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DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO B2B LEAD NURTURING

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Despite the benefits of client centricity, many B2B marketers still focus their lead nurturing on business goals, rather than the needs of their prospects and clients. In other words, their lead nurturing initiatives are designed to support sales and increase pipeline velocity, rather than effectively build a long-term relationship.

Nurturing leads and providing value over a longer sales cycle is essential to maintain brand interest and encourage engagement. However, this process can last up to a year or more in some B2B industries, presenting a formidable challenge for organizations to maintain and optimize B2B lead nurturing cadences.

WHAT IS LEAD NURTURING?

Lead nurturing refers to a long-term marketing strategy that seeks to foster trust and relationships with prospects to present a brand as a potential solution provider. This is done via the delivery of valuable content and resources across the buyer's journey and beyond. Such content must demonstrate an acute understanding of the leads' needs, pain points, and challenges, which over time encourage buyers to complete a purchase (or, in the case of existing clients, renew or expand their partnerships).

Lead nurturing starts with segmenting leads based on **buyer personas and ICP criteria**, which will serve to indicate which materials and resources are the best fit for them. Lead nurturing strategies must engage with prospects regularly to generate demand and maintain interest, cultivating awareness, and educating leads on the business value of partnering with a brand with specific products and services.

This definitive guide explores how to implement a sophisticated lead nurturing strategy in only five steps and also features an actionable playbook to illustrate and guide your B2B lead nurturing strategies throughout the entire B2B sales funnel and lead process.

5-STEP GUIDE TO DEVELOPING A LEAD NURTURING STRATEGY THAT CONVERTS

Crafting an entire B2B lead nurturing process from scratch can be daunting. However, keep in mind that effective lead nurturing comes from a strong understanding of the pain points and knowledge gaps of your audience. Securing this knowledge is the first step to achieving performance with your lead nurturing, from there, strategies can be scaled or extremely targeted.

The five-step framework below explores how to create a lead nurturing strategy that informs prospects and develops strong bonds with them until they feel ready to buy.

#1 Have an open conversation with leads and clients

Lead nurturing strives to form a relationship and build trust. A key element of this process is ensuring that lead nurturing strategies effectively address concerns and provide useful information.

Therefore, before you start developing your lead nurturing content and channel mix, begin by sourcing direct feedback from your audience. For best results, implement this approach across multiple channels and audiences. For example, book meetings with loyal clients, comment on LinkedIn posts, or conduct incentivized surveys.

Another data source to leverage is search intent. While not guaranteed to be an indicator of buyer intent, understanding what prospective buyers are searching for can help you identify the most common pain points your audience is facing. These can later be addressed in your lead nurturing campaigns.

Direct feedback from potential leads and existing clients can allow you to glean invaluable insights to help build your lead nurturing strategies with greater accuracy. Any findings you gain from this process can also feed into your overall lead engagement strategy to promote better pipeline velocity.

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Collect lead intelligence on your accounts

Data-driven marketing strategies are essential for achieving better performance, given the greater accuracy that they allow marketing teams. Data insights such as lead pain points and their likelihood to convert are crucial for crafting B2B lead nurturing strategies that connect with their target audience. However, acquiring actionable, clean data requires the correct approach.

Start by leveraging the data insights already at your disposal, such as account details from previously closed deals. These can help to update or formulate your Ideal Client Profiles (ICP) and buyer personas accordingly to act as a foundation against new findings that can be measured.

Compare this data with leads currently in your sales funnel to improve accuracy and determine the leads that are most likely to convert. Remember to constantly reassess these assets to keep them up to date with your market as it evolves.

Discover how to collect, refine, and leverage accurate lead intelligence ⟶

As you continue to research and collect data on your prospective buyers as they interact with your brand, a good strategy is to create “battle cards” for specific leads in target accounts. This is a particularly effective strategy for account based marketing, as these battle cards work as a cheat sheet to inform your lead strategy and core messaging. As a result, these should be utilized for all decision makers at priority accounts.

