

# Best Practices: Getting Started with Lead Nurturing

While initially overwhelming, it's important to begin nurturing leads who aren't ready to purchase or risk falling behind competitors. According to [MarketingSherpa, 73% of all leads are not ready to buy yet and 79% of all marketing leads will never convert](#) to a sale in the B2B sphere. These numbers prove why it is increasingly important to constantly touch and engage those in your pipeline—only a small portion will convert to a sale.

Lead nurturing presents organizations with the ability invest in future potential business. With [67% of the buyer's journey completed digitally](#), it's now important for you to engage with leads where they are, not where you want them to be. Research by the RAIN Group, it [takes an average of 8 touches](#) before a customer will take a meeting with a sales representative. By enabling an effective lead nurturing campaign, you are priming those leads to engage further with your company representative and the likelihood movement further down the sales pipeline. Yet despite the clear impact on sales pipelines, many businesses are not investing in lead nurturing.

To help you further your lead nurturing campaigns, this guide includes a list of actionable steps to integrate into your efforts. Throughout this guide, you will discover the basics of lead nurturing, lead nurturing tips, and new nurture campaign ideas.

## WHAT IS LEAD NURTURING?

When email marketing and lead scoring combine, you end up with their beautiful brainchild: Lead nurturing. Lead nurtures are a key element for marketing professionals because they enable the brand to stay in front of prospects. Nurtures provide relevant content while gauging interest and increasing prospects lead score until they are qualified to move on to the sales team.

More targeted than traditional email marketing, lead nurturing focuses on specific parts of the buyer's journey to guide prospects to purchase. Because of their targeted nature, nurture campaigns follow a set of rules that automatically deploys a specific message based on factors including the prospects content interaction, form fills, demographic data etc.

## WHY SHOULD BUSINESSES NURTURE LEADS?

Believe it or not, the why behind nurturing leads is more complex because businesses tend to nurture based on multiple instances of the reasons below. Each business will have a different reason that is important to their business but here are some general reasons businesses should nurture leads:

- Educate prospects about your product or service
- Build relationships with prospects over time
- Establish trust and credibility with your brand
- Maintain top-of-mind awareness
- Personalize content and experiences for each buyer
- Help overcome objections during the buying process
- Close a higher percentage of leads
- Accelerate the readiness of prospects to buy

## FIVE FACTS ABOUT LEAD NURTURING TO KEEP YOU MOTIVATED

1. Nurtured leads make 47% larger purchases than non-nurtured leads [[Annuitas](#)]
2. Companies focused on lead nurturing can create 50% more sales (while lowering the cost per lead by 33%). [Strategic IC, 2017]
3. It potentially saves 80% of your direct mail budget and while increasing revenue by 10% over 6-9 months. [[Gartner](#)]
4. Lead nurturing emails can get up to 4 to 10x the response rate. [[Invespcro](#)]
5. It takes an average of 10 marketing-driven “touches” to convert a lead into a revenue- generating customer. [[Aberdeen Group](#)]

## Best Practices for Lead Nurturing Campaigns

### PICK AN AUDIENCE

Your nurtures should target strategic audiences, but how you want to segment those audiences is up to you. However, make sure that these audiences are segmented in a way that is logically related directly to your brand including segmenting by persona, interaction, or product interest to name only a few. Once you select your key characteristics, assure that you segment your nurture campaigns because when building multiple nurtures, you'll want to ensure you have rules in place to prevent one user from falling into multiple nurtures at once. Your audience segmentation is key to creating effective nurtures because different audiences will need different content to convert from prospect to marketing qualified lead (MQL).

*Tip: You don't want your prospect to fall into multiple nurtures at once, but that doesn't mean if they finish one nurture cadence that they cannot go into another with different content. This has the added benefit of showing you what works and what doesn't in your nurture campaigns.*

### AUDIENCE SEGMENTATION EXAMPLES

#### Region

Consider a localized nurture for China. Address your audience in Chinese and adapt the tone to fit cultural norms for that region and provide relevant links that you are sure can be accessed by this region.

#### Product

Nurtures are a huge win if your company has multiple shine products or services. Create a different nurture for prospects based on product and/or service interest rating your products by popularity. Multiple interests? No problem! Add them to the most popular interest first and then follow up with a campaign on the second interest.

#### Industry

If your company performs well in specific industries, the content of your nurture campaign should speak to the industry challenges to position your business as an expert.

# Map Your Content

Before you get started with building your nurture campaigns, you must map out your content. If you don't, you're going to be scrambling to find a piece of content to adapt to your email. Most of the time, this does not work so it's better to know your assets before writing your nurture campaigns. Each asset you select should serve a purpose and be logically selected for the specific part of the nurture sequence, and appropriate for the audience you target.

If email nurturing is the engine, then content is the fuel that keeps it running. Powerful and helpful content will build your brand's rapport with prospects, but poor content will do just the opposite. Remember, content is king—Bill Gate's observation still rings true today.

*Tip: If you're missing content for your nurture campaigns, it's okay to include it later but don't put it off forever. How can you provide quality content quickly to support your nurture? Think landing pages, infographics, or video shorts—you can always replace it later with a guide, whitepaper, or ebook (just don't forget).*

## NURTURE CONTENT EXAMPLES

### **Thought Leadership Content**

This content is groundbreaking and exclusive to your company. This work may have been syndicated externally to your organization but, like the name implies, it is unique, thought inspiring content relevant to your company and your industry vertical. This can include whitepapers, ebooks, guides, research reports or articles. Usually, this type of asset is most useful in the middle of your nurture campaign.

### **Engaging and Informative Content**

While thought leadership content can fit this category, this content is more general in use. This includes whitepapers, ebooks, guides, articles, quizzes, or infographics—anything that can appeal to your audience on a specific level. This content fits wonderfully at the top of a nurture to help a prospect increase their lead score and provide something of value, free of charge.

### **Brand Building Content**

This content is meant for justification and identification of your brand meaning it incorporates well near the end of your nurture campaign. The type of assets generally found in this tier includes case studies, testimonials, videos, and corporate landing pages. Use enough of these to help the audience make a decision but avoid looking like you're bragging (even if it's warranted). It's also important to make the information in the asset relevant to your audience. Using a case study on manufacturing for your manufacturing audience works but sharing a video on how you've impacted an ecommerce company will not resound nearly as well with the same audience.

### **Offer Oriented Content**

This type of content, as you probably have guessed, extends a type of offer to your audience such as a demo, free trial, coupon, discount code, or upgrade. While all of these may not apply to your organization, this is definitely the carrot to your audience before passing them on to your sales team.

## Maintain Your Lead Scoring

Nurture campaigns are designed to build a relationship with prospects before sending them over to the sales team at your organization. While interaction from a prospect in your nurture is exciting, make sure that the lead is fully qualified before sending it over to your sales team. One of the most alienating things that can happen to a customer is a premature sales pitch.

At first, qualifying leads to send to sales may be scored via simple actions like form fills but as you build your brand trust and loyalty, you'll want to ensure you're not still scoring them the same way. Why? As you grow, your content and lead generation efforts grow with you resulting in more interactions and engagement (hopefully). As a result, certain actions must adjust their score weight and you may have to add scoring for additional assets and/or actions. Launching nurtures makes revisiting and reevaluating your scoring models critical because it will enable you to ensure the quality of your leads.

### **Communication is Key to a Healthy Relationship**

One essential aspect of lead scoring is that it is meant to pass on the most qualified leads to your sales team. That's why you can't forget to keep the communication open with your sales team. Update the scoring model? Let your sales team know. Launched a new nurture campaign? Let your sales team know. It's important to keep the lines of communication open so that they know they can deliver feedback on the leads sent to them. That feedback is essential to increasing the effectiveness of lead nurturing campaigns and lead scoring. Plus, it can also unlock new opportunities for you both to win additional qualified leads based on feedback and insight you can only gather from working together. You'll also want to work with your sales team to understand where it is most logical marketing to stop nurturing leads related to the stages in your organizational sales funnel.

