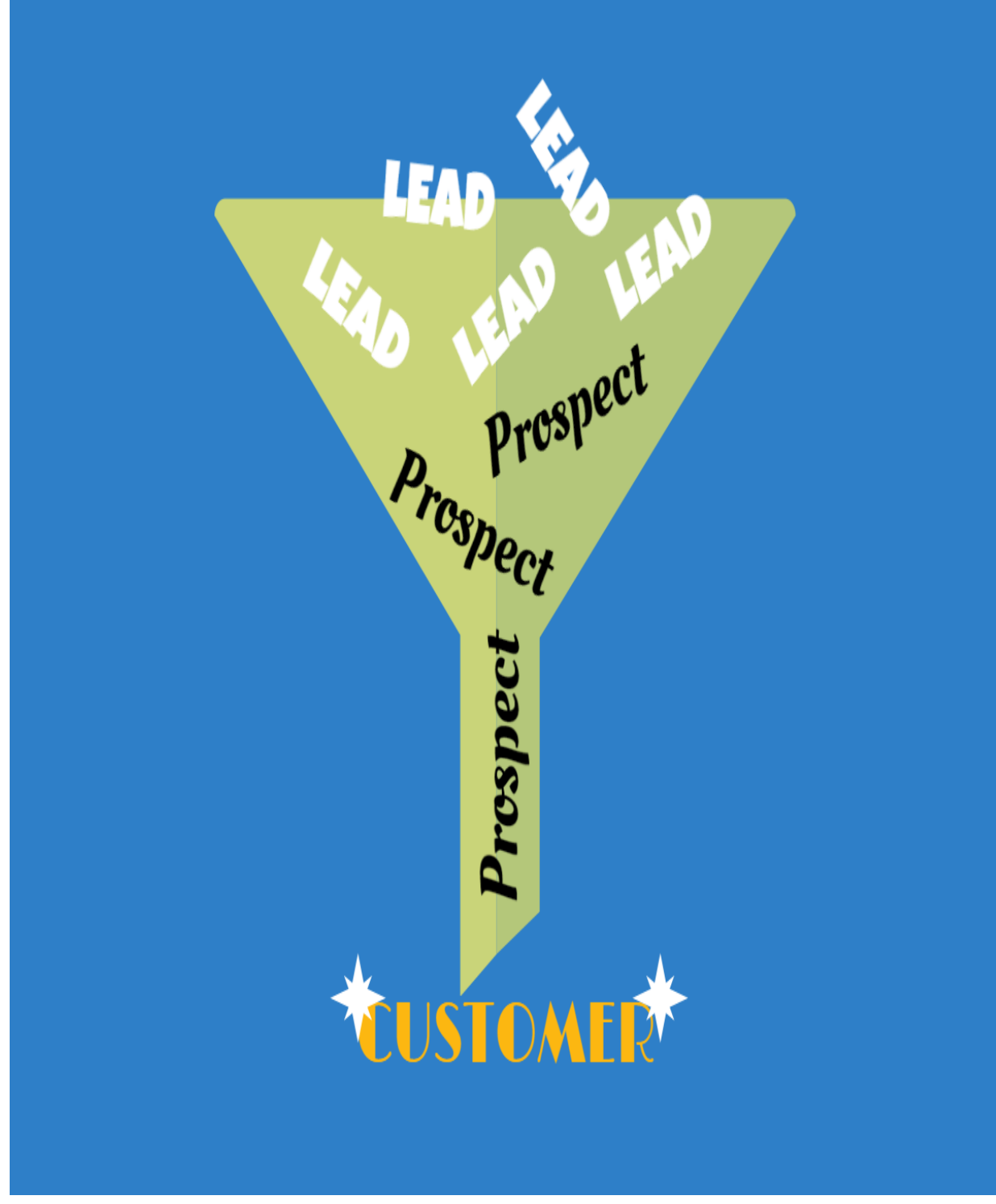


Building a Sales Funnel: Convert Leads to Customers

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Sales funnels can be your best friend when trying to capture leads, and constructing them well will bring you customers—and keep them.



(https://www.businesstechpro.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/building-a-sale\_546\_1980c542cec4c045b7a32496d096d0b6abec4cf0.png)Chances are, you've heard the term "sales funnel," and some of you may have even built one; however, what makes a good sales funnel so successful? Does it send out a million emails to everyone and their mothers, hoping something will stick? The truthful answer: hardly. Smart sales funnel building involves knowing who you think would like your product, who is likely to buy your product, and then guiding leads toward customer status in every step of the process.

The point of a sales funnel is not to necessarily appeal to the masses to sell your product but to maximize your time and resources focusing on those that are the most likely to buy from you. For example, if you sell steak knives, you would be better off trying to sell your product to people who frequent steakhouses, enjoy meat products in general, and are not vegetarian.

The Structure of a Sales Funnel

A lot of visualizations you will see of sales funnels make them look akin to basketball nets or upside down pyramids, but their real shape is a bit more complex than that, depending on your industry and what you are trying to sell.

Leads

The largest part of the sales funnel, or the "top," is typically considered the "Lead" section, or where your sales funnel begins collecting sales leads. These people are aware of your existence and have expressed a general interest in what you do through content you have put out, promotional sales, PPC advertising, social media posts, or good old organic search results. However, customer motives for visiting your website are not so uniform. Continuing with the steak knives example, perhaps they had searched "knives" on Google and found your site, but in reality, are searching for butter knives. While leads may appear like potential customers on the surface, you will need to dive deeper into their personal preferences to see whether they are true prospects or not.

