Lead MANAGEMENT

Preface

I attempted to formulate a new and comprehensive attitude toward IT and its use by companies and people. I said that it is not enough that IT merely “functions.” If companies use IT solutions strategically, they can also look forward to substantial potential growth and competitive advantages. Gaining these opportunities requires new and forward-looking views, which I publish in the following E-booklets.

The sales department is a key to corporate success more than ever before. It faces new challenges in a time when the Internet has changed a seller’s market into a buyer’s market. Sales – and the salespeople who do sales – do not get the credit they deserve in many companies. That has to change.

To develop innovative IT solutions for sales, businesses are called upon and required to assign greater value to sales and all the managers and skilled employees working in sales. In the E-booklets, I discuss that sales management software in the future has to have a completely new approach to sales.

As an example my own Software “Pipeliner” is a program to support the forward-looking orientation of companies. It drives home the point that attitudes and mindsets are the crucial factors in the successful use of the IT Revolution. Anyone who ignores them runs the risk of being among the losers in the years to come. Those who understand them generate benefits and win. The Pipeliner Principles described in the E-booklets opens up new perspectives for many people. I hope you will be among them.

Nikolaus Kimla

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CHAPTER 1

Lead Generation: The Call to Action

Lead Management

The call to action is the most important element of any **lead generation** activity. It is the part of your email, web page, landing page or other device that causes the reader to act (hence the name). That is, click through to a software download, fill out a contact form for more information, “call us right away,” download trialware, or the like. It is even used in verbal presentations; at the end of a webinar or video presentation the presenter says something like, “Call us today to find out how you can take advantage!”

Some businesses miss out on the necessity of creating and including calls to action in everything they do. You might do a splendid job of selling someone on the idea of finding more or even making a purchase—but if you don’t give them an instant way to do that, it could be an opportunity lost.

The call to action is placed at the end of a pitch—such as at the end of an email or on a web page that should result in interest turning to a lead. Many experts, however, advise the placing of a call to action on every single web page in a site as you never know when someone will decide they are interested; it may be earlier than you expect.

There are other scenarios in which a web site might contain different pages that address different levels of interest; in such a case different calls to action for each page might be required.

Inciting Action

How do you know what will cause your potential customers to act? That is a matter of research. You need to know your customers well enough to know what made them act in the first place. Then conduct research on new people that have not purchased, and find out what would cause them to want to move to the next stage in your sales process.

Too many companies make calls to action a matter of guesswork; they make assumptions about what will cause a prospect to act, put up calls to action and hope for the best. That's a far more expensive way to go than getting the research done in the first place.

Creating a Call to Action

When you're first creating a web site—especially when you're first starting out and have no budget—a text-only link might be all you can afford. If so, do that; something is always better than nothing. If you **base that call to action on your research**, it should still work.

But most lead generation experts will point out that a call to action should stand out from the rest of your design and attract attention from the moment a viewer first lands on a web page. That way the reader always knows it's there; the moment he or she is pushed over the edge into becoming a lead the action is only a click away.

There are many experts out there who can design a call to action for you, one that will fit in with your design and color scheme yet nicely stand out. They have tested various designs and colors as to response—it's worth tapping this expertise to gain the most possible traffic.

Simplicity of Verbiage

A call to action should be simple yet effective. It should have a minimum of carefully chosen words; the less cluttered the better. It should clearly and rapidly communicate exactly what you want the reader to do.

You want to firmly direct your public, and keep them moving. If you want someone to download a white paper on cloud solutions, for example, don't go crazy with something like, "Download our free white paper about cloud computing in today's environment and why our solution will make a huge difference in your computing ROI." A simple, "Download our cloud solutions white paper!" will do much better.

