



# Sales Speaks:

Perceptions & Ponderings on  
Marketing Leads

**VORSIGHT**



*Build. Expand. Optimize.  
Sales Strategies*

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In Q4 2010, Vorsight & The Bridge Group, Inc. surveyed **1,150+ B2B Sales Reps** on their view of marketing-generated leads. The Sales Reps surveyed were diverse in that they spanned selling roles, target customer types & average deal sizes.

**The single constant among responders was that they are all end-users of marketing generated leads.**

We believe this is the first research into ***the perceptions of Sales Reps*** on the marketing-generated leads they receive on a daily basis. *What follows is an analysis of their responses.*

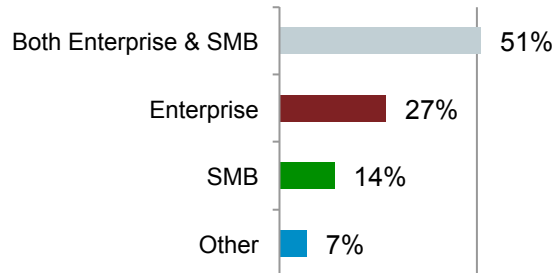
The half-hour you spend reading/considering this eBook will be time well spent. You'll begin questioning the "leads" your reps are pursuing, calculating your own Lead Effectiveness Index, likely consider putting an internal SLA in place between Sales & Marketing, and one more thing--turning your funnel upside down.

**Barry Trailer**  
Managing Partner  
CSO Insights

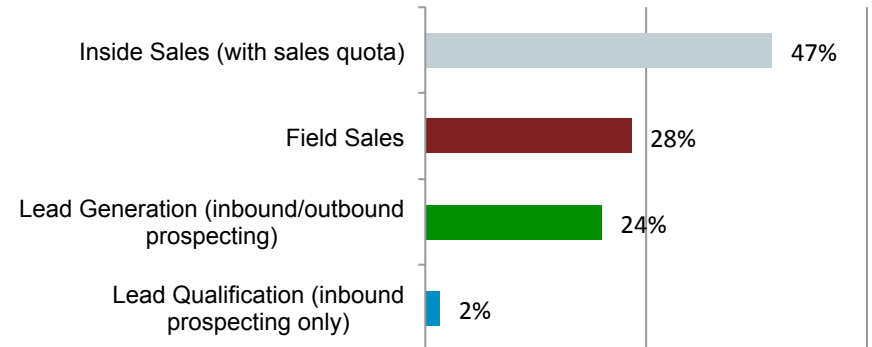


# About the Sales Reps who Participated

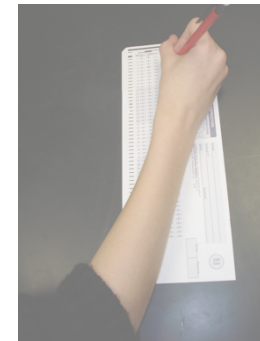
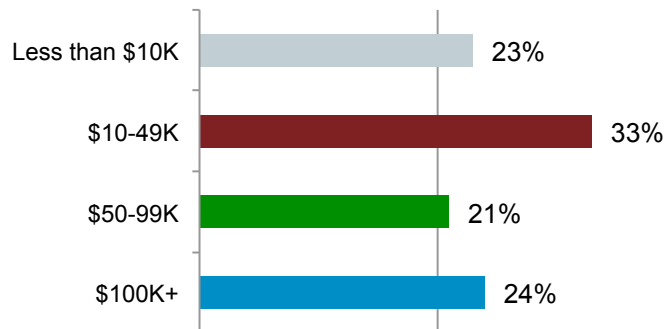
- What type of customer do you target?



- How would you describe your role?



- What is your average deal size?



