

V-Squared Creative Lead Generation Blueprint

Most small business owners are very tactical in nature when it comes to their marketing. In other words, when the topic of marketing comes up the conversation generally focuses on specific marketing techniques such as direct mail, Google ads, social media, etc.

They also seem to be fairly “one-time event” oriented, meaning they view marketing as something you do once and then it’s over. They think in terms of “campaigns” as opposed to “building relationships.”

However, none of the tactics listed above will work for you unless they are part of an overall, integrated, on-going strategy. This guide, The Lead Generation Blueprint, is designed to help you develop that big-picture strategy so that you can have a systematic, dependable and consistent way to get new customers, clients, or patients.

Regardless of what type of business you are in – whether it is business-to-business, business-to-consumer, a medical office, a retail store, or whatever – the principles of this blueprint are the same and will work for you. The key will be in the consistent application of those principles.

By following the 8 steps of the blueprint you will quickly and effortlessly move interested prospects through your buying process until they become paying customers, regardless of how they initially come to you.

Ready to get started? Ok, let’s do it.

How to Design a Lead Generation Machine for Your Business

I need to first define what I mean by “lead generation machine.” See, our style of marketing is very different than most people’s marketing. I approach it differently, do things differently, and get vastly different (superior) results.

This type of marketing is NOT branding or image building. It is NOT tactical in nature (In other words, it’s not just direct mail or just social media or whatever). It is NOT just trying random things and hoping something sticks.

Our style of marketing is strategic, systematic, deliberate and results-oriented. Every step of the process is measured and if it isn’t working, it is scrapped immediately and replaced with something that does work. It is very process oriented. Like a well-oiled machine.

Imagine this scenario: You’re at a networking meeting and things are going pretty well. You’ve met with some great people and collected quite a few business cards. You go back to your office and what happens? If you are like most people, you stick the business cards in your desk drawer and get back to work. If you happen to run into that person again great, but if not, you most likely forget about them.

That is what happens 99% of the time. The Lead Generation Blueprint is going to change that for you. Your new scenario will go something like this:

As you collect business cards at the networking meeting you jot a note on the back about something you learned about the person you just met. When you get back to the office you immediately enter the business cards into your CRM system and make

any notes about the person that you have gathered from the back of the card (Or, if you're like me, you'll have your assistant do this work for you).

The next morning your CRM system sends you an email reminding you to write each person you met the previous day a handwritten thank-you note expressing your delight in having met them. In that note you will reference something of interest to them that you had noted on the back of the card.

A few days later you get another notice from your CRM to send that person an email inviting them to coffee. When the appointment is set you print off a little form you use for these meetings that will help you find out more about that person and their business. Along with that form you bring a packet of relevant info (we call this a "Shock 'n Awe" package – more on that later) to give to them.

They are then automatically added to your monthly newsletter list as well. Each month thereafter, they receive your newsletter and any other email updates you send to your list. A few times a year they get a personal note from you. At Christmas they get a card. And on and on.

This is how you build a Lead Generation Machine. It takes a formerly one-time event (getting a business card) and turns it into a detailed process that gets results. This is just one example, but can be applied to any number of situations: inquiries that come from an ad you run, a blog post click-through, a walk-in or call to your store or office, a referral, etc., etc., etc.

Ok, so now that you have a pretty good idea of how we are going to use this blueprint, let's talk more about the 8 phases...

The 8 Phases of the Lead Generation Blueprint

The 8 phases are...

- 1) Identify Your Ideal Leads
- 2) Find Your Prospects
- 3) Attract Them to You and Capture Their Information
- 4) Nurture the Relationship
- 5) Convert Sales
- 6) Fulfillment and WOW! Factor
- 7) Expand Lifetime Value
- 8) Leverage the Relationship

(By the way, I've drawn this process out for you so you can see how it looks. It's at the back of this guide if you want to pull it out and follow along as we go. It might help make more sense to you if you see it visually.)

We will go through each phase separately and then I will show you how they all tie together at the end. Let's start with Identify.

Step 1 – Identify Your Ideal Customers

Legendary copywriter and entrepreneur Gary Halbert would ask his seminar audiences to imagine they were starting a restaurant. He would then ask, "Above all else, what's the ONE thing you would need to guarantee your restaurant's success?"

Answers would be shouted from the crowd, "A great location!" or "Great food!" or "A world-class staff and chef!"

Gary would smirk a little and say, “Nope, nope, and nope. The ONLY thing you would need to be successful would be a starving crowd.”

