

B2B demand generation guide

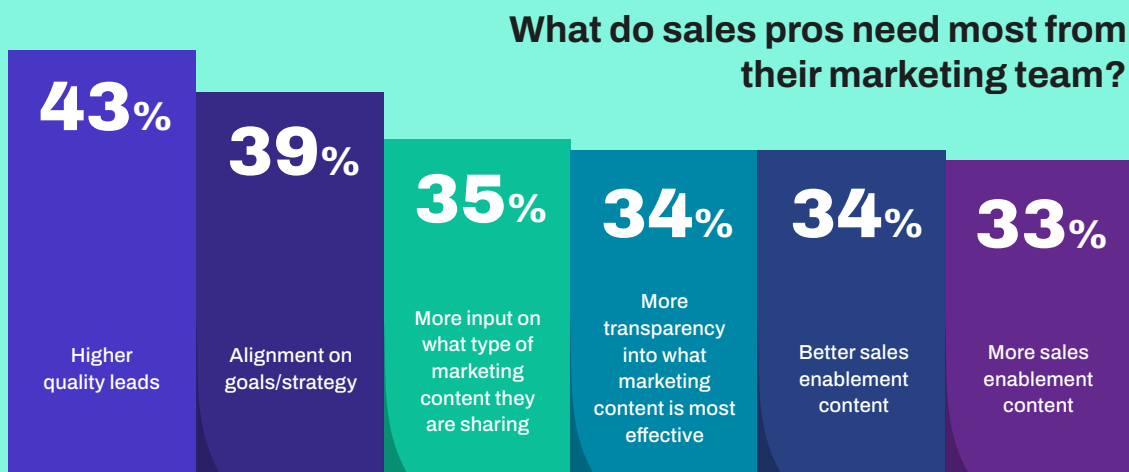
Drive leads and grow your business

Tell the full story with B2B demand generation

First, let's get the big question out of the way: Focusing exclusively on lead generation is the marketing equivalent of starting a book in the middle of the third chapter and stopping before ever reaching the end.

Having such a narrow picture of your marketing funnel leaves you with uncertainty about who your target prospects even are, let alone how to ensure they become customers.

And yet, it's pretty common in the marketing world. According to **HubSpot**, 39% of sales pros say they need more alignment on goals and strategy with their marketing team.



Achieving results is challenging when you consider that **62% of sales** pros say their company is taking fewer risks and 70% say budgets are being scrutinized more than ever.

To truly understand the full story, you need to start at the beginning of the book and read through to the end.

Translation?

Marketing leaders need to stop focusing only on lead generation and **start analyzing their entire lead funnel.**

You need to go through the entire process of B2B demand generation, lead generation, and lead nurturing to **fuel sales and grow your business.**

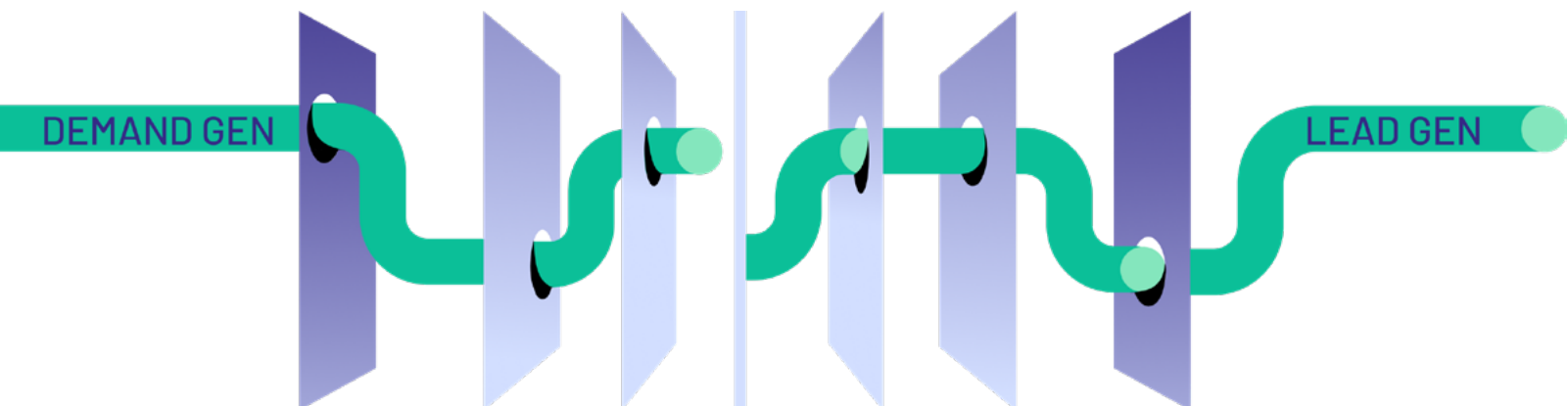
What you'll learn in this guide:

