

**A brief guide to...**

# Demand Generation



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## Let's firstly set the scene

So, how does this guide help me?

It's, rightly, taken as read that demand generation plays a central - underpinning - role within any winning B2B growth strategy. What though does success look like and what are its coordinates? Equally, is it not of substantive value to fully understand the foundational structure of a - commercially successful - demand generation programme?

Within this brief guide we will look to deliver illumination across all such aspects. Providing a reminder of best practice, as well as sharing observations, insights and learnings gained through supporting our client partners in driving their financial traction.

Our focus is, unashamedly, skewed towards the tech vertical - given our 20+ years of operating within the sector. Such heritage, however, doesn't mean we pretend for one moment to have all the answers. Furthermore, such a publication is deliberately positioned as a 'handy guide', rather than a 'definitive tome'. It's a jumping-off point for further thought, discussion and action.

At the very least though, we would hope that the Vanson Bourne perspective will validate and - in places - challenge your thinking. Encouraging you to ask the question: *'Is there anything our demand generation programme should be doing differently/better?'*

Sharks never stop swimming; that's when they die. Behaviour directly analogous with growth activity across the B2B tech landscape - you gotta keep moving forward!



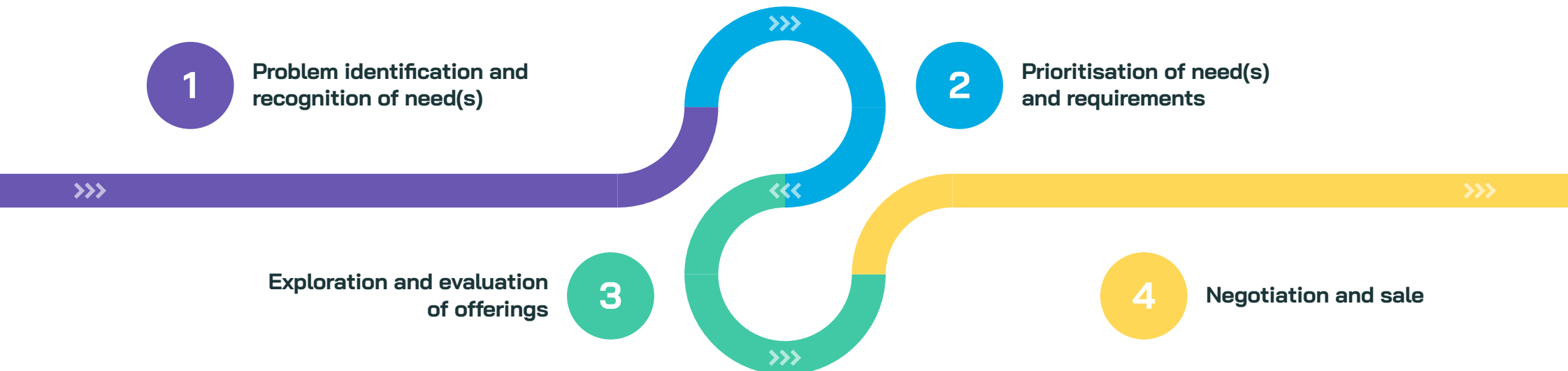
# Acknowledging the challenge

## Forewarned is forearmed

Attracting new customers is crucial for growth, though keeping a steady flow of prospects is often taxing - particularly as B2B tech buyers are increasingly technically savvy and demanding of clear, commercial, value. It's important not to shy away from such a real-world reality, albeit acknowledging that this isn't an insurmountable challenge - provided, of course, that the right things are done and done well.

Ultimately, delivering pipeline momentum - across both customer and prospect accounts - requires a relevant, tailored, impactful, approach across buying groups; a proactive response to purchase signals (spanning digital and non-digital channels); as well as true optimisation of the path-to-purchase (removing/reducing points-of-friction).

### Key stages across the B2B buyer journey



# Demand and lead generation

Understanding the distinction, whilst applying both in concert

Prior to wading into some of the specifics of best practice, it's important to re-emphasize the distinction between 'demand' and 'lead' gen. Whilst sometimes (erroneously) applied on an interchangeable basis, demand and lead generation are very different in their goals and application within the sales-pipeline.

We're highly conscious that this, for many, is firmly 101 territory. That being said, when at the coalface, in our day-to-day roles, it's surprising how clarity of thought can become muddled.

