



HOW TO GENERATE QUALIFIED LEADS IN 2024

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Synopsis:

- Why lead qualification is important
- How to implement lead qualification
- 7 strategies to support lead qualification and B2B demand generation



As B2B buyers and buying groups continually evolve in line with the shifting market and tech landscape, so must an organization's lead generation and lead qualification process.

Generating qualified leads requires carefully orchestrated marketing and sales strategies implemented across a diverse channel mix in line with buyer priorities and needs.

This article explores a variety of processes and B2B demand generation initiatives to support high-quality lead generation and a steady pipeline of sales opportunities to empower your growth.

What is B2B lead qualification?

Lead qualification is the process of assessing the quality and fit of prospective buyers in line with the targeting parameters of an organization. A lead can be considered qualified if it aligns closely with predetermined criteria such as an organization's **ideal client profile (ICP) and buyer personas**, for example.

Other qualifying factors are typically summarized under frameworks such as BANT (Budget, Authority, Need, and Timing) or CHAMP (Challenges, Authority, Money, and Prioritization), and vary according to the specific objectives of each organization.

How does lead qualification work?

B2B leads are typically categorized into the following four groups, depending on their characteristics and the method of lead qualification involved:

Types of qualified leads



Marketing qualified lead (MQL)

A prospect, typically higher in the funnel, that has been identified as likely to convert based on their interaction with top of funnel (TOFU) marketing materials.

This can include:

- Web pages visited
- CTAs clicked
- Social engagement
- Content downloads



Sales qualified lead (SQL)

A prospect that has progressed from the MQL stage to becoming a SQL based on their activity and interest.

This is quantified with lead scoring and qualification, often performed by the marketing team to avoid churn and wasted sales resources.



Product qualified lead (PGL)

A prospect that has been determined as ready to convert after interacting with a free trial or demo of a product/service.

The qualification process for these leads should include evaluating their experience and the value demonstrated to inform lead follow-up.



Service qualified lead (SQL)

This is an existing or potential client (in the bottom of funnel, BOFU, stage) that has expressed an interest in new or additional products/services.

As a result, these leads are ideal candidates for upselling and cross-selling opportunities and should be nurtured correctly to secure a higher lifetime value.

The specific details of each lead qualification type depend on the lead definitions established by each organization (see more in step one below).

Why is qualifying leads important?

B2B lead qualification is an integral part of efficient lead management, and by extension, B2B marketing campaigns and sales strategies.

Qualifying leads allows organizations to:



Lead qualification helps teams avoid targeting leads that are a poor fit, as well as targeting B2B marketing leads with sales materials before they have been adequately nurtured. Given the tightening of marketing budgets and [the emphasis on marketing supporting sales goals](#), lead qualification is an essential process for ensuring that performance goals are met.

In short, lead qualification helps anchor strategies with the right approach and enhance targeting to avoid wasted resources and drive higher client value.

Contact a demand expert to secure qualified engagement with your target buyers and drive growth →

6 ways to generate more qualified leads

Securing high-quality, qualified leads to fuel your pipeline and growth is a complex, multi-faceted process that requires departmental collaboration and detailed planning.

Below are seven B2B demand generation strategies and sales initiatives to help your lead generation efforts yield necessary outcomes to support your objectives.

1 Determine your target market



Quality lead and demand generation requires a focused approach that is accurate to the specific needs of your target market. As a result, both strategies should be based on a clearly defined and understood target market to inform lead qualification and lead follow-up. **Below are a range of techniques for establishing your target market:**

Create detailed target market segments

Data-driven marketing strategies that effectively engage the core segments of your total addressable market (TAM) can be informed by the **following three buyer attribute types:**

- 🔹 **Target audience:** A group of prospective buyers who share similar traits such as demographic and geographic characteristics, in combination with other [market segmentation](#) factors such as revenue, opinions, problems, and solutions.
- 🔹 **Ideal Client Profile (ICP):** Also referred to as an ideal buyer profile, this includes the firmographic, technographic, and demographic characteristics of an ideal client. In B2B, this extends to an entire organization that is most likely to benefit from and purchase your solutions. As a result, ICPs are based on criteria such as company size, industry, budget, job title, and tech stack.
- 🔹 **Buyer Persona:** These are fictional representations of decision makers in the buying group of your target accounts. While sharing characteristics of the previous two segments, buyer personas are based on an archetypal individual and are more detailed as a result.

