

How Do You Qualify A Sales Prospect?

By Barrett Niehus

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Arguably, the most difficult part of the sales process is locating and qualifying a sales lead. This difficulty is compounded by gatekeepers, personal assistants, and all of those individuals that stand between you and the potential decision maker. However, through a few creative techniques, and by involving the prospect early in the sales process, leads can be qualified, prepared, and closed with little difficulty.

In order to qualify a prospect, you must have communication. In many instances, your ability to establish communication is hindered by the inability to directly contact your prospect. Communication and information gathering is a key step in the sales process, and is a necessity to effectively selling your product. Thus the question, how do you effectively communicate with a prospect that you cannot get hold of? The answer is simple, make them come to you.

There are many marketing techniques that encourage your prospects to make initial contact. Direct mail is extremely useful, and can be used as highly effective information gathering tool. A valuable method to leverage direct mail as a qualifying tool is to create a feedback questionnaire. This can either be presented as a general questionnaire, or as a marketing survey. In order to get your prospect to respond, offer an incentive for their completion and return of the survey.

An effective example of this technique is to include a one dollar bill, golf balls, or some other bit of marketing paraphernalia with the survey. Anything that would make the prospect feel guilty if they do not complete the form. The other technique is to offer a free membership. Product, or tool when the survey is returned.

Finally, the format of the questionnaire should be not appear to be too invasive on the prospect's privacy. It should have questions that can easily be answered, and create more interest in your product. Remember, the intent of the survey is to qualify the prospect, not uncover their deepest driving need. Some of the most effective formats used present the questionnaire as a marketing survey. Marketing surveys give the prospect the impression that they are helping your company, without giving information that could be used against them.

The direct mail questionnaire is an effective tool to make initial contact with your prospect and

gather essential data in the qualification process. From that point, personal contact can be used to establish rapport, further introduce your product, and finally, close the sale.

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