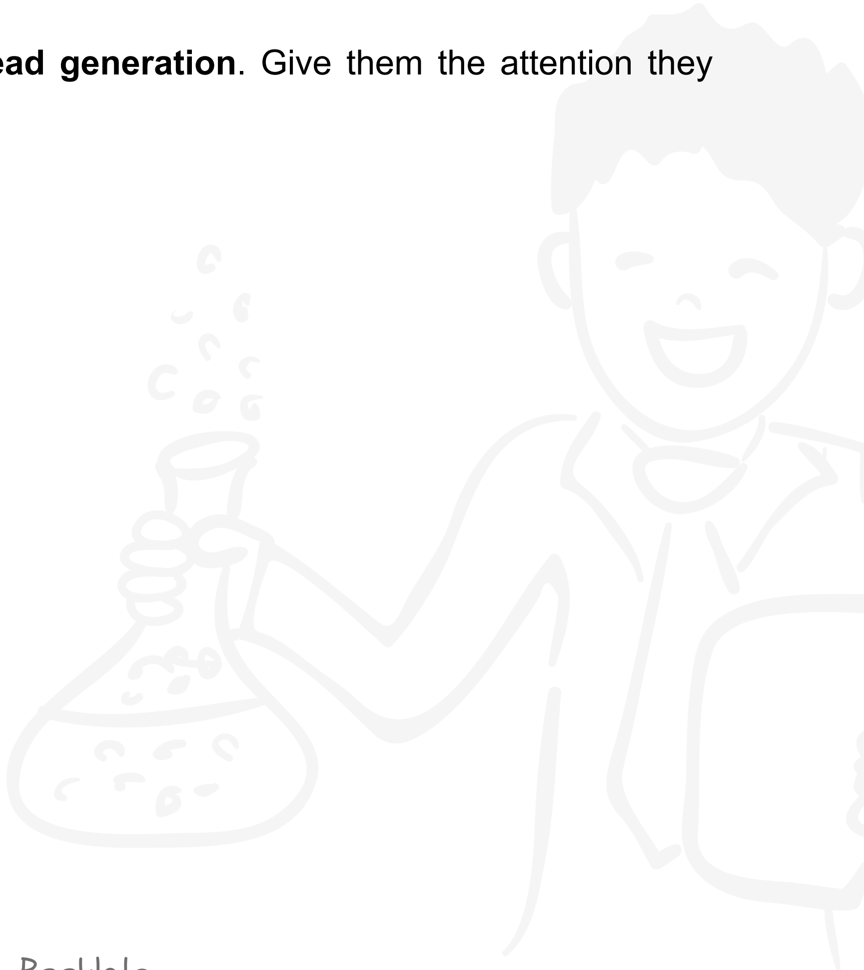
Again, there are experts that can show you many examples of the types of wording that have been the most successful.

Testing and CRM Solution

Once you have designed one or several possible calls to action, you can actually show them to either customers or potential prospects and get their input on what will cause them to act. When you have made your calls to action live, though (whether or not you have shown them around beforehand), you should **employ web analytics that will reveal how many of your visitors click on various calls to action**. Keep careful track of them, testing various ones to see which work best.

Of course, the final analysis will be monitoring the resultant leads through a leading-edge CRM solution; Who bought? Who didn't? Which leads from which calls to action turned to sales the fastest?

Calls to action are vital to your lead generation. Give them the attention they deserve—and so will your prospects.



CHAPTER 2

Lead Generation: Sowing the Field

Lead generation used to be quite different than it is today. A company could do some research about potential clients, create some materials, send them out, and count on a certain percentage of leads coming back. When contacting those leads the sales force could have some confidence that the **prospects, for the most part, wouldn't be all that educated in the marketplace and in the product specifics**. It would be up to the sales rep to educate the prospect on the product or service, then sell them on the idea that the sales rep's product was the best for their purposes.

The internet dramatically changed this scenario. Today a buyer will conduct extensive online research into your product category, comb through third-party product comparisons and evaluations, scope out trade shows, and interact with other buyers in forums and social media. Any promotion they might receive from you will likely hit the round file (virtually or literally) as they're busy making up their own minds using their own sources.

Does this mean companies should quit marketing? Hardly. It just means businesses should take a hard look at how they're marketing, and how they can fit in with the new buyer patterns.

1 Becoming Part of the Research Trail

The secret to steering more prospects toward your company is **making sure positive information about your product or service becomes part of the research your potential prospects are conducting**. That means "sowing the field" with materials and information that turns up in places they will be looking for it.

2 PR Materials

There are a relatively few companies today that know the real value of PR (public relations). It is an actual fact that PR actually plants the seeds out ahead of Marketing, so that Marketing can come along and nurture and grow the crop that will eventually be harvested by sales.

One of the first places your potential **prospect is going to research is in the area of third-party product evaluations**. One need not sit by and let such evaluations "just happen"; savvy companies know that they can have a positive influence on such evaluations by cultivating relationships with product editors, writers and evaluators. Offer them anything they need, including tech support. And of course make sure you send them the best version of your product you possibly can.

Press coverage should be actively sought. A very active PR department will make themselves fully aware of publication calendars, what topics will be covered when and by whom. This makes it possible to submit materials on your company's product or service at opportune times, to writers, editors, web sites, podcasts and publications that have the broadest coverage and highest impact.

There is much more that can be done with PR—but the bottom line is to get your product or service out there in the third-party arena being positively covered. Make it so that your prospect can't help but run across it while researching it.

3 Social Media and Forums

Another place your potential prospect will be researching is in places where unsolicited ground-level opinions can be found about your product. This normally happens in social media settings—and once again, **this is not an area which you need to sit idly by** and let run as it will. Your company should have accounts and pages on these sites and invite engagement. Your employees should be regularly monitoring such media, responding and participating in discussions.