[Read the Definitive Guide to B2B Buyer Personas for a full breakdown of how to define your TAM](#) →

Develop lead definitions

Lead definitions are the parameters that determine what constitutes a lead based on its characteristics and the qualification method(s) an organization follows. Creating lead definitions is therefore a key element of guiding the lead qualification process.

These definitions should be informed by your target market and include the behavior triggers that indicate buyer intent and categorize leads into their various types.

Establish a lead scoring process

Lead scoring is a system of assigning numerical values to actions taken by prospective buyers. While this aspect of scoring is similar to the lead definition process, the cumulative lead score serves both as an indicator of the lead's progress through their buyer's journey and of its quality.

These triggers should align with your lead generation goals and the typical buyer's journey you have established. Detail is important here, as not all actions should be treated equally in terms of buyer intent. For example, a whitepaper download should not carry the same weight as a demo request.

Given its complexity, leveraging predictive lead scoring models can be highly beneficial. These utilize data from your Customer Relationship Management (CRM) database to determine the hierarchy of the data variables being tracked. Predictive lead scoring can also analyze buyer behavior in combination with data to determine which leads are most likely to complete a purchase, delivering insights that can be used to inform future strategies.

As such, lead scoring serves as the launching point for lead qualification, by indicating lead value to inform the process in general.

All of these techniques are invaluable for guiding the lead qualification process and should be routinely evaluated to assess their accuracy.

Inform your lead scoring process with these resources on data insights:

[How to Drive Your ROI with Lead Intelligence](#) →

[Demand Marketer's Guide to Intent Activation](#) →

2 Sales and marketing alignment



Generating qualified leads requires strong interdepartmental alignment between sales and marketing teams to facilitate data flow and a seamless buying experience.

As such, open communication is a must to allow both teams to navigate buyer behavior and adjust key elements of the sales process. This includes lead definitions, how leads are qualified, and finally, their hand-off to sales as they progress from the MQL to the SQL stage.

Sharing insights that allow for this process to be optimized is essential. Create an environment where team members feel comfortable sharing feedback, opinions, and constructive criticism to enable strategies to yield the best results.

True alignment is an essential and valuable aspect of the lead qualification process, helping companies drive higher client lifetime value (CLTV).

