

What's Working IN DEMAND GENERATION?

Rethinking Traditional Channels
& Testing New Tactics To Boost
Buyer Interest & Engagement



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Introduction


As buyers grow more selective with their content consumption and time, generating and maintaining demand is becoming a more elusive task for B2B brands. With in-person engagement off the table for the time being, fearless marketers are plowing ahead, experimenting with different channels and investing in demand generation to kickstart conversations with potential customers in a digital-only environment.

“This is a really good time to banish random acts of content from your demand gen program,” said author and digital marketing expert Jay Baer of **Convince & Convert**. “Do fewer things but do them more consistently. That will attract more attention and yield more results than firing off a ton of buckshot in the air and hoping that a bird flies over it simultaneously.”

Marketing organizations have long been relying on filling the top-of-funnel with new leads, and often used “spray-and-pray” tactics to achieve “quantity.” But **recent research** from *Demand Gen Report* revealed signs that progressive organizations are not as concerned with MQLs and are focusing more on quality leads versus the quantity. To achieve more quality leads, the research showed marketers are:

- Practicing ABM to ensure they are targeting the right stakeholders **(73%)**;
- A/B testing messaging to ensure content resonates with target audiences **(45%)**; and
- Using intent data to better assess prospects that are actively researching a buying decision **(51%)**.

“The companies that are diversifying their channels are winning,” said Matt Heinz, President of **Heinz Marketing**. “Pushing people to a landing page and forcing them to fill out a form is an arbitrary measure of whether someone’s authentically interested. And assuming that one’s random act of marketing is going to generate demand is short-sighted for companies that are working with larger, more complex deals.”



“The trend there is just thinking less about how many leads that we get from an individual email and instead, thinking about the body of work across multiple campaigns and across multiple channels to drive interest, awareness and demand.”

Another priority for marketers was improving conversion rates and campaign performance, with 77% of survey respondents to *DGR*'s survey saying it's their top priority for 2020. This may have already become an even greater priority in light of the global pandemic, as marketers pivot strategies for the new reality and work to develop content and campaigns that resonate with and help audiences during this time. According to a [survey by Bynder](#), developing messaging, content and campaigns in response to coronavirus was the highest brand-related priority for 53% of marketers surveyed.

“I believe content and relevancy, regardless of the channel, continues to be the most important thing in a demand gen strategy,” said Jeff Pedowitz, President and CEO of [The Pedowitz Group](#). “It's not about having content that's just top-of-funnel-focused or focused on one portion of the funnel. It's different content for different parts of the customer lifecycle that adds value. It's not just in the awareness and consideration stage, but all the way through justification decisions going into onboarding by delivery, value realization and advocacy. I think that's very important.”

This special report will explore some of the top tactics and formats industry leaders are pointing to as the recipe for what's working in demand generation in 2020 and beyond, including:

- Doubling Down On ABM
- Personalized Targeting
- Virtual Experiences & Content Hubs
- Empathetic Messaging
- Video Re-imagined

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JEFF PEDOWITZ, THE PEDOWITZ GROUP



Doubling Down On ABM

As marketers move away from relying heavily on top-of-funnel leads, leveraging account-based marketing tactics with traditional demand gen has allowed them to become more targeted in their approach. During these times of uncertainty, experts agree that focusing on making individual, authentic connections is important. And this is where ABM can really shine.

“We certainly believe it’s a time to double down on ABM,” said Rob Leavitt, SVP of Consulting at **ITSMA**. “Being much more focused on core accounts and existing accounts — especially in the near term, like the rest of the year — is a wise principle for a general approach. Then you can think about the tactics accordingly. It’s about putting a lot more emphasis on more individualized connections and engagement with key accounts, a lot more emphasis on research and insight. Just running a lot of those broad-based demand gen-type programs is going to be much less effective going forward for quite a while.”

Having an account-based mindset also allows for greater alignment with sales and the ability to personalize messaging that targets audiences in an authentic way. Leavitt noted that because you’re putting your time, money and efforts on top prospects, ABM can be a cost-effective way to deliver personalized experiences across channels that resonate with audiences.

