BROUGHT TO YOU BY LEADMD

MONSTERS OF FUNNEL

ARE YOU READY TO ROCK?

LeadMD APTTUS Linked in® TOPO HEINZ MARKETING ENGAGIO

THE SET LIST

THE FUNNEL TODAY AND TOMORROW

by Scott Albro | *Founder & CEO* | *TOPO*

As digital marketing transforms the B2B buying journey, many marketers struggle with one essential question: **HOW EFFECTIVE IS MY FUNNEL?**

Our buyers move in a blizzard of social, mobile, offline, digital and now virtual messages.

Every day marketers must fight their way through a crowded landscape to capture lead attention, nurture them with compelling campaigns and persuade them all the way to the close.

THE FUNNEL TODAY AND TOMORROW

Complicating matters is the very status of the funnel itself.

It's been a mainstay of marketing and sales for decades, a framework for guiding leads from awareness to evaluation to purchase. But in this age, is it still relevant?

In our multidimensional world, buyers are both interconnected and independent, and decisions are formed based on colleague opinion and personal research. The linear simplicity of yesterday's buying journey has been upended, permanently. Buyers can enter the funnel at any stage, go backward through the stages, or even accelerate after months of suspension. For this reason, traditional B2B funnel diagrams really aren't that accurate anymore; current funnels tend to resemble more of a bell curve, swollen in the middle with prospects that have stagnated for months or longer.

Yet, the funnel still survives as a useful construct for mapping strategies geared toward buyer context. By understanding a lead's mindset and buying stage, B2B marketers can devise intelligent plays that escalate sales cycles, tighten sales and marketing alignment, and eliminate wasted resources to drive higher revenue.

BUT THIS GIVES WAY TO EVEN MORE QUESTIONS

▶ *How many leads are we capturing? Are we investing budget in assets that will attract the right leads?*

▶ *Is our data capture working? Are we collecting the information we need to adequately track and pursue leads through the funnel?*

▶ *Are our nurture campaigns effective? Are we delivering the right messaging at the right time? Where and why do people typically fall out of the funnel or get stuck?*

▶ *How many leads become MQL? And how many of those does the sales team accept? Are they qualified by right time, right price, right decision-maker and other factors? How many of those qualified leads translate into revenue?*

THE FUNNEL TODAY AND TOMORROW

Make no mistake: this is an exciting time to be a marketer. New technologies, creative distribution channels, and bleeding-edge insights all offer the possibility to boldly go where no marketer has gone before. But to reach those new heights – or even stay competitive in the field – mastering the new rules of the funnel is essential.

And that's why we've talked to the top marketing thinkers of our time. **Jason Miller**, **Craig Rosenberg**, **Justin Gray**, **Maria Pergolino**, **Matt Heinz**, **Jon Miller** – you'll find them all in this book, sharing their secrets and strategies on turning sales and marketing into a revenue engine. Fluent in today's trends, but with a finger of the pulse on the future, these are the leaders who partner marketing ingenuity with practical expertise to achieve breakthrough results.

Too many marketers live in the moment, celebrating wins and dismissing setbacks without examining the real forces behind either. But you cannot steer your brand into a profitable future until you've charted the roadmap there. Evaluating and refining your funnel reveals the incontestable story of your performance and empowers you to excel as a marketing leader for years to come.

THE ART OF THE STORY

by **Jason Miller** | *Author* | *Sr. Content Manager* | *LinkedIn*

Let's start by talking about the top of the funnel.

The stage where fundamental awareness is created has traditionally been both the most exciting and least successful stage for marketers. **It's where we fight to rise above the noise of the digital crowd;** it's where we spend considerable budget trying to look special, cool and smart to buyers.

Again and again we inspire, educate and entertain audiences in the hopes they will like our brand.
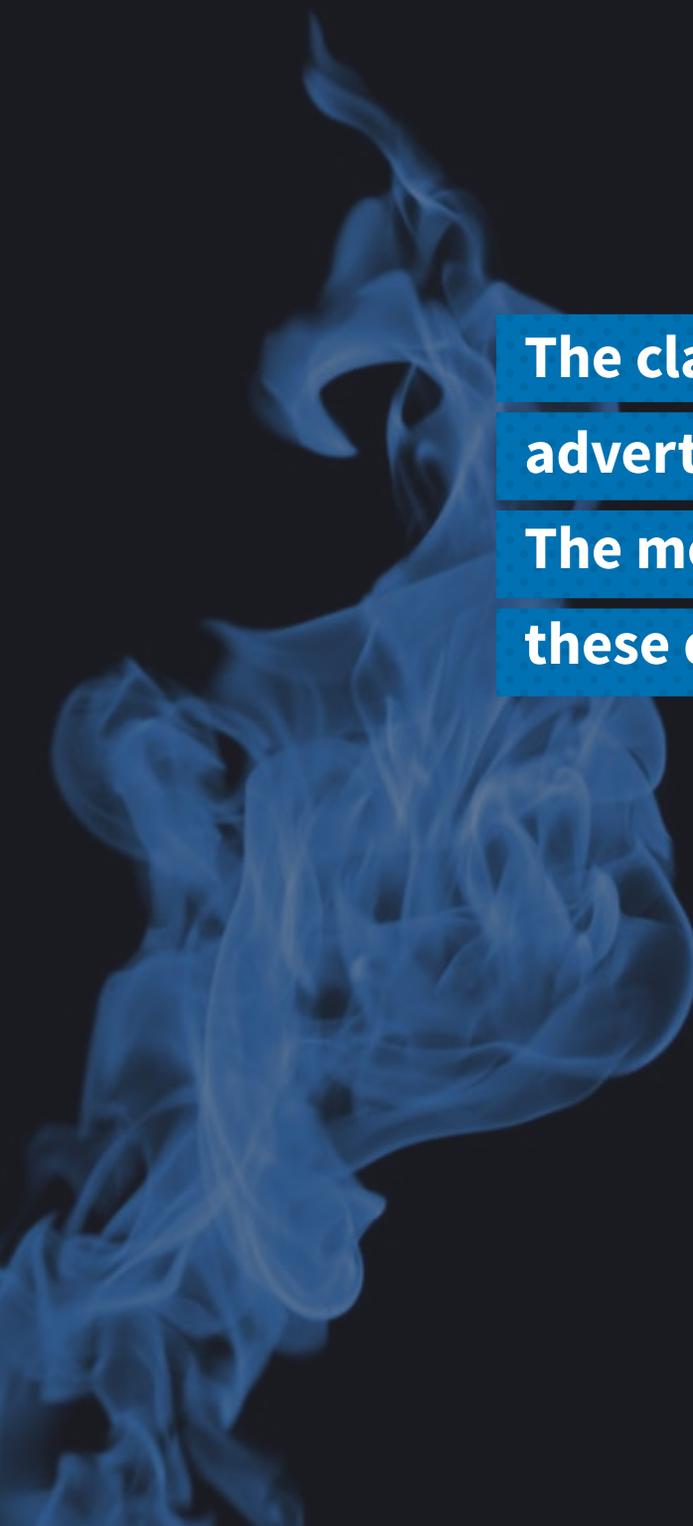
The classic portal for funnel entry has always been advertising. But even that no longer really stands. The meteoric force igniting the top of the B2B funnel these days is content marketing.

