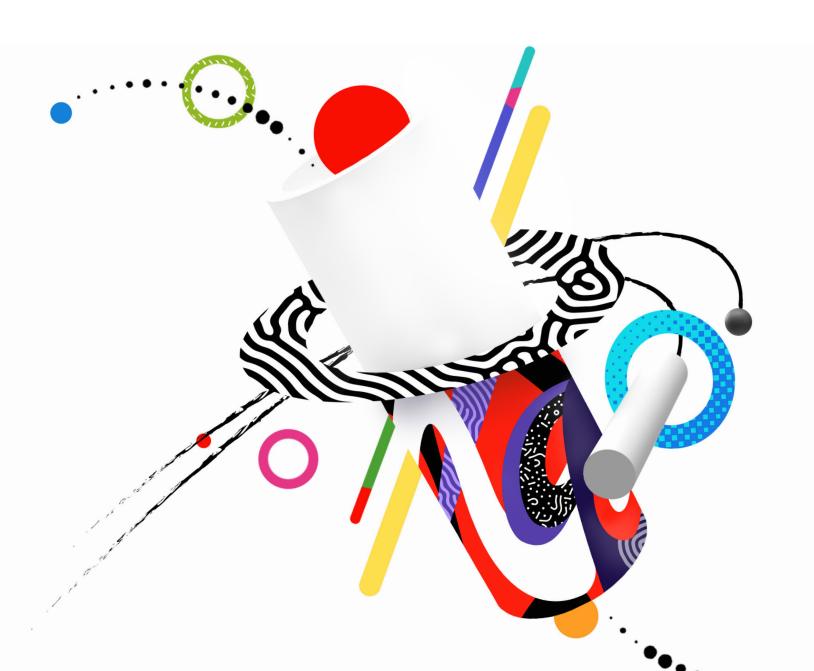




THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO

# **Pipeline Marketing**



## Welcome

This hands-on guide will walk you through thoughtprovoking and actionable takeaways high-performing B2B companies use to drive revenue and accelerate growth.

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## **Pipeline Marketing Defined**

Marketers have been doing lead generation—the process of creating new contacts—for decades. According to Google Ngram, it's been around for at least 50 years. That's before the internet, before content marketing and growth hacking, and before SaaS and Google Ads. While the work might have changed, the mindset hasn't.

As marketers, we hope all leads will turn into customers. But we know the reality is very different. At every stage of the funnel, unqualified leads will drop off, making each stage smaller than the one before. That's why it's called a funnel.

The problem with the lead generation mindset is that it focuses too heavily on the top of the funnel. The more leads the better. But getting more leads isn't going to create more customers. Nor will it help you reach your growth and revenue goals. Instead, sales and media teams will optimize for cost per lead rather than true business growth.

While generating more leads won't result in more customers, getting more qualified leads will.

Pipeline marketing is the evolution of lead generation that focuses on viewing the funnel in its entirety and making decisions based on the final stage—revenue. It's about strengthening all aspects of marketing to widen the funnel at every stage and maximize marketing's impact on growth. You need to look further down the funnel, beyond just leads.

# How Marketing is Connected to Revenue

## Attribution Models Explained

Marketing drives awareness and engagement as leads flow through the funnel. By nurturing these prospects and using data to track interactions and key performance indicators (KPIs), you can create a stronger connection between marketing and sales. If you get it right, every lead you pass on to your sales team will be one step closer to conversion.

In order to create a marketing budget that reflects your organization's revenue targets, your marketing team should know their buyer personas, cost per lead, customer acquisition cost, and average deal size.

Once marketing is connected to revenue, you should understand how to apply it to every marketing touchpoint so you can determine your return.

Attribution is how you report revenue back to each marketing touchpoint that contributed to a customer conversion. This is how marketers apply revenue credit to calculate return on investment (ROI). How you apply this credit greatly affects decision-making. There are two types of attribution models: single-touch and multi-touch.



