

EBOOK

LEAD NURTURING GUIDE:

7 Steps Toward Setting Up Your Next Campaign

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INTRODUCTION

If your company's mission is to improve ROI, you probably invest countless hours in generating qualified leads. But, despite these efforts, chances are your organization is probably struggling to seal the deal and not seeing the type of results you want or need. **That is because there is a huge difference between leads that are “qualified” and those who are “ready to buy.”** To be more concise, a qualified lead doesn't always lead to a conversion.



LEAD NURTURING FACT:

Customers that are well-understood and served by a business are 643% more likely to be satisfied than those who aren't.

[Marketing Sherpa](#)

So how do you know a qualified lead is ready to convert and how do you guide your prospects to that stage in the sales funnel? To start, we know a lead is qualified because they have expressed genuine interest that indicates to both your marketing and sales teams that they are worth your time and investment. The process is similar when it comes to determining whether that qualified lead is ready to buy and schedule a demo, set up that meeting or whatever else you need them to do to convert. They will show you through their actions that they are eager to learn more.

However, in order to get qualified leads to that place where they want to learn more, it is important to nurture a relationship with your prospective customers. Your job as a marketer is to give these prospects the information they need to make a buying decision, keep your brand front-and-center during this period, and be there when they're ready to commit.

Now, you might be wondering what it means to nurture a relationship with your customer. According to Phil Bosley, CEO and founder of Tactical Marketing, nurturing means reaching out and building a relationship with customers who are already interested in what you have to offer.

“Truly nurturing is taking somebody who’s already engaged, who’s already shown an interest, and advancing that interest, expanding that interest, and expanding that awareness.” Managing leads in this way can lead to huge results for companies.

Need more proof? Research shows that companies with lead-nurturing plans sell upwards of 38% more than their competitors, so it’s one way to give your business a competitive advantage. And 86.3% of marketers with established lead nurturing programs say their programs are somewhat or very effective in contributing to their pipeline and revenue. Your colleagues agree that spending time fostering a relationship with customers can lead to great results.

So are you ready to create a lead nurturing program that gets you results? This guide will equip you with tips and tools to jumpstart and make the most out of your next lead nurturing campaign.

LEAD NURTURING FACT:

According to Gleanster Research, 86.3% of marketers with established lead nurturing programs collectively say their efforts have been somewhat or very effective in contributing to their pipeline and revenue.

[Gleanster Research](#)

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Phil Bosley, CEO and founder of Tactical Marketing

STEP: DEFINE A GOAL FOR YOUR LEAD NURTURING PROGRAM

Before you develop a lead nurturing program, it's good to have a goal of what you want to accomplish.

According to Phil Bosley, Founder and CEO of Tactical Marketing, the number one thing to consider is what is the goal of the campaign. "Your goal for your lead nurturing program should never be more conversions, because that doesn't mean anything. The goal of lead nurturing is not to convince somebody to buy something. It's to prepare them for a sales conversation." Therefore, your goals should center on engaging and educating your customers.

When it comes to setting goals, Robert Kohnke, Marketing Operations Strategist at Act-On, says one of the biggest mistakes people make is not defining what they want people to do at the end of the program. "Sometimes the program will end, and the company will not realize they are no longer touching and nurturing those leads."

He suggests organizations with lead nurturing campaigns should consider whether they want their lead to enter into another campaign, or whether they want to alert a rep via their CRM so they know the lead has completed the nurturing campaign and should be contacted.

On top of that, you should also consider the following questions in defining your goals:

- What do you want your customers to gain through your lead nurturing program?
- What do you want them to learn?
- How do you want them to engage?
- Are there any desired outcomes that will help you determine whether that person is ready to take your call, schedule a demo and take the next step in the sales funnel?

Having a clear understanding of your goals will not only give your lead nurturing program a defined purpose, it will make the process of creating content, setting it up and measuring results much easier. Your goals serve as the foundation that determine the way you build and evaluate your lead nurturing program.

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2 STEP: CREATE A BUYER PROFILE(S)

No lead nurturing program is one-size-fits all. It is more than likely your customers face an array of pain points that your product can solve, and many of them have different motivations that will influence their final purchasing decision, even if they all represent the same organization.