And he was absolutely right. Think about it. If you are starving then does the quality of food really matter? Or how good the wait staff is? Or if they are conveniently located? No. You just want food...virtually any food will do. And the job of selling you that food is infinitely easier because you are starving.

(Obviously, to sustain your business and have any longevity you will need a great product, location and service. But don't get bogged down in those kinds of details just yet and miss the point of this entirely.)

So the first step in building your Lead Generation Machine will be to identify your starving crowd ... your target market.

This is a fairly straight-forward process and I will explain exactly how to identify your potential customers in just a second. But first, a word of caution:

This is the area that I find most of my clients spend the least amount of time in. And that is a HUGE mistake. Everything – and I mean everything – that you do in your marketing from this point forward will hinge on what you uncover here. If you are off in identifying your ideal market

(i.e. your starving crowd) then everything you do going forward will be off the mark as well and your marketing will fail.

So spend some time with this and take it seriously. Now, on to the mechanics.

When choosing your ideal target market, you are going to focus on three things: Demographics, Geographics and Psychographics.

Let's look at each one of these in turn:

- 1) Demographics – these are objective, identifiable traits. For consumers these are things such as age, income, education level, family status, marriage status, etc. For businesses they are things like industry-type, revenue, asset size, number of employees, etc.
- 2) Geographics – where they are located...locally, regionally, nationally, internationally, or web-based.
- 3) Psychographics – this is a measure of attitudes, values, lifestyles and opinions of your ideal customer segment. This is how your customers think, how they buy and why, and the emotions that are evoked through the buying process.

Like I said before, you need to give careful consideration to each of these areas. This will be important later on because when you start crafting messages for these prospects you need to make sure you are “speaking their language.” For example, whatever it is you sell, you would speak to a business executive very differently than a housewife. And you have to know how they each think in order to craft an effective sales pitch.

Step 2 – Find Your Prospects

Now that you know who you would like as a customer, the next step is to find them through all available marketing channels.

That means you're going to have to figure out what they're reading, where they're spending their time, who they talk to, what they're listening to on the radio, what they're watching on TV, where they're hanging out on weekends, which social media they participate in, which websites they are visiting, what they search for online, etc.

If you were thorough in Step 1, you should have a pretty good idea about where your target market is mostly likely to be found. If you run a small, local business then I have several different media for you to consider. This is far from an exhaustive list, but it should get you jump-started with some ideas on where to start. For simplicity's sake and to keep consistent we will call these media Lead Sources.

I break these Lead Sources up into three categories: Outbound Lead Sources, Inbound Lead Sources and Publicity/Public Relations Lead Sources. You will probably use one or two of the three most often, but I would encourage you to incorporate all three into your marketing plan if at all possible. You will always find that the more Lead Sources you use, the stronger your marketing plan will be.

First some definitions...after all, what exactly are the differences between these three Lead Sources?

Outbound marketing – marketing that you initiate to go out and find prospects. This is where you “push” your marketing messages out to the masses in search of prospects. This would include media such as television, radio, direct mail, telemarketing, etc.

Inbound marketing – marketing that attracts prospects that are looking for specific solutions to their problems. It is where you create content that gives people the information they are looking for to make a purchase decision. This would include search engine optimization, blog posts, pay-per-click advertising, content generation, referrals, etc.

Publicity and PR – being seen or heard through different media sources. Although not technically a lead generator you can certainly use publicity and PR to gain tons of new customers very quickly and inexpensively. Publicity/PR includes things like being interviewed on television, radio, or for a variety of publications (newspapers, magazines, trade journals and the like.)

You don't need to have 20 different lead generation sources to start with. At most you will need 3-5 simple ones that will each bring you several leads/new customers per month. Once you get those working then you can begin adding more.

Tip: If you are wondering where to even begin I would suggest that you start with a really well-thought out referral strategy. Most people I know are very casual about the referrals they get, but by just putting a little thought into it you could really make this your main source of new customers.

Step 3 – Attract Them to You and Capture Their Information

Once you have identified your target market and found out where they are hanging out, you will need to attract them to you. We do this through what is called content marketing.

Simply put, when most people start the buying process, they do so by looking for information on the subject they are interested in. Your job then, is to give them the information – or content – that they are looking for. What does this information look like?

It can come in several different formats. It could be a free report (like this one that you are reading), it could be an audio CD, a video, a series of webinars or teleseminars, whitepapers, booklets ... the list goes on and on.

Or, in the case of a retail establishment, it could be a coupon, special offer, unique promotion, or anything else that will peak the interest of your target market.