## Single-Touch Models

## **First Touch**



The easiest way to apply credit is with a single-touch model. There are three common single-touch models: first touch, lead-conversion touch, and last touch.

## **Lead-Conversion Touch**

With first-touch attribution, 100 percent of the revenue credit is given to the action that drives the first website visit.

For example, if an anonymous visitor comes to your website for the first time from a Google ad, and then closes as a buyer for \$1,000/month, you would attribute 100 percent of this revenue to Google. To measure this, you need to cookie visitors who do not fill out a form on their first session.

Lead-conversion touch attribution is where 100 percent of the revenue credit is given to the first data-producing interaction. For example, when a visitor gives you their contact information by filling out a form.

Let's say an anonymous visitor browses your website multiple times. On the fifth visit, he fills out a form to download a piece of content, and eventually converts into a buyer. The form would receive 100 percent of the revenue credit.

This is the model most often used by marketing automation systems, which typically view first touch as when the lead was created, not the actual first visit to your website.

## **Last Touch**

The third single-touch attribution model is last-touch attribution. This attribution model is similar to the lead-conversion touch model, but it gives 100 percent of the credit to the marketing channel that drove the engagement where the lead converted into an opportunity.

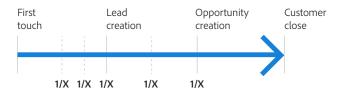
Although single-touch models are the easiest to implement, they're actually quite flawed. With first touch, you're giving all the revenue credit to top-of-the-funnel marketing touches, such as search, social, or content. By not including bottom-of-the-funnel marketing touches, you're undervaluing those marketing efforts.

With lead-conversion touch, you assign all revenue credit to the last marketing touch before the lead was created—those at the bottom of the funnel. This, in turn, undervalues top-of-funnel marketing touches that play an important part in the decision-making process, and are essential to pipeline marketing.

## Multi-Touch Models

Rarely will an anonymous user visit your website, fill out a form, and close as a buyer in one session—unless you have an extremely short buying cycle or self-service product. This is where the value of multi-touch attribution comes into play. In multi-touch attribution, the credit for revenue output is distributed across multiple touchpoints. Multi-touch attribution models are harder to implement, but they're much better at properly attributing revenue across all your marketing channels to give credit where it's due.

#### Linear



Where X equals the total number of touchpoints

Linear attribution gives equal weight to every touchpoint. For example, if there are three touchpoints that lead to a conversion, each touchpoint receives one-third of the conversion credit. If there are 10 touchpoints that lead to a conversion, each touchpoint receives one-tenth of the conversion credit. It's a simple way to apply credit over multiple touchpoints, but it often oversimplifies how marketing works by making all touchpoints equal.

## **Descending (or Time Decay)**

A descending attribution model gives more credit to touchpoints closer to conversion. It ends up looking like a staircase, where the touchpoint closest to the conversion receives the most credit.

## **U-Shaped**

With a U-shaped attribution model, 40 percent of the revenue credit is applied to both the first touch and the lead-conversion touch, with the remaining 20 percent applied evenly to all other touches. The biggest benefit of the U-shaped model is its simplicity, and that it accounts for marketing driving visits and leads. The drawback is that no revenue credit is applied to the marketing that converts a lead to a sales opportunity, such as lead nurturing.

## W-Shaped

The most accurate attribution model for an advanced B2B marketing team is likely the W-shaped model. It accounts for all major transitions: the first visit, when the visitor converted into a lead, and when the lead converted into an opportunity. By attributing 30 percent of revenue to each of those three major touch transitions, marketers can make more accurate, data-driven decisions.

### **Full Path**

Full path is a deep dive into attribution that models the impact of marketing on revenue. If you're marketing to people who are already in the sales funnel, you should consider using a full-path model. Full path attributes 22.5 percent of the revenue credit to the first touch, the lead-creation touch, the opportunity-creation touch, and the closed-revenue touch. The remaining 10% is distributed among all of the other touchpoints. Of the advanced attribution models, this is the only model that accounts for marketing efforts past the opportunity stage.