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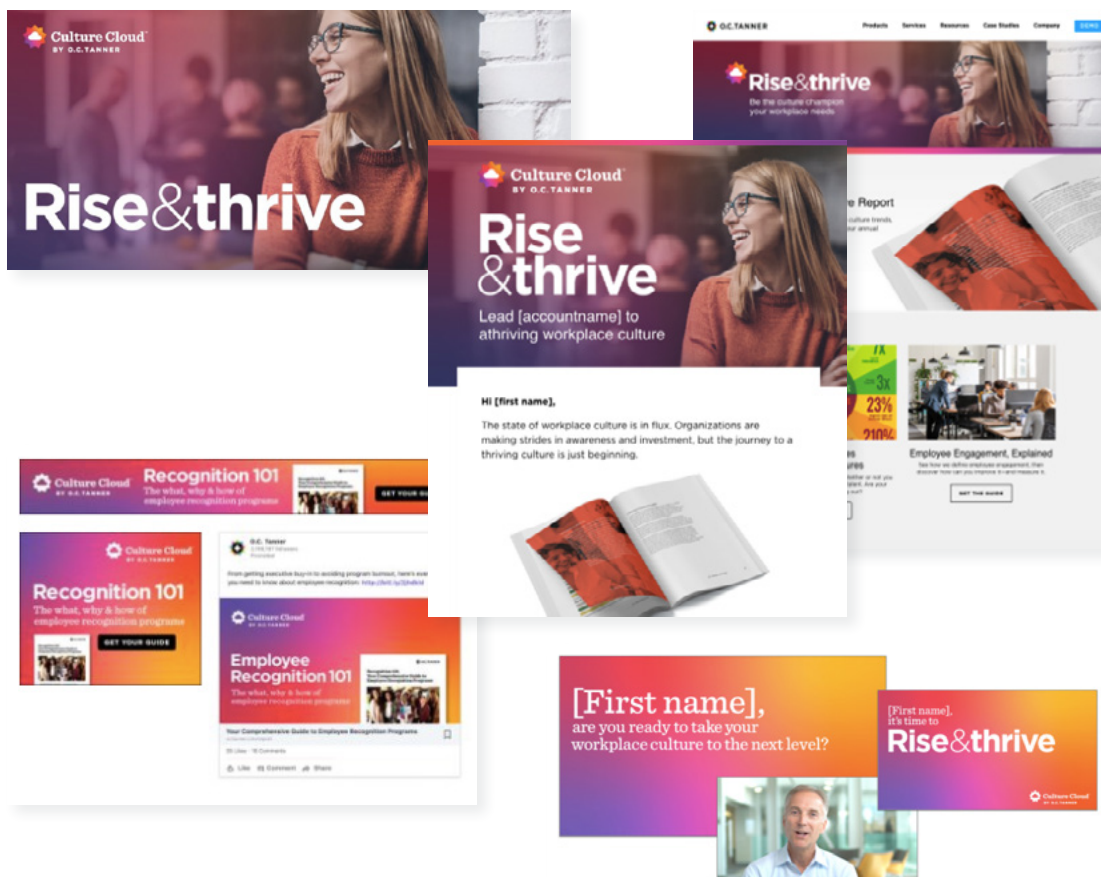
ROB LEAVITT, ITSMA

“ABM doesn’t have to be expensive, because it is more personalized,” he said. “And it doesn’t have to be personalized in a ‘let’s spend lots of money on each account’ way. You can literally trade time for money. So, you can spend more time with fewer numbers of accounts and do one-to-one outreach to learn what they need, what’s going on, and how you can help to adjust your offerings and approaches.”

This level of personalization for target accounts equips marketers with the ability to deliver a consistent theme for specific audiences across channels.

Proof Point

O.C. Tanner developed a theme that helped boil down the passion of HR leaders and the need to create culture-building programs for their people and help them connect with the business and feel engaged in their work. The company used “Rise & Thrive” messaging as a connecting point for all touch points and it was the hub for messaging across all the components in the campaign. This included thought leadership assets, personalized videos, nurture emails and social media content.



Powering Demand Gen With Personalized Targeting: It's All In The Data

EMMA CHALWIN, SVP OF AMER MARKETING, SALESFORCE



In-person engagement may be taking a back seat, but the demand gen engine must continue to run. Marketers are faced with navigating new realities and shifting strategies to connect with audiences on digital channels. Today, effective demand gen requires personalization and targeted outreach, according to Emma Chalwin, SVP of AMER Marketing at **Salesforce**, who emphasized the critical need of taking a data-driven approach to marketing.

Demand Gen Report sat down with Chalwin to discuss the evolution of demand gen and how she and her team take this targeted approach to their efforts, leveraging all the data at their disposal and incorporating ABM.