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 - Marketing qualified leads
 - Sales qualified leads
 - Sales opportunities
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Lead generation vs. demand generation: What's the difference?

Demand generation is about reaching new audiences and providing the brand awareness that prospects need to get excited about what it is you offer. It's also essential for building the level of trust with your brand that ultimately convinces prospects to move to the next phase of the marketing funnel.

Lead generation, on the other hand, focuses on converting your target prospects into leads who can be remarketed to and engaged with to ultimately nurture them toward a sale. A prospect converts into a lead when they take an action such as downloading a white paper and submitting their contact information to your CRM.



As **HubSpot explains**, the key takeaway when comparing demand generation and lead generation is that **demand generation has to come first**. You need to attract prospects before you can ever expect to convert them into leads and, ultimately, customers.

Demand generation

Focuses on building brand awareness

vs.

Lead generation

Focuses on converting prospects

The other piece of the puzzle: **lead nurturing**. This is the process of continually engaging with leads and building meaningful relationships after they've converted and are entered into your CRM.

Effective lead nurturing provides your leads with relevant, useful information that moves them further down the funnel, qualifies leads to help the sales team understand whether they are worth pursuing, and warms the leads up to be contacted by sales.

Now, you have the building blocks of a complete lead funnel that you can use to inform your entire marketing strategy.

The advantages of a full-funnel marketing strategy

A full-funnel marketing strategy isn't simply nice to have. It's a must for consistently driving leads and fueling growth. This becomes apparent when you consider how marketing professionals think about what they're most eager to work toward.

According to the [2024 Demand Generation Benchmark Survey](#), B2B demand generation priorities for marketers are:



Improving conversion rates and campaign results



Generating the right contacts/stakeholders within target accounts



Focusing on lead quality over quantity



Generating increased lead volume



Improving their ability to measure and analyze marketing impact

Note that each of these priorities is related to **different parts of the lead funnel**, meaning they each require different marketing tactics. For example, you wouldn't want to run a bunch of search ads targeting generic keywords if your primary goal is to prioritize lead quality over quantity.

Think about what your goals truly are and where they align with the funnel first, then plan your marketing activities.

An effective, full-funnel marketing strategy also takes the pressure off sales representatives. This is critical because **Gartner research reveals** that buyers only devote 5% of their time to meeting with individual sales representatives.

There's even evidence to suggest that providing the right information to customers at the right time, which is what marketing does, leads to bigger deals. **Gartner reports** that customers who are provided with helpful information from B2B companies are 3X more likely to commit to a bigger deal without regret.

Customers who receive helpful information from B2B companies are 3X more likely to commit to a bigger deal.

Source: Gartner

Understanding the lead funnel

Having a clear understanding of the lead funnel is important for any organization, but even more so for those in the B2B space. Why? Because the sales cycles tend to be quite long. According to [6sense](#), the average buying journey lasts 11 months, with buyers not reaching out to sales until 8 months in.