#### Custom

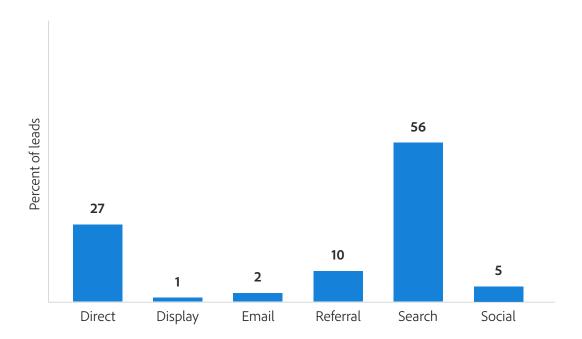
Sometimes, you can work with attribution solutions to create custom models. But you really only need this if your company has extremely complex customer journeys. With custom attribution models, marketers can work with their attribution solution provider to emphasize certain stages in the funnel by giving additional weight. For example, you could create a custom model that gives 25 percent of the revenue credit each to the first touch and lead-conversion touch, and the remaining 50 percent to the opportunity-creation touch. Essentially, this model is a hybrid of the W-shaped model and the descending model. It emphasizes the three key transitions, but gives extra credit to the one closest to the opportunity conversion. Getting everyone on board for advanced attribution models isn't easy. Start slowly and build over time rather than diving into the deep end with a custom attribution model.

## **Search Engine Marketing**

## Driving Demand Through Media

Now that you have the right tracking and attribution in place, it's time to grow. One of the most classic digital channels to do this is Google.

Adobe studied all the marketing touches for nearly 500,000 leads and found that search engine marketing is an incredibly effective channel for B2B marketers. Essentially, it's a treasure chest of revenue.



Of all the channels studied, search was the first marketing touch for the majority of leads. The next highest channel was direct. In fact, social, email, and display combined accounted for just 8 percent of leads for the average B2B company.

With so many options, it's hard to know where to start. We've narrowed it down to four of the most effective types of media campaigns.

## **Brand Campaigns**

Brand campaigns focus on using keywords to target people who are searching for your company name. Otherwise known as "brand keywords" or "brand terms," they include the name of your company, as well as deeper down-the-funnel keywords, since searchers are already familiar with your brand.

Here's an example of a company ad that displays when searching "Marketo" on Google:

### Marketo.com - Marketo Official Site

M www.marketo.com/ ▼

Generate, Nurture, & Grow Leads Watch Demo to Learn How

Accelerate your pipeline · Nurture and score leads · Real-time personalization

Voted One of the Most Significant Software Providers – Forrester

#### Marketing Automation Demo

Learn About Marketing Automation Watch the Free Demo. Sign Up Now.

## Compare Automation Vendor Analysis of 14 Automation Vendors

Analysis of 14 Automation Vendors Get Free Gartner Report. Sign Up!

#### Digital Advertising Guide

PPC, Display, Social Ads Made Easy! 80+ page guide you need to read now

#### MKTG Automation Guide

Improve Your Marketing Efficiency. Free Comprehensive Guide to MA.

## **Category Campaigns**

Category campaigns cover keywords people use when searching for a solution, or terms related to your product. These keywords tend to be more exploratory since no brand is mentioned. For example, the keyword phrase "marketing automation solutions" is a good opportunity to serve ads to your prospects, with options to dig deeper into specific areas of your product or download relevant content that offers a solution to their general search.

Here's an example of a category ad when searching "marketing automation solutions" on Google:

Ad · www.adobe.com/ ▼

### Adobe's Marketo Engage - Utilize to Align Sales

Nurture potential customers with automated journey flows and CRM integrations. Engage...