Bosley identifies having a clear understanding of customers as an essential part of a successful lead nurturing campaign. “In order to have an effective lead nurture program, the very first thing you have to have is a clear understanding of the challenges your buyer has, what problems they are trying to solve, and then you need to have clearly defined and articulated how you are going to help solve this problem. And that should be the content of your nurture program.”

As a marketer, you should know what all of those challenges are for each of your customer types, and develop a profile for them. Doing so will enable you to develop a plan of action of how to target and nurture a relationship with them.

In creating these personas, think about how you want to engage customers. According to Robert Kohnke, Marketing Operations Strategist at Act-On, “Something that is often overlooked is a buyer’s journey map of what you intend your target prospects to do as you’re sending them emails.” Robert suggests that when setting up an automated nurture campaign, users should not just send their leads emails, but have an engagement goal in mind for each communication.

Therefore, in drafting your buyer profiles, consider the following:



How many people are involved in the process of buying your company’s products or services? What job roles do they have, and how influential are they in the final decision?



What business needs drive their decisions? What questions do they typically have, and what objections are they likely to raise before they make a decisions?



What does your buyer’s purchase process look like? How long does the process usually take?



How do buyers respond to your existing marketing campaigns? Does their online behavior suggest certain patterns in how they consume your marketing content?

Once you gather the data to answer these questions, you can define a set of ideal buyer profiles that allows you to focus and target your lead nurturing campaigns.

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STEP: DEVELOP A LEAD SCORING PROGRAM AND SEGMENT YOUR LEADS

Just like you can't expect every buyer to have the same motivations to buy your product, you also can't expect all your prospective leads to start at the same place in the customer journey and move along at the same pace. This is where a lead scoring program can be your best friend.

Lead scoring is an easy and effective way to separate leads based on where they are in the sales journey. The way it works is that you assign points to customers based on actions, such as downloading a case study, filling out a form or attending an event. You can also choose to subtract points for any actions that indicate these known or unknown leads might not be the right fit for your product or service (such as visiting your website's careers page).

Think of lead nurturing as a journey for your buyers, where your marketing organization plays the tour guide. You'll learn more about what buyers like, by looking at their online activity and behavior. You'll provide relevant, timely information based upon those preferences. Finally, you'll learn to recognize when buyers are ready to make a decision – and to begin a conversation with your sales team.

Finding a scoring system that works for you may take some trial and error. But, establishing one will help you learn to recognize when and how to best approach your leads based on their actions and score.



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IDENTIFY AND DEVELOP CONTENT

Now that you have built your customer personas and developed a lead scoring program, think about what type of content will help you educate and engage your customers. Sending emails asking your leads to schedule a time to chat with a sales rep is simply not enough. Research shows that [47% of buyers](#) view three to five pieces of content before engaging with a sales rep, so the content you share is part of the nurturing process. Therefore, in crafting this content, think about what you want them to do with it and how it will help you best measure their level of interest.

LEAD NURTURING FACT:

68% of B2B companies will use landing pages to nurture new sales leads for future conversion.

[Marketing Sherpa](#)

When it comes to creating content that engages and educates your leads, sharing the success of your current customers is a great way to start. In fact, [73% of respondents](#) viewed a case study during their research. Why is this type of content viewed so often? And why is it effective? To put it simply, showing your leads how other customers have benefited from what you have to offer makes it easier for them to envision the type of impact your product or service will have in their own line of business.

According to [Marketing Sherpa](#), 68% of B2B companies will also use landing pages to nurture new sales leads for future conversion. Landing pages are a great way for you to present leads with curated information so they can learn about the things you believe will most benefit them.

Ashley Kennedy, Demand Generation Manager at Act-On, suggests you use landing pages as an opportunity to collect information you can use later to aid you in the nurturing process. “Gating the content on your landing pages provides you an opportunity to collect additional information that will enable you to better segment your leads and determine what type of information and content they need from you moving forward.”

Ashley adds that a tactic that works well for Act-On is using progressive profiling, which allows you to gather data over time. This practice enables you to nurture a relationship and get to know your leads better without negatively impacting conversion rates.



