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Leads That Convert: Why AI Demands a Smarter Marketing Infrastructure

Convertr™ B2B MARKETING

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Future Proofing Lead Management

Introduction: A Shift To Quality Lead Management



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Lead management is no easy feat especially in 2025. As the market evolves, marketing has had to swiftly adapt. In today's era of self-serving buyers and complex decision-making groups, marketing teams have been forced to adjust. What once relied on a straightforward buying journey now demands processes that take into account independent research and personalized expectations.

We also recognize that the B2B industry itself has become an increasingly tough market due to budget constraints and the pressure for marketing to deliver. With both of these factors in play, high-value leads that convert are more essential than ever. Quality leads often means less wasted spend, greater efficiency, and tighter alignment across the business.

And all these changes have only accelerated the adoption of AI. Whether that means incorporating AI into your workflows to make operations more efficient and/or freeing up time to focus on high-value efforts.

In this report, we will be digging into the current state of lead management and workflows, and the potential impact that AI has on it. When you're done reading this report, we hope you understand the current challenges with lead management and the solutions that can be used to tackle them effectively. Plus, we interviewed four senior marketing leaders to showcase their view on the market, as well as tangible tips and takeaways to give you insight into what some industry leaders are currently experiencing.

B2B MARKETING

Foreword
by Emma Bowkett, *CEO*, **Convertr**



Emma Bowkett
CEO
Convertr

In today's high-stakes B2B environment, marketing teams are under pressure to do more with less, and lead management has never been more complex. From self-directed buyers to disconnected tech stacks and rising expectations around AI, the path from inquiry to revenue is anything but linear. Yet one truth remains: quality leads drive better outcomes. Without clean, connected, and context-rich data behind them, even the best campaigns fall short.

This report from B2B Marketing spotlights the core challenges behind lead conversion today, from fragmented systems and handoff gaps to the costly impact of bad data. It also offers tangible advice from senior marketing leaders on how to adapt: building stronger sales alignment, refining scoring methodologies, and embracing AI to enhance (not replace) human strategy.

At Convertr, we see this every day. Poor data is no longer just a marketing inefficiency, it's a business risk. That's why we're focused on helping enterprise teams create smarter, AI-ready marketing infrastructure by delivering validated, enriched, and compliant leads that convert. Because the best strategies are only as strong as the data they're built on.

If you're reconsidering your lead management approach, this report is a must-read.

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From Volume to Precision:
Why Quality Over Quantity Matters

Now more than ever, the quality of a lead is far superior to the quantity of leads coming in.



Megan Cabrera, *VP Marketing Operations*, **Sophos** said that in the past, her company would focus primarily on driving a high volume of MQLs rather than conversion to pipeline or revenue. When the organization made the pivot to prioritizing quality leads and optimizing their lead scoring methodology, they noticed a decline in lead volume by over 50%. While there was initial resistance internally, the company eventually started to reallocate budget based on conversions and pipeline performance instead of MQL volume, and they saw a much higher success rate when the focus shifted from quantity to quality.

Drawing from another example, Vicky McNamara, *VP of Marketing, UK&I*, **Workday** agreed that low conversion rates could stem from channels that generate high lead volumes with poor quality leads or an excessive volume of leads. And when this influx happens, this can lead to sales development (SD) organizations disqualifying leads prematurely. We talk more about this challenge on page 9.



Vicky said: "***There is always the question of what the data is telling us and then having the curiosity to not make quick decisions on that. You need to be learning and adapting so that we are ensuring that our SD organization who creates the pipeline are set up for success. So we're always looking at quality."***

And if we take a step back and look at success through a **commercial marketing** perspective, your C-suite is probably not going to be impressed with the quantity of leads. What they're looking for is revenue-focused metrics to prove marketing ROI.

Setting the Scene:
AI's Growing Role in Lead Management

So when success depends significantly more on the quality of a lead rather than the quantity, AI comes onto the scene through several aspects. From lead scoring and targeting to data solutions, content generation and more, AI can be used to leverage tasks that humans alone can't manage at scale. In addition, AI agents can also deliver real-time insights that help optimize campaigns and, in turn, increase ROI. And when we spoke with our marketing leaders, it turns out that they're already embedding AI into their processes.

For example, Megan said her current approach to lead management includes a mix of inbound and outbound strategies like using machine learning in lead scoring, targeted outbound outreach and AI-enabled chatbot routing. The company has also started to ungate some of their marketing assets while monitoring the types of content that LLMs (large language models) like to consume (e.g., listicles, blogs).