#### Integrated Sales App

Connect your Marketing and Sales Team to Capture more Customers

#### Marketing Attribution

Accurately attribute performance across Campaigns & Prove Impact

#### **Account Based Marketing**

Don't Settle for Less, Use ABX Capabilities from Marketo

#### **Cross Channel Engagement**

Meet your Customers where they want Deliver Personalized Messages

## **Content Campaigns**

Content campaigns include keywords people use when searching for specific content related to your industry. Like category ads, these searches tend to be more exploratory and top-of-the-funnel since people are looking for education, not a tool or solution. This is a good opportunity to land prospects directly on a content download page to capture the lead.

Here's an example of a category ad when searching "marketing automation guide" on Google:

Marketing Automation - How to Drive Relevant Conversions

Ad www.marketo.com/ \*

Download Our Free eBook Today.

Marketo has 6,337 followers on Google+

Marketing Nation Roadshow - MA Buyer's Kit - Guide to Lead Scoring

## **Competitor Campaigns**

Competitor campaigns zero in on keywords people use when actively comparing options and competitors. These campaigns tend to be much deeper in the funnel. They also provide a good opportunity to direct prospects to prebuilt pages that only focus on the competitor being compared, making it easy for visitors to understand key differences.

Here's an example of a category ad when searching "Hubspot vs. Marketo" on Google:

#### Vendor Comparison - Marketo.com

Million www.marketo.com/Compare-Hubspot ▼

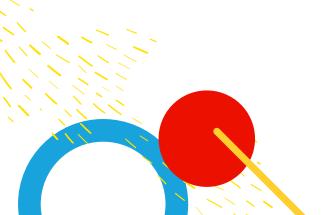
Get Gartner's Vendor Analysis of 14 Marketing Automation Vendors
Email campaign management · Real-time personalization · Calculate ROI
Voted One of the Most Significant Software Providers – Forrester

### Compare Automation Vendor

Get Free Gartner Report.
Compare 12 Automation Vendors.

#### Guide to Lead Scoring

Learn Lead Scoring Best Practices Get the Free Guide. Sign Up Now!



## **Going Beyond Google**

While Google holds an 87.6 percent share of the U.S. paid search market, others account for the remaining 12.4 percent, including Microsoft at 7.02 percent and Yahoo at 3.38 percent.<sup>1</sup>

A reason to consider investing in Bing Ads is the lower cost per click (CPC) compared to Google Ads. A report by Kantar, formerly AdGooroo, found that on average, B2B advertisers paid 117 percent more per click on Google Ads than on Bing. By not advertising on Bing, you're missing out on low-hanging fruit. Less advertiser competition on Bing means lower bids and therefore cheaper CPCs.

## yahoo!

3.38%

**Shares** 

~1B monthly searches

**bing** 

7.02%

**Shares** 

~6B monthly searches

yahoo! bing

10.4%

Shares

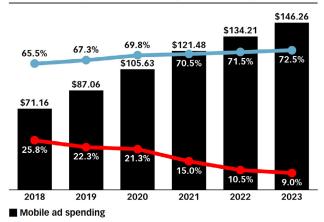
~ 7B monthly searches

## Make the Most of Mobile Search

Recently, eMarketer released a report showing that mobile ad spending has surpassed TV ad spending.<sup>2</sup>

With budgets shifting, it's important to understand how you can make mobile search work for your company. It all starts with knowing where to focus.

## Mobile Ad Spending in the US, 2018-2023 billions, % change and % of total digital ad spending



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Google share of the search ad market is expected to grow, Vox, 2017. https://www.vox.com/2017/3/14/14890122/google-search-ad-market-share-growth

