

5 Tips to Improve Online Lead Generation Campaigns

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Direct Marketing or Lead Generation is nothing new. It's a proven and quantifiable tool for many marketers. In recent years, the emergence of Internet-based Lead Generation has allowed many direct marketers a valuable tool to add to their arsenal.

Generating qualified leads online can benefit virtually any business, regardless of size or industry. Some savvy marketers are fully aware of this and have been taking advantage of the Internet to profitably grow their consumer base for years now. Others have stayed out of the game for a variety of reasons. But whether you're a seasoned online direct marketer or a little late to the dance, here are a few tips that if employed correctly, will greatly enhance your bottom line:

1. Create the right offer

Given that most online lead generation campaigns are limited in the amount of ad copy that can be used, conveying your offer to the consumer accurately and concisely is paramount. In short, you want to create the most perceived value for the consumer with little or no perceived risk.

For instance, if you sell widgets and are trying to find consumers interested in purchasing a widget, a compelling offer might be, "Sign-up to receive our FREE guide, Top 10 tips for buying a widget".

After all, your goal is to start a dialog with the consumer. Over time, you will build this relationship and eventually grow the "lead" into a loyal consumer.

2. Be honest

To a certain degree, lead generation is self-selecting and by that I mean, people who are interested in your offer will opt-in, and presumably, those who are not interested, will not. However, this isn't always the case and some people, for various reasons, opt-in to offers they have no interest in.

To combat this, you should be completely honest and direct in your message and set consumer's expectations accordingly. For instance, if you are offering a free trial, clearly spell out what is expected from the consumer in return for the free trial and detail what will happen when the free trial ends. By doing this, you'll greatly reduce the number of unqualified leads and eliminate surprise from consumers who weren't expecting to receive a bill after the free trial.

3. Don't make it too easy to respond

When a consumer only has to click a check-box, there are few safeguards in place to weed out unqualified or poorer quality leads. Make the consumer complete a few additional fields of data. This slight sacrifice in lead quantity will be offset by significantly improved lead quality.

4. Empower the consumer

It's happened to us all...you're eating dinner and the phone rings. There are few things harder to overcome than a negative first experience with a prospective consumer.

To prevent this, empower the consumer. Ask them how they want to be contacted, when they want to be contacted, would they prefer a phone call, email, or postal mail? If you ask a consumer, how far along they are in the buying cycle, they will tell you. Let the consumer dictate the manner and terms in which they communicate with you and you will both win.

5. Follow-up quickly

It may sound like common sense, but follow-up quickly. Many companies do a very poor job of following-up with incoming leads. In fact, if you are considering a new lead generation campaign, ask yourself the following:

- How will these leads be filtered-out to sales reps?
- How will these leads be contacted?
- How quickly will these leads be contacted?
- What will be done with non-responsive leads?

If you are uncertain or cannot confidently answer any of the above questions, take a step back and reevaluate your follow-up process. Make sure you have a solid plan in place before you purchase even one lead.

On the other hand, if you have a good follow-up plan in place, but want to further increase the quality of your leads, consider using an auto-response email correspondence. This is an email message that is automatically triggered when a consumer submits a completed lead form. Good auto-response email copy should confirm the interest of the consumer in your offer (or give them the chance to opt-out if they submitted the lead form in error) and clearly spell out the next steps of the process. If you have an inbound call center, offer a toll-free number for the consumer to use if they want a more immediate response.

In summary, Internet-based lead generation can benefit virtually any business, regardless of size or industry. Furthermore, Internet-based lead generation has inherent benefits that are lacking in other forms of direct marketing; there are no postage fees with online lead generation, campaigns are quick to implement and can often be structured on a cost-per-lead payout.