

# HOW TO CREATE A LEAD NURTURING STRATEGY

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## GOAL SETTING



Setting up a lead nurture program is not a goal in and of itself. Instead, lead nurturing is a *vehicle for your business to get to your overall goals*. In order for your lead nurture program to be a success, you have to first determine what you hope to achieve.

### Set the Stage

The key to designing an effective lead nurture program is taking stock of your current lead management processes. By asking the right questions, you will not only uncover opportunities for improvement, but the information will also play a critical role in defining issues of workflow.

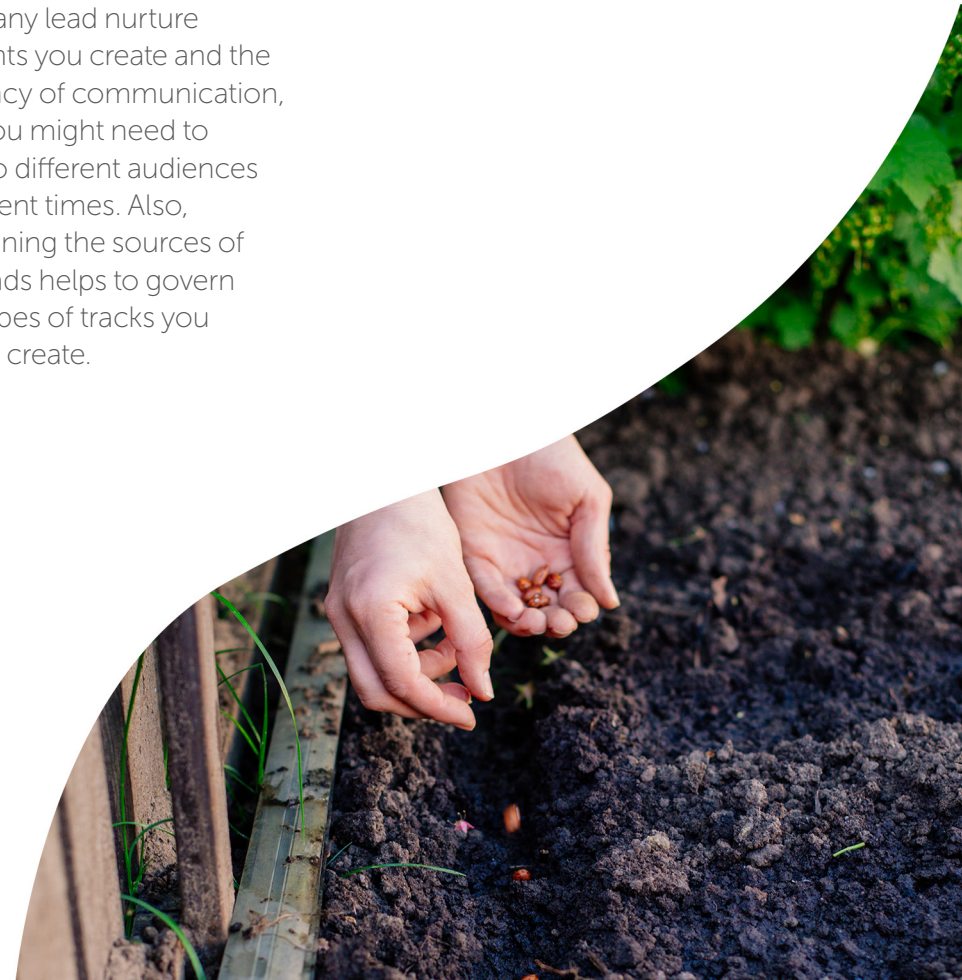
Invite sales into the room for this initial discovery process. Giving sales a voice in this process ensures that you have a holistic view of your leads.

Here are 5 questions to ask about your current lead management process:

#### 1. **How many leads do you generate each month and what is the source of those leads?**

Understanding the scale and source of leads helps to determine the scale of your lead nurturing program. You can get this information by running a report in your marketing automation or CRM.

The number of leads you generate has an impact on how many lead nurture segments you create and the frequency of communication, since you might need to speak to different audiences at different times. Also, determining the sources of your leads helps to govern what types of tracks you need to create.



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### 2. What is the range of products that you offer?

Some companies market very homogenous product lines; others market a multitude of products or services. The diversity of your offerings plays a large role in determining the number of tracks in your program, in addition to the messaging and offer strategy.

### 3. What are the key audience groups that comprise your inbound leads?

How different are your leads from one another in terms of functional role, industry, company size, and so on? To what extent do these groups require different messaging? The higher the number of distinct groups, the more likely it is that you need separate lead nurture tracks in order for your campaigns to be relevant and effective.