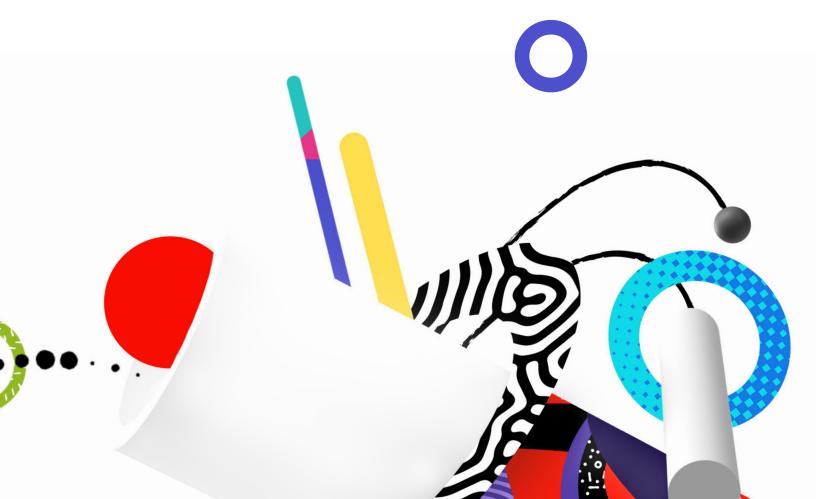
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Mobile ad spending, eMarketer, 2019. https://www.emarketer.com/topics/topic/mobile-ad-spending

## Set a Mobile Bid Modifier

A mobile bid modifier is how much more (or less) you're willing to pay for a click when the searcher is using a mobile device rather than a laptop. There's no set number for this, but to share one data point, Bizible discounts mobile clicks by 30 percent.

## **Design Mobile Landing Pages**

The most effective landing pages make it easy for people to find and consume content. When designing landing pages, be sure to optimize for mobile devices to provide visitors with the best viewing experience.



## **Paid Social Media**

## Driving Demand Through Media

LinkedIn is a major driver of growth for most B2B companies practicing pipeline marketing. Years ago, LinkedIn was a marketplace for job seekers and recruiters. Over the years, they've evolved into a professional hub by expanding their value proposition and offerings. Reaching more than 610 million members who have profiles rich with professional data, LinkedIn is a gold mine for B2B marketers.

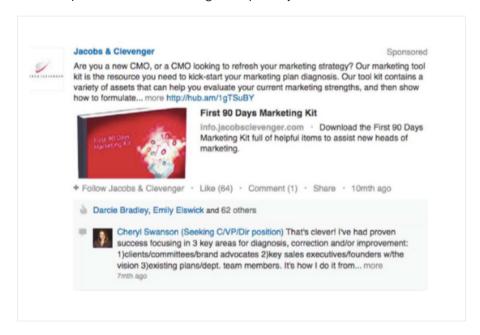
### LinkedIn

Due to precise targeting, LinkedIn ads can be effective at driving more qualified leads—specifically for content downloads. Simply run targeted ads to your content landing pages. You'll notice the cost per click (CPC) is significantly higher than many other channels. But track through the funnel, and you'll find that LinkedIn converts much higher than other social advertising.

## **Edge Out Competition with Relevant Messaging**

LinkedIn gives you the ability to target very precise audiences, so use this to your advantage.

For example, here's an ad focusing on a specific job title:



## **Monitor Mobile Traffic**

Bizible, has found that out of 7,500 LinkedIn ad clicks, the mobile bounce rate was 26 percent greater than desktop. Since higher bounce rates contribute to more lead costs, be sure to actively monitor mobile traffic from LinkedIn—especially since there's no way to set a mobile bid modifier like you can in Google Ads.

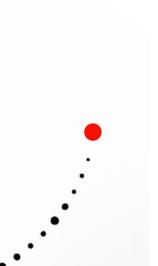
## **Promote Your Events**

Conferences, trade shows, and exhibitions can generate a lot of revenue for B2B companies. When it comes to marketing physical events, social media ranked in the top three most effective channels.

LinkedIn is a valuable channel for promoting events, as these are often a popular topic of discussion on the platform. For example, you could use LinkedIn to increase message frequency and create awareness of your sponsorship prior to the event, or to direct attendees to your booth during the event.

Social can be an effective channel—not just for B2C, but B2B as well if used the right way. Be sure to investigate primary use cases for B2B paid social: content and events.





