



How Are You Going to Fill Your Sales Pipeline?

By [Amy Zucker](#), President of [Synergy Marketing Group, Inc.](#)

As a marketing consultant one resounding demand I keep hearing from Indiana CEOs is: “Help me fill my sales pipeline.” After an especially lean summer, executives are hungry for results today that will yield revenue for months and years to come. To capitalize on this opportunity, now is the time to put the sales and marketing people, processes and tools in place to attract, capture and convert an influx of new leads.

Filling your sales pipeline with “qualified” leads is a three-step process that requires marketing and sales to work together synchronously. It also requires forethought, dedication and continuous attention. So, while it may take only three steps, each is critical to your long-term success.

Attract Leads

With a strong outbound marketing and sales program, you can attract qualified in-bound leads. To begin, take the time to identify and clearly define your ideal client and understand his or her buying motivations and patterns. This process will enable you to develop a detailed profile that keeps your sales and marketing efforts focused and helps you allocate resources where they will have the most impact. Your profile may include factors such as targeted vertical industries, company type (geography, number of employees, annualized revenue, etc.), size of the opportunity, decision-maker demographics (gender, job title, preferred mode of communication, etc.), buying methodology, timing, and level of knowledge, history or comfort with your particular type of product or service.

Once you have a solid profile established, craft key messages strategically designed to resonate with your prospects. Then you can develop targeted marketing and sales strategies using a broad mix of activities—advertising, media relations, direct mail (or e-mail), Internet marketing, community service, trade association memberships, sponsorships, industry partnerships and networking—to aggressively pursue qualified prospects when and where they are making purchasing decisions.

Capture Leads

Before your outbound marketing and sales program is in motion and has reached momentum, make sure your organization is prepared to capture the influx of qualified leads. This doesn't necessarily mean volume. Your business may thrive on only six new deals a year—but they may be monster-sized accounts that require significant resources to land and service. Before you start an aggressive outbound marketing campaign, give thought to how well your present infrastructure can scale to capture and convert these leads.

One of the best ways to capture in-bound leads is through electronic means, which allows you to track and analyze opportunities instantly. For instance, you can add a contact form to your Web site, then initiate an e-mail marketing campaign that elicits responses. Set up a unique e-mail address for all sales and marketing activities to funnel all electronic leads, or establish a unique phone number to answer all telephone leads. These simple electronic tools will give you the data you need to effectively and efficiently identify and pursue “qualified” opportunities – and, cull out the bad leads from the good. Additionally, you'll be able to assess how many leads you received from which sources and what your prospects are interested in – so you'll know if your lead generation initiatives are working.

Convert Leads

Converting leads is the last critical step in the lead generation process. Once you have qualified opportunities in your funnel, how are you going to convert them into sales? There is no easy answer to this age-old challenge—especially for those who sell customized products or consultative services.

Your best bet is to develop a consistent process. First, designate and train point people to field leads and equip them with the information and tools they will need: sales kit, presentation templates, RFP templates, pricing sheets, technical specifications, etc. Next, establish a step-by-step methodology for efficiently

moving your prospects through a defined sales process (e.g., start with a consultative phone call, then conduct a face-to-face meeting, then present a proposal in person). At any point, be prepared to weed out prospects that are not a good fit. Finally, seek feedback from your prospects at each stage. Whether you win the deal or not, seeking candid input from your prospects will help you improve your approach. It is important to know whether certain elements of your sales pitch or process are barriers (such as your pricing structure, contract terms, delivery/installation timing, etc.), or if they put you ahead of the pack.

Over the last five years Synergy Marketing Group has helped dozens of executives from many different industries leverage marketing to make a measurable impact to their bottom-line. Learn more about our [lead generation services](#).

About the Author:

[Amy Zucker](#) is president and founder of Synergy Marketing Group. A marketing, branding and public relations veteran with 15 years of industry expertise, she started the company in 2002 to exclusively serve the business-to-business community. Today Synergy is one of the top 20 [Indianapolis marketing agencies](#) with an impressive roster of both B2B and B2C clients. The firm offers its clients expertise in building memorable brands, generating awareness in the global marketplace, establishing credibility, creating demand and quantifying marketing investments. In 2007 Synergy became a certified Woman-owned Business Enterprise (WBE) to bring added value to clients and vendor partners who want to meet corporate supplier diversity program goals and qualify for new business opportunities in government and regulated industries.

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