Megan explained: *"Our whole strategy is to give as much information as possible to the user upfront. So that has meant ungating most of our high value content and putting it in HTML on the site so that AI bots can crawl that information. We get people coming in through the chat, demos, quote request forms and free trial forms. So that's how we look to pull people in from an inbound perspective."*

Companies shift from lead volume to lead quality focus ▸ **This quality requires deeper insights and efficiency** ▸ **There is a limit on manual/human processes** ▸ **AI adoption can help streamline these processes**

In addition to this strategy, other marketing leaders have looked at how they're approaching different tech vendors.



Tommy Little, *Head of Marketing Operations*, **Benifex** explained how Benifex is transitioning from static lead scoring rules in some tools to exploring alternatives that offer more unique features, from predictive scoring to pipeline scores. This example emphasizes the shift towards more advanced vendors within the business, some of which can automate practices that might have taken sales and marketing hours to complete.



Emma Chatwin, *VP Marketing, Europe*, **Fujitsu** said the organization has a comprehensive martech stack and they're currently running several AI pilots. With an approach that is 'evolving' rather than being fully 'evolved', Emma pointed out that they're in a low-volume environment and can afford to take their time in evaluating AI tooling.

Clearly, AI has made its stamp in various ways and to different degrees. Whether that be creating more precise targeting for ICPs, using a more dynamic lead scoring system, or using AI-powered predictive analytic tools for intent signals, the introduction of AI has been a game changer.



The Challenge:
Poor Data and Fragmented Infrastructure

4.1
The Cost of Bad Data

Now that we have established lead management practices and its link to AI, let's reflect on some challenges that continue to plague marketing teams despite automation and new processes in place.

One clear challenge is bad data. Organizations can have superb CRMs and automation tools embedded into their systems, but it won't fix anything if they have poor data. According to Gartner's estimates, bad data costs companies an average of $15 million annually.

And according to a report with Dun & Bradstreet, an average client database has 18% duplicates and 7% out of business contacts. In the same report, Paul Fakley, Executive Director of Engagement, British Safety Council said: *"If we're sending marketing to 100,000 people, and 50% of those businesses don't exist anymore or we've got the wrong contact details, it's wasted time and money, and the results are misleading."*

Megan mentioned that these types of data gaps can often occur at the handoff to sales due to differing territory management or third party data systems. She explained: *"I'd say we can fill the data gaps pretty sufficiently. Our problem is in that handoff to sales because sales use a different territory management system. They use a different third-party data provider to fill in their account information, and they only update those territories once a year."*

So not only does there need to be clearer communication between the two teams, but they need to be utilizing the same data set if possible. In a survey with The Think Tank and Censuswide on GTM strategies, a massive eight in 10 respondents reported friction between sales and marketing around GTM execution. And a couple of the main reasons? According to the report, marketing is not getting the feedback from sales teams on lead quality or customer insights. The other reason? Not having integrated technology stacks.

4.2

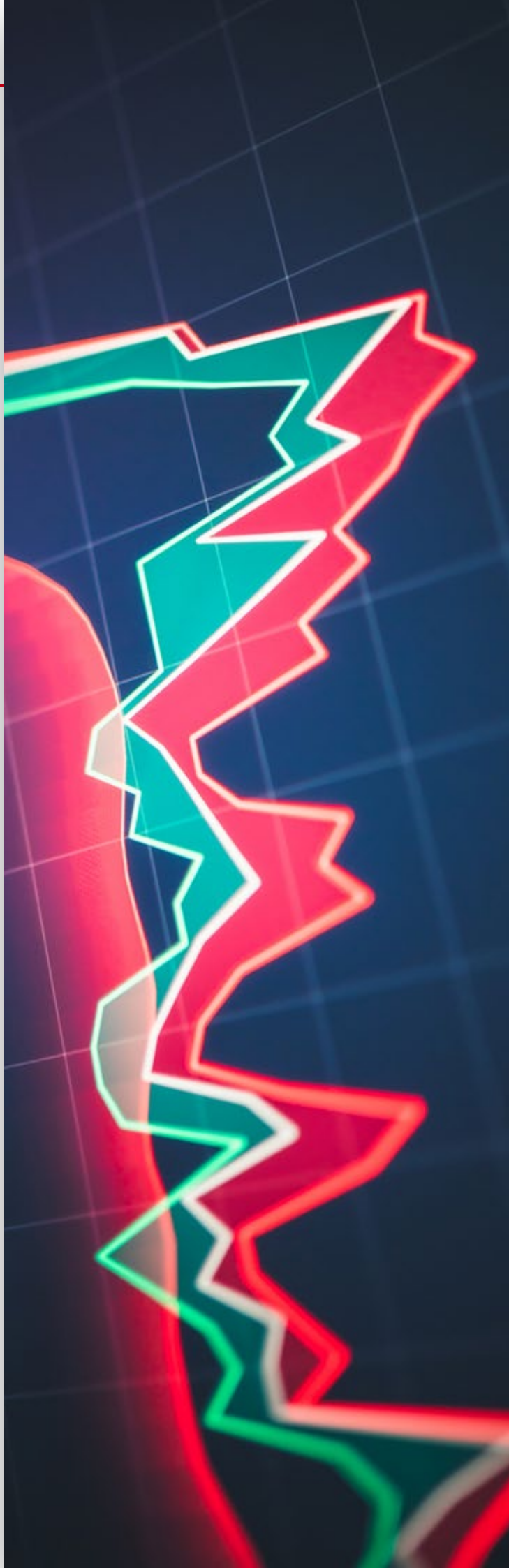
Another Challenge? Nurturing Leads That Require More Insights