Top of the funnel (TOFU)

Awareness

Prospect > Net new leads

Middle of the funnel (MOFU)

Consideration

Marketing qualified leads > Sales qualified leads

Bottom of the funnel (BOFU)

Decision

Sales opportunity > Customer

This lead funnel aligns buyers to every phase of the funnel and each stage also has corresponding goals and marketing activities that drive toward those goals. It's worth noting that different companies have different ways of representing the funnel and categorizing leads — some sales teams have many more stages as well.

That said, this funnel can serve as a useful foundation for every organization. Let's explore each stage a bit more closely.



Get to know each stage of your lead funnel

Prospects

Prospects are potential buyers who have yet to discover your brand. Prospects represent potential as they are a good fit for your business, but have yet to enter your CRM.



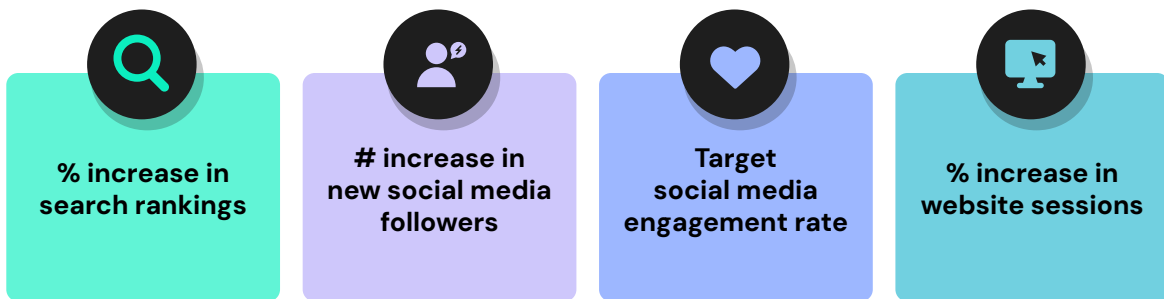
Here are a few factors that define your prospects:

- ✓ **Demographic information**
- ✓ **Geographic location**
- ✓ **Job experience** (title, function, seniority)
- ✓ **Company size**
- ✓ **Industry**

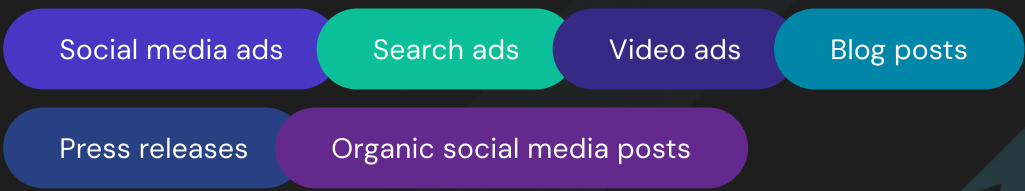
The goal:

Educate and inform prospects about your product and why it solves their biggest pain points.

