

"Leads are the lifeblood of selling. This book is the lifeblood of lead generation."

—Jeffrey J. Fox, bestselling author of *Secrets of Great Rainmakers*

# *Lead Generation*

for the

# COMPLEX SALE

**Boost the Quality and Quantity  
of Leads to Increase Your ROI**

**BRIAN J. CARROLL**

Founder of InTouch Incorporated—recognized as one of  
America's Fastest Growing Companies by *Inc.* magazine

## More Praise for *Lead Generation for the Complex Sale*

“Brian Carroll ‘gets’ that marketing and sales must have a common definition of a lead and a ‘sales ready’ lead is a targeted decision maker who is curious how you have helped someone with the same job title in the same industry achieve a goal or solve a problem.”

—Mike Bosworth, author *Solution Selling* and coauthor *CustomerCentric Selling*

“The lead generation game has changed in the age of the Internet; if you don't have this new playbook your competitors will. Brian Carroll closes the loop on lead generation, taking you from defining a lead, thinking like your prospects, tactics to increase lead generation, passing leads from marketing to sales, measuring the results, and nurturing the leads for increased revenue. If you don't read and then apply lessons from *Lead Generation for the Complex Sale*, then let me know how things work out for you.”

—Bryan Eisenberg, *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* bestselling author of *Call To Action*

“Great book on a very important topic. The author speaks from a true knowledge-base and offers a ‘Soup-to-Nuts’ instruction of principles, strategies, and tactics from which the reader can greatly profit.”

—Bob Burg, author of *Endless Referrals: Network Your Everyday Contacts into Sales*

“Great book! I heartily recommend *Lead Generation for the Complex Sale* because it's packed with practical, hands-on advice. In particular, Chapter 3 ‘Defining Your Best Lead’ should be required reading for CSOs and CMOs alike \*before\* you invest in any more demand generation campaigns!”

—Anne Holland, Publisher, MarketingSherpa Inc.

“Brian Carroll has unveiled some of the most guarded secrets of lead generation experts. His approach to generating leads for the complex sale is not only on-target but will produce results as well.”

—John M. Coe, President, Sales & Marketing Institute

“It’s never been tougher to crack into corporate accounts. To help your sales force, create a lead generation program based on the multiple strategies in this information-rich book. In today’s crazy market, it’s the best way to slash your sales cycle.”

—Jill Konrath, Chief Sales Officer, author of *Selling to Big Companies*

“Brian Carroll has written a no-nonsense, practical guide to sales lead generation that will help anybody who is looking for advice based on real-world experience. He makes the case for a strong working relationship between the sales and marketing functions.”

—Ruth P. Stevens, President, eMarketing Strategy, and author of *Trade Show and Event Marketing*

“Brian Carroll gives us insightful lessons in the complete sales lead management process, including the critical organizational issues that will determine success or failure. Read it, and start putting Brian’s advice to work immediately.”

—Bob Donath, Bob Donath & Co., marketing author and consultant

“Does your company have an uncrossable abyss between your sales and marketing functions? If so, then this book will help you bridge that gap and fill the void. If you follow a few of its simple concepts you will be able to drive significantly enhanced sales and marketing effectiveness.”

—Guy R. Powell, DemandROMI—Prove and Improve your Marketing Performance, author, *Return on Marketing Investment*

“Brian’s book is an absolute must read for any B-to-B marketers.”

—Russell Kern, President, The Kern Organization

“Brian tackles a tough subject and gives it the depth it deserves. Anyone selling a complex product or service will avoid the common mistakes and close more sales if they follow the advice in this book.”

—Kristin Zhivago, author of *Rivers of Revenue*

“Finally, a book that addresses the realities of today’s selling environment. Brian Carroll has broken new ground in this comprehensive, utterly practical, and thoughtful guide to sales lead generation.”

—Michael W. McLaughlin, coauthor of *Guerrilla Marketing for Consultants*

“Trade shows are hard work for an individual and expensive for a firm. Most shows are geared to complex sales—i.e., you are selling on the floor—so this book is a definitive resource in how to develop the structure of a lead, the rationale for a lead, and the importance of follow-up. If marketing and sales do not understand these three components, you are doomed at a trade show. Working together will improve the quality of both marketing and sales—and make everybody happier.”

