

TURN YOUR WEBSITE INTO A LEAD GENERATION AND SALES MACHINE



GENERATING LEADS ONLINE

Lead generation consistently ranks as a top priority for B2B companies. However, most companies handicap themselves by relying on their website's "Contact Us" page as the sole method for prospects to take action. Don't make this mistake. Proactively turn your website into a lead generation and sales machine.

MAKE AN OFFER THEY CAN'T REFUSE

Only 10 percent of your website visitors are ready to buy. The other 90 percent are kicking tires, performing research or just have a pre-sales question. To turn your website into a lead generation machine, you need to have a variety of offers that appeal to prospects at different stages of the purchasing cycle. This will help you generate leads for near-term business, as well as build a marketing database to nurture future opportunities. **Successful B2B offers have the following characteristics:**

WHEN AND WHERE

Bob DeStefano, STAFDA's online marketing consultant, will discuss "Online Marketing Strategies," **Sunday, Nov. 8 from 9:00 - 11:00 a.m.** A continental breakfast will be served 8:30 - 9:00 a.m., outside the meeting rooms.

■ **High perceived value:** Your customers and prospects place a significant monetary or emotional value on your offer and want to take advantage of it.

■ **Highly desirable:** The offer is so valuable, your customers and prospects want to take advantage of it RIGHT NOW!

■ **Uniquely yours:** Your offer is something that is unique to your company and can be found nowhere else.

■ **Related to the value of your offering:** Your offer is a first step that leads your customers and prospects toward the ultimate sale.

■ **Easy to respond to:** People do not have to jump through hoops to respond to your offer. You need to provide a simple process for them to take the next step.

■ **Minimizes risk or obligation:** By taking advantage of your offer, you make customers and prospects more comfortable doing business with you.



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THERE IS A REASON AMAZON PLACES THE “ADD TO CART” BOX IN THE UPPER RIGHT HAND SECTION OF EVERY PAGE — BECAUSE IT WORKS!

► **Examples of successful B2B offers include:**

Request More Info – A basic offer for people who want more information about your product, service or company.

Request a Quote or Add to Cart – These offers are tailored for the 10 percent of people who are ready to buy from you.

Download Whitepaper – Whitepapers and guides from your content marketing arsenal can help you generate leads. People will give up basic contact information to download these valuable resources.

Watch a Webinar – As with whitepapers and guides, people will give up basic contact information to download these valuable resources.

Subscribe to Newsletter – An email newsletter sign-up is a nice low-threat offer that will appeal to early-stage prospects.

Free Trial – If you can offer a free trial of your product or service, you can minimize risk by making it easier for prospects to want to buy.

Free Samples – As with free trials, free samples minimize risk by letting prospects sample the goods.

Free Consultation – This offer works well if you offer professional services.

Enter a Contest – While this offer works, it does not deliver the most targeted leads. People love to win things, but just because they entered your contest doesn't mean they want to do business with you.

Ask a Question – Now this offer works and delivers targeted prospects! It's a nice low-threat call to action that early-stage prospects will take advantage of because they don't assume they are starting a sales conversation.

I like to see calls to action offered in the top right section of every page. There is a reason Amazon places the “add to cart” box in the upper right hand section of every page — because it works! Do the same thing and you will be amazed by how many more prospects reach out to you because you make it easy for them to do so.

DESIGN FORMS THAT GENERATE LEADS AND SALES

Most of your calls to action will send people to

complete an online form. You may not realize it, but your Web forms may be hurting your lead generation efforts. Most online forms are too long, too hidden or too unpersuasive to generate leads — but you need them to fill your sales pipeline. You need to create forms that generate leads and sales.