Prospect metrics for success

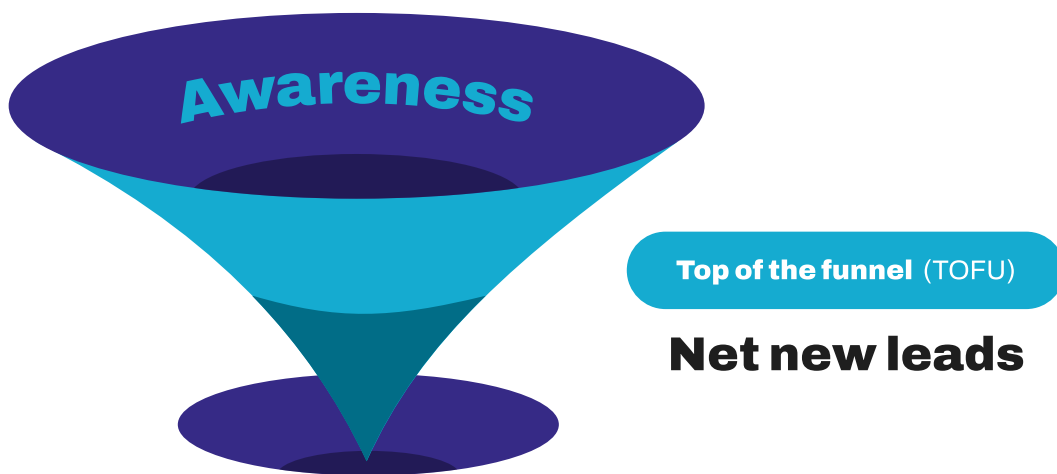


A few examples of how to reach prospects



Net new leads

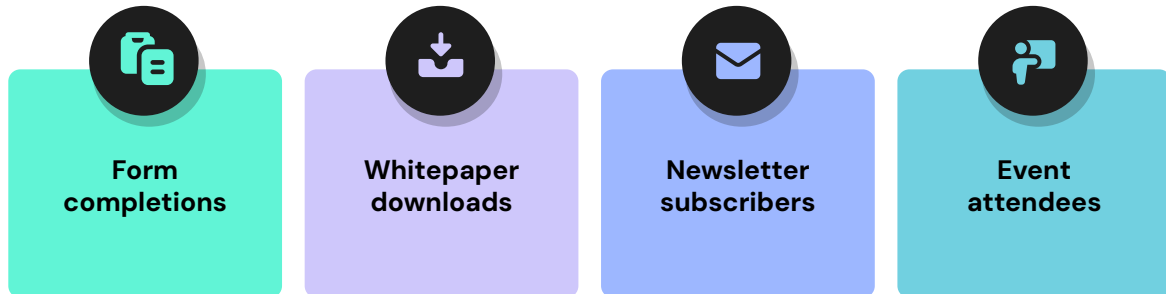
Net new leads are prospects who have taken the next step by expressing interest in your products or services, often by submitting contact information and getting entered into your CRM. At this stage, they've made it clear that they have an interest in what your company has to offer.



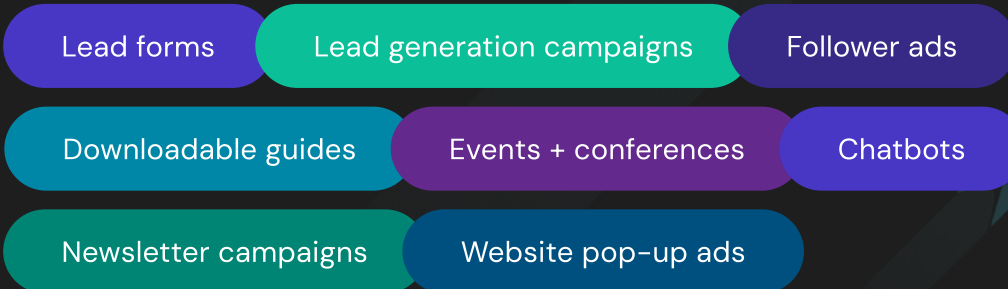
The goal:

Persuade prospects to submit their contact information into your CRM so they become a net new lead that your marketing and sales teams can pursue.

