Shorten Your SALES CYCLE

Using auto response campaigns
to shorten your sales cycle and
strengthen customer relationships

roundpeg

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People don't become customers overnight. Typically, they start out as a casual conversation at a networking event or a random visitor to your website. Your objective is to move those casual connections through your sales funnel, converting them to leads, customers and ultimately raving fans.

That all sounds great, but who has the time to reach out to every lead as soon as they express even a casual interest, remind every prospect of what you proposed and reconnect with every client for important updates and annual messages?

The good news is you can do all that with auto response campaigns to deliver information while you focus on other aspects of your business. They do what YOU wish you had the time to do!

With an auto response campaign, you can shorten your sales cycle as you deliver relevant information to prospects, answering their questions and helping them take the next step in a logical, simple manner.

And once you have the tools in place, you can also use auto responders to simplify, up-sell and reactivate campaigns for existing and former clients.

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WHY YOU?

There is that moment in every sales conversation when a client must decide if you are the right choice. Whether they come out and ask, or simply wonder internally, the question on the table is very simply "Why should I buy from you?"

With a well-planned out auto response campaign you use information on your website, social media profiles and email campaigns to answer the question before they have to ask. Then you stay in touch throughout the sales process and beyond.

So how do you put together an effective auto response campaign? There are three main pieces to a comprehensive program. They are:

- Web Content
- The Offer
- The Follow up

DRIVE TRAFFIC WITH GREAT CONTENT

The first step is to drive traffic to your website, but not just any traffic. You want people who are most likely to become leads, and, ultimately, happy customers to drop by.

So who are the "right" people? To answer this, you need to have a clear definition of your ideal customer. If you are still trying to sell to everyone, this process won't work. It is built around the idea of delivering the right information, to the right people, at the right time. Since different people need different things, the clearer your definition is the easier it is to create focused content which attracts those people.

Not sure who your target customer is? Spend some time with our Target Market workbook and then come back to develop your campaign.

CREATE CONTENT

Once you know who you are trying to reach, it is easy to think about the kind of information they might need to make a purchase decision. Even though we are talking about answering prospects questions, this "content" shouldn't be overtly selling.

It's not an ad, it's not a hard sell. Instead, it's impartial(ish) information, designed to nudge a prospect further down your sales funnel. Take time to look at which pages typically attract visitors to your website. What questions come up in conversations again and again? Start by answering commonly asked questions, share tips on industry trends, how-to guides and comparisons between solutions.

Your content can be presented in a range of formats for example:

- Blog posts and lists of frequently asked questions
- Infographics and surveys
- Videos and podcasts
- White papers and check lists

Drive Traffic

Once you have created the content, you need to make it easier for people to find it. Here are just a few ways to drive traffic to your content.

- Promote it on a variety of social media platforms, but don't stop there
- Publish links and descriptions on other sites your customers are likely to visit
- Include descriptions in your email blasts
- Mention the content at networking events and send a link in personal follow up notes
- Take advantage of SEO - Pick keywords around the terms your ideal clients are likely to use, then optimize your pages and build links
- Advertise – Consider Google adwords or a small boost of a popular post on one or more social media platforms around the terms your ideal buyers are searching for.

Offer Visitors Something of Value.

You spend time and sometimes money to drive visitors to your site. Make sure you greet them properly, make it easy for them to find what they are looking for and for you to collect their contact information.

Your sales process begins with their contact information. Even just an email address will allow you to follow up with additional relevant information.

Content Examples

Here are a few examples of several very successful content offers created for a range of clients:

- **Cookbooks –** We work with a network of recipe bloggers to develop original recipes for one of our clients. We gather a series of ten into a Word document, add a cover and offer the entire collection as a free online cookbook.
- **Buying Guides and Checklists –** For clients with a more technical or expensive product, these outlines educate prospects giving them all the information they need before they start a project.
- **Fee Audits –** These interactive forms allow visitors to assess themselves or their business. They are then offered general suggestions and an invitation for a more detailed conversation.
- **Webinars and Podcasts –** Recorded programs on a range of topics are offered in exchange for contact information. Visitors can watch again and again and easily share the link with others. The only requirement is that they log in each time they view.