Whatever it is you decide to give, just remember that it needs to contain highly valuable content. What you are looking for here is a quid pro quo. If you are asking someone to give you their name and other contact information (such as an email address) then you need to give them something that will benefit them in return.

A lot of times when we think of giving away free reports or other information, we think of sending someone to a website to enter their information in and download something. But let me give you an example of how a traditional, brick-and-mortar business could do this.

Let's say that you own a floral shop and you run an ad in the local paper that promises a free report to men on what flowers to buy for their special lady. Certain flowers are better for January, different ones are better for June, etc. The ad may direct the guy to call a free recorded message and leave his contact info and significant other's birthday month in order to have the report mailed or emailed to him. (As an aside, you could just as easily direct him to your website or landing page to do this.)

Now you have captured not only his name and contact info, but also his significant other's birthday month. This is extremely valuable information that you will use for the next step.

Step 4 - Nurture the Relationship

Business has always been about building relationships, but never has that principle been as important as it is today. With the effects of the recent recession still fresh in the mind of your prospects, they are much more hesitant to spend money as they once were.

I don't believe consumers are spending less money necessarily, but simply that we are much pickier about where and with whom we spend it. This is why it is so crucial that you have a well-established follow-up plan in place to help nurture this budding relationship you have started with your prospect.

Let's go back to the floral shop business from earlier. You have been busy capturing the names, contact info and significant others' birthdays in exchange for a valuable report teaching these guys which flowers to purchase during which month.

So how do you nurture the relationship from this point on? You may decide to follow the report up with a handwritten thank-you note a few days later. You may put them on your monthly newsletter list. You may periodically send them other information about gift ideas for Mother's Day, Valentine's Day and other holidays. You could send them a coupon for a floral arrangement during the month of their significant other's birthday.

The key here is to not always be in "sales mode" but to take a genuine interest in their life and be a solution provider. This is the way you are going to win in business in the future ... by being a trusted resource and provider of valuable information and practical solutions.

Take some time to draw out your follow-up plan for your new prospects. Chances are they are getting very little of this from anyone else in their life, much less from your competitors.

Nurturing the relationship isn't just about follow-up, however. It is also about the entire buying process your prospects and customers go through. It is about the cleanliness and décor of your store, restaurant, or office. It is about your customer service. It is about how friendly and helpful your staff is. It is about your value proposition. It is about having appropriate solutions for your prospect's problem. It is about all of these things taken as a whole.

Step 5 – Convert Sales

While you absolutely should be concentrating on building a solid relationship with your prospects by providing them with high-quality content, you also need to move them from being just a prospect to a paying customer at some point.

Do not hesitate to ask for the sale during the nurture process. After all, by asking for your free information and giving you their contact info they are also in a sense giving you permission to sell to them.

The good news is, if you really are offering solid content and are trying to build a relationship with them, then the sales process will almost naturally take care of itself. A mentor of mine once told me, "If you find yourself having to 'close' sales, then it means you aren't opening your sales properly."

In other words, my initial marketing and relationship building should be doing the heavy lifting for me. The idea here is to go from being perceived as a salesman to an advisor. Think about the last time you went to the doctor and were prescribed medication. Did you question the doctor's advice? If you are like most of us, probably not. You accepted it and went and got the prescription filled.

Why? Because of the doctor's position, authority and credibility. You don't question the doctor because you don't perceive him to be a salesman, even though that is essentially what he is.

Converting sales will become so much easier for you when you understand this and position yourself accordingly.

Step 6 – Fulfillment and WOW! Factor

Most of us view closing the sale as the end game. But in reality, your job has just begun. After you have made the sale then you need to make sure they are blown away by the experience of getting and using your product or service.

We tend to put very little thought into this aspect of our business. It goes without saying that your product or service must be top-notch, but it is more than that. I'm reminded of the dentist we took our son to for some work he needed done to make sure his teeth would come in straight.

My son was about 7 at the time and was a little scared of the whole ordeal (Who could blame him, right?). But the dentist was very kind during the procedure and took a genuine interest in my son by asking him questions, making jokes and entertaining him. Later that evening, he called our home personally to make sure Beau was feeling okay and to see if we had any questions.

The delivery of his service was fantastic and left a memorable impression upon us as parents. Do you think we tell our friends and neighbors about this dentist whenever the subject comes up? You bet we do.

If you take some time to look for businesses that are mediocre, it won't be long until you find them. They are pervasive and it really is unfortunate. On the flip side, it creates a great opportunity for you to stand out and really make an impression.