Net new leads metrics for success

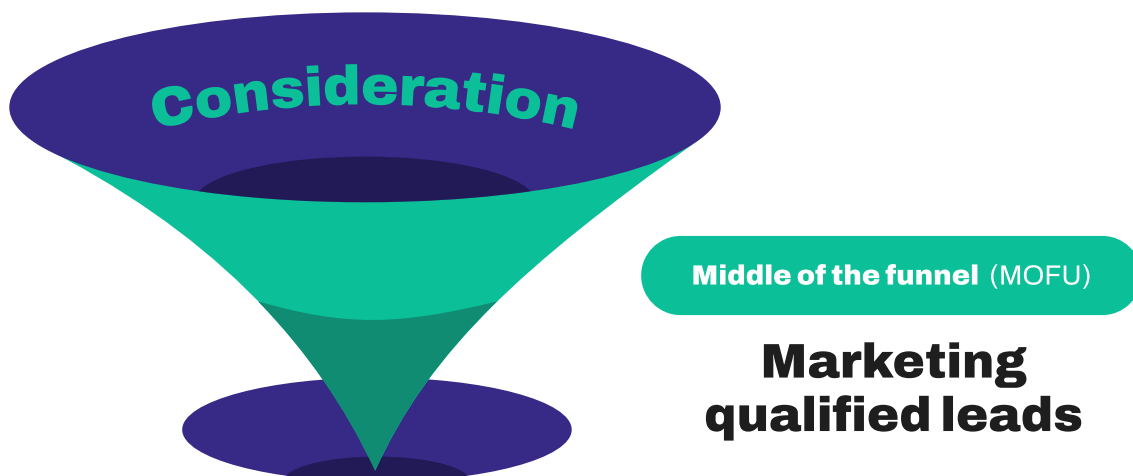


A few examples of **how to reach net new leads**



Marketing qualified leads (MQLs)

At this stage of the buyer's journey, individuals have shown that they have good potential to become a customer so long as they're nurtured appropriately and subsequently engage with the sales team. You identify these people based on qualification criteria such as which pages they visited, the content they interacted with, and so on.



This process is called **lead scoring**, and it can drastically help improve the sales process. An established lead scoring program can cut deal-closing time by 50% and help increase sales by up to 29% according to [Sender](#).

The goal:

Build a system to determine which leads in your CRM are worth pursuing, then move them down the funnel

MQL metrics for success



A few examples of **how to reach MQLs**

Email nurture campaigns

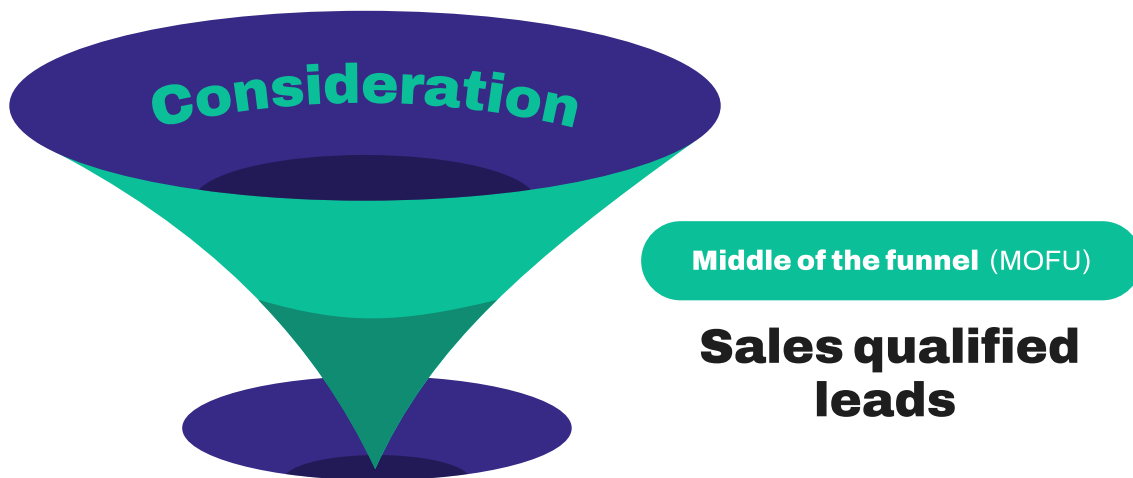
Webinars

Demo campaigns

Retargeting campaigns

Sales qualified leads (SQLs)

An MQL becomes an SQL once they've taken actions that fall in line with criteria showing they have a high potential to become customers. These are often decided upon jointly between the marketing and sales teams, which is important because it ensures alignment on who qualifies. Criteria might include activities such as booking a demo or replying directly to an email.

