



STATE OF FULL-FUNNEL DEMAND GENERATION

Leveraging Tech & Data To Humanize Lead Engagement

INTRODUCTION

Lead generation is essential to B2B marketing, with businesses investing millions of dollars annually into lead-gen activities to reach potential customers and drive sales. As the physical and digital worlds converge, it's becoming increasingly important – and more difficult – for companies to understand the best strategies for engaging prospects and generating valuable leads that are more than just a number in the funnel.

"B2B startups invest heavily in conferences/trade shows, LinkedIn advertising, SDR teams, content syndication programs and more," said Sarah Breathnach, Head of Demand Gen & Field Marketing at [Hunters.ai](#), a security operations center platform. "The effectiveness of these tactics can range from 'awful' to 'awesome.' Targeting the right audience with a resonant message, getting creative about 'earning' their attention and practicing patience when converting prospects into customers separates the good from the bad."

With **61% of marketers** ranking lead generation as their No. 1 challenge, marketing teams must reinvent their strategies to better reach potential buyers. The opportunity for creative solutions and pioneering approaches has never been more prevalent, allowing companies to offer a different buyer experience that can create brand recognition and usher in new clients.

This report will highlight the most effective ways to drive leads and re-engage past customers, featuring insights from leading industry experts on topics such as:

- The newest, most successful lead generation channels and how to maximize engagement on each one;
- How to humanize the lead generation process beyond form fills and into targeted outreach campaigns by leveraging available data about previous buyers; and
- The must-have strategies assisting marketing teams in their lead scoring and generation efforts.

UNCOVERING THE CORRECT CHANNEL PAIRINGS FOR SUCCESSFUL LEAD GENERATION

It's not feasible to evaluate individual channels in isolation: For example, marketers can't independently judge a webinar's effectiveness when it's integrated with other elements such as emails, display advertising and content syndication. Therefore, experts suggest continuously monitoring how potential customers interact with a brand and remain on top of any path changes or trends between channels.

"Lead generation takes a one-two punch," said Jessica Kao, Sr. Director of Marketing Operations and Analytics at **F5**, a multi-cloud security and application delivery platform. "Does a particular channel work if you don't pair it with another? Many companies are not asking the right question when learning which channel is the best. It depends on who you're targeting in each situation."

By taking a targeted approach, prospects can learn more about an organization's offerings at their own pace. Furthermore, marketers can collect more engagement data to help prospects along their journey.

"I've had clients who wanted prospects to consume these three specific pieces of content in a certain order," said Kao. "They would send three emails to get someone to download Asset A and beat that into them. Then, they'd send three emails until they read Asset B. People spend lots of money and time thinking this is a good idea, but it's not."

That thought process is a tough hurdle for most B2B brands: **85% of marketers** believe customers expect a personalized experience, but **less than half (47%)** consider improving customer engagement and loyalty a priority.

Optimizing lead gen strategies to drive engagement means it's essential to evaluate a channel's performance and gain insight from existing customers on their experience. Additionally, marketers should inquire where current clients received most of the information that guided their buying decision to identify areas for potential growth and expansion.

"With that information, you can identify similar accounts more likely to engage with you," said Sabina Iyengar, Director of Growth Marketing at **Betterworks**, an enterprise performance enablement platform. "It's as simple as identifying a customer and asking to get all of the key decision-makers in one room to discuss the experience."



