

B2B Lead Nurturing: An Introduction, Strategies & Tactics



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Introduction

B2B lead nurturing is the process of developing relationships with prospects throughout their buying cycle. Lead nurturing takes place at every stage of the sales funnel, from the moment that you first collect a prospect's information, until the time that they buy your product. **Even then, the process of relationship building doesn't stop once they become a customer.**

B2B lead nurturing strategies focus on learning more about and educating your prospects. You learn more about them through the information that they share. You learn more about them through the engagement data that you collect. Then, you use that data to deliver targeted messaging that educates, builds a relationship, and (over time) begins to subtly push prospects toward making a purchase.

Let's take a look at a few statistics that show the importance of lead nurturing within B2B marketing and sales programs:

96% [of the visitors](#) that reach your site aren't ready to buy. Lead nurturing allows you to get them from Point A to Point B.

48% [of B2B companies](#) state that their leads require long-cycle nurturing programs.

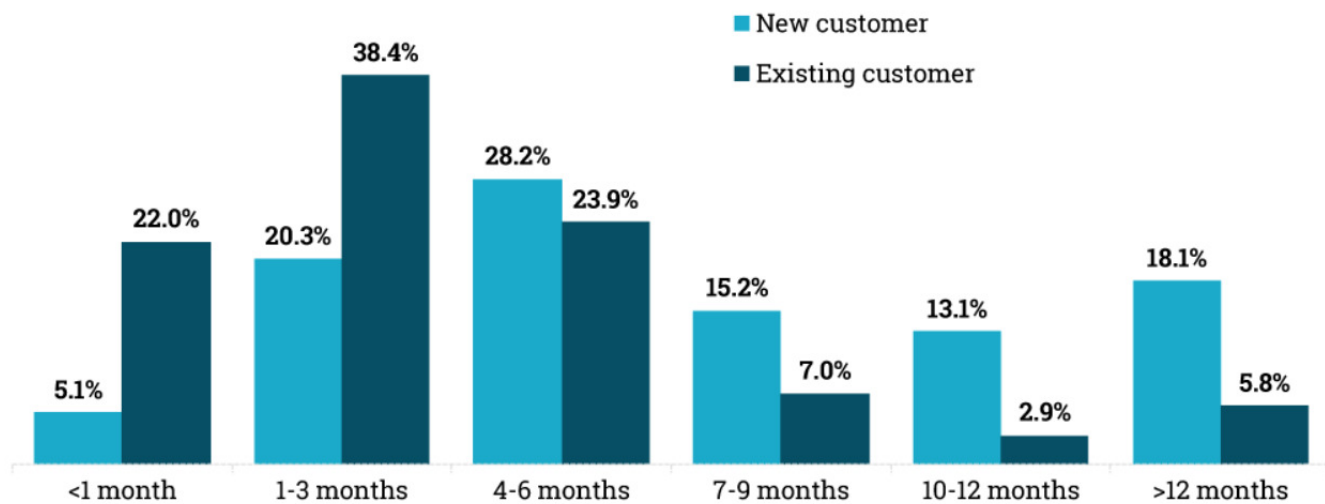
47% Nurtured leads [make purchases that are 47%](#) larger than leads that are not nurtured.

61% [of marketers](#) say that generating traffic and leads is their biggest challenge. Lead nurturing helps companies to identify quality leads and make smaller numbers of leads go farther.

29% [of companies](#) continue to nurture customers beyond their initial purchase. There is a lot of room to grow in relationship building within most marketing departments.



Typical B2B Sales Cycle Length New vs. Existing Customers



Published on MarketingCharts.com in January 2019 | Data Source: CSO Insights, the research division of Miller Heiman Group

Based on a survey of 886 sales leaders around the world conducted in Summer 2018

Lead nurturing isn't a strategy you hope to install — it's a necessity. Most B2B companies that are generating revenue are lead nurturing in some form (even if by hand) to secure those sales and ensure that your prospects develop trust with their company over time. With sales cycles lasting between 3-12 months for most B2B businesses, creating opportunities for constant interaction is required.

But, designing a lead nurturing program can be difficult.