While bad data can lead to starting off on the wrong foot, lack of insights can also ultimately lead an organization down the wrong path. After all, what happens when you simply don't have enough information from the jump?

When managing a whole ecosystem of channels and partners, particularly third party content sites, untargeted lead dumps can present a considerable challenge as leads often go to waste due to the inability for sales to manage the influx. This lack of structure can be a critical error between marketing and sales. This overload can result in leads going cold quickly, wasted spend and leads not being nurtured properly.

To help sales, it's crucial to provide better buyer engagement insights and nurture leads for an appropriate amount of time. Leads often enter the queue as single points of action without any knowledge or prior engagements. As the marketing landscape has shifted to more self-directed buying behaviors, the traditional funnel is a lot less linear.

In further understanding what is considered quality, Vicky recommends making decisions based on context. For instance, just because a lead comes in from content syndication doesn't mean it should be written off. There's simply not enough information yet, so these types of leads need to be nurtured first to ensure optimal resource allocation and potential ROI. This was just one of many solutions our leaders gave us when it came to common lead generation pain points.



Solutions from the Field:
How Marketing Leaders Are Responding

Found Vicky's advice helpful? To expand further on lead management solutions, we highlight four tried and tested recommendations backed by our marketing leaders in the following section.

5.1
Perfect Your Processes

We discussed the main challenges in today's climate, mainly being bad data and poor insights - both of which contribute towards misalignment between marketing and sales. Our advice?

Start generating a feedback loop between marketing and sales. Help understand which activities work on both sides and then replicate that. Working in silos will continue to be a pain point unless you build that bridge with sales. Megan said that Sophos has adapted a similar approach in an effort to improve lead quality. For instance, they were able to identify low conversion rates on content syndication in a specific region because of that feedback loop. And as a result, marketing was able to clock on to this issue at a much earlier stage and pivot their money away from those efforts.

Megan said: *"We started to see those conversion rates go up as a result of that feedback loop. It's getting the marketers to think differently about the activities that they're doing on the onset that I think really helps drive quality."*

Tommy agreed with this sentiment and mentioned that in a previous role, he hadn't built the bridge with sales when he first joined and because of that, there were a few fires to put out off the bat. However, at Benifex, he met with sales straight away to understand their pain points and processes, which made a huge difference in connectivity.

Tommy said: *"Start with the processes. New tools won't fix bad data. I would do an audit to have a look at how the systems are speaking to each other and what the overall quality of the different data sources are."*

Finally, Vicky noted that at one point, the marketing and sales teams were using different dashboards and weren't reporting the same numbers at her company. She explained: *"I think the biggest challenge is having a joint working cadence with the SD organization. We changed our success metrics from SLAs to high-value actions because that just drives differently. Beforehand, we were experiencing challenges because we didn't have the right metrics in place."*

5.2 Key Tip: Stay Aligned Where it Matters

While it might be good to build that bridge with sales, it's important to know how much detail to provide because they have their own sales processes in place.

Over at Fujitsu, the company utilizes a single CRM system across sales and marketing, based on Salesforce, which helps drive consistent reporting, measurement, and tracking across the business. Emma stressed that data quality and hygiene are collective responsibilities, which are ultimately two huge pain points both teams have addressed. It's worth noting that because Fujitsu is using the same system across teams, it isn't nearly as imperative to over communicate but to harness a certain amount of trust between each other instead.

Emma said: *"The reality on the ground is that our sales don't need to know everything about how we score or the mechanics of that process. That's our role to understand what makes a lead qualified. They just need to know that level of governance and structure, so that when we do a handoff, they can trust that that lead has been sufficiently qualified. That's why that relationship between sales is so important."*

And if your organization operates at a larger scale? Work even closer together. In the same Think Tank report we referenced earlier, we interviewed our Propolis GTM Expert, David van Schaick and he said: *"Sadly, the larger the company, the more likely it is to report friction between sales and marketing teams. Occasional disagreements are part of the cut and thrust of working life, but when conflict becomes the norm, you have a problem that must be addressed if your GTM strategy is to flourish."*

The bottom line? As much as we stress about marketing and sales alignment, organizations will have different needs depending on size and structure. Those using different systems will most likely need to work a bit closer together and those using the same systems might not have the same urgency to get close to sales.