### 4. Describe the life of a lead currently. How are leads responded to, distributed, and managed today? How often does a lead hear from your company over time?

Knowing how you follow-up with, and prioritize leads currently can help steer your lead nurturing program in a direction where it's likely to have the most impact on ROI. When taking stock of ongoing communication, don't just consider formal marketing programs, determine how often sales reaches out to those same leads.

### 5. What percentage of your leads are considered sales ready when they enter your database? And what is your average day to opportunity?

Knowing what percentage of your current leads are sales ready when they enter your database is critical to determining how to set up your lead nurture program and how to measure your ROI. Additionally, knowing your average days to opportunity can help you benchmark how lead nurturing *accelerates* your leads.



# HOW TO CREATE A LEAD NURTURING STRATEGY

## GOAL SETTING RECAP



How many leads do you generate each month and what is the source of those leads?



What is the range of products that you offer?



What are the key audience groups that comprise your inbound leads?



Describe the life of a lead currently. How are leads responded to, distributed, and managed today?  
How often does a lead hear from your company over time?



What percentage of your leads are considered sales ready when they enter your database? And what is your average day to opportunity?



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### Qualitative Objectives

Your lead nurture efforts will include qualitative goals—what *business outcomes* do you hope to get from setting up lead nurture tracks? Consider the following goals:

- Convert sales inquiries to qualified prospects over time
- Move your buyers through their buying journey at an accelerated pace
- Engage in conversations with your buyers
- Qualify and collect more information from inbound leads
- Educate and build trust amongst existing leads

- Stay in touch with existing leads so they call on your company when the need arises
- Acquire more business from current customers
- Turn dormant leads to active leads
- Increase sales productivity by distributing only sales ready leads

Depending on your unique business case, choose some of these goals or set your own. Setting these overall qualitative goals for your lead nurturing campaigns will help you make better decisions on timing, frequency, segmentation, and offer strategy.

### Quantitative Objectives

In addition to creating qualitative objectives, be sure to set goals that are quantitative—*those that you can measure*. Even if you aren't sure what your metrics should be initially, setting estimates up front helps you define your program. Quantitative metrics not only help you define success, but they also help you determine the scope and scale of your overall lead nurturing efforts.

Without quantitative goals in place your lead nurturing program can lack purpose, and you'll have greater difficulty tracking your progress towards your objectives. Here are some quantitative goals you may want to consider:

- Improve the percentage rate at which raw leads convert to qualified prospects by X%
- Improve the percentage rate at which raw leads convert to closed deals by X%
- Increase the number of sales ready leads per month to X
- Reduce the number of leads rejected by sales to X%
- Generate X incremental opportunities per month from the existing database
- Faster sales cycle by X%
- Better win rates by X%
- Increase upsell / cross-sell with current customers by X%

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## GOAL SETTING

### Start Small, Think Big

There is a lot you can do with today's marketing automation platforms. And it is easy for companies to want to do everything. But, especially for those just starting lead nurture, you should create a plan that includes a *phased approach*. That way, you are incrementally measuring and improving.

By embracing this mentality you will:

- **Launch more quickly:** It's a simple point, but the smaller your program, the quicker you'll go live, and the sooner you will see return on your investment.
- **Know what works and what doesn't:** Even if you ask all of the right questions and goal set appropriately, it is guaranteed that your results might differ from expectations. If you start small, you can see what works and iterate from there vs. setting up a full 18 tracks and all of a sudden learning that you set something up incorrectly.



# HOW TO CREATE A LEAD NURTURING STRATEGY

## LEAD NURTURE TEAM



Lead nurturing is a co-existence of two opposing variables: creativity and logic. It's both an art and a science. Your nurture team needs to produce compelling content, but it also needs to perform complex marketing operations.

On some marketing teams, all lead nurturing is managed by one person. In other organizations, it is divided amongst several people. Regardless of whether this function is filled by one or a group, the following pages outline the roles and responsibilities on a lead nurture team.



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## LEAD NURTURE TEAM

### The Creative Side of Lead Nurturing

On the creative side of your lead nurturing team you might have a nurture content manager. Depending on your organization, this role might be broken up into several roles.

#### **Nurture Content Manager**

Because nurturing automates communication with several different segments over a long period of time, it requires thoughtful and relevant content. The goal of the nurture content manager is to make each piece of nurturing content as relevant to your audience as possible. The person in this role doesn't always create the content, but they do assign each piece of content to the appropriate segment.