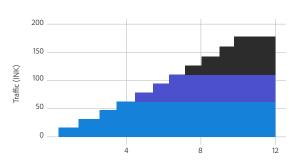


## **How Content Marketing Powers Growth**

Content marketing has become the backbone of many companies. Why is this?

Unlike media, where the effects are short-lived, content has the opportunity to continue providing value for months and years. In other words, content provides a compounding return.

#### Compounding content marketing evergreen content





Content is one of the few forms of marketing that has a compounding return.

#### **Tom Tunguz**

Author of Winning with Data: Transform Your Culture, Empower Your People, and Shape the Future

## **Persona Creation**

Before you write anything, you need to deeply understand the personas of the audience you're writing for. Your persona definitions should include demographic information and qualitative information.

#### Person

- Title
- Years of experience (based on college graduation date)
- Skills

## **Company**

- Industry
- Number of employees
- Location

Enrich this persona definition with market research to develop a comprehensive view of your target audience. Include qualitative information such as the following:

- Where do these people live online? How can you engage them and promote content on those sites?
- What types of content do they like? Do they prefer visual e-books, techy white papers, or webinar presentations? Which pain points should you address? What information do they need at each stage of the funnel?

## **Content Development**

Ultimately, there are four criteria for deciding if something should be published:

**Performance:** How well is the content going to perform? How has similar content performed? Think beyond just the topic. Instead, consider job level, format, and other details to get the complete picture.

**Interest:** How much will the persona care? Has the topic been written about recently? Having the right cadence and variation helps content stay fresh.

Effort required: How much time or energy is required? Some pieces of content are easier to write than others. For example, roundups, interviews, and recaps are quick posts that provide high value.

Business need: Does the content really need to be published? Let's say you want to make an announcement. Rather than standing alone, announcements are best included in a compelling story for the most impact..

One key element of a high-performing content team is the ability to recycle content. It's important to take content and convert it into other types of content for more mileage. For example, turn presentations into webinars, blog posts into PDF downloads, and so forth.



Content marketing is all the marketing that's left.

**Seth Godin** 

Author of This is Marketing



## **Back to Basics**

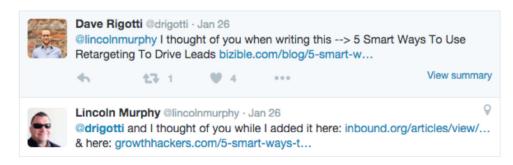
You're likely doing the basics already, but here's a quick reminder. The following basics should be done on nearly every post:

- Test headlines before publishing with Google Ads keyword planner. Google will estimate
  average monthly searches for a term based upon historical search data, so you can
  choose your keywords with confidence.
- Provide internal links to other blog posts. How you link to other pages on your site, including other blog posts, can have a big impact on your rankings. Link to old, relevant posts using the keyword you've targeted to let Google know it's important and that they should rank it higher.
- Promote content to groups and communities. These include LinkedIn groups and industry forums. Let them know about your content, but also comment on their posts and become an active member of the community.
- Share content multiple times. Social media is not a one-and-done activity. Share your
  content multiple times to ensure the most eyes will see your headline and have an
  opportunity to read your post. Here's the republishing schedule recommended by Buffer.



### Influencer Outreach

Another source for content growth is influencers. Influencers have large followings and add credibility to your content. You don't even have to mention them. Here's an article that was tweeted at an influencer who wasn't mentioned, but would find the content interesting. In this example, Lincoln did something more impactful than tweet it out— he submitted it to key communities.



His submission hit the home page of both Inbound.org and GrowthHackers.com.



Ultimately, free channels and activities are not guaranteed to provide quick returns or fast growth, as these take time to deliver results. That's when you should turn to paid.

## **Paid Social Campaigns**

You've already learned about LinkedIn advertising. Now it's time to connect advertising to content. Test content in different stages of the funnel (e.g., gated vs. ungated), as well as different types (e.g., blog vs. video) to build a well-rounded content machine. Above all, focus on educating your audience—not promoting your product.