FULL FUNNEL DEMAND GENERATION: EVERYTHING, EVERYWHERE... YOU GET THE IDEA

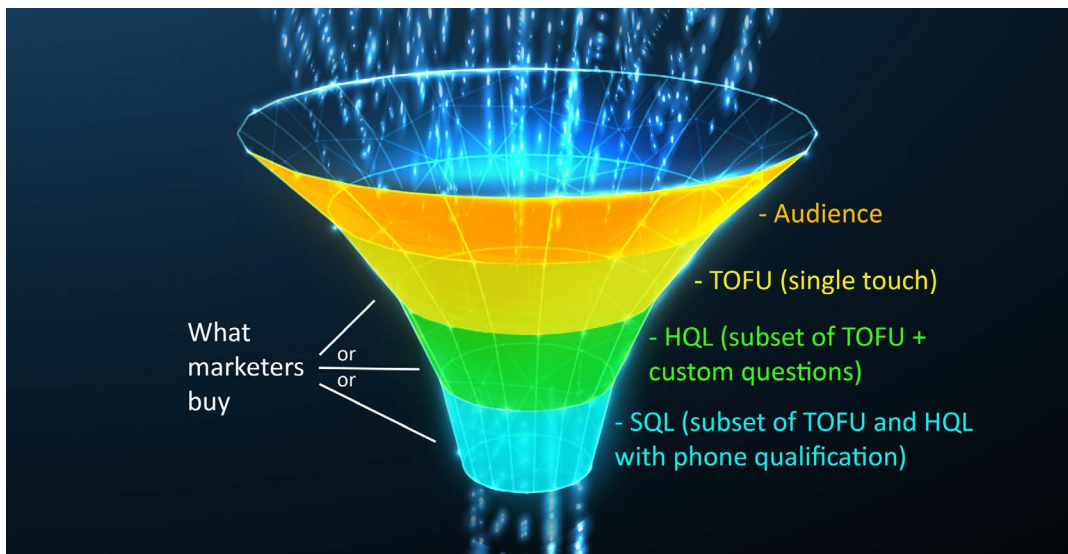
By Laura Ashley, B2Lead

Without giving too much away for those who haven't seen the highly nominated and award-winning movie, demand generation marketers already live in a multiverse of lead creation, lead nurturing and even lead qualification — multiple streams running side by side, concurrently.

The expectation is to deliver a predictable and consistent flow of leads to sales development teams, account managers and enterprise account executives. Each marketing program is done with distinct channels, tools and service providers, and some lead generation marketers can have campaigns numbering in the high hundreds at any given time.

As a lead generation services provider, we service requests for top-of-funnel (TOFU) and mid-funnel (HQL) programs, which must be then further refined by the client's marketing team or sales qualified lead (SQL) programs, which have been qualified over the phone.





Interestingly, when clients purchase discreet HQL or SQL programs, they only get the refined results, leaving behind the less qualified leads – which still meet their target criteria.

What About It? Is That Bad?

Here are **some metrics** to consider:

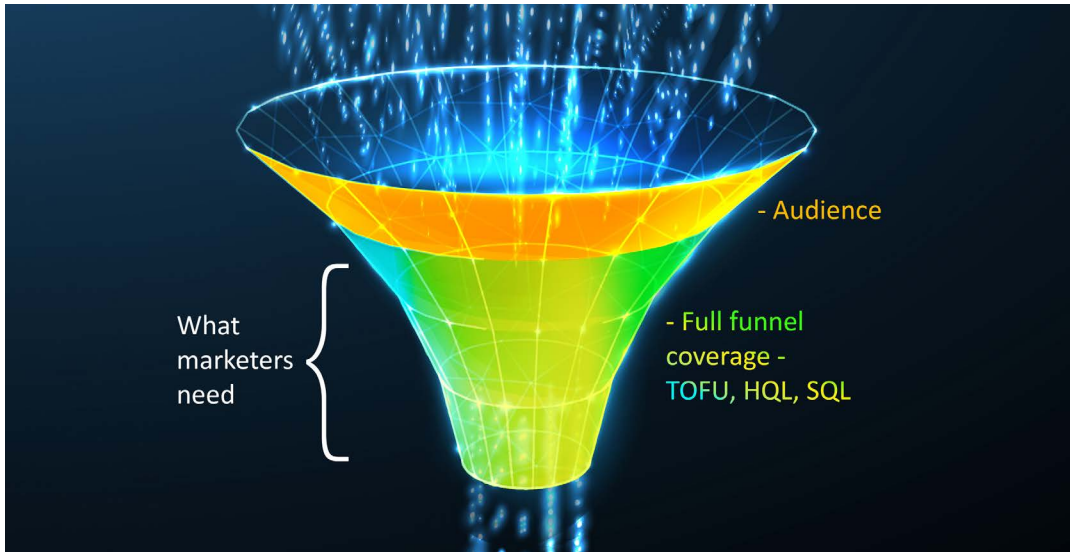
- B2B customers will connect with three marketing channels (that you know of and can track) on average before closing;
- The average number of touches before a B2B deal is closed is 31; and
- The average B2B customer journey takes 192 days from anonymous first touch to won.

With content syndication, depending on the program you're purchasing, you have a vendor covering two or even three channels (email, online, phone), doing as many as three to five touches and potentially condensing the sales cycle for you already. Yet in most instances, the lead will still be put into a marketing program where all the work that has been done by the vendor is treated as one channel, one touch and the clock starting at zero. This is both normal and understandable. Unfortunately, this approach tends to devalue your investment in all the touches the vendor has made.



Getting Creative

At B2Lead, we're working with clients to see how we can help shorten their sales cycle and contribute across their marketing funnel with programs that feed it at multiple levels while still fitting within constrained budgets. The typical content syndication programs are tried and true, and they've been the core of many demand generation models, but they can also result in genuinely interested prospects being left on the table.



How Do I Even Start?

If you're a marketer, the first thing is simply to get to know more of the options. If you've been focused on buying single-touch programs because they have the lowest cost per lead, take the time to really get to know all the options. Most importantly, when evaluating providers based on results, look at metrics beyond the cost per lead, such as cost per opportunity and lead-to-opportunity ratio.