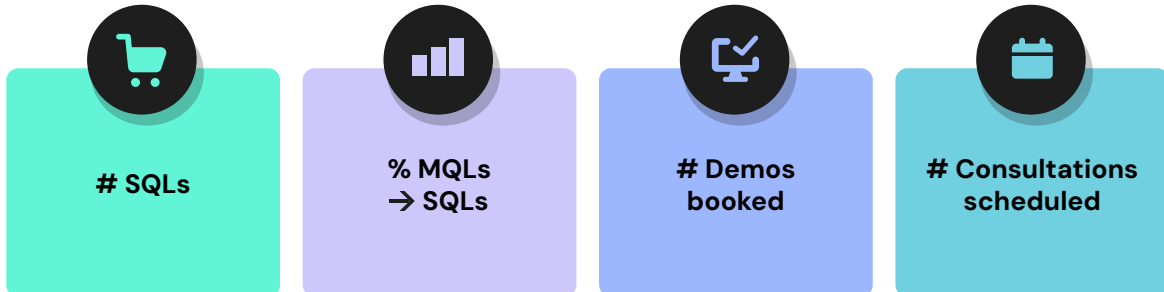


Another key part of this stage is deciding on a formal "Lead Hand-Off" process between marketing and sales, so that both parties are crystal clear on how marketing will share leads and how sales can provide feedback on lead quality.

The goal:

Convince marketing qualified leads to book a meeting with the sales team.

SQL metrics for success



A few examples of how to reach SQLs

Demo campaigns

Email nurture campaigns

Sales calls

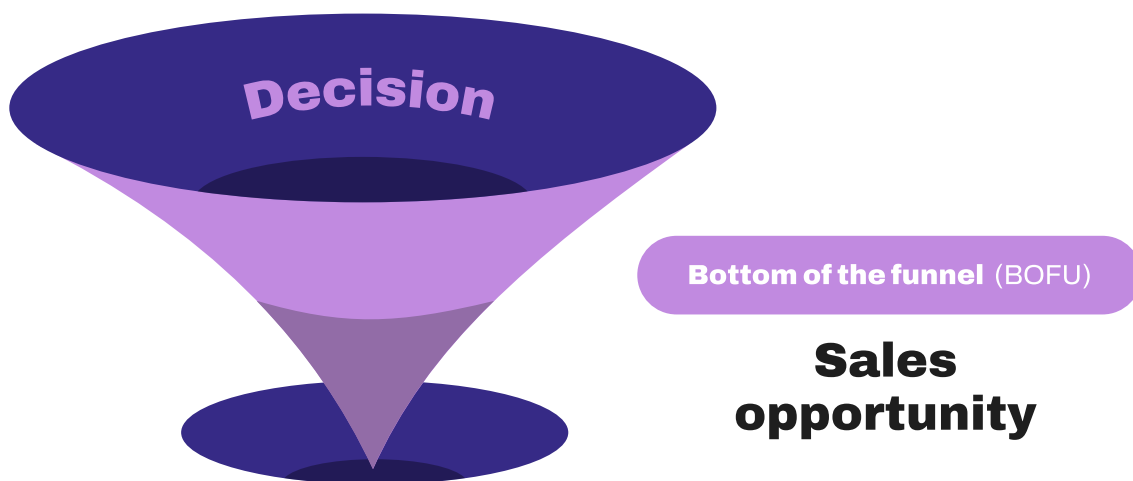
Automated sales email sequences

SMS

Account based marketing

Sales opportunities

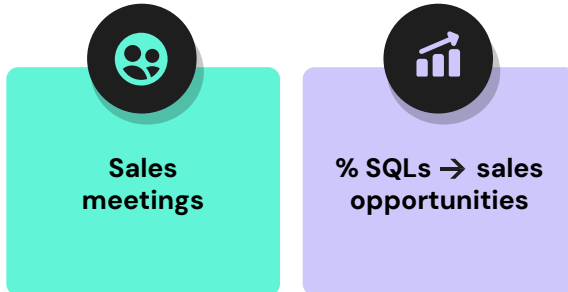
Sales opportunities are qualified leads that have further indicated the potential for buying. They will have engaged in multiple high-value interactions at this point, including conversations with the sales team and key stakeholders, so the sales team will be focusing on closing the deal. These individuals are right on the edge of making a purchase. Consider them on-the-cusp customers.