4 White Papers and Useful Documents

When a potential buyer is conducting research, much of the time any materials generated by your company itself will be taken with a grain of salt. However, you can play into the research process by **providing materials that a prospect will truly find useful**. These could include white papers, product trials or other documents that contain truly relevant and useful data for the prospect.

5 Trade Show Presentations

Buyers often attend trade shows hoping to find out the latest about products or services they might be interested in. If you're going to participate in a trade show, **don't simply set up a booth and be done with it**. There are many more activities available, and it's a unique opportunity to appear live and in person before your potential prospects. Have your CEO deliver a keynote address; have your tech personnel perform demonstrations and answer questions; make sure your booth is more than just a place someone can pick up promotional materials—engage visitors and get them on board.

6 Evaluating the Influx

The leads that come in from such activities will be far more valuable than the "more information requests" that used to come in in ages past. How will you know which of your lead generation activities are working? Which to keep up, which to drop, which to strengthen? You'll need a leading-edge CRM solution through which you can rapidly and accurately rate your leads, and follow them through your sales process.

Today the most rewarding lead generation is performed by proactively sowing the field—and reaping the bounty.

CHAPTER 3

Lead Generation: Purchasing Lists for Leads

Lead Management

It used to be the norm—and in some quarters it still happens—that the sales force generated its own leads. But today it is far more common to leave sales reps doing what they do best: closing sales. The job of **lead generation is left to Marketing**.

As anyone informed will tell you, leads is a quantity game. The more prospective targets you can reach out to, the more leads you will get back. The higher the quantity of leads you can get in the door, the higher the number of closes.

It often happens, then, that marketing will **purchase lists of potential prospects** instead of manually trying to seek them out, then isolate and promote to them; this is often the way to **reach larger numbers of potential buyers faster**. There is a definite science, however, to choosing the right list and promoting to it in such a way that a decent response will be obtained.

Specifying a List

There are a number of specifications you will need to provide in order to purchase a list. These minimally include job title, type of company, size of company, and geographical location. The better list providers offer further options, such as direct phone numbers and email addresses.

But how do you know what to ask for?

To answer that question, you must compile a detailed customer profile. This is best done through your CRM solution (if you have the right one). **Look at your customers—who has purchased, how much, what kinds of companies are they?** List out the job title of every decision maker in such companies, as you'll want to target those.

Do not skimp on this step—it will mean the difference between success and failure of any marketing campaign you conduct with the list you purchase. The more accurately you can describe your ideal customer, the better your list will be.

Where to Purchase?

Anyone who has spent a few years in direct marketing will warn you about the **volume of bad lists available out there**, so take care in choosing the company from which you purchase lists. Consult with friends and colleagues you trust, and experts you listen to. When possible, ask for references. Make sure their lists are kept current. Make sure you're dealing with a reputable company that is going to provide you with what you really need.

Create Campaigns

Based on the job titles you're getting on your list, along with the knowledge you have accumulated about the types of prospects and the industry or industries involved, craft a targeted campaign for your list. Look over your own company's sales process and figure out how best to approach potential prospects from the first point of contact in order to garner their interest in your product or service and your company as a source. Realize that you may have to **create different messages for different job titles**—for example your wording to a senior executive would probably be different than for the IT director.

There are a number of companies that specialize in email marketing campaigns. If it is in your budget, consult with one of them as you create your campaign. Some of them even offer free materials on creating campaigns with some expert advice. This is ground that has been successfully trod before and you need not go it alone.

It is a good idea to create campaign-specific landing pages that contain the same messaging as your emails, so that there is not only consistency of message but a "push" for the same result.

Test!

Once you have obtained your list and created your campaign, test it and carefully monitor the results. Some companies will split a new list up into multiple parts, and test different versions of a campaign on different parts of the list (with landing pages to match).

Make sure you attach codes to all response vehicles (specific URLs, codes in emails, extension numbers for phone calls, etc.) so that responses from your tests can be clearly and easily monitored.

Through testing, you can fine-tune you campaign so it's successful.

Utilize Your CRM Solution Throughout

A leading-edge CRM solution will not only provide you plentiful data with which to create your ideal customer profile for specifying your list and creating your campaign, it will also allow you to **carefully track any leads that come from the campaign**. It is very important to watch them as they move through the sales process: did they fully qualify? Did they fall off anyplace? What are the sales reps saying about them? Being able to track leads is part and parcel of any lead generation campaign.

Purchasing of lists for lead generation can be profitable and rewarding—if the right homework is done as part of the process. Put in the effort and reap the benefits of high-quantity and high-quality leads.