For providers of lead generation programs, consider providing samples of the higher-touch program leads that include data points that your clients can easily ingest and incorporate into their database marketing programs. Whether you are a buyer or a seller of marketing programs, it's time to think outside the box of traditional cost-per-lead models and lead lifecycles — we certainly are.



COHORT ANALYSIS & DATA-BACKED ENGAGEMENT FUEL TARGETED LEAD GEN

Lead generation has notoriously turned into a numbers game in the B2B marketplace. It's not enough to merely assess a channel or lead one at a time; marketers must now examine engagement rates more closely to form distinct micro-categories of leads to enhance how they target similar prospects.

"I've been in organizations where there's a conflict of how 'lead generation' is perceived all the time," said Iyengar. "Well, it's not about just getting the name; it's about getting the right name. I could offer a Lamborghini as a prize in a raffle and get you a million names. Modern lead generation has conformed to this strategy where you want to target the right profiles with the right information. It's not just about lead gen, but about the right lead gen."

Cohort analysis, a form of statistical analysis used to measure and compare the behavior of different groups of people over time, can help explain why some leads remain on the buyers' journey while others stagnate. Exposing what works enables practitioners to fine-tune their targeting at not just any lead, but also a lead that may ultimately convert into a happy customer.

"What if we looked at the active people, ran that performance report, then looked at the cold leads and read that report?" said Kao. "It's common sense that is often overlooked."

Additionally, this understanding also assists in tailoring conversations to the leads. Leads are not just names and numbers; they expect meaningful dialogue. The more marketers incorporate that mentality into their lead generation campaigns, the higher the chances of producing more qualified leads with a higher propensity to close.

"I work with a talented RevOps leader who is rolling out a technology that captures intent data using AI," said Hunters's Breathnach. "The goal is to use the intent to inform our outbound sales strategy and leverage the account data to enhance our ad targeting capabilities for LinkedIn."

CREATING VALUE VIA HUMANIZATION, DATA-DRIVEN INSIGHTS

When marketers are refining their lead gen strategies, they must ensure they deliver genuine value to their prospects. To achieve this, it is vital to comprehend the issue that needs resolving and how to best assist the target market in finding an answer for themselves.

“I think technology has dehumanized the lead gen experience in many ways,” said Breathnach. “Thinking about ‘lead gen’ as a ‘numbers game’ often encourages the wrong behavior.”

Research shows that **80% of people** prefer to buy from brands whose actions align with their values. To gain insights on engaging prospective leads, companies should investigate their past customer engagement data or consult with a company employee who has a shared understanding of the target audience. This can range from complex, detailed analysis to straightforward conversations that yield valuable information.

Breathnach shared a story about the content team at **Abnormal Security**, a cloud email security platform, doing an “incredible” job with their intelligence subdomain.

“Abnormal Intelligence shares first-party research and reports,” she continued. “The company focuses on getting their audience to subscribe to updates rather than forcing them into a lead gen funnel. This is a great example of ‘demand creation,’ aka staying top of mind with relevant content until your audience is ready to evaluate your solution.”

To succeed with lead gen, business need to concentrate on the entire engagement journey and not just the 5% of leads that close. Assessing everything thoroughly is critical to achieving the desired results for your team.

“Marketers are focused on ‘capturing’ the (roughly) 5% of buyers that are in-market for a solution like theirs, while winning ‘share-of-mind’ from the 95% of buyers that aren’t in-market but could be in the future,” explained Breathnach.



CONCLUSION

Lead generation requires a comprehensive approach that includes leveraging the power of channel pairings, cohort analysis, data-backed insights and humanization. Research shows that B2B companies with mature lead generation processes enjoy **133% more revenue** than average companies.

“People like having personal relationships and conversations,” said Iyengar. “I love trying to understand somebody and know that I’ve helped them out. That’s what it’s all about.”

Understanding how potential customers interact with a brand at every stage in their buying journey can help marketers form effective lead gen strategies that drive sales. With these tips and techniques in mind, marketers can be well on their way to generating more qualified leads.



Turn to B2Lead to reach lead generation goals and make the most of your marketing assets with content marketing campaigns that are within budget and offer guaranteed results. Since 2008, agencies, publishers and enterprise customers have leveraged our expertise in lead generation, our in-house database of US-based business contacts, and our global partner network to stay ahead of the curve. Our team uses campaign tracking and lead scoring capabilities to verify engagement, builds advanced ABM and custom marketing programs to meet your specific needs, and leverages online publishing sites to build awareness. Above all, our team is focused on quality.

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Demand Gen Report is a targeted online publication that uncovers the strategies and solutions that help companies better align their sales and marketing organizations, and ultimately, drive growth. A key component of the publication's editorial coverage focuses on the sales and marketing automation tools that enable companies to better measure and manage their multichannel demand generation efforts.

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