That's why every brand worth its salt has jumped into the content game by producing videos, blog posts, white papers and case studies, then peppering them across every channel.

It's not hard to see why, either; content positions brands as thought leaders while selling product, thereby cultivating loyalty and assisting buyers.

Despite these manifold rewards, the rise of content marketing has presented an enormous challenge for marketers. Some focus on quantity, churning out a stream of fluff pieces; some write for SEO purposes, or even just to try to sound clever and look cool.

Savvier teams prioritize the creation of high-quality assets.

Yet, almost all of them **struggle** to truly **capture buyer attention**.

WHY IS THIS SO DIFFICULT TO ACCOMPLISH?

In a nutshell, content has to actually be interesting.

Anyone with basic industry knowledge can create an asset that's informative and educational. But given the near relentless tidal wave of content that washes into a buyer's inbox or social feed every day, only the truly interesting content will get read.

"Interesting" can be hard to define, of course, let alone produce on demand.

So here's one formula that always succeeds in content marketing: finding out the buyers' questions and delivering the best answer.

That's right. Writing for the audience first is what gets leads to convert. Obviously good design and copy play an important role in creating appealing assets, but what really matters is telling a story the customer wants to hear. Without it, magic keywords, pretty design and clever taglines will be ignored and quickly forgotten. Whether you're creating an infographic, blog post, or webinar, you need to get inside the customer's head, find out their specific questions, and speak to them. Loudly.

CONTENT REALITY CHECK.

IS WHAT YOU'RE DOING WORKING?

- ☑ Does the content address a pain point?

- ☑ Does it move someone into and through the funnel?

- ☑ Will it inspire readers to take action? Is it necessary?

There's no denying that content strategy can be frustratingly nebulous and to some extent, **unpredictable**.

Here's a great analogy (*and a true story*)...

When I met Maria Pergolino at a conference, she asked me to divide a jar of marbles into **TWO BUCKETS**: one representing brand content and one representing educational content.

I divided them up 50/50, which she told me was the wrong choice. So what was the right choice? There wasn't one.

There is no perfect answer for content marketing at the top of funnel. You take your best shot, you measure and modify and sometimes you pivot on a dime. And you continue experimenting until you feel that momentum start to roll.

This requires much thought and effort, and takes time. Brands invest substantially in online personas, an effort that can sometimes go unpaid for years – but when the rewards do roll in, they more than reflect the ingenuity, skill and investment put in.

Making the Connection

The **top 3 B2B** Lead Generation Challenges according to marketers:

1. **Generating high-quality leads**
2. **Converting leads to customers**
3. **Creating meaningful content**

Intelligent Measurement

To some extent, the investment in content is a leap of faith that traditional metrics don't often support. That's why brands that grasp the value of interesting content will let their content team be creative without asking them to prove their lead generation stats. The great benefit offered by the top of the funnel is that marketers can experiment and innovate at this stage. Remember, the last thing you want to do is blend in by covering the same topics in the same tone as everyone else. You want to stand out.

That's why measuring must be done with care at this stage of the funnel. Take so-called "vanity metrics;" they can serve as useful indicators but only if interpreted in a strategic way. For instance, social signals can indicate relevance if brands understand that who is sharing matters more than how many people are sharing. 10 shares from the right influencers are worth more than 100 shares from people without the same clout.

That's critical to remember, especially given marketers' tendency to get addicted to social media responses – and also why we have the tongue-in-cheek saying to "never let ego hijack your content strategy." **A higher number of shares and likes may feel gratifying, but ultimately it's smarter to base strategy on referral traffic and non-branded keyword traffic – and of course, the ultimate measure of content effectiveness: EYEBALLS.**

Some brands will overcomplicate measurement at this stage, with demand gen waterfall models that are more complicated than a nuclear reactor. That might feel useful, but it's really a waste of time. Distribution methods should handle the conversion to a "known" or cookied lead, and after that marketers can define the buyer's needs through tools like buyer personas, segmentation and nurture. But trying to measure every performance of every component just isn't worthwhile.

DESIGNING THE CONTENT ECOSYSTEM

In a buyer's eyes, a brand's content program should appear diverse and energetic, with meaningful assets spontaneously rising up at the perfect moment.

But behind the scenes, the content program should be carefully strategized and controlled in a well-organized ecosystem.

That's quite the tall order, which is why this is precisely where many teams lose control of their content. Case studies, Instagram contests, tweets, blog posts, infographics – with so many mediums and channels available, marketers often don't know what to prioritize or how often to produce it.
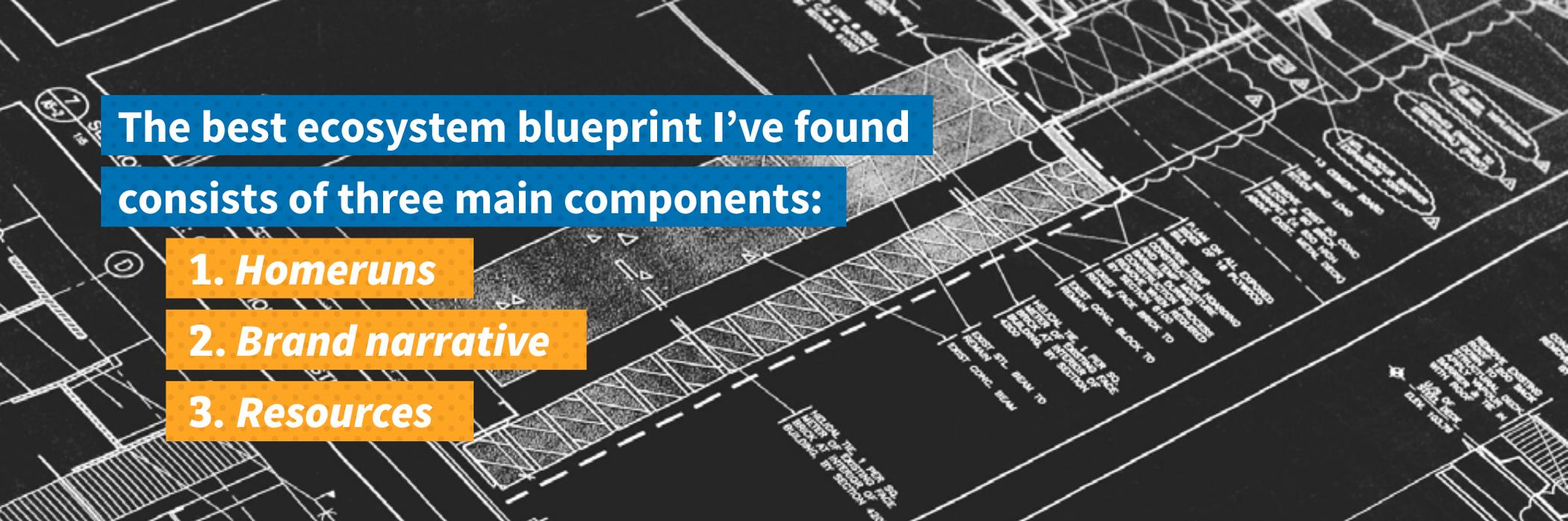
The best ecosystem blueprint I've found consists of three main components:

1. *Homeruns*
2. *Brand narrative*
3. *Resources*

Homeruns are big splashy pieces of content, such as an ebook or a video, that you'll generate every quarter.

The best strategy here is to pick a conversation that connects to your buyers' pain points and goals and own it.

Get other teams involved; work with sales enablement, product marketing, PR and other departments for maximum impact so you can come out of the gate swinging. Once that cross-functional alignment is in place, you can slice and dice the homerun asset into related articles, social content and other assets that fuel your channels for months.

This brings us to your brand narrative. This is the section of your content program that runs continuously through your social platforms, company blog and other channels. As buyers learn to depend on a consistent and compelling flow of material from you, you'll elevate your brand visibility while deepening your connection to leads, prospects and current customers.

But that's a lot of content, most teams will say. We don't have the resources for that. It's true that an active content marketing program does require work, but certain strategies can lighten the workload. One tip: don't try to create every asset from scratch. Break down the big homerun pieces into infographics or blog posts. Dig up your old content from two years ago and repurpose it by refreshing the copy and design, changing the date and making it visible again.

The third section of your content program should flow naturally out of the first two: a content library of cross-platform resources.

All of your white papers, videos, webinars and ebooks should be stored in an accessible repository to keep buyers coming back to you as their industry resource.

Be sure also to maintain a digital newsroom with press releases, images and byline articles to make it easy for the media to write about you.

IN THE QUEST TO CREATE FASCINATING CONTENT,

every team will experience failures, surprising successes and changes in direction. Ask any brand how their program today compares to their earlier content efforts and I guarantee they'll say it's dramatically different.

But some underlying elements never change and they're the same ones that put brands in the spotlight:

the willingness to experiment

the ability to offer buyers the answers

**& they need and a commitment to excellence**

DEFINING YOUR UNIVERSE

by Matt Heinz | *President & Founder* | *Heinz Marketing*

If there's one unfortunate trait many teams share, it's turning inquiries into Marketing Qualified Leads (MQLs) without the middle ground of **Marketing Accepted Leads (MALs.)** This is a primary reason so many companies fail at the rest of the funnel; they spend colossal portions of their budget on nurturing and selling to leads that will never be buyers.

The solution here is to define your buyer universe.
At this stage it's not about complex lead scoring, but defining an overall fit in broad strokes.

Buyers should be divided into two buckets:

YES   **NO**
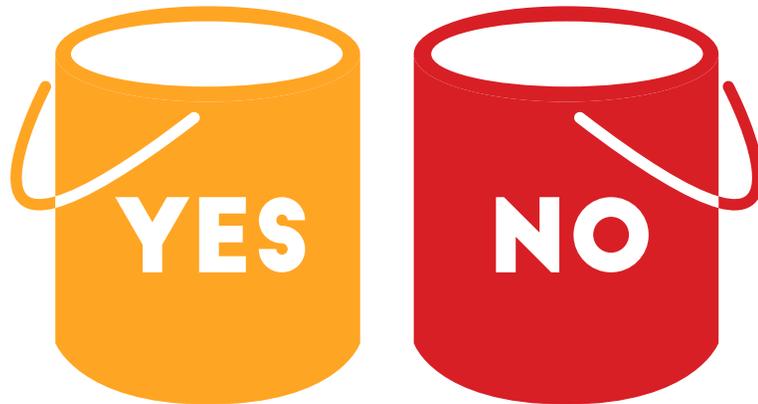
Think of the MAL stage as St. Peter guarding the gates of Heaven. Leads that pass will enter and begin to consume divine content. Leads that don't will be disqualified and routed to purgatory.

Forget about lead volume; the metric that matters here is sales pipeline contribution.

MALs are the very foundation of sales and marketing alignment.

Sales needs to know that marketing is efficiently weeding out dead-end leads while marketing needs to grasp that sales resources are limited and higher volume won't equal higher returns. Tossing unqualified leads over the fence wastes the sales team's time and erodes marketing's credibility, which is why an effective MAL process is one of the most critical parts of the funnel.

Studies show failure to align sales and marketing teams around the right processes and technologies **costs B2B companies 10% or more of revenue per year** **($100 million for a billion-dollar company.)**[2]

2. source: marketeer.kapost.com/sales-marketing-alignment-stats/#ixzz3cCw9Glar

The MAL In Action

Let's say you define your MAL as a decision-maker, influencer or user at a company that you can do business with. Yes, that's a loose definition but it's what will serve you perfectly at this stage. Because you know you sell to mid-market companies, you immediately know the five-person startup walking in the door is not the right fit.

Another demarcation to draw is the difference between the leads you'll pursue and the leads you'll sell to.

Here's a ratio that every marketer should remember: in any given market, 3 percent are actively searching while 40-45 percent are poised.

Smart marketers will include the poised along with the actively searching.

These definitions have to scale to be efficient; spending an hour with a prospect to determine their fit is the antithesis of an effective process. The trick is to be discerning without overcomplicating the funnel and losing control over what you're tracking. One effective solution is building a qualification gate into tools like marketing automation.

At the same time, it's important to understand which tools can't and can't assist with this. Marketo, Salesforce and CMS systems are good at overall tracking, but haven't been quite as efficient at multi-campaign, multi-attribute tracking.

But tools like **Full Circle CRM** provide a better picture of the connection between marketing activities and lead generation, velocity and conversion. In this way, marketers can measure the impact of activities that don't have a direct call to action.

And of course the new predictive intelligence tools can greatly amplify your MAL power.

By using buying signals and trigger events across the web to identify leads outside your database, these tools can deliver an expanded crop of MQLs that didn't even require nurturing.

