

Leads, and when to drop 'em

 By [Daryn Smith](#)

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One of the primary responsibilities of a business-to-business marketer is to generate leads; some do this through focused lead generation programs primarily through digital channels, while others take a more subtle approach through brand related marketing.

In South Africa, most marketing teams go through a huge effort to generate a lead, and then they immediately hand it over to their sales team. That lead could have been someone just doing initial research on a purchase they plan to make, they could have just been entering your competition or maybe they were a qualified buyer.

Sales people cannot waste their time though on unqualified leads, their income is dependent on making sales. Over time, they realise that there are more effective methods of generating business than responding to leads generated by marketing, and they stop responding.

This could have a huge negative impact on the brand. Not only will their qualified buyers in the assortment of leads that marketing generates be left with negative brand impressions due to receiving no response, but it will become increasingly difficult to justify return on the investment your company makes on marketing - and you could face budget cuts.

Nurture them

So, by handing over a lead immediately to your sales team, are you in essence giving up on all your hard work to this point? I would think that this is exactly what you are doing, but there is a solution, and it's called "lead nurturing".

Lead nurturing is the process whereby you guide a lead down the path to purchase using strategic and timeous communications. This either qualifies the lead to a point whereby you can hand it to your sales team or it confirms the lead is not qualified and can just be moved to your quarterly newsletter program, for example.

In developed markets, such as the US, lead nurturing is being adopted at a rapid pace, possibly this is because they have been hit worse by the global recession and need to get a maximum return from the small marketing budgets that remain. This adoption is fuelling other new marketing tactics such as "content marketing" as it is content that is used to generate leads and then nurture them further.

Not only is lead nurturing effective for B2B brands, but consumer-focused brands are also using it effectively, whether it be in the automotive, household appliances or even books and music sales. Shoppers who turn to their mobile devices while shopping can easily be added to a rapid lead nurturing program that results in a sale.

As South African marketing teams begin planning 2013 strategies, they need to ensure they are not going to give up on leads prematurely - and they *can* avoid this by adopting practices such as lead nurturing.

ABOUT DARYN SMITH

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