Prospects

The middle section of a sales funnel is reserved for "prospects," or leads that through your research and outreach efforts have proven to be interested in your product specifically. It is here that you begin parsing the dead ends from the leads that show real promise, making this middle section the most robust part of the entire sales funnel. So what makes this such an important section? There is no one simple answer, as there are many variables to consider such as your industry, your online reputation, your line of products and services, and the projected demand for said products and services.

People that show real interest in what you do will want something tangible that they can see, hear, and experience that helps them with the issue they want to solve by purchasing your product. Moreover, they will want good reasons to choose your product over competitors or comparable services. In the sales funnel, your first move is to gain a point of contact for sharing more of your content and promotions with them to transform them into a customer. While there are a few options of going about this action, a planned web of email trains has great effectiveness since it is not terribly invasive and forces business owners to focus their content for their target demographics to obtain conversions. So how do you obtain prospect email addresses, or get people to subscribe to your information channels?

An effective way of piquing people's interest in your company as well as getting their email contact information is to give them a taste of what you have to offer. Providing something for FREE, such as an offer of a free sample, always gets people's attention, and gives you an opportunity to begin hitting them with a sales pitch. Here is an example:

"Need energy now? ABC Tea will give you long-lasting energy without a crash. Don't believe us? Try it for yourself today! Submit your email address below to get a FREE sample! We'll send you a confirmation email with a link to claim your FREE sample!"

And boom, they have given you a point of contact while demonstrating an interest in your product.

While free samples can work for some products, it won't work for everything, such as our example business owner selling steak knives. In this case, giving exclusive access to useful content that a) solves a problem the prospect has, which is why they are seeking said product, and b) gives a company the opportunity to evangelize how its product is the solution.

Examples of FREE content include the following:

- E-book
Video demonstration
Infographic
Industry report

By making content exclusive to "subscribers," it ensures that prospects will provide their email addresses to receive that content, and thus begin an email train of related or interesting content that pertains customer interest.

After the initial request for your free content, send additional content via email with the occasional deal pertaining to the product(s) prospects showed interest in. Additional content builds up a customer's trust in a company's authority in the industry and spurs him or her to make a purchase.

A very basic email train goes something like this:

- Email #1: Initial content confirmation
Email #2: Additional relevant content - "Since you showed interest in Product A, here are some other articles you may"
Email #3: Additional relevant content - "We have some NEW stuff you might"
Email #4: Promotion or Deal - "Remember that thing you liked? It's on sale right now! Here's a link to the product"

Customers

The bottom section, and the final destination, of a sales funnel is where your prospect become customers. These are the people that have gotten something out of all the content, deals, coupons, and other attempts you have made to entice them, and decided to take the plunge and make a purchase. While you want every prospect to become a customer, the sales funnel does not end with the purchase. What is better than a customer? A return customer that comes back time and again to make more purchases.

However, marketing to a returning customer should be approached differently than a prospect. You have won them over, and now it is time to show that you care about brand loyalty. Exclusive incentives, discounts, and additional content should be employed when emailing return customers because they are bread and butter of any successful company.

After a customer makes an initial purchase, new opportunities to help a business grow becomes available: reviews and referrals.

Reviews

When people see your company online while performing a search, your reputation comes into play almost immediately. How people view your business is affected by many factors, but the most front-facing are reviews, whether through Google, Yelp, or third party review sites for your industry. While we cannot always control negative reviews, they can be made the minority by a proactive company. Additionally, a new company can also suffer from having little to no reviews and can be just as bad as negative reviews.

Enticing customers to leave a review of your products and services can be a tricky business because it may appear as if you are bribing them for a positive review. Wording and tact play a key role here, especially when offering something in return such as a coupon or discount on future purchases.

Example: "Thank you so much for purchasing [Product Name]. We are always doing our best to improve our products to serve our customers better, and would love to hear about your experience! As a special thank you for your purchase and your story with our product, we'd like to offer you 15% Off any item! Please submit your experience below to get the ball rolling. Thank you again, and we look forward to your feedback!"

In this kind of follow-up email, you avoid saying you want a positive review and also give the customer incentive to make a future purchase.

Referrals

When customers are happy, they tend to refer their friends and family towards your products. Thanks to new platforms such as social media, it is easier than ever to track referrals and get customers to evangelize your brand for you. A referral offer should be made in a follow-up email to a customer shortly after a purchase complete with an incentive to do so. While some people may refer your business on their own accord because of a positive experience, an incentive such as a coupon or deal for repeat purchasing is an effective way to get others off the fence and in your camp.

Referrals, especially in the online space, should be tracked electronically so a) you can reward the customer who gave the referral, b) you can see what platform the referral came from to analyze effectiveness. Affiliate programs are great for tracking referrals, providing companies with special links that determine a referral source.

Example: "Thank you so much for your purchase! If you are pleased with your purchase, we would appreciate you spreading the word! Just enter this code [STEAKCUT12345] into a post on your favorite social media channel, and we'll send you a coupon for a FREE cleaning cloth!"

The follow-up cycle is possibly one of the most critical steps in the sales funnel, so automating your responses can be very useful in assuring your customers remain as such and bring other on board as well.

If you have any questions about how a sales funnel will work for your business, contact Business Tech Pro today at (888)326-6856 or support@businesstechpro.com (mailto:support@businesstechpro.com) for more information. You can also contact us via text at (949) 860-7477 or through our web chat on www.businesstechpro.com (http://www.businesstechpro.com) and Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/businesstechpro/) during regular business hours.

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