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10 MISTAKES TO STOP MAKING IN YOUR LEAD FOLLOW UP

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Synopsis:

- **Top ten lead follow up mistakes and how to avoid them**
- **Strategies on how to motivate buyers to convert**
- **Key resources for supporting your lead follow up strategies**

Effective lead follow up is a vital element of maintaining and growing revenue streams, given its focus on motivating conversions and maximising client lifetime value (CLTV).

Indeed, the expansion of B2B buying groups (**averaging 4-10 members**) and longer sales cycles (up to 12 months) places a greater emphasis on detailed lead follow up strategies that accompany prospective buyers throughout their buying journey.

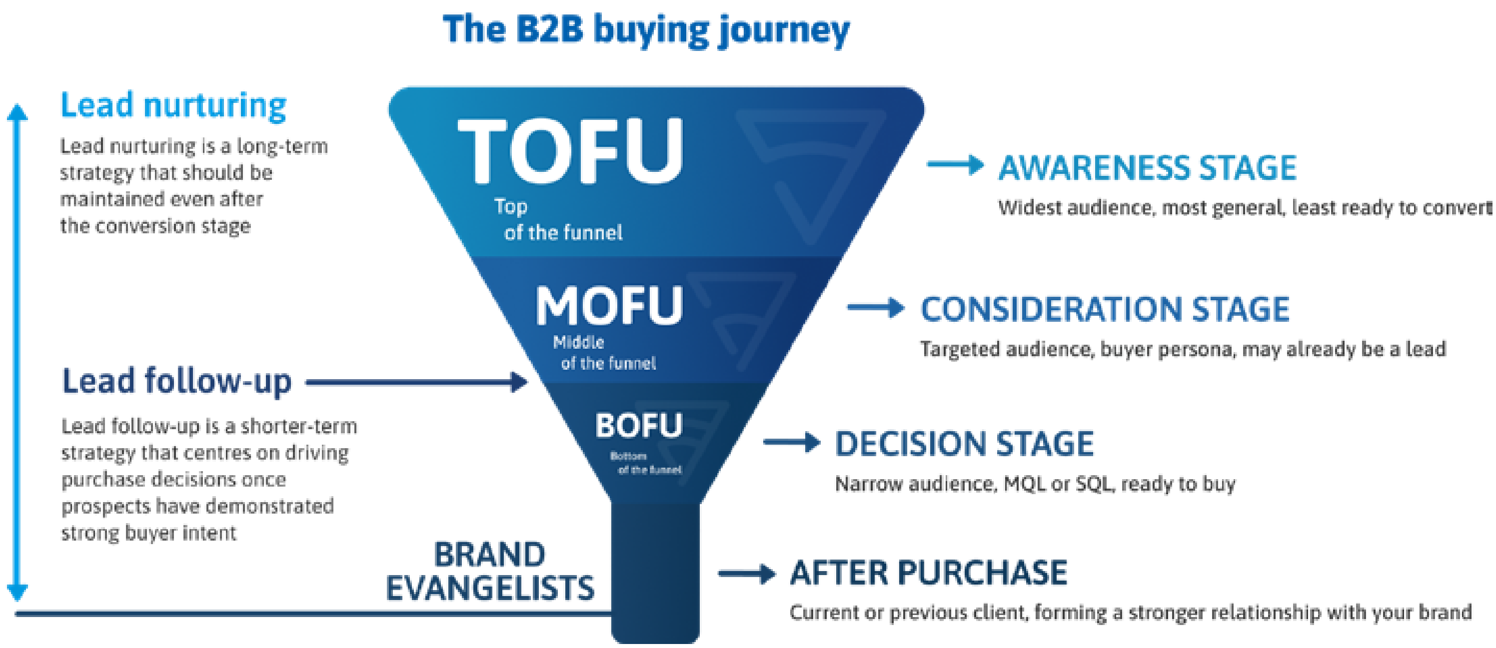
WHAT IS LEAD FOLLOW UP?

Lead follow up refers to the systematic process of contacting prospective buyers who have demonstrated an interest in a brand and its solutions but are not yet ready to complete a purchase. Measuring this interest is achieved with lead qualification and lead scoring based on specific actions completed by B2B leads.