Responsibilities include:

- Setting the standard for content quality. This isn't just from a performance standpoint; it also applies to tone, positioning statements, and key message points.
- Balancing early stage and late stage content. Early stage content pieces engage your newest prospects with broad, educational, entertaining information. Late stage content is more product-focused, such as demos or customer case studies. Your lead nurture content manager should know the perfect combination for conversion.
- Help to create content to engage with leads on multiple channels. Your nurture content manager should be interacting

with other key groups like social, inbound marketing, and paid programs, in order to have a cohesive cross-channel strategy.

When you're hiring someone who will manage your nurture content, here's what you should look for:

- **Messaging comprehension.** An understanding of what your different markets want, and which messages resonate best with each.
- **Editing skills.** A keen grasp of language, along with the ability to clearly communicate how a piece of content should be positioned.
- **A head for numbers.** The manager should be familiar with email performance metrics, and be able to assess that performance over time.

- **Writing skills.** The nurture content manager needs a comprehensive understanding on the company's voice, tone, and core competencies.
- **Producing at a high volume.** There are a lot of moving parts with your nurture content, your content manager should be able to project manage and produce.
- **Listening skills.** To write effective content, the content manager needs to hear audience pain points, and address them through the voice of the company.
- **Willingness to experiment.** Your manager should love to experiment, but should also know how to monitor results.



# HOW TO CREATE A LEAD NURTURING STRATEGY

## LEAD NURTURE TEAM

### The Scientific Side of Lead Nurturing

To balance out your nurture team you need a strong dose of logic. These responsibilities might fall under a nurture operations manager.

#### *Nurture Operations Manager*

The nurture operations manager probably has the toughest job on the team, especially at a company that uses advanced lead nurturing. It's up to these operations managers to determine how nurture flows work, and which filters will be used. Nurture operations managers need to define segmentations and design nurture flows that meet complex business needs, but are possible for the entire team to use. Luckily, marketing automation makes this job a lot easier.

Here are the responsibilities of a nurture operations manager:

- **Determine the best data fields to reference.** If that data isn't available, managers need to figure out how to obtain it.
- **System checks.** This role monitors advanced nurture campaigns, and verifies that those campaigns are running correctly. Frequent system checks are important.
- **Balance business needs with sustainable practices.** Effective nurture operations managers constantly look for ways to simplify their operations, and are responsible for implementing procedures to mitigate potential issues.

- **Execute.** The operations manager must be able to execute quickly and be agile with change.

Here's what to look for in a nurture operations manager:

- **A technical background.** You want someone who thinks in terms of stages, products, and procedures.
- **Understanding company infrastructure.** To build a strong nurture workflow that truly meets business needs.
- **Attention to detail.** The devil is in the details when it comes to creating nurture flows.
- **Provide feedback.** The manager should be aware of every success and failure, and communicate those results to the team.

- **Troubleshoot.** The manager comes up with solutions to any roadblocks, and then executes those solutions.
- **Curiosity.** The manager should be unafraid to test programs, and naturally inclined to ask questions or make suggestions.

# HOW TO CREATE A LEAD NURTURING STRATEGY

# TECHNOLOGY SELECTION



Marketing automation is the technology that allows companies to streamline, automate, and measure marketing tasks and workflows so they can increase operational efficiency and grow revenue faster. One of the key components of your marketing automation technology is lead nurturing.

Beyond the time-saving and efficiency benefits of automation, marketing automation enables essential business processes for any modern marketing department. This can include lead nurturing, lead scoring, lead lifecycle management, personalization and analytics. So how do you select the right solution for your business?

## Purchase Process

Depending on your business objectives and goals, there are different solutions available to suit your needs. Here is a process you can follow to find and buy the marketing automation solution that is right for your company.

- **Step 1: Write down your goals for the project:** To get where you need to go, write it down. Statistically you increase your likelihood for success simply by putting your goals down on paper. Refer to the goals we determined earlier in this part.
- **Step 2: Plan your timeline:** Now identify the steps it will take to get where you want to go. Remember, you aren't ever "done" with marketing automation, so build in time to evolve and adapt and learn your process.
- **Step 3: Identify your requirements:** Picking the right solution involves more than just picking the right technology. Think about your business case—who will use the technology, and how?



