

## Targeted Lead Relationship Management For Sales

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Lost business opportunities, inefficient resource management and broken processes are recurring challenges for business-to-business sales and marketing organizations. According to Gartner, The Yankee Group and In-Stat/MDR, 40-80% of sales leads are not fully exploited and sales personnel spend just 18% of their time calling on new business opportunity, and even less researching new opportunity. Further, as much as 70% of buyers say that when a purchasing need arises it's unlikely that a sales representative has recently called.

### Traditional Prospecting

In the traditional approach to new business prospecting, marketing organizations develop strategy and distribute sales leads from myriad sources. Due to the numerous channels available to capture leads, the lead volume into a sales organization can present significant administrative and management challenges. First, how do sales teams prioritize leads? How does marketing assess which channels are developing the most relevant prospects? And, if sales representatives are unsuccessful with leads presented through marketing, trust within an organization can diminish rapidly. Once this occurs, sales has little incentive to fully pursue and develop leads referred from marketing.

Further complicating these challenges is the way markets work. Research suggests that, at any time, only 15% of target markets are in an active buying cycle, while another 15% of the marketplace presents no purchase opportunity at all. The remaining 70% of companies, or majority of the market, may not know how they can benefit from a company's products or services and need to be educated in a consultative process.

When considering all of this, it's easy to understand why missed opportunities occur. Sales may categorize 70% of the market as of

little value and never engage these companies as potential customers, though studies have shown that as much as 43% of them will make purchasing decisions within 13 months. And, the organization may not have developed the systematic approach needed to stay-in front of prospects until they enter the decision cycle.

### Targeted Lead Relationship Management (TLRM)

TLRM is a systematic, relationship-based approach to prospecting, supported by ongoing target market research and prospect data and performance management. TLRM enables companies to capture the 43% of prospects that will enter a purchasing cycle within 13 months. Sales leads developed with TLRM are highly qualified and relevant because TLRM facilitates ongoing discussion and education of prospects about highlighted products and services until prospects enter the purchasing decision cycle.

TLRM is based on the importance of nurturing relationships with the right prospects—even when a sale is not imminent. For that reason, TLRM should be outsourced as a lead generation and qualification strategy, with the ultimate objective of engaging the sales team with educated, interested prospects at the point they enter the buying cycle.

A successful TLRM practice requires personnel with advanced business acumen and communication skills, and the right approach to nurturing relationships. A systematic TLRM methodology should enable comprehensive and intelligent prospect coverage through direct conversations, mail material (white papers, updates, brochures, etc.) and emails, designed to educate prospects, increase confidence, elicit intelligence and build relationships. Data obtained as intelligence information in prospect discussions should be analyzed, periodically updated and/or exploited when warranted.