Lead follow up strategies intend to build trust and strengthen relationships with prospects to motivate them to progress through the sales funnel toward a conversion. Successful lead follow up results in higher CLTV and supports other initiatives for improving retention, such as brand evangelism.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LEAD FOLLOW UP AND LEAD NURTURING?

While both strategies are designed to encourage prospective buyers to progress through the sales funnel, the two approaches differ in terms of timeline and the stage they are activated in the buying journey.



The increase in buyer scrutiny has, in turn, complicated the buying journey, making it more demanding for decision makers facing pressure to drive value for their business priorities.

Considering the complexity of the B2B buying journey, lead follow up strategies must be carefully developed to drive the best results.

With that in mind, this article explores the ten most common mistakes to avoid when developing and implementing your lead follow up strategy:

1. PICKING AND CHOOSING LEADS

When prioritising B2B leads to pursue with lead follow up initiatives, dividing them into the following three categories based on lead scoring can be valuable for informing your approach:

Hot leads High lead score	Warm leads Medium lead score	Cold leads (or bad leads) Low lead score
Leads that have been deemed as ready to make a purchase, based on their lead score and general activity.	Leads, that have demonstrated interest and buyer intent, but do not meet the threshold to be categorised as ready to buy.	Leads that have failed to indicate any buyer intent despite marketing efforts, and may be a poor fit for the brand.

While these segments can be helpful, it is important to avoid cherry-picking leads as this can result in cold or even warm leads becoming neglected, and opportunities lost.

Indeed, effective B2B lead nurturing plays an important role in enabling the demand generation necessary to motivate decision makers at target accounts to progress toward a purchase.

Therefore, when determining the best strategy for lead follow up, be sure to combine lead scoring data with buyer personas, ICPs, and any other lead intelligence available. This may include information about buying behavior and other influencing factors that could impact how B2B marketing leads respond to sales strategies.

Develop ICP and data-driven buyer personas that boost conversions →

Below are two examples of how lead scoring and lead intelligence can be combined to create accurate strategies for engaging high-value accounts:

	Prospect 1	Prospect 2
Job title	IT Manager at a Mid Market Business	Chief Marketing Officer at a Tech Enterprise
Lead score	Medium	Low
Lead intelligence	While this lead is engaging with marketing efforts, their job title indicates that they are not a key decision maker at the target account. However, they may have the potential to influence buying decisions made by the committee.	This lead is a decision maker in the buying group of an organisation that is a good fit for the brand's solutions. However, they are currently partnered with a competitor and have a contractual obligation.
Strategy	This lead, while not a member of the buying group, should continue to receive lead nurturing. The brand should implement lead follow up strategies once the lead demonstrates greater buyer intent. This should include valuable resources and insights that encourage sharing with decision makers at the target account.	This lead represents a high-value account despite its low lead score. Given the potential, the brand should deploy a competitive displacement campaign to generate demand, before actioning any lead follow up strategies.

Combining data insights can help to inform detailed strategies that address key pain points and priorities for prospective buyers. This, in turn, will support driving engagement throughout the entire buying group at target accounts.

Drive engagement with your buying groups in just 6 steps ⟶

2. NEGLECTING YOUR DATABASE AS IT CHANGES AND EVOLVES

Leveraging the latest lead intelligence at your disposal is essential.

However, be sure to regularly update your lead database. Your solutions are likely to evolve as you navigate market trends and fluctuations in buyer behavior. As a result, assessing and revising how B2B marketing leads are reviewed will help you adapt strategies with greater accuracy to combat any challenges and developments that present themselves.

Below are some examples of how your database should be updated in order of specificity:

ICPs

Firmographic and demographic data that indicates a business that is most likely to benefit from purchasing your solutions, including:

- Company size
- Industry
- Budget
- Job title
- Tech stack

Buyer personas

A buyer persona is a fictional representation of decision makers at your ideal target accounts. **Here is data to consider updating:**

- Professional information
- Values and goals
- Personal background
- Identifying information
- Objections and barriers to purchase

Lead intelligence

A combination of buyer persona, segmentation, buyer intent, lead scoring, and behavioral data points, collected from campaign performance reports. **Here are some examples:**

- Marketing channel preferences
- Top performing messaging and content
- Top engagement drivers

Ensuring data efficiency will enable you to segment leads as needed to inform the customisation and performance of your lead follow up campaigns.