CHAPTER 4

While You’re Home With Your Family, Your Lead Generation Machine Rolls On

Lead Management

It used to be that businesses owners—especially in those businesses that were sales-centric—would sweat the holidays. While it was mandatory that they paid their employees, those employees weren't in the office and **leads and sales were not being made**. Money was being spent but none was coming in; not really a viable proposition.

But on a holiday, while your employees are enjoying time with their families, at least your lead generation machine can keep right on chugging—thanks to the internet.

The Seeds Have Been Planted

The reason this can happen is because you have taken the time to plant seeds all through the "fields" where interest can grow and potential customers can find out about your product or service, whenever they might pass by. Your company has put out plentiful webinars, free downloads, YouTube videos, white papers, case studies and much more. If prospective customers do happen to be putting in a few hours on Turkey Day, you won't miss out just because your employees aren't. There will be plenty out there for interested people to learn.

If your materials are truly on-target (because you have done your research well), some of those folks will be driven to your web site. If you have created your web site with the total purpose of lead generation in mind, some of those will become leads.

It's Not A Holiday Everywhere

You must also bear in mind that the **internet has made us all into international businesses**. In other countries, it is just another working day. There will be plenty of potential prospects out there scouring the web in search of a product or service like yours.

Cloud CRM Means that If They Want to Work, They Can

Being the entrepreneurs that they are, salespeople will often want to put in some hours even on a holiday. If you have a leading-edge CRM solution that empowers salespeople and follows your full sales process, any **leads that happen to show up will appear in CRM**. If your CRM application resides in the cloud, the sales force can access CRM from their mobile devices in virtually any location, and can start working those leads right then, taking the necessary steps to move them along the sales pipeline to a sale.

So go on, have a very happy and relaxing holiday. And as if by magic, while the office is dark and no one is about, leads are still happening.

CHAPTER 5

Lead Management: Nurturing the Leads

Lead Management

The subject of "what constitutes a lead" is often the subject of heated debate between a sales force and a marketing department. Marketing is generating leads and sending them over to sales reps; the sales reps are firing back comments such as, "You call these leads? These guys were barely interested!"

Today astute companies not wishing to simply waste the leads they get—whether super hot or lukewarm—are instituting ways of nurturing leads before sending them onto sales. It is part of an overall lead management system that makes it possible to utilize nearly everything that comes in the door.

Categorizing Leads

A lead can fall anywhere between "hot" (ready to buy) and "cold" (maybe once interested but has apparently moved on). A company that fully analyzes its sales process places these varying degrees of leads into precise categories indicating their viability. Successful methods of moving them along these categories are found and **when they finally arrive at "hot" they are then** and only then **forwarded to sales reps** to work.

One method of rating degrees of leads relates to prospect behavior. Someone who regularly reads the blog and rarely responds to communication is obviously not as hot as someone who is perusing pricing and prospect specification pages and asking relevant questions.

Inside Sales Team

When new sales reps are hired at a company, it often happens they are made inside reps that work the leads that "aren't ready for prime time." But an **inside rep should not just be a new person turned loose with a phone and a list to call**. If a company (specifically their marketing department) has done their research well, specific methods have been evolved that inside reps utilize to move the leads along from cold to warm to hot.

A good part of what a skilled inside rep is doing is building relationships. By the time a lead is turned over to the sales force, there should be considerable rapport built between the prospect and the company.

Remember: you're not just selling your product or service, you're selling your company as a source, too.

That relationship building should be also based on research about the prospect and industry. The more the communication is kept relevant, the more of the prospect's interest you will retain.

Levels of Content

Along with levels of approach utilized by inside sales, there should also be levels of content based on the degree of interest. Someone toward the lower end would probably be more interested in general issues that affect the prospect's company and the overall industry, and how your product or service fits in. **The hotter the lead is, the more product-specific and detailed the subject matter**. And remember who you're talking to: the higher the relevance factor to your specific prospect the more your prospect will read your content.

These levels of content can apply to email blasts, but also to specific landing pages. Some companies even have different editions of their newsletters for prospects and customers; the prospect edition is smaller and more general in scope.

Patterned Through CRM Solution

Your **lead management program**—nurturing leads along through their various degrees of sellability—**is best conducted utilizing a leading-edge CRM solution** that exactly follows your sales process. As each lead makes its way along, it is clearly viewable and rated. Sales reps can always see what's coming, inside sales reps confidently know what to do next and Marketing can exactly and easily target content. Sales management is also able to see where inside sales is weak or strong, and Marketing can also evaluate lead quality.

So within your lead management system, what constitutes a lead?

A company that can calmly and accurately answer that question—and have agreement from both sales and marketing on that answer—is well on its way to big-time success if not already there.

CHAPTER 6

Lead Management: Five Cold Calling Basics

It used to be that cold calling was the primary method of lead generation itself. It was a do-or-die proposