

# CLICK TO LEAD: THE WEBSITE CHALLENGE

How to Reach Business Software Buyers  
and Convert Them to Sales-Ready Leads

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- Mike

Do your salespeople ask incoming leads how they heard about you?  
Does your online form request fields such as job title and mailing address?  
Do your salespeople discard leads that appear to be cold?  
Does your website remain stagnant for months at a time?

If you answered “Yes” to any of these questions, then read on!

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# INTRODUCTION

The Web has had a huge impact on how people research business software. Companies used to rely on consultants, tradeshows and magazines for information, but now the Web is the primary resource buyers use to find and research products and services. In fact, even when someone learns about a company offline, they will likely go online to find out more about them. Because of this shift, the Web is the primary channel for software vendors to reach potential buyers.

With that in mind, software marketers must excel at each of these four steps:

1. Attract prospects to the company's website.
2. Convert these web visitors into leads.
3. Track the referring campaign for each lead.
4. Qualify and cultivate the leads.

This may seem obvious and simple, but based on my conversations with **thousands of software companies**, few appear to execute all four of these elements successfully. Even if a software company performs the first step well, chances are good that they fail at the rest.

The website is the lynchpin of software lead generation success. This eBook will provide practical advice for getting the most out of your company's website and your online marketing campaigns – with particular attention paid to the goal of maximizing qualified leads, sales and revenue.

# ATTRACTING PROSPECTS TO YOUR WEBSITE

## Online Venues

From search engines and online directories to industry-specific portals, there are numerous websites that attract software buyers and direct them to your website. I recommend trying any venue that does not lock you into a time commitment or minimum spend. The major search engines – Google, Yahoo and MSN – are a great place to start.

## Pricing Models

There are three predominant pricing models: CPM (Cost Per Thousand Impressions), PPC (Pay Per Click) and PPL (Pay Per Lead). CPM has been around the longest and carries with it the greatest risk – that the audience will not interact with your advertisement in any way. A buyer may not even see your ad, since an “impression” simply indicates that the ad has been delivered, meaning it is available on the page the buyer is viewing. This is how radio, television, newspaper, magazine, billboard and even banner ads operate. There is a world of difference between your ad being delivered to your audience and your ad being noticed, and preferably acted upon, by your audience. CPM can be successful in certain instances, but advertisers

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should understand that these campaigns are notoriously difficult to measure and have a high failure rate.

Pay Per Click pricing eliminates the risk of paying for an audience that does not interact with your ad by only charging you for web visitors that have viewed AND clicked on your ad. It is worth pointing out that it does not guarantee that an audience member will become a lead or sale. However, since you are only charged for traffic that goes to your website, it is easy to determine if the campaign is effective based on whether or not the traffic converts to leads. One caveat worth mentioning is that some Pay Per Click venues do a poor job of removing duplicate, invalid or malicious clicks. Running test campaigns with limited budgets helps to quickly identify these venues at very little cost.

Pay Per Lead pricing further reduces the risk that ad dollars will not convert to leads. However, campaign success varies widely depending on how the venue defines a lead. Additionally, if your website is optimized to convert clicks to leads, your cost per lead may actually be lower with the Pay Per Click option.

### **Value of a Click**

On the subject of Pay Per Click pricing, the amount you can pay for someone to click through to your website is a simple math exercise. Consider the following in order to calculate the value of a paid web visitor:

1. The average price point of your product. Or, better yet, the present value of all future revenue from your average customer.
2. The percentage of that value that you are willing to spend to find a customer (not including sales commission).
3. The percentage of your leads that convert to sales.
4. The percentage of web visitors from paid campaigns that convert to leads.

Multiply these four numbers together and you will arrive at the top limit of how much you should spend per click. I have provided an example at the end of this eBook. You will find that #3 and #4 may differ across venues; visitors from one website may convert better than visitors from another.

## **CONVERTING WEB VISITORS INTO LEADS**

### **The Goal of Your Website**

Once you are spending money for web traffic, you will quickly realize how important your website is to the lead generation process. The goal of your website should be to convert visitors into leads. Acknowledging this goal is extremely important, as it gives you a way to measure the effectiveness of your website.

Successful websites convert a high percentage of visitors into leads. They accomplish this by providing great content. What is considered a good conversion rate and what do I mean by great content?

### **Conversion Rate**

Your conversion rate is the percentage of your website visitors that become leads, typically by providing their contact details using a web form. Most websites will also post a phone number, but if a website is well-designed, the majority of leads will likely come in through the web form. Good conversion rates typically range from 5-25%, but this will vary, depending on the nature of your customer and your offering. For example, the more niche your target market, the lower your conversion rate will be since it is likely that you will attract visitors who are not in your market. For some software vendors with

a perfectly optimized website, 5% is a great result while vendors that target a broader audience may be able to surpass 25%.