**Boost your sales and marketing alignment
with our 10 best practices** →

3 Map out your buyer's journey

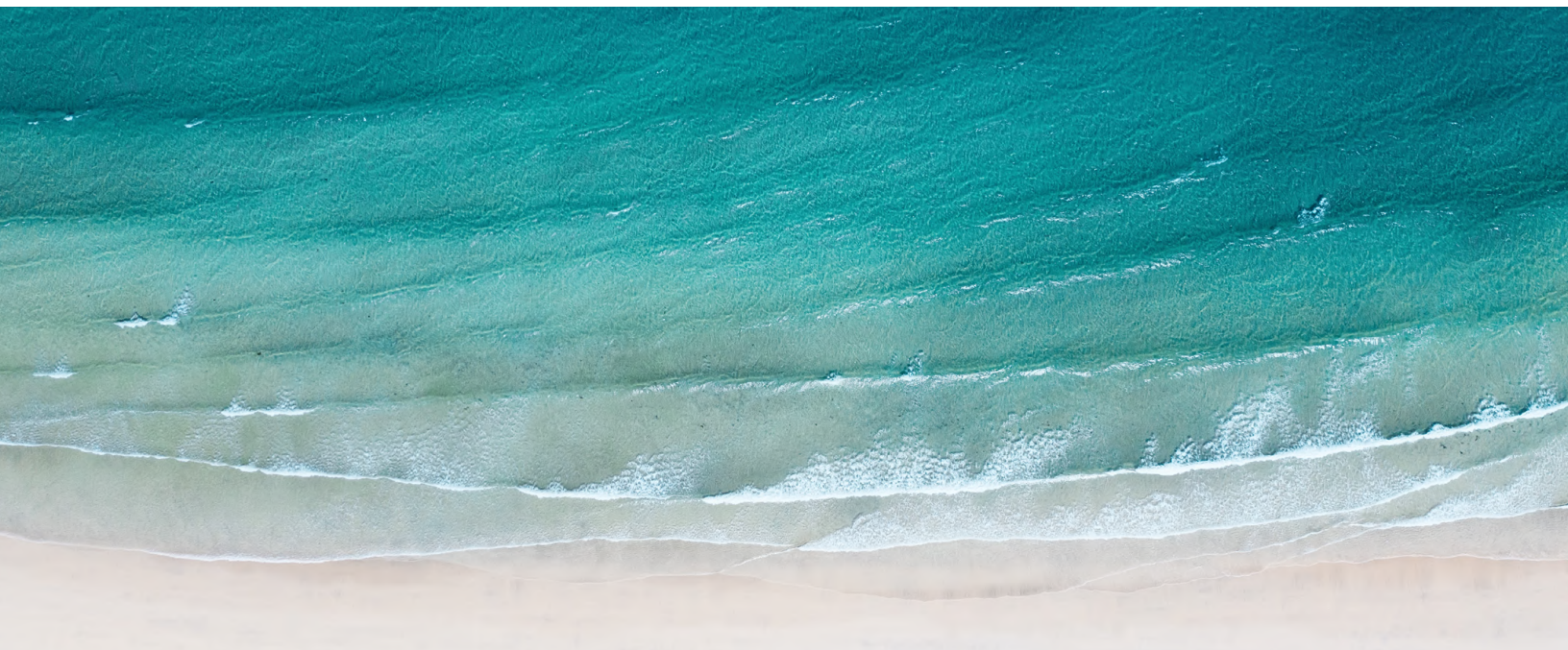


While it is essential to avoid prescribing how your prospects interact with your brand, scoping out your buyer's journey is valuable for shaping a positive buyer's experience according to the preferences of your target market.

This also supports lead qualification, as touchpoints should naturally be designed in line with the specific buyer behavior triggers established as part of lead scoring and qualification processes. Your average buyer's journey should also be based on a solid foundation of [lead intelligence](#) and campaign performance to ensure that your budget yields the best possible results.

Define your channel mix

As prospects progress through their buyer's journey, the process increases in complexity as more decision makers become involved. As a result, ensuring that they receive the correct buyer enablement on the channels they frequent is essential.



Examples of marketing channels and content ideas relevant to a range of buyer types:

Buyer type	Marketing channel	Content
Business professional	Social media	Slides promoting an article dissecting a common pain point and strategies on how to solve it
Manager	Targeted display	A display ad promoting a report addressing a specific buyer persona’s industry and key findings
Executive	Website	A demo of a proprietary tool that highlights a unique value proposition (UVP) specific to a buyer persona

[Align your channels and content marketing strategy with 2024 INFUSE research findings to engage buyers efficiently](#) →

Indeed, planning and refining this buyer’s journey with a diverse range of marketing channels aids qualified lead generation, as leads are actively encouraged to progress to the MQL and SQL stages, all the way toward a conversion.

This is also another example of a strategy that benefits greatly from sales and marketing alignment, as sales feedback can help shape the accuracy of marketing activities on each channel.

