Lead Nurturing: Moving Your Company from "Average" to "Good"

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Over four years ago, when Laura Ramos was part of Forrester's superstar B2B marketing analyst group, she wrote:

"B2B marketers can no longer afford to emphasize lead volume over lead quality. This practice reduces sales efficiency, increases costs, and fuels the gap between sales and marketing."

I could not agree more with Laura. At Forrester, she helped develop a maturity model that outlined four levels of evolution that B2B marketers attain in moving from average to market leading.

After numerous marketing automation projects, I adapted the maturity model to three levels that I labeled **average, good** and **best.** In this article, we will look at the profile of the "average" marketing organization and the steps they need to follow to become "good."

Start With an Honest Assessment

Let's be honest here. Moving from a culture focused on quantity to one that practices the tenants of quality and lead management is not something that happens overnight or even in a year. So what do B2B marketers do in our instant gratification business culture, where CEOs and sales organizations want marketing programs to produce results in weeks and months, not quarters and years?

It starts with B2B marketers making an honest assessment of how they capture, qualify, nurture and route leads. Most companies I work with are at best average in their lead management processes.

What Does it Mean to be "Average" at Lead Management?

Average B2B marketing organizations are almost exclusively focused on lead quantity. As a result they have a "one and done" mindset when it comes to lead generation campaigns and events. No sooner are they done with an event or email blast, than they are on to the next. B2B marketers have no standard lead management processes defined as they pass basically raw leads to sales.

According to Marketing Sherpa, 8 out of 10 B2B marketers pass raw leads to sales with no further qualification. All of these "hand-raisers" who are not sales-ready (70-80%) are ignored and never touched again by sales or marketing.

Additional data from B2B tech product companies (as reported by many B2B marketing authorities over the past few years), supports the need for better lead management:

- Only 3-5% of new lead inquiries are "sales-ready."
- 70-80% of the other inquiries are latent demand that will buy within 2 years, BUT are not called on by sales.
- 87 out of 100 deals are left behind by sales.
- It takes 7 to 9 proactive communications to gain a B2B decision-maker's attention.
- Best-in-class sales and marketing teams generate 4x closed deals than average teams from the same pool of leads.

What Should You Focus on to Become "Good" at Lead Management?

The following steps should be implemented and will take anywhere from 6 to 12 months to put in place and perfect:

- Develop a common lead quality definition that is agreed to by sales. Add qualification questions to web site registration pages, telesales scripts, email campaigns and any other process that interacts with new and returning prospect visitors.
- Close the loop between marketing and sales to ensure efficient lead handoff processes and eliminate bottlenecks. Establish initial lead scoring and routing rules for determining sales-ready leads.
- Develop automated lead nurturing programs with multiple themes tied to the problem.
- Capture and publish metrics that show the impact of the lead nurturing programs of sales success and sales pipeline development.
- Develop permission-based practices focused on data hygiene that keep contact information up-to-date.
- Implement one of the various Marketing Automation applications (from Eloqua, Marketo, Silverpop and others) to successfully enable these practices.

Listen to this **podcast** to hear more about the **thought leadership approach** to lead nurturing and the results that were achieved for one of Henry Bruce's clients.

About Henry Bruce

Henry Bruce is the President and founder of the **Rock Annand Group**, a client acquisition strategy consulting firm focused on the B2B software industry. Henry is a passionate B2B sales and marketing strategist and blogger who brings over 30 years of operational software experience to his engagements. As both a services provider and in-house marketing executive, he has played a transformative role in driving marketing and sales programs that achieve the desired results and create alignment and synergy between sales and marketing operations.

You can learn more about Henry by connecting on **LinkedIn**, following on **Twitter** or the **FOCUS** business community. Or you can **Contact** him directly via email or call him at *203-870-9076* to find out how to move your company's performance from "average" to "best".

About The Rock Annand

The Rock Annand Group is a client acquisition strategy consulting firm focused on the B2B software industry. Software technology clients hire The Rock Annand Group when they're looking for a go-to-market program with a quick return on investment in less than 90 days or for someone to turn around the entire marketing program on an interim or long-term basis. Check out the **company website** to learn more.