5.3

Strategy First, Technology Second

In addition to her advice on sales and marketing alignment, Emma stressed the importance of strategy over everything else.

Emma advised: *"Start with the strategy. Don't think bottom up, don't think about systems and processes first. Think strategically and then think about it from a top down perspective so you're clear on what you're trying to achieve. And then design everything with that in mind."*

Megan agreed with this and advised marketing and revenue operation leaders to map out the entire journey end-to-end. Then from there, you can start considering lower-cost alternatives to traditional tools. Another tip Megan gave was to use AI to enhance your existing strategy.

Megan said: *"I would encourage teams to start getting creative. One of the things that has been helpful is using Chat GPT as a thought partner to help work through 'if I have an end-to-end scenario, what does my GTM architecture look like? I'll feed it the tools we're using but I'll ask what other tools can be subbed in for this. And I'll double-check across different models. It's a really constructive exercise to find out what tooling gaps are out there."*

So before you consider the latest technology, start with strategy, feed it to an AI tool, and see what the results suggest.

5.4

… And Then Use AI to Enhance Both Strategy AND Process

Now that we've touched on the challenges and solutions, let's get back to the AI of it all.

In terms of future plans to optimize teams around AI, Megan said in addition to what they've already automated, they're continuing to think about AI as an enhancement and not a replacement to actual people: *"We're really leveraging AI as a teammate. It's a very people centric approach. We're not trying to replace roles, but rather to replace the repetitive parts of people's roles that are not adding value to our marketing department."*

Sophos is augmenting their workforce with AI teammates, including over 50 active custom GPTs within their marketing environment. These AI teammates handle repetitive tasks, such as identifying and fixing JSON errors between Eloqua and Salesforce, re-mining data, and passing it back through.

In addition, Tommy said: *"The direction of travel's pretty clear. We've already onboarded trusted tools using their current functionality, and I think we need to move onto the front foot with it a bit more, so I'm looking to develop a bit of framework identifying use cases on a matrix of difficulty and impact. So if you've got a use case which is high impact and low difficulty, that's a quick win. [For example], we've already got Chat GPT onboarded for something like content creation."*

However, he pointed out that if something is high difficulty and high impact, those might need to consider the tools they've already onboarded. And failing that, you might have to determine what the ROI is on an external solution.

As we can see, marketing leaders are already using AI with success tied to seamless processes and strategy more than the technology itself.

Conclusion:
Future Proofing Lead Management



Vicky concluded: *"AI gives you the ability to be more insightful on the profiling of the prospect. AI enables us to do better lead scoring. AI helps us to do better with attribution modelling of the marketing and sales on the journey to give the step. AI is just building on what we already have to give us more insight and better analysis."*

So based on our conversations with marketing leaders, what are some practical takeaways?

1. **Get the Foundation Right First:** Quality leads, clean data and strong alignment are the ultimate enablers for growth. Without those in place, no amount of systems or AI can deliver meaningful and effective results.
2. **Use AI as an Enabler, Not a Replacement:** That being said, AI can improve lead scoring, data hygiene, personalization and much more, but only when it's executed on top of a solid strategy. View AI as a teammate that can enhance human capability, not substitute it.
3. **Think Strategically, And Then Experiment Boldly:** Organizations that start with clear goals and end-to-end customer journeys and then use AI strategically and creatively in specific use cases will be positioned to future proof their lead management.

In conclusion, quality leads and strong sales/marketing alignment are the true foundations of B2B growth. While AI can enhance workflows and efficiency, it cannot compensate for poor data, weak processes, or a lack of strategy.

About Convertr

Convertr is the enterprise data integrity layer that ensures clean, compliant, and complete data flows across systems and teams to support AI-readiness. Global leaders like Microsoft, Oracle, Amazon, Stripe, and HP use Convertr to improve data quality, accelerate operations, and gain full transparency across their lead and data supply chains. By automating complex workflows and standardizing data at scale, Convertr helps organisations drive better decisions, reduce risk, and unlock the full value of their data. The best convert with Convertr.



About B2B Marketing

B2B MARKETING AWARDS
FROM B2B MARKETING

B2B Marketing is the world-renowned provider of insight, professional development, events and training for marketers and leaders in B2B.

Since our launch in 2004, we've amassed the largest global network of B2B marketers, giving us the unique ability to place your brand in the centre of the B2B buzz.

At the core of our business are the 85,000+ members of our website worldwide and five of the biggest and most influential annual events in the B2B calendar, alongside a host of webinars, podcasts, roundtables and training.

What can we do for you?

Our dedicated marketing and media solutions team can help you:

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Create compelling stories around your brand with headline-grabbing research and analysis through our reports.

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