—Julia O’Connor, President of TradeShowTraining.com

“The quality and quantity of leads does as much to determine sales success as face-to-face selling prowess, yet little has been written about lead generation. This book fills the void. Carroll really understands lead generation.”

—Ford Harding, author of *Creating Rainmakers*, Harding & Company

“A logical and straightforward methodology to maximize your likelihood of success. A good primer for the uninitiated and a great refresher for the experienced.”

—Bill Herr, Managing Director, sales lead development programs, CMP Media, LLC

“This book should be a must read for all people involved in the sales and marketing process. Definitely one for your business book collection.”

—Bob Freytag, President, Introworks Branding and Marketing Communications

“Brian masterfully tackles the single biggest issue for enterprise marketing today.”

—John Neeson, Managing Director & Cofounder, SiriusDecisions Inc.

“This book is essential reading for anyone in marketing today. It will make a difference in your company’s lead generation results!”

—Dan Kosch & Mark Shonka, copresidents of IMPAX Corporation and coauthors of the best-selling book *Beyond Selling Value*

“If *Lead Generation for the Complex Sale* helps your business grow half as fast as Brian Carroll’s has, it may be the best marketing and sales investment you make all year.”

—Keith Ferrazzi, CEO of sales consulting and training firm Ferrazzi Greenlight and former CMO of Starwood Hotels and Deloitte Consulting

“Exhaustive coverage and discussion of the lead generation modalities and the synergies therein, ranging from the classical modes such as telemarketing and direct mail through such new generation modes as blogs and podcasts, is insightful. A very compelling read indeed.”

—Sharmila C. Chatterjee, Visiting Professor, MIT

“The time has come for sales and marketing teams to finally unite to create and solidify customer relationships. This book provides sound execution strategies for collaboration that leads to results.”

—Barbara Geraghty, President, Visionary Selling

“*Lead Generation for the Complex Sale* is an important and intelligent addition to the small but growing body of literature on business-to-business sales lead generation.”

—Bob Bly, author, *The Copywriter's Handbook*

“Chapter six alone is worth the price of the book. If you're puzzled about the nuts and bolts of building a lead-gen plan that actually works, you're in luck. It's right here.”

—Chris Coleman, speaker, author and cofounder, [greenbananaproject.com](http://greenbananaproject.com)



***Lead  
Generation***  
for the  
**COMPLEX  
SALE**

**Boost the Quality and Quantity  
of Leads to Increase Your ROI**

**Brian J. Carroll**

**McGraw-Hill**

New York Chicago San Francisco Lisbon London  
Madrid Mexico City Milan New Delhi San Juan  
Seoul Singapore Sydney Toronto



# Professional



## Want to learn more?

We hope you enjoy this McGraw-Hill eBook! If you'd like more information about this book, its author, or related books and websites, please [click here](#).

# Contents

---

---

<b>Acknowledgments</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>Part One: <i>Fundamentals of Lead Generation for the Complex Sale</i></b>	<b>I</b>
<b>Chapter One:</b> Essential Lead Generation	3
<b>Chapter Two:</b> Marketing and Sales: One Team in the Complex Sale	13
<b>Chapter Three:</b> Defining Your Best Lead	25
<b>Chapter Four:</b> Lead Generation ROI Depends on Data Quality	41
<b>Chapter Five:</b> The Value Proposition	53
<b>Chapter Six:</b> Building the Lead Generation Plan— Critical Success Factors	69
<b>Part Two: <i>Lead Generation Tactics for the Complex Sale</i></b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Chapter Seven:</b> Synergies in Tactics	79
<b>Chapter Eight:</b> The Phone	87
<b>Chapter Nine:</b> E-Mailing with Credibility	99
<b>Chapter Ten:</b> Public Relations and Lead Generation	107
<b>Chapter Eleven:</b> Event Marketing	115
<b>Chapter Twelve:</b> Lead Generation on the Web	127

