emedia

An emedia guide to:

Lead Follow-up

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What's inside?

How to identify the leads worth pursuing immediately
Some top-tips to creating an effective follow-up plan
The importance of personalisation
How to find your way to Conversion Town via first base
The way to a warmer, willing prospect

An emedia guide to:

Lead Follow-up

We can provide you with leads, but it's up to you what you do with them…

With the best will in the world, there's not a single lead generation company that can provide you with a sales-ready lead that just needs a call to convert. If they say they can, run for the hills, because they're talking rubbish.

What companies like emedia can provide you with are people that have an interest in your product or market, which in turn can be gauged by asking a few pertinent questions when they register that interest in your whitepaper, collateral or asset.

It's likely, therefore, that they'll need some work before they'll convert, so getting the follow-up right is essential.

This guide provides tips on the 5 steps that anyone can take which, if followed, are guaranteed to improve your lead conversion rate and the efficiency of your campaigns.

1. Sift & Score
2. Make a follow-up plan
3. Personalise
4. Listen
5. Make the most of every prospect - Nurture

Sift & Score

Before we can kick-off this whole shebang, it's important that you take a moment to gather as much information as possible about your prospects and do some **scoring** - a basic process for doing this (in case you hadn't realised!) is on the right.

This saves time, because prospects get followed-up when they're ready to be, and you'll convert more, as sales will only get leads that have a better chance of converting, keeping them engaged with the list!

With emedia, depending on the type of campaign you've run with us, you may have already been given BANT leads, which will help with this process…

So what's a BANT lead?
It's a lead where the prospect has answered a number of qualifying questions which specifically address the prospects':

- Budget
- Authority
- Need
- Timeframe

Taking this information into account, along with basic qualifiers like company size, sector and geography; you should be able to quickly and effectively sift your pool of leads into the 3 groups (right) and get motoring with the business-end of your campaign.

A word of caution: the risks of qualifying questions
Running campaigns with a bucket load of BANT or qualifying questions may come at quite an expense (both figuratively and literally).

There will inevitably be a much higher wastage of leads, due to people not meeting your exact qualifying criteria, so you may only get the details of 5 out of every 100 people that responded to your campaign. Whilst these 5 may be who you want to speak to, who's to say that the 95 that aren't right now won't be in 6 months, or after nurturing?

Not only that, because your lead generation company will have to discard 95% of the leads that they generate from your campaign, they'll need to work much harder to fulfil it, so this will be reflected in the programme's cost.

Who's your ideal prospect? Consider:

- Job title and function
- Prospect's company
- Past relationship?
- What have they done/seen?
- What's their need/authority?

↓

Select **8+** key lead criteria questions and a range of scores for different responses

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Collate **all** information that you hold about the prospects

↓

Score and **band prospects**, depending on the results, into 3 basic groups:

1. Follow-up now
2. Nurture
3. Eliminate - use sparingly!

↓

Keep **close to sales**: refine and improve scoring method/criteria depending on results

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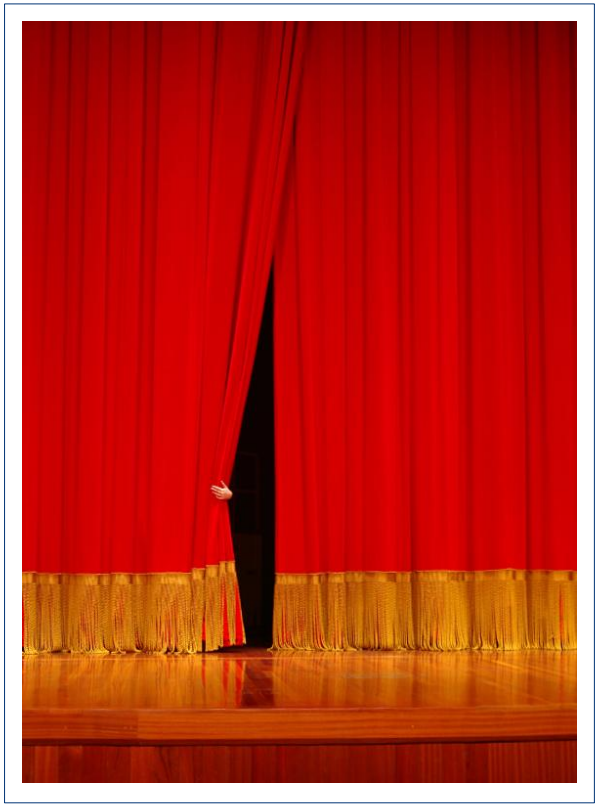
Make a follow-up plan

Sales and marketing, sitting in a tree…

Ok, that's a bit much, but it's important that sales know where these leads have come from; what generated them; why they're strong (or weak); and have an idea as to what they could use to push them down the sales funnel. As this is a symbiotic relationship, take the time to listen to what they have to say and quell their concerns - ideally, you'll have chatted about the campaign before it started, so none of this should be revelatory!