5 SET UP YOUR PROGRAM AND CHOOSE A CADENCE

Now that you have all the moving pieces, it's time to set up your lead nurturing program and start building a relationship with your prospective customers. Just like any other email, you'll want to make sure everything looks good and all your links and graphics work. The right marketing automation platform, such as Act-On, can also help you test for deliverability and optimize your content for various devices.

One thing to keep in mind before you start your nurturing programs is the amount of time your leads will need to make a decision, and what kind of cadence you need to adopt to match that process. Think about how much time your leads need to process the information you've sent them and share it with others involved before sending them any follow up information. The last thing you want to do is send them four to five emails within a two-week period, only to have them ignore them all. That lack of engagement, as tracked by Google and the other email platforms, also creates the risk of negatively affecting your email deliverability in the future.

Robert Kohnke, Marketing Operations Strategist at Act-On, adds that cadence is also essential to evaluating the success of your program. "Cadence is important because you know how often you want to send emails and how often you want to check if somebody is engaged. The easiest way to do that is A/B testing. You can check who has clicked on a certain subject line, and if not you can resend it."

LEAD NURTURING FACT:

50% of enterprise organizations create nurture-specific content on a consistent basis.

[Annuitas](#)



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STEP: GET STARTED AND MEASURE YOUR RESULTS

Lead nurturing, especially when combined with a marketing automation solution, gives your company the ability to track and measure the effectiveness of your efforts. **There are a few places to look for key performance indicators (KPIs) in a lead nurturing campaign, including:**



Engagement: Email open and click-through rates are an obvious starting point for your tracking efforts.



Lead acceleration: How long does it take to move your leads between nurturing campaign stages, and how long does it take to move nurtured leads into the sales cycle?



Outcome metrics: How many nurtured leads that enter the sales pipeline turn into closed/won deals? What is the average revenue associated with those deals, and how long do they take to close?

Once you establish a baseline with these and other key indicators, you can look for trouble spots in your nurturing campaign, experiment with solutions and consider your next steps.

7 STEP: DON'T FORGET TO TEST, REVIEW, AND IMPROVE!

Like lead scoring, lead nurturing is a process that's never finished; there's always room to refine, improve and expand your efforts. In fact, at Act-On, our team meets every week to review our ongoing lead nurturing programs.

We look at analytics to see how they've been performing over the months and determine any changes that need to be made to each email in our program. We also take into consideration whether we have new content to share that could better serve our customers. We refine email copy to make it more easy to consume. And we refresh subject lines depending on which ones got more click thrus and engagement. We also explore new areas to test, whether a new round of subject line testing, or testing whether a GIF or video increases engagement.

Besides adding new touchpoints, content, and communication channels to your existing campaigns, there are other ways to take advantage of lead nurturing. **These are some you can look at to improve your efforts:**



Customer loyalty and retention:

Use nurturing tactics to build deeper relationships with your existing customers – including cross-sell and upsell opportunities based on targeted content.



Customer welcome and onboarding:

Use lead nurturing to introduce customers to a newly-purchased product or service; give them support options, tips and tricks, community information, and other resources.



Remarketing: So-called “waking the dead” campaigns can make the most of missed opportunities.

Lead nurturing can be intimidating, and it can certainly be a complex undertaking. Getting started with lead nurturing, however, can be a straightforward process, given an effective game plan and clearly defined goals.

Finally, Robert Kohnke, Marketing Operations Strategist at Act-On, advises you continue to stay up to date on industry best practices and apply those learnings to your campaigns. “The technical marketing and marketing automation industries are always changing and advancing. If you're relying on last year's data, you're way behind the curve.”

LEAD NURTURING FACT:

78% of B2B organizations claim that lead nurturing is a goal of their content marketing.

[Content Marketing Institute](#)





ABOUT ACT-ON SOFTWARE

Act-On Software is the world's growth marketing leader, offering solutions that empower marketers to move beyond the lead and engage targets at every step of the customer lifecycle. Act-On makes customer data actionable so marketers can strategize smart, effective solutions to grow their businesses and generate higher customer lifetime value – all with the fastest time-to-value.



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