

Good Leads, Bad Leads

by Ronald Lang

Swing and a miss! Is that what your lead generation campaigns are like? In honor of the new baseball season it is easy to compare close ratios on leads to a batter stepping up to the plate. If you are able to hit .300 for your career, you're probably a Hall of Famer. Bat .300 in your sales close ratio and you're probably a Hall of Shamer. The biggest problem with most lead generation campaigns is defining the parameters of what makes a "qualified lead."

Break down what a qualified lead means to your company. Is it someone that has a pulse? Could it be someone that has a purchase order (PO) in hand ready to write a company's name on it? The truth is, a qualified lead for you is somewhere in between. It doesn't matter if you decide to commit an investment to an inside team or outsource it, a plan of action needs to be put in place. Your action plan for a successful lead generation should be as follows:

1. Define a "qualified lead."
2. Purchase or utilize your own

database with clean and current information.

3. Develop an easy-to-follow script.

4. Define a standardized process for the sales team to follow once they receive a lead.

5. Monitor success by soliciting feedback frequently.

6. Make sure you give suspects (not qualified leads yet) multiple ways to contact you.

7. Develop a backlog of suspects that are interested but not qualified. (They could be in the future.)

Other lead generation programs could be in the form of customer surveys. Depending on how you craft your surveys (no more than 5-10 simple questions), you could identify many up-sell and cross-sell opportunities. Make sure that the questions are in a "soft sell" approach. Your customers will appreciate it. After you've identified the key customers for new opportunities, follow-up with a letter first, then a phone call. At the bottom of the letter, let the customer know you will be calling them within

a week. The letter should first thank them and continue to explain the purpose of the survey and based upon the results, how you can help them. Remember, it costs an average of 7-10 times more to acquire a new customer than to retain one. It is also 7-10 times easier selling to an existing customer than the efforts to build trust in acquiring new customers. The success from these efforts will yield excellent results if done properly. There are many websites that help you create surveys and will consolidate all the data. Two websites to consider are www.zoomerang.com and www.surveymonkey.com. If you want to take the results to the next level, integrate your results into a CRM package to immediately update a customer's profile and schedule calls accordingly.

The only task worse than cold calling for a salesperson is bad leads! When a sales rep receives bad leads, it wastes their selling time and if it happens all the time, they won't even make the calls. If there was a good lead in there, it would never

have a follow-up call. If you get a lot of manufacturer and trade show leads, have someone internally or outsource the task to call and better qualify every single lead. You should apply the qualifying factors we discussed earlier to these leads until they are ready to be distributed.

Another lead generation program is telesales. Whether you decide to set up an internal team or outsource this function, it is by far the most effective and will yield you the greatest results over time. It's amazing, we have email and faxing, postcards, trade shows and seminars, but the phone continues to be the mainstay. There is no quicker response than to pick up the phone, connect with the right point person, pitch them on your products and services and get an immediate response. Right then and there you can determine if they are a good lead or a bad lead.

Ronald E. Lang (rlang@majestictechnology.com) is president of Majestic Consulting Group, developers of AVLogix sales and customer service automation software.