# HOW TO CREATE A LEAD NURTURING STRATEGY

## TECHNOLOGY SELECTION



- **Step 4: Assemble a team to choose and manage the solution:** Make sure to get signoff from all stakeholders on goals, requirements, and potential scenarios. Look to your lead nurture and marketing automation teams mentioned earlier in this chapter.
- **Step 5: Evaluate potential vendors against your scenarios:** You'll choose the vendor that best suits your needs if you select a handful of vendors to evaluate. Then, scour the technology, look beyond the technology to account management teams, ask tough questions, and avoid a feature bake-off.
- **Step 6: Talk to references:** Now it's time to find out if your vendor can actually make customers like you successful. Talk to a variety of references that are similar to your organization.
- **Step 7: Make a decision:** The time has come. Choose the vendor that can best make you successful in line with the goals you created at the beginning of this process.



# CHECKLIST

## What to Seek in a Solution for Lead Nurturing

Lead nurturing is a key component to any marketing automation solution, here is a checklist to make sure your vendor has all of the latest and greatest lead nurture capabilities.

- Enables you to listen and respond to individual behaviors in real time.**  
You want to make sure you have a flexible solution that supports 2-way conversations with your leads and customers.
- Enables you to communicate with prospects and customers both online and offline.**  
Many modern lead nurturing solutions allow the capabilities to nurture through online venues such as social media, or offline through direct mail or events.
- Empowers you to set a limit.** You want to make sure your leads aren't getting too many emails from you at any given time. Look for a solution that enables you to set limits. This is particularly critical when different areas of the organization send messages.
- Determines which content to send and when.** Your solution should enable you to have control over the content you send based on the recipient's actions to date—such as visiting a booth at a show, downloading content, or reaching out to a sales rep.
- Helps build relationships over the entire customer lifecycle.** From the awareness stage through customer onboarding, the right lead nurture solution can help engage prospects and customers over time by sending relevant content to buyers through different channels instead of just via email.
- Helps measure true engagement.** The ideal solution measures the degree of customer engagement with the entire program, as well as with each component of content over time.

# CHECKLIST

## What to Seek in a Solution for Lead Nurturing

- ❑ **Is easy to implement.** We all know how frustrating it can be to rely on the IT department to help us get programs off the ground. Look for a solution that allows any marketer to create powerful lead nurture programs that are easy to set up and manage. After all, you want to focus on what matters most—creating compelling content that will deeply engage prospects and customers.
- ❑ **Simplifies content management.**  
For example:
  - The ideal solution allows you to add new content simply by dragging and dropping it into the work-stream
  - The system should be intelligent enough not to send the content to those that have already received it
  - It should be smart enough to know if someone downloaded that content through another channel
  - For limited-time events and special offers, the system should automatically activate the content at the right time and pull it out of the nurture stream when the event is over
  - The system can intelligently help measure what content asset is performing best

### Marketo's Customer Engagement engine

Marketo's unique Customer Engagement engine automatically and intelligently sends prospects and customers the best message and the best piece of content, based on who they are, what they have seen in the past, and their behaviors.

You simply drag content into a stream, Marketo's version of a track—which can be thought of as a conversation—and the system automatically manages the timing and sending of the right content to the right person at the right time. The system even takes outdated content out of rotation in a particular program. And will warn you in advance when there isn't any more content available to continue the conversation.

# HOW TO CREATE A LEAD NURTURING STRATEGY

## NURTURE AS PART OF YOUR OVERALL MARKETING STRATEGY



When creating your lead nurturing strategy, do not think about nurture in isolation. Think about how nurture fits into the other marketing communications you send.

You can't think about lead nurturing in a vacuum. You need to take a look at your entire marketing calendar to determine what other communications your leads receive. You might be sending newsletters, product updates, database emails, and other cross-channel communications. How are these interactions working together in harmony? You want to deliver coordinated, relevant, customer experiences across all of the channels your buyers use.



# HOW TO CREATE A LEAD NURTURING STRATEGY

## NURTURE AS PART OF YOUR OVERALL MARKETING STRATEGY

### Communication Timing

How often you send lead nurturing communications, particularly email, needs to be reconciled with how often you hit your database with other communications. The first step to getting this right is to determine your overall communication cadence. How often are you engaging with the contacts in your database? Meet with stakeholders in your organization to decide what this number should be. Be sure to test and iterate this over time to determine the correct number of touches based on your results.

Consider the length of the buying process and the communication approaches used. The timing of your lead nurturing programs are impacted by both the length of your average buying process and the approaches you use for lead nurturing (email, direct mail, phone, etc.).