How has demand generation evolved to cater to the growing needs of modern B2B buyers?

The pressure to personalize and market is intense. We are more connected than ever before, and targeted marketing is no longer a “nice to have.” If it’s missing, buyers will gravitate towards the brands who do speak their language and deliver a great customer experience via multi-channel, targeted marketing. For effective B2B marketing that is targeted, personalized, relevant and has the right message to be delivered at the right time and on the appropriate channel, you need data. Your campaigns are only as good as the data informing them.

In leading a demand gen marketing team, how have you seen your team's account-based marketing strategies evolve in recent years and has the strategy shifted in 2020?

I think about demand gen marketing in categories: 1:Many, 1:Few and 1:1. Each of them require elevated levels of personalization, but as you narrow down your audiences and clusters to even smaller groups with 1:Few and 1:1 ABM, you have to take that personalization to the next level.

For us, this meant a strategy shift to create a dedicated ABM team. Backed by data science, strong alignment to sales and manpower to go deep on account discovery, we build custom journeys across all channels with pain-point and account-specific messages that demonstrate our knowledge about that account, which puts the customer at the center.

How can artificial intelligence help B2B marketing and sales teams deliver authentic and empathetic engagement with prospects and customers?

Your marketing really is only as good as your data, and AI is another data input that can drastically impact personalization and relevancy. One caveat: There is never a true replacement for human connection. Use AI to drive the science of marketing and help to craft and articulate the story you are telling, but never fully lose the art and human touch.

With events currently out of the picture, how should marketers reallocate their budgets and pivot strategies to continue to generate interest and demand?

The magic of events is the networking, which can still be done virtually. Despite going virtual, we are seeing engagement go way up and we're seeing a higher level of C-level interactions. The reduction in the number of demand generation tactics due to this pandemic is driving creativity, collaboration and innovation amongst our teams, and we are enjoying the out-the-box thinking and scrappiness in our approach! We have had to reimagine how we create demand by experimenting, taking risks, learning, unlearning and relearning in real time.

What are the most important elements of demand generation in a digital/virtual-only world?

- **Tone:** It's not about us right now. It's about helping our customers re-open their workplaces, recover and re-emerge stronger.
- **Innovation:** Try new things. Don't be afraid to fail and learn as you go.
- **Relevancy:** Don't assume your old messaging still works. Be timely.
- **Community:** Bring people together virtually to share stories and lessons learned.



Targeted Virtual Experiences & Content Hubs

With all physical events canceled for the unforeseeable future, marketers have had to pivot to a virtual and digital-only mindset. Many organizations are using their event budgets to create virtual events, webinars and digital thought-leadership content to connect with prospects and customers amid social distancing and help them along their journey.

“I’ve seen more companies using educational thought leadership in visual formats as a way to continue to get their message out there,” said Tyler Lessard, VP of Marketing at **Vidyard**. “They are doing it in a way that builds their brand using visual content and real people from the company. This creates content that is highly shareable and interesting.”

Whether it’s a large-scale virtual event or an account-focused content hub featuring a variety of content formats for the buyer to binge on, it’s important to leverage all the data at your disposal to ensure all messaging is consistent and relevant to the buyer. In a way, it’s about going back to basics and re-evaluating ICPs, auditing content to fill in gaps and offering it up to sales so they can start meaningful conversations.

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TYLER LESSARD, VIDYARD



“Think about how [a buyer’s] operations may have changed completely across all the different lines of businesses so you can package together interesting content that will help resonate with them on how to use your products or how they can actually be thinking about their strategies,” said Adam Forrest, VP of Marketing at Salesforce.

Proof Point

With all physical events canceled for the remainder of the year, Salesforce packaged up content and webinars in collaboration with sales to put together what they call “Conversations In A Box.” The teams looked into key personas to target the packaged content.

“We’re putting together different topics that we’re enabling sales with to help them go out and create millions of conversations in a box,” said Forrest. “Salesforce is really well known for Dreamforce and World Tours and we’ve really had to pivot that strategy to provide multiple virtual avenues to drive demand and provide valuable content for our audiences. For example, we’re bundling webinars, and we’ve got our new ‘Leading Through Change’ series.”

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ADAM FORREST, SALESFORCE

Creating HQLs & Driving Pipeline In Unique Times

IMRAN SULEMAN, VP OF MARKETING STRATEGY, ACTIVATE MARKETING SERVICES



We are living in unprecedented times, forcing us to re-evaluate and reconfigure our approach to demand gen marketing.