<b>Chapter Thirteen:</b> Lead Generation and Direct Mail	139
<b>Chapter Fourteen:</b> Lead Generation and Referrals	145
<b>Chapter Fifteen:</b> Blogs, Podcasting, and the Brave New World of Lead Generation	151
<b>Part Three: <i>Lead Development for the Complex Sale</i></b>	<b>157</b>
<b>Chapter Sixteen:</b> Working with Your Leads	159
<b>Chapter Seventeen:</b> ROI Measurement and Metrics	167
<b>Chapter Eighteen:</b> Lead Nurturing	181
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>193</b>
<b>Index</b>	<b>211</b>

# Introduction

---

**K**eeping the pipeline full of qualified leads is vitally important in today's challenging business climate, so important, in fact, that consistent lead generation is often imperative to a company's very survival. Add to the equation that *your* sale always seems to be more complex than most, and the challenge becomes downright daunting, doesn't it?

Exactly what is a complex sale? It is associated with businesses that are engaged in long-term sales processes that require prolonged education and nurturing of the prospect, frequently over a 6- to 36-month sales cycle. Companies that use the complex sale provide solutions to their clients that tend to be sophisticated, designed to solve crucial business issues, and are managed deliberately and with precision. Ultimately, these solutions can require significant investment of dollars and the buy-in of the company's senior management. The complex sale most often manifests itself in the business-to-business environment, though it is not always limited to that sector.

Because of the unique demands of the complex sale, lead generation has become a major roadblock for marketers as they spin their wheels looking for strategies and tactics that can consistently and measurably push the sales needle forward.

Why is lead generation inherently more challenging in the complex sale?

- **Fewer opportunities:** Although the deal value of each sale is extremely high, there are simply fewer opportunities as compared to more transactional selling environments. More attention therefore

must be paid to identifying those relatively few and valuable opportunities.

- **Commoditization is more difficult to overcome:** Marketers must work much more diligently and creatively to differentiate their organizations from increasing competition. Exposure is not enough; there must be a value proposition that resonates with prospects.
- **Increased selling at the executive level:** There must be a more intelligent and varied approach to reaching and converting executives who are more often the economic buyers for complex solutions.
- **Must reach the sphere of influence:** Buying processes frequently involve a team approach. Enlisting the support of one decision maker is rarely enough. The sphere of influence must be identified and a targeted, multipronged approach taken to reach as many as possible.
- **Less selling time:** Because of longer sales cycles, salespeople cannot afford to spend time on unqualified leads. They must focus attention on opportunities that have the greatest likelihood of closing.
- **Return on investment:** Direct return from lead generation activity takes time to surface. A solid plan for reporting and measuring reliable indicators must be in place to justify continued investment.

At my company, we wonder, how did it get to be like this? The scope and complexity of the business of lead generation have grown enormously since we began as a teleprospecting firm in 1995, and we occasionally just have to step back and exclaim, “wow.”

In all respects, there was a time that carrying on a conversation was much easier than it is now, and that is no more evident than in the marketplace. It used to be easier to talk with high-level executives because there simply were not as many barriers to beginning the conversation.

A shift that marked the increasing difficulty in reaching people became apparent in the early 1990s. To those of us involved in producing leads for salespeople back then, calling the prospect on the phone with a short pitch more often than not initiated a conversation leading to an appointment. Advances in technology have made that a thing of the past. The objectives of good dialogue and conversation have not changed, but the ways of winning the complex sale today are decidedly different.

The Internet, e-mail, and voice mail had not yet begun to revolutionize communication. Most companies didn't use voice mail or e-mail to any great extent, and the Internet was just moving beyond its limited university campus profile. Caller ID didn't exist on most corporate phone systems. A letter posted by mail was ordinarily the most effective way of communicating on

business matters, and the fax machine was the only rapid means of communication. Executive assistants were the primary point of access.

The practice of selling became more complex as the business climate evolved, in many ways spurred by the burgeoning communications technologies. It became apparent to us that a formal lead generation discipline was very much in order, particularly in light of the changing face of sales and marketing for the complex sale. Our exposure dictated that an intelligent, sophisticated, multimodal, integrated solution would be needed if lead generation was going to be effective going forward. No more cookie-cutter tactics; we were seeing technologies that would give us the ability to tailor and personalize our reach, and there began the results that have made lead generation what it is today.

