



THE SECRET SAUCE IN B2B LEAD GENERATION

7 KEY INGREDIENTS THAT SEPARATE THE MEDIocre FROM THE MAGNIFICENT

ABSTRACT »

We've all had it if we're lucky—that unforgettable dining experience. Impeccable service, a creative menu, an entrée that captured the imagination of the palette: Perfection from first to last. While some might say, “a meal is a meal,” we all know that’s not true. It’s the ingredients, the creativity, the expertise, and the execution that separates a mediocre dining experience from a memorable one. So what’s the secret? In short, you need more than just the right ingredients. You need the right ingredients executed to perfection.

This white paper will explore seven of the most critical—and most often overlooked—ingredients of a successful B2B lead generation strategy. It will also explore three real-life case studies that clearly illustrate the impact that these ingredients can have on the success of your campaigns. Finally, it will make recommendations on how you can execute your lead generation program with the right ingredients to perfection, to achieve the “secret sauce” that will make your campaigns perform better.

“A single overlooked element of a lead generation campaign can turn off the prospect and lead to poor results on an otherwise well-targeted campaign.”

01. DON'T LET A BAD OR MISSING INGREDIENT SPOIL THE SAUCE.

The best chefs know all too well that slow service can spoil their most excellent creations. That's why they insist on working in an environment where service is as important as the meal. So too, a single overlooked element of a lead generation campaign can turn off the prospect and lead to poor results on an otherwise well-targeted campaign.

The best lead generation campaigns take every detail into consideration, knowing that if even one aspect of the campaign is overlooked or trivialized, the effect can be disastrous. In short, you need to “connect the dots.” That is, you need to begin every lead generation campaign by first doing the research to determine your goals, then how you are going to achieve them.

After that, you need to identify your target markets, and devise a message and offer strategy that communicates the right message and offers to the right audience. But it does not stop there. It's one thing to get the attention of the prospect, it's quite another to get them to click through to your offer, and ultimately, respond. In interactive marketing, the landing page is a critical part of the entire process and user experience; yet a lot of marketers overlook this element of the campaign. If a prospect clicks through, but finds a disjointed message on the landing page, they may abandon the process. Or, if you are asking for registration via a form, the form must be easy to complete. Too many companies place their own roadblocks up by not paying attention to one of these “dots” in the process.

Don't ask too many questions.

Here's a real life example of a “dis-connect-the-dots” lead generation campaign: An online web conferencing software company recently sent out an email encouraging managers to sign up for a webinar on motivating employees. The offer was information-based, designed to speak to the business need of managers to attract and retain great employees. Great so far. When the recipient clicked through to the landing page to sign up, however, in addition to the standard contact information, there were required fields regarding company-centric buying questions.

The first question was “When do you plan to implement a solution?” What solution? The questions were based on the assumption that a) the recipient of the email was familiar with the company sponsoring the webinar and b) they were in the market for a web conferencing solution. None of that was explained in the email. The result? The user gets the impression that the company hasn't really thought through its strategy, and is turned off, even though the offer itself was an attractive one.

This is just one example of how the best offer can be subverted by irrelevant, required form fields on the registration page. The better approach would have been to stay on-message with the user, follow-up with a survey about how

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they liked the webinar, and ask some follow-on questions to gauge their interest in purchasing a web conferencing software solution.

Landing pages aren't the only piece of the pie. Smart follow-up, as mentioned above, is critical. Follow-up emails, phone calls, or follow-on lead nurture strategies all help close the loop and create a seamless, positive experience for the qualified recipient.

Where did I lose you?

To increase effectiveness of your campaigns, take a close look at where prospects are dropping off. Are they clicking on your ad? If not, test the message, offer, copy and graphics to see what's working and what's not. Are they abandoning at the landing page, or during the sales transaction? Utilize landing page best practices, then follow-up with analytics tools to identify any weak spots. Then work to make it better, and thus, make the entire campaign more effective.

