The Inbound Marketing Playbook

Content

INTRODUCTION

What is inbound marketing?

Inbound marketing is a methodology for attracting, engaging and converting customers. It's an approach that uses technology to its advantage. With inbound, prospective customers find an organisation through web searches, social media, blog posts, email marketing campaigns and other types of valuable, relevant content.

What are the benefits of inbound marketing?

Inbound marketing can deliver many benefits to a B2B company:

- **It generates high-quality leads** - by producing content that's relevant to your target audience, you will attract only best-fit customers to your company.
- **It builds brand awareness** - the more people who interact with your content, the bigger your brand recognition becomes.
- **It builds rapport and increases trust** - by delivering content that speaks to your target audience, you'll quickly build lasting relationships and turn customers into lifelong fans.
- **It's cost-effective** - you don't need huge marketing budgets to run inbound marketing. A website, a blog, an email account and social media profiles are really all you need!

What are the challenges of inbound marketing?

The main problem with inbound is that it depends entirely on customers finding your organisation among all the other online 'noise'. And many marketers find it difficult to know how to act on the connections.

Inbound marketing explained

Which is where this playbook comes in. We're going to give you a complete guide to becoming an inbound marketing champion. Over the course of these pages, you'll discover:

- What the three stages of inbound are.
- What the three big inbound channels are and how they work.
- Step-by-step instructions to mastering each of the three inbound channels.
- Top tips and hacks from a world-class panel of B2B/SaaS marketers.

Welcome to **The Inbound Marketing Playbook**, presented by Cognism, the world's best all-in-one prospecting solution. Let's get started!

The three stages of inbound marketing

There are three stages to inbound marketing. They are:

Attract

The first stage is the simplest. You want to attract people to visit your website, read your blogs and download your content.

But you don't want just anyone. You want people who are highly likely to become customers. Before you start creating and publishing content, you need to know who your ideal buyers are and what matters to them. Only then can you create content that's wholly relevant to that audience.

Engage

Once you've got a captive audience, then what? You need to keep engaging with them on the platforms that they use every day.

The Engage stage is all about maintaining quality relationships with prospects and customers. You need to personalise interactions and deliver value to your audience - ultimately creating a brand-loyal following!

Convert

The final stage. Here, you have to align with your sales team and generate content specifically focused on individual sectors, companies and prospects.

You have to use tools to reach your target accounts and keep a meaningful dialogue going. The ultimate prize is to convert those accounts into customers.

The three inbound stages combined

When the three stages are combined, they create a workflow that looks like this:

The three main inbound marketing channels

As you can see from our infographic, there are three main inbound marketing channels to focus on: paid, content marketing (blogs/social media) and email marketing.

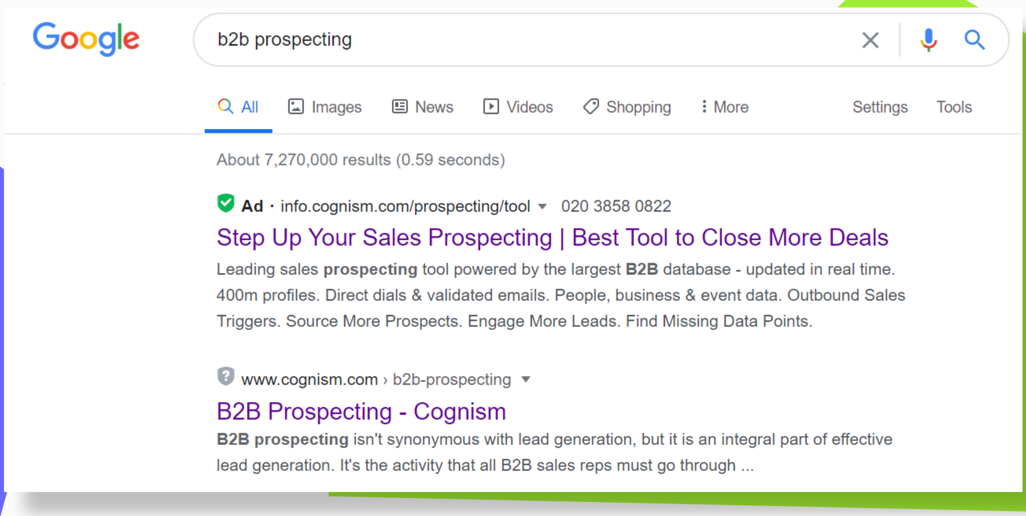
We'll tackle each of these channels in turn, giving you some great insights and key takeaways that you can use in your business today. Starting with…

Paid

Paid, also known as paid ads or pay-per-click (PPC), is a model of inbound marketing where businesses pay a fee whenever someone clicks on their online ad. It's a method of securing visitors to your site through advertising, rather than attracting them organically through content.

Search engine advertising is a popular example of PPC. Companies can bid for placement on search engines using relevant keywords or phrases.

For example, if we search on Google for "B2B prospecting", we can see that Cognism's ad targeting this keyword is at the top of the Search Engine Results Page (SERP).



In the B2B sector, the three main platforms for paid ads are Google, LinkedIn and Facebook. We'll show you how to manage paid ads on each of these platforms.

Let's start with Google!

The beginner's guide to PPC

Sam Warren is the Director of Marketing at RankPay, the top-rated SEO service that helps hundreds of small and mid-market businesses grow their online presence. In this chapter, he shares his comprehensive guide to managing PPC on Google.

In case you've been living under a rock for the past few decades, PPC (Pay-Per-Click) advertising is a seriously effective way to get your business digital exposure quickly.

While it may seem conceptually simple, you can easily spend over your budget without doing some proper leg work and research.

Before you start creating a PPC campaign, you should completely familiarise yourself with what you're getting into.

In this beginner's guide to PPC, I'll walk you through everything you need to know to get up and running with your own PPC campaign.

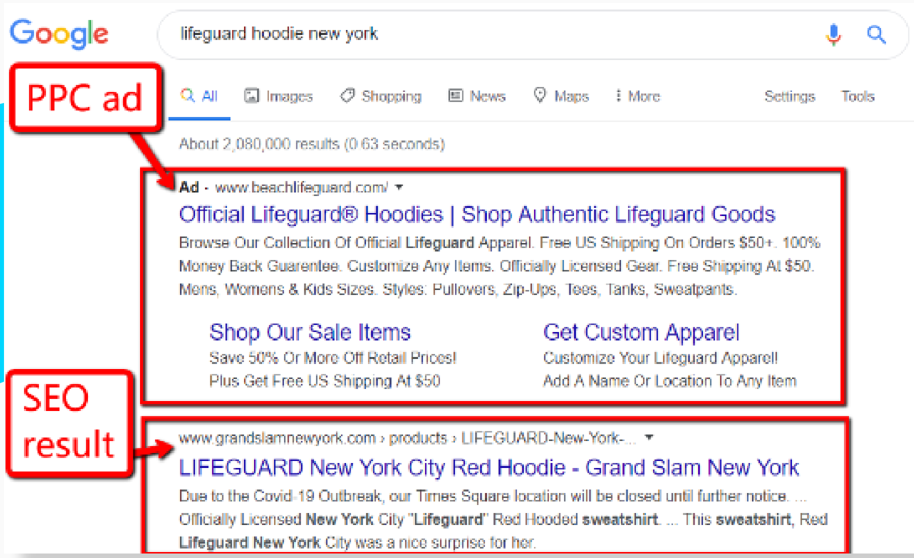
That way, you'll launch PPC ads correctly and effectively, maximise traffic, and improve your B2B lead generation. And the more site visits you get, the more sales and revenue you generate!

What is PPC?

PPC advertising is an online advertising model where advertisers pay a fee whenever an internet user clicks on their ads. But what makes PPC ads different from organic search results?

Unlike search results that appear organically, PPC ads aren't free. And while they look similar to organic listings, there are some notable differences.

An image is worth a thousand words as they say. So I took a screenshot of a standard google search to illustrate the difference between the two.



As you can see, there is an ad listed first (there can be up to 4 shown here). Subsequently, you'll see the organic search results.

Of course, many search result pages will include maps, news stories, or featured snippets and answer boxes. But those are topics for another day.

Why use PPC?

While both SEO and PPC are about making a great first impression in search engine result pages, they actually function quite differently.

As a marketing channel, paid advertising comes with unique benefits (and costs). Let's take a closer look.

1. A quick increase in visibility

Fact: PPC advertising produces an average 80% increase in brand awareness.

As you can probably infer, this means that paid advertising is a fantastic way to introduce your brand to new audiences.

So if you want to expand your brand awareness and make inroads with new markets, PPC is one of the fastest and most efficient ways to do so.

Good things come to those who wait, sure. But waiting can also mean you're missing out on promising opportunities and business.

2. Hyper-targeted audience

Search engine optimisation does indeed allow you the opportunity to target specific audiences, but it is less granular than PPC by nature. After all, you can literally set demographic data that controls directly who your PPC ads are shown to.

That's definitely not the case with SEO.

When properly leveraged, the specificity of targeting provided by PPC platforms allows sponsors to hone in on a specific ROI. Targeting systems also allow ad personalisation to be a prominent feature.

The more personalised your approach is, the more effective it will be. That's because personalised ads will allow you to reach the right people, at the right time, with the right message.

Believe it or not, you can target specific ages, genders, geographic locations. You can even include custom parameters like interests and attitudes!

3. Better measurement of results

Can't tell if your online marketing campaigns are working? Don't know if your conversion rates are going up?

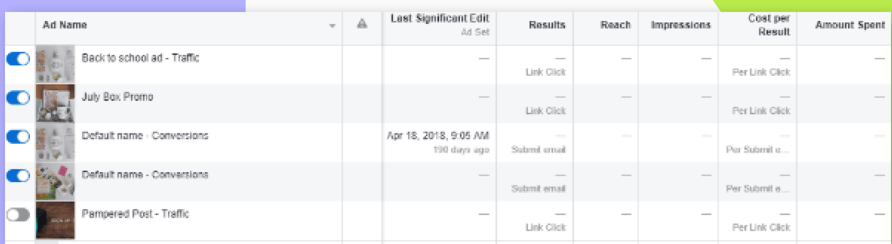
If you're a B2B marketer, this could spell trouble. In fact, 42% of B2B marketers state that the absence of quality B2B data is a big challenge to their lead generation efforts.

Don't worry, though. PPC advertising (when properly set up) will provide **very** clear data.

To be fair, there's no reason you can't accomplish this with your SEO efforts as well via free tools like Google Analytics. But even without GA, Google Ads (or any major PPC platform) will have very strong and customisable data right in your administrative panel without any set up required.

To find out for yourself, why not create an advertising campaign on Facebook? Once you're ready with a campaign, you can access a dashboard where you can monitor what's going on with your campaign.

Refer to the image below. As you can see, for every advertising campaign, you can measure results such as your ad's reach, impressions, the amount spent, and more.



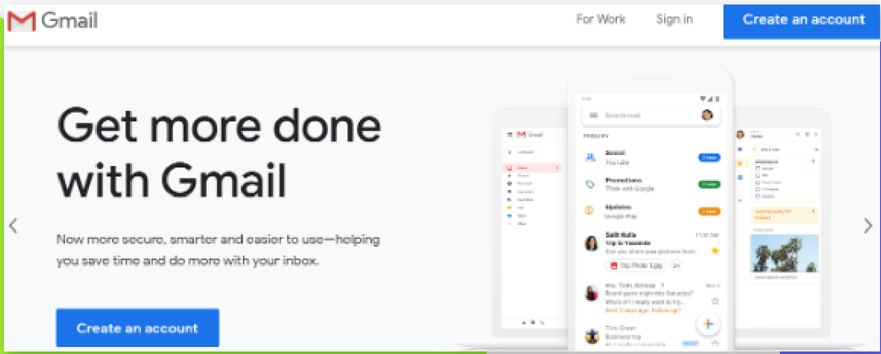
Ad Name		Last Significant Edit Ad Set	Results	Reach	Impressions	Cost per Result	Amount Spent
Back to school ad - Traffic		—	— Link Click	—	—	— Per Link Click	—
July Box Promo		—	— Link Click	—	—	— Per Link Click	—
Default name - Conversions		Apr 18, 2018, 9:05 AM 190 days ago	— Submit email	—	—	— Per Submit e...	—
Default name - Conversions		—	— Submit email	—	—	— Per Submit e...	—
Pampered Post - Traffic		—	— Link Click	—	—	— Per Link Click	—

How does PPC work?

In this beginner's guide, we'll start simple. We'll start off where most marketers take their first steps into PPC advertising: Google Ads.

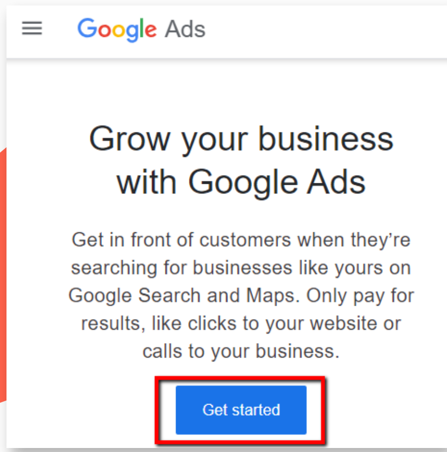
Step 1: Sign up for a Google account

Already have an existing account? Then simply sign in to that account to be done with this step.



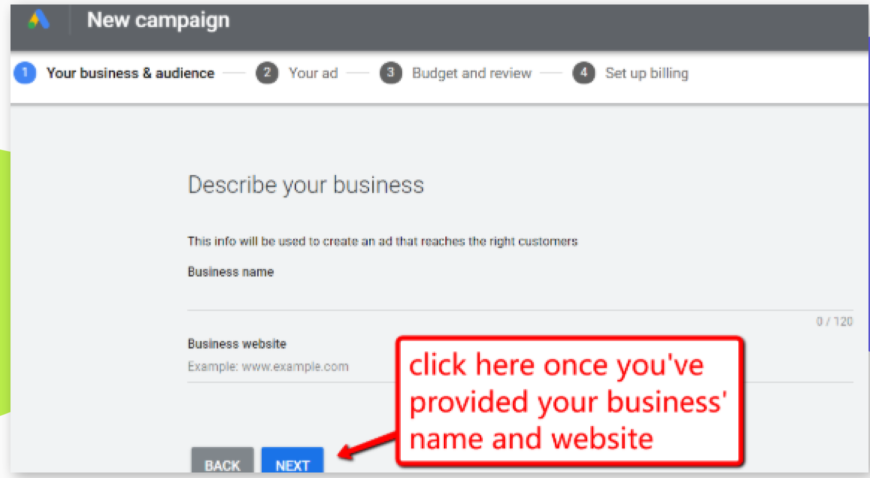
Step 2: Get started with Google Ads

Go to the homepage of [Google Ads](#) and click **Get started**.



Google will then redirect you to a form where you need to provide details for a new campaign. To kick off a new campaign with Google PPC, enter your business name and business website.

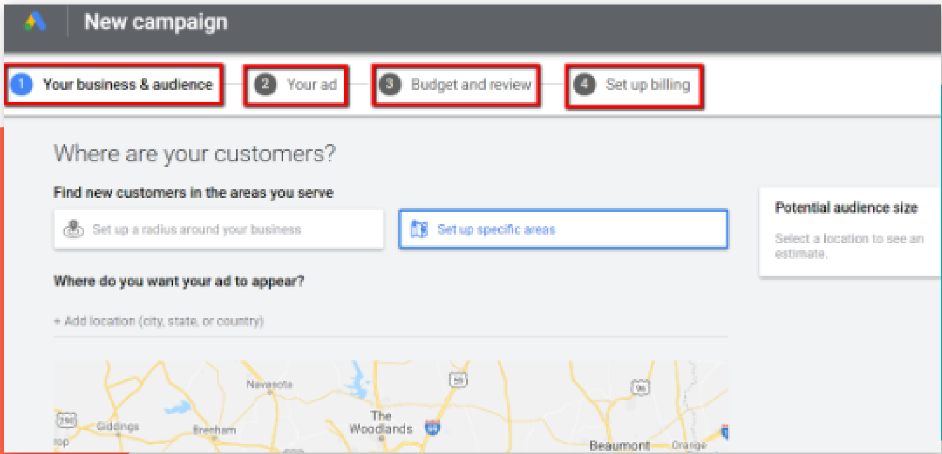
Click **NEXT** once you're finished.



Step 3: Fill out the rest of the form

Then finish filling out the rest of the form. This means completing these sections:

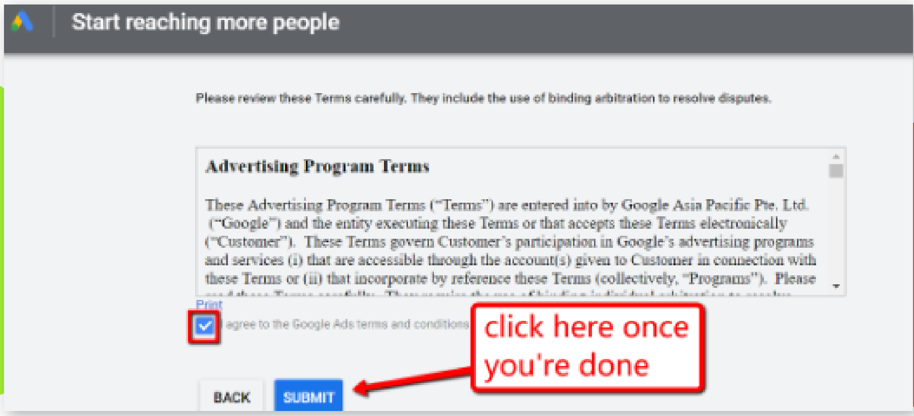
- **Your business & audience** – This refers to information about your customers, potential audience size, and where you want your ad to appear.
- **Your ad** – Here, you'll write your ad copy.
- **Budget & review** – This is where you'll set your ad budget and review your campaign settings.
- **Set up billing** – This is where you'll provide billing information.



Once you're set, tick the box to say that you agree to Google's terms and conditions. But of course, you should only do this if you fully agree with what you're signing up for.

So make sure to read the agreement (Advertising Program Terms) first.

Then hit **SUBMIT** to launch your campaign and start reaching more people.



How to optimise your PPC campaign

Now that you have your campaign setup, it's time to get setup for management and optimisation of your ads.

Targeting the right audience is a powerful and essential approach. When you're reaching the right audience, you're saving resources -- both yours and your potential customers' - by not beating around the bush.

But more than just targeting the right audience, you should also know what's important to your target audience and what they're searching for. Knowing your Ideal Customer Profile will help you here.

Optimising your campaign for generating the highest clicks with the lowest spend is an obvious goal for many B2B marketers. But, there are a variety of factors involved in this such as term selection, ad copy, and others.

More importantly, you have to consider their conversion rates to help you determine your ad budget. The click-through rate of ads depends on your industry and the goal you want to achieve with them.

WordStream released a study that shows the average CTR of each industry, among other factors.

But instead of worrying about these things, head on over to Peer Analytics' Free PPC Budget Calculator.

By entering your keywords, the tool shows you the estimated daily and monthly spend on your ads. This way, you remove the guesswork so you can develop your campaign based on these figures.

Aside from these things, here's what else you can do to optimise your PPC campaign:

- **Market to small ad groups** - Focus on a specific group of leads using ad text that appeals to them. This will keep your campaigns organised and effective.
- **Exclude negative keywords** - Perform keyword research to identify and exclude irrelevant keywords. Your goal is to prevent them from showing up in results for searchers who are not interested in what you're selling.
- **Use compelling CTAs** - When possible, be sure to include clear and concise calls to action to drive visitors to a desired place.

Last but not least, you'll want to monitor and iterate (potentially) all aspects of your new PPC campaign/s.

Make adjustments routinely. Create negative keyword lists if your keyword targeting isn't specific enough. Run A/B tests on ad copy to drive greater click-through rates.

Adjust your bid strategy or actual bids in order to lower CPC's and improve your ROI.

The sky is the limit. But don't just set up a campaign and let it run itself. PPC campaigns require maintenance and ongoing optimisations. So no excuses!

Key takeaway

Overall, the value of PPC advertising should be pretty clear.

Many business owners will simply not have the time to run campaigns even if they know it's an important step for them to take.

If after reading this guide, you find yourself in that boat, RankPay been managing PPC campaigns for over 13 years and we would be more than happy to help. So feel free to visit our site and learn more about how we leverage Google Ads and other platforms to our clients' benefit.

Remember, no matter which route you take, it's important to keep your eye on the ball with PPC campaigns.

Stay up to date with the most recent PPC best practices. Monitor your results. And make improvements as you go along.

OPTIMISING YOUR GOOGLE ADS

A quick guide

Once you've set up your Google Ads, the next step is optimising them. Sophie Logan, PPC Manager at Adzooma, explains her process for doing this.

Sophie Logan is the PPC Manager at Adzooma, the market-leading digital advertising platform. She is an expert in Google search/ads and pursues a smart, data-driven approach to paid media advertising.

We asked Sophie 10 questions about the steps she takes to optimise Google ads at Adzooma. If you're struggling to get good B2B lead generation results from paid ads on Google, then Sophie's advice will definitely help you out.

1. How do you know which audiences to target with your Google ads?

"There's no point in doing PPC unless you know your audience! Use targeting methods to make sure your ads are reaching the right people. You can change your bids to target particular demographics. You can also exclude certain keywords that your audience isn't interested in. With Google advertising, you want to go for quality, not quantity."

2. How do you choose your Google ad keywords?

"The best tool to use is Google Keyword Planner. It shows you how much you'll pay for a click. Don't just go for the keyword that looks the best in terms of search volume. Be realistic; can you afford it?"

"It's also good to be aware that people use all sorts of words to search for your business online - not just the words you want! Take a look at alternative keywords. They're often cheaper than your target keywords. For example, you can try using 'software' or 'tool' instead of 'product' or 'solution'."

3. What's your advice for keyword bidding?

"A healthy bid is very important. You want to manage your spend well, to make sure your ads get on Google's first page. Some campaigns we run at Adzooma have an automated bidding strategy, but for some others, we do manual bidding."

"My advice for keyword bidding is to be restrained. I always look at it like bidding on eBay - you don't want to spend any more than you think the item is worth! Set some limits on your bidding and stick to them. Otherwise, you can end up spending much more than you intended."

"Another tip is to keep an eye out for what's going on in your target industry. If a competitor goes bust, for example, you can bid for their keyword! That can be a very quick PPC win."

4. What are the steps you would take to optimise your Google ads?

"When optimising Google ads, it's very important to get into a routine. Mistakes can be very easy to miss if you don't look too often. You should aim to spend half of your day optimising your ads and reviewing performance and spend. If you put enough time and effort in, you'll get good rewards!"

"Always be on the look-out for out-of-date content and ad copy. I've seen companies run ads with last year's date on them, or with seasonal offers that aren't relevant any more. It looks bad and it's a waste of money, as very few people will click on those ads. That shows the importance of constant optimisation."

5. What's your process for A/B testing your Google ads?

"Don't be afraid to test and play around with your Google ads. You can create a contest between your ads, to see how effective they are."

"What I do is, I choose an ad that's doing well - I call this the 'champion ad'. Then I'll have a different ad, called the 'competitor ad', running alongside it, with alternative images and keywords. I'll have them both running at the same time for a month. Whichever ad does better is the one I'll carry on using."

6. How important are ad copy and images to the success of a Google ad?

"A Google ad must make an instant impression. You only get one chance to get people to click on it. If the ad looks bad, they won't click. So it's vitally important that spelling and grammar are all correct and the information on the ad is relevant and up-to-date."

"In terms of ad content, I always try to hone in on a USP that is really unique. Too many ads I see are very samey. Think hard about what makes your product truly unique. It could be anything - the length of time you've been trading, the experience you've got in your team, any awards you've won recently. It's good to be specific and detailed."

7. How do you manage your Google ad budget/ spend?

"I have a simple rule when it comes to managing budget for Google ads: it's about the quality of traffic. Don't spend for the sake of it; be targeted and focused on where your money goes."

