y" overtone.



Speak at conferences. The 'call for abstracts' usually goes about about six months prior to the tradeshow. Make sure you review the technical program for areas in which you may be a subject expert. If it's the right show to attend, usually they'll be at least one good fit.



Give webinars. Webinars are the quick-and-easy way to get good information to your marketing database, quickly. They are also the most lenient audience when it comes to product or company mentions.



Blog. If you're anything like some of our clients, so much information resides primarily in the minds of those developing the technology. Blogging can be an easy way to share tips, tricks, and forward-thinking opinions, establishing your leadership team as thought leaders in the space.

Conclusion

Whatever the outlook for your 2018, give your objectives the best chance of success by equipping the plan execution with best practices. Educate yourself, identify gaps in your team, and secure the resources you need to generate more and better quality leads.



Author's Bio: *Laura Cuttill is Practice Lead for Advertas. With 16 years in marketing and public relations, her clients have all been technology clients in oil and gas, software security, and healthcare. Her passion is establishing efficient processes, supported by great software, to enable successful marketing and lead generation programs.*