



THE STATE OF B2B Lead Scoring

HOW AN

ALIGNED SCORING STRATEGY = BIG PAYOFFS
FOR MARKETING & SALES

Introduction

Data-driven approaches to lead scoring are beginning to bear fruit, with the added benefit of better aligned marketing and sales teams.

B2B organizations such as Extol are seeing big payoffs when it comes to aligning marketing and sales teams on the behaviors that matter to score leads. This, in turn, can help companies better identify, target and accelerate prospective customers through the sales funnel.

Demand Gen Report's 2016 [Lead Scoring Survey Report](#) revealed that the biggest benefit to scoring that

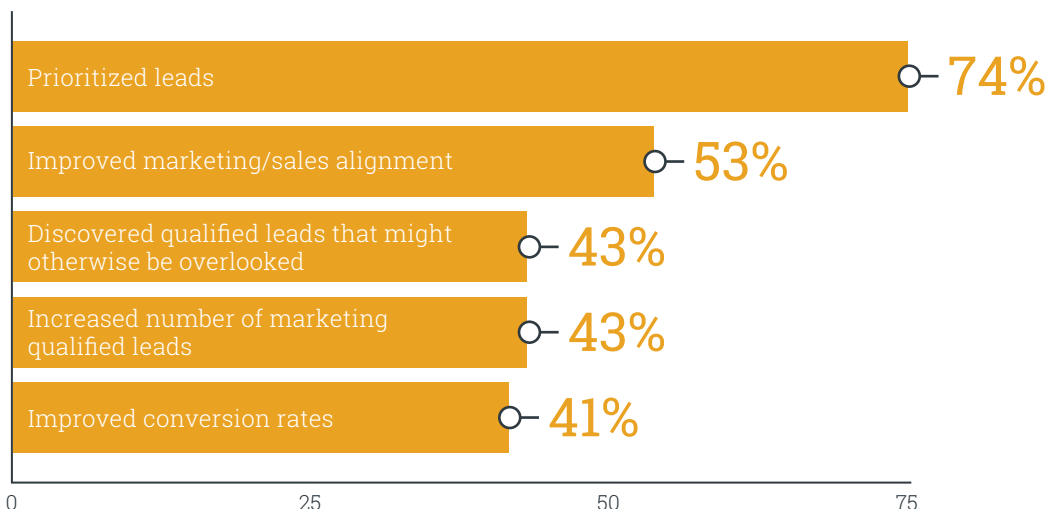
respondents cited was prioritized leads (74%), enabling a focus on targets with the highest potential to buy. Additionally, more than half (53%) of respondents said that they experienced improved marketing and sales alignment.

"Lead scoring is the lynchpin between [marketing and sales]," said Scott Benedetti, VP of Sales at [The Pedowitz Group](#). "Sales should trust the score, because they helped develop the scoring model. They should be so aligned that sales can predict if they are

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- Scott Benedetti,
The Pedowitz Group

What have you seen as the biggest payoffs you've realized from your lead scoring initiatives? (Pick top four)



Demand Gen Report's 2016 Lead Scoring Survey Report

going to be short one month compared with another, and be able to communicate to turn the dial down on lead scoring to fill prospect lists."

A fair number of marketers have found success with lead scoring initiatives, but there is still room for improvement. Close to half (49%) of survey respondents indicated that lead scoring initiatives within their organizations need improvement. Of the challenges that marketing teams face with lead scoring, shortage of data to accurately score leads (64%) is the biggest hurdle — followed closely by misleading buying signals (61%) and lack of insights into best practices on lead scoring frameworks (52%).

"The crux of the process is better alignment, not only within marketing and sales, but through the entire organization," said Justin Gray, Founder and CEO of [LeadMD](#). "The thing that has caused lead scoring to not work is the fact that we are not measuring the right things and getting the data we need. Most organizations are going back to the beginning and learning how to tap into what buyers are consuming, what their next actions are and trying to design the systems that are dependent on that information."

Read on to gain a glimpse at the current state of lead scoring within the B2B marketplace, as well as key trends, best practices and use cases that prove its worth.