So, plain and simply, the purpose of this book is to help marketers and corporate leaders assemble the necessary tools to more confidently develop customer relationships—with the importance of business-to-business lead generation for the complex sale always in mind. Our approach is a holistic one that recognizes that lead generation must include sales and marketing efforts that work together in harmony towards the common end. It dispels common myths and provides proven strategies and tactics that can be replicated and implemented immediately in the interest of developing new customers and improving your return on investment (ROI).

Most of what I say in this book deals with companies that have a direct sales force. Generally, these principles also hold true for those with a sales channel or those who sell through partners or channels. Regardless of sales structure, experience dictates that the complex sale more often than not entails a *consultative* approach to selling.

A mind-set that is consultative starts well before opportunities are handed over to sales. It is a long-term process that engages targeted prospects as early in the buying process as possible, and it does not relegate to the garbage bin those not ready to buy yet. A well-conceived plan that keeps the lead generation vehicle on track is necessary.

Consider that a cross-country trip requires the aid of both itinerary and map to arrive on time. Without proper planning and direction, you tend to get lost, wander aimlessly, likely take a lot of different side roads, or end up traveling the same old routes. So, too, for lead generation. And frequently with the same unsatisfactory results. My hope is that this book can become your road map, in a direct and timely way, for customizing your own plan for achieving a successful lead generation program that will bring you new customers and accelerate your growth rate.



*Lead  
Generation*

for the

**COMPLEX  
SALE**

## **Part One**

# **Fundamentals of Lead Generation for the Complex Sale**

## Chapter One

---

---

# Essential Lead Generation

### Not Like it Used to Be

It wasn't long ago that lead generation campaigns were largely based on unfocused direct mail campaigns along with, perhaps, a flashy Web site, sporadic trade show appearances, innumerable e-mail blasts, and on-and-off-again telemarketing campaigns that had little to do with the rest—all with the express hope that somehow, something would work. If this is your lead generation strategy and you are still waiting for results, I'm here to say stop. Studies confirm that response rates for lead generation campaigns of this nature—the old way—just don't work. The course of passive reactivity is of little value in pursuing the complex sale.

The business scene today is rife with new competition. Budgets are shrinking, and marketing and sales teams are stretched to the limit to do more with less.

Many business-to-consumer marketing resources exist, but they are of little relevance in business-to-business where the complex sale, a phenomenon in its own right, requires a holistic approach that considers all of the marketing and selling components on a total, complete, and ongoing basis.

CEOs traditionally feel they aren't getting enough activity at the top of the sales funnel and demand more leads. Any kind of leads will do, it seems, as long as they are *right now*. Marketers, on the other hand, must continually face the exasperation of having too few high-quality leads and are forced to choose immediate tactics over better long-term planning and execution.

Salespeople, in their primary quest for increased sales, operate under the pressure to more effectively utilize their available leads. In either case, the generation of leads today calls for much more than salespeople getting on the phone in an attempt to schedule appointments. Sadly, this is the exercise in

futility where a great many talented salespeople still find themselves trapped. In the end, poorly conceived and executed lead generation is a major impediment to growth.

## **Who Is Responsible for Generating Leads in the Complex Sale?**

Unfortunately, the time-honored struggle of sales to get a foot in the door fails miserably in context of the complex sale. To be successful, a carefully crafted, thoroughly researched, and proven lead generation strategy cannot come from sales—any more than should modern salespeople be burdened with the old, worn-out tactic of cold-call prospecting. Salespeople must be enabled to do what they do best—to sell, with leads that have been qualified as sales ready.

In lead generation, the job of the marketing department is to develop leads to match the buyer's readiness to buy and the seller's expectations of selling. Marketing to sales: "We get the leads; you get the sales." Although sales leads can be generated in any number of ways, some better than others, the high-quality, high-value kind so necessary to the complex sale is quite another matter.

Marketing, by virtue of its province, should be responsible for the actual process of lead generation, if not for accountability then for ensuring that the definition of a qualified lead is properly followed and measured. Marketers must have the perspective to know when the lead is sales ready. Marketers can then more effectively manage the lead generation process and be better placed to measure ROI and revenue contribution.