"In PPC, spending more doesn't guarantee success. A good question to ask yourself at the start is: how much are you willing to spend to bring a new customer in?"

"One thing that can be very tricky is that Google can automatically spend more than your daily budget. It's a system that Google uses to boost an ad's performance - if it sees an opportunity to make an ad do even better, it will spend more. It can be quite worrying if you're not prepared for it! But I've found it usually balances out after a month or two. Just keep checking your Google account!"

8. What metrics do you use to track your Google ad performance?

“Before you start running a Google ad, always work out what your objective is. The majority of our clients at Adzooma are after leads for conversion. If that’s your goal, the metrics I recommend are the number of conversions, the cost per conversion and the conversion rate.”

“You might be after something else besides leads. Some of my clients are looking to increase their brand awareness. To track this, I recommend measuring the website traffic from the ad, the volume of impressions you get and the total number of clicks.”

9. What’s your number 1 PPC tip?

“My number 1 PPC tip is to always be prepared for change. The PPC industry is constantly evolving. New tools are always being developed and Google refreshes its processes almost every year!”

“Keep on top of the latest trends. There are a couple of PPC LinkedIn groups you can join, which are a great source of industry information.”

10. Beyond Google, what other PPC channels are worth considering?

"I'm a massive fan of Bing Ads! It's not a channel that's used very much in the UK, but 12-20% of all UK searches are done on Bing. That's a big chunk of the total UK audience. A lot of advertisers overlook it, but it can be much cheaper than Google."

"Luckily, you can import your Google ads to Bing. One thing though, the demographics on Bing tend to be older than those on Google. But, if your audience is more senior, it can be a very fruitful channel. I've certainly found a lot of success on it!"

Bonus tip

If you're looking for more PPC-related content, then we definitely recommend adding the Adzooma blog to your bookmarks - you'll find some great insights there.

LinkedIn advertising uncovered

The second main channel for B2B paid ads is LinkedIn. In this article, Dean Seddon, CEO at Maverrik, shares his seven tips for LinkedIn advertising success.

LinkedIn is the primary social media platform for B2B professionals, with 675 million monthly users, including 80% of the people who 'drive business decisions'.

However, even if you're using it to publish content and drive brand awareness, you could be missing out on valuable leads. To really use LinkedIn to its full B2B lead generation potential, you have to try LinkedIn advertising.

In 2018, 26% of social media marketers were using LinkedIn ads, but 58% of B2B marketers rated it as the best value platform.

Dean Seddon, CEO of Maverrik, is a B2B LinkedIn consultant and his company, Maverrik, has helped companies such as Coca-Cola, Bose and Ikea acquire customers through digital channels. These are his 7 steps to improve your LinkedIn advertising.

Know your audience

You need to know who you're targeting before you create your ads and commit budget. You need to make sure that the people who see your ads see something they are likely to respond to.

For example, the messaging you use for a salesperson will be different from the messaging for a marketer. Salespeople tend to prefer direct language and statistics to prove value, while marketers may be looking for more creative ideas. Marketing people are also often drawn in by controversy and innovation.

When thinking about who your audience is, a good idea is to return to your Ideal Customer Profile. Or, if you haven't done so already, developing your ICP is a very worthwhile exercise. Once you've defined it, you'll know who you should be targeting with your ads.

Segment your audience

Once you've defined your main target grouping, you need to break this down into narrower segments that you can target with ads.

Let's say SMBs are your primary target. As a whole, this sector is too broad to target on its own. What you need to do is split the primary target into separate industries, such as events, recruitment and tech etc.

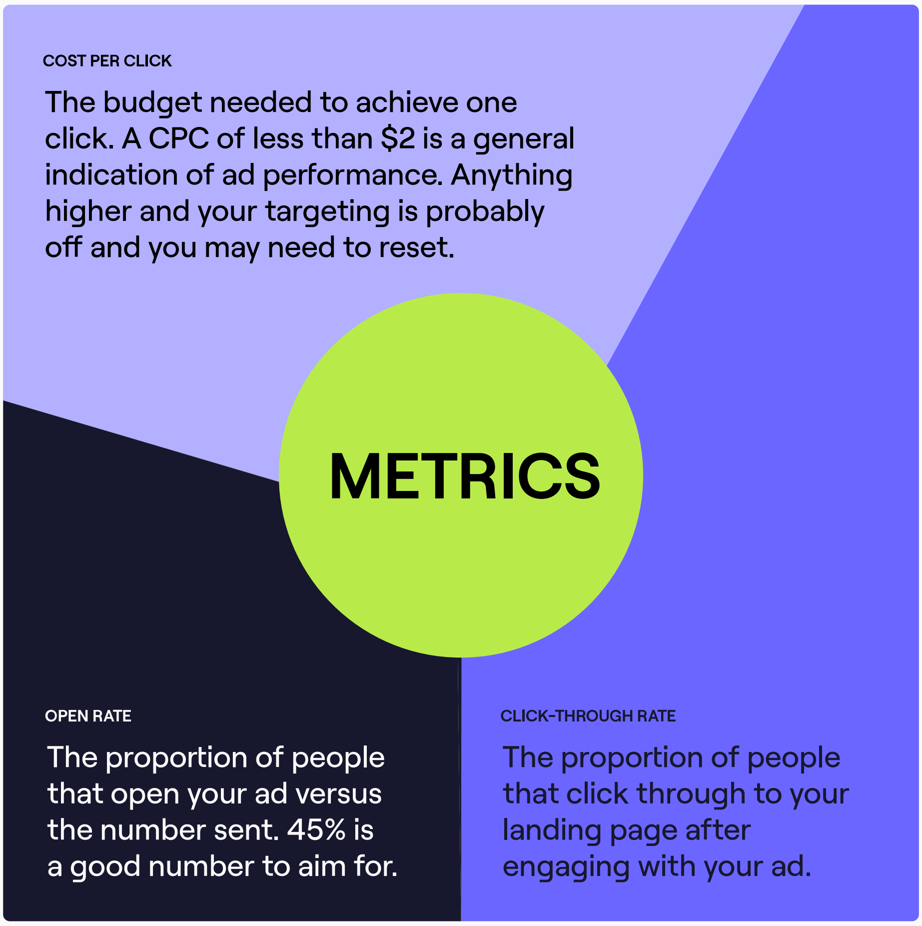
Having narrower B2B lead lists based on industries is vitally important, for one main reason: they will give you a steer on the content of your LinkedIn ads. You can create variations of your ads for each industry, using relevant terminology and images.

Segment your audience

Compared to other social media platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn is a more expensive advertising channel. Although, as we have seen, the audience is exclusive and many marketers find value from it. It just means you have to be smart with the money you spend.

Best practice when evaluating your LinkedIn marketing and its performance is to select your metrics upfront, then track them regularly. This will enable you to make quick adjustments or optimisations where necessary.

I recommend the following three metrics:



Create a content funnel

Different types of ads work at different stages, depending on where your targets are in your B2B marketing funnel.

For example, at the top of the funnel, they have just engaged with your brand. At this point, more generic content marketing is best, such as whitepapers, eBooks or guides. The goal is to cast a wide net and attract as many people as you can.

Then, as they move through the funnel, you can get more specific. Retarget those leads with more specific pieces of LinkedIn advertising, relevant to their business proposition. These could include case studies for companies similar to theirs, or ads showing relevant product features.

Choose your media

The media you use for each ad can make a big difference. In my experience, video works well at the top of the B2B marketing funnel, on broader campaigns.

That said, further down the funnel, videos can be a distraction. At this point, image-based ads perform better. You're not giving too much away and they don't require much attention from the audience. Image-based ads are often the ticket to better click-through rates!

Try getting personal

I recommend trying the following B2B marketing experiment: create highly-personalised ads, aimed at senior management in one specific company.

Research the company as thoroughly as you can. Look at their LinkedIn feed to see the kinds of messaging they use on a day-to-day basis. Then, use those insights to tailor an ad that resonates solely with them.

Mention the company name in your ad, as well as any other information you can find, such as their office location. Maybe they have bought some new technology? Get as personal as you can. When you do, your prospect is much more likely to engage with your ad.

It's a bit more work than usual, but it can produce a great payout!

Always A/B test

Testing is essential in LinkedIn advertising. You need to lock down quickly which ads perform better than others.

So, when you come up with an ad campaign, create several different variants. Try them all out and track them against your chosen marketing metrics. Which one performs best?

Certain ads may work better at different stages of your funnel. Make sure you test this out too!

Key takeaway

Dean shared with us a final top tip for LinkedIn advertising:

"The bottom line is that LinkedIn advertising is an expensive business, but when you get it right, it can work extremely well. My advice is to keep testing and iterating. Anything you can do to optimise your ads and improve their performance has got to be a good thing."

Bonus tip

If you're after more guides to LinkedIn advertising, then Maverrik has published several articles on their blog. They're well worth seeking out!

Facebook advertising uncovered

The third main channel for B2B paid ads is Facebook. Andrew Haines, marketing consultant, has 10 great tips for managing ads on Facebook.

In B2B marketing, a lot of marketers will look to LinkedIn for advertising over Facebook. But are you missing out on a key, cheaper channel?

If you can get Facebook advertising right in B2B, it can represent a powerful channel for your lead generation and often at a far lower cost than LinkedIn. So we asked an expert how they get success from Facebook.

Andrew Haines is a highly-experienced marketing consultant. His consultancy business, Mission Three60, supports its clients by developing and implementing detailed marketing strategies.

One of Andrew's many specialities is PPC, in particular Facebook advertising. We spoke to Andrew and asked him for his advice on turning Facebook ads into a lucrative B2B lead generation channel.

Here are Andrew's PPC insights.

Know your audience

The number one thing you need to work out before you start creating your Facebook ads is: who is your audience? Who are you advertising to?

On Facebook, audience profiling can be very granular. You're given a lot of options. If your targeting is too broad, you'll fall into the trap of getting a lot of clicks, but a low conversion rate.

The best place to start is with custom or look-a-like audiences of current customers or website visitors. This will allow Facebook to go after those people who have similar profiles to your current audience base.

Outside of that it really depends on who you're looking to target, as you can build audiences on any interest groups, such as:

- Specific companies - you can use company names to target people at those companies.
- Household income (applicable in the US only).
- Business-specific newspapers and journals such as Financial Times, Business Insider and Harvard Business Review.
- Also you can target behaviours such as Small Business Owners.

The possibilities are endless, so do your research! Identify your ideal customers on Facebook and then create ads tailored to them. Luckily, Facebook collects a wealth of data on its users - age, location, education, interests etc. Use this to your advantage!

One very important thing is to ensure you're not targeting people who are already your customers. All that leads to is wasted budget!

Know your objectives

Before you start advertising, it's absolutely crucial to know your objectives. You need an end goal to work towards. Ask yourself what success looks like for every Facebook ad campaign you run.

"Think carefully about what you want to achieve with Facebook advertising. Is it to gain new customers or boost your brand awareness? Define your B2B marketing KPIs before running an ad campaign.

Manage your budget

Always take the time to work out the budget for your Facebook ad campaign. A good tactic is to link the budget to your objectives. For example, you can ask yourself: how many B2B leads am I expecting this campaign to bring in, and what will that cost?

In general, I've found that a good Facebook ad campaign takes about 3 months to become profitable. In the first month, you can expect to spend more and incur a slightly higher cost per lead. The second month is all about optimisation and refinement. By the third month, you should have a fully bedded-in and profitable ad campaign.