In this battle card, you should research and include the following information:

- What is the history of their company?
- What is their current job title and role within the company?
- What are their pain points and goals?
- What topics do they share and engage with the most on social media?
- Are they in the buying committee? If not, who are its members?

Answering these questions will help you identify touchpoints and messaging that will resonate with prospective buyers. Social media information can be extracted automatically using tools such as Zapier and Phantombuster; however, the rest of the data will require teams to invest time in research.

Even so, this effort is worth the investment to craft a more effective B2B lead nurturing campaign, especially for priority accounts that are a good match for your business goals.

#2 Develop strategies and assets to address obstacles

Once you have identified the key goals and pain points of your leads, you can develop content specific to their interests that enables them to address these challenges.

Your messaging in this content should be tailored to showcase the unique value your company is able to provide as relevant to the interests of each buyer persona (and account in the case of ABM). This should include the expertise and experience your company has in solving the problems being faced by leads.

When it comes to content creation, produce materials that can help your leads overcome challenges, with actionable advice and data specific to their needs. If, for example, your lead is looking to engage decision makers at priority accounts, provide a guide to developing account based marketing (ABM) strategies. This boosts your lead nurturing campaign by demonstrating your investment in spending time getting to know them and their pain points, as well as presenting your brand as a valuable source of expertise.

Keep in mind that content that successfully addresses needs and pain points has the potential to be shared by leads with other decision makers in their buying committee. Quality content, therefore, has the potential to greatly increase your chances of a successful deal later on.

Learn how to implement a B2B lead generation strategy in 6 steps ⟶

#3 Fill in knowledge gaps

As previously discussed, helping leads overcome challenges is a key goal of B2B lead nurturing, which guides prospects toward a sale. However, on this path, leads may reveal knowledge gaps. These are signals that a lead is aware of the symptoms of an issue, but not of its origin or how to solve it.

While prospects may be eager to indicate what they need or want to learn, their uncertainty may result in this being vague, making it more challenging to identify knowledge gaps yourself.

Industry-wide surveys are an option to assess knowledge, but it is important to consider the bias of respondents to scrutinize these insights and leverage such information carefully. However, SEO audits and buyer intent analysis can reveal the most common queries and visited web pages, which can also signal the kind of information your leads are looking for.

Use these inputs to tailor a strategy that fills in these gaps on a one-to-one or on a one-to-many level (if you are following an ABM strategy). This enables your marketing team to craft broader campaigns that span various channels, employing strategies such as email nurturing, social media, and programmatic display.

Providing your leads with valuable educational opportunities targeted at their needs over an extended period positions your brand as an industry expert. This boosts your brand image and the outcomes of your lead nurturing campaign, as well as empowers prospects to make a well-informed purchasing decision in the next step.

#4 Develop a personalized approach for sales

Although the objective of B2B lead nurturing is to curate a meaningful relationship rather than pushing for a sale, it is important to seize the opportunity when your leads demonstrate being ready for a purchase. At this stage, mobilize your sales team and make the most of the interest you have curated. Marketing teams should develop and arm your sales development representatives (SDRs) with assets and copy to make the pitch to the buying committee memorable.

Do a deep dive and consider the knowledge gaps they filled with your content and any obstacles that remain. Based upon that, pick one insight as an ice-breaker for your lead nurturing emails.

Here are some examples:

Done correctly, this type of outreach can spark curiosity by creating an open loop. Your SDR team can then determine who is interested in your solutions from those who need to be nurtured longer based on their response.

> Hi [first name], I've been researching [topic of interest] at my company.
> I can send you my data if you are interested.

> [First name], I am a specialist in [topic of interest] at [company name].
> I can help you with [challenge] in a free consultation.

> Hello [first name], do you need help with [challenge]? I have helped [client X] and [client Y] to [result]. Book a free 30-minute call and I'll go over the details.