02. MEASURE CORRECTLY.

The best—and worst—thing that has come out of interactive lead generation is the ability to measure. The reason? Many marketers don't know what to measure, or worse, they focus on the wrong metrics. As a result, they become too granular in their thinking, and cannot translate the “number crunching” into real, meaningful changes that will positively impact their campaigns. Or, they focus on the wrong metrics. Many times, it's the more subtle clues that point to a poorly performing campaign. Bottom line? You have to know what you want to accomplish, and then know what metrics will help you get there.

Measure only what matters. Skip the rest.

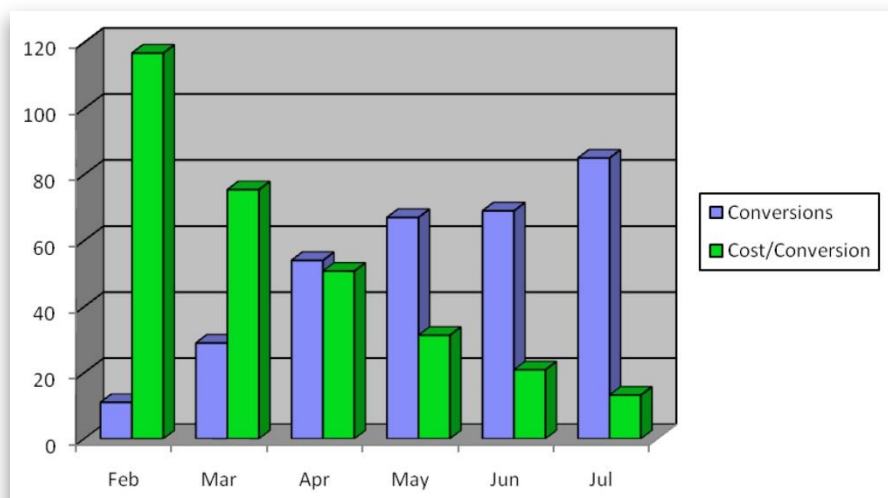
Let's look at a typical Google campaign, for instance. You can measure any number of variables including: Impressions, Clicks, Click-Through Rate, Cost per Click, Cost, Average Position, Conversion Rate, Conversion Cost, Conversions, Cost/Transaction, Sales Count, and Sales Value. With so much to measure, how can you decide what are the one or two most important metrics, and what are the drivers that affect these metrics?

First decide what's most important to you. In the following case study the client decided that their goal was to drive the most leads at the least cost per lead. Note that they did not decide to go after this goal AND try to achieve the most visibility on keywords or the lowest cost per click. They were focused on their most important goal, and as a result, they achieved it. Here's how they got there:

“Conversions rose from 11/month to 85/month in the course of just 5 months, and the cost per conversion fell dramatically, from \$120 to just \$13.23 per conversion.”

Case Study: Pay Per Click – Dramatically Improve Cost/Conversion.

A business process management company was experiencing low conversion rates in its Google Pay Per Click campaign which lead to a low conversion rate and a high cost per lead. The solution was to restructure the campaign to carefully match the keywords to new campaign-specific copy on the landing pages. This effort increased the quality score and drove more relevant traffic to each landing page in the campaign. As a result, conversions increased 8-fold over a 6-month period, and the cost-per-conversion fell from \$120 per lead to just \$13 per lead in the same timeframe. By focusing on a key metric, i.e. the cost per lead and the number of leads generated; Nowspeed was able to test variables until it significantly improved the results for the campaign. Conversions rose from 11/month to 85/month in the course of just 5 months, and the cost per conversion fell dramatically, from \$120 per conversion to just \$13.23 per conversion.



03. RESPOND TO YOUR CUSTOMERS' SPECIFIC TASTES.

Remember that scene in “When Harry Met Sally?” when Meg Ryan is in the diner with Billy Crystal? No, not that part. In the beginning of the scene, she orders her lunch, and to the exasperation of the waitress, lists out a plethora of special requests. Meg Ryan knows what she wants.

Everyone wants options.