Manage your tracking

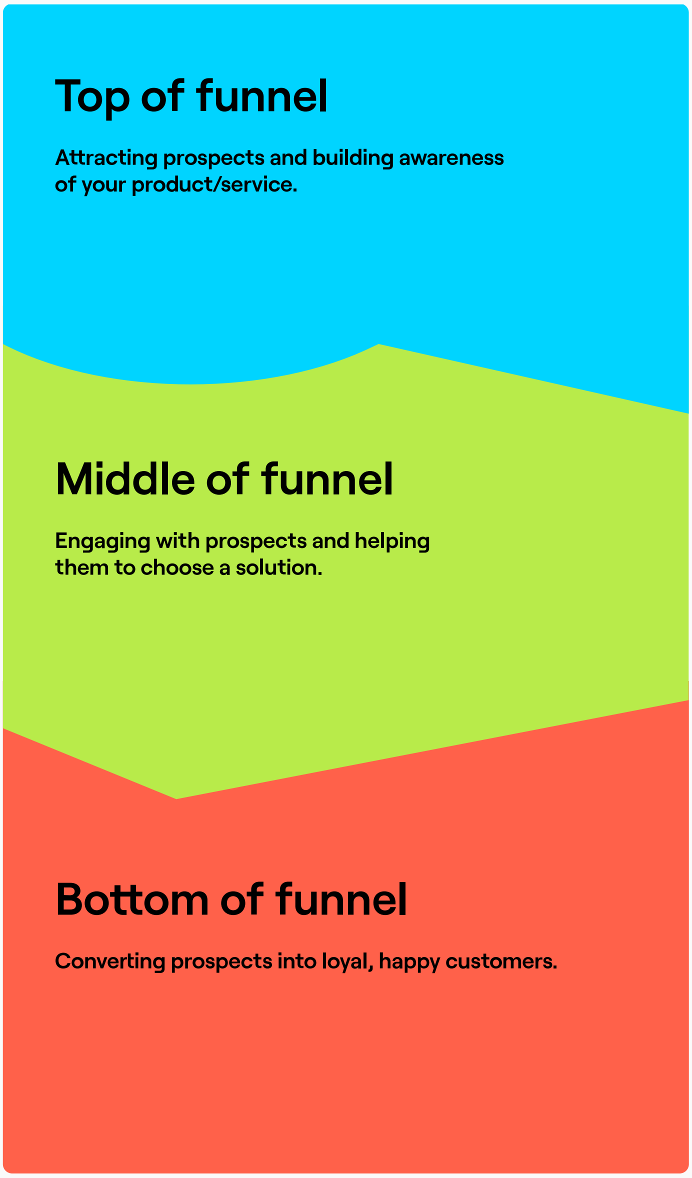
Your tracking must be set up before you start advertising. If someone visits your website from a Facebook ad, then you need to be able to track this and start building your remarketing pools.

There are many reasons to have good tracking in place. One of the most useful is that it gives you a clear picture of who is engaging with your ads, website content and most importantly return on investment.

Your tracking will tell you which audiences you're reaching, which audiences you're missing out on and which audiences are driving sales. You can then use those insights to refresh your ads, remarket to those missing audiences and reallocate budget to those campaigns that are generating sales.

Segment your audiences

Best practice for Facebook advertising is to segment your audiences based on the B2B marketing funnel. If you're not sure what this looks like, then you can segment into 3 sections: top, middle and bottom.



Top of funnel content

Different types of ads work best at different points in the funnel. At the top of the funnel, you want to promote your business through content marketing and social channels.

At this stage, you want to attract your audience and track them as they move down the funnel. White papers, eBooks and any other content that's valuable enough for people to part with their data to gain access to is the perfect place to start.

Middle of funnel content

In the middle of the funnel, you want to broaden the scope of your ads and talk to your identified audience about why they should choose your business. These should include trust signals such as case studies and your key USPs.

Bottom of funnel content

The bottom of the funnel is the place for a more attractive deal. Things like a 10% off discount, a freebie or a 14-day free trial are perfect here. If you don't have any of those, a demo or a free consultation will do.

Other tracking tips

You can also have a separate segment for existing customers. You can use Facebook ads to promote cross-sell or up-sell opportunities to them.

Use your tracking to push your content to the different segments, e.g.: pushing bottom-of-funnel ads to a mid-funnel audience. One thing to note is that your tracking must be mutually exclusive - you want a unique audience in each segment.

Get creative

My advice is to be creative and disruptive with your Facebook ads. Some studies have shown that you've got **6 seconds** to grab people's attention and get your message across. If it takes any more time than that, then people will simply scroll on by and your ad will be lost.

Remember that Facebook isn't specifically a business social network. If you're targeting a B2B audience, then it's unlikely they'll be in a 'business mindset' when they're browsing Facebook.

So you have to create ads that are eye-catching and instantly grab people's attention. I've found that carousel ads can work well if you've got multiple products to promote, or a product with several different features. You can have all the products or features in a sequence on the carousel, and then have a CTA at the end.

Time it right

There's always been a lot of discussion about the best times to run a Facebook ad. For B2B, the best days are usually Monday-Friday.

However, ever since lockdown was imposed, I've noticed people's behaviours are changing on Facebook. It's not surprising, since more people are now working from home. My advice is to constantly test and track your ads. Alter them based on your audience's behaviour and whether they're working from home or not.

Try A/B testing

A/B testing is very important when advertising on Facebook. It's how you work out which ads perform best. My process is to have 2 ads running simultaneously, aimed at the same audience. The three metrics I focus on are conversion rate, cost per lead and cost per sale.

I'll run the test for 2 weeks minimum. I'll drop whichever ad fails the test - and carry on running the winner!

Set up your attributions

A lot of people miss this, but attribution is an absolutely key part of Facebook advertising. Don't look at your campaigns in isolation - make sure you've got access to Google Analytics and that your UTM parameters are incorporated.

When you have all this set up, you can see the impact that your Facebook ads are having on your website and organic traffic. There are many great tools on Google Analytics that PPC marketers often overlook, such as first and last click interactions. Always study the data and make your decisions based on that.

Track your metrics

The most important metric you should monitor is spend! It can run away very quickly on Facebook advertising.

Beyond that, the metrics you track will depend on your KPIs. If increasing brand awareness is your goal, then you should be looking at the clicks your ads are getting, or whether you are seeing an increase in direct or brand traffic.

What I like to do is have metrics in place for each stage of the funnel. So, at the top of the funnel, I'll track impressions to clicks. At mid-funnel, I'll track the click to lead rate. Finally, at the bottom of the funnel, I'll look at the lead to sale rate.

How often should you track your metrics? Daily, is my answer! Check them every day. See what's converting and what isn't. Daily metric tracking means that you can make quick adjustments to your Facebook ads and, hopefully, improve their performance!

Key takeaway

My number one tip for Facebook advertising is to have your objectives in place before you start. Also, make sure your tracking is set up correctly. If those 2 elements aren't there, then you can quickly waste budget!

Bonus tip

Andrew Haines has been publishing more marketing and paid ads insights over on the Mission Three60 blog. We recommend taking a look!

Content marketing

The second main channel of inbound marketing is content marketing. It's best described as a methodology for creating and distributing relevant, valuable content to your ideal prospects and customers.

Content marketing isn't simply pitching your products and selling your services. You have to provide value, real value, and insight to your target audience. You have to speak to their concerns, answer their questions and solve their problems.

Content marketing is delivered via a number of different media:

Blogging
Online articles based on topics that are relevant to your target audience.

Social media
Content promoted and shared on social networks.

Video
Online videos that speak to your audience, hosted on streaming sites.

Infographics
A visual representation of information or data.

eBooks/Whitepapers
Longer-form guides or manuals that are gated for lead capture.

Podcasts/Webinars
Online audio/visual discussions of specific topics. Often gated for lead capture.

5 tips for creating content that Google will love

If you want to start blogging, you need to know how to create content that has a good chance of ranking on Google and attracting organic traffic. Devin Pickell, data-driven content marketer who previously worked for G2, shares his content knowledge.

As content marketers, we're constantly vying for the love and attention of Google.

With more than 5 billion searches conducted every day on Google, it's easy to see why. Although, writing content that will be at the forefront of a Google search term is easier said than done.

Content marketing is booming - especially this year, with more people working from home - so it's not uncommon for thousands of brands to compete for the same search terms. Even if you're on page one, you can expect competing brands to target your content and attempt to dethrone you.

Because of this and the anonymity of Google ranking algorithms, I can't give you the "secret sauce" that will have you ranking on page one of every desired term. I can't give you advice that will fortify you from being targeted by competing brands.

However, I can give you five helpful tips for producing content that has a better chance at ranking for the right terms and attracting organic traffic.

Write for human readers

One of the most fundamental content marketing tips I can provide is to write high-quality content for human readers. This may seem obvious, but it can fall by the wayside when SEOs attempt to "over-engineer" their content and end up writing strictly for what they believe will satisfy search engines.

Google is the most sophisticated search engine in the world and uses complex machine learning algorithms (called RankBrain) to understand how users interact with content; it doesn't need much help!

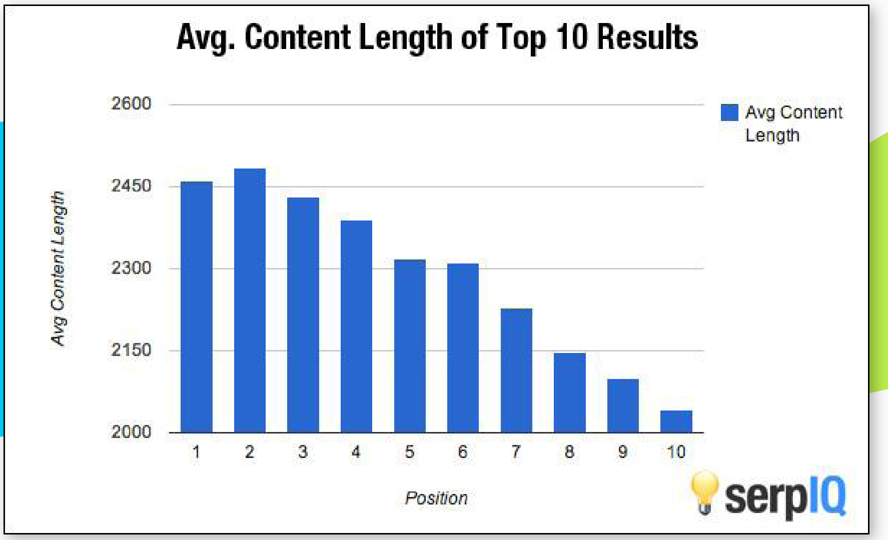
Be sure to check off all the on-page SEO fundamentals like header tags, interlinking, keyword research, and more. But above all, give your audience the information they seek and do so in the most high-quality way possible.

According to Google:

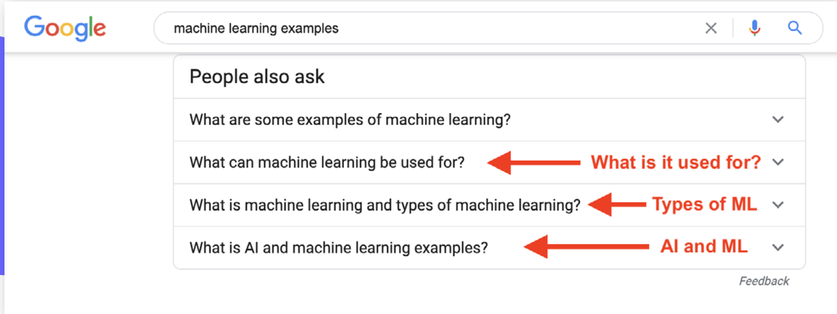
"This is the single most important thing to do. If your pages contain useful information, their content will attract many visitors and entice webmasters to link to your site."

Here are some actionable ways to write for human readers:

Cover a topic comprehensively. A study from SerpIQ found that the top 10 results for Google searches were typically in the 2,000 to 2,500-word count range. If you can't be a one-stop content shop for readers, they'll bounce and find their answers elsewhere.



Need help expanding on a topic? Run your keyword through a Google search and look at the 'People also ask' section. These are "hints" from Google itself telling you what the related searches are for your keyword.



Write at about an eighth-grade reading level. Being able to convey complex topics, such as B2B lead generation, without pumping your content full of industry jargon, is a desirable content marketing skill.

This also opens your content up to a wider audience and makes it more accessible, which brings me to my next tip.

Make your content accessible

In addition to making your content more digestible and easier to read, you should also look at its accessibility.

In terms of image SEO, make sure your blog images have relevant file names. For example, let's say I have a graphic on advertising strategies. Instead of leaving it as **IMG2278.jpg,** consider changing it to something more descriptive like **8-advertising-strategies-for-marketers.jpg**. But why is this?