You need to analyze your entire process – from the time you close the sale to the first 30 days afterwards – and see where you can improve it. How can you make it really pop and stand out in the mind of your new customers? How can you WOW them in such a way that they feel compelled to tell others about you?

Don't be lazy with this...take it seriously and watch your business grow as a result.

Step 7 – Expand Lifetime Value

You have probably heard the saying that it is much more difficult and costly to acquire a new customer than it is to sell to an existing customer. In my own business and in my clients' businesses, I have found this to be an accurate statement.

Lifetime value is simply a measure of how much a customer is worth to you over the time period for however long they are a customer. This takes three variables into account: how much they spend with you, how frequently and for how long.

For example, let's say that you own a restaurant and have determined that your average customer spends \$30 a meal, comes in once every 3 months and lives in the area for 5 years. Based on these averages you customer would be worth approximately \$600 to you over their lifetime.

But what if you could encourage them to visit your restaurant two more times per year? Now they're worth \$900 to you. How about if the average ticket goes to \$35 per meal from \$30? That would make them worth \$1,050 to you.

By determining their lifetime value, you can start to strategize how to expand it so that you are getting more money from your existing customer base instead of just trying to grow your revenue through new customer acquisition. It's easier and it's more profitable to take this approach as well.

What can you do to increase the lifetime value? Well, for starters, focus on the three variables that make up the dollar amount:

Average Ticket: are there other products or services you can sell to your customers? Up-sells, cross-sells, complementary products or services ... this is where you need to get creative and come up with other items of value that your customers need or want.

Frequency: what promotions can you run that will get your customers back into your store, office, or website more frequently? Remember in the above example that just by getting the customer in 2 more times per year boosted revenue by 50%. The more often you can get your customers in the better.

Duration of Relationship: this will oftentimes be out of your control (if your customer moves for example), but many times it is completely in your control. One of the number one reasons customers will leave is simply because they don't feel appreciated or they just forget about you. You have total control over both of those scenarios. Do what you can to continually build an active relationship with your customers and you will make it very difficult for them to ever leave you.

Step 8 – Leverage the Relationship

The single best way to grow your business is going to be through word-of-mouth and referrals. A referral comes to you 90% sold and ready to do business with you almost from the start. All you have to do is seal the deal ... which is much easier to do than if they came to you from an outside marketing push.

I am often bewildered that my clients treat their referral process so casually. When asked, most of them readily admit that they get most of their business through referrals, that they are easier to sell to and are more pleasant to work with. Why then, do we treat them so flippantly?

Part of the reason for this, I think, is because we just expect people to refer others to us if we have done a good job for them. This is wishful thinking. They might refer others to us, but why leave it to chance?



Lead Generation Blueprint

Referrals start with forging a deep, on-going relationship with your customers in the first place. If you aren't doing everything you can to delight your customers – not just meet their expectations, but delight them – then you aren't going to receive as many referrals as you could. This is a crucial point to remember. To receive a referral, you have to be worthy of it first ... you have to earn it.

The second thing you have to do is be willing to ask for it. Most of us are so wimpy about asking for referrals. But think about the last time someone asked for your help on something ... were you put off by the request? Probably not. In fact, like most of us, you were probably honored that they asked and felt good about helping them. Your customers feel the same way about your business, so ask them.

Finally, this type of behavior should be rewarded so as to be encouraged. Everyone enjoys being recognized and feeling appreciated. The best thing you can do when someone sends you a referral is to make a HUGE deal out of it. By taking steps to proactively leverage the relationship you are building with your customers, you will see dividends almost immediately. There is no surer way to weather a slowdown in the economy or your business than to have lasting relationships with the ones paying your bills. That is the Lead Generation Blueprint. None of this is rocket science, but it isn't exactly easy either. You have your work cut out for you. You can't just do one or two, or even five of the steps. You have to do every one of them consistently and persistently. Acquiring new customers, in my opinion, is the most important function of your business. It really is the lifeblood that keeps you going. If you have high-quality leads coming in on a regular basis then your life will be pretty good. If that dries up you will struggle ... it's that simple.

Designing a complete sales and marketing funnel can be a daunting task. With our creative team we have tried to streamline the process and do all the heavy lifting for you, including developing your offers/lead magnets, building your landing pages, creating the email series, implementing the back-end SEO, developing additional content, writing your ad copy, and more.

If you would like to explore how V-Squared Creative can help your business start generating more leads and customers please contact our office at 855-632-6673, ext. 0 or email us at hello@vsquaredcreative.com. We will help you design a customized program that will help you reach your sales goals and one that will fit your budget.