THE FUTURE OF THE FUNNEL

If there's one trend that could alter the path from MAL to MQL, it's the rising tendency of marketing teams to own inside sales and development. Traditionally, marketers haven't been comfortable with owning the entire process - yet those who embrace this ownership often find they enjoy more flexibility, control and freedom in their work.

One reason is that owning inside sales can expand the channels and tactics through which marketers can qualify marketing accepted leads. By tracking which leads are spending time with content that focuses on a relevant pain point, these teams can qualify leads based on a demonstrated short-term need – that desirable 3 percent of the market that's ripe for the picking.

When it comes to processes for lead nurturing and incubation, those companies where sales and marketing have blended ownership report better conversion rates.[3]

Establishing intelligent MAL processes may represent an additional step for some teams. But by **using the right tools** and **establishing useful definitions,** marketers can eliminate wasted effort later in the funnel and make the most of sales' valuable time.

INTEREST.PAIN.TIMING. WHO QUALIFIES

by Craig Rosenberg | *Chief Analyst with TOPO*

Marketing Qualified Leads (MQLs) have always posed a significant challenge to marketers for several reasons.

On one hand, smart qualification is vital to set up sales for success instead of wasting their hours on fruitless dead ends; on the other, the typical misalignment between sales and marketing has left many marketers confused about accurate scoring practices, even as they become more determined to qualify leads more effectively.

18 **CHAPTER 03** Interest.Pain.Timing. Who Qualifies **MARKETING QUALIFIED LEADS**

monstersoffunnel.com ▶

Traditional thought has held that MQLs are not a significant driver of value to sales, given that so many sales reps will prospect and nurture on their own.

Then there's the habit of measuring marketers on their MQL numbers, which inspires many to qualify worthless leads to inflate their success rates.

Luckily, this outdated tradition is changing; as marketers diversify their skillsets and grow more influential in the funnel, more organizations look at MQLs through the lens of marketing sourced or influenced deals.

So, just what is the most effective way for you to score and qualify leads? How can you prove your organizational value while providing sales with a rich pipeline of strong contenders? **Let's take a look.**

19   CHAPTER 03 Interest.Pain.Timing. Who Qualifies MARKETING QUALIFIED LEADS

monstersoffunnel.com

Identifying the MQL

There is one chief driver of MQL definitions: **the buyer persona.** Two factors should guide persona criteria:

1 **Demographic fit.** Are they an ideal customer profile (ICP) from the account and the contacts perspectives?

2 **Meaningful engagement.** This might be downloading a white paper or signing up for a demo at a trade show.

The foundational strategy is to define the ideal customer profile and find every possible way to engage. Content downloads remain the best way to start a meaningful conversation, as they indicate pain and interest levels. But while many B2B companies will interpret any content download as an indicator of a MQL, that isn't enough. Behaviors alone don't indicate a lead is an MQL. The ICP factor must be there as well.

It's more helpful to think of behaviors as a window into how you should engage with the buyer. Some behaviors are just noise, nothing more and nothing less. In some industries, the more content a lead downloads, the weaker they become as a prospect. Factors like buyer characteristics and industry matter as well. Some buyers may qualify at drastically different engagement levels or behavior types.

Another important factor in evaluating MQLs: timing. To avoid drowning sales in worthless leads, marketers must recognize that not everyone is ready to talk to sales. Smart teams will optimize their messages to speak to both the leads that are ready and those who need more time and interpret signals to understand when the moment is right for qualification.

20 **CHAPTER 03** Interest.Pain.Timing. Who Qualifies MARKETING QUALIFIED LEADS

monstersoffunnel.com ▶

Benchmarking buyer behavior

MQLs represent the stage of the funnel where benchmarks become invaluable. Simply making assumptions (or worse, going on "intuition") will inevitably lead to unqualified leads slipping into the sales bucket. Instead, teams can quantitatively measure how the market is handling a similar metric and evaluate how they stack up to businesses and competitors.

For instance, benchmarks could also reveal that your Sales Qualified Lead to Closed Won ratios are comparatively low, indicating that your MQLs aren't aligned to sales definitions. Or you could also find that Inquiry to Marketing Qualified Lead volume is too high, pointing to a lack of discernment in the MAL stage.

Yet benchmarks are only as useful as the criteria they're based on - and many marketers are measuring the wrong results or failing to measure the right ones. Businesses that compare themselves to other companies may fail to see factors, such as budget, that can make the results meaningless. Others search for their twin company, assuming that data will be the most relevant. It's a misconception that can quickly lead to distorted conclusions, as there are unlikely to be enough businesses just like yours to yield data sufficient for trends.

This is the more intelligent path: benchmarking with a business of your maturity, size and other similarities. If the company has the same type of sales cycle or ticket/sales value/MRR, you'll have a much stronger foundation for comparing and evaluating your performance.

Internal benchmarks are just as useful. You could find that recent qualified leads aren't converting at the same rate as they used to because you've delivered the wrong message. Or let's say that your social data points to a high number of shares for your video content, while only a few people have shared your white papers. That type of content consumption comparison might seem useful until you connect it to conversion rates. Then you find that your videos are popular with people who have no intention of buying anything from you, while the white papers are driving more leads through the funnel.

By connecting your benchmarks to revenue and conversion, you'll view your results in context and spot opportunities for dramatic improvement. By revealing the revenue truths at the heart of your lead scoring, your team can eliminate guesswork and refine your strategies. **Remember, you cannot know how you're actually performing without determining what you've gained or lost.**

21 CHAPTER 03 Interest.Pain.Timing. Who Qualifies MARKETING QUALIFIED LEADS

monstersoffunnel.com ▶

ONLY
5-10%
of qualified B2B leads convert

&

ONLY
25%
of marketers don't know
their conversion rates [4]

Achieving Alignment _____

As challenged as marketers feel by the MQL stage, the solution to most struggles is very simple: having a conversation with sales.

Consider how often marketing will announce an ideal customer profile definition that sales pronounces wildly inaccurate. You might feel pleased because you collected 300 leads at a trade show; but if only a handful of those leads fit the sales ICP, you've accomplished very little. The simplest definition of the ICP is someone sales should talk to no matter what, which makes it imperative to ask sales for their insights.

Armed with that information, your team can make better decisions, such as with account-based targeting or outbound prospecting. This is about forming a perfect loop of definition and action, where you can use benchmarks to identify the best sources for ICPs and align your lead scoring model with your revenue model. And because this is the stage where marketing automation and CRM shake hands, the feedback loop between those two is paramount as well.

[4] Source: http://www.slideshare.net/hschulze/b2-b-lead-generation-report-2013

Marketing qualified leads can be one of the most valuable stages of the funnel if managed correctly.

BY BENCHMARKING RESULTS, aligning with sales and understanding the true significance of lead characteristics and behavior, you can enrich the quality of your pipeline. It's an effort that pays dividends up and down the funnel.