Nobody wants to be told what they should be interested in, or what they can and cannot ask for when they order a meal. The same goes for lead generation. You will always be less-than-successful at generating demand unless you know exactly what your target market is demanding, and then provide a solution that meets their specific need.

“Your chances of converting prospects to leads improves tremendously because you took the time to listen to the top issues of your prospects, and craft a multi-touch message and offer strategy that corresponded directly to those needs.”

Smart lead generation recognizes that prospects are unique. Their information needs may or may not line up with what you have to offer. But if you identify their most likely business needs and pain points, and then create and address these needs with an offer of perceived value, tied in with the appropriate messaging, you will likely strike a chord and improve response rates. Behavioral marketing takes this further, nurturing leads by utilizing smart, trigger-based tools that send out specific messaging and follow-up communications based on a prospect’s prior action taken.

Get smart, get personal.

Here’s an example of a particular communications path for a trigger-based lead nurture campaign: An IT operations guy comes to your software website, and downloads a whitepaper on improving server performance to meet SLAs. Based on that action, you follow up with a personal email acknowledging the download, and invite him to a webinar that specifically addresses SLAs and how IT is addressing them through products like yours. If he responds and attends the webinar, you then follow up with a personal phone call, and gather more information on the particular pain points he is facing in his specific environment. Or, if you can’t reach him personally, you send a personalized text email, thanking him for his time, and asking him if he’d like to perhaps spend some one-on-one time talking to you about how individuals like him in other companies were able to overcome the SLA demands with your software. All the time, you only offer him what he has already identified is important to him.

Perhaps you don’t know upfront what issue will resonate with what individuals on your list. You may decide to craft an “issues-based” multi-touch campaign for your prospects. Prospects for your product may be concerned about various items that your software can solve. So you plan a 3-touch campaign with three unique messages around three hot issues, and unique informational offers that correspond to those issues. More than likely, one or more of the issues will resonate with an immediate pain with some of the people on your list, if you’ve done your homework.

The result? Your chances of converting prospects to leads improves tremendously because you took the time to listen to the top issues of your prospects, and craft a multi-touch message and offer strategy that corresponded directly to those needs. Below is a case study of a software company that benefited from this approach:

Case Study: Three Touch Email Campaign

A leading software company wished to drive the largest number of leads possible from their in-house database. They also wished to augment their in-house database with relevant contacts within identified Fortune 50 companies by utilizing a business information database service to add new contacts.

“The client was able to follow up on 484 conversions and identify a number of lucrative sales opportunities for their software solution.”

Nowspeed developed a messaging strategy aimed at the three top issues identified by the company that prospects were dealing with, based on interviews the company conducted with current customers. Then, Nowspeed developed a three-touch messaging and offer email campaign strategy centered on these issues. It tailored the messages to be real-life scenarios of the pitfalls that can happen when these issues are not addressed, using a face and a name in each email. In addition, Nowspeed performed data cleansing and segmentation on the company’s existing database. Nowspeed then developed and executed the email campaign over a three-month period.

The client was able to follow up on 484 conversions and identify a number of lucrative sales opportunities for their software solution.

04. CREATE THE PERFECT RECIPE BY TESTING, NOT GUESSING.

The best dishes are not created the first time around. Great chefs invest a considerable amount of time and energy trying new combinations until they find the perfect balance of ingredients to create the most memorable meals. This testing may feel tedious at the outset, but the combination of creativity with systematic trial and error, performed over and over, always results in a superior offering. Few get it right “the first time around.”

Don’t take shortcuts!

As tempting as they may be, shortcuts and guesses never pay off. One of the key motivators to taking shortcuts is the imperative, perhaps coming from above in the organization, to get results now.

Classic scenario: It’s the third quarter, and the sales organization hasn’t made its numbers. The V.P. tells marketing they need to get at least 100 new leads in the pipeline before the month end, or sales won’t have a chance at meeting the company’s sales goals. You, as the marketing point person, need to get results quick. What do you do? Throw a little bit of everything against the wall and hope something sticks? Not a good strategy.

