

MARKETING Process

Your Lead Generation Process Guide

Attracting qualified leads to your doorstep



MARKETING

Your Lead Generation Process

Overview

Lead generation is about offering the promise of what your business will deliver in such compelling terms that potential customers in your target market are moved to take action.

Your lead generation activities must create curiosity and excitement, and broadcast the offer your business makes in a way that's irresistible to your target market. To do that, the message must speak to your probable customers' needs and desires in the way they will hear best. Then, it must be communicated through the channels that are best suited to your message and are already a part of your customers' lives.

Before innovating new lead generation activities, it's important to establish a baseline for your current activities. This baseline will let you know what you have and where you are. It will give you a firm foundation for evaluating and innovating your lead generation activities. With the completion of your lead generation baseline, you'll have an objective, reliable way to keep your fingers on the pulse of what you do to broadcast your promise and attract qualified leads.

Most businesses conduct lead generation as a series of discrete, almost disconnected activities — a newspaper ad here, a public event there — with little continuity or overall strategy. This approach may give short-term results, but rarely provides the solid, long-term foundation that your business needs. In this business development process, you'll find the blueprint for a true lead generation system that you can easily customize for your business. It will give you and your people a solid plan to work from and help you bring ever-increasing numbers of qualified leads to your doorstep.

The Universal Lead Generation Process

Lead Generation
Baseline Process

Identify Target
Market

Determine Lead
Generation Budget

Confirm
Positioning and USP

Select Channels

Implement Lead
Generation Activity

Quantify and
Track

Benchmarks for Implementing Your Lead Generation Activity

Select Specific Channels

Determine Channel Specifications

Develop Specific Messages

Complete Technical Production

Execute the Campaign

The Irresistible Offer

Lead generation is about offering the promise of what your business will deliver in such compelling terms that potential customers in your target market are moved to take action. You must make an irresistible offer, one heard above the din of all your competitors' offers. This offer should target the key frustrations customers feel in trying to do business with people in your industry, and it should promise a risk-free solution. Ideally, it's an offer that satisfies so many purchase-decision needs that the only need left to meet in your lead conversion process is the sales transaction.

Now that would be some offer! Talk about differentiation from your competition. That's where you have to aim: to shape your business to do one thing in a unique way that immediately differentiates you from every other business. Afterwards, tell people about it in such a way that they

experience the opportunity for emotional gratification, both in the product itself and in their purchase-decision process.

Your lead generation process needs to create curiosity, excitement, and action; make an offer to your potential customers they can't resist. If you know your market, you'll know what they'd like to hear and how. That's half the battle. The other half is to analyze and improve your process so it produces the results you want. Systems innovation will bring discipline and objectivity to your efforts to innovate your lead generation process. Don't settle for anything less. Systemizing the way you make change in your business is just as powerful as systemizing any other process. It gives consistent, predictable results you can rely on time and time again.

Lead Generation and the Multiplier Effect

Too many businesses treat lead generation as a mixture of isolated activities and are frustrated by the lack of results. Lead generation can look like a bunch of fragmented activities (ads, mail, signs, referrals), but it should be a tightly integrated, highly orchestrated set of systems. It's the cumulative, integrated effect of well-designed lead generation activities that create the persuasive power you want.

If your lead generation is fragmented and uncoordinated, as it is in most small businesses, you'll still get benefit from each activity you add to your mix. But if you have an integrated, coordinated lead generation process, with activities that echo and reinforce each other, the multiplier effect kicks in, doubling and redoubling the effect and

greatly increasing the likelihood of the desired response. The message your customers see in your ads has to be reinforced by what they read in your mailers, see on your signs, or hear by word of mouth. All those messages then have to create the foundation for the way you offer to satisfy their needs in your sales process.

And remember, you have to send the same message through all channels. It'll be expressed in a variety of words and images, and you'll direct it through a variety of channels, but no matter which way your message reaches your customer, it has to reinforce the impact you want to create.

Determine “Where We Are Now” In Lead Generation

Before you begin to apply the Universal Lead Generation Process to innovate these activities, you’ll want to devote the time it takes to conducting a baseline. The baseline serves as the solid ground under your feet that tells you what you’ve got and where you’re starting from.