23 CHAPTER 03 Interest.Pain.Timing. Who Qualifies MARKETING QUALIFIED LEADS

monstersoffunnel.com ▶

CHECKS AND BALANCES

by Justin Gray | *Founder and CEO* | *LeadMD*

Too often marketers view their MQLs as an end game, or the last word in setting sales up for success.

In fact, **sales acceptance of leads** acts as the check and balance in relation to the MQL bucket.

Even when MQLs are driven by lead scoring, even when sales and marketing are perfectly aligned around lead definition and score methodology, sales acceptance is a critical part of optimized funnel management.

This is, after all, the stage where your sales reps decide how they're going to use their eight or nine effective hours in a day.

Consider that one study found that 54 percent of outside sales teams reported an average B2B sales cycle length of 90 days or more. Another 23 percent dealt with cycles that averaged between 61-90 days in length.

I think we can agree that when the average B2B sale takes more than a quarter of a year to complete, sales teams must be pragmatic when it comes to investing their time. Be aware that when I say "sales," I'm referring to a range of relevant players, from business development reps to inside and outside sales to channel sales. All of those representatives must allocate their time strategically. If they spend three hours talking to prospect A, that's three hours they don't have for prospect B. In this way, the SAL stage often mirrors the MAL stage at inception; they both close in on the *"can we work together?"* question, which they usually follow up with BANT qualification or other methods.

SETTING THE STAGE FOR SUCCESS

Let's break down what this means for you as a marketer. It's not enough to simply qualify leads; you must provide sales with the maximum amount of lead data they can effectively consume. Such as:

- What the lead has told you
- What you added in terms of data
- Who you think the lead is
- What the lead values
- How the lead builds trust

Will your marketing team always be able to supply this information? Not completely, not for every single lead.

But it's your job to supply enough data to enable sales to follow up with plays designed for that specific buyer.

While CRM is the undisputed home for SAL qualification, many other channels influence this stage as well. Ultimately, this is where lead nurturing shines or falls on its face. It's the entry point for the sales nurture process – the stage that requires all of marketing's data-- compares it to the buyer persona and then presents targeted messaging that reinforces the sales cycle.

Jay Gaines, SiriusDecisions' Group Director for Demand, has called sales accepted leads the most important (but most overlooked) step in the demand creation process. *"It's the best thing an organization can do to ensure that the budget, effort and resources devoted to lead generation are not wasted."*

Sales & Marketing SLAs

The strongest way to ensure marketing and sales are delivering a tightly aligned approach to each lead is to establish a Service Level Agreement (SLA.) This agreement should specify the characteristics of a sales-ready lead and the next steps sales will take within a required timeframe. By formalizing the acceptance process, the SLA confirms sales are acting on leads and illuminates scoring or qualification weaknesses.

MARKETING SLA REQUIREMENTS

Marketing provides:

▶ *Buyer persona assumption*

▶ *Plays based on the persona*

▶ *Relevant content and dissemination strategy*

▶ *Feedback loop*

▶ *Relevant nurture*

SALES SLA REQUIREMENTS

Sales must:

▶ *Check that marketing met their SLA requirements*

▶ *Verify the lead meets the minimum requirement and the MQL definition*

▶ *Respond in kind and qualify or kill*

▶ *Follow up by engaging quickly and effectively*
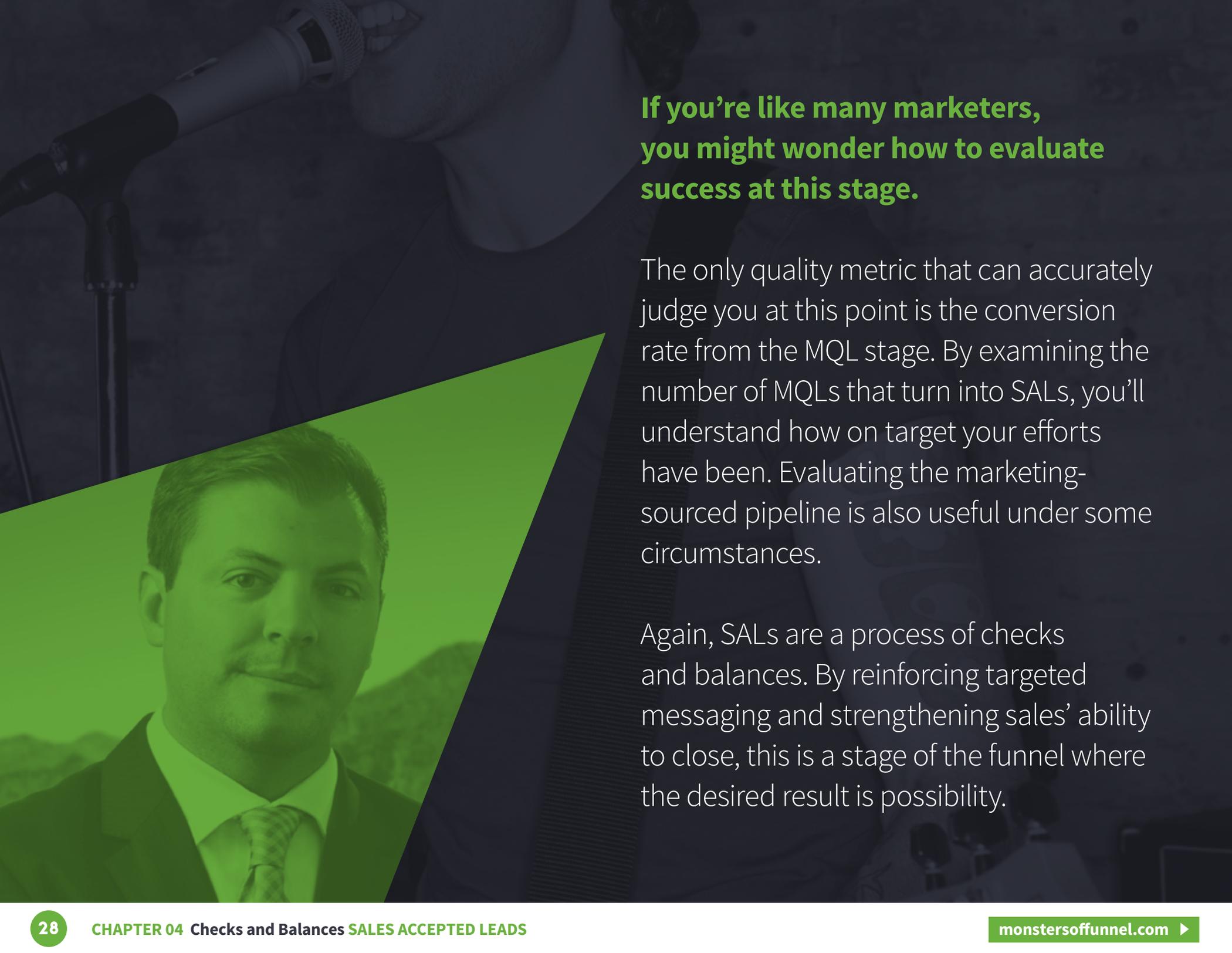
If you're like many marketers, you might wonder how to evaluate success at this stage.