[Drive valuable conversions with our 4-step guide on B2B client journeys](#) →

4 Develop a B2B content marketing strategy



Investing in a strong, multi-faceted content marketing strategy is integral to fueling your channel mix, and therefore, generating qualified leads. If relevant to the needs of your target buyers, your content marketing can act as a primary way of delivering value to prospects and driving conversions as a result.

Below are four core aspects of developing a content marketing strategy to support lead qualification:



Create a content plan

Matching content to leads' diverse needs and preferences requires a structured content plan.

This should map out the content you will create in terms of format, channel, and buyer personas it will be relevant to. This can help your teams (or external teams) balance the variety of functions your content will likely need to realize.



Match content with different funnel stages

Be sure to create content suited to each stage of the sales funnel. As you build iterations of your content marketing strategy, identify gaps in the buyer's journey that can be addressed with content and lead nurturing. This can be supported with feedback from sales teams.



Craft lead magnets

As content with a unique and compelling value proposition, lead magnets are not only ideal for gathering lead contact information but also for qualifying interest while benefiting prospects.

Lead magnets must be relevant to generate demand and should suit the preferences of a specific segment of your target audience.



Repurpose content

As the needs of your prospective buyers evolve, so must your content. However, **[your existing content library can be repurposed](#)** to suit different audiences or buyer personas by updating or changing the content format.

For more details on how to craft a B2B content marketing strategy that enables performance, read our [Definitive Guide to B2B Content Marketing](#).

INFUSE demand experts create and leverage content marketing to meet your objectives as an extension of your team.

[Engage your target buyers with INFUSE Custom Content Solutions](#) →

5 // Optimize your website



As your channel hub and a key conversion point ([especially for SEO traffic](#)), your website plays a critical role in your buyer's journey and ensures that your strategies yield qualified leads and a strong base of demand generation. Therefore, optimizing and maintaining your website is a high priority.

Below are four tactics for enhancing your website performance:

#1 Support UX

Given the multiple functions your website will perform (including the main contact point for your brand), one of the most important website optimizations you can implement is facilitating navigation and improving its general user experience (UX).

Employ an adaptive, user-friendly design that allows prospects to access your site on their preferred device (mobile optimization is particularly important) in short load times. Be sure to develop your design elements with this in mind to support messaging, without harming UX.

When it comes to the navigation of your website, consider the different types of intent that users may have as a guiding principle for creating different sections. **Below are some examples:**

Buyer intent

Behavior that signals interest in a solution, which may ultimately evolve into a purchase decision

Educational intent

Behavior that signals interest in acquiring knowledge, without a clear intent in purchasing a product

Research intent

Research that indicates a deeper level of interest in elucidating doubts and concerns—usually correlated with the need to make a purchase

Career intent

Behavior that indicates interest in job opportunities, usually determined by user searches related to careers, training, and open positions

Based on the types of intent that you define, you can then create navigational elements to allow users to find what they are looking for. This encourages users to spend more time on your website and increases the likelihood that they will navigate to a broader range of pages, increasing the performance of your website and its capacity to drive qualified lead generation.

[Discover 6 reasons why B2B organizations should prioritize UX](#) →

#2 Search engine optimization (SEO)

Increasing organic traffic to your website and its content is a key strategy for B2B demand generation and growth. While search engine optimization strategies are usually long-term and a lengthy process, they have the potential to decrease bounce rates and increase dwell time.

Start by aligning your strategy with your target market's search intent. This will allow you to optimize your website copy with keywords to match this intent and improve the overall ranking of your website and content.

Include long-tail keywords to reflect the specific needs of the segments within the audience you are targeting. Another important aspect of SEO is performing competitor analysis to identify competitive strategies to displace their pages in favor of your own.

In general, SEO should not be prescriptive. The greater the accuracy of keywords to the interest of your buyers, the greater the likelihood of supporting qualified lead generation and brand awareness that supports a strong basis for lasting demand.