## Time Your Nurture

In an email nurture campaign, scheduling is an important part of your strategy. Schedule your emails so that they are sent to the right audience, at the right time automatically. But what's the right cadence? Answer is that it depends. Here are a few ideas to consider in regard to timing your nurture campaign:

### HOW MUCH OF A DELAY DO YOU NEED BETWEEN EMAILS?

A delay is important for most nurture campaigns but it's really up to you what makes the most sense for your audience, your planned content, and your sales cycle.

**Audience** – Emailing too often can result in a deluge of spams and unsubscribes but for some audiences it can be a good reminder of something they were interested in. Be cautious not to overload that audience and use the information from whatever data you have. If ecommerce businesses are visiting your website 3-4 times per week but manufacturing visits once a month, use that to reflect what cadence you should set for that audience.

**Content** – Have a lot of hard-hitting content that's valuable? Increase its value by spreading it out over time. Likewise, if you have content that is short and easy to digest, it might make sense to send it more frequently.

**Sales Cycle** – Understanding your sales cycle is key to knowing when to send nurture emails because it varies depending on your organization. Companies with a relatively short sales cycle, such as 1 month, may want to stay top-of-mind as often as possible but those with longer sales cycles may not want to bombard their prospects with too much information too quickly while they make a decision.

## HOW MANY EMAILS SHOULD YOU SEND?

There isn't a specific number of emails that make a magic nurture campaign. Some experts will say that you shouldn't email more than once per week, there should be a minimum of six days between emails and up to 30 or even 45, but these are guidelines. The important thing is to understand what works for your company. Take into account again your sales cycle and plan accordingly. If your typical sales cycle is one month, your nurture campaign may only be four emails but if it's six months, that may be as few as six emails or as many as 24.

The type of customer you have in your audience also impacts the number of emails that you should include. Executives have limited time and focus on streamlining so if you're over-emailing them, they may eliminate you "cluttering" their inbox. While a product manager may have more bandwidth to see the emails your sending and need more information to make a decision. Your audience and buyer personas are a great help in this area.

## DO YOU WANT TO BLACKLIST SPECIFIC DAYS OF THE WEEK OR HOLIDAYS?

Email marketing best practices suggest specific times and days of the week to send emails to your mailing lists, but does that apply to nurtures? Yes. Your nurture emails are important to your sales cycle, but they may not supersede emails that need to go out to existing customers, product announcements, or other important news. Deciding if any of these emails will ever cross over and the audience will influence what days you need to send your nurture campaigns. Additionally, if you're in a vertical where you have a large push around specific holidays, pausing your traditional nurtures for an intermediary nurture placeholder until you resume your nurture schedule. It also may make sense to pause your nurtures completely during common times that people take holidays depending on your market. If you're not going to reach your target audience, you should plan accordingly for those time periods.

## ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How long do you want the entire nurture campaign to last?
- Does your marketing automation platform allow for forced delays if the prospect has received another email?
- Should you divide your nurture and the timing based on additional factors?

# Advanced Best Practices for Lead Nurturing

Feel successful with your first nurture campaign? Want to do more? Here are some ways you can optimize and upscale your nurture campaigns to make them more targeted, personal, and effective.

## PERSONALIZE CAMPAIGNS

Personalization is the new marketing and the beauty of nurture campaigns is that you can leverage your marketing automation platform to personalize emails at scale. Your nurtures are crafted around strategic audience segments, speaking to the audience's interests or challenges where you can leverage tagging to insert attributes such as their name or company name.

Personalize each touch so that the reader is immediately engaged.

Remember, you'll want to ensure you have a clean database with accurate contact information if you want to personalize emails. Greeting someone with the wrong name or having the wrong audience within a nurture can make your brand look bad and most of the time, there is no coming back from that.