When Google crawls a web page, it looks at things like text and links. When it comes to indexing images, Google looks at the surrounding text and image file names to gain more of an understanding of what the image is. That's why you should be descriptive.

While you're at it, go ahead and add some descriptive alt-text to your blog images. Alt-text is read by screen-reading software to assist sight-impaired search users. You may even be able to see an image's alt-text by hovering over it with your cursor.

Most content management systems today allow marketers to easily go in and update alt-text. Below is an example of what that may look like:

Finally, make sure your website is mobile-friendly. Google announced that it will make mobile-first indexing its default by September 2020, so if your site isn't consistent across desktop and mobile devices, you may suffer some penalties.

Get backlinks to your content

Backlinks are regarded as one of the most powerful ranking factors for Google. Why is this?

Well, when Google crawls content across the web, one of the things it's looking for is links between web pages. For example, a link from **Page A** to **Page B** signals to Google that **Page B** is of some importance. The more links **Page B** is able to acquire, the more Google will regard it as an authoritative piece of content, thus, increasing its rankings.

Maybe even more important than the number of backlinks is the quality of them. For example, if **Page B** is able to acquire links from high-quality domains like The Washington Post or Forbes, this will undoubtedly help with increasing its rankings. Because those sites have millions of monthly visitors, you may get some hefty referral traffic - a nice added bonus.

My advice is to dedicate meaningful time to link building strategies. It's not enough to create compelling content and forget about it. You need to tap your network and conduct outreach for content if you want to increase its likelihood of ranking on Google.

Update your content regularly

Did you know that more than 4 million blogs are published every day? Months go by, millions of new content pieces are introduced to Google, and suddenly your article starts to drop in rankings. Don't worry, this is natural, and it's called "content decay."

Every blog on the web today is susceptible to decay, which is why it's important to regularly check on your older content and update it when decay starts to set in.

"But Devin, how do I know when my content starts to decay?"

Great question! You can start by keeping an eye on your content marketing metrics. When month-over-month traffic decreases anywhere from 15 to 40 percent, it's time to go in and make some changes.

Here are some actionable ways to update your content:

Conduct new keyword research and see where the gaps in your content are. Most premium SEO tools today can provide in-depth analysis into keyword gaps and even show what new keywords your competitors are picking up.

Find new research to touch on in your article. For example, if you're referencing a study that was conducted in 2015 but a new study just came out, it's time to go in and update your content to reflect new findings.

The same goes for timely news stories and events. For example, if you're a video conferencing software provider, you should update your content to resonate with more people who are working from home.

In general, you'll want to update a significant enough amount of content for Google to recrawl your web page. Updating a few headers alone just won't cut it. Below is a real-life example of one of our articles when we recognised decay and updated it with fresh content.

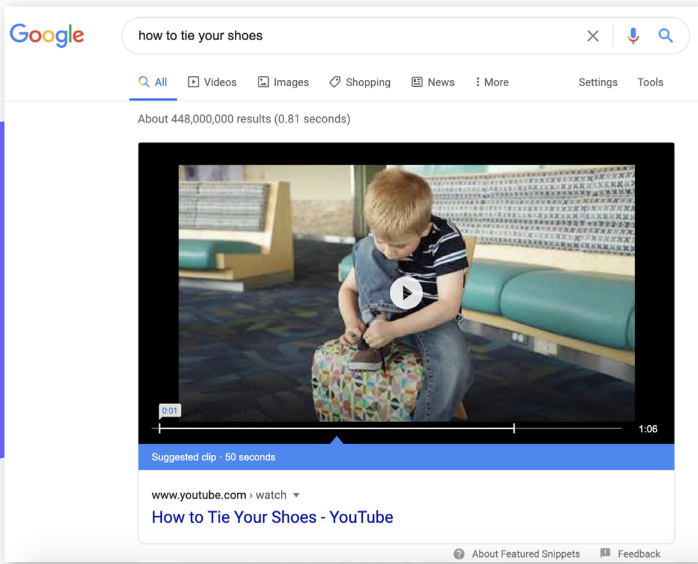
I recommend taking a look at your older content about once every quarter to ensure it's not decaying. And, even if it is decaying, quarterly B2B data checkups should allow you to jump on optimising it quickly.

Use images and video when necessary

By now it's obvious that Google loves what its users love, and what we all love is a variety of digital content like images and video.

The truth is in the data. Blogs containing visual content receive up to 94% more views than text-only content. Remember, one person could consume and retain information differently than another person, and not everyone enjoys scrolling through a field of white space and text. Providing a variety of content broadens your blog's appeal for more site visitors.

Let's not forget that Google pulls video snippets as well – typically for "how-to" type of search queries. Without video in your content repertoire, you could be missing out on audiences with visual content preferences.



Key takeaway: content quality trumps all

Google has spent years adjusting how it looks at content quality, how it ranks websites based on content quality, and most importantly, how users interact with content.

Even though Google continues to work at its search engine, one thing has remained consistent throughout, and that's creating high-quality content for your site visitors no matter whether you're targeting general SEO or local SEO.

Slow down and dedicate meaningful time to writing your best content that is easy to understand. Spend time working on visual content that users want to engage with. Spend time acquiring backlinks and promoting your content across multiple channels. Update your content for relevancy and give it the care it needs over time.

Because if you truly want to create content that Google will love, you'll need to put content quality at the forefront of your strategy.

7 LinkedIn marketing tips to grow your business

In B2B, LinkedIn is the social network of choice. Kevin Urrutia, founder of Voy Media, describes 7 powerful tips for mastering social media marketing on LinkedIn.

LinkedIn is the world's most popular business social network. Every day, over 600 million professionals use it to make personal connections, discuss their industries, share knowledge and develop their careers.

It’s also the platform of choice for B2B prospecting. On LinkedIn, businesses have direct access to their customers, competitors, investors, potential hires and prospects. Both marketing and sales can use it to attract and convert new business. Studies have shown that 80% of B2B leads come from LinkedIn, and 94% of B2B marketers use LinkedIn to distribute content.

It’s clear then that you need a LinkedIn marketing plan. LinkedIn can be a very effective channel for B2B companies, if you use it right.

Here are my tips for using LinkedIn to its maximum marketing potential!

Identify your goals

Just like with any marketing initiative, it’s crucial to identify your goals. The usual B2B marketing goals for LinkedIn may include:

- Increasing your brand profile and authority.
- Generating, nurturing and capturing leads.
- Driving relevant traffic to your website.
- Promoting event appearances.

Once you know what your goals are, it’s easier to formulate a marketing plan that works.

Complete your company profile

On LinkedIn, your company profile will always be the heart and soul of your online brand. As people search for your business online and get to know more about your products and services, it’s imperative to have a rock-solid profile.

You only get one chance to make a first impression; your company profile is where most people in your target market will go when they first click on your page. Here are some tips for filling out an excellent company profile:

- Make sure you complete 100% of your profile. Don't leave any gaps!
- It almost goes without saying, but - no typos or grammar mistakes!
- Look at the profiles of your competitors. What can you do to make your business stand out next to them?
- Have you recently received any industry awards or distinctions? List them!
- Similarly, do you have any well-known clients? Mention them in your profile, if they've given you permission to do so.
- Always include a link to your company website. If people like what they read in your profile, they will want to find out more!
- Finally, make sure you make use of the banner space provided. Use this wisely; perhaps you have certain campaign messaging you want to push here. Think of the banner as your online store front and make it work for you.

Completing your LinkedIn profile is vital, because it allows you to be found in searches, and gives you a fantastic opportunity to wow potential clients. It gives you the credibility you need to convince new prospects to reach out to you on LinkedIn and start a conversation.

Optimise your page for search

A great company profile will only get you so far. What's the good in having one if people find it hard to find?

This is where SEO (search engine optimisation) comes in use. Insert keywords into your company profile. The keywords you choose must be relevant and descriptive of your business and what you provide.

Unsure about which keywords to use? Start by asking yourself which words or phrases a prospect would type into Google when looking for your product or service.

Start sharing content

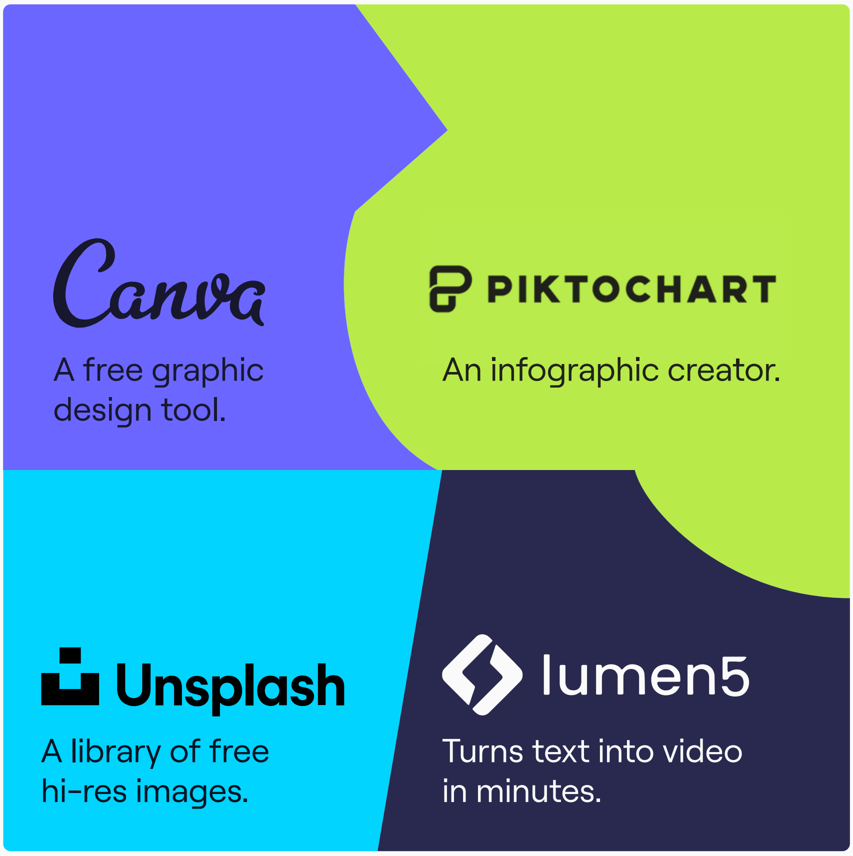
Once you have your profile set up, it's time to start creating content.

Content marketing is crucial to any social media platform, and LinkedIn is no exception. In fact, content marketing on LinkedIn can be more successful than on any other channel.

With LinkedIn, you have a captive audience of professionals who are hungry for knowledge and information - 91% of executives rate LinkedIn as their first choice for professionally relevant content.

Take advantage of this by sharing blogs, webinars and videos based around topics that are relevant to your target market. Focus on quality - if you can, reach out to thought leaders in your industry who are active on LinkedIn and ask them to contribute. Share your content often and you will soon build up an audience that comes back to your page every week.

Don't think that content marketing requires a huge budget! There are many free tools you can use to create graphics and videos. Here are some notable providers:



Here are some best practices for sharing content:

- High-value posts are best executed on Tuesday-Thursday (new/hero posts or high-engagement events).
- Low-value posts: Monday or Friday (re-shares, repurposing, old content).
- Headlines for posts should be 40-69 characters (including spaces). You have 220 characters before the copy breaks and is hidden.
- Best performing headline types include: questions, lists and how-to guides.
- Hashtags should be used carefully and on a new line when possible.
- The link you post will normally be a piece/page itself, to pull the image and increase the click area. Always use a tracking link where possible.
- LinkedIn's algorithm rewards posts without corporate links, so occasionally - particularly from personal accounts - write engaging post copy and put the link in the comments.

Grow your network

Content marketing is one way to gain new followers. There are other things you can do as well. Try a combination of these 5 methods:

- Make sure all your employees follow your company page and like your posts (create a Slack channel for sharing social media posts). They're your biggest brand advocates, and the most likely to share your content.
- Invite your customers and partners to follow your page. Promote your LinkedIn presence on your blogs, email newsletters and press releases.
- Share other people's content – if you see a blog post or article that you like, share it! Especially if it's relevant or by an influencer in your industry.
- Tag connections in your content promotions, if you think they'll find it useful.
- Ask your successful customers to write recommendations and testimonials for your company page. It's good social proof. Write recommendations for others, as well!

