6 tips for getting the most from your leads

Abstract

Get your sales funnel off to a good start by using the leads object in Salesforce CRM. By tracking potential customers from lead through closed deal, you can collect the information you need to refine your sales process to reach high conversion rates.

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A lead is a prospect or potential opportunity—and it is the starting point for any good sales process. A lead can be a person you met at a conference who's interested in your company, products, or services. It can be someone who filled out a form asking for more information. Leads can also be generated as a result of a marketing campaign.

Leads help you track potential business, but they often need additional background work or nurturing before you can estimate your chances for success. To get the most from your leads, try these approaches to start your sales process from potential customer to closed deal:

1. **Capture potential customers from your Web site** – Your Web site is a very effective, yet low-cost channel for collecting leads and information on potential customers. These people have actually come to you—don't miss the opportunity to capture these "low hanging fruit."

2. **Consolidate your leads** – Make it easy to follow up on and nurture all potential customers by consolidating all your leads in one place.

    - Survey everyone in your company, especially your Marketing department, for lead sources.
    - If you find that some lists are in other applications or formats, import those leads into Salesforce CRM.
    - Tell everyone who is gathering leads that you're consolidating—and plan a process for continually sharing data with them.

3. **Ensure that potential customers get the attention they need** – Once all your leads are in a single place, make sure there's follow up. One way to accomplish this goal is to assign leads to individual reps.

    - Assign leads based on region, product, or other criteria you define.
    - If you need to assign lots of leads, create a lead queue to help manage the distribution of leads.
    - Create queues for different teams, such as "Western Region" or "Eastern Region" and assign different reps to each queue.

4. **Qualify your leads** – Qualifying your leads helps you understand what's needed to move them to the next phase of your sales process. Be sure you define a lead/sales process that includes a list of status options that reps can use to assign to each lead.

    - The standard lead status options are Open, Contacted, Unqualified, or Qualified.
    - Be sure your reps know your lead/sales process and use the same lead status. That way you'll know how your leads are moving through your sales funnel when you run reports.
    - You also need to qualify incoming leads as you import them from another system, gather them from a marketing campaign, or as they come in from your Web site.

Best practice

5. **Convert leads to start to close the deal** – Once you qualify a lead, it's important to convert the lead into an account with an associated contact and opportunity. Lead conversion is the first step towards closing the deal because reps can start working the account. Be sure everyone who interacts with leads clearly understands the terms as they are used in Salesforce CRM.
    - Accounts, contacts, and opportunities show the total picture of a customer relationship. The lead is the introduction to that picture.
    - An account is the company information associated with a deal.
    - A contact is an individual associated with an account.
    - An opportunity is the related deal information.
6. **Keep track of the progress of your leads** – As your reps work with prospects, they're likely to contact them, send information via emails, and—hopefully—move them to the next phase of your sales process. With this information, you can run reports to show what lead sources perform best, so you can decide how to adjust your marketing mix, adjust your sales process, and best invest you marketing budget. For example, you can:
    - Evaluate marketing campaigns based on the leads they create
    - Monitor the time it takes your sales team to convert leads

A lead is a great starting point for any sales process. Use these simple lead management best practices to understand the potential your leads hold for new business. Then use the features in Salesforce CRM—such as the web-to-lead feature—to efficiently manage your leads and get the most from them.

For More Information

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