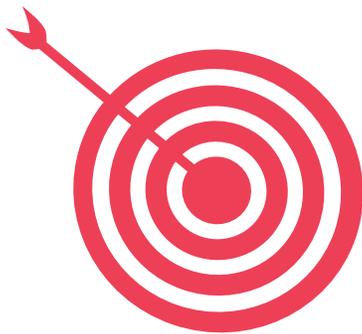


# Do you know who your best prospects are?

By: Hugh Bishop

According to a study by MarketingSherpa, Sales reports that 73% of all B2B leads that marketing passes to sales are not ready and willing to engage with a sales person. This feedback means that the leads sales are getting are not nurtured sufficiently for them to have a meaningful sales conversation.

If you are in charge of generating leads for your sales team, you know the importance of sending over quality leads. The last thing you want is word to get around that the demand gen team is sending over junk leads and that sales has to carry the brunt of the burden themselves. If your company is in the process of targeting a new market or introducing a new offering, the pressure on you only increases.



When you enter a new market your ability to provide qualified leads is at its absolute low point

## The Nurture Game Has Changed:

Entering new markets mean the sales team cannot rely on their personal contact lists to generate opportunities. It will take them longer to close deals until they can build their knowledge and contact list. Unfamiliarity with a prospect's needs, or new product / service makes your sales reps unsure and less persuasive when they engage with prospects. Everyone is looking to you to provide valid opportunities to ensure early success.

Yet, when you are entering a new market is the exact time when your ability to provide qualified leads is at its absolute low point. Step back and think about it for a moment. You are probably working with new databases that you have purchased from a list broker, trying to add new titles, industries and companies to your existing database.

These new people probably have never heard of your company and will probably tune out the flood of emails you are about to send them. Even people in your existing databases may be scratching their heads and wondering

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about the new products or services you are promoting.

You attempt to sift out the best leads the only way you know -- select them based on criteria such as company size, title or vertical industry. The problem with this approach is that you are really just guessing. You think that "companies with \$5 to \$50 million in revenue" are your best target, but how do you really know? After all, this is a new market for your company and the old rules may simply not apply.

## You Must Master A New Game

Maybe its time to rethink who the best leads in your database really are. When you think about it, the best type of lead marketing should pass over to sales is someone who:

- **Recognizes** that they have an urgent problem or challenge that cannot be solved using existing means
- **Agrees** that the solution/approach promoted by your company makes reasonable sense
- **Views** your company as an expert in its field
- **Demonstrates** an interest in learning more about the ideas your company has to offer.



How can responders self-identify themselves as ready to engage with sales?

Aren't these the people your sales team should be talking to? The question, then, is how do you identify these individuals? Or even better, how can individuals in your database self-identify themselves as ready to engage with sales?

### Two Steps to Winning

The solution hinges on two elements:

**1** First, you need to have a library of presentable content that discusses the challenges faced by your prospects and what a reasonable solution to these challenges might be. In the early stage, this content should minimize any discussion of your products or services and instead focus on the issues being faced by the prospect. After all, they only care about their problems and are not interested in how great you think your company is.

If crafted correctly, this content should result in the prospect perceiving your company as a trusted advisor. Only after this is accomplished will the prospect

be interested in looking at the second category of content in your portfolio, which will discuss your specific approach as well as products and services. Thus, your content library needs both types of content -- thought leadership and company-specific.

**2** Second, you need to know who in your database reacts to your content in the right way. Rather than speculate what hypothetical profile is best, prioritize your leads based on how they actually behave and what signals they provide. Let the people in your database tell you they are ready. To accomplish this task, you need a mechanism that allows you to track the activities of each individual person and what content resonates with them. Lastly, map this behavior back to your actual sales process to highlight those responders who look like your ideal customer.

### A New Approach

To succeed in new markets, you must be able to provide sales with the best leads possible. The old way of doing this -- simply segmenting by industry, company size and title -- are no longer sufficient. A new approach, one that combines a fresh view of your content portfolio combined with a software solution that personalizes the experience and tracks the behavior of each individual, is the only way to separate the real sales opportunities from dead-end prospects. The marketing and demand gen professionals who solve this challenge for their companies will become truly valued individuals.

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