In the following example, let's assume a prospect downloads a whitepaper from your web site, and your lead scoring methodology deems this individual is a lead nurturing candidate. If the buying cycle for your product is three months, the nurturing path for this specific prospect might look like this:

- **Day 1**—Website personalization persona based offer
- **Day 10**—Follow-up with introductory email
- **Day 15**—Email offering new content related to first download and subsequent web site activity
- **Day 30**—Personal email from sales rep
- **Day 45**—Email best practices whitepaper
- **Day 60**—Social campaign on email best practices
- **Day 75**—Website personalization and banner ads to promote webinar series
- **Day 85**—Personal email from sales rep offering a product demo
- **Day 90**—Personalized ad on Facebook using targeting



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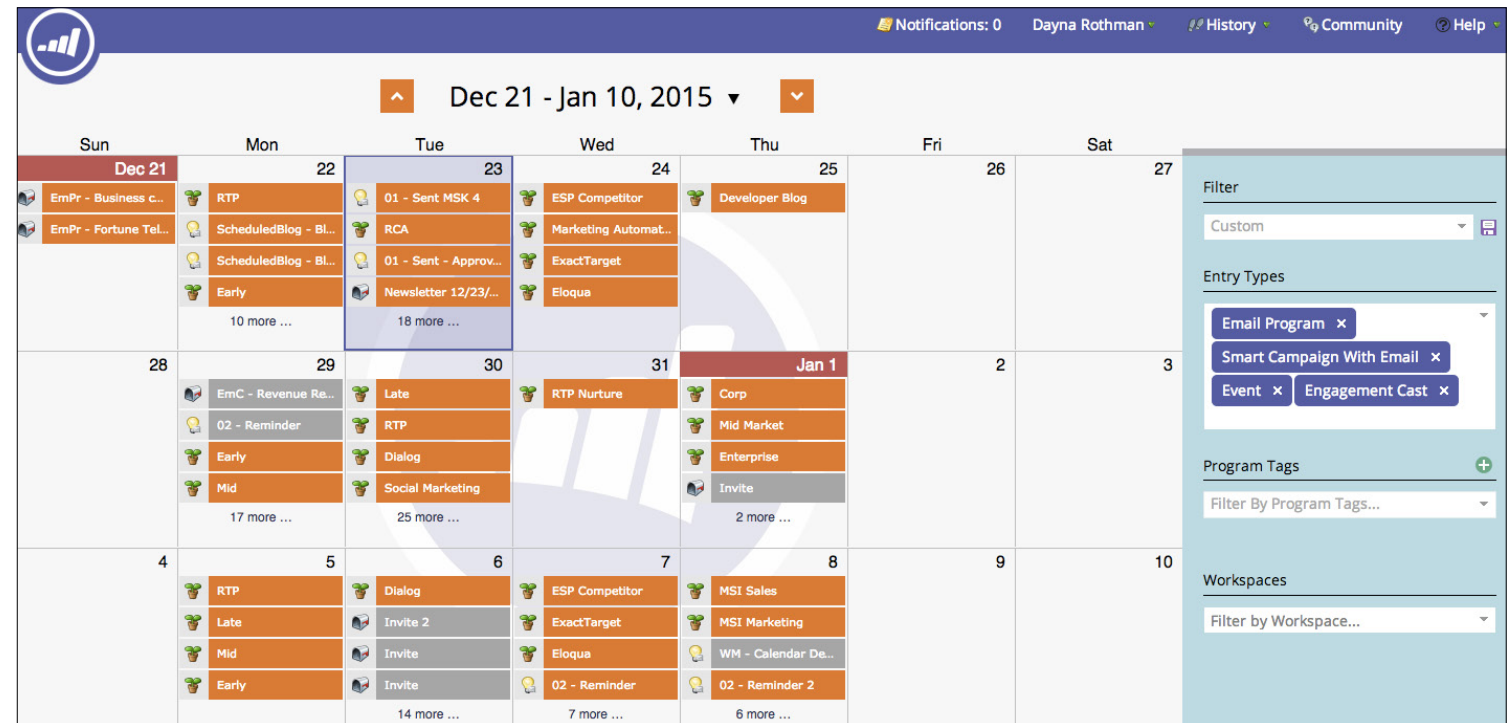
### Marketing Calendars

You need a way to see all of your campaigns all in one place—so you know exactly what database email sends and what nurture campaign sends are going out in any given week.

A marketing calendar, like the one in Marketo, is an ideal place to ensure that you are not over-marketing to the same people over and over again with your marketing communications.

At Marketo, we use our platform's marketing calendar to see a holistic view of all communications with our database across the entire marketing department—we can see event invites, nurture emails, demand generation emails, and so on.

With this holistic view, you can see exactly who is being communicated with and when.



Marketo Marketing Calendar