Don't be afraid to experiment

When you've mastered the basics of LinkedIn marketing, it's time to diversify. Experiment with posting at different times of the day or week. If you find that a particular type of post gets more engagement than others – do more of it!

Again, look at your competitor's pages. How effectively are they using LinkedIn? Is there anything they're doing that you do? Or conversely, is there anything they're not doing that you can do? Seek out the gaps that exist in your sector and see if you can fill them.

Always measure your results

To get better at LinkedIn marketing, you need to analyse your efforts regularly. Most social media schedulers include a reporting function as standard. If you're not using one, don't worry! LinkedIn's own analytics pages can give you an enormous amount of insight.

LinkedIn Analytics is split into 3 sections:

Visitor analytics
Everything you need to know about the people who click on your page, including:

- The total number of page views and unique visitors over time.
- The ratio of visitors from desktop and mobile.
- Demographic information such as job function, location, industry and company size.

Update analytics
Engagement metrics for all your LinkedIn posts, including:

- The total number of likes, comments, clicks and shares you've had over a specified time period.
- The ratio of engagement between organic and sponsored content (if you're running any LinkedIn ads).
- Real-time data on a post-by-post basis, including impressions, views, clicks and LinkedIn's own aggregated engagement rate.

Follower analytics
All the information you need on your audience, including:

- The total number of followers you've got and how many new followers you gained in the last 30 days.
- Demographic data on all of your followers, showing you where they live and work.
- A competitor tracker, comparing your followers and updates to those of other similar companies.

Key takeaway

Without a doubt, one of the best marketing channels that will help you with the development of your business is LinkedIn. When it comes to professional online networking, it's at the forefront of most people's minds. Your business needs to be on there and you need to be making the most of the opportunities it offers.

Hopefully, these LinkedIn marketing strategies will help you devise a social media marketing plan for your business. My final thought? Follow the guidance I've outlined above and keep track of your progress!

Email marketing

The last inbound marketing activity we're going to study in this playbook is email marketing. It can be described as the practice of using email to promote products and services.

But, just like content, email shouldn't be used primarily to pitch and sell. It can be a very effective channel for delivering value, building relationships and guiding prospects through the marketing funnel, until they're ready to convert. This relationship-building process is known as lead nurturing.

Email marketing campaigns

A coordinated sequence of emails is known as an email marketing campaign. Each email in the campaign is sent at a specific time and with a specific intent or call-to-action for the recipient to follow.

What follows are a set of guides to email marketing campaigns and lead nurturing. Keep reading for some great email insights!

How to plan an email marketing campaign

Before you can start sending emails and nurturing leads, you need to plan. Cognism's Head of Demand Generation, Liam Bartholomew, shares his guide to effective campaign planning.

Formalising a campaign plan may seem like an unnecessary step, when you all want to do is get your campaign live and start delivering results.

However, building out your campaign will take time, so it's important to give yourself structure. This will help you to execute your campaign methodically and to schedule. While your campaign is in development, it's delivering no B2B lead generation value to you. Setting yourself milestones and targets means you will get the campaign live quicker!

The danger in starting a campaign without a formalised plan is that you may find halfway through that you've missed something important. This may leave your campaign ineffective and incomplete.

By planning first, you can ensure you've covered all channels and have enough marketing content before you start! Doing all this means that you've set yourself up for the best possible success.

It's important to remember that no matter how much you believe in your idea, it still may not work! Planning allows time to research and iron out any creases before you start.

It also means you have your original starting point documented, so that when you come back to optimise the campaign, you'll have a clear understanding of what parts you can change or tweak.

A clear overview of where you started is also useful when planning future campaigns – especially if you need to start from scratch!

The campaign planning process

Liam explained to us how the campaign planning process works at Cognism. We've put his workflow together into a useful infographic, which will help you plan campaigns at your own company.

The campaign planning template

Here is the campaign planning template that Liam uses to prepare his campaigns in advance. Hit the button below to download and start using!

Get the template

Top campaign planning tip

Liam had a final thought for campaign planning:

“Never start a campaign without defined goals. The planning template provides a constant reference point to what you originally wanted to achieve. Without that reference point, your campaign can easily morph into something it wasn’t intended to do - you don’t want to waste any time or budget on not delivering the value you intended.”

What is drip email marketing?

Because your prospects aren't ready to buy when they first encounter your brand, you need to build a relationship. Drip email marketing is how it's done. In this section, we'll look more closely at why it works and how you can do it.

Drip email marketing is a B2B lead generation technique, commonly used by B2B companies to build stronger relationships with leads. It works by moving leads through the marketing funnel until it's time for the sales team to take over.

A drip campaign consists of a series of automated emails that go out on a timeline, or when a user acts in a certain way. It's about getting the right information in front of the prospect at the right time.

Why is drip email marketing effective?

Drip campaigns work because not every B2B prospect is ready to buy from you when they first meet your brand. A buyer may come across your company and think, for example, that it would be something they would be interested in next year when they have a new budget. As a marketer, your job is to keep them engaged until that time comes.

With a drip campaign, you can use that time to provide value to your prospect with informative marketing content. You can start a relationship, have a two-way conversation and build trust.

You can also create drip campaigns that closely match your prospect and the position they are currently in. When you segment your leads in this way, you speak directly to your prospect.

Email drip campaigns are cost-effective, scalable and measurable. You can use lead scoring to track how each recipient interacts with your emails. With the right software, once you have crafted your messaging, your drip campaign works away in the background, delivering qualified leads excited to buy.

And it works. Research by Marketo found that B2B companies that run drip campaigns generate 50% more sales-qualified leads at a 33% lower cost.

Where does it fit into the sales cycle?

B2B sales teams love prospects who have been through a drip email marketing campaign. When the sales team come to speak to the prospect, they know that the email campaign has done a lot of the hard work already.

The email campaign will have started building a relationship with the prospect. It will have educated them about how the product works and the problems it solves. It will also have measured the prospect's responses, so salespeople can assess how engaged they are.

Drip campaigns should also have the prospect placing more trust in the sales rep. The emails have already established credibility and provided value. It makes the salesperson's job a lot easier.

How does it work?

Before you start your email drip campaign, there are a few things to consider.

Who are you going to send your emails to?

You don't want to blast your entire database with the same campaign, as it will not be relevant to a significant proportion of your prospects.

Instead, narrow your focus down to a target audience that you can reach with a super-relevant message. Look at your Ideal Customer Profile (ICP). Create a group for your drip campaign that matches it.

What are the goals for your campaign?

Next, think about the B2B marketing KPIs for your drip campaign. What do you want your prospect to do when they go through your email sequence? Do you want them to call your sales team for a demo? When you have a goal, you will know if your campaign has been successful in reaching it.

Have you planned the campaign in advance?

Now, it's time to plan your campaign. How many emails will you send? How often? You don't want to bombard your prospect; instead, gently walk them through what you do. That's good lead nurturing.

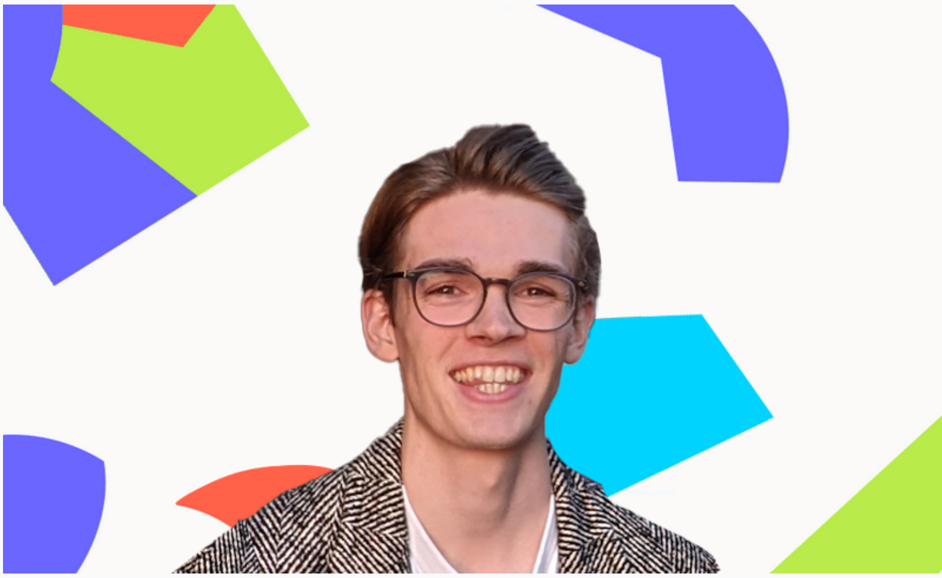
What content will you include in your emails?

Think carefully about the content of your emails. What will it be? Make sure you go for impact, with sharp subject lines and striking graphics. How will you introduce yourself in an email?

Is your tracking in place?

Once you press go on your campaign, keep a close eye on your analytics. If there is a part of the sequence which is not generating enough engagement, look at how you can fix it.

Drip email campaigns: 3 great examples



What makes a great drip email campaign? Cognism's Campaign Marketing Executive, James Sutton, shares 3 winning examples.

A drip email campaign is a great way of building stronger relationships with leads. In the last chapter, we explained what drip email marketing is and how you can introduce it into your marketing mix.

To give you a few ideas on how to run your own drip email campaigns, we spoke to James Sutton, a Campaign Marketing Executive at Cognism. James, among other things, is responsible for creating and nurturing fantastic drip email campaigns.

What makes a drip email campaign successful?

When creating a drip email campaign, your purpose shouldn't be to close deals; leave that to your sales team! You should instead be providing a gentle reminder that you're there and can provide value.

While you're 'warming up the lead', you should always be providing value. A successful drip email campaign should be mutually beneficial. The lead will consider you a valuable contact if you're sending useful content.

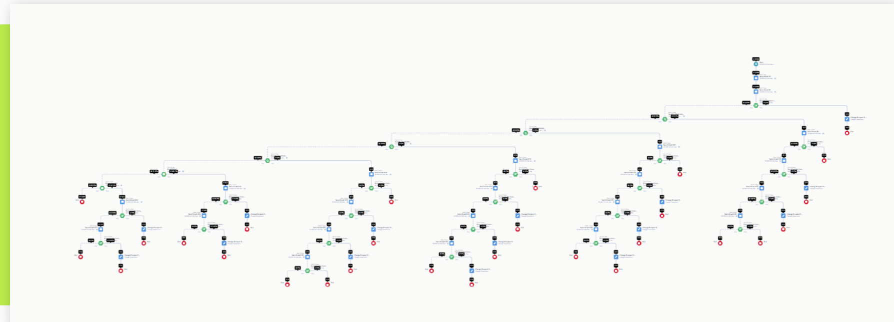
James has had a lot of success with mixing up his messaging:

"Different people prefer to interact in different ways. Make sure you're sending a mix of video content, case studies, decks and more to ensure you're connecting with each lead in their preferred way!"

James offered to put together a few examples of successful campaigns he has been running. Feel free to use James' advice to build your own campaigns!

3 great drip email campaigns

'Rekindle' drip campaign



The purpose of James' 'Rekindle' campaign is to re-engage with existing leads in our database.

Leads who failed to convert from past marketing campaigns or content downloads are marked as 'nurture' and entered into this campaign. James said:

"For this type of campaign, it's important to be non-obtrusive. If you irritate 'nurture' leads, they'll be quick to unsubscribe."

"This is down to the fact that you've not yet shown them a lot of value. Sure, they might've downloaded some content or signed up for a webinar, but how many times have you signed up for something and then forgotten all about it?"