You’ll want to go through the baseline with an eye toward identifying what may or may not be working, how you’re going to tell, and what you can track over time to see if it’s getting any better. If you’re tempted to roll through

this step because you think you already know where you are, think about this: You are already running a business and you have done this work before, but there’s always more to learn, there are always more surprises, and you can’t afford to miss anything — especially about lead generation. So, do the work. Take your current lead generation system apart and look at the pieces. This will serve as the very important foundation for your next steps in the process.

Finding Square One

Like any large-scale process in your business, lead generation is comprised of multiple systems. Some of them, like advertising or public relations, are so complex they look like separate processes themselves and, in fact, are systems made up of many smaller systems. Others, like business location or word-of-mouth referrals, may look incidental and not part of a formal lead generation system or process at all. So, for the purpose of creating your lead generation baseline, where do you draw the line? What needs to be included to give you the objective point of reference you need to clearly “see” this part of your business?

Simply put, your lead generation process consists of everything you do to position, prepare, and broadcast your offer to your market. The first step in lead generation usu-

ally starts with the decisions you make about your lead generation objectives and the development of the budget that will support them. It also requires preparation of your message and selection of the lead generation channels that will best reach your market. Your lead generation process might include print, broadcast, electronic, display or outdoor advertising, direct response marketing, promotional events and activities, public relations and word-of-mouth or published publicity. This may not include all lead generation activities, but it’s a place to start.

Your Lead Generation Baseline Process

1

Identify your lead generation process.

The first task is to identify the boundaries and the main milestones of the process. The easiest way to do this for lead generation is to start by finding the first step in the chain of events that creates enough interest in your target market to produce “leads” — people who demonstrate interest in learning more about your offer. The last step in your process will reflect how those people demonstrate their interest — for example, by walking in your door, or by returning a coupon, calling, faxing, or e-mailing for more information.

Use the Process Identification worksheet in the Worksheets section of this booklet to define the boundaries and content of your current lead generation process.

2

Identify and describe inputs, outputs, and costs.

If you haven’t “seen” your system before, this will bring it into sharp relief. Think of it as an “x-ray” of your process. Once you take the time to really look at all the resources your current process uses, what results you get from it, and how much it’s costing you, you’ll be in a better position to decide if it needs innovation. Being objective and specific is the key to success in this step.

The Process Baseline Worksheet in the back of this booklet will guide you. You express the inputs, outputs, and costs of your lead generation process in terms of their “QQT&I” (quantity, quality, timing, and intangibles). Inputs of a system include all the resources used by the system to produce its result. Input includes staffing, workspace, facilities, equipment, supplies, information, and anything else the system needs in order to function. Outputs of a system are the results it produces plus any by-products and waste it may generate. System costs are the specific costs directly attributable to the system and its operation. Intangibles are those aspects of the system you can observe and describe but can’t measure directly.



3

Select key indicators.

One of the most valuable results of this approach will be the identification of quantifiable indicators you can track to see if the system is meeting your goals. The indicators that tell you the most about your system’s performance are the key indicators of your lead generation system. Once you identify them, you’ll be able to check the health of the whole system quickly and easily just by checking these “pulse points.”

There are four key indicators that are fundamental to any lead generation system: how much of your target market is reached by your lead generation efforts and how often, the number of leads generated, the cost per lead, and your total lead generation costs. Tracking these four indicators alone will give you a good handle on how your system is functioning, but there are probably other “pulse points” specific to your business. You’ll identify them as you complete your baseline. Think in terms of rates, ratios, and costs per unit as you review the “QQT&I” of your process, and additional key indicators may suggest themselves.

4

Track and review the key indicators periodically.

Nothing ever stays the same, and sometimes it shouldn't, so you've got to have a handle on changing conditions. Review the key indicators you'll develop in this process on a regular basis. They'll allow you to measure your efforts and make the ongoing course corrections that will take you most directly to your goals. Use the Key Indicators Worksheet in this booklet to identify and track indicators on an ongoing basis.

Establishing the baseline for your process will give you a reference point for interpreting its performance, and a foundation for the innovation, quantification, and orchestration of your continuing business development.