You know you should be creating email sequences, content assets, and remarketing ads for prospects at specific points in your sales funnel. But — how do you do that? What kind of content do you create? What kind of goals will each nurturing sequence have?

In this eBook, we'll break down the foundational nurturing sequences that companies in nearly any B2B industry can benefit from. Then, we'll show you how to automate your lead nurturing programs and provide some real-world examples to show them in action.



Types of Nurtures

Lead nurturing is all about building a solid foundation.

Once you have a foundation in place, you can start getting creative and designing nurturing sequences for specific customer segments. But until you have those foundational nurtures in place, you should place your focus on designing and testing those.

Foundational nurtures are designed to speak to prospects at specific points in the buying cycle. They can include email sequences that are delivered to cold leads with no prior interactions, educational materials to those in the middle of the funnel, sales materials to those reaching their buying decision, and beyond.

1 Prospecting

- **Goal:** Make targeted prospects aware of your product/service and facilitate a positive interaction with your brand.
- **Recommended Cadence:** 5-8 emails over 4 weeks
- **Tone:** Introductory

The cold prospecting nurture is the “prospecting” nurture. Typically, prospecting nurtures are sent to targeted lists of prospects. These lists may be built in-house, comprised of internal prospect data, or through purchased lists from third-party data vendors. [Increasing lead generation](#) is the most common goal for companies using marketing automation.

Using your lists, prospecting nurtures allow you to deliver carefully crafted messages to prospects that narrowly fall within your core personas parameters. But — slow down. It’s important to understand that prospecting nurtures aren’t SPAM. They aren’t messages thrown out blindly, en masse, to attract customers. **The goal of a prospecting nurture is not to convince your prospect to buy right now, but rather to make them aware of your company and show them the value that you offer.** Then, if they so choose, they can explore your offering further on their own.

The distinction here is that the power is in the hands of the buyer. They decide if your offering sounds like it is right for them, or if they would like to learn more. In prospecting nurtures, you don't know anything about your prospects. But, throughout the nurturing process, as you collect more information, you'll be able to deliver marketing messages that closely align the needs of each specific prospect.

2 Middle-of-Funnel

- **Goal:** Engage prospects, collect more information, and educate them about your offering.
- **Recommended Cadence:** 6-10 emails over 4-8 weeks
- **Tone:** Informational

Middle of the funnel nurtures can take a wide range of shapes and sizes. Above, we recommend sending between six and ten emails over the course of four to eight weeks. The truth is that there is no right or wrong answer here as the appropriate length and time frame depends on your industry and offer. More expensive or more complicated products may require more education and trust building from your prospects.

In the middle of the funnel, your focus shifts away from building awareness toward engaging prospects and collecting more information from them. The more you know, the more your sales teams can use to close deals at a later date. Additionally, your marketing teams will have more data to work with to personalize the communications that you send.

Each email in a middle-of-funnel nurturing sequence should be delivered with a different goal in mind. Those goals might be to continue to build awareness of your product, educate them on vital features, or educate them on the value that your product could potentially provide to their organization.

Depending on the goal of each individual email in a sequence, there are a wealth of different educational materials that you can deliver to prospects at this point in the process. These can include:

- Case studies
- eBooks
- Quizzes
- Educational blog posts
- White papers
- Product comparison guides
- Exclusive and gated content
- Videos

Providing a wealth of educational content in the middle of the funnel can help you to improve your company's standing in the eyes of the prospect and further their understanding of the value that your product provides.

In these nurtures, you should be less focused on making the sale and more focused on ensuring that you are doing everything that you can to educate your prospects and further their understanding of your offering.

3 Bottom-of-Funnel / Sales Closing

- **Goal:** Close Sales
- **Recommended Cadence:** 3-5 emails over 2-4 weeks
- **Tone:** Salesy

Once a prospect has received enough educational material about your product to understand it in full, it's time to move them down the funnel and again shift the type of communications that you deliver. Often, nurturing sequences will shift toward the bottom of the funnel/sales content based on trigger actions that the customer takes. These might be clicking on your product pages, asking a question, engaging with a sales rep, or simply asking for sales-specific information.