The goal:

Complete a meeting with the sales qualified lead and confirm their viability to create a deal.

Sales opportunities metrics for success



A few examples of **how to reach sales opportunities**

Sales team meetings

Proposals shared

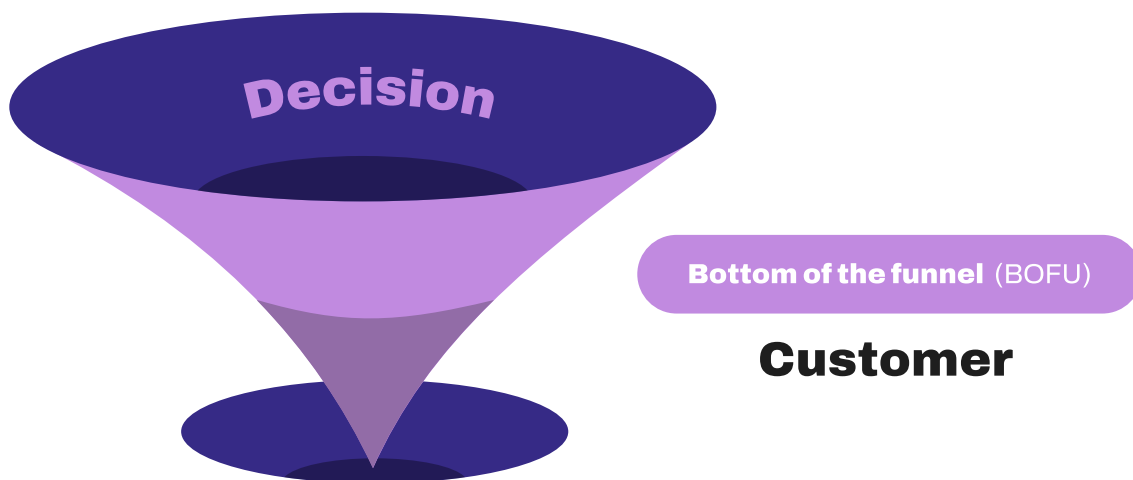
Case studies

Sell sheets

Stakeholder meetings

Customers

Customers are the ones who make it all the way to the end of the journey and go through with a purchase. But don't think of customers as having reached the end. Continuing to nurture these relationships can ultimately contribute to repeat sales and word-of-mouth recommendations.



The goal:

Get the sales opportunity to close the deal.

Remember, retaining customers is far less costly than acquiring new ones. Going the extra step to continue delighting them ensures you're able to build a lead funnel that's stable, predictable, and growth-oriented.

Build a lead funnel that drives results

Intimidated? Don't be. Analyze your funnel to determine which stage you should address first, then move on to the next. **Over time, you can refine your funnel and adjust the criteria for lead qualification to further focus your efforts.** It's like re-reading that entire book — you'll continually gain a better understanding of the full story.

About Aimtal

Aimtal is an integrated marketing agency with a specialization in B2B marketing. Our consultative, creative, and data-informed approach to marketing allows our team of experts to build strategies, programs, and processes that result in sustainable brand awareness and business growth for your company.

Aimtal specializes in building efficient systems that lay the foundation for growth. We've built demand generation programs for smaller marketing teams that are ready to scale and for some of the largest tech companies in the world.

Show the value of marketing and sales with
Aimtal's marketing & RevOps services



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