Benchmarks of Your Lead Generation Process

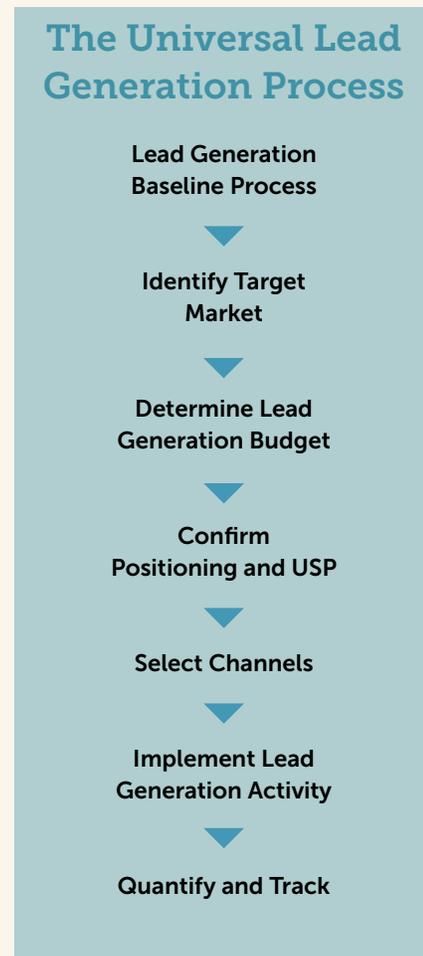
Your lead generation process is about both strategy and tactics. Not only is it about the ads you write or the publicity you seek; it's also about the marketing blueprint you devise, the money you allot, the channel choices you make, and the messages you construct. Lead generation is a complex activity; however, it's at the heart of your business. It's how you give voice to the idea or vision that was behind the creation of your business in the first place.

An integrated lead generation process, like any other effective system, has a number of clearly defined benchmarks. The benchmarks of the universal lead generation process, as outlined below, will help you put all the pieces together, from start to finish, in a simple, easy process that you can modify and use season after season, year after year, as the foundation for continually attracting high-quality leads to your doorstep.

1

Lead Generation Baseline Process.

As described already in this booklet, baselining gives you a firm foundation before innovating your lead generation process. Make sure to follow the lead generation process outlined in this booklet before moving on to the next step of identifying your target market.



2

Identify your target market.

You want your potential customers to feel that you really know them – their wishes, desires, discomforts, and dislikes. You want to know them almost as well as you know yourself.

3

Determine your lead generation budget.

Refer back to your financial statement and budgets. You can't do a precise lead generation budget until you quantify your lead generation activity and know its financial dynamics. Until you reach that point, it's best to budget what you can afford and/or what you've seen work in the past, mixing in a combination of your best judgment and a little common sense.

4

Confirm your positioning strategy and your unique selling proposition for the target market.

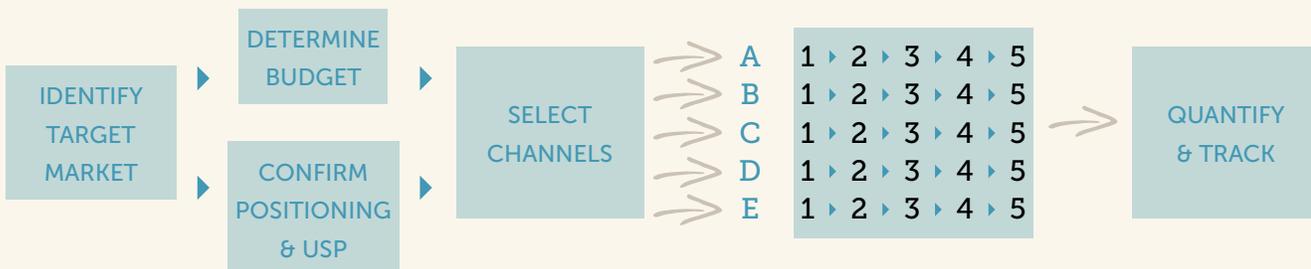
These are the foundations of your message and the starting point of the message-development process. Review them, keep them clearly in mind, and make sure every message you develop has them at its core.

