

Creating New Customers

Lee Levitt
Managing Director
The Acelera Group
www.aceragroup.com

In marketing and selling, as in most things in life, timing is critical.

Open your car window **before** you throw the coin into the toll basket. Pour the foundation **before** you frame the house. Put the suntan lotion on **before** you spend the day at the beach. Bring your prospects through your demand generation process **before** you try to convert them to customers.

Awareness - Interest - Desire - Action

A→I→D→A

Most companies today use a combination of direct marketing, advertising, public relations, and more to generate initial **awareness** and **interest** in their product or service. Many expect their prospects to then move directly to purchase (action), completely bypassing the "desire" (or emotion) stage of the purchase process. When this doesn't happen, the company blames the sales organization, the product or service attributes, or even the prospect.

In reality, these activities generate increased **awareness** but not much more. Awareness is simply the first step in the sales process. Demand generation activities will not inspire a prospect to **act**, except in the rare instance that the prospect is already in the "buying zone". And this is so unusual that in the retail world, this is referred to as a "laydown" - you could lay down on the retail floor in front of this motivated customer and they'd **still** buy!

In the real world, you must "touch" the prospect several times with advertising, mailings, salesperson's visits, etc., and then you must **pull** the prospect through **interest** and **desire** before you can stimulate **action**!

So what is an effective demand generation program?

An effective demand generation program targets the **ideal** prospect with a compelling message and builds awareness for your product or service. What's the thorny business problem that's keeping them up at night? Can you help them with this problem?

You must identify this ideal prospect, understand their needs, "care-about's" and their decision making process. The more narrowly you target this prospect, the more effective your campaign will be.

*If you were going to call on only **one** company, who would it be? What person within the company? What would you say to that person?*

Oh, and by the way, don't assume that you already have this knowledge about your prospects. Usually, these assumptions have been made without benefit of external research or feedback...and they're flat **wrong**.

Don't look to your current customers for this information - if you are a growing company they are probably not representative of the kind of customers you will want in the future. And if you're not a growing company, they **certainly** are not representative of the kinds of customers you will want in the future.

It's a numbers game

Ideally, the message is received just as the prospect is beginning to consider a purchase, but with some exceptions this is difficult to orchestrate.

This is a numbers game. Repetition and your closed loop lead management process will guarantee eventual success.

Start a lot of prospects moving through the top of the sales funnel and those that you don't convert on the first pass through will either be disqualified or retained in the closed loop lead management system for future "touches".

Let each level of the sales funnel do its job and don't rush things. If you try to rush the prospect through the funnel or do things out of order, you will lose that prospect.

The **goal** of your demand generation program should be to start your "ideal" prospects through your selling process -- make your prospect **aware** of your product or service, **interest** them in your product or service, build **desire** for that product or service, and get them to **act** on that desire.

In reality, demand generation for most business-to-business products and services can get no further than awareness before a sales person must become involved. The market is too crowded and noisy and the prospect has too many contradictory demands on their time and attention.

How can we guarantee that a demand generation program will lead to a sale?

Unfortunately we can't.

However, an effective lead generation program, properly managed, **will** lead to many new prospects entering the sales pipeline and eventually converting a percentage of them to customers or clients.

Remember, the goal of a demand generation program is to generate awareness and to **initiate** the sales process (rather than to conclude it.)

It's the details that count - if you properly identify the ideal prospect profile, deliver a compelling message via the appropriate channel, move prospects through each phase of the sales funnel and ensure that the sales organization follows up appropriately - you have a shot at building your revenue stream.



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