Nevertheless, there are some organizations that for various reasons still place the responsibility of lead creation with the sales sector. While I disagree that this is the most effective way to generate leads, it's important to note that the tenets offered here can be just as valuable in any case.

## **Let Sales Sell**

According to research by SiriusDecisions, during the last five years the average sales cycle has gotten to be 22 percent longer, typically with three more decision makers participating in the buying process.<sup>1</sup> With the reduced administrative support that there seems to be across the board, more of the

1 "SiriusDecisions 2005 Sales and Marketing Benchmarking Study," (Southport, CT: SiriusDecisions 2005).

seller's time must be spent on writing reports, keeping pace with customers, and maintaining paperwork. Experience with clients of my company points to as little as 35 to 40 percent of the sales staff's time being available for actually moving the sales process forward. And because of the multitude of interrelated aspects of the complex sale, the salesperson is often expected to remain involved beyond the buy, and that can go right through implementation and subsequent ongoing service.

Whether to put more money into sales or into marketing is a dilemma faced by many senior executives. Individuals charged with selling a company's products or services would tell you they need more selling time to generate increased revenue, not more sales leads. And the truth of the matter is, there are a number of indicators supporting the contention that they do have too much else to do and not enough time to sell.

In his book *Return on Marketing Investment*, Guy R. Powell notes that "CEOs often wonder, why should I invest in marketing [lead generation] when I can hire more sales people for the same budget and see a measurable increase in revenue?"<sup>2</sup> Contrarily, our research shows, for the complex sale, it is far more effective to support proven salespeople with good lead generation than to hire additional salespeople.

Still, salespeople succeed in spite of it all. They may have to generate their own leads, in one way or another, to meet their revenue and sales targets. They are often compelled to do their own prospecting for leads independent of any corporate marketing programs. Remember, the sales team is either doing selling activities or prospecting activities. It's like a teeter-totter—when prospecting, the teeter-totter is up, and when pursuing a hot deal it is down.

Today, it takes new salespeople, and hence their productivity, longer to get up to speed. Product- and servicewise, companies are in constant flux, and salespeople have more to sell, more to do. Cross-selling and up-selling often suffer. Where does all of this take us? Current business trends show that complex sales products and services are being commoditized faster, margins are eroding, and salespeople have less time to acquire the necessary knowledge to sell properly as trusted consultative advisors to their customers.

In addition, there are many other issues happening that are affecting whether or not a prospect will buy. For example, companies have many more choices that can solve their needs. The time required to get consensus is taking much longer. The status quo—"decision delay"—is increasing. In addition, the sales landscape has gotten much more competitive. Salespeople are

2 Guy R. Powell, *Return on Marketing Investment*, (RPI Press: February, 2003).

forced to sell in situations where they are merely column fodder on a potential customer's spreadsheet. In such situations, sales proposals are simply used to justify a vendor selection decision, a determination that already has been made. Unbeknownst to the salespeople, they may even be responding to nothing more than an RFP (request for proposal) coming from association with a well-entrenched competitor.

Sales teams, unfortunately, aren't always equipped for this new paradigm, nor are the company's marketing processes able to adapt. As the complexity increases, so does the challenge of being able to find a clear value proposition. This is why marketing must assume a pivotal role to help the sales team sell. Marketing must now go beyond the sales lead.

For all intents and purposes, lead generation must be looked at to drive more sales. If not, consider it wasted expense, time, and effort. In the traditional sales funnel, the objective is to convert more leads faster. However, an Aberdeen Group study found that salespeople don't necessarily want more leads but rather more selling time with viable opportunities.<sup>3</sup>

## Universal Lead Defined

Additionally, a lot of money is squandered every day because companies lack a clear understanding of what a "sales lead" really means. Consequently, they fail to make lead definition a credible facet of their business. There is consensus among numerous sources that sales fails to act on upwards of 80 percent of the leads it gets, an astounding fact if anywhere near accurate. More than likely, that number is so high because most of the leads that sales receive aren't qualified leads or appropriate buyers for what is being sold.