By putting sales in the picture and getting them engaged, you'll improve the chances of conversion and getting a better ROI for your campaign.

Proper preparation prevents poor performance
After the briefing, sales and marketing should draw-up a plan for follow-up, thereby ensuring that both sides know exactly what's expected of each other.



The timeline for following-up a lead can look very different depending on your product, the prospect and the need. A basic timeline, and one echoed by many lead generation and nurturing companies, could look a little like this:

- Day 0: They respond to your collateral/an emedia bulletin
- Days 1-2: Follow-up the response with a call
- Days 2-3: Send an email covering the points discussed and propose a way ahead
- Day 7: Auto-email with content that might be of interest
- Day 9: Call from a sales rep to check if they received the collateral/email and if it is of interest - arrange a time for a call or meeting before the end
- Day 10: Connect via social media, such as LinkedIn
- Days 14-21: Meet/call
- Days 16-23: Send a personalised sales proposal
- Day 24: Auto-email with testimonials/case studies
- Day 31: Negotiate and convert!

If things don't quite go to plan…
It's important that marketing are kept informed as to how each lead supplied is doing (but perhaps not on a case-by-case basis!).

This is not so that marketing (you) can lambast sales for their shoddy work, but so that any leads that fail to progress down the sales funnel are picked up by a lead nurturing programme. Ideally, this process should be automated and recorded in a CRM system.

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Personalise

Time is of the essence and a follow-up needs to be done asap, but it's important that you take the time to personalise. After scoring, you'll know a bit about the prospect and you should be able to outline the ways in which sales can personalise/tailor their responses during the sales briefing.

'Who is your daddy and what does he do?'
Get sales to take the time to find out a little bit about the business and deduce what their goals may be: check their website, look at their products/services and read their 'About us' section.

As marketers, we've all been on the end of a sales call when the person obviously hasn't even bothered to find out what you do; so reverse engineer it and think about what you would need in order to optimise sales follow-up.

What have they responded to?
Different collateral can demonstrate different interests, surreptitiously. For example:

Whitepapers & Guides

General pieces demonstrate a broad level of interest, so after a call to find out more, they'll need nurturing.

Those that address a specific problem could indicate that the prospect has it/are concerned - a way in.

Webinars/Videos

Are normally more targeted than whitepapers and require a longer attention-span, so prospects originating from them are more likely to be engaged with you, your solution, or their issues.

Product trials

They know they've a problem and that you have a cure, or they're new to what you do and want to see if it'll improve things for them - either way, they're bound to need some hand holding, so have good potential.

Case studies & Testimonials

These are very useful when a prospect knows that they have a problem, thinks that you could be the answer, but needs something to justify their spend. By definition, they're warm.

Tools & Widgets

It could be that they're just procrastinating with you game/test/survey, or that they are worried that they might have a problem that you could fix. Pick up the phone, give them a call and find out!

What have they said in any of the qualifying questions?
From the answers, it should be possible to deduce where they are in the sales cycle and how best to follow them up.

Supply sales with different collateral that will fulfil all prospects' immediate needs and which can be aligned to their position in the sales cycle. Also, ensure sales are able to outline the problems that the prospects could be facing and that they're able to demonstrate why your solution is by far and away better than your competitors'!

If your sales team are engaged, they should be able to draw a picture as to what the prospect's pain points are and sell more, effectively.

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Listen

First impressions count - a cliché… but it's true.

It's important that the prospect feels as if they are, or might, develop a working relationship with you (at the very least).

Feel their pain
You may already have an idea as to their pain-points, but take the time and let them explain why they exist and whether they know the first thing about how they can be solved. Some prospects mightn't even be able to verbalise the situation, so this is where you might be able to do a bit of handholding to help.

Only once the pain points have been established by the prospect can you begin to explain how your product can solve these issues - denial is powerful - but bear in mind that it's probably not appropriate to go for a home run on the first date.



Don't rush it, head for first base
Follow-up your initial chat with an email with extra collateral/information that could be useful to them (reinforcing your expertise) and before ending the call, ask when would be a good time to follow-up.

By establishing a follow-up time, you're getting commitment from your prospect to go to the next step where you can try a harder sell and begin to demonstrate your, no doubt, excellent solution.

At each stage of the decision-making cycle, funnel or whatever model is *de rigour*, it helps to have collateral up your sleeve that can assist your sale. Don't brazenly deploy it, but use it if it is going to have real value to your prospect (or their line manager who holds the purse strings).

Relate
At all stages of interaction with your prospect, the ability to listen and respond to their individual needs will put you ahead of the competition. Relating your product to their exact needs, responding with a customised sales proposal that directly mentions what they've said to you and how your solution can address those issues will put you firmly on the road to conversion town.

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Make the most of every prospect - Nurture

Too many companies are fatalistic about their leads - just because a prospect doesn't have a current need for your product, doesn't mean that they never will; so it's vital to have an effective, resourced and thought-out lead nurturing programme.