## **Best Practices for Higher Conversions**

So far, you've learned about attribution, driving demand through media, and content marketing. Now it's time to find out what to do after you get the lead. A solid pipeline marketing team keeps their eyes focused on revenue.

There are three main ways to nurture leads: email, retargeting, and sales engagement. The goal of all lead nurturing is to convert to the next stage, whether that's a new open lead to a marketing qualified lead (MQL), or an MQL to a sales opportunity.

To do this, your nurture campaigns should include education, objection handling, offers and incentives, and a call-to-action (CTA). Each plays their part. Remember, nurturing doesn't always have to be directly about the product.

## Start with the Visit

Lead nurturing begins before the lead is even created. It starts at the very first visit, where retargeting comes into play. Retargeting—also known as remarketing—is a way to drive visitors back to your website, and is designed to trigger the next step in the buying process.

One of the great things about retargeting is that you can show ads and messages to visitors based on specific pages or sections they've viewed.

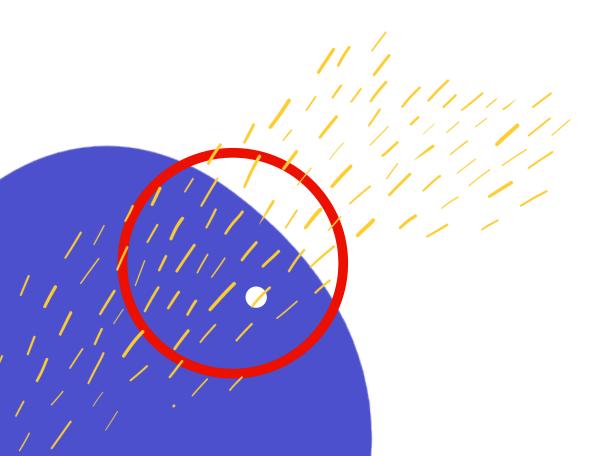
Using the information gathered from page visits, you can estimate the buying stage of each of your visitors, and offer them content that pulls them through the funnel. It's simply about aligning content and offers to each stage. The payoff: new form submissions with increasing value.

Another thing to consider when retargeting is recency, or when the visitor last viewed your targeted URLs. Most platforms allow you to specify the duration that a user remains in an audience. Test and refine different options. For example, an ad for 0 to 7 days might have a different CTA than an ad for 7 to 30 days.

In addition to this method, consider account-based retargeting. With account-based retargeting, your retargeting runs not only to the person who viewed your site, but also to their colleagues.

## Here are Some Ways to Get Started with Retargeting:

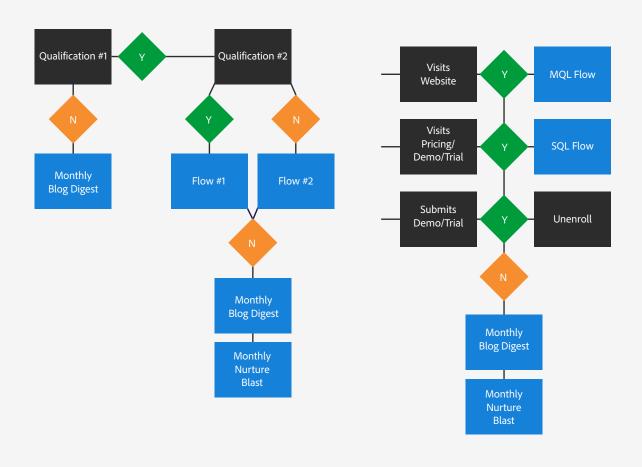
- Top of the funnel (TOFU): This part of the funnel includes people who visit pages related to content rather than your product. A great example of TOFU content is a blog. Run retargeting, directing these visitors to download an e-book to capture the initial lead.
- Middle of the funnel (MOFU): Visitors in the middle
  of the funnel consume pages related to your product,
  but only at a high level. Run retargeting, driving them
  to consideration material such as case studies.
- Bottom of the funnel (BOFU): This portion of the funnel includes people who visit pages related to decision-making, such as case studies or a pricing page. Retarget these visitors by encouraging them to request a demo or start a trial.