- **Use a simple and clean design.** Make your forms appear easy to complete by leveraging “white space” to improve legibility, remove all unnecessary elements and ensure your field labels are understandable.
- **Remove unnecessary fields.** Are your online lead generation forms as long and daunting as a tax return? If so, shorten them. The more fields your forms include, the less likely prospects will be to fill them out. Ask only for basic contact information and product interests that your salespeople will need to make an intelligent follow-up (e.g., name, company, phone, email and product interest).
- **Fix your buttons.** No one wants to “submit.” Label your buttons so they represent the action the prospect wants to take. Use phrases like Order Now, Sign Up, Get Started, Begin Free Trial, Request a Quote, Please Contact Me, etc. Also, use large buttons with contrasting colors so the button pops off the page.
- **Get creative – use the “Mad Libs” approach.** Try offering your lead generation form in a narrative format, presenting input fields to people as blanks within sentences. It is a fun and interesting way for prospects to take the next step.
- **Get creative – ask a question.** Replace your field labels with complete questions, such as “How much do you want to buy?” instead of “Quantity.” It makes your form friendlier and easier to understand.
- **Shorten your checkout process.** If you sell products online, look for opportunities to simplify your checkout process. Cut the number of clicks required to complete the sale. Communicate shipping costs early. Offer a progress meter to let people know where they are in the process. In addition, offer alternative (offline) ways to order.
- **Provide a nurturing offer on your “Thank You” pages.** After someone completes an online form, they should be presented with a “Thank You” confirmation page. These pages offer a great opportunity to nurture prospects further through the pipeline. According to MarketingSherpa, 39 percent of prospects accept offers

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23% OF COMPANIES NEVER RESPOND AT ALL TO THEIR ONLINE LEADS. REALLY?!

on "Thank You" pages, so this is a great time to offer your e-newsletter, social media follows or discounts on a future purchase.

PROMINENTLY DISPLAY YOUR PHONE NUMBER

In my experience, more than 50 percent of people prefer to pick up the phone and call when they are on a website. To boost the number of inquiries you receive, don't make your visitors hunt for your phone number. Make your phone number one of the prominent calls to action on every page of your website and encourage prospects to call you. Since they can use the website as a presentation tool, there is no better time for your salespeople to be speaking with prospects.

I recommend using a unique toll-free number on your website so you can accurately track the number of calls you receive from website visitors. This will help you close the loop in terms of tracking inbound leads from your website.

OFFER ONLINE CHAT AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO PHONE & FORMS

My clients are having great success offering online chat as an alternative to a phone number and online forms. In fact, many are receiving 10 times more chats than online form completions. By calling you on the phone, a prospect will get an immediate response.

But not everyone is ready to engage in a sales conversation. By using an online form, prospects can remain somewhat anonymous, but they assume it will take hours or days before they get a response. Online chat offers the best of both worlds. Prospects can get an immediate response, while still remaining somewhat anonymous.

It's very easy to integrate online chat into your website. Hosted chat services like LivePerson offer an intuitive toolset for integrating chat buttons onto your site, as well as a Web-based interface for managing chat conversations. Most business leaders mistakenly assume online chat is a 24 hours per day, 365 days per year proposition. It's not. You can offer online chat only during your normal business hours and still be effective.

HAVE A PROCESS IN PLACE TO SHORTEN THE FOLLOW-UP TIME

Whatever method you use to generate leads, make sure you have a process in place to shorten the follow-up

time. How long does it currently take for your salespeople to follow up on online lead inquiries? If the follow-up is not immediate, you are leaving money on the table.

It is absolutely shocking how many companies hurt their online lead generation efforts because they have a poor follow-up process. According to a study performed by Harvard Business Review:

37%	of companies respond to their leads within an hour
16%	respond within one to 24 hours
24%	of companies take more than 24 hours
23%	of companies <i>never</i> respond at all to their online leads

Really?!?! Almost one-quarter of companies never respond to online leads! Another quarter is taking more than a day to respond to an interested prospect. All of the money and time invested in generating the lead is completely wasted due to poor or lacking follow-up. Disgraceful!

Don't make this vital mistake. Assign salespeople to follow up on online leads and make sure the inquiries get to them as soon as possible. Also, don't let leads languish in someone's inbox; look for technology solutions to shorten the follow-up time. Tie your website forms into a customer relationship management (CRM) system like Salesforce.com, SugarCRM or Infusionsoft to streamline your lead management and follow-up process.

You can also take a low-tech route and direct online and phone-in leads to a salesperson's smartphone. The goal is to make sure your salespeople talk to the prospect when they are still on your website, so they can use your website as a presentation tool. **CS**

Bob DeStefano is STAFDA's endorsed online marketing consultant and president of SVM E-Marketing Solutions, an online marketing agency that helps distributors and manufacturers transform their websites into their most powerful marketing tool. He helps business leaders harness the power of customer-focused websites, search engine marketing, social media marketing, e-mail marketing and more to produce bottom-line results. Contact Bob at bdestefano@svmsolutions.com, (877) 786-3249 ext. 234, or for more information, visit www.svmsolutions.com and www.bobdestefano.com.



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