Discover how to develop and leverage lead intelligence to drive your ROI ⟶

3. DRIVING TOO QUICKLY FOR A CONVERSION

Creating a sense of urgency is no longer effective in the face of today's **scrutinous buyers who are navigating complex buying journeys**. Rushing a lead toward a sale before they are prepared, or able to do so, will not only result in churn but also damage any trust established through demand generation efforts.

Instead, prioritise building a stronger relationship with prospects to lay the foundation for lead follow up and other outreach strategies. **Aside from lead nurturing, here are two other approaches to consider:**

- **Client centricity:** A meaningful cultural shift, anchoring your campaigns around client centricity is an effective way to support higher CLTV, ROI, and positive brand perception. In practice, this involves identifying areas of friction in the client experience, and onboarding processes, as well as sales training that empowers teams to act with accuracy and flexibility to meet client needs.

- **Enable your buyers:** A shocking **75% of buyers would rather self-serve** than interact directly with sales teams (Gartner, 2023). Capitalise on this buyer preference by creating resources that effectively communicate your brand's business value to B2B leads and support their research process. This way you can encourage leads to progress through their buyer's journey and prime them for sales conversations when they are ready.

To ensure that B2B marketing leads are handed over to sales teams for lead follow up at the right moment, bolster your lead scoring process with triggers. These can be specific actions you have identified through successful campaigns to indicate strong buyer intent.

For example, leads generated via different channels cannot be considered to have the same levels of intent. A lead completing a contact form on a gated whitepaper is unlikely to have the same interest as one that has completed similar fields on a product demo page.

This process is crucial, especially given the emphasis buyers place on high-quality, personalised buying experiences.

Reach your target buyers with high-performance demand generation programs, informed by INFUSE Insights and crafted to drive quality engagement ⟶

4 BAD TIMING

Timing is everything. Understanding the optimal frequency and time of day to reach out to leads is crucial for yielding the best results from campaigns. However, this is also likely to fluctuate according to the factors influencing lead engagement with outreach (outside of messaging, etc).

Here are some best practices to keep in mind when scheduling lead follow up cadences:

- Ensure that the first touch is within 24 hours of the lead follow up being triggered (by specific lead scoring behavior)
- Space out lead follow up touches and diversify your channel mix to avoid fatigue and consequent churn.
- Adjust both of these practices as necessary, based on the performance achieved with specific lead segments and buyer personas, etc.

Orchestrating the best timing, both in terms of day of the week and time of day, and **lead score** will naturally evolve as you gather more data insights on lead behavior.

5 'COOKIE CUTTER' MESSAGING

For lead follow up to be effective and resonate with prospective buyers, it is crucial to personalise campaigns as much as possible (per account if capacity allows). Any messaging that can be interpreted as derivative is unlikely to perform well. After all, relevance is key as buyers expect to have their needs understood and met.

Therefore, messaging is another core area of lead follow up that should be informed by lead intelligence. As a result, feedback from your sales teams can be particularly valuable for helping you shape messaging that tackles objections and highlights solutions to pain points in a way that resonates with B2B leads.

Combine findings with the performance of marketing campaigns at the top of the funnel to identify the messaging that is best suited to each stage.

Consider implementing Account Based Marketing and Experience (ABM, ABX) strategies for accounts that represent high-value opportunities and match your buyer personas and ICPs. While a resource-intensive approach, hyper-personalised campaigns have a greater potential to yield better results.

6 ONE CHANNEL COMMUNICATION

Channel diversification is not only a powerful strategy for tackling channel fatigue, but also an effective way to demonstrate your understanding of your prospect's unique preferences and needs.

For example, when implementing lead follow up strategies, consider activating outreach across a blend of marketing channels such as email, socials, and even less formal channels such as calls or SMS. Like all other elements of your lead follow up efforts, inform your channel mix based on the data insights you have available to you.

Although lead follow up is a shorter process than lead nurturing, you can adopt nurturing best practices to capitalise on your channel mix. This involves alternating between channels and allowing for breaks between outreach cadences on each. For example, email lead follow up can be enriched with touchpoints on LinkedIn, assuming that a connection has already been established with the lead on this platform.

Depending on the engagement generated, you will be able to identify priority channels to invest more in and others to remove from your channel mix to ensure optimal results.