Demand generation strives to build brand awareness, curiosity and authority in your product/service proposition - via outreach activity. Usually, such leads are top-of-the-funnel, requiring significant on-going engagement and reassurance. Whereas lead generation (a middle/bottom-of-the-funnel) activity is when prospect attention is turned into qualified leads - those who are ready to explore your offering.



## Demand generation

Top-of-the-funnel activity which drives brand awareness and business interest

## Lead generation

Bottom-of-the-funnel activity which captures and qualifies leads for nurture, then conversion

**Demand generation**

- ▶ Establishing a need, through driving implicit and explicit awareness of the problem or challenge
- ▶ Amplifying your brand authority, trust and overarching footprint
- ▶ Sharing thought leadership and expertise
- ▶ Offering complimentary resources, frameworks and tools
- ▶ Engaging with wider - albeit relevant - target audience(s)

**vs.****Lead generation**

- ▶ Offering a compelling solution to the problem or challenge
- ▶ Impactfully presenting your proposition benefits
- ▶ Sharing case studies (addressing a similar problem or challenge)
- ▶ Leveraging (potentially gated) content and experiences - to capture contact details
- ▶ Nurturing quality, qualified, leads

It's, however, crucial that we view the demand and lead gen components as part of an integrated whole, rather than distinct, separated, initiatives. Without robust demand generation, lead gen fails to maximise the latent commercial potential - often attempting to 'land' opportunities before prospects are fully aware of the solution (negatively impacting conversion rates).

The most effective B2B tech marketing approaches have moved away from generating as many leads as possible, shifting to a focus on activating demand. Looking to map the proposition offering to the requirement, doing so at the right moment, in the right way.



# The imperative of a joined-up approach

Alignment of thought, word and deed

Brand marketing and business development functions are all too often siloed in their activities, this is - in our view - a mistake. A way-of-working which often leads to misalignment and loss of impact. Essentially, B2B tech marketers and commercial leads should look to unite efforts and approaches.

A strong demand generation programme inherently builds brand awareness and authority, produces thoughtful, engaging, content - which drives interest and cultivates strong leads. In essence, demand generation is an essential component of a healthy sales and marketing strategy. Integration should therefore be a central, pervading, principle.

In essence, catalysing demand requires...

**Right  
audience**



**Engaging,  
impactful  
content**



**Relevant  
proposition**  
(mapping to needs)



**Demand**

Forging strong inter-team partnerships is, by extension, a bedrock component of any successful demand gen initiative. Whether you're in a marketing or commercial function there needs to be a laser-like focus on having relevant, meaningful, interactions with customers and prospects. Energy (and time) invested in such an effort, is - in our experience - rarely wasted. Such activity helps to cement the overarching goal that it's all about having the right conversation, with the right person, at the right time, in the right way.

# A framework for success

## Building and optimising the paths-to-growth

Clearly, all of us will be at different junctures in the construction, implementation and refinement of our respective approaches to demand generation. Whilst being cognizant of this, certain building blocks - the cornerstones of success - are consistent.

It's worth briefly mapping-out these components. In our experience, there are five key elements in the construction of a winning B2B demand generation strategy:

### Five key elements in the construction of a winning B2B demand generation strategy





1

## **Brand amplification - growing the awareness footprint**

Given the competitiveness of the B2B tech landscape, brand awareness is absolutely critical for an on-going flow of quality leads. Such an observation is, in itself, no great epiphany. The challenge comes in looking to gain cut-through (mental availability) in a crowded marketplace.

Equally, building brand awareness isn't simply about gaining the attention of a potential buyer. An effective approach leaves prospects with a lasting, positive, brand halo - engendering authority, trust and distinctiveness. Absolute fundamentals when it comes to offering solutions to their problems/challenges. A couple of aspects which will help power such activity include:

**Looking towards a more personalised approach:** a one-size-fits-all philosophy is outmoded and will rapidly burn through any hard-won stores of attention and consideration initially gained. It's about making B2B tech buyers feel valued, respected and unique - not being treated as a homogenous, transactional, 'deal' - a walking dollar-sign, if you will.

**Maximising perceptions of value:** it's important for prospects to feel that they will receive maximum bang-for-their-buck. Everyone wants to secure the required products/services at the most competitive rate.

2

## **Shaping and activating an impactful content strategy**

Shortly, we will explore - in far broader terms - the critical role your content strategy needs to play within any such demand gen activity. However, it's worth flagging, at this point, the benefit of rich (ungated) content in helping communicate value. Sharing such thought leadership helps underline your knowledge and credibility within the marketplace, whilst signalling a generosity of spirit and your belief in a partnership-type ethos. All high-prized brand qualities.

In parallel with amplifying brand awareness, promoting reputational expertise is - in our experience - another key facet of any successful demand gen programme. Such industry standing means your brand is viewed as an authority from the very first prospect interaction.

Providing content which addresses questions and/or allays concerns - across the purchase journey - engenders buyer confidence and builds brand credibility. Such an approach helps distinguish your brand as a guide within the marketplace and a subject matter expert. Developing curated and/or personalised content, in relation to specific needs, can also prove particularly fruitful. In such instances, it's often beneficial to employ segment-specific knowledge to tailor coverage and calls-to-action (CTAs).





3

### **Nurturing quality, qualified, leads**

To fully maximise commercial opportunities, healthy, reliable, demand generation requires full, on-going, lead nurture from the very first prospect contact through all subsequent purchase consideration, decision and action stages.

It's essential that the associated nurture activity focuses on the types of content prospects need, as well as the most appropriate channels through which to engage. The goal, as previously mentioned, is to reach-out with the right content at the right time, in the right way.

In our experience, closely monitoring lead engagement - to establish whether your outreach activities are 'landing' well and helping (rather than hindering) conversion - is invaluable. It's important to regularly review related performance data (engagement levels, unsubscribe rates, etc.), as well as anecdotal feedback, to continually hone your lead nurture approaches and messaging.

4

### **Integrating account-based marketing**

Central to any successful account-based marketing strategy is a close, in-depth, understanding of the accounts and prospect personas you're targeting.

5

### **Leveraging partner marketing**

Ascertain their commercial objectives and organisational values, as well as the major steps in their purchase path. Such insight should also be employed to directly shape the respective approach. With the creation of bespoke, relevant, content to address specific - often unique - opportunities and/or pain points.

Building successful partnerships is another intrinsic part of any B2B demand gen programme. Establishing strategic alliances to promote and sell your product/ service proposition can be highly advantageous. That being said, productive B2B tech marketing partnerships require, in our view, shared outcomes, mutually agreed KPIs and a clarity of structure. Partnership programmes can lead to confusion and even frustration without well-established parameters and expectations.

Ideally, your partnership programme structure should also be segmented by partner type - such as alliance, referral and reseller - with appropriately tailored goals. Furthermore, such a structure could be tiered (say silver, gold and platinum) - with the opportunity to transition between tiers based on sales outcomes, referrals, etc. Whilst there are undoubted pitfalls, let's make no mistake, third-party partners can absolutely get your offering in front of the right buyers at the right moment.

# Market research as a commercial catalyst

Fully leveraging industry insight and illumination

Clearly, thoughtful, engaging, content has a major role to play across each and every stage of the demand generation process.

With insatiable demand for such B2B tech content, marketers and commercial leads alike face the constant battle of differentiating their brand offering, product/service proposition and messaging from competitors. Raising the rather obvious question: 'How can we generate content which is relevant, impactful and insightful to our target customer/prospect audience?' To which, a large part of the answer is... market research.

Well-executed market research provides qualitative and quantitative data, insights and illumination across industry topics, trends, opportunities and challenges.

Such an approach provides the facility to create many different story narratives and forms of content - from infographics to whitepapers, eBooks, webinars and micro-sites. Delivering the initial demand-gen 'bang', as well as supporting the rolling thunder of activity across the commercial calendar - through tailored marketing campaigns and outreach.



## One - final - closing thought

### Swifter, higher, stronger

Evidently, as we touched-on in the opening words, much of this guide will have simply validated your existing practices, behaviours and thinking. No bad thing in itself - we all, on occasion, require a reminder of the central tenets of commercially successful activity.

We would also hope though that the odd idea has started to crystallise as to how your approach to demand generation can be further honed to crank up growth momentum another gear. The Olympic motto of 'Citius, Altius, Fortius' (swifter, higher, stronger) entirely encapsulates such a drive for continuous improvement - highly applicable to any such demand generation activity and an entirely appropriate final thought to leave you with.

## Direction and guidance

### Always happy to help

Of course, we would be very happy to talk through our approach to demand generation with you - or for that matter - any aspects of the research and insight process. Do view us as an expert sounding board, if guidance is required.

After all, Vanson Bourne has been supporting tech businesses in the delivery of market research, strategy and consulting programmes for over 20 years.

Want to know more? Don't hesitate to get in touch.

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