The only quality metric that can accurately judge you at this point is the conversion rate from the MQL stage. By examining the number of MQLs that turn into SALs, you'll understand how on target your efforts have been. Evaluating the marketing-sourced pipeline is also useful under some circumstances.

Again, SALs are a process of checks and balances. By reinforcing targeted messaging and strengthening sales' ability to close, this is a stage of the funnel where the desired result is possibility.
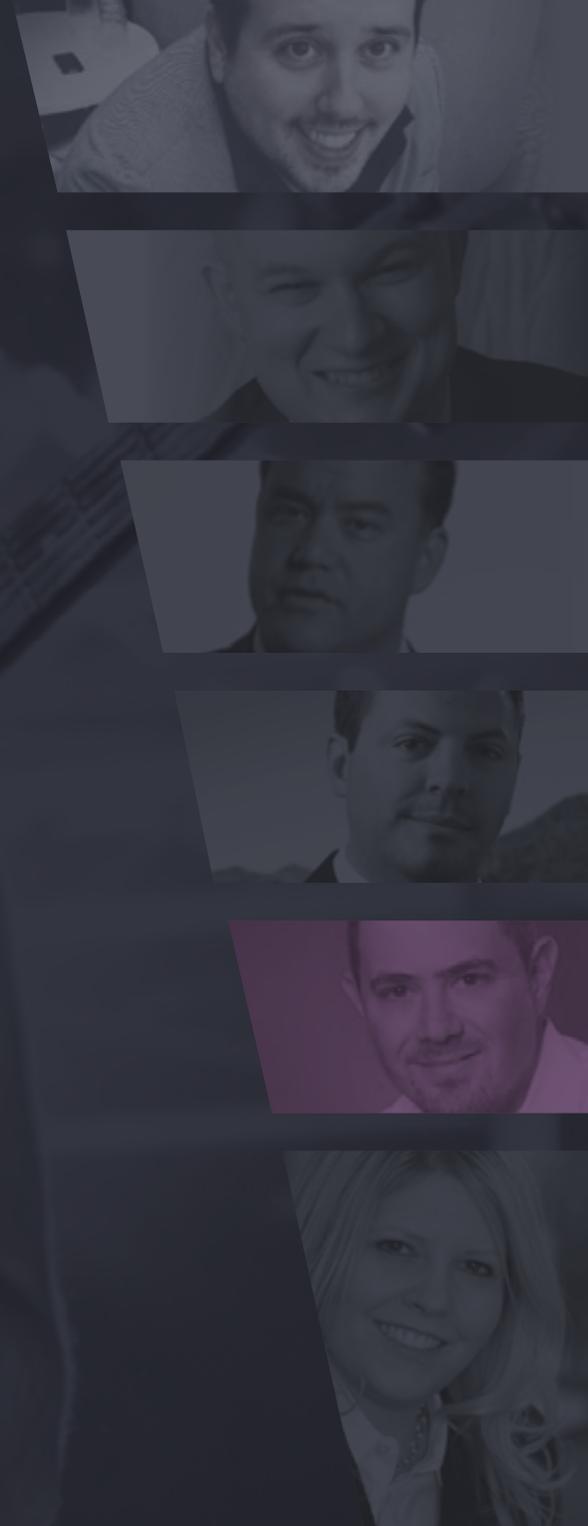
BUILDING TRUST

by Jon Miller | *CoFounder and CEO* | *Engagio*

You might measure the buyer's journey in numbers and benchmarks, but the essence of the funnel is psychological.

This is especially true near the end, when leads reach the **stage of being qualified by sales**. At this point, you've successfully captured and held their attention and evaluated their fitness. Yet in many ways the most critical quest of all is yet to come: the building of trust.

Many marketers would like to stay involved at this stage – but this is precisely when most of us lose visibility, making it one of the most difficult buckets to measure.

Benchmarking plays a strong role when it comes to Sales Qualified Leads (SQLs).

Win rate and sales cycle are critical, but that data is fairly well benchmarked.

The measurement challenge here is the impact of marketing activities on win rate, sales cycle and ASPs. If you've ever been told by sales to back off at this stage, you know that impact often becomes obscured.

Think of the benefits you might reap in this scenario: a control group where your marketing team has been blocked from acting and another where you've continued their activities. Perhaps in one group, accounts are shown display ads in the SQL stage while accounts in the other group are not.

By measuring the difference at the SQL stage, you'd gain a much clearer understanding of the relationships inside the account – along with invaluable insights on creating trust in your prospects.

Americans are starving for relationships they can understand with entities they can trust. This represents a great opportunity for brands to gain a foothold in consumers' psyches.

Charlie Elberson
President of Elberson Partners

FROM RELATIONSHIP TO REVENUE

As sophisticated as marketing technology has become, B2B marketers frequently experience significant data challenges at this stage of the funnel.

Typically, systems can provide an individual's lead score without being able to measure the overall aggregate engagement of the account.

That's a problem; because yesterday's one-dimensional lead structure simply isn't viable today.

Here's what marketers have: CRM systems that store leads in one compartment, disconnected from the accounts and contacts stored in another compartment. Without an infrastructure that ties them together, marketers struggle to differentiate between the leads and the contacts affiliated with each account. As a result, marketers are left with a person-by-person report, which can't tell them whether the overall aggregate engagement is increasing or decreasing.

Now here's what marketers need: a system that can clean and organize the data in a way that communicates the hierarchies and the relationships within the account, while measuring the impact of marketing activities on those people in terms of relevant sales outcomes.

Yes, that's more complicated. But in B2B marketing, it's critical. By understanding the relationships within the account, marketers can stay true to the natural mind-cycle that's behind purchasing decisions. They can also collaborate with sales in the same system.

For instance, within one account you might need to know:

▶ *Suzanne is the decision maker, Paula is her administrative assistant and Cameron is the influencer.*

▶ *Tom on Facebook and Tom with the Gmail address and Twitter account are the same person.*

▶ *How the hierarchies and relationships within the account present an accurate data picture.*

Also relevant is the way our personal behaviors influence our buying decisions. Suzanne the CEO might be on her iPad each night, flipping between **Game of Thrones** content and industry articles.

To really understand her as a buyer, it's your job as a marketer to incorporate those signals and merge the identities.