> Hi [First name], curious, how are you [team] solving [problem] to ensure they are getting [solution]? We've helped [company name] solve [problem] and were wondering if you'd be interested in [content] that can guide you through the same process. May I send it to you?

#5 Keep nurturing, even if you get a sale

Lead nurturing should not end with a sale, especially in B2B.

To avoid churn and ensure client success, the first step is to ensure a seamless and comprehensive onboarding process. Make yourself available and top-of-mind with regular, relevant content drips. This can be achieved with lead nurturing emails or communication that clients can opt into, such as newsletters. These can act as another platform for sharing new and existing content of interest to leads and clients alike, as well as regular updates, news, and promotions.

Continuing to provide your clients with value well after a sale will help your brand maintain relevance and gain recurrent revenue. This will also contribute to higher client satisfaction and better social proof. Depending on your success, this can also have the potential to create a virtuous word-of-mouth marketing cycle with earned media. This boosts brand awareness and adds credibility that can facilitate demand generation and lead generation processes.

Learn how to design lead nurturing campaigns that drive conversions through automation ⟶

LEAD NURTURING TIPS FOR EACH FUNNEL STAGE

Lead nurturing efforts must evolve according to the lead's progress in their individual buying journey, including the content that is shared. **This section illustrates the content most suited for each stage of the sales funnel.**

Top of funnel (TOFU) stage

Also known as the awareness stage, the TOFU stage begins when prospective buyers come into contact with your brand for the first time. In order to attract leads to this stage, it is important to leverage high-quality, short-form content that addresses common knowledge gaps in your target audience, such as:

- Checklists
- Blog posts and articles
- Listicles
- Social media posts
- Search engine-based marketing

Middle of funnel (MOFU) stage

The middle of funnel stage is also known as the consideration stage. Prospects in this step are considering and comparing different options available, but are still not ready for a purchase.

Usually, these leads will be already registered into your system and can be directed to different nurturing tracks, according to their segmentation data. These leads must be nurtured with longer-form resources that showcase the unique value of your brand, such as:

- Blog posts and articles
- Whitepapers and unique research reports
- Webinars
- Free tools
- Podcasts
- Product samples
- Email nurture

Bottom of funnel (BOFU) stage

In what is also known as the decision stage, leads are usually considered "ready to buy." However, although this tends to be the case in B2C, B2B BOFU leads are more cautious and discerning, and therefore should not be rushed into purchasing.

Instead of directing these leads to SDRs, keep them engaged with nurturing that focuses on highlighting the unique benefits of your products and solutions, while also providing social proof, with content such as:

- Case studies
- Product comparisons
- Targeted discount pages
- Email nurture

Discover how to drive maximum value from your B2B content marketing efforts with or content repurposing guide ⟶

B2B LEAD NURTURING PLAYBOOK FOR A 6-MONTH SALES CYCLE

Below is an actionable playbook you can use to guide your B2B lead nurturing campaign as you nurture leads over a 6-month sales cycle.

In B2B, sales cycles are usually longer than a year, but the playbook below can be adjusted to cater to more months by simply extending the time allocated for each step.

Month #1

In the first month, it is important to focus your efforts on crafting cadences and scripts for the entire sales cycle. This includes cadences via channels such as email and social media (for instance, LinkedIn is a key channel for B2B).

Write messages for at least the first, second, and third touch. You can add more later as you get to know the buying committee at target accounts and their challenges.

Your scripts should cater to social messaging and voicemail. If you are going to cold call, create a separate script and cadence just for that, as the messaging must be crisp to resonate on the phone. While creating a script is important, sales reps must also practice improvisation and objection handling. Calls should strike the balance between hitting the marks and sounding natural.

In this step, you should also decide which parts of your cadences may be automated and which must be completed manually, depending on triggers uncovered with your lead nurturing strategies and the research you have performed to date. Manual cadences can be more effective, yet require more time on your end for personalization , so choose wisely.

After this preparation period, it is time to launch your cadences and test your scripts with your leads.