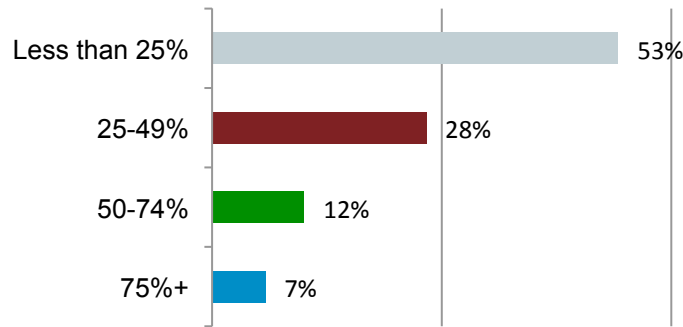
A group of five sales representatives are seated at a long table covered with a blue cloth. They are all holding up small white cards with black numbers. From left to right, the first person holds a card with the number '3', and the other four people hold cards with the number '4'. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

## **Chapter 1: How Sales Reps Rate Leads**

# What Percentage of Marketing-Generated Leads do you Feel Fit your Sweet Spot?

(i.e. company fits your Ideal Customer Profile)

% of Marketing-Generated Leads that Fits Sweet Spot



## Average Percent that Fits Sweet Spot

All	31%
SMB Only	36%
Enterprise Only	29%

Although the vast majority of companies ***have defined their sweet spot***, it appears that creating demand generation campaigns **that attract that specific audience** is easier said than done.

On average, Sales Reps report that only 31% of all leads generated fit their Ideal Customer Profile (ICP). Said another way, **Sales Reps believe roughly 70% of the leads they receive have a low probability to purchase.**

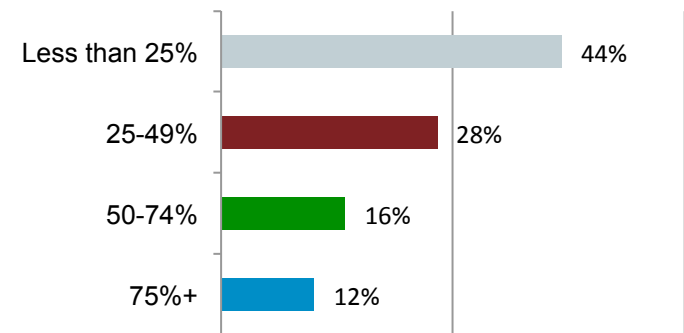
# Of Those that Fit your Sweet Spot, What Percentage are Decision Makers or Strong Influencers?

(i.e. significant role in the buying process)

As one might expect, “Decision Makers” are not typically responding directly to Marketing efforts. This is especially true in the enterprise space where nearly two-thirds of leads within Ideal Customer Profile Accounts are neither “Decision Makers” nor “Strong Influencers.”

So what happens when a non-Decision Maker or Influencer raises their hand? Sales reps must be coached to **qualify the company**, rather than disqualifying the contact.

Percentage of Marketing-Generated Leads that Fit Sweet Spot and are Decision Makers or Strong Influencers



Average Percent of Leads that Fit Sweet Spot AND Reflect Activity from ‘Decision Makers’ or ‘Strong Influencers’

All	11%
SMB Only	17%
Enterprise Only	10%

# THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

## Creating Opportunity

Smart organizations realize that the job of a Sales Rep is not to just “**follow up on leads,**” but rather to “**create opportunity.**”

- Sales Reps should view leads as ***arrows pointing to potential opportunity***
- Rather than just calling the responding contact, Reps should use the intelligence gathered from a lead as part of their ***overall account penetration strategy***
- Combining this information with what Reps know about the buyer’s market and potential challenges, they can contact a more appropriate Influencer, Decision Maker or Economic Buyer with a message that is ***more relevant*** and with a ***greater likelihood of resonating***

This “arrow to opportunity” strategy eliminates the tendency to have a large number of non-influential people floating around Reps’ “tickler” queues and Marketing lead nurturing tracks. Top performers know how to identify a potential opportunity and engage the appropriate Executive(s) even if they weren’t directly identified as “the lead.”

Sales Managers need to understand the skillset that Reps require to successfully create opportunity and evaluate the skill level and ability of each of their Sales Reps to do these activities.

