



WHAT'S WORKING IN LEAD NURTURING & ACCELERATION?

Practitioners Working Toward Humanizing Nurturing Strategies

INTRODUCTION

Converting B2B prospects into buyers is often a complicated, lengthy process. This is especially true for high-dollar purchases, such as software, that involve multiple stakeholders.

There are a lot of balls in the air, and lead nurturing campaigns must consider the role each stakeholder plays in the decision-making process. Additionally, a strong lead nurturing strategy requires data-driven touchpoints that provide personalized content for each stage of the buyer's journey.

While most marketers agree on the importance of lead nurturing, there's ample opportunity for improvement. Although some B2B marketers have made strides in enhancing their strategies, the "[2022 Lead Nurturing & Acceleration Benchmark Survey](#)" found that just 16% of B2B marketers rate their current lead nurturing initiatives as excellent. While this number doubled from the 2021 lead nurturing survey, a significant percentage of respondents still said their lead nurturing efforts are subpar.

The tough sales environment of the past few years made lead nurturing more critical — and challenging.

"B2B buyers must segment, because it's imperative they reach their buyers at the right point in their buying journey," said Jon Russo, Founder and CMO at [B2B Fusion](#), a sales and marketing performance firm. "Nurturing serves as the glue; it brings order to the chaos, but it must be topic-, persona- and intent-based to see the most success."

This special report provides a deeper look at current lead nurturing and acceleration initiatives, including the biggest roadblocks to success and new tactics that are being tested to better attract, engage and convert prospective buyers. Specific topics of discussion include:

- How B2B teams are developing more advanced, account-based segmentation strategies;
- The ever-increasing role intent and first-party data plays in helping serve up highly personalized and targeted outreach throughout all stages of the sales cycle;
- How to humanize the lead generation process beyond form fills and into targeted outreach campaigns; and
- The must-have platforms, technologies and strategies assisting marketing teams in their lead scoring and generation efforts.



EMPLOYING ADVANCED SEGMENTATION STRATEGIES

It's no longer enough to run a drip campaign that presents all prospects with the same content intended to move them down the funnel. In fact, the "Lead Nurturing & Acceleration" survey found that B2B teams are primarily segmenting their databases by:

- Account (37%);
- Industry (33%);
- Returning customers (31%); and
- Response/area of interest as part of an ABM approach (30%).

However, it appears that companies are failing to create highly customized assets to each group they're targeting.

"I think that if your standard thought process around lead nurturing is, 'Let's put up a white paper or a downloadable PDF, a guide of some kind, and then we'll send some automated emails out,' there's very little segmentation on that front," said Josh Lowery, Co-founder and Director of [Makeway](#), a marketing agency. "We're seeing a lot more intentional programs around specific accounts that have shown some level of intent, maybe using third-party intent data or first-party engagement data."

Another potential roadblock: 41% of "Lead Nurturing & Acceleration" survey respondents noted that they have a shortage of data for effective lead nurturing. Building a funnel and a path is one thing but being able to continually analyze performance and identify weak spots in the nurture campaign requires data, which means understanding intent at the account level is critical, Russo added.

"If you know what the company is interested in, in terms of keywords or keyword searches, you can move toward a topical based approach from a marketing perspective," he explained. "That's where intent can be informative. You must capture that data somehow in your systems, either in Salesforce or in your marketing automation system, to do effective lead nurturing."

Proof Point:

[Shell Aviation](#) (SAV) leveraged an ABM strategy to develop "Shell Flightpath," a digital home for a series of video interviews between environmental journalist Joel Makower of Greenbiz and senior experts from The Nature Conservancy, Environmental Defense Fund, Everland and other aviation sustainability leaders, along with Shell executives. Each interview informed a nurture stream of content, including infographics and video animations.

Through the campaign, SAV:

- Generated more than 217 leads, which included CEOs, COOs, Chief Sustainability Officers and VPs of Operations, Sales, Marketing and Fleet Management; and
- Built a high-value list of 528 newsletter subscribers, outperforming its target of 500.



MAKING LEAD NURTURING MORE HUMAN

Lead nurturing outreach that appears to be sent to a mass audience has already lost its effectiveness in moving buyers through the funnel — no one wants to feel like a number. The “Lead Nurturing & Acceleration” survey revealed that 35% of respondents added enhanced personalization techniques to their lead nurturing tactics, as being more human is about solving problems.