Forward-thinking marketers already do this with mobile technology; by knowing someone's location, they can create relevant ads.
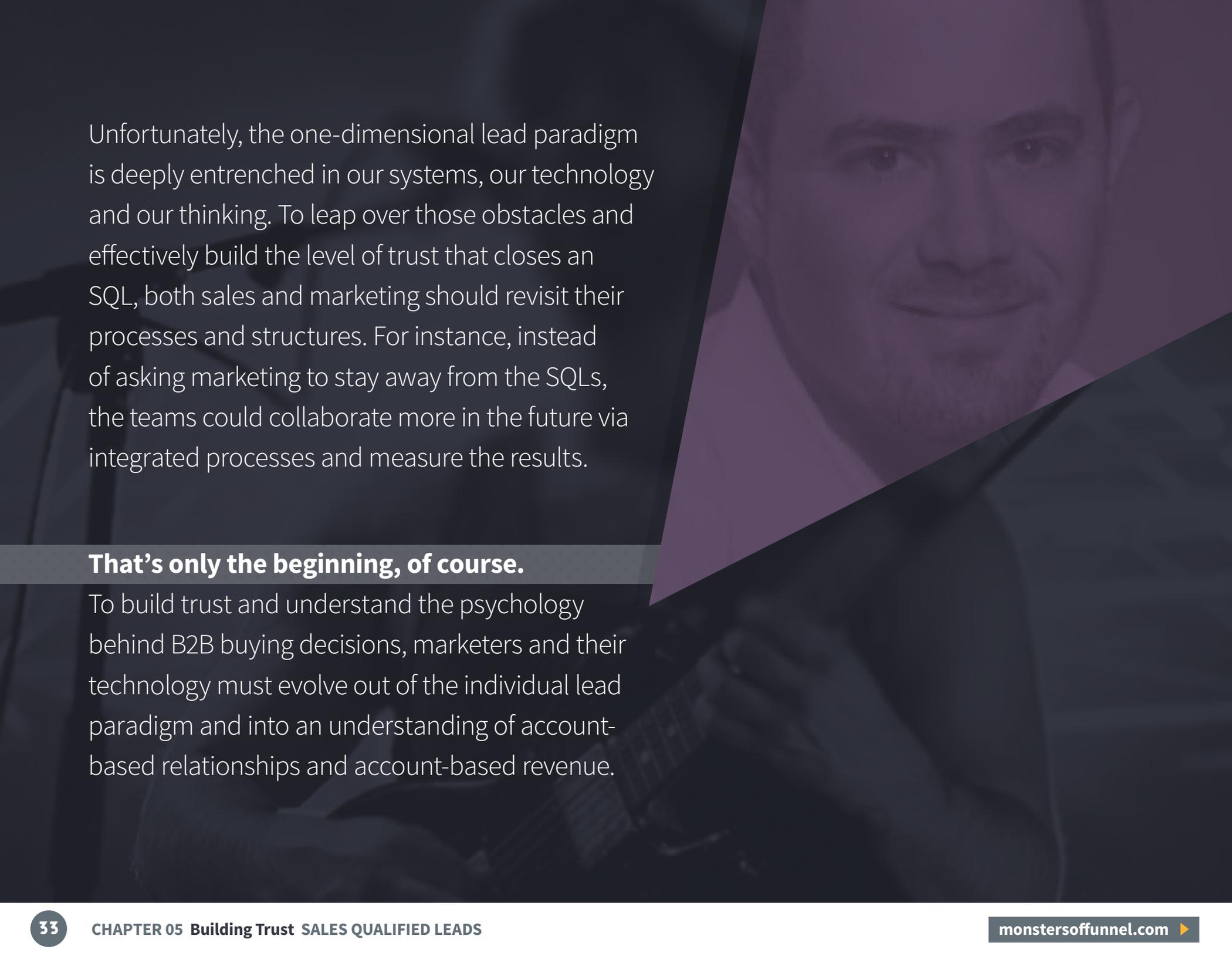
Unfortunately, the one-dimensional lead paradigm is deeply entrenched in our systems, our technology and our thinking. To leap over those obstacles and effectively build the level of trust that closes an SQL, both sales and marketing should revisit their processes and structures. For instance, instead of asking marketing to stay away from the SQLs, the teams could collaborate more in the future via integrated processes and measure the results.

That's only the beginning, of course.

To build trust and understand the psychology behind B2B buying decisions, marketers and their technology must evolve out of the individual lead paradigm and into an understanding of account-based relationships and account-based revenue.

# WHO MARKETS THE MARKETING?

by Maria Pergolino | *VP of Marketing* | *Apptus*

If there's one challenge that doesn't get discussed enough in our world, it's the need to market our own marketing.

Nurturing leads? Passing qualified leads to sales?

Those conversations occur regularly across the industry blogosphere. But getting our own companies excited about our programs is a unique endeavor and one that can make or break a marketing department's success.

So let's talk about how we explain marketing to our coworkers and leaders who aren't immersed in it the way we are. These are the people in the organization who need to fund our marketing, support it and have faith in it.

How do we get them on board with our marketing programs – not only to sign off on budget, but also to spread that feeling of excitement throughout the company and beyond?

At a glance, it may seem like this has gotten easier in recent years. As marketers have become more analytical, we've acquired our own dashboards and reports. Yet while we find immense value in these tools, people outside the department often fail to see the same relevance.

A metric showing a 7 percent improvement in conversions might thrill the marketing team but it won't necessarily have the same impact on others. Walk into a stakeholder meeting full of leaders and you'll often find they have their own dashboards. They don't want to view yours.

That makes it our job as marketers to translate the heart of what we're doing into benefits those leaders can understand. In a sense, this should come naturally to marketers. We're the great storytellers in the organization. Now we're tasked with the telling of our marketing story. We need to make our mission and our efforts come alive to our coworkers and get them invested in our success and excited about our programs.

To do that, we need to skillfully alter the dialogue with a few changes.

While two out of three U.S. CMOs say they feel pressure from the top to prove the value of marketing, **just 51% of CEOs agree** *"that marketing's financial value is clear to the business."*

Communicate strategically.

Let people know what you're going to do before you do it. Let anticipation build. Get them intrigued by your plans and eager to see how the campaigns look.

Once you're actually involved in the project? Keep talking about it.
If it's a big endeavor, post ongoing updates. Let's say your team will be rolling out a new video series or a stylish line of ads. Share progress updates and make your excitement palpable. The idea is to continue that early momentum.

Once you release the new campaigns, PROMOTE THEM EVERYWHERE.
Show them off on the employee portal, post visuals in the office, share the feedback and attention you're getting from customers. By offering an ever-running dialogue on marketing activities, you'll keep employees intrigued and engaged.