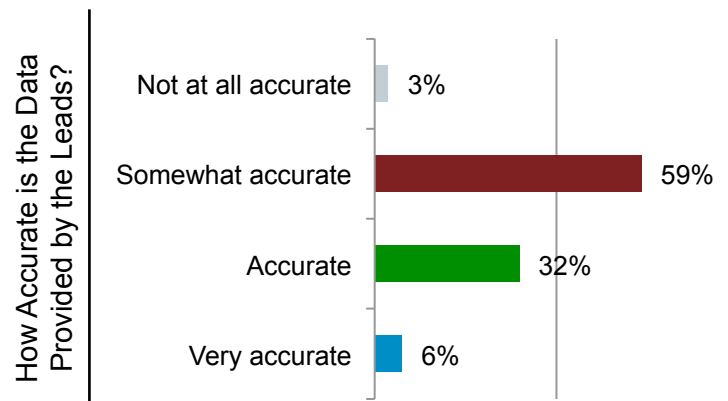




## **Chapter 2: What Sales Reps Say About Lead Accuracy**

# How Accurate is the Data Provided by the Leads?

(e.g. contact details, title, qualification information, etc.)



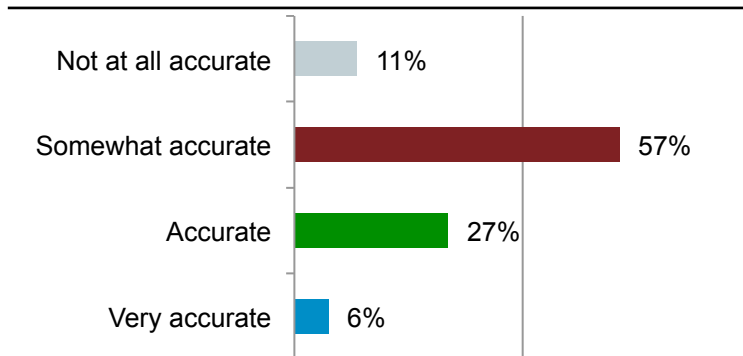
Business people are by and large pretty honest when it comes to filling out web forms. As such, Sales Reps report that Marketing is providing a fairly good starting point. But it is **only** a starting point.

In many ways, this is a no control situation for Marketing. **Accuracy** tends to be inversely proportional to the **number & pointed-ness** of questions asked. In this light, 40% responding that lead data is “accurate” or “very accurate” is, in our view, a positive result.

# If your Company Scores Leads, How Accurate is the Lead Scoring System?

(A high lead score reflects a high propensity to purchase)

If your Company Scores Leads, How Accurate is the Lead Scoring System?



**Companies not using lead scoring: 40%**

Sales Reps report that a full 40% of their Companies are not using lead scoring. For those that are, only one-third of Sales Reps rate their scoring systems as “accurate” or “very accurate.”

Lead scoring has been a hot topic for quite some time. Many of the organizations implementing **marketing automation** technologies & methodologies have adopted lead scoring as part of that process. But as a key indicator of propensity to purchase, ***Sales Reps are grading lead scoring as still in its infancy.***

Great to see that more than half of respondents have deployed lead scoring. In some ways, that can be the biggest hurdle. Now it's time to adjust the scoring. The best place is to look at deals that closed, and look at the contacts and behaviors that are associated with those deals. Use data, not anecdote, to get it right. W. Edwards Deming, the great management thinker, said it best: "In God we trust. All others bring data."

**Brian Kardon**  
Chief Marketing Officer  
Eloqua



# If your Company Scores Leads, How Accurate is the Lead Scoring System?

(A high lead score reflects a high propensity to purchase)

Percentage of Responders Rating Lead Scoring System as “Accurate” or “Very Accurate”	
All	33%
SMB Only	44%
Enterprise Only	25%



The most effective way to build a lead scoring system is to base it on “fit” for your Ideal Customer Profile. It doesn’t matter how many times John Smith, a Database Architect at a \$20M dollar company, hits your website or downloads your content. If you are selling to Abigail Adams, a Network Security Officer at a \$100M+ company, the Abigails of the world always deserve greater Sales attention.

The lead score, *as an indicator of where Reps should be focusing their time*, should have propensity to purchase and buyer fit at its foundation.