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Lead Scoring Challenges:

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Demand Gen Report's
2016 Lead Scoring Survey Report

Leveraging Data To Prove The Worth Of Scoring Models

The gap between marketing and sales dates to the beginning of both departments within B2B companies — and B2B thought leaders agree that it remains an ongoing struggle.

“In some cases, you have companies that can’t get out of their own way,” said Matt Heinz, President of [Heinz Marketing](#). “Great lead scoring can be lost in the shuffle if there isn’t a tight sequence of process and messaging between marketing and sales.”

Industry experts agree there have been clear strides towards better alignment in many larger organizations. However, smaller companies have struggled to move away from a sales-focused mindset.

“At bigger companies, for example, marketing has a bigger sway in the conversation,” Benedetti said. “If you go to a traditional manufacturer, for example, they are taking up [marketing automation], but it is traditionally a sales-controlled model. The mentality is that sales

rules the roost, and will get things done by doing what they’ve always done. They rarely turn to marketing as a resource.”

Benedetti said marketers must prove their worth in a meaningful and valuable manner through tech optimization and data analysis.

“There’s so much information available now that sales can use to be strategic,” Benedetti said. “But time and time again, they hire big closer sales reps to pick up the slack.” He noted that this adoption has been “relatively slow,” which can cause this gap between marketing and sales.

LeadMD’s Justin Gray agrees that data analysis is crucial. “The number one limitation is how databases work,” said Gray. “If you can just understand sequential databases, you can be a better asset to your organization. The database must be looked at as a marketing [function], not an IT [function].”

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[Heinz Marketing](#)

What holds marketers back is their need to justify demand generation efforts, experts explained. Their inability to do so is what causes sales to devalue their leads and their scoring models. However, Gray said that having a strong, data-driven lead scoring strategy can simplify that justification.

“Marketers need to be confident in providing answers, and data can help provide that confidence,” said Gray. “When a marketer goes to sales [with a lead] only because they opened an email, there’s no conversation there. Additional data allows marketers to be confident in the fact that the leads they are passing along to sales are valuable. Sales then knows that,

based on the indicators that both marketing and sales agreed on, the lead is an opportunity.”

Focusing on that process and messaging can identify the gaps within scoring models and — in turn — further help marketers justify their leads to the sales team, according to Heinz.

“[Creating] a real lead scoring engine takes time and effort, and many haven’t given it the time and effort it deserves,” said Heinz. He also noted that this lack of attention to spending time on processes can be attributed to marketers being overwhelmed “in a constant state of execution and reaction.”

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Extole Sees 88% Increase In MQLs By Aligning Tech With Scoring Processes

With a well-tuned process and integrated tech stack, lead scoring initiatives can be better executed and evaluated, experts said. For example, referral marketing company **Extole** struggled with data quality issues, as well as reporting capabilities, to help prove the impact of their nurturing initiatives. The company ultimately turned to LeadMD to help identify the right tools and processes to meet their lead scoring goals.

With the help of LeadMD, Extole's team now revamps its lead scoring models on a quarterly basis to ensure that values and KPIs are assigned accurately. This includes understanding what happens before leads enter the funnel, as well as what happens with those leads once they are passed along to the sales development reps (SDRs) or sales team.

"[Marketers] need to be involved in all aspects of the deal cycle," Gray said. "They can consume those conversations and see, in real time, what the market needs."

Having this data integrated between the company's marketing

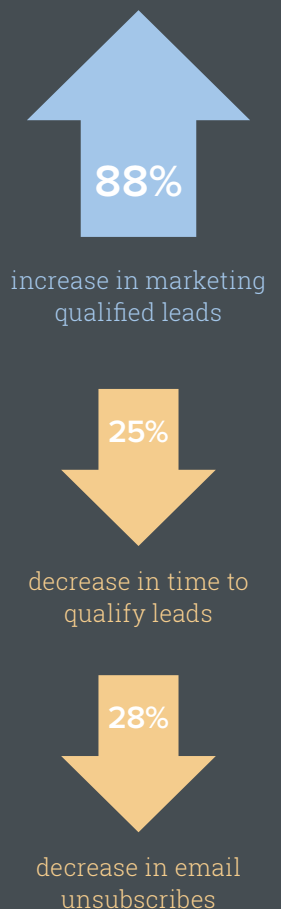
automation and CRM platforms provided a holistic view of company goals and expectations — while also helping save the marketing team time by identifying and removing duplicate and dead leads.

