

7 Questions to Ask When Choosing a Lead Generation Company



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Generating sales leads is the first – and arguably the most important – step in a company’s sales funnel. Without generating high quantities of high quality leads, a business will never be able to convert leads into prospects, and prospects into customers. Ultimately, lead generation, or the process of creating interest in a product or service, is essential for the development of a strong sales pipeline.

Despite its importance, however, not all business are able (or willing) to generate sales lead themselves. Whether they are constrained by the size of their company or the cost of taking on a lead generation department, these businesses may choose to outsource lead generation to specialty companies, such as [Intelliconnection](#).

The Benefits of Outsourcing Lead Generation

Outsourced lead generation providers are generally responsible for all behind-the-scenes work of lead generation, including, but not limited to, managing marketing programs, creating email campaigns, qualifying buyer interest, conducting cold calls, lead scoring, nurturing hesitant leads, and pushing sales-ready leads through the buyer cycle.

While outsourcing lead generation may not be the right choice for every business, oftentimes it proves to be an effective and cost-efficient business strategy. In fact, according to [InboundSales.net](#), outsourced lead generation provided 43% better results than in-house lead generation. When you consider that seven out of ten businesses consider finding high quality leads their top priority, companies oftentimes cannot afford the mistakes that commonly plague in-house lead generation. From lacking follow-up to incorrect targeting, these inadvertent errors waste precious company time and resources.

For both large and small companies, outsourcing lead generation can help businesses improve lead conversion rates, maintain strong relationships with current customers, and bring a fresh, improved approach to new customer acquisition.

Questions to Consider

While hiring a B2B lead generation company can oftentimes be a savvy business move, allowing your company to increase your customers and profits significantly, it’s also a weighty business decision that requires research and thought. Given that a poor choice could negatively impact your profit margins, it’s essential to know what to look for when hiring a lead generation company. Below, we’ve outlined seven of the most important questions to ask a prospective B2B lead generation company to make sure they’re the right fit for your company:

1. **What services can you offer?** Although lead generation companies generally have a standardized approach, they do differ in the specific [services](#) they offer. When seeking your best-fit company, you'll want a comprehensive approach that also caters to your target audience (see #2). From lead gen services to managing CRM, prioritize what's best for your company's needs and budget.

Services offered by top lead generation companies include SEO, social media, blogging, web page graphics and text, local optimization, paid search, email marketing, direct mail, and white papers. Some companies go beyond the typical services and also incorporate live customer service chat, event promotion, e-books, telemarketing, and B2B appointment setting. In addition, many offer tracking services, including lead scoring, segmentation, and list management. Reporting (like CRM integration) and help & support services are also added perks of some companies. Needless to say, your company may not have a need for all of these services; pick what's most valuable for your target audience, and compare quotes.

2. **Can my vendor provide the *right audience for my solutions*?** Lead generation services tend to follow one of two approaches: a blanket approach or a focused, niche approach. While a vendor who aims to reach a large audience is appealing at first glance, it means your sales team will have to sift through cold leads later on in the sales funnel. A niche approach, on the other hand, is great for generating hot leads but may not ensure a high quantity of leads. A company that combines both audience types is essential for your lead generation success.

To ensure your lead gen company reaches your target audience, it is beneficial to ask if they have industry experience within your vertical. After all, selling computer software is entirely different from selling manufacturing products – and your lead generation tactics should reflect that. So, ask the prospective company: Do they have experience within your industry? Do they understand the unique aspects to your sales cycle? If the answers are “yes,” this company will have a shorter learning curve, and therefore the ability to generate leads more quickly for you.

3. **Is there a *lead guarantee policy*?** Ensure beforehand that your lead generation vendor offers a minimum guarantee policy. This means that your B2B lead gen service will commit beforehand to delivering a set number of leads within a given time frame. Not only does this give the company an incentive to meet their target goal, it will also allow you to avoid upfront invoicing and empty promises.

To best approach a lead guarantee policy, be precise in your expectations. What is the fixed period of time in which you'd like to see leads entered through your sales funnel? What is the minimum and maximum number of leads your business can take on at one time? Expert tip: to avoid low quality leads (which your lead generation service might provide in order to meet their lead guarantee), require the vendor to add profiling

questions to their leads. These specifically-designed questions will ensure that only the hottest prospects are led through your sales funnel.

4. **What is the *format* for receiving leads?** In order to increase overall effectiveness and efficiency, it's important to ensure that a vendor's technology can be easily integrated with your own. Before signing the dotted line, verify that your prospective lead gen partner will be able to work within your pre-existing customer relationship management system.

In addition to working with CRM software, verify that your salespeople will receive leads in their preferred format. Reputable lead generation companies should offer multiple methods to receive leads and be flexible with your sales' team preferences. Whether by email, text message, XML, bulk file (TSV or CSV), or integration directly within your CRM, such as [Salesforce.com](https://www.salesforce.com), your lead gen company should make a point to accommodate your format of choice.

5. **What *references* can you give me in my industry?** The importance of checking out your lead generation company's credentials and former clients cannot be overstated. Understanding their past successes and failures is essential in making an educated decision about your hire. For this step, ask for two pieces of information: a client list and quantifiable metrics.

A current and former client list will help you understand whether the company has experience within your industry and if they can help your business hit the ground running. In speaking with these companies, ask them to quantify their past success: how many appointments have they set? How many leads have they generated for others? What percentage of those leads are qualified? What percentage continue through the sales pipeline? If your lead generation company is hesitant in providing you a contact list or metrics, consider this a warning sign.

6. **How has their *approach* changed over time?** Although this question may not immediately come to mind, it's essential to hire a lead generation company that evolves alongside the industry. Lead generation has completely changed over the past decade, shifting from hand-written cards to email campaigns, from in-person consultations to e-communications, and your lead generation company must be at the forefront of these changes. You need a lead generation company that has fully embraced Sales 2.0 tactics – and is prepared to embrace whatever might come next in the field.

In addition to technology continuing to change, your specific marketplace is also continuing to evolve. Your vendor needs to be able to track new products and services, stay on top of emerging trends in your industry, and be aware of any new competitors. Hiring a lead generation company that values flexibility and adaptability is essential for your business' future success.

7. **How is a lead qualified?** Oftentimes, the appeal in outsourcing leads is having someone qualify leads before they reach your business' sales team. This will not only save your sales team time and energy; it will also result in hotter, more profitable leads down the pipeline. Before working together with a company, ensure that they are committed to providing quality leads – and that you agree upon the definition of what a “qualified lead” is.

Generally, a qualified lead not only expresses interest in your product/ service, but also provides a piece of information to your lead gen team: a name, an address, a phone number, or an email address. Better yet, the leads will provide an indication of their purchasing timeline and budget. Armed with this knowledge, your business and lead generation company will go into the relationship with shared expectations.