# THINGS TO THINK ABOUT: The Lead Effectiveness Index

Above, we discussed how Sales Reps graded leads against:

- % fitting the sweet spot
- % of Decision Makers or Strong Influencers
- Accuracy of the data gathered

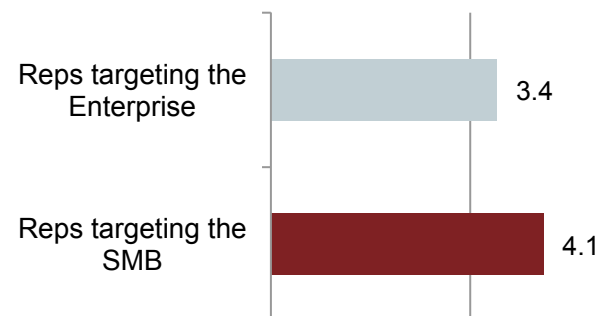
We thought it would be interesting to take a look at the comparative “value” of Leads based on those ratings. This **Lead Effectiveness Index** runs between 0 and 10 (*with 0 being of the lowest “value” and 10 being of the highest*).

**Note:** for those math inclined, the index is derived from  
 (‘Average % that fit sweet spot’ + ‘Average % Decision Makers/Strong Influencers’ +  
 ‘% of accurate or very accurate lead data’) \*3.33

If you asked your Sales team(s) these 3 questions, how would they respond?

1. *What percentage of leads fit our sweet spot?*
2. *Of those, what percentage identify Decision Makers or Strong Influencers?*
3. *How accurate is the data provided by our leads?*

**Lead Effectiveness Index**  
 with “1” being lowest value and “10” being highest value



These data points can deliver real insight into your own **Lead Effectiveness Index** and how Sales Reps perceive Marketing efforts within your organization.



Q2

« Sales & Marketing  
This Way

## **Chapter 3: How Sales Reps Treat Leads**

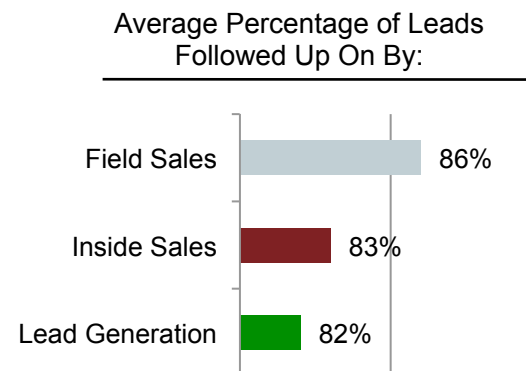
# Approximately What Percentage of Marketing Supplied Leads do you Follow Up on?

We found it **very surprising** that Sales Reps self-reported following up on 84% of leads when we know that, in their view, roughly 70% of them don't fit their particular *sweet spots*.

**Average Percent of Leads Followed Up on: 84%**

There are 2 schools of thought here:

1. Sales Reps are paid to follow up on Marketing-generated leads and cherry picking can leave demand on the table.
2. Time is often the limiting factor for Sales and countless hours are being wasted calling leads that Reps "know" will never buy.



The thing that surprised me most was that 84% of reps follow-up on the marketing generated leads. It would be interesting to determine what they mean by follow-up - as it could mean a standard email and then leaving it alone. I think the real key is proper follow up which means consistent and repeatable and delivering a solid value proposition.



**Carlos Hidalgo**  
CEO  
The Annuitas Group

# Approximately What Percentage of Marketing Supplied Leads do you Follow Up on?

Are Reps wasting effort & energy? Is this behavior because they “have to” or feel that they are “supposed to” follow up on every lead? Or are companies at risk of leaving demand on the table when Reps “cherry pick?”

More on this later, but we wanted to highlight some of the *actual comments we received* on this question:



## The Good

- 100% I would hate to leave something unanswered.
- All leads!! 100%
- I FOLLOW UP ON EVERY LEAD I GET



## The Bad

- 100%. All supplied leads are touched at least 1 time.
- Depends on their title. Title right, call all
- Required to do 100%



## Ugly

- 100%, but only because I must
- 30% pass my smell test
- All, to some extent. Most just get an email.

I was shocked to see that sales reps follow up on leads they don't consider to fit the ideal customer profile. We hear so many complaints from sales about marketing throwing garbage over the wall. But if sales accepts the garbage, there's little chance that lead quality will improve.