With the implementation of new tools and processes designed to provide cleaner data, align the marketing and sales teams and streamline campaigns, Extole saw an 88% increase in marketing qualified leads. The company also saw its time to qualify leads decrease by 25%, as well as a 28% decrease in email unsubscribes.

Ultimately, Gray noted that sometimes the best way to get the info you need is to sit and have those conversations with sales. Even having a member of the marketing team shadow a sales rep for a day can provide invaluable insight into the conversations sales is looking to have with prospects and what leads want to learn more about.

"Spending a day with sales can be invaluable to the marketing team," Gray said. "This can yield good lead scoring, as well as content creation and funnel engagement."

Extole's Success



Focus On Long-Term Goals To Develop Winning Scoring Models

Experts noted that in order to start promoting change within a B2B company's lead scoring initiatives, there must be a change in how the company evaluates the marketing team's performance. Shifting away from the "quantity over quality" mindset — meaning a move away from measuring the number of leads generated versus the number of MQLs turned into opportunities, for example — is crucial to growing a healthier, aligned relationship between marketing and sales.

"The more marketers can focus on long-term goals, the more quality leads are going to go to sales and impact pipeline," said Heinz. "The further down the pipeline marketing is measured, the more you maximize the likelihood that conversations are turning into deals."

To make this shift, marketers must be able to "speak the language of sales and the C-suite" to highlight the importance of lead scoring as a core component to driving their value, according to Heinz. He noted that it is "not an easy shift for some people, especially at companies that have had that mindset for years."

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Benedetti highlighted four steps to formulating an aligned scoring model and have better conversations with sales and the C-suite:



Align the process to understand what ideal customers and KPIs look like, and when MQLs should be handed off;



Align technology to guarantee all of this data is accessible to both the marketing and sales team;



Formulate **department accountability** to set expectations and to identify when problems arise; and



Gain **executive sponsorship** to make sure all the above steps are understood and followed.

Benedetti also noted that providing sales with a place to go to understand how a lead was scored facilitates better communication.

“Regular face-to-face between the various [departments] creates the continuum,” said Benedetti. “From a

support [standpoint], this depends on how the organization operates. If it’s a smaller company, for example, a simple email might be the answer.”

To further promote communication between the teams, Gray suggests moving SDRs into the marketing department to create more “real-time” conversations on deals. “If you move SDRs into marketing, these conversations will be happening regularly,” Gray said.

Technology can be a blessing — or a curse — depending on how it is implemented. Ultimately, it is important to understand how the technology works in your current processes before implementing it. This allows marketers to understand how that data and insight will impact scoring initiatives.

“Any time you implement a new solution, think about what drives buying decisions and what data points are created there,” Gray said. He also said to keep in mind “where that data will be housed and where marketing will be able to obtain that information.”

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- Justin Gray,
LeadMD

Interested in learning more?



Demand Gen Report is a targeted online publication that uncovers the strategies and solutions that help companies better align their sales and marketing organizations, and ultimately, drive growth. A key component of the publication's editorial coverage focuses on the sales and marketing automation tools that enable companies to better measure and manage their multi-channel demand generation efforts.

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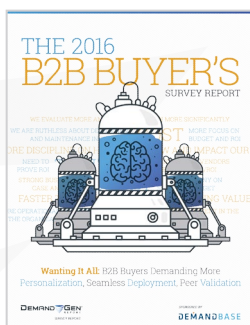


Brian Anderson

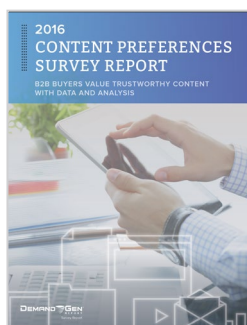
is an avid B2B journalist with a knack for all things trendy in the automation, Big Data analytics, mobile & social realms of B2B marketing and sales.

[Read more from Brian.](#)

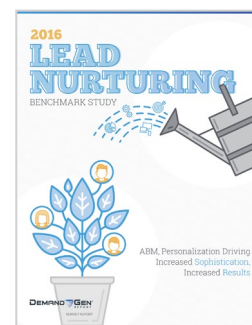
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