Activate was built seven years ago to create pipeline for tech marketers charged with empowering sales with highly qualified leads. We leverage interactive, tele-qualified demand gen products positioned to uncover buyer pain points. These products and activities result in high-quality leads.

But how is Activate able to generate HQLs in today's challenging climate? Simple: By talking with prospects every day.

The Role Of Empathy In Today's Demand Gen Conversations

The best way to know someone is to have a conversation with them. Given the nature of Activate's business — where we examine digital interactions — we also talk with hundreds of prospects on a daily basis. By examining their digital body language and the conversations we are having with them, Activate gains a better sense of what the buyer is thinking, what they are feeling (especially in the unique times we currently live in) and how they are buying.

Tech buyers, like everyone else, are working through a monumental challenge themselves, given the movement to work from home and the unfolding of the new normal (i.e., How will things be in the near future?).

We have to go beyond BANT and sales-readiness qualification to be able to engage a buyer, who has challenges to meet and is actively seeking solutions. But today's buyer, more than at any period in the history of modern marketing, is also seeking empathy at this time. In many cases, our conversations are three times longer than usual when we infuse genuine empathy into our discussion.

If a caller comes off as too pushy, salesy or product-pitchy, and makes too many phone calls in a short timeframe, the buyer is immediately shut off and the potential for a successful and lasting business relationship is lost. Infuse compassion in your conversation, stay centered on solving the prospect's pain points, seek their permission every step of the way and you will pave the path to earning trust and building strong long-term relationships.

Activate & Dell Technologies: Getting Creative & Interactive

It is also time to get creative. Consider reimagining the means to your end. Activate's Tech Score product, created a few years ago, continues to win renewals and new customers because it is interactive, can segment leads by pain point or persona, and delivers HQLs. These HQLs are in-market because they have told us — over the phone, human to human — that they are actively seeking solutions.

To give its sales team an edge, Dell Technologies sought to cost-effectively generate HQLs with rich detail so sales could have quality conversations that convert. Dell partnered with Activate to create a program that included the following features to enable the outcome they were looking for:

- **Digital interaction:** 10-question interactive quiz;
- **Person-to-person interaction:** Tele-verified leads ensured they were ready for follow-up; and
- **Buyer pain point identification:** Aligned customer personas to Dell's value proposition.

The Results

The Activate-Dell program generated 3x ROI versus comparable programs, experienced 5% to 10% higher conversion, and had positive feedback from the Dell sales team.

Now is a good time to build new relationships rooted in trust and respect. IT buyers have a dire need to meet their organizational objectives in a new environment. Deliver content that is interactive and unique to their needs, be compassionate in your tone and approach, and you have the opportunity to create mutually rewarding relationships now and for the long term.



Video Re-imagined

Experts agreed that video has become a key engagement driver for B2B organizations. In fact, *Demand Gen Report's 2020 Content Preferences Study* revealed that 65% of buyers have engaged with videos during their buying process — topping white papers, blogs and webinars.

“Video is becoming rapidly one of the best content types to drive engagement, especially when it can be optimized and delivered through streaming or smaller pieces for social channels like LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook,” said Pedowitz. “We’re seeing a lot of B2B marketers have success and crossing over to some of those other channels.”

Both Pedowitz and Baer noted that short-form videos are having a moment in the age of Instagram and TikTok. Pedowitz noted that under three minutes is an ideal length.

“I think there are two big trends: One is hyper-abbreviated — the Tik-Tok effect — and the ability to create compelling videos that are super short,” said Baer. “One of the most interesting approaches is to literally look at your funnel stages and then say, ‘What is the video execution at each of these stages?’”

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JEFF PEDOWITZ, THE PEDOWITZ GROUP