The better your conversion rate, the more you can spend per click and the more traffic – potential leads – you can drive to your website. So, how well your website is optimized has a direct impact on your ability to grow your business.

### **Great Content**

Your prospects are looking for software to solve a particular problem. The more helpful your website is at highlighting how your software solution solves their problem, the more likely they will be to convert to a lead. Any content you can provide that helps people gain a better understanding of their particular issues will increase the likelihood that they will see you as a trusted resource and want to buy from you. Therefore, an abundance of informative content not only helps to generate leads, but it also enhances your brand image. The following is a list of content pieces worth considering:

- ▶ Benefits Overview
- ▶ Feature List
- ▶ Testimonials
- ▶ Success Stories
- ▶ Case Studies
- ▶ White Papers
- ▶ Client List
- ▶ Virtual Tour / Screenshots
- ▶ ROI Demonstration
- ▶ Industries Served
- ▶ Pricing
- ▶ General Expertise / Lessons Learned
- ▶ Competitor Comparison Matrix

Most of these should be easily accessible web pages that do not require users to login. Some, particularly the general expertise, could even be offered via a blog, podcast or webcast.

**HIGHLIGHTING CLEAR CALLS TO ACTION ON EVERY PAGE OF YOUR WEBSITE IS CRITICAL FOR IMPROVING CONVERSION RATES**

### **Website Design**

Once you have developed great content for your website, displaying everything in a user-friendly format designed to persuade the visitor to provide their contact details and become a lead is essential. Whether you are using the trendiest, flashiest design tools is hardly relevant. Here is what is important for a well-designed website:

- ▶ A clear, enticing call to action, preferably several, highlighted on every page of your website.
- ▶ Visually appealing text in an accessible font size and grouped into short, easy to read paragraphs and/or bullet points.
- ▶ Intuitive navigation that guides the prospect through the buying process, including clear “next steps” at the end of each web page.
- ▶ A Contact Us page that includes phone number and location, linked from the header or footer of every page.
- ▶ A brief online form linked from your calls to action.

### **Calls To Action**

Highlighting clear calls to action on every page of your website is critical for improving conversion rates. Popular examples include Request Demo, Free Trial and Free Phone Consultation. These are much more effective than simply Contact Us or Request More Information, because they allow the prospect to get something in return for providing their details. Having several calls to action is generally recommended since potential leads may respond to different offers based on where they are in the buying process.

When a prospect clicks on the call to action they should arrive at a very brief online form. The fewer fields you request, the more likely they will be to complete the form. You have one chance to get the visitor to provide their contact details, so now is NOT the ideal time to attempt lead qualification. While requesting fields such as position, industry, company size and location may reduce your “bad” leads, it will also reduce your good leads. Better to do this once the prospect completes the

### **Test, Measure, Test**

One final point to be made about your web content and design is that building and maintaining a website should be an iterative process. You are never finished. Test everything. It is amazing how seemingly innocuous changes can have a huge impact on your conversion rate. Test different images, copy changes, positions, colors, navigation and calls to action!

initial form. Getting the visitor to at least provide their email address is extremely important.

### **Online Forms**

So what fields should you request? Email is the bare minimum, but I generally suggest first name and last name as well. Being able to send someone a personalized email makes a noticeable difference and it is nice to know who you are talking to from the beginning. Phone number and company name are debatable. I recommend testing forms with and without these fields. If you find that the email address is usually accurate and your conversion rate climbs significantly when you don’t request a phone number then go with that. If, on the other hand, requesting phone number has little impact on your conversion rate, you may want to leave it on the form as a backup in case you don’t receive a response to your emails. Most other fields are not essential and you risk losing the lead by requesting them. Remember, you can always follow up with a secondary form, email or phone call to request additional information.

## TRACK THE REFERRING CAMPAIGN

### Lead Tracking

One of the most common mistakes that software marketers and salespeople make is relying on prospects to remember how they heard about your company. If a prospect found you online, they likely will have forgotten the last website they visited before arriving at yours. They may give you an answer, but there is no way for you to know if it is accurate. That's the bad news. The good news is that you don't need prospects to remember how they found you since you can automate this tracking via tagged links and cookies.

### Tagging your Links

The easiest way to measure and track your online campaigns is to place a tag at the end of your referring links. A tag is a string of characters, usually beginning with a question mark, which identifies the campaign from which the visitor originated. A common tag used by Capterra advertisers is "?source=capterra". Adding this

tag makes it easy to identify anyone who clicks on your Capterra link and comes to your website. Tagged links give more accurate information than relying solely on web analytic tools to report referring websites.