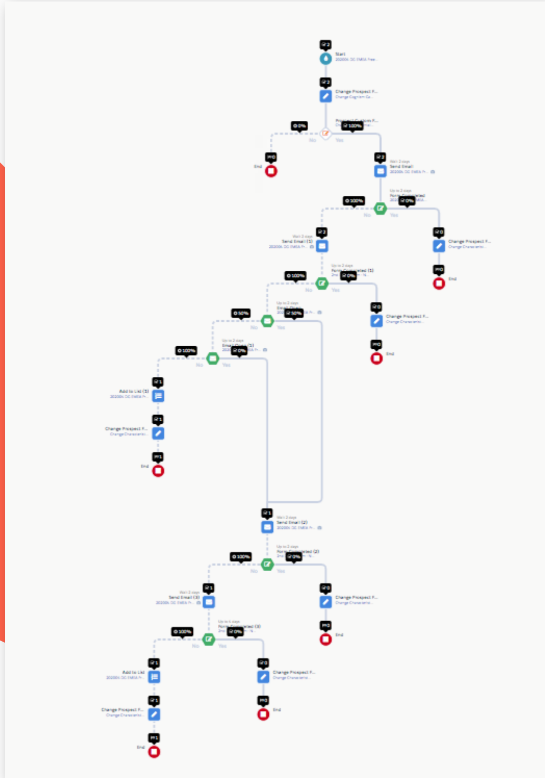
"The contact might know as little about you as you know about them. Setting up a nurture campaign can help you to get to know each other. For this reason, start with general messaging, and then branch the leads off as you learn more about them."

In his 'Rekindle' campaign, James puts two links into his email - one for sales content, one for marketing content. Depending on which link the recipient clicks, they'll be moved to the relevant funnel.

It's worth thinking about how you want to segment your audience. If you're a salesperson running a drip email campaign, offer articles on two types of products. If you're a realtor running a drip email campaign, offer articles on types of housing.

By learning more about the lead, you'll be able to offer them a more contextually relevant solution.

‘Free Trial’ drip campaign



The purpose of James’ ‘Free Trial’ campaign is to engage with prospects who’ve been shown value. The success rate for these campaigns should be higher because you’ve already established yourself as a valuable contact.

Cognism recently offered 25 free leads to people searching for B2B data. Upon signing up for this, they’re entered into James’ drip email campaign, where they’ll be sent further advice on how to contact the leads they’ve generated.

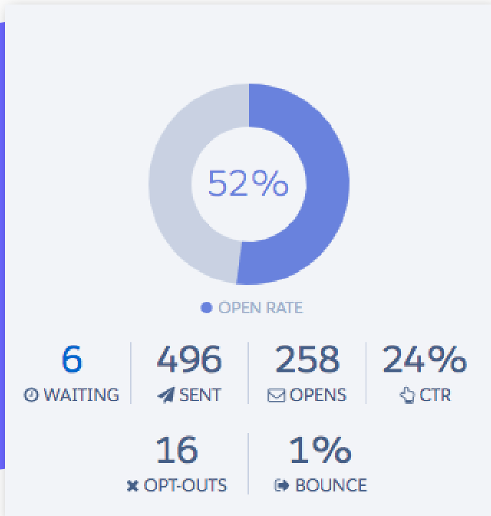
James explained more about this campaign:

“The goal here is to demonstrate thought leadership and personal support. This adds depth to the trial and the human interaction will make you more memorable.”

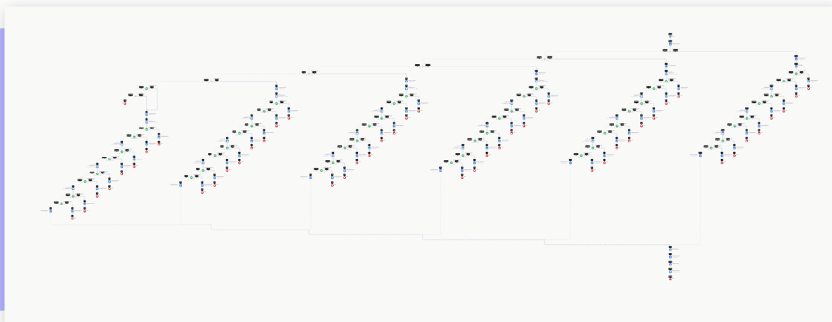
“If this campaign sounds more direct than the ‘Rekindle’ campaign, it’s because it is. We already know these prospects are interested in B2B lead generation, and they already know we can provide it. Now, it’s just a case of breaking the ice!”

"We also offered 25 free leads to people in the 'Rekindle' campaign. If they signed up, they would be moved into the 'Free Trial' campaign. I love to interconnect my sequences. It can improve the relevance of your messaging, with minimal additional effort."

James found that the email offering 25 free leads to people in his 'Rekindle' campaign was the most effective one he sent. Here's a screenshot showing the campaign results:



'Additional Value' drip campaign



The purpose of James' 'Additional Value' campaign is to engage with leads who've already downloaded gated content. The advantage you have here is that you already know which content this lead is interested in, so you can provide more of the same. James told us:

"By regularly providing helpful content, you'll demonstrate the value of your company, and build a positive relationship with the lead."

“Every email in a drip campaign should provide value. Make sure that your emails are useful. Show that you have thought leadership in the right area.”

In this campaign, James’ CTA (call to action) is a demo request. The leads will still be able to view the content without booking a demo, but it’s there if they’re interested. The demo request should be positioned as free value – an opportunity to learn more about a potential solution. If your leads feel as though they’re being pushed into a demo which they don’t want, you’ll lose them.

If you set up an ‘additional value’ drip campaign successfully – you’ll be booking meetings with leads who already trust you, and your SDRs will love you for it!

Key takeaway

James had some final thoughts regarding drip email campaigns:

“Making sure that you have a good structure for your drip email campaign is only the first step. Use data from previous drip email campaigns to refine future campaigns, review the sequences as they’re running and nurture them.”

“One of the many great things about drip email campaigns is that you have the ability to change them in an instant. If something isn’t working, change it! If something is working well, use it as inspiration for your other campaigns.”

“Like many areas of marketing, the value lies in your ability to improve over time.”

What is lead nurturing and how can you do it?

Workbooks

Find out everything you need to know about lead nurturing, courtesy of Christelle Fraysse, Chief Marketing Officer at Workbooks.com, the affordable, feature-rich CRM solution for mid-market companies.

What is lead nurturing?

It's the process of building up relationships with potential customers, with the goal of moving them down the sales funnel until they're ready to buy.

It's very rare for a buyer to arrive on a company website with the express intention of purchasing a product or service. Most times, prospects want to find out more about the company and compare them to the competition. They will have a myriad of questions in their mind and will be constantly checking to see if your product or service has what it takes to solve their pain points.

This is what good lead nurturing must do – it must answer questions and position your product as the ultimate solution to your prospective customers' challenges.

Why do you want to do lead nurturing? What are you trying to achieve?

Usually, businesses are looking to improve the quality of the B2B leads that are being handed over to sales (taking leads to a "sales-ready" stage – that usually goes hand-in-hand with lead scoring – ranking your leads on a readiness scale until they reach a certain threshold).

In order to start nurturing, you need to dig into your buyer's journey. Ask yourself the following key questions:

- How did they find your products/service?
- Where do they look online for information?
- How do they evaluate which products are right for their business?
- What steps do they take through their discovery journey?
- What content are they engaging with?

The more you know, the better your nurturing programme will be!

One of the ways to get this information is to speak to those customers who have just gone through your sales cycle. This can be done by setting up online surveys or virtual meetings. Review the journey with them – what they liked, what they didn't like, and what added value to the process for them.

When is the right time to start nurturing?

This is an important question! Should you start straight away (i.e. as soon as the prospect engages)? Or when the prospect reaches a certain threshold (if you are lead scoring)?

If you start nurturing too early, you risk annoying the prospect and having them switch off. If you start nurturing too late, chances are you'll miss the opportunity.

What type of nurturing should you be doing? How often, how many times, what content do you want to engage with and through which channel(s)?

Successful nurture is about three things: timeliness, relevance and personalisation. In order to manage these three elements, you need to leverage the following:

Demographic data
In B2B, consider these factors:

- What the prospect's role is, their seniority and decision-making status.
- The type of company the person works at – look for any specific trends or drivers in that industry that match your offering
- The size of the business – are they enterprise or SMB?

Behavioural data
The questions you need to ask are:

- What did the prospect do to enter the nurturing programme?
- Did they purchase anything in the past? If so – what and when?
- How have they engaged with you before?
- What are their preferences?

Personalisation
All demographic and behavioural B2B data could be a source of personalisation, ensuring that your nurture programme is relevant and timely to each prospect.

However without the right technology and infrastructure to support execution, personalisation can quickly become very complex.

For example, if we personalise our marketing based on demographics, behavioural data and the lead score, multiple paths of nurture are possible:

- If the prospect is a marketer in a manufacturing business, then the nurture path is A.
- If the prospect is a salesperson in the same manufacturing business, then the nurture path is B.

You can see how it can very easily become complex! My advice is not to try it using Excel - it will soon become a logistical nightmare! So make sure you have the technology to support you in execution, such as a CRM with a proper email nurture tool.

Consider leveraging dynamic marketing content within your emails to simplify your workflow design. Once you have built your workflows in the tool (incorporating different channels), the nurture will run automatically, saving you time.

Data capture
Think about the details of your nurture programme. A vital component is data capture: finding out more about your prospect to make your lead nurture even more targeted.

If you already have their data in your CRM (from, say, a form fill), then there's no need to request this again during your nurture campaign. This is the perfect opportunity to offer un-gated or "free" content, different from what you've used at the top of the B2B marketing funnel. Offer your prospects something exclusive, making it easy and frictionless for your prospects to engage with you.

Top tip: capture this engagement using UTMs or PURLs and use webpage scoring to measure engagement. Try using simple surveys rather than standard emails to boost prospect engagement.

Timings
How often should you nurture? The length of time to leave between each nurture engagement will vary. It could be anything from every day, every five days, or every two weeks.

Channels
Other essential questions are: what channel(s) to use and how best to combine them? It could be a mix of blogs, videos and social media promotions. You'll know which channels to use after your initial research into your customer journey and your buyers' preferences.

How closely should marketing work with sales on lead nurturing?

Lead nurturing is about getting a lead to a point where they are sales-ready. So, sales and marketing alignment is crucial. Start by discussing with your sales team what a "sales-ready" lead looks like. This will help you understand how much nurture you'll need to do (this will depend on the type of business you're in).

Introduce a lead scoring system (if one doesn't exist at your company already). You need to regularly monitor the impact your lead nurturing is having on pipeline. Is it working? Is it too long? Too short? Are people dropping off? Is the B2B sales pipeline drying up or does low-lead quality remain the issue?

Depending on the answers to these questions, you can increase or decrease scoring or refine the nurturing programme.

What's best practice for refining a lead nurture programme?

Once your programme is in place, monitor it and start the next phase, which is: **refinement!** Start doing A/B testing. Try different channels, try different content, try different subject lines.

Defining the nurture path is the first step but by no means the last one; this process is about iteration and constant small improvements. Be careful, though - don't try and test too many things at once! Otherwise, you won't know which of your changes really impacted the outcome.

Instead, perform A/B testing on one particular part of the workflow. Once you've tested for long enough, and your data shows that Option B performs better, then implement that option across the whole nurture programme.

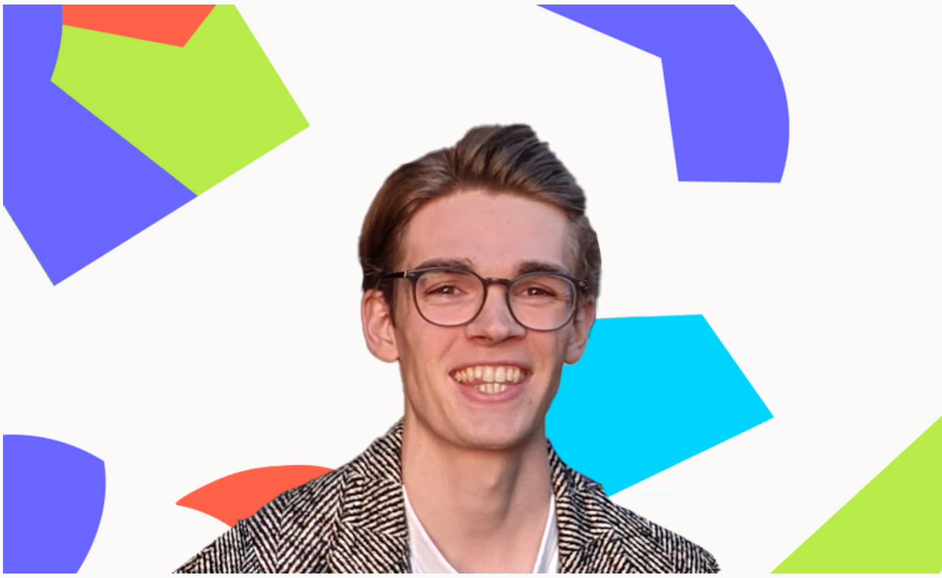
As the programme is running, continue doing iterations. Give yourself enough time to run your A/B testing so that you know your testing sample is significant enough.