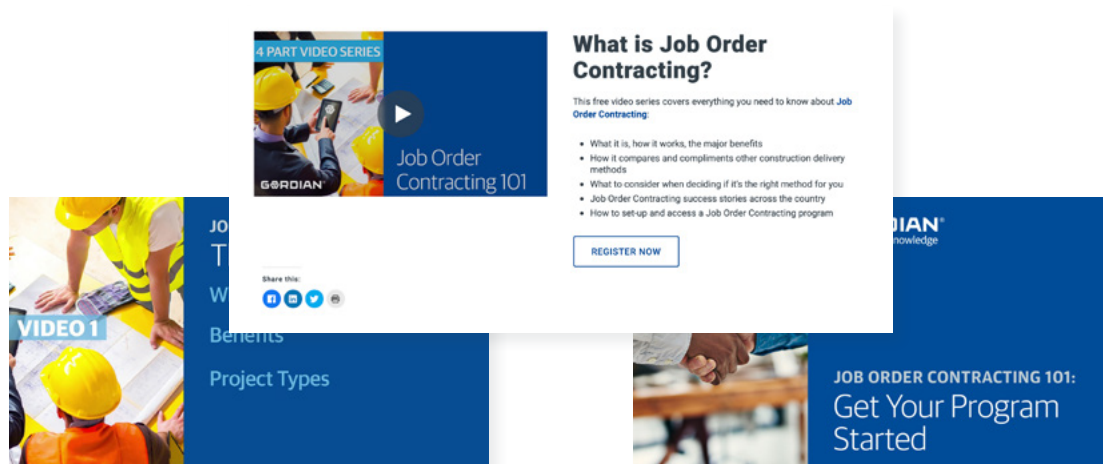
Interactive videos are also becoming a valuable content format, especially as marketers look to further engage with audiences in authentic ways amid social distancing. This could include interactive webcast presentations with polls and chat capabilities, white board videos that promote collaboration or even new video tools that enable marketers to create “choose-your-own-adventure” video content that delivers a different experience for each individual user.

“Instead of just being a straight video that people watch from beginning to end, you can tell your own story and have your own immersive experience within the video,” said Pedowitz. “So, I can then put together eight or 10 different pieces of content and put it together in a video story and people will see very different videos. There’s a lot of great uses for that, such as white papers, trials, demos, training, onboarding and education. I can see marketers using it in a lot of compelling ways.”

Marketers are also leveraging videos to deliver a series of content to target audiences. Marketers such as Sangram Vajre have been consistently sharing live video content on social channels to drive awareness and thought leadership, while companies such as Gordian are taking an episodic approach to videos.

Proof Point

Gordian created a video series called “**Job Order Contracting 101**” that allowed the company to educate buyers through private content. By offering the series to existing prospects (ungated) and new audiences (gated), Gordian was able to generate \$20 million in revenue and increase the level and quantity of new leads for sales to follow up with.





Conclusion

Even in these uncertain times, B2B marketers are finding new and unique ways to connect with buyers through empathy. As the journey becomes more complex and buyer expectations continue to evolve, traditional demand generation tactics and “batch-and-blast” strategies are no longer an option. Marketers should use this time to get creative with their campaigns by leveraging targeted personalization, unique content formats and buyer-centric messaging to engage with audiences and stand out from competitors.

“This is a great opportunity to rewrite recipes and bake new pies,” said Baer. “Spend more time with sales and understand what they’re seeing. And sales should spend more time with marketing and understand what the New World Order is from a demand perspective. I think this is a very, very important time to take whatever ‘smarketing’ [smart marketing] initiative you have and push it forward.”

**“This is a great opportunity to rewrite recipes
and bake new pies.”**

JAY BAER, CONVINCING & CONVERT

Learn more



Today, tech buyers decide when and where they engage with you. Activate makes sure your message is right there in front of them, giving tech buyers what they need to say yes faster, so your pipeline gets stronger. We do it by giving you deep insight into tech buyers' behavior, using the best content to grab their attention and putting it in the right place at the right time. We test, measure, learn and adapt so you keep getting better results. With Activate, you'll attract more prospects, engage more prospects, and convert more prospects. For more information, visit www.activatems.com.

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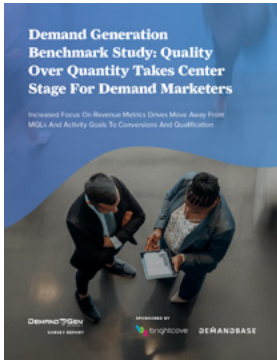
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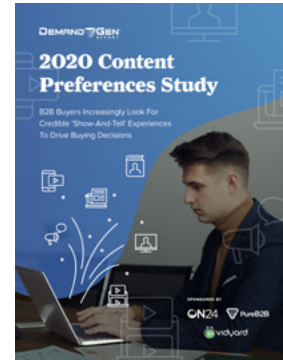
Additional Resources



Demand Generation
Benchmark Study



2020 State Of
Account-Based Marketing



2020 Content
Preferences Study



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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