## ADD TACTICS TO THE MIX

If you want to further accelerate your nurtures, take your nurtures to the next level by incorporating more tactics. Create very targeted audiences out of your analytics. Bolster your nurtures by using social media, retargeting, direct mail, sales outreach, and account-based marketing tactics. Get creative with supplementing your nurtures and using the same messaging, but make sure you're staying targeted because you might end up doing more with less of an impact. Hyper focus in this area is a great way to truly advance your nurture campaigns and score leads that marketing and sales want to attract.

## ANALYZE THE RESULTS

Hopefully, you're using a marketing automation platform that gives you advanced reporting. Don't neglect your nurture campaign analytics and don't wait until the campaign is over to look at the numbers. During the nurture campaign, it's important to look at how your emails are performing and modify where needed. If the numbers aren't where you would like them, try to modify your messaging, calls to action, cadence and even the order of the email sequence.

After the campaign is over, see where there can be improvement and apply your learnings to the next one. Finding the "secret sauce" that works for your organization is essential to successfully passing on qualified leads that convert.

## ENSURE YOUR TOOL IS EMPOWERING

Your marketing automation platform should be empowering you to launch effective nurtures instead of adding hurdles to the mix. What if your prospect doesn't even open your emails? What if they engage by visiting your website or attending a webinar? How do you even know when leads are ready for sales? It's simply too hard to answer these questions if your processes are fragmented. These questions should all be answered within your marketing automation platform. By using a tool to automate your lead nurturing, you can monitor the progress of leads to keep the dialogue going. The path a lead travels is customized by you including activities like emails,

phone calls, or events. For those of you already using a marketing automation tool, don't forget to integrate it with your CRM to keep sales involved.

With the right tool, your nurture campaigns can be simple. Take baby steps and start with broad audiences and short nurtures. While nurture marketing is used most often for leads, it's important to remember that it can also be used to provide meaningful experiences for customers and partners. Keep your brand top-of-mind with awareness nurtures, drive loyalty, and create customers for life.

## Not Sure Where to Start?

Here are 6 common nurture campaigns to help you get started. These nurtures force you to think through your audiences and will give you practice with creating audience lists in your marketing automation platform.

### 1. Welcome Nurture

Your prospects might not know anything about your brand or solutions when they fill out a form for an asset, sign up for your newsletter based on a blog post, or engage with content they find appealing on social media. A welcome nurture should typically provide some high-level information and are used to start a lasting conversation with newly acquired leads.

### 2. Keep in Touch Nurture

If a prospect isn't ready to buy right now, you don't want to lose touch with them completely. This type of nurture campaign allows you to stay top-of-mind and build credibility for when they are ready to make a decision. The purpose of this campaign is to help educate leads and position your company as a thought leader in your industry.

### 3. Remarket Nurture

If your prospect customer shows interest in your company for a number of reasons but doesn't actually convert, remarketing campaigns help you to target them in a new way. Remarketing targets leads from people who didn't convert but have engaged you're your company in a new way—if they filled out a form and now use the chat feature, remarketing is a way to pique their interest once again. Reasons to remarket can include visiting the company website, sending an email, or visiting and/or engaging with company social media pages.

### 4. Accelerate Nurture

Are things you thought were moving quickly starting to slow down? Or do you think putting the process into overdrive will get things moving in the right direction? Accelerator campaigns are designed to nudge leads along in the buyer's journey faster by providing relevant information that drives a purchase.

### 5. Re-engagement Nurture

Sometimes your biggest competitor is the prospect. They aren't purchasing anything from anyone but rather gathering information for a purchase in the future. Automated closed-lost nurtures can give you a chance to revive that opportunity by reminding that prospect you're still available whenever they want to have a conversation.

### 6. Customer Nurture

Congratulations! Your lead has turned into a customer! Now what? Don't shut down the conversation (that's just bad customer experience). Customer nurture campaigns can do a lot for your brand including



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