Invest in the future
A lead nurturing programme works a little like this…

- Sales send unready leads back to marketing;
- Marketing builds a relationship with these prospects; before
- Passing back to sales once they're engaged.



The goal is to educate your prospects using good collateral, warming them to the idea that your company offers the best options for addressing their business issues.

Good assets are essential to your programmes performance, as is the ability to identify how a prospect needs nurturing and then being able to do it.

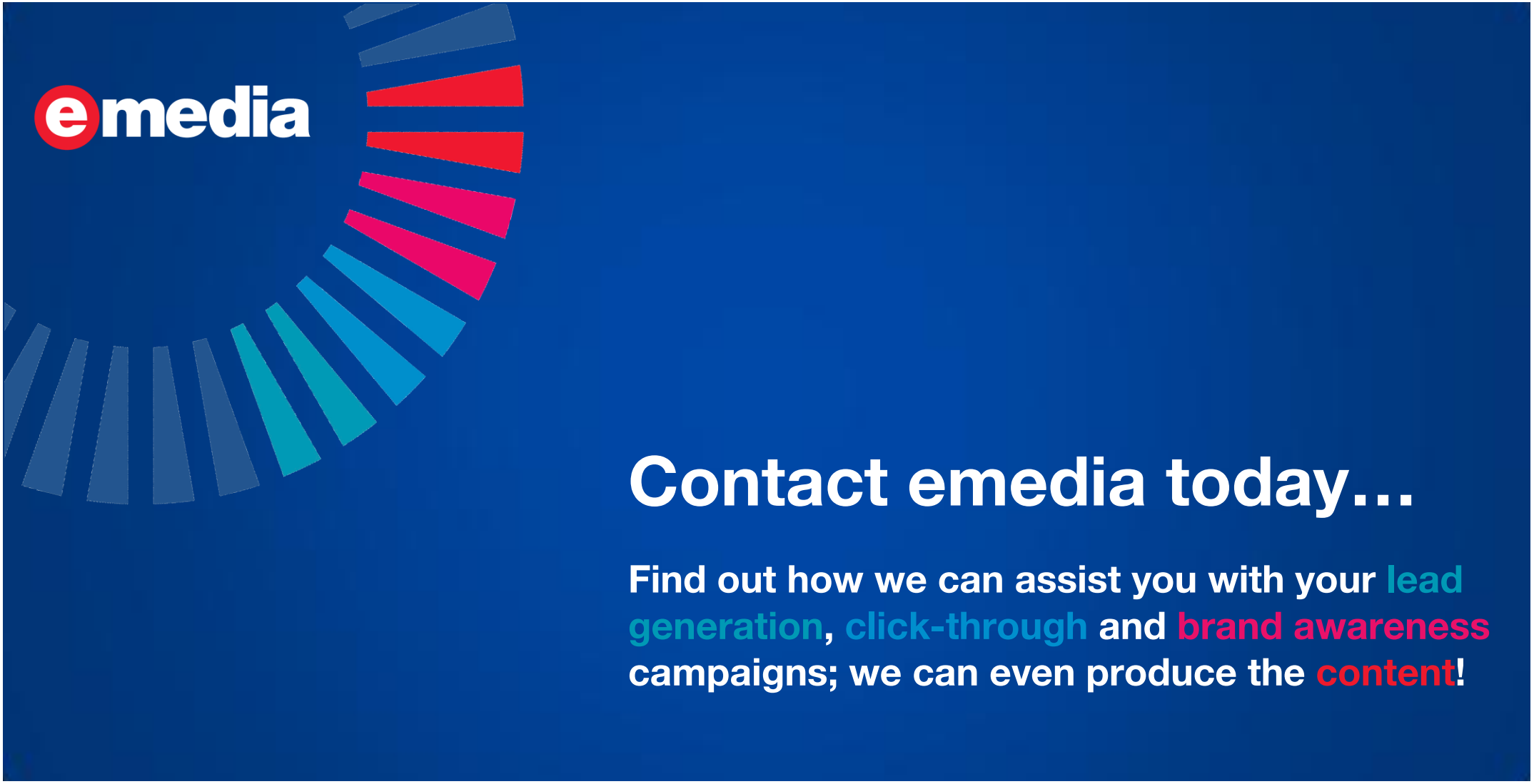
The best way of doing this is to design your CRM system with your sales cycle in mind and ensure it can flag a prospect when they're interacting with the programme and are ready for sales follow-up.

Build your pipeline - nurture everyone possible
People don't work in silos and modern selling is about account penetration.

By nurturing others from within the same organisation or team as your prospect, you'll build a deeper relationship and ensure that influencers know who you are and why you're great, so that when a purchasing decision needs to be made, you'll be front of mind.

A delayed return
Implement a lead nurturing programme and the return from your lead generation campaign could have longevity and an ROI that goes beyond what is immediately obvious. This is why 'lead source' is an important field in your CRM system and one that should often be revisited when a sale completes - make sure you get the credit for your work!

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