**Stephanie Tilton**  
Principal/B2B Content Marketing Strategist  
Ten Ton Marketing





# Does your Organization have an SLA between Marketing & Sales for Follow Up

***Sales and Marketing alignment*** is a big buzz phrase now.

However, “alignment” as a force for change within B2B companies is still in its infancy. Without a service level agreement, Sales Reps will continue to make individual decisions on who to call and why.

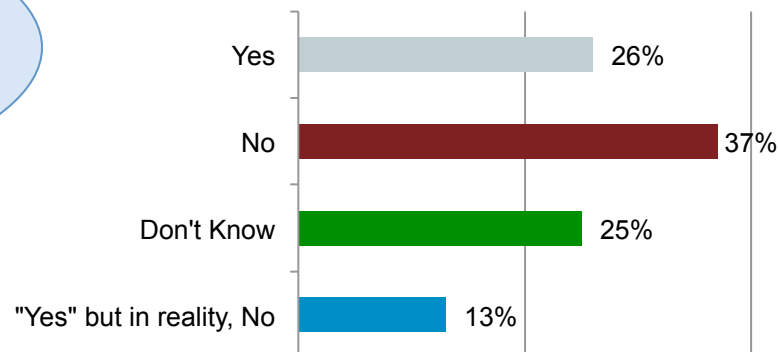
Everyone in Sales and Marketing knows that the type and quality of leads varies dramatically from one campaign to the next. Yet the rules of engagement for the Sales Reps who actually conduct the lead follow up process remain the same from one campaign to the next (***and poorly defined by almost three quarters of organizations***).

The fact that only 26% of companies have an SLA for sales follow-up is scary. I would argue that the Marketing team should stop generating leads until the Sales team puts forth and lives up to a reasonable SLA for follow-up. On the flip side, the Marketing team should also have an SLA for both lead volume and lead quality for what they provide to Sales.



**Mike Volpe**  
VP Marketing  
Hubspot

Does your Organization have an SLA between Marketing & Sales for Follow Up



# THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

## Creating Sales & Marketing Alignment

With less than one-third of all leads fitting the Ideal Customer Profile, Sales Reps must do a lot of *best guess sorting* in order to separate the wheat from the chaff.

If you also consider that only one-quarter of Sales Reps reports having an SLA between Sales & Marketing, we start to see a much bigger problem. Without an agreement on where to invest their time, Sales Reps must make individual decisions on whom to call and why.

Sales & Marketing must agree to “ground rules” on a campaign-by-campaign basis on what a good lead looks like, which ones to call and which ones to leave be. One simple possible solution is the Sales & Marketing huddle concept.

Huddles are **brief**, frequent (*daily at a maximum*) meetings with the whole team for quick status updates. During a campaign follow-up, for example, the team includes Inside Sales, the group’s manager & relevant Field/Product Marketing folks.

Here’s a simple outline:

### Day 1 –

- **Marketing** rolls out the campaign details & tells the story
- **Inside Sales** asks questions to make calling most effective

### Day 3 –

- **Inside Sales** reports on initial results
- **Marketing** commits to deliver additional resources as requested by Inside Sales

### Days 6 & 10 –

Teams update ‘where are we,’ identify obstacles & commit to assistance

### Day 14

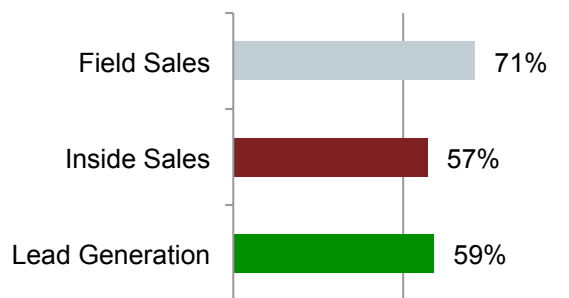
Teams debrief by retelling actual conversation, sharing results & making future commitments