## **Convert the Lead**

Once you've captured the lead, it's time to convert them to a sales opportunity. Start with an ideal nurturing flow. To design this, think about segmenting leads based on qualifications such as product line fit, company size, web behavior, email click interaction, and job roles. These criteria signal the kinds of email content and messaging that will be most relevant to your segments. Keep in mind that a lot of platforms will allow for inserting dynamic content into the email. Be sure to use that feature to increase your chances of connecting with your customers.

Then design a flow like this:



A new lead is the most obvious nurturing flow to consider, but there are others, such as converting a blog subscriber to a lead, or long-term education for a recycled sales opportunity.

For email campaigns, a 30-percent open rate and 3-percent click-through rates (CTRs) are good targets to shoot for. Once you have a baseline rate, it's time to fine-tune.

## **Connect Retargeting with Email Nurturing**

If you're only running retargeting ads to web visitors, you're missing out on a great opportunity. Google, Facebook, and LinkedIn have email matching functions, which make it easy to run ads to specific users based on their email address.

For B2B contacts, you should expect about a 15 percent match rate on Facebook, since many Facebook users do not list their work email address. It's a small percentage, but when you have thousands of email addresses, it can add up to a sizeable opportunity.

## **Sync with Sales**

Don't ever create nurturing in a vacuum. Work with sales—a key partner for converting leads—to gather feedback that can be used for improving your campaigns. Be sure to also create the content sales needs to be successful in converting leads, such as one-pagers.

Introductory email follow-up
Email offering new content related to the first download and website activity
Personal email from sales rep
Email offering best practices whitepaper
Check-in call from sales rep
Email promoting webinar series
Personal email from sales rep offering a product demo
Call from sales rep to schedule in-person meeting
Sales proposal sent via email



## **Align Your Team with Reporting**

Top-notch marketing reporting is a must for any good pipeline marketing organization. Here are the types of metrics that pipeline marketers measure:

- Lead acquisition: How many net new leads were generated?
- Funnel velocity: How long did leads stay at each stage of the sales funnel, and where did they get stalled?
- **Content usage:** How popular were your content assets to various personas at each stage of their customer lifecycle?
- Opportunity creation and close rate: How many new opportunities were created, and how many of those resulted in deals?
- ROI: How much did it cost to generate and nurture a lead, and how much revenue was generated?

Pipeline marketing is about finding creative ways to reach audiences, converting them with well-executed nurture streams, and measuring your success. When you do these three things, you can more easily show the impact marketing is making on the business. You're also creating wins you can use to show your strength as a marketing leader.

## More from Adobe:

**B2B Marketing Attribution** 

An introductory guide to attribution for the revenue-driven B2B marketer

The CMO's Guide to Marketing Attribution

The ins and outs of B2B marketing attribution for CMOs

## Adobe Experience Cloud

Adobe Experience Cloud is the most comprehensive suite of customer experience management tools on the market. With solutions for data, content, engagement, commerce, personalization, and more, Experience Cloud is built on the world's first platform designed explicitly for customer experience. So each product is infused with artificial intelligence and works seamlessly together, but also integrates with your existing technology and your future innovations so you can consistently deliver the right experience every time.

## Marketo Engage

Marketo Engage specializes in customer engagement over complex B2B buying journeys. As a complete solution for lead management, it brings marketing and sales together to nurture leads, orchestrate personalized experiences, optimize content, and measure business impact across every channel. Marketo natively supports both demand and account-based marketing strategies, providing a single, integrated lead management platform from acquisition to advocacy. Build engaging, personalized experiences at scale and prove impact with Marketo Engage.







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