5

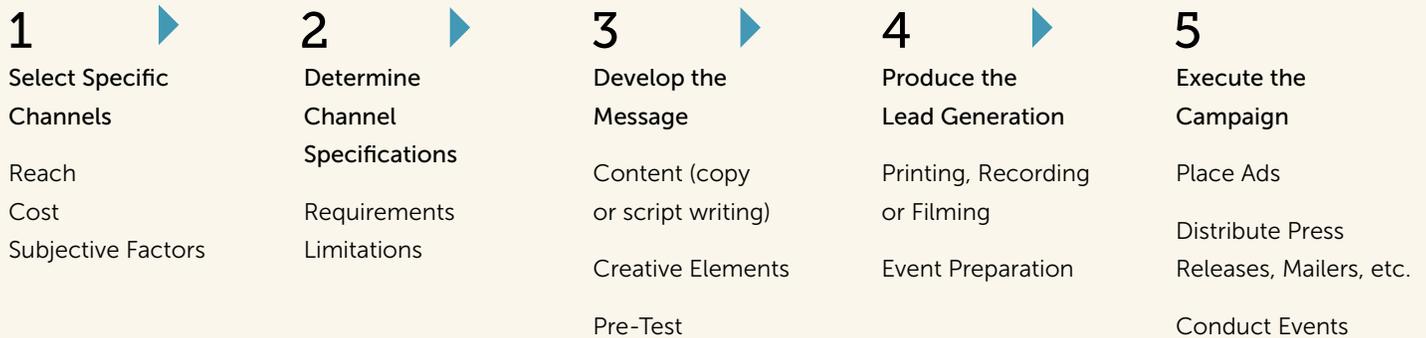
Select your lead generation channels.

Keeping in mind the profile of your target customer and the positioning of your lead generation message, think about which lead generation channels fit best for your business. Which channel types are a part of your target customers' lives? Do they read magazines and newspapers? Do they listen to the radio while they commute? Is word of mouth particularly effective with this group? Are publications like trade journals or professional newsletters more credible? Which channels are appropriate for your offer? Would a radio or TV advertisement seem inappropriate to a doctor's target customers? Would a word-of-mouth referral program for funeral services feel inappropriate to target customers? The way your target customers perceive various types of lead generation channels can be as important as the message you're sending through them because the channel becomes part of the message.

After you determine which types of channels to use, you need to think about how much coverage you'll get for the cost. Cheaper is not always better. One exposure through a dynamic channel that is particularly well targeted to your probable customer may be more effective than ten exposures in a more economical channel. When in doubt, opt for fewer exposures in the best targeted channel.



GENERIC LEAD GENERATION IMPLEMENTATION SYSTEM
 IMPLEMENT PROCESS FOR EACH CHANNEL



6
 Implement your lead generation activity, one channel at a time.

There are five steps to implementing your lead generation activities:

1. Select the specific channels you'll use (newspaper, magazine, radio, TV station, public relations activity, etc.)
2. Determine the specifications for the ones you pick
3. Do the creative work to develop the specific message you'll present in each channel
4. Complete the actual technical production
5. Make the final execution

These steps comprise the generic lead generation implementation system. As you develop your own systems to meet the special needs of your business, these five steps will serve as the main milestones of your process for each lead generation channel you use.

7
 Quantify and track your lead generation process.

The most productive way to monitor the effectiveness of your lead generation process is to tie your lead to something trackable. It could be the number of calls on your toll-free line in response to a television or radio commercial, the number of postcards returned from a direct

mail flyer, the number of times your leads mention an ad or a referring friend's name, or the return rate of a price-off coupon that's part of a print ad. The goal is to be able to identify which messages and channels have been the most effective in attracting your target customers.

Lead generation can be a costly and time-consuming activity. If you can't quantify, track, and ultimately analyze its results, you'll be wasting your resources. But if you create ways to examine your results systematically, you'll remove the mystery from customer response. You'll know exactly which channels and messages effectively broadcast your offer to your customers. Afterwards, use this information to develop even more effective ways to attract them.

Either use the Lead Generation Tracking worksheet in the back of this booklet to quantify and track the results of your lead generation activities, or create one that will better suit your business' lead generation process and the results you want to track. Make sure you capture all the key indicators you identified when you established your lead generation baseline.

Innovating Your Lead Generation Process

The universal lead generation process and the generic lead generation implementation system are all you need for effective lead generation. But they're generic. You still have to make the various elements and subsystems your own to adapt them to your business and your target market. The inset diagram reviews the steps in the systems innovation process.