# **Chapter 4: How Sales Reps Judge Pipeline**

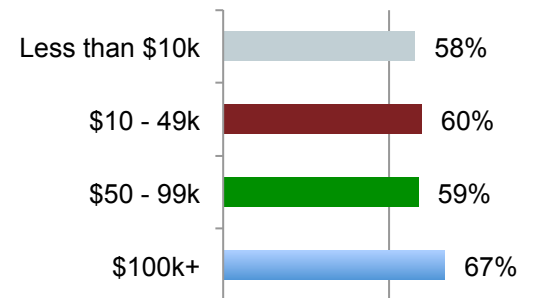


# What Percentage of your Pipeline do you Generate, As Opposed to Being Sourced by Marketing-Generated Leads

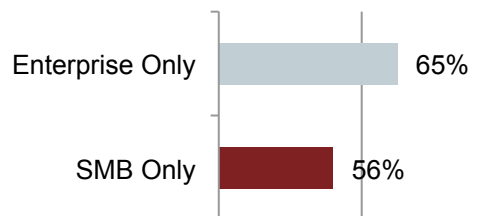
Percentage of Self-Generated Pipeline by Rep Role



Percentage of Self-Generated Pipeline by Deal Size



Percentage of Self-Generated Pipeline by Market



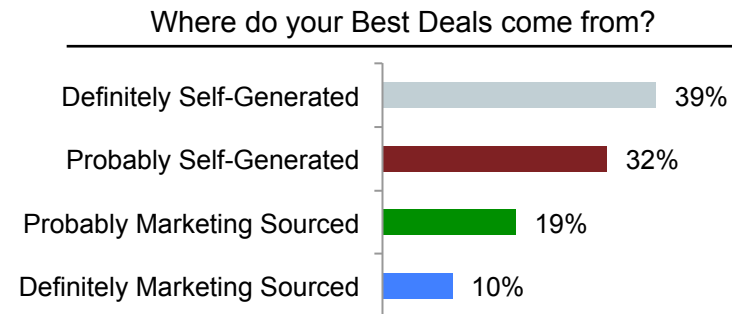
Personally, I am surprised that enterprise reps still generated 65% of their own leads. Knowing how tough it is for salespeople to set up meetings with key corporate decision makers, I assumed that companies would be focused on doing whatever they could to help their field sales force get their foot in the door.

**Jill Konrath**  
CEO & Chief Sales Officer  
Selling to Big Companies



# Where do your Best Deals come from?

Average Deal Size	Definitely Marketing Sourced	Probably Marketing Sourced	Probably Self-Generated	Definitely Self-Generated
Less than \$10K	13%	20%	31%	37%
\$10-49K	10%	20%	35%	35%
\$50-99K	6%	23%	32%	40%
\$100K+	11%	14%	30%	45%



To a large extent, Sales Reps report their “best deals” are self-generated as opposed to having been sourced by Marketing.

This begs the following questions:

**Q:** Is there a natural limit to what Marketing can generate?

-or-

**Q:** Do a significant number of Sales Reps lack the wherewithal and skills necessary to take the incremental intelligence that Marketing provides and create opportunity?

-or-

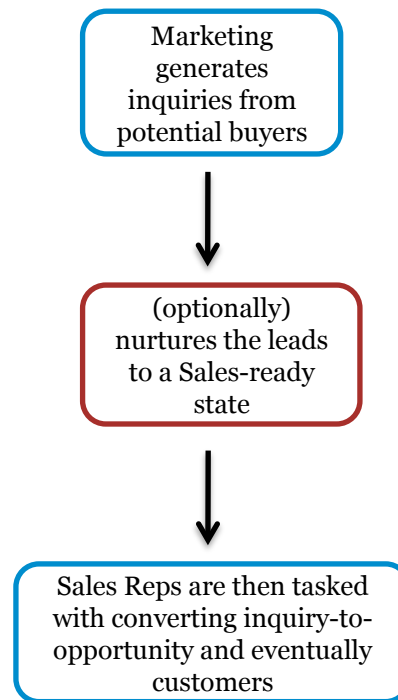
**Q:** Are Sales Reps just dazed and confused about the source of their best deals?

# THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

## An Evolved Approach to the Lead Funnel

As we saw above, more than two-thirds of Sales Reps report self-generating their “best” opportunities. Yet they still call nearly 85% of all Marketing leads. This calls into question the effectiveness of the existing model.