[Discover conversion tactics for SEO in B2B markets](#) →

#3 Create targeted landing pages

Your website is likely to receive a broad range of visitors. To ensure that the messaging and content of your website do not come across as generic, consider creating landing pages for different audiences within your target market.

These can feature personalized messaging focused on the pain points and objectives of each target audience, serving as hubs for buyer enablement materials that sales teams can share with prospects. The performance of this strategy can support lead qualification while demonstrating a keen understanding of buyer needs and providing prospects with value.

Therefore, making landing pages to suit the unique needs of your prospective buyers is a powerful strategy for improving the function of your website—as well as generating qualified leads and demand.

#4 Leverage social proof

A crucial element of adding credibility to the core messaging of your website is showcasing social proof. This can include a combination of reviews, either directly made on your website, or from review platforms you are using (such as [G2](#) or [TrustRadius](#)), in combination with more detailed case studies.

Implement tracking on reviews, and add lead contact forms to case studies to further qualify the buyer intent of B2B leads. However, it is important to note that gating case studies should only be leveraged if there is depth to the content and a detailed overview of the strategies and results achieved.

Finally, social proof can also be supported by applying for well-recognized awards in your industry. Strategize campaigns and content projects that align with your award objectives to streamline the resources necessary for completing multiple applications.

6 Testing and gathering feedback



Regularly testing the performance of strategies and fielding feedback is essential for consistently generating qualified leads. **Below are a range of techniques for both initiatives:**

Testing



A/B testing

This involves launching two slightly different versions of the same asset, campaign, or strategy to compare the performance of both. Doing so can help to broaden testing to identify top-performing messaging or features.

[Learn more](#) →



Lead scoring models

A fundamental element of B2B lead qualification, lead scoring models should be routinely tested to assess their accuracy. Evaluate lead intelligence and buyer behavior data to draw correlations that can inform optimizations to your model.



Targeted messaging

Drive optimizations by routinely testing different messaging for specific target audiences, or even target accounts (in the case of ABM). This will allow you to narrow down the messaging that resonates with prospects the most.



Offer testing

An important step in the buyer's journey is the offer that prospects receive from sales teams. Action offer testing to determine the most effective strategies for encouraging conversions and sales opportunities.

Note: All of these techniques should be developed in collaboration with sales teams to aid accuracy.

Feedback



Incentivized surveys

Create outreach campaigns with surveys that reward clients (or prospects) for sharing their feedback. Be sure to keep these short and emphasize how responses will be utilized to make meaningful optimizations.

[Learn more](#) →



Client committees

Select clients that have partnered with your brand for an extended period to join a committee. This is essentially a regular meeting where clients can share feedback on the organization's buyer experience and solutions.



Communities

Creating an online community where clients and prospects can interact is ideal for sourcing direct feedback. It is important to consider that this strategy often takes a while to establish and requires maintenance.



Post-campaign feedback

Include regular opportunities for clients to share feedback, both during campaigns and after. If clients would prefer to keep feedback anonymous, client success teams can share questionnaires for them to fill in offline.

Note: Direct client feedback can be incredibly valuable. Any insights gained can help contribute to creating a better experience and support lead qualification, as well as demand generation. Be sure to combine these findings with any feedback sales teams receive when interacting with prospective buyers.



Key takeaways



As the needs and preferences of your target market continue to evolve over time, maintaining lead qualification and B2B demand generation requires consistent evaluation and optimization. While it is a complex process, ensuring qualified lead generation can be facilitated by following the steps outlined in this guide.

- Anchor your lead qualification and demand generation strategies with a firm understanding of your target market and the buyer segments within
- Map out a buyer's journey that leverages a diverse channel mix and is fueled by a content marketing strategy aligned with the interests of your prospective buyers
- Invest in the optimization of your website to improve its performance and implement testing along with collecting feedback to inform your strategies
- Build your demand generation and lead qualification strategies with the input of both your sales and marketing teams to ensure seamless integration and alignment

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