Build community.

While marketers know that social media is a great external tool, not enough of them are using it as an internal marketing tool. But if you check your fan and follower lists, you'll likely see that many are employees. Take advantage of this and build a strong online community around the marketing team. Post photos of the team at work, share old campaigns on Throwback Thursday and ask for opinions on your latest creative.

Don't forget that employees will want to show their friends what a great company they work for, so make it easy for them to share your coolest marketing materials and most stunning visuals. Your own workforce can be the marketing team's best ambassadors if you empower them. Build those relationships and you'll create a vibrant social community that helps employees stay connected to the marketing team's mission.

Get everyone involved.

If there's one slogan that every marketer needs to remember, it's this: There are many paths to success. Eavesdrop on any strategy session and you may hear teams debating the merits of inbound marketing versus paid, or mobile versus social. Compromise, experimentation, measurement and risk all play a role in where we plant our budget flag.

But when it comes to working with stakeholders outside the team, we need to get really flexible. Maybe your CEO wants to get out on the road, even though your data suggests a vivid online presence would drive stronger results. Maybe your sales team loves the idea of a brochure, although your research shows they're not effective. **Which path do you choose?**

The truth is that numbers rarely change anyone's interests – and the more internal support your initiatives have, the smoother they will go. Forcing projects that no one likes usually leads to an uphill battle. A better solution: using people's passions to ignite your marketing. Sometimes you'll need to opt for the projects that excite stakeholders, rather than the ones supported by metrics. Whether you're working with the product team or senior executives, as marketers you're the mouthpiece for everyone – so ask for their ideas and make everyone feel they have a chance to be heard. A happy organization makes for a happy marketing team.

76%

of marketers think their
assets are helpful to sales

BUT ONLY

46%

of sales professionals agree[8]

4. Source: http://www.marketingprofs.com/charts/2014/25682/why-b2b-
sales-leads-dont-convert-and-who-is-to-blame

Present results creatively.

If you've practiced the all of these strategies, ideally you'll be surrounded by an enthusiastic organization.

Sometimes, however, you'll find yourself faced with decision makers who demand more and more reports. **And the unfortunate truth is that if you have to defend your work with too many numbers, you've already lost.** It's not a matter of producing the right report at that point; there's another organizational problem that needs some fixing.

The best way to present results is visually and memorably. You'll want to keep your data accessible and be ready to provide key information to your finance team, of course. But the majority of your workforce will respond the most strongly to visuals.

Rather than announcing in a newsletter that the new ad drove an uptick in lead generation, find an appealing way to put campaign results on the wall.

Even better is creating something tangible that people can hold in their hands or prop up on their desk, which can have a more lingering effect than a fleeting digital image.

Often we're so immersed in our daily marketing hustle that we fail to recognize the many potential advocates in our own office.

But by sparking organizational fervor and passion for our marketing work, we can win budget from the C-Suite and empower our own campaigns both inside and outside the organization.

THE FUNNEL AS A REVENUE ENGINE

*by **Justin Gray** | Founder and CEO | LeadMD*

SO... HOW EFFECTIVE IS YOUR FUNNEL?

As I hope this ebook has proven, the funnel has undergone many changes. Marketers who want to maximize their marketing performance need to optimize their funnel management.

We've all heard people pronounce the funnel dead in the last few years. But it's not the funnel that needs to be discarded. It's our strategies and plays that need to evolve. In fact, the proposed replacement models for the funnel haven't found a toehold because they don't help marketers map their strategies to the buyer's mindset the way the funnel does. By understanding how to prioritize the leads that matter and target them with greater relevance and efficiency, we can turn our funnels into a strong and successful revenue engine.

THE FUNNEL AS A REVENUE ENGINE

As we saw, alignment is more critical than ever. That includes engineering our lead scoring processes to reflect our revenue models, so we don't waste marketing budget and sales time on leads that will never become customers.

By understanding the transition of qualified lead to dollar sign, marketers can strengthen the mind-meld between sales and marketing – from agreeing on the ideal customer profile to empowering sales with the information they need to craft the most effective approach.

The first test of this alignment is content, of course. As **Jason Miller** pointed out, it's not as simple as being clever or using the right keywords. It's about being meaningful and understanding to whom we're talking to – about knowing our audience's immediate needs and their obstacles down the road, their long-term goals. It's about answering their questions and speaking to their feelings. At the same time, that engagement needs to be framed strategically. The popular models of shooting out rapid-fire assets or micro-controlling every result of every piece just do not work. But by creating a well-orchestrated ecosystem and fostering a certain amount of experimentation, brands can hit the intersection of producing interesting content that's also mapped to buyer needs.

If there's one change that can improve both our content and our sales plays, it's shifting our mindset – and our technology – around B2B relationships.

Our current systems and tools are often configured to collect disjointed pockets of information, which is distinctly at odds with the reality of multiple people merging into one collective buying faction. **Relationships are the beating heart of B2B marketing, given our longer sales cycles.** It's time to evolve out of the "one lead/one transaction" mindset and into an ability to understand and address the relationships within an account for positive sales outcomes.

The next generation of technical marketers

All of these points connect to a common denominator that's the hub of 21st century marketing: technology. Marketing departments all over the world are implementing CRM platforms, social tools, marketing automation systems, predictive intelligence tools and content management solutions to streamline their processes and boost campaign speed and power. These platforms are so influential that mastering them has become a major influence on the success of any company's marketing program. **Yet, if there's one lesson teams have learned in the last few years, it's that merely using these technologies is not enough.** To unlock the door to impressive results, teams must strategically manage their technology stack and make their tools work synergistically.

THE FUNNEL AS A REVENUE ENGINE

One of marketing automation's top benefits, of course, is measurement - yet this is clearly still a minefield for marketers who aren't sure of what metrics are meaningful.

The tendency to focus too much on new net leads or attempt to measure every component of every asset and strategy has led many teams to pour significant time into insignificant results. The smarter approach is mapping metrics to revenue while looking for the true state of lead generation, scoring and conversion success – particularly with benchmarks that contextualize results, identify buyer sources and evaluate performance.

Sun Tzu said, *"Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat."*

Intelligent funnel management improves both. It's important to understand that the strategies and tactics that do work will change over time; in the mercurial landscape that is marketing, ROI is a moving target. But by staying creative, educated and nimble, teams can enjoy the advantages of advanced technology, acquire clearer predictive powers, and discover the real road to higher revenue.

MONSTERS OF FUNNEL

MARKETING TO THE BEAT OF A NEW DRUM

To learn more about the band,
visit **monstersoffunnel.com**.

LeadMD   **APTTUS**   Linked**in**   **TOPO**   **HEINZ** MARKETING   ENGAGIO