### Uni-Directional Funnel:



# THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

## An Evolved Approach to the Lead Funnel

### Multi-Directional Funnel:

Sales Reps should engage in intelligent outbound prospecting with the goal of laying the groundwork within an Account by beginning to understand their unique environment and challenges. These efforts result in newly found and engaged Executives who fit the Ideal Customer Profile and can go into lead nurturing buckets which are specific to them.

Inbound Marketing is a fantastic way to generate an opt-in list, over time. Growth focused companies need that asset *now*. How about this for a novel idea: **Sales (especially Inside Sales and Lead Generation) sending leads to Marketing.** This model is confirmed by lead generation companies like Green Leads who have clients that hire them not for meetings, but to get Executives to 'opt in' for Marketing awareness campaigns.

*"In order to drive results from their campaigns, Marketing needs a permission-based asset. Just purchasing lists of names just doesn't cut it anymore. So what we do is build targeted lists based on identified roles and responsibilities and then call on behalf of the client. We offer the contact a specific marketing asset (such as a whitepaper or other valuable piece of content. When they agree, we then validate their contact information -- building up the opt in list."*

- Mike Damphousse CEO/CMO of Green Leads

You've built the Marketing machine; now feed it with outreach to targeted prospects with the highest likelihood to buy!

# THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

## Universal Truths

We thought we'd take a moment to step back and review a few universal truths that are common to any organization, *but tend to get lost in the shuffle*. They hold true whether selling software or cow feed.

- Smart organizations realize that the job of Sales is not to *call leads*, but rather to **create opportunity**
- Potential buyers become aware of their pain and decide to explore potential solutions organically. The process is complex and often influenced by countless factors including Sales, Marketing, social media, referrals etc. Multiple impressions impact buying decisions.
- Marketing campaigns can never turn over every stone to find all potential opportunities the way that Sales outreach can.



# SO, WHAT NOW?

## What you should do *tomorrow*

- Commit to piloting **‘huddles’** for your next sales & marketing campaign. *(See page 18 for more details)*
- Commit to embracing the **multi-directional funnel**. *(See page 23 for more details)*

## What you should do *next week*

- Tactical steps for rolling out ‘huddles’ for your next campaign
  - Bring the teams together, discuss the strategy, agree to “ground rules” on what a good lead looks like, which ones to call and which ones to leave be.
  - **Communication beats documentation every day.**
- Tactical steps for rolling out the multi-directional funnel
  - Train your sales team to view marketing leads as guides or arrows to a potential decision maker at an account. Refine your lead scoring to match your Ideal Customer Profile.
  - **Qualify the company, don’t disqualify the contact.**

## What you should do *next month*

### Assess your Sales Team’s Skills

- You can have alignment & a multi-directional funnel, but if you don’t have a sales team that has the necessary skills to follow-up on leads and know where to find the *right contact* at these companies, you have wasted your time.

*Let Vorsight conduct a Prospecting Skills Grader for a “check-up” on your sales team.*

### Conduct the survey internally.

- Where does your company stand relative to lead effectiveness?

*Let The Bridge Group benchmark your people, process & implementation of technology.*

# Shameless Self-Promotion

So now you have alignment between Sales and Marketing. You have established the need for a multi-directional funnel. You have adopted the protocol of qualifying the company instead of disqualifying the contact.

Great! This means absolutely nothing if your Sales team doesn't have the skills to make the most of their leads.

Let Vorsight's award-winning Sales Training and Consulting Team conduct a Prospecting Skills Grader to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of your Sales team.

**Prospecting Skills Grader**



Call (703) 637-0544  
or E-mail [Sales@Vorsight.com](mailto:Sales@Vorsight.com)

 **Grade Your Prospecting Skills**

# Shameless Self-Promotion

Do you have a team of Inside Sales reps responsible for the front end of the sales process? Are they executing the “arrow to opportunity” strategy or are they just “following up on leads”?

Let us benchmark your people, process and implementation of technology against best practices with our Sales & Marketing Alignment audit.

You will walk away with the information you need to make a strategic decision on your inside group and have a roadmap for implementation in hand.



**Call (978) 562-2623  
or email [info@bridgegroupinc.com](mailto:info@bridgegroupinc.com)**

- Data Analysis & Interpretation



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Many thanks for feedback and comments to:

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