Here’s the reality: Every company wants to rank high on organic search. Every company wants to be in a top position in PPC. Every company wants their email to be thoughtfully read and acted upon. Every company wants their website to be engaging, intuitive and encourage people to frequent their site to learn more. The fact is that all these desired results require a lot of strategy and planning before they become reality.

For example, how do you know which message is resonating with your audience, “security” or “ease of use?” Before you ring up creative and tell them your best guess, devise a message strategy around the key messages, then test them using PPC perhaps, or variable landing page copy, and various offers. Keep a control set and vary only one item at a time in a series of A/B tests until you are sure you have a winner. Or, utilize multivariate testing with

“The key is to have all of your elements working together for greatest combined effect. In an integrated campaign, every piece comes together. The sum is greater than its parts.”

Google. Test, don't guess. Once you've determined what resonates, then you will be in a far better place to develop the messages and offers based on the data you see.

05. COMBINE FOR MEMORABLE IMPACT.

Ever tried fusion cooking? Its uniqueness lies in the combination of multiple flavors or styles of cooking to create a whole new epicurean experience. How can you apply this creative approach to your lead generation strategy?

It's easier than you think. People will find your product or service offering in a variety of different ways. Will you be there when the problem you solve is top of mind for them? It depends. If you plan your marketing strategy wisely, you will spend money in a fashion that brings the most return for the investment. At the same time, you should not neglect to include various online and offline elements to your marketing mix because they may be a bit more expensive. One person may respond to a high-end seminar offer; another to a postcard message. The key is to have all of your elements working together for greatest combined effect. In an integrated campaign, every piece comes together. The sum is greater than its parts.

Mix it up.

Another way to mix it up is to try different messaging approaches for different audiences. Techies don't like to be sold to; perhaps they would respond to a blog posting before an email. C-level executives want the most important information; they don't have time to sift through too much information. Perhaps for them, an executive summary of a well-performing white paper would meet their need. You must be willing to think out of the box, and modify your offers to make them more palatable to the intended audience.

06. SURPRISE AND DELIGHT.

“Amuse Boucher” means “to amuse the mouth” in French. In fine dining establishments, the chef will sometimes give the customer a little taste to get the palette ready for the next course. It's delightful.

Short of offering your prospects the full product or service for free, perhaps you can “give them a taste” of what they may experience. A highly successful gourmet popcorn company executes well on this idea for its B2B prospects. Each new identified opportunity is assigned a personal “popcorn concierge” (doesn't that sound better than a sales rep?). To garner interest, they send out free samples of their popcorn flavors. Their belief is that if only the prospect will try the product, he/she will be sold on its superior taste and unique flavors. To incent even further, the company promotes free gift cards—no strings attached—for prospects for their own personal use when they place a business order.

“On your website, don’t assume that visitors know anything about you, or even care. Assume that they care about a need that they think they’ll find an answer to on your website, and structure your information so that they can easily find what they are looking for.”

The end result? Prospects value the potential relationship with the company, because the company has valued them. They have already shown personal interest and gone beyond what most catalogue companies do to bring in new business. How can you do the same? Be proactive in communications. Invest some of your marketing dollars in simple things like “thank you” gift cards, or special “by invitation only” events, for example. In an age where automation is king, a personal touch of any sort will go a long way. Tell prospects and customers that you value them and their business enough to take an extra step to gain their confidence.

07. KEEP YOUR INGREDIENTS FRESH.

The only thing worse than a stale menu is a stagnant marketing strategy. Offers, messaging, and content need to be updated regularly, both as your target market’s needs and your company’s offerings grow and change. One area that is notoriously overlooked is the corporate website.

Why? Most marketers spend the lion’s share of their attention on outbound lead generation strategies, and pay little attention to the most visible, most strategic, least expensive inbound lead generation tool available—their company website.