Direct Visitors

Once you create your content make sure people can find it easily.

- **Navigation** - Check your navigation structure. Is it simple with a clear path to the vital information?
- **Calls-to-action** - These are the buttons or links peppered throughout your site which encourage visitors to take action. Often located in the sidebar or at the bottom of a related post, these commands to “Download a Whitepaper” or “Attend a Webinar” direct visitors to your landing page.
- **Landing page** - This is where a visitor arrives when he clicks on a call-to-action. This page should be dedicated to one purpose; getting the visitor to complete the sign up form in exchange for the content. To eliminate distractions, there should only be one offer per page, a request for information or a download form.

Capture the Leads

Now that your visitor has arrived make sure they don’t leave before they give you their contact information.

- **Form -** In order for visitors to become leads, they must fill out a form and submit their information. Keep the form simple, with as few fields as possible. The more information you request the fewer the number of leads you will receive as a result.
- **Contact list**: Keep track of the leads in a centralized marketing database. Categorize each contact based on the information downloaded so you can follow up with more information on related topics.

The Follow Up

Attracting visitors and converting them into prospects is a great first step. Now you need to transform those leads into customers and stay in touch after the sale to keep them coming back, buying more and referring others to you.

Email is your Best Employee

Sure there are the personal touches, a quick phone call or a handwritten note which marketing automation won’t replace, but a good email program with auto response capabilities supplements those activities, keeping your pipeline active even when you are busy working on other projects.

After a visitor clicks on your call-to-action, fills out a landing page or downloads your whitepaper, the next step should be one or a series of emails focused on useful, relevant content. This “drip campaign” builds trust and moves them easily to the next stage in the sales process.

Drip campaigns can also be used after live events, a meeting, proposal submission or program registration. And they are equally effective with existing clients. Examples of common drip campaigns include:

- **Reasons to buy or competitive analysis –** Remember to avoid being too sales oriented, but if you keep the tone informative after an initial interaction you become viewed as an impartial source of industry information.
- **Educational programs** – After the download of a workbook, a series of emails can be used to send subsequent information as part of an online course sending participants back to your website for more resources.
- **Kickoff forms** – At the beginning of a business relationship there are always a few housekeeping issues. Whether it is a medical practice setting up a new patient or a web design firm starting up a project, a series of short emails sent over a few weeks leading up to the first interaction delivers information in manageable bits.
- **Reminders** – Any product which is purchased regularly or seasonally can benefit from a date-based trigger program. These emails are sent on anniversaries for example:
    - Monthly reminder to change your contact lenses
    - Seasonal reminders to have your car serviced or furnace checked
    - Reminders to grooms on the one month, or one-year anniversary to send flowers to their brides
    - Customer satisfaction check ins – Whether it is a formal survey or a simple question, this touch base will remind your clients you care about them.
- **Refer a friend** – The best source of new customers is often the customers who already know and love you. Periodically send new information to clients and ask them to share it with their friends. In some product categories it even makes sense to offer incentives for them to pass on the information.

The Right Tools

There are lots of tools available to put together an integrated auto response campaign. These are our favorites:

- **Web Content** – Wordpress allows you to build a simple, mobile responsive website which can be expanded with new content on your blog or a new landing page. The media library is the ideal place to collect all your content.
- **The Offer** – Formstack lets you create simple contact forms without programming skills, which collect leads in exchange for access to relevant content. You can download the leads or send them directly to your auto messaging tool.
- **The Follow Up** – **Constant Contact**. Simple, easy to use and extremely affordable email solution which can deliver an individual email or an auto response series. It also includes event management, survey and social integration capabilities.

That's it. You have everything you need to put together your auto response campaign. If you need any more help, feel free to reach out to Roundpeg:

317-569-1396 or info@roundpeg.biz