Read the Definitive Lead Nurturing Guide for a playbook to engage buyers ⟶

7 NOT SHARING CONTENT

As defensive buyers are required to navigate an increasingly complex buying journey, content can be an effective tool for demonstrating the business value your brand provides. However, as an extension of your brand voice, expertise, and therefore image, content needs to be of high quality and accurate to its audience's needs.

Content performance can also be supported by matching the type of content shared with the right buyer persona and across the right channel. When it comes to lead follow up, consider sharing content best suited for leads in the lower stages of the funnel—and in the format that matches their preferences. **Here are some examples:**

- **Webinars**
- **Free tools**
- **Case studies**
- **Product comparisons**
- **Targeted discount pages**
- **Unique research findings (proprietary, if possible)**

Consider repurposing your content to match the strength of the channel you are distributing it on to support its performance. For example, case studies can be repurposed into one-pagers that highlight the principal features or data points that are most likely to be of interest to the recipient in question. Similarly, webinars represent a great opportunity for repurposed content, as they can be cut into short clips of key moments (especially suited to social platforms such as LinkedIn).

Align this strategy with your **content marketing** roadmaps to ensure that your sales teams have a consistent stream of up-to-date sales enablement materials for outreach and lead follow up strategies.

In essence, providing B2B marketing leads with valuable content in your lead follow up can be an effective way to establish and strengthen relationships that will support conversions.

Read the Content Repurposing Guide for best practices to adapt assets for different funnel stages ⟶