You may be surprised - small improvements could have a big impact! At Workbooks.com, due to rigorous A/B testing and refining, we've moved from a lead to pipeline conversion of less than 10% to a current conversion at 25%, which is a substantial shift in performance.

Bonus tip

You'll find similar practical advice for improving business performance over on the Workbooks blog. It's recommended reading for growth-focused marketers!

Lead nurturing tips



James Sutton, Cognism's Campaign Executive, shares 10 great tips to help you optimise your lead nurturing.

Lead nurturing is a very underrated part of inbound marketing. If you've got leads just sitting in your database, it's no good to anyone. You have to re-engage those leads and push them through the marketing funnel. That's lead nurturing in a nutshell!

Here's how I manage this process at Cognism.

Make it relevant

Any lead nurture sequence you run must be relevant to the target audience. Sending blanket emails is never a good idea!

Personalisation is obviously important, but you can go beyond that. A good thing to do is anchor your lead nurture around the prospect's pain points. Your lead nurture should be answering questions or solving pain points.

Bear in mind that pain points can be different depending on the industry or even the lead's role. The pain points for a salesperson will be different from those of a marketer, for example.

CEOs have a very particular set of pain points, which are very different from other people's. Research your target audience thoroughly before you start nurturing.

Deliver value

With lead nurturing, sometimes people can be too quick to sell straight away. A much better approach is to engage your leads at the start with relevant, valuable content. Offer them something that will help them or answer a question they've got.

Education is pivotal to good lead nurturing. Different types of content work better at certain junctures in the nurture sequence. It depends on what your goal is. If you want to progress leads through the funnel, then case studies can be very effective.

Anticipate behaviours

So much of lead nurturing is about predicting how people are going to behave. Which actions are people going to take? A good lead nurture sequence should have branches for people to go down - but there must always be a 'golden path' that you want your leads to follow. Every branch must guide them back to that path.

Don't be afraid of giving your leads options. You can learn a great deal from the options that people choose. Then, you can use those insights to optimise your sequence.

No sequence should be set in stone from the off - you should always be looking to improve it. Track it regularly and keep going back and making changes, based on how your leads are behaving.

Another good tip is, if you've got multiple sequences running at the same time, you can drop leads who aren't engaging out of one sequence and into another. Again, it's all about guiding your leads to your preferred outcome.

Don't rush

Be sure to give your leads time. Don't rush your lead nurture sequence. The idea is to keep your company in the recipients' minds, without bombarding them with too many marketing emails. If they get too many messages early on, they're likely to unsubscribe.

I usually start with a couple of emails in the first week of the sequence, then 1 email a week after that.

Tailor your sending times

Just like pain points, the times that you send the emails in your sequence can differ depending on the industry.

There's no exact science to this, but I've found that early morning times such as **8:40-8:45am** work best for salespeople, while marketers tend to respond best in the afternoon.

Adjust your sending times for best results. Do some research into the best times to send for your target industry - there are quite a few studies online about this!

Be varied

A good lead nurturing sequence should have something for everyone! Include as many different types of content as you can. Blogs, videos, webinars, animations - variety is the spice of lead nurturing life!

Not everyone will open your email - but if you include as much variety as possible, you'll maximise your chances. Remember that everyone consumes content in different ways. Some people like the written word while others prefer audio or video. Cater to as many tastes as possible in your lead nurture sequence.

A/B test everything

I like to experiment with everything in my lead nurturing sequences. Try out different banners, copy, CTAs. Do buttons work best or do text links? These are all questions that only A/B testing can answer.

Segment your audience into 2 groups. Send one style of email to the first group, and another style of email to the second group. Go back to your analytics - which email performed better? Take your learnings to improve the later emails in the sequence - and possibly emails in your other sequences, as well!

Expand your touchpoints

An effective lead nurture sequence should expand the touchpoints that your leads have with your company. You want them to be interacting with your brand everywhere!

So, don't be afraid to have other channels as your CTA. You could include links to your social media pages or a subscribe button to your YouTube channel. If you're hosting webinars or podcasts, you can link out to them, too.

Make your leads aware of all the content you're producing and they might follow you on those other platforms - adding another touchpoint in the long-term.

Scale over time

Sometimes you'll find that leads aren't engaging with your sequence but won't unsubscribe. If that's happening by the third or fourth week of the sequence, what you need to do is scale it up!

Typically, this takes the form of a bigger offer - a substantial freebie or giveaway. This is a great way to warm up cold leads in a sequence.

Have a common thread

I always find that it's good to have a common thread throughout the whole lead nurturing sequence. This can be anything: the same messaging or banner, the same style or author - but it must be something memorable, something that will stick in the recipients' minds.

Having a motif like this ties your lead nurturing sequence together and gives your leads a seamless first experience with your brand.

8 ways to improve email deliverability

Greg Jordan, Sales and Marketing Director at EmailChecker, identifies 8 ways for improving email deliverability and boosting open rates on your campaigns.

What is email deliverability?

Email deliverability, put simply, is the likelihood of your messages reaching recipients' inboxes. When emails fail to arrive at their intended destination, it's usually either because they've been blocked by the ISP or redirected into a spam folder.

Low delivery rates are a significant challenge that email marketers face. If you're finding that your email campaigns are failing to deliver, it's likely that there's something not working in your processes. Fortunately, this is easy to fix; I've highlighted 8 ways you can improve your email deliverability and rack up those open rates!

Get authenticated

Ensuring you're recognised by your recipients' inboxes is key to your sender reputation. The last thing you want is someone else being able to impersonate your sender address, also known as email spoofing.

How can you counteract this? It's vital that you enable the following 2 things:

- **Sender Policy Framework (SPF)** – this is an authentication method that's designed to identify forged email addresses during the delivery process.
- **DomainKeys Identified Mail (DKIM)** – another authentication method that enables the recipient to verify that an email was sent by the owner of the domain from which it came.

Taking these steps convinces the receiving ISP that your cold email is worthy of delivery, prevents spoofing and, as a result, keeps your delivery rates high.

For more information on setting up or updating your SPF and DKIM, it's recommended that you contact your email provider.

Own an IP address

As your email marketing campaigns scale, you'll need tools and processes that can cope with the volume.

Once your output reaches 25,000 emails per day, you should consider sending on a dedicated IP address. This ensures that only your company's emails are routed through (as opposed to a shared IP that hosts several senders), so other campaigns' poor marketing won't affect your reputation.

It's essential that you take steps to "warm up" your IP address to build trust with the ISPs that will be overseeing your mail delivery. In practical terms, this involves gradually increasing the amount of mail you send per day, to determine the IP as a legitimate sender.

As ISPs consider email volume as a determining factor in spam detection, it's best practice to start small and work up to greater volumes to avoid being penalised.

Dodge spam traps

Spam traps are one of the main reasons why your email hasn't reached an inbox. They're commonly used by inbox providers to catch harmful senders, though they can catch you if your data hygiene or sender practices aren't up to scratch.

If a sender is captured by a spam trap, they are flagged and blacklisted, which is extremely difficult to reverse. The best ways to dodge them are by:

- Actively using a double opt-in process.
- Validating new email addresses.
- Managing your inactive subscribers.
- Deactivating bounced email addresses.
- Cleaning your lists and avoiding purchased email lists.

Spice up your subject lines

The first thing your recipients see when your email arrives in their inbox is the subject line - and first impressions matter! It's bad if your mail gets ignored, even worse if it's marked as spam.

To ensure your readers are opening and engaging, keep your subject lines catchy but free from spam phrases. Instead of using generic hooks such as "Free!" or "Click now", write something that's going to stand out in a crowded inbox, offering real value to the reader.

Here's my subject line top tips:

- **Pick out a key idea** from the message you're sending as your subject. Be honest – the subject line must accurately describe the content of your email.
- **Create a sense of urgency or curiosity**. The language you use should draw people in and entice them to click.
- **Keep it short** – studies have shown that subject lines fewer than 50 characters are likely to perform best.
- **Always personalise your subject line**, including the recipient's name and/or their company name. Emails with personalised subject lines see an 82% increase in open rates.

Make your content shine

Once your emails are delivered to your subscribers' inboxes, the next step is to get them opening and reading the messages you've painstakingly crafted. This is where your content needs to shine.

Emails need to be readable and offer value, encouraging users to take action. I've got some advice if you're struggling to write a compelling marketing email:

- **Open your email with a question** – this helps to create rapport with the reader.
- **Use formatting effectively**. Don't just type up long blocks of text. Capture attention by using bullet points, for example, to emphasise key points or messaging.
- **Utilise the active voice** throughout your email to sound authoritative and involved. Words like "imagine" or "remember" suggest that you're telling a story, while "because" is important in providing reasons why your reader might take action.
- **Always finish with a call to action** that demonstrates benefits, or the value you're offering to those users who carry out what you ask.

Optimise opt-ins

In all probability, those who have chosen to opt-in will be active readers of your emails. Recipients who aren't expecting to or didn't agree to receive your messages will either delete them without clicking through, or mark them as spam. If the latter happens it can be very risky, as it leads ISPs to label all your mail as spam.

Optimising your opt-in process is a surefire way to improve your deliverability. The best way to do this is to build in a double opt-in mechanism (such as a follow-up email to a sign-up form). Taking this simple step ensures that any user entering your database has explicitly given their consent to receive your communications.

Ask for preferences

Keeping up with what your audience wants is one of the most important elements of email marketing. A simple way to discover how often your subscribers want to hear from you and even what exactly they want to hear is a preference centre.

This gives users options other than simply unsubscribing, such as altering the frequency of your email sequences or changing the topics they want to engage with. It's also possible for subscribers to change their personal details through this form, avoiding the all-too-common problem of a list peppered with invalid email addresses.

Keep your email lists clean

Keeping invalid email addresses, as well as inactive or disengaged users, on your list can harm your delivery rates and, ultimately, your sender reputation.

Ideally, you only want to be marketing to people who are actively interested in receiving your messages. List hygiene should be near the top of your list of marketing priorities; you should aim to clean your B2B lead lists a couple of times per year at least.

You can spot when it's time to take action when your marketing campaign analytics reveal a large drop in your open and click-through rates. Unsubscription, bounce and spam complaint rates are an indicator too.

Turn this around with an email cleaning service like EmailChecker, which offers both bulk list cleaning and real-time verification with domain, mailbox, syntax and format checks. Join EmailChecker today and boost your deliverability up to 98%.

Conclusion

We hope you enjoyed, and got value from, our inbound marketing playbook. We'd like to thank all our contributors for sharing their knowledge.

Our final tip for inbound marketing is always test and optimise. Track everything you do, study the results, and make adjustments as necessary.

Send us your feedback

Do you have any comments/feedback about this playbook? Be sure to connect with us on our social media - we'd love to hear from you!

Contact Cognism today

Cognism can help you solve a variety of marketing challenges. Our accurate, compliant and intelligent B2B data can be used to:

- Identify new audiences.
- Run data-driven campaigns.
- Boost email deliverability.
- Increase audience match rates.

"With Cognism, our email campaigns have a 95-98% deliverability rate. As a marketer, this is outstanding and the engagement rates from these campaigns match that."
- Protolabs

"Overall, email marketing is our most successful new business channel. Using Cognism's valid email addresses to run email campaigns has helped accelerate our sales cycle."
- The Marketing Centre

"We have campaigns where we are hitting 40-50% open rates, which is well above our overall target."
- Reconomy

To book a demo with us, simply click the button below!

Request your demo