Bottom of the funnel nurturing sequences are generally shorter. We recommend delivering 3-5 emails over the course of 2-4 weeks. Remember, you're making "the ask" on the sale here and providing some last-minute need-to-know information to influence their final buying decision. We don't want to draw things out too much. They have the information that they need to make a decision. **Our goal is to nudge them toward making that decision.**

End-of-funnel content can come in many different forms. You might offer your prospects a free assessment of your product. You might send them a link to a landing page that asks them to buy your product. You might gift them with a free trial of your product. There are an unending number of ways to facilitate the sale, but ultimately the way that you make your final pitch will depend on your offer and the educational materials that you have delivered throughout the nurturing process. Use what you have taught them to position your product as the perfect solution to their problems.

4 Long-Term Drip

- **Goal:** Stay Top-of-mind
- **Recommended Cadence:** 10+ emails over ~1 year
- **Tone:** Educational

Once a prospect has gone through your full nurture program and declines to make a purchase, that doesn't mean that your nurturing is done. Different customers reach their buying decisions at different speeds. Sometimes a prospect is receiving your closing nurture when in reality, they need months of more relationship building before they are ready to be. Or, perhaps they have an interest in your product but just aren't in a position to buy currently.

Your long-term drip nurture sequence should go out less-often than earlier sequences. They've already received a bulk of the information at this point. **Now you want to make sure that you are sending them high-quality content that will further the understanding that they already have.**

The content delivered during a long-term drip should, in many ways, look similar to that of a middle-of-funnel nurture sequence. A heavier focus on product updates can also be helpful, and in some cases may be the final nudge that a prospect needs to decide to buy.

5 Post-Sale

- **Goal:** Upsell, Relationship building
- **Recommended Cadence:** 1-2 emails per month
- **Tone:** Educational, salesy

The nurturing process doesn't end when the prospect makes a sale. The focus just shifts.

You might have upsells, cross-sells, or other products that you may want to draw their attention toward. Those would require nurtures that are a bit more "salesy" in nature and focus on slowly working your way toward conversion.

Additionally, you could use a post-sale nurture for more general relationship building or reducing churn. These nurtures would use more educational, middle-of-funnel-type content.



Closed Loop Nurturing

Closed loop nurturing focuses on using a prospect's actions and engagement (known as 'triggers') to determine what marketing materials they receive and where they are at in the buying process.

As an example — if a prospect that recently joined your mailing list is actively engaging with sales materials on your website that would normally be delivered during the bottom-of-funnel nurturing sequence, it doesn't make sense to make them wait through weeks or months of nurturing sequences. **By that time, they may not be interested anymore. Their engagement with those materials can trigger specific emails or sequences that are more aligned with what the prospect is showing you.**

Closed loop nurturing is the logical progression of a nurturing program. First, you'll want to build out your foundational nurture sequences. Once you have a nurturing program in place, injecting action triggers into your sequence delivery schedules, using tools like HubSpot, can help you to ensure that you are delivering the materials that prospects want to engage with, when they want to engage with them.



Automating Your Nurtures

Delivering nurture campaigns by-hand would lead to mistakes and be nearly impossible to manage as your list grows. If you are serious about injecting lead nurturing into your strategies, you need to be willing to invest in a comprehensive solution that will automate the sending and tracking of your nurturing campaigns.

Here at [OpGen Media](#), we recommend that our clients use [HubSpot](#). Their suite of tools provides a comprehensive digital marketing platform that covers nearly any aspect of a full digital marketing operation. However, our reason for recommending them here is not because they have a great overall platform, but because their platform is excellent for **lead nurturing**.

HubSpot is first and foremost an inbound marketing solution. B2B lead nurturing plays a key role in any inbound marketing strategy. HubSpot offers an email management solution that offers a number of key features:

- Lead nurture scheduling
- Trigger-based nurturing sequences
- In-depth email analytics
- Personalization

HubSpot makes it easy to setup lead nurturing campaigns utilizing data from your other marketing activities.



Conclusion

Lead nurturing is a vital component of any B2B marketing strategy. Knowing how to structure different nurturing sequences around specific stages of the funnel can help you to walk customers through the buying process while building awareness, educating them about your product and company, and ultimately making them a loyal brand advocate.

Want help designing and launching
your own nurturing sequences?

[Request a Consultation](#)

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