Managing “B” Leads Will Improve Your Lead Generation ROI.
Convert “B” leads into “A” leads using low-cost e-communications.

It’s hard to realize full value from your investment in lead generation if most of your leads end up in the database deep freeze. If someone is interested enough in what you’re offering to take the time to fill out a form and give you their name, they have value. Your sales people may not agree. They tend to have myopic vision, focusing only the large and the ready-to-buy-now opportunities. Send them interested but not-ready-now prospects, and you’re likely to hear shouts like “these leads aren’t qualified,” “send me better leads,” or “take these leads and…” What should you do? With money tight, you might do well to unlock the hidden value in your “B” leads.

Look closely! “B” leads represent a tremendous opportunity.

How many of your leads are “hot” prospects? If your company is like most, your “B” leads will well out-number the “A’s.” Sure, with “B” leads your conversion rate is lower and the timeline slower. But you can still reap revenue comparable to what you get with your “A’s” – for a lot less money than you’d spend generating a whole new set of “hot” leads. Here’s a typical scenario: Let’s say you generate 1,000 leads. 100 are hot, 850 are”B’s,” and the rest not worth the trouble. If you convert 5% of the “A” leads you’ll have 5 customers. But you only have to convert 1% of your “B” leads, and you’ll have 9 new customers!

What separates a “B” lead from an “A”?
Time and authority. “Decision makers” may need time to get funds, time to get approval, time to do their due diligence. Influencers may need time to make their case to managers. Both “A” and “B” leads are interested in what you’re offering, but the “A” leads are interested in purchasing right away. The “B” leads need time to develop. One thing is certain: if you keep in touch with “B” leads over time, providing personalized information and incentives, you’re far more likely to make a sale than if they were left alone. If you don’t try to build a relationship with them, you can be sure your competitors will.

Keep Ownership of “B” Leads in Marketing!
With costs per interaction ranging from a low of $3.00 for telesales to a high of $200+ for direct contact, it makes no sense to use direct sales to convert “B” leads. But if you keep control of the “B’s,” you can use low cost electronic communications to convert many of them into customers. Don’t think this will drain your already strained resources. In fact, it does the opposite. Programs to send regular, personalized communications and offers can be set up to run automatically – without using any of your internal IT resources. Fulfillment can also be automated, saving time and money. And, you’ll have tighter management control than ever before through real-time reports that provide metrics (including ROI calculations) to track performance.

Convert “B” leads with low cost electronic communications.
e-Communication is by far your lowest cost option to convert “B” leads into customers. Each interaction cost is a fraction of what you’ll spend for direct mail, trade show leads, Webinars, etc.. Plus, using “marketing intelligence” technology, you can personalize every e-communication. Your prospects get only the information they want, when they want it. When they are ready to buy, they are automatically sent to your sales force so they can close the deal. This could happen quickly, since you’ve provided hot prospects that have already been educated, received incentives, and expressed strong interest.

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Develop campaign rules that work best for you.
An effective way to run a “B” lead campaign is to send a sequence of rules-basede-communications. This can generate sales from leads you’ve already captured –and it will help you get your database cleaned and organized so you can get full value from it. Rules help you build a personal relationship with each lead by providing them with information and incentives based on their expressed interests. The campaign rules should be unique to your company and enhance your existing processes. By building a 1:1 relationship with your prospects, you should realize more sales and a much lower opt-out rate.

Understand how rules-based “B” lead campaigns work.
To start, you’ll set up the rule that determines when a lead is upgraded to “A” and sent to sales, or dropped down to “C.” In the real-world example that follows, if a “B” lead takes 3 actions it will automatically upgrade to “A” and be sent to sales. 3 potential actions were identified: 1) response, 2) download from email link, 3) open the email. Here’s how it worked:

Email 1
John filled out a simple Web form in response to the initial “B” lead campaign email. He answered 3 questions that lead to this profile: he is a decision-maker, will purchase within 6 months and is interested in database encryption.

Automatic action per your rule: Send email in 3 weeks with download link to the database encryption white paper and include the discount offer for decision-makers.

Email 2
John received the next email in the “B” lead conversion campaign, with links to a white paper on database encryption and an incentive to purchase within 30 days. Another question was asked to find out more about him. John downloaded the white paper and revealed by answering the question that he is concerned about product scalability.

Automatic action per your rule: Send email in 3 weeks with link to spec sheet about scalability and decision-maker offer.

Email 3
John received the email. He opened it but took no action.

Automatic action per your rule: Since opening the email constituted his 3rd action, he was sent to sales for direct contact. By now, he was very educated on the product, reducing the time a sales person would have to interact with him to close a deal. By rule, any leads not taking action from any of the 3 emails would become a "C" lead.

Use flexible templates to get your message across.
The best emails are short and focused, with a meaningful offer and strong branding. Since a "B" lead campaign is built around a reusable template, design costs usually only occur once. The style and content zones within your template are defined in the first email, leaving you with low content development costs for each subsequent email.

Get maximum value for your marketing dollars.
Once your process for building relationships with "B" leads is in place, you can funnel leads to it from any channel, at any time. It won't take long until you'll see the cost-per-sale decline, you'll realize a higher ROI on your initial lead generation investment, and the sales people will be given the quality leads they keep demanding from you.

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