Month #2

In the second month, you need to measure the engagement from the cadences and scripts. If engagement is low across the board, this may be an indicator that you are targeting the wrong audience or that your content is irrelevant. In this case, return to the previous step and adjust your content and/or targeting.

If, however, only some leads are not engaged, consider adding them to a separate lead nurturing stream (based on commonalities) with content that is more to their liking. Evaluate the scale of the edits necessary based on the knowledge of your leads gathered with **market segmentation**.

Once you have done your edits, continue cadences and follow your scripts as usual for the second month. After all, lead nurturing emails and calls can take time to perfect so that they resonate with their target audience—highlighting the importance of continuous adjustment and iterative testing.

If your lead nurturing continues to progress well by the end of the second month, consider expanding your channel or content reach with further segmentation, A/B testing, channel diversity, etc.

Month #3

When approaching the third month, it is important to remember that the buyer's journey is not linear—and you should evaluate each lead's content consumption and web searches to check how far they are in their brand discovery.

Lead scoring can help determine this automatically with a points system. Although following lead scoring best practices is a must, interactions with the lead are the prime source of information for signaling if they are ready for a more sales-focused conversation. If possible, evaluating engagement across the **buying committee** makes for a clearer picture of the buyer's journey throughout the target organization.

You can evaluate lead readiness by sending a message with BOFU content that features the benefits of your solution, or even **case studies** with proof of the results you deliver. If the lead is receptive, this is indicative of their progression further down in the sales funnel, signaling that they may soon be ready for your sales team.

Month #4

In the fourth month, you will most likely be able to categorize which leads are sales-ready, and which, according to the sales funnel methodology, are stuck in the middle stage of the nurturing process. Although a lack of progress can be frustrating, it is normal for leads to stay idle in this stage and you should not force them to advance quicker than they can (there is, however, a tactful way to streamline nurturing at the bottom of the funnel).

Deploy lead nurturing for those in the consideration phase with content that demonstrates expertise, and by extension, value. This can take the form of content such as analyst reports, in-depth guides, comparison charts, and testimonials.

Identify the buying committee of accounts that are more prone to making a purchase and conduct B2B psychographic research on its members. This will provide data to personalize your pitch and make a more convincing deal that resonates with their emotional triggers.

Avoid the most common mistakes when nurturing BOFU leads ⟶

Month #5

If you are still not close to a sales conversation, then continue building a productive relationship with the lead. It is common for prospects close to the end of the sales cycle to still not be prepared for a purchase, which is why you can assess their interest by encouraging them to introduce you to their buying committee in a no-obligation call to talk about their challenges.

Continue to drip content to these leads, such as thought leadership, product updates, and even industry-wide news in email newsletters that you believe could be useful for them. By making yourself available, you'll remain top-of-mind and ready for sales when the time is right.

Remember that even this late into the nurture, you still need to be conversational and avoid sounding too incisive. Therefore, even when booking meetings and showcasing your solutions, think of yourself as a guide helping your prospective clients on their path, rather than a salesperson or a business development representative (BDR).

For the leads that are idle in the middle phase, you can split them into two separate cadences depending on their engagement levels:

- **Leads that continue to engage, but are not sales-ready:** Continue to nurture with thought leadership, webinars, videos, and articles. In essence, anything that proves brand value will likely move these prospects toward a buying stage.
- **Leads that do not engage at all:** These leads should be placed on an automated long-term lead nurturing track, which you can further scrutinize for engagement. Remember not to overdo your outreach or you will risk unsubscribes. Educational content works best for these leads. If they engage, then move them to your prime cadence.

Month #6

As the end of the nurturing cycle looms, despite the pressure to close the deal, timing—especially in the last month—is of the essence to make sure the deal works in your favor.

As buying committees in B2B consist of members with different schedules and priorities, catering to all of them can be challenging. Do your best to abide by their preferences based on the data you have gathered from previous interactions.