By definition, a universal sales lead is one that has been determined to fit the profile of the ideal customer, has been qualified as sales ready, and spells out the responsibilities and accountabilities of the participants in the program, sales and marketing.

Actually, our own research reveals that only 1 out of every 10 companies operates under a lead definition that both sales and marketing have agreed upon. There is no better catalyst for building ties between sales and marketing—and no better way to generate a greater return on marketing investment—than the premise that everyone knows what a sales lead really and truly means.

Lead generation represents an important marketing investment, and the systematic development of good lead generation is increasingly a strategic

<sup>3</sup> *Sales Effectiveness: Helping Sales Sell*, (Boston: Aberdeen Group, June 2004).

imperative worldwide. The right culture, strategy, and tactics are required to make this a cost-effective outlay.

It seems that companies have little problem generating inquiries, but inquiries as such are rarely useful without an adequate process to qualify them as sales ready and will often promote activity that produces little result.

Chapter 3 provides an in-depth discussion of creating a universal lead definition for the complex sale.

## Reaching the Decision Makers

The complex sale requires that salespeople develop relationships within higher levels of management, often top-level executives. It is the job of marketing to pave the way by providing opportunity to develop these relationships. To reach C-level executives, salespeople must have a strategic dialogue that's relevant to the prospects' interests in return on investment and predictable growth for their stakeholders. The paradigm is one that makes the salesperson a trusted advisor who adds value to the proposition, with the goal of increasing the odds of success for both parties.

In this paradigm, salespeople can no longer tout their solutions as simply better, faster, and cheaper and hope to get the attention of these higher-level economic buyers. And for the very same reason, a lead generation program aimed at reaching these same prospects must focus on value propositions that speak directly to the right decision makers at the right time in their buying process.

## Why Is Trust So Important?

Economic buyers increasingly avoid talking to salespeople if at all possible. It seems there is a decided lack of trust of salespeople, and, truth told, they just don't want to be sold. A wealth of readily available information from the Internet and other sources delays the need and value of face-to-face contact with the salesperson until later phases of the buying process. And when at last a participant, to be successful the salesperson must earn the recognition of "trusted advisor." It's been said that trusted advisors are 70 percent more likely to come away with a sale.<sup>4</sup> That becomes easier to understand when you consider that people *buy* based on emotion and then *backfill* with logic.

<sup>4</sup> Susan Mulcahy, "Evaluating the Cost of Sales Calls in Business-to-Business Markets: A study of more than 23,000 businesses," (Washington: Cahners Research, January 2002), p 8.

Trust has become the theme for a new type of marketing. It's about the relationship. In today's commoditized business climate, the thing that sets companies apart is their ability to create and develop relationships. Companies that understand the concept of how to develop trust and follow with specific actions are positioned to grow and prosper as none other. Decision makers will tell you they value the sales interaction that instills trust that the solution will make their professional lives better. To establish the confidence that your company can provide:

- Buyers must be familiar with you, your company, and what you do.
- Buyers must perceive that you and your company are expert in your field.
- Buyers must believe that you and your company understand their specific needs and can solve them.
- Buyers must like you and your company enough to want to work with you.

It is important to view potential customers as unique individuals, and, in pursuit of their trust, it is time well spent getting to know everything you can about what they do and how they think. How do they work? What are their needs? Where do they go for research? Who in fact are they?

Trust comes from respecting where the prospect is in the buying process and, accordingly, selecting the communication tactics that are warranted. With clear understanding of the buying process, you can remain productively visible throughout. Messaging, content, and tactics are then targeted as is appropriate. The right value proposition, delivered via the correct tactics and on a consistent basis, puts timing in your favor. Be cognizant, then, of what needs to be provided at each stage of the buying process, thus enabling a comfortable transition to the next stage when ready.

## **Matching Your Strategy with Your Customer's Strategy**

In *Mastering the Complex Sale*, Jeff Thull notes that salespeople struggle with the complex sale because their customers do not have a clear buying process defined. He advocates that companies help customers develop appropriate criteria with which to make informed decisions.<sup>5</sup> How will your prospects make informed decisions that will be good for you if they don't have the

<sup>5</sup> Jeff Thull, *Mastering the Complex Sale: How to Compete and Win When the Stakes are High!*, (Wiley, May 2003).

parameters in their buying process? Better they turn to you as a trusted advisor than to uninformed colleagues. Or to the Internet. Or to trade publications. Or, heaven forbid, to your competitors.