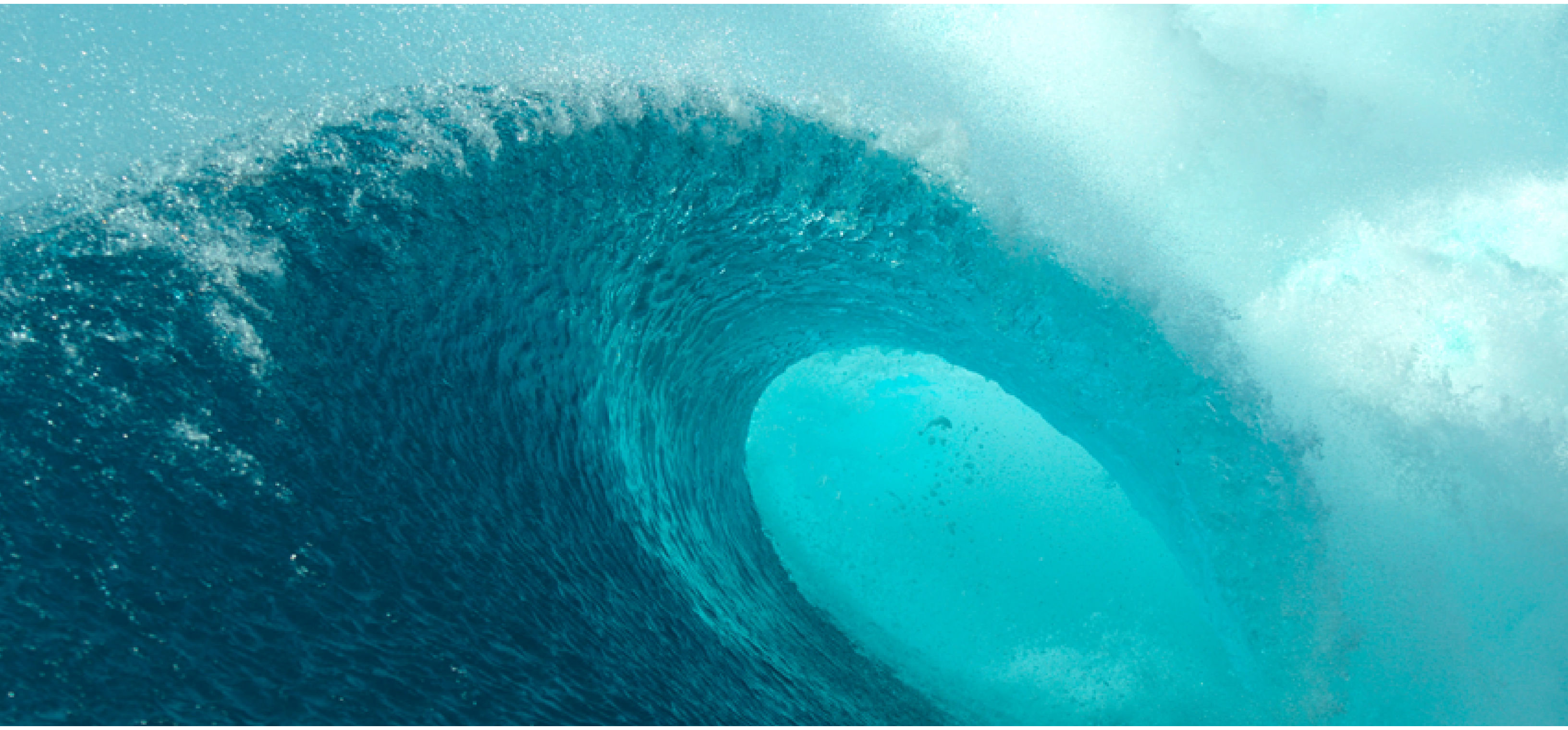
8. FAILING TO ALIGN SALES AND MARKETING TEAMS

Given the importance of delivering seamless, highly personalised experiences for buyers, achieving alignment (a common challenge for many) is necessary for yielding the best outcomes.

Communication is key. Lead scoring, lead nurturing, and lead follow up are all processes that require constant adjustment to ensure their accuracy. Therefore, **establishing regular meetings between sales and marketing teams** to share feedback from both sides of the process can help to inform optimisation, and also encourage teamwork.

These team syncs can also address joint KPIs and strategise tweaks to workflows (such as lead handover between sales and marketing), as well as new campaigns based on the latest data insights available.

Simple efforts allow teams to work off a strong foundation, enabling more innovation, a higher-quality buyer experience, and a greater likelihood of achieving performance goals as a result.



9. FORGETTING TO BE HUMAN

In the pursuit of high-value target accounts, it is easy to lose sight of the more personal, human element of sales—however, prioritising this is often key to securing higher client lifetime value (CLTV) by setting up a stronger basis for repeat business.

As explored in other aspects of this guide, providing leads with value and demonstrating a keen understanding of their challenges and ambitions is crucial for successful lead follow up. This act of ‘making deposits’ by sharing valuable information or resources accurate to buyer needs can be made more effective with a more ‘human’ approach in the language you leverage.

Avoid industry jargon that dilutes your message and detracts from the value proposition in your lead follow up. Engaging leads with honest, humble, and humorous messaging (as appropriate) can help leads build trust with you and your brand as an extension.

Straightforward outreach supports demand generation by humanising your brand and bringing the value of your solutions to the forefront.

While capacity will certainly play a role in this strategy, investing more time with leads on a more personal level can help to drive lead follow up performance.

10. CHASING LOST CAUSES

Finally, a critical element of your lead follow up strategy is identifying when to stop contacting B2B leads.

After all, while it is important to not disregard leads that have the potential to drive significant value for your business, misplaced persistence has the potential to waste opportunities to engage leads who are currently not in the market.

In the case of no engagement with a series of touchpoints, consider pausing lead follow up altogether or re-routing leads into personalised lead nurturing streams to maintain interest. This helps to avoid churn and accounts for the influencing factors that may explain an apparent ‘loss of interest’ from the lead’s side.

Another strategy to consider is addressing this drop in engagement with the lead directly with a closed-loop process. This can be a straightforward yes/no question or a light-hearted email with options for indicating their level of interest, a short video message, or a unique offer.

This can not only help to inform your next steps but it also differentiates your brand from a more generic action, or lack thereof.

Remember, a high percentage of B2B marketing leads with low engagement may be symptomatic of errors in your targeting.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Lead follow up is a process that requires constant optimisation, supported by sales and marketing alignment, to yield optimal performance.
- Innovative lead follow up strategies are fuelled by data management and the latest insights, such as lead intelligence.
- Successful lead follow up is based on providing B2B leads value as part of an accurate and seamless buyer experience.
- Develop and implement lead follow up that enables the buying journey and drives engagement with highly-personalised strategies such as ABM and ABX.

WHAT TO READ NEXT:

- MOFU to BOFU Guide: How to Get Leads to the Bottom of Funnel
- The Dangers of Only Focusing on Bottom of Funnel Leads

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