Let's look at how May Chan of Chan's Delectables used the benchmarks of the universal lead generation process to create a real lead generation process for her business.

Example — Chan's Delectables

Chan's Delectables is a gourmet deli and gift store. Although May's business has been successful thus far with a somewhat random lead generation system, it lacks the control and predictability she needs. May knows that to have a healthy business for the long run, she needs a truly orchestrated and documented lead generation process.

May Chan created a detailed system, and documented each benchmark of her overall lead generation process. It was relatively easy to adapt the universal lead generation benchmarks to fit her business' situation. For each system in the process, she followed the principles of system design and documentation, system evaluation, and system innovation. The diagram on the next page is an overview of the systems that comprise May's lead generation process.

May created the following systems:

- ▶ Annual review of market information, including a review and revision (when needed) of her positioning strategy and unique selling proposition.
- ▶ Annual budgeting for lead generation with monthly monitoring and adjustments as needed. (She tied this in with her sales/lead conversion budget and her overall company budget, as they go hand in hand).
- ▶ Annual review system for confirming or dropping old channels or selecting new ones.
- ▶ Ongoing systems for implementation of each channel strategy. A separate system, patterned after the

generic lead generation implementation system, for each channel. May had implementation systems for:

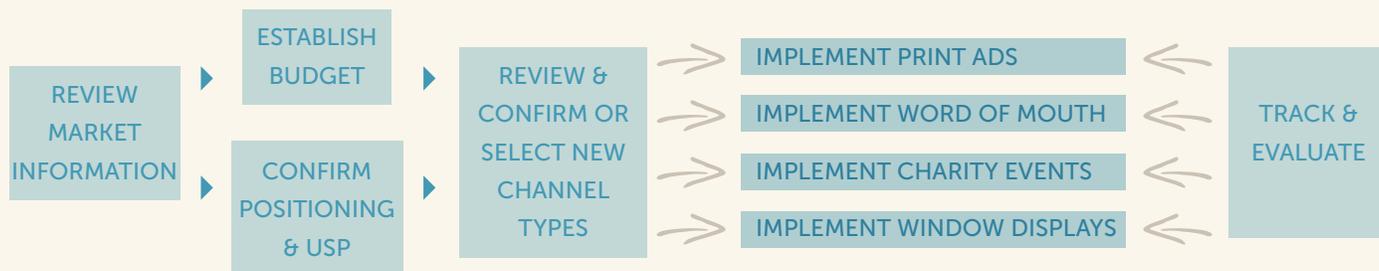
- print advertising
- word-of-mouth promotions
- charity events
- window displays

- ▶ Ongoing tracking. May's tracking system had separate tracking of each channel. She created monthly tracking reports for each one.

May has determined her lead generation baseline and innovated and created her new lead generation process. To complete her lead generation work, May estimated the results of her new process as compared to the results she has been getting and confirmed that she will, in fact, move forward with her innovated system. Finally, she put all the pieces into place, installing her new lead generation process and testing the process over time.

Engaging in this process gave May a renewed sense of confidence and passion for her work. "This is why I went into business. I'm really just like my customers in that I want to try something new all the time. But when it's your business you have to be careful. You have to think first. And a lot of the time, I wasn't even very sure what I should be thinking about. But now I know how to figure out where I am and where I'd like to go in a very systematic way. And I know what to look for when evaluating my results. This really is going to be exciting!"

CHAN'S DELECTABLES—LEAD GENERATION PROCESS OVERVIEW



Taking it to the Streets

The principles of lead generation are universal. They're all about telling your potential customers who you are and what you want to do for them. They're about broadcasting your intentions and telling your potential customers how your business will fulfill them. And, more than anything else, they're about telling them in the way they can hear it best. So you must create a lead generation message that gets your potential customers' full attention. Then, you must draw them to you with an offer so

magnetic that it reaches them where they really live — in the places they occupy, the activities that they do, and the needs, hopes, and dreams they have.

Finally, you must dedicate your business to embracing the lead generation process you create. Make it so much a part of the way you operate daily that the flow of new customers to you becomes as automatic and natural as opening your doors each day.