Keeping your website fresh with new offers and information is especially critical if you are in an industry where business needs/expectations of roles are rapidly changing, and your prospects need the latest information and tools to meet changing demands. Do the research: learn what issues your target markets are dealing with; then provide relevant information and offers around those needs. On your website, don’t assume that visitors know anything about you, or even care. Assume that they care about a need that they think they’ll find an answer to on your website, and structure your information so that they can easily find what they are looking for.

What marketers miss.

Nowspeed has optimized many websites for lead generation, and the weak areas that we typically find are: homepage content that is company and product-centric rather than prospect/solution-centric; stale offers, or no offers; static information that does not invite any interaction on the part of the visitor; and information architecture that is confusing, hard to navigate, and cumbersome.

Rather than making copy, layout and design decisions based on best guesses or corporate preferences, we recommend using actionable metrics and testing to increase targeted traffic and conversions. Following is a case study on how Nowspeed helped one company increase website leads 583%:

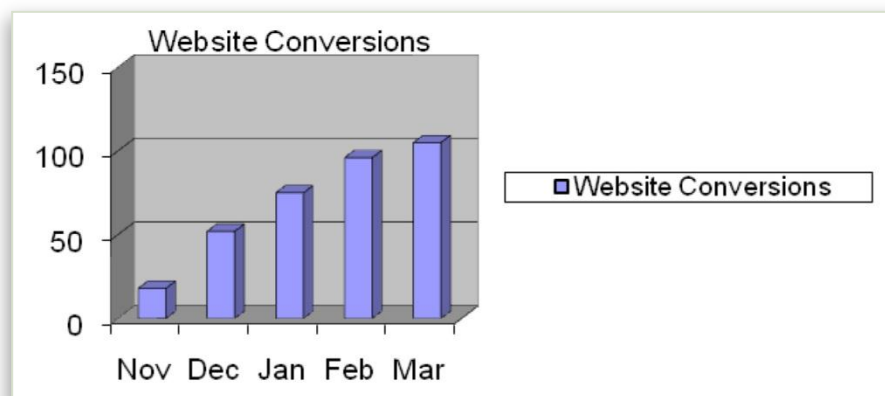
“Web analytics can identify where visitors are going on the site, and what they are responding to, allowing you to make modifications and enhancements that will not only increase your leads, but improve the overall usability, effectiveness and user experience of your website.”

Case Study – Using Website Analytics to Increase Leads

A technology company was not getting the conversions it had anticipated after launching a new website design. Newspeed implemented a Google Analytics campaign, and performed a benchmark on the site, including: Tracking visitors; traffic to key pages (products, solutions, and landing pages); conversions; etc.

Newspeed’s recommendations were to condense multi-step landing pages into one; create graphic-rich ads to highlight offers and place them on relevant pages; and create a prominent branded offer on the home page.

The chart below shows the increase in conversions after these changes were implemented:



Optimizing your website is an ongoing process; it’s not a once-a-year effort. Web analytics can identify where visitors are going on the site, and what they are responding to, allowing you to make modifications and enhancements that will not only increase your leads, but improve the overall usability, effectiveness and user experience of your website.

SUMMARY

Effective lead generation is not an art or a science; in fact, it is a combination of the two. Interactive marketing brings the ability to test messages, offers, and response immediately, and can have great impact on campaigns. But campaigns still need to be thoughtfully designed, and contain creative, engaging ideas that capture the attention of your target audience.

Like the best meals, effective lead generation campaigns must utilize the right ingredients, and be executed flawlessly to be truly effective. When all the elements come together, results improve dramatically. This white paper addressed some of the key ingredients that you can use to create the “special sauce” needed to improve your B2B lead generation strategies. This is just the beginning, however. If you would like to learn more, contact Newspeed for a free in-depth evaluation and benchmarking of your lead generation efforts. Bon appétit!

ABOUT NOWSPEED

Nowspeed is a search engine marketing firm that drives leads—from click to customer—for companies like yours. Our packaged services include a blend of search engine marketing, website design, social media, lead nurture and marketing analytics, so that we can deliver complete end-to-end solutions to our customers. For more information, visit us at www.nowspeed.com.