### Cookies

Once your tagged visitor enters your website, create a cookie that is specific to the incoming tag. A cookie is a small text file placed on your web visitor's hard drive that will allow you to follow them as they navigate throughout your website and later, if they return. Although there are other methods, cookies are a fairly standard way of tracking web visitors from click to lead. When a visitor completes your online form, the cookie will allow you to report the referring site along with the information submitted via the form. While it is true that some web users block cookies, it is generally considered to be a tiny percentage.

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## QUALIFYING AND NURTURING LEADS

A common mistake that I see made by larger software companies is that leads are handed off to a salesperson without first being qualified by someone in marketing or pre-sales. What happens when the salesperson realizes the prospect is not qualified? Or if the prospect is a long way away from buying? Or if they aren't yet sure of their need for software? The lead will eventually get discarded. And I can't really blame the salespeople. There are only so many hours in the day and they have to dedicate those hours to the leads that are closest to buying – the most qualified ones.

Instead of being abandoned, these leads that are less sales-ready should be nurtured...and it is the marketing department's responsibility to do this. Whether it is with white papers, case studies, success stories, webinars, or some other marketing piece, there is a lot that the marketing department can do to stay in touch with those leads until they are closer to a purchase.

Note: if the lead isn't a good fit, try handing it off to a software partner in exchange for a referral fee.

### **Examples of Software Vendors That Get It**

These websites are great examples of what is possible.

None are perfect, but we can learn something from each of them.

- ▶ [Syberworks](#) – Useful and abundant content in an easy to read format.
- ▶ [Autotask](#) – Very professional; great “Try It Free” call to action.
- ▶ [BuildIT Systems](#) – Easy to navigate, strong calls to action linked to a brief online form.
- ▶ [Intuit](#) – Excellent, intuitive layout. Manages the display of many products very well.
- ▶ [Basecamp](#) – Excellent virtual tours; easy to navigate.

## RECAP: MY TOP 6 TIPS

1. Highlight clear calls to action on every page of your website.
2. Link each call to action to a brief online form where you request a prospect's name, email address and phone number.
3. Provide abundant, easy-to-access free information including product benefits, case studies and a virtual tour.
4. Use tracking codes and cookies for each of your paid online campaigns in order to track the source of your leads.
5. Use marketing materials in conjunction with an email marketing campaign in order to cultivate leads that are not ready to buy today.
6. Test everything!

**CAPTERRA OFFERS A FREE CONVERSION TRACKING TOOL  
TO HELP YOU MEASURE THE SUCCESS OF YOUR CAMPAIGN**

## FINAL WORD

The larger your software company is, the more difficult it may be to accomplish these otherwise straightforward goals. Everyone has an opinion and many have an agenda. The key is to simply remember – and make sure everyone understands - that the primary goal of your website is to generate leads for your salespeople in order to grow your business. And in order to improve your website, you have to be able to accurately measure its success. Everything I have written is geared toward fulfilling these goals. Good luck!

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

I would recommend reading or subscribing to the following books, blogs and newsletters that provide further information regarding the topics I have discussed.

[MarketingSherpa](#) – Market research firm that covers what works in marketing.

[MarketingProfs](#) – Publishes know-how articles related to marketing.

[Brian Carroll Blog](#) – Covers best practices regarding B2B lead generation.

[Managing Sales Leads](#) – James Obermayer covers the process of cultivating leads.

[Don't Make Me Think](#) – Steve Krug covers web usability and design.

[W3Schools](#) – Provides an overview on implementing cookies.

## CLICK VALUATION EXAMPLE

Software Company XYZ sells a software product that has an initial price point of \$14,000 and they charge an annual maintenance fee of \$2,000. Considering the time value of money and the fact that they lose some customers over time, they determine that the average total present value of any new customer is \$20,000.

They are willing to spend 5% of that figure to acquire a new customer.

10% of their new leads convert to sales.

20% of their paid web visitors convert to leads.

Multiplying \$20,000 by .05 by .1 by .2 results in a maximum of \$20 that they are able to pay per click. Imagine their ROI when they find an online venue that charges just a few dollars per click!

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Ortner is the President and Founder of Capterra, an online marketplace for the business software industry. A graduate of Georgetown University's School of Business and currently pursuing a philosophy degree from the University of London as a part-time student, Mike gained experience in the technology industry while working for the management consulting practice of Price Waterhouse.

He started Capterra in 1999 to help companies avoid the many pitfalls that exist in the software buying process as well as provide a more effective and less expensive way for software vendors to reach buyers. Capterra has been awarded a spot on the Inc. 500 list as one of the fastest growing private companies in the United States. Mike resides in Falls Church, VA with his wife and two children.

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