Designing around the customer's buying process and all it represents is as critical as it gets in the development of good lead generation. So how is this done? It all starts with the right lead generation strategy.

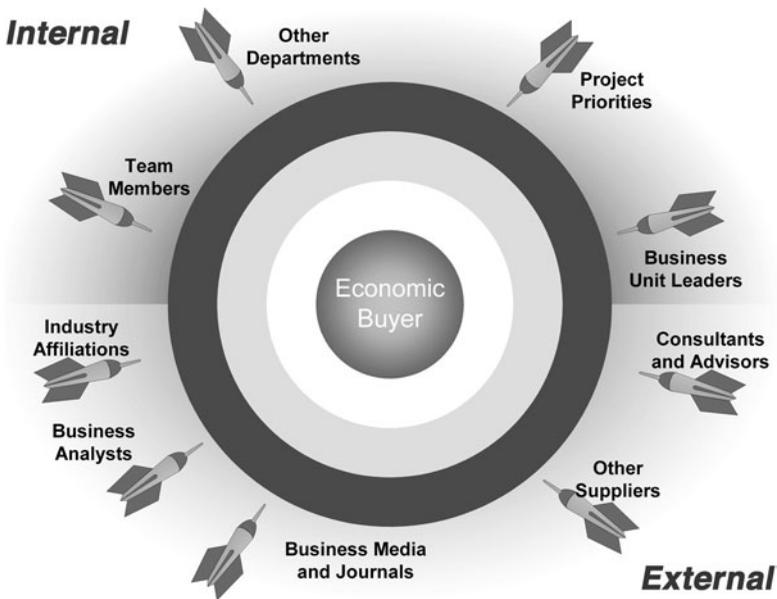
Successful lead generation is predicated on a firm foundation of strategy. It is getting to be universal, however, that marketers are under extreme pressure to provide more leads *now*, which tends to prompt an errant emphasis on tactics over strategy. CEOs pay great lip service to the concept of marketing strategy, yet the concern remains overriding that there is never enough activity in the sales funnel. Marketers, therefore, doing exactly as they are directed, following orders, under such circumstances don't follow the general truth that only with good strategy come the right tactics. Meanwhile, there isn't much to move the sales needle.

In addition, with the increasing involvement of upper management and in light of today's buying decision processes, it's clear that much of the selling takes place when the salesperson isn't present. The number of individuals brought into the act of buying as defined by the complex sale has increased by three over the past five years. Not only is the average sales cycle longer and more complex, there are more principals tending to the customer's interests. The era of selling to one economic buyer is long gone. Decisions are now consensus-driven, with more stakeholders weighing in on the decision.

Consequently, the lead generation effort must reach beyond one individual buyer. Astute marketers today recognize that there is an entire sphere of influence represented by contacts associated with the economic buyers, e.g., influencers, information gatherers, opinion molders, and an external sphere of influence represented by end-users as illustrated in Figure 1-1. All must be addressed with equal intensity. The more you reach, the better.

Marketers are charged with the responsibility of measuring, identifying, and optimizing performance. The complex sale means working within your prospect's corporate structure. A recent visit to a company revealed a CEO, a sales manager, and a marketing director with altogether divergent views on who was responsible for what. It was quickly apparent that each represented an important target to be reached and influenced equally.

A sign of the times is that no one seems to feel compelled anymore to make decisions without consensus. Perhaps a bit paradoxically, companies seem bent on doing more with less, and if that puts you in the position of failing to reach the right individual at the right time, then no one's purposes



**Figure I-1** Spheres of influence<sup>6</sup>

are served well, yours or the prospect's. Exactly who is that person? Do your homework and then go for the broadest potential group to increase the odds that you are reaching someone who can make the final decision.

## “All of Them”

A client's CEO asks his marketing manager, “What are our most effective tactics for generating leads?” The marketer's reply: “All of them.”