In the last month of your cadence, you should also re-evaluate all the data you compiled on engagement and make final adjustments to the content, your overall nurturing stream, and your target audience. Remember to also update your ICPs and buyer personas with actual, up-to-date data collected along this process. This is crucial so you can reboot this six-month sales cycle with new leads and obtain better results.

To summarize , at the end of the cadence you should facilitate sales by making yourself available and catering to the preferences of your leads.

Read Outlook 2024 to stay ahead of trends in lead nurturing and buyer enablement →

LEAD NURTURING BEST PRACTICES

Below is a list of best practices to keep in mind when creating your nurturing campaigns. Think of these best practices as recommendations rather than strict rules for effective lead nurturing in most B2B verticals.

#1 Align marketing and sales teams

Effective lead nurture depends on both sales and marketing staying up-to-date by communicating and creating campaigns together.

Siloed departments can be a huge disadvantage to high-growth organizations . Make sure both marketing and sales teams can collect and analyze the same data, are measured on common KPIs, and collaborate on projects.

A bi-annual sales-marketing summit can be extraordinarily helpful to keep everyone on the same page. You can also book meetings every week or two to discuss your lead nurturing tactics, assess the results, and discuss any necessary changes. All the adjustments we outlined in the playbook above become much easier and more efficient with aligned sales and marketing teams.

#2 Create data-driven and personalized cadences

Your cadences should be crafted based on buyer intent, search intent, and segmentation analysis to drive up the engagement of your leads.

Discover how to make the most out of intent data with the **Demand Marketer's Guide to Intent Activation** ⟶

Adding more personalization to your outreach distinguishes it from the other offers and adverts your leads see daily and makes your messaging more likely to resonate with them. Even with an automated cadence, make sure to personalize your messaging and fuel it with data that is helpful to your leads and does not sound generic.

#3 Monitor touchpoints

Every touchpoint matters. Evaluate what content leads interact with and analyze the data such as time on page, clicks, and watch time.

This will help you define the quality of these touchpoints and assess with further clarity how engaged the leads are with your brand. Adapt your outreach based on this input and switch underperforming content for what works best.

#4 Be zealous with re-engagement campaigns

Remarketing has a bad reputation with B2C audiences for a good reason, and that malaise is felt by B2B leads, too—the feeling of being "followed" with display ads wherever you go.

Evaluate if you should pick contextual or audience targeting for your remarketing campaigns and strive to provide value. Promoting tools, reports, and educational content works better than straight-out product ads for remarketing.

#5 Always adopt a conversational tone in your outreach

Lead nurturing must be conversational, not salesy, and you must always focus on developing relationships rather than closing deals. With this approach, you will gain trust and be of higher value to your prospective clients as an expert and solution provider.

CONCLUSION

B2B lead nurturing is about developing trust with your audience over time, by staying top-of-mind with high-quality content and approachable sales teams. By focusing on long-term value, your brand benefits by association with the quality of your marketing.

Instead of focusing on pipeline generation and measuring engagement to quickly advance leads down the sales funnel, the goal of lead nurturing is to create a win-win relationship for both parties.

To create a lead nurturing strategy that is truly effective, you must be hyper-knowledgeable of your audience, analyze data on their preferences, and deliver content that helps them overcome their professional challenges.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Focus your nurturing efforts in building relationships, rather than pushing for a sale
- Leverage data on your audience, from buyer intent and market segmentation to feedback from loyal clients and survey results, to craft resonating messaging and engaging nurturing streams
- Provide your leads with valuable materials that enable them to overcome challenges, keeping your brand top of mind
- Continue nurturing clients after deals are closed, making way for upsells, cross-sells, renewals, and referrals
- Monitor engagement data from your nurturing materials, continuously adjusting targeting and messaging to ensure maximum performance

DRIVE LONG-TERM DEMAND WITH TARGETED NURTURING PROGRAMS BUILT BY DEMAND EXPERTS

INFUSE designs long-term, strategic demand programs for businesses across 30+ industry verticals, enabling quality engagement among key buyers.

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