

Waking the dead: Increased sales from "beyond the grave"

 By [Brandon Faber](#)

23 Jan 2015

This article is about turning marketing into sales. It's about mining the database you already have, about what your business can (and should) be doing to better nurture marketing leads into prospects, and pushing prospects through to close.

The core message of the process is the same, whether you consider yourself a B2B or B2C business. In the end you are trying to convey enough relevant value in your product or service to put you on the purchasing radar. In the end, you can enjoy 50% more sales-ready prospects by treating those hard-earned leads with the respect they deserve.

Lead me not astray

South African businesses, *en masse*, are guilty of working wastefully with the valuable leads they earn through various marketing activities. If a prospect is not immediately "sales ready" when contacted by a company representative, that lead is largely forgotten about and chucked on a heap of "dead leads" where it will roam in anonymity until, one day, someone else bothers to contact them at the right time *et voila* - SOLD.



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By doing this, companies leave millions in lost revenue on the table. What is required are the systems (technology), defined processes and, of course, co-operative planning between sales and marketing regarding what should happen to leads when they enter the marketing funnel.

If no such elements exist then all companies are doing with their marketing spend is endlessly filling up a bucket that is porous - inevitably leading company executives to conclude that marketing is ineffective.

And that is not the case . . . well, not exactly.

BANT(ing) for business

Budget. Authority. Need and Timeline. Apologies to Professor Tim Noakes but this is the type of BANTING that *really* matters. These four KEY elements are what qualify a lead as worthy of a field sales call.

This is what trims endless fat from the wobbly exterior that is your average cost-of-sale. Without knowing the answer to these four qualifying criteria a sales person is wasting time, fuel and office resource that can be better spent elsewhere.

It is imperative that marketing and sales work together to setup criteria of what boxes should be ticked before a lead is passed on to sales. A basic flow of the process companies should follow before a lead can be deemed sales ready looks something like this:

1. **A lead is won** through marketing activity and entered into the marketing funnel.
2. **That lead is nurtured** through various activity and communication (more about that later)
3. **The lead becomes Marketing Qualified** when he/she reaches set criteria, and is contacted.
4. **Based on the outcome of that contact**, the lead is further nurtured or BANT qualified before being passed to field sales.
5. **Field sales** then reaches out to the lead for an on-site (or web-based) meeting.

The assumption (as mentioned) that marketing is not doing its job because sales is not getting enough leads is not 100% correct. Marketing (also read advertising) may be doing an outstanding job of earning leads but it's what happens after that where the rubber meets the road.

It's the "WHAT THEN?" that marketing *and* sales need to answer.

Lucky 13- and beyond

Microsoft research estimates that "It takes at least 7-13 touches before a lead becomes sales ready." That's assuming, of course, that things go to plan. It is safe to assume though that 50% of sales people lose interest if the first point of contact was not successful. Fast forward a call or two further and a staggering 89% of field sales professionals throw in the towel (on a specific lead) after the fourth unsuccessful touch point - be it an unanswered email, phone call or unsuccessful physical meeting.

Now consider this following statistic from SiriusDecisions: "80% of prospects deemed 'bad leads' by sales teams go on to buy within 24 months." The lack of agreed process and available systems are what sees those leads buy from someone else.

Regular (RELEVANT) communication is the key to increased

*"Because market conditions are tougher, people are more careful about spending their money, which means they **need more information** and will **evaluate more options** before making a purchase decision."*

There is no quick way around it, there is no way to cheat. Pushing leads through the buying cycle to close requires patience, process and practical application. It requires content that adds value at every stage of the purchase decision.

Method to the madness

The right software solutions and methodology is needed to setup and implement effective marketing automation. It works for any size business, in any industry, yet very few South African companies have embraced technology and the science of lead-nurturing as a way to deliver qualified leads to their sales teams.

Over the next month or two we'll get into the meat of the subject. Today, however, you only need to ask one important question of your sales and marketing teams, "Are we maximising return on the leads we win?"

Chances are that, like most local companies, you are not.

ABOUT BRANDON FABER

Been involved with Media and Marketing for 14 years. I understand the creative process and how it should tie into business objectives. How success should be tracked and measured and what needs to be done across both traditional and digital marketing funnels. Currently I am Group Marketing Manager at incuBeta, a global group of Digital Performance Marketing companies.

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