“Most B2B companies recognize that they are in the business of solving some kind of problem,” said Mason Cosby, Director of Growth at B2B marketing agency [Gravity Global](#). “It’s then about appropriately positioning your product within the framing of the problem. And it’s more than just saving money or time; it’s about getting to the root of the problem, which reinforces a human connection.”

That means resisting the urge to quickly schedule a demo, he continued.

“The key is leveraging first-party engagement data, so that prospects know you’re a viable, trusted potential solution,” said Crosby. “Once they start to show specific first-party engagement, that’s when you start to get more product specific.”

As in-person meetings expand following Covid-19 restriction rollbacks, there are more opportunities to humanize the lead nurturing process, explained Tracey Barber, VP of Marketing for digital marketing firm **Verndale**, as “if you have high-value targets, face-time becomes an important way to nurture prospects.”

Barber also noted that using chat tools to engage leads in the moment is another way to offer personalized messaging, because “people have become comfortable with tools like chatbots in their personal interactions with vendors.”

Proof Point:

The Pedowitz Group, a marketing consultancy, launched an interactive campaign featuring chat bots and dad jokes, which involved removing all content forms in favor of chatbot asset delivery, embedding calendar CTAs on product pages and designing unique chatbot experiences for known customers and ICP accounts based on intent data.

As a result, The Pedowitz Group:

- Increased “contact us” form conversion by 10% (YoY comparison) due to lowered barrier to book meetings;
- Acquired net-new logos with deals 2X to 3X the average sale price of marketing-sourced bookings; and
- Doubled marketing’s revenue attribution compared to the last five years’.

USING CONTENT TO FUEL PERSONALIZATION EFFORTS

It appears that content is driving personalization efforts. According to the “Lead Nurturing & Acceleration” survey, nearly half of all marketers (46%) indicated they now create content experiences that are used exclusively for nurture programs rather than relying on multipurpose assets — a significant jump from 25% in 2021. Another 9% of respondents said they plan to develop exclusive nurture content over the next 12 months.

“You have to figure out what the relevant content is and then do a multi-touch, multi-integration approach,” said B2B Fusion’s Russo. “It’s not just one person making the decision; it’s going to the entire buying group, so that it can raise the stakes pretty significantly.”

Finally, the experts explained that the must-have tools for lead nurturing include marketing and sales automation, email marketing, CRM and ABM platforms.

Proof Point:

Panasonic Logiscend, an industrial IoT solution, debuted its first-ever ABM effort in March 2021, which was tailored to a contact’s persona with strategic content for C-level titles. The company offered videos, case studies and sell sheets that explained exactly how the Logiscend system would work for five potential applications. The assets were delivered by a series of six emails and outbound telemarketing.

Since its inception, the campaign has:

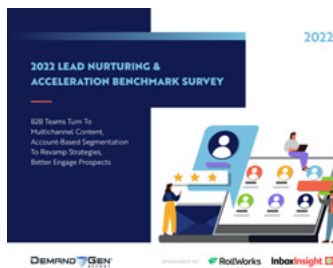
- Surpassed its 12-month goal of 60 marketing qualified leads after just six months;
- Held 31 demo calls to date, 10 of which have moved into mid-funnel with the sales team; and
- Generated at least one opportunity potential of more than \$1 million.



CONCLUSION

Lead nurturing must be part of every modern marketer's playbook, and it needs to be more than just leading a prospect from a white paper to a webinar. There has to be specific content and a path that instills trust in the prospect that the company understands their challenges and offers solutions to their complex problems. The campaign needs an authentic, human touch rather than a robotic feeling.

"I don't think anybody truly wants to be nurtured — they want to be educated," Gravity Global's Crosby said. "As a marketer, you need to create a program in which you are appropriately educating people and driving significant intent and engagement so that you can, at the appropriate time, bring in your sales team."



2022 Lead Nurturing & Acceleration Benchmark Survey



2022 State Of Database Quality & Accuracy



2022 State of Lead Generation



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 multichannel demand generation efforts.

201.257.8528

INFO@DEMANDGENREPORT.COM



BY KIM ZIMMERMANN, CONTRIBUTING WRITER