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Don't Let Marketing Leads Wither on the Vine!

Developing an Effective Lead Nurturing Strategy

By: *Josie Johnson*

When the CEO asks about marketing, the question is “how has the investment in marketing contributed to revenue?” Even though they are critical elements to success and can't take a backseat, all the beautiful websites and brochures, prolific article placements and spot-on branding strategies in the world will not justify your budget or get you more money. You need leads. And you need those leads to lead to something! That is where a lead nurturing strategy comes into play.

Let's look at leads in the context of making wine. For maximum enjoyment of this article, grab a glass!

Step 1: Locate the most fertile soil = **Identify the target market**

Step 2: Select the best grapevines = **Create a marketing plan**

Step 3: Prepare the ground for planting = **Build awareness with branding and PR activities**

Step 4: Plant the vines = **Execute lead generation activities: events, webinars, emails, etc.**

Step 5: Tend to the crop = **Qualify and nurture the leads**

Step 6: Harvest at the right moment = **Know when the time is right to pass leads to sales**

Step 7: Age to perfection and enjoy the fruits of your labor!

Traditionally, marketing bows out after step 4, leaving sales to take care of the rest . . . and enjoy step 7 alone! How do you change that? First, you need a decision process for whether a lead is “marketing qualified” and for whether it should go into a keep-in-touch program or get passed to sales for further development. You will define your own parameters for “marketing qualified” – generally demographic data like size of company, industry, etc. – and what constitutes a sales-ready lead with your sales team – generally factors like budget, timing, buying signals, etc. If a lead is marketing qualified but not sales ready, it is not time to harvest those grapes!

Enter the second piece of the equation, the keep-in-touch process. The details will depend on your specific market and buying cycle, but two elements are not optional: content and frequency. Content is not just sales brochures but useful information that builds trust and rapport. You want the leads you are nurturing to think of you later when they are ready to buy by making their jobs/lives easier with helpful advice now. Content is your fertilizer: it needs to be rich and nourishing and map to your growing (buying) cycle. Frequency is your water: you need enough to keep your precious grapes from withering on the vine but not so much that you drown them! You may want to invest in a marketing automation tool to facilitate these “drip campaigns.” But even if you decide against that, you need a plan for how to assign each lead to a specific nurturing campaign and a regimented communication schedule.



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So, remember, it is not enough to hand sales a list of leads and wash your hands of them – not when marketing is increasingly accountable for what happens with the leads it generates. Think about it this way: if you are not nurturing your leads in a systematic way, you are probably paying multiple times to acquire the same leads over and over. Just consider what you could do with that money – roll out another beautiful ad campaign!

About the Author

Josie Johnson is a marketing consultant for Edge Legal Marketing with a passion for creative lead generation and nurturing programs and a belief that marketing can directly impact revenue! She is an avid nature lover and enjoys traveling and hiking with her husband and two young kids.



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