What? Well, simply put, you cannot rely on a single marketing medium for generating leads. For strength and stability, a table requires all four legs. To lose one is to become less sound, less secure. So too with lead generation. Do you rely on a minimum of tactics, maybe to save a dollar? Or do you proceed with a strong and stable base? Lead generation is an iterative process; you must monitor and adjust your tactics based on your results.

For the complex sale, a proper lead generation program requires a disciplined and multimodal approach. A director of marketing comments: “I look at our lead generation efforts, specifically in this economy, as I might a financial portfolio. If I can't measure the tactics or programs in terms of return on

<sup>6</sup> Figure 1.1 Cheryl Hatlevig, Chris Hawver, *Spheres of Influence*, 2005.

investment—leads generated, business closed, opportunities in the funnel—then why should I expect anyone to invest in my fund?”<sup>7</sup>

## Valuable Tools to Use with Lead Generation

Let’s briefly explore three key elements that are crucial for success with any lead generation program.

### ***Closed-Loop Feedback Is Crucial***

When routed to the sales department, many sales leads just disappear into a black hole, never to be seen again. Studies show that as many as 80 percent are ignored as a matter of course. This most probably is due to jaded salespeople accustomed to a tradition of poor-quality leads. With the proper universal lead definition, however, and with the sales team’s input, there is justifiable confidence to believe that sales will ultimately close the loop and provide targeted results. How are we doing? Keep communication open. Relevant feedback is critical.

### ***Database, CRM, SFA***

For the purpose of clarity we will refer to the varied applications that track, house, and report on sales and marketing activity simply as a database rather

Discussion with the disgruntled vice president of marketing of one of the big software firms disclosed a poor success rate with lead generation companies he had worked with, and he was frustrated that his own internal lead generation program wasn’t working either. Tangibly, things looked much brighter. The marketing department was decorated with beautifully framed, award-winning magazine ads. The CMO’s office was like a toy store, with a wide array of logo-imprinted specialty items and a wall full of awards. None, suffice to say, was notated for ROI or its overall impact on performance. From a lead generation perspective, it would have been nice to see, for each:

- How many inquiries were generated.
- How many inquiries converted into qualified leads.
- How many sales were generated as result of that ad.
- What the ROI was.

7 Interview with Cheryl Hatlevig, Director of Marketing, Adesso Systems.

than customer relationship management (CRM) or sales force automation (SFA) with all the misconceptions and baggage that come with those terms.

Most companies still lack a defined process and discipline for consistently using and updating their databases. On average, salespeople are not held responsible for updating the databases, and marketers don't effectively know how to use the data contained in them. Unless the sales and marketing data are integrated, it is nearly impossible to get an accurate picture of return on marketing investment. Lead generation being the bridge between marketing and sales, the responsibility of maintaining the database must be assigned to one function or the other. Whichever, depending on the organization, it's important that the issue be addressed for the sake of managing the lead generation program.

### ***Open Dialogue—A Mind-Set***

As simplistic as it seems, *thinking effectively* is vital to developing good lead generation.

Our mind-sets ultimately influence our strategic choices. Investing in lead generation means you are proactively initiating a relationship. Lead generation becomes a conversation, a dialogue; it is not a series of campaigns. This opens up a whole new set of possibilities. Again, companies don't buy; people do. Good lead generation *identifies*, *initiates*, and *nurtures* relationships with the right people, making them sales-ready leads.



## **About the Author**

**Brian J. Carroll** knows what drives B2B buyers. As the founder of the B2B Lead Blog, a researcher and lecturer on marketing best practices, and leader in empathy marketing, he's at the epicenter of the shifting B2B marketing landscape. He is also the founder of the B2B Lead Roundtable LinkedIn Group with over 19,533+ members. Brian helps companies understand and execute modern lead generation with his speaking, consulting, and training workshops. His blog, [www.b2bleadblog.com](http://www.b2bleadblog.com), is read by thousands each week.

Brian can be contacted at:

E-mail: [brian@b2bleadblog.com](mailto:brian@b2bleadblog.com)

B2B Lead Generation Blog: <http://www.b2bleadblog.com>

Book Web site: <http://leadgenerationbook.com>