



Managing Sales Leads

Getting the Most ROI

Sales lead generation and management is central to the financial health of every sales organization.

“Management” is the emphasis here. There must be an investment of time and focus by Sales Executives to daily manage the lead process. Having the right generation tools in place along with effective management allows the organization to make the most of every opportunity in a tight market. Effective managers will use the tools, reporting and feedback to fine-tune their marketing messages and their sales process, to dramatically increase ROI.

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Overview

With weakening consumer purchasing power, slowing job growth and tighter bank lending standards, sales executives are scrambling to meet sales quotas. Tighter advertising budgets and the reduced number of buyers in the market make managing sales leads a priority. The leads generated by direct marketing must be efficiently processed, evaluated, assigned and tracked within the sales process.

A well managed sales lead program will:

- Qualify the Consumer – critical contact and relevant sales/service information must be collected for it to be a “complete” lead
- Fulfill Information or Contact Requests – in a timely manner
- Appropriately Assign Lead to Salesperson – leads must be given to sales professionals that can effectively build relationship with consumers
- Report Activity in Real-Time – daily and weekly reporting is used by sales managers to insure leads are immediately contacted and to track what stage the sales process is in
- Evaluate Effectiveness of Marketing – what list, offer, media mix, messaging provides greatest results

The following is a synopsis of the strategies that make sales lead management work for most successful retail and service companies.

Turn Pressure into Profits

Sales managers are straining under the constant pressure to increase revenues and profits in this competitive market. Sales staff are often concerned about their futures as they experience reduced customer inquiries, slower traffic in retail locations and an extended sales cycle as consumers take longer to evaluate purchases. Consumers are also more educated and demand immediate, personalized communication.

Organizations that grow and thrive in today’s economy will be those that have a comprehensive sales cycle in place and review all their sales activities to maximize ROI and insure that no opportunities “fall through the cracks.”

Millions are spent each year to implement the latest Customer Relationship Management software products (CRM's). Virtually every person reading this brief has access to one of these products, either as a stand-alone system or as a module of their overall management software system. It is clear that CRM's won't relieve the "pressure" that sales organizations are feeling. It is imperative that every contact with a client is tracked and meets the criteria set by the company. Sales Managers must review the performance of every associate that has contact with the consumer to "close the loop" and increase the ROI.

Several key areas to evaluate are:

- How and by whom are inquiries to the company being handled?
- Is everyone that interfaces with a consumer properly trained on how to keep the sales process in motion?
- What are the feedback mechanisms you have in place to monitor consumer experiences?
- Is result reporting frequent and accurate?
- What is the accountability criteria for each position?
- How are incoming leads assigned to salespeople?
- How are salespeople made aware of current promotions?

ROI will be increased by fine-tuning all phases of your sales process via feedback, tracking and reporting.

Top 6 Reasons for Lost Revenue

1. Salespeople are not motivated to contact every lead. Many managers believe that the leads they purchase or generate for their sales team are being handled appropriately – the reality is that even the best salespeople have been known to "cherry-pick" or judge the leads. It has been estimated that over 80% of customer inquiries are never contacted.
2. Sales leads are not effectively processed, assigned, tracked and reported on within a consistent system. Every lead must be resolved and sales managers need a simple system to track all salesperson activity.
3. Salespeople do not differentiate how they handle consumer inquiries. Do you have what the consumer wants to buy in stock? In their size or color? Did they make a specific request that was completely ignored?
4. Most leads are incomplete or not "qualified" prospects. High quality leads require more than contact information from the consumer. Salespeople will dismiss incomplete leads as "junk" so either increase the information you gather from consumer inquiries or don't even bother assigning these leads to a salesperson.

5. Marketing dollars are allocated to the same areas each month. When did you last analyze the effectiveness of your media mix and modify the monthly marketing plan? What is your feedback mechanism so you can invest in media with the highest ROI for your company and message?
6. Lastly, and most importantly, management does not hold the team accountable for results. How do you identify the best performing members of the team and insure leads go to them? Who follows up with all leads assigned to them? What happens if a salesperson does not contact leads and actually generate sales?

Make the most from the leads you generate.

Whether leads are generated using the internet or by traditional media, it is critical to insure the tracking process effectively channels the leads into your sales process. Millions are invested to generate leads from direct mail, special offers, print ads, broadcast, websites and email. Results are collected in spreadsheets, toll-free numbers are tracked, hits on websites are measured and foot traffic is recorded. Lots of energy, time and money goes into the generation process for a qualified lead...so is it handled as one of the most valuable assets of your company?

Studies in various industries indicated that up to 85% of all inquiries generated lack all the information required for appropriate follow-up by your sales team. What can you do to “complete” the information you gather and convert inquiries into true leads? How can you insure the highest quality leads from all your media expenditures? Many technologies and tools exist today that can assist you in generating leads that your sales team will fight to get their hands on.

While you may invest in mass marketing, consumers today are increasingly turned off by general messages and instead respond to “relationship marketing.” By collecting the right data on your prospects, you can craft a sales message that is timely, appropriate and powerful. Turning prospects into customers with personalized messages, delivered at the right time in the right way is key. Shifting your lead gathering efforts toward highly qualified, non-shared leads will dramatically increase your closing ratio and therefore your ROI.

The Marriage of Direct Marketing and Your Sales Team

Dramatic results come from the coordination of marketing and sales in every organization. Often at odds with each other, these two groups typically do not effectively communicate. What would happen if they worked toward a common goal?

Companies that insist on a partnership between the sales force and the marketing department see dramatic results. It is not necessary for “everyone” in both departments to meet. Rather, key representatives from both areas need to coordinate their efforts.

Make sure that Marketing informs Sales of all upcoming and current promotions, campaigns and messaging. How can a salesperson appropriately follow-up, in a personalized manner, on a lead that is generated in response to an “unknown promotion?”

Make sure that Sales provides feedback to Marketing about the quantity and quality of the consumer responses. The direct marketing department seldom has direct contact with the consumer. How can they modify, update, empower future communications without proper feedback? Salespeople must provide this feedback in order to obtain more qualified leads.

Sales executives must encourage the marriage of this “odd couple” by:

- Creating an environment where constructive feedback is expected and valued
- Have the two teams work together to define target markets and appropriate messaging
- Consistently reviewing marketing campaigns with sales team
- Include the marketing team in sales meetings
- Have both teams review leads generated each month and results

Summary

Sales lead generation and management is central to the financial health of every sales organization. “Management” is the emphasis here. There must be an investment of time and focus by Sales Executives to daily manage the lead process. There are many systems, tools and software programs that can help manage the lead-to-sales process, but they do not supply the accountability required. Having the right tools in place along with effective management allows the organization to make the most of every opportunity in a tight market. Effective managers will use the tools, reporting and feedback to fine-tune their marketing messages and their sales process, to dramatically increase ROI.

About Techström

Techström is a solution company with a 20+ year proven track record of crafting and implementing marketing and operational processes for clients. Through our unique direct marketing campaigns, our Internet Lead Generation tool and Site Kick Tool we have the ability to:

- Generate more qualified, non-shared sales leads
- Track, Measure and Increase your ROI
- Provide Better Sales Lead Management
- Increase Customer Retention with Pertinent Messaging

Our marketing goal is clear: To provide you with high-quality, non-shared leads that quickly turn into sales. For more information about how we can help you achieve your sales goals, call at 1-888-775-0009 or email us at sales@techstrom.com.