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Seven components of smarter demand generation.

Improve the commercial impact of demand generation through better convergence of technology and people.

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Multi-faceted. Episodic. Lengthy.

Today, the B2B demand marketing ecosystem is all these things and more. There can be a tendency for firms to seek to address the complexity with over-engineered marketing automation programs. They involve too many nurture streams and content that has little chance of delivering ROI based on market size and average order value.

It's no surprise then, that demand generation efforts can be characterised by a small pipeline, missed targets and a failure to respond to the needs of buyers.

But it doesn't have to be this way. This paper outlines practical ways to instigate smarter demand generation. It shows how you can improve customer interactions and experiences via careful planning, crafting and delivery.

What is **smarter demand generation?**

Before we address this question, perhaps we should define demand generation. For us, it is everything involved in creating, managing and converting demand for a company's products, services or solutions.

Activity generally follows **three stages:**

- Planning
- Creating demand
- Managing and converting demand

Smarter demand generation enhances each of these stages by maximising the interplay of people and technology.

At the planning stage, human insight and expertise draws on data analytics for the creation and operationalisation of personas. Next, it shapes the development and substance of programs which are augmented and delivered via sophisticated technologies. Finally, individuals at the receiving end of smarter demand generation are served with optimised, highly personalised communications. Content is relevant to their needs at that precise moment, and it is delivered via the most appropriate platform. The upshot is finely-tuned buyer engagement and a more robust pipeline.

If this sounds a world away from what's happening in your organisation, you're not alone. Smarter demand generation requires a deeply analytical and intelligent approach expertly integrated with technical capabilities. But every journey begins with a single step. Marketers who set their sights on smarter demand generation can quickly realise benefits at a micro level that can later be replicated at a larger scale.

We've developed a 'SMARTER' framework to help marketers take their existing demand generation to the next level.

How to get **SMARTER**

Addressing the following components of smarter demand generation can amplify results and deliver impressive ROI.

Social media

Building bridges between marketing and sales is a longstanding goal for many B2B brands. Social media can provide a shared territory where the two departments can collaborate in a meaningful manner. Empowering sales teams with robust social tools and frameworks can pave the way for a steady pipeline of inbound social leads.

At best-in-class companies, 21 percent of leads originate in social media, and they contribute 15 percent of direct sales revenue. Social is a key component of smarter demand generation.

Micro-targeting

Broad brush segmentation will result in a brush off from buyers. You need to really understand what makes them tick so you can drive a positive relationship with your brand.

B2B marketers are beginning to take the leap from personalisation to individualisation. This approach uses micro-targeting to enhance the buyer experience with relevant, precisely tailored interactions. It integrates data, tactics, people and technology to achieve a higher level of resonance.

Actionable

According to Kapost/Content Marketeer, 65 percent of sales reps complain that they can't find content to send to prospects. Progressing leads – whether in an automated or a sales follow up communication – requires 'next best action' planning.

Smarter demand generation moves a lead through the sales process with planned calls to action drawing on mapped content to maximise conversion. Content should be catalogued and shared internally to ensure all stakeholders can find what they need quickly and easily. Good old fashioned sales guides can play an important role here – get smart about organising content and empowering sales people.

Relevance

CEB Global claims that the average B2B decision-making group includes 5.4 buyers. So how can you create customer experiences that are relevant to each buyer and result in conversion?

A good starting point is to create benefit-led messaging and content that talks to persona-specific pain points. Take the time to build robust personas and develop them on an ongoing basis. They should continually evolve and form a reference point throughout the content creation process. This ensures assets are finely tuned to address both enduring and emerging needs. When content is relevant and of-the-moment, it helps to build advocacy and loyalty amongst buyers and prospects.

Technological

If you are in any doubt about the rise of technology in marketing, consider this: there has been a 1,767% increase in marketing technologies in the past four years. Such proliferation of sophisticated tools can be overwhelming, so it's vital to keep the end-goal in your sights.

Try simplifying the tech stack by selecting partners that are most fit for purpose. It's important to be realistic about what can be targeted, enhanced and captured to create a single customer view. And any technologies deployed in support of demand generation should be firmly geared towards enhancing the buyer experience.

Experience

Product differentiation has been usurped by customer experience as the battleground for organisations wanting to achieve standout. According to Gartner for Marketing Leaders, marketers are under pressure to 'create exceptional branded moments at every customer touchpoint'. With linear buyer journeys morphing into an episodic, multi-interaction buyer ecosystem, every customer interaction is crucial.

Smarter demand generation is fully aligned with customer experience management. It involves managing and guiding buyers through every touchpoint of their journey. Ideally, this should involve a 50/50 split between human and digital support. Important factors to consider include individualisation, tone of action, channel, responsiveness, relevance and perception.

ROI

Maximising return on investment remains the top priority – and a major challenge – for all marketers. At Harte Hanks, we typically see ROI ratios between 35:1 and 75:1 for best-in-class brands who integrate data, technology, people and tactics intelligently to deliver smarter demand generation. To put that in context, a 2015 study by Sirius Decisions indicated that average ROI in Europe is 18:1 (based on euro return for euro spent).

The B2B demand marketing ecosystem is inherently complex. Tackling this complexity requires clarity of vision, fleetness of foot and intelligence. Each component of the smarter demand generation framework delivers incremental improvements in ROI. The secret is finding effective ways to achieve alignment between marketers, salespeople and systems.

A springboard **for success**

Are you ready to embrace the seven components of smarter demand generation? Grouping activities into three distinct but interconnected areas can provide a springboard for success.

Discover

The first step is to understand your current situation. That might involve defining your audience, developing more comprehensive personas, augmenting data and establishing the most effective approach to meet your goals. It can be beneficial to conduct a high level demand marketing audit which culminates in:

- a summary of the existing situation
- a gap analysis against best practice demand generation
- top line recommendations for change
- a roadmap of prioritised and sequenced activities and investments to make the recommended changes.

Create

Once the foundations are in place, marketing activity, assets and models can be developed as the basis for delivering smarter demand generation.

Integration is an overused term, and often focuses on connecting systems or tactics. But it can be much more than that. It is about how the four key dimensions – data, tactics, people, technology – are plugged together to create meaningful interactions. A truly integrative approach leverages insight to improve targeting, messaging and creative. It ensures multiple resources across marketing, sales, agencies, service providers and customer service work cohesively and responsively, drawing on a unified view of data, interactions and systems.

Act

Smarter demand generation optimises and enhances use of marketing technology to facilitate one-to-one conversations across an integrated set of channels and touchpoints. It's important to ensure digital and human interactions don't operate in isolation. Digital is the platform from which to plan, create and deliver many interactions with human input built in. Think of live chat, responsive one-to-one emails or social conversations: digital interactions delivered by humans. A central feature of smarter demand generation is the convergence of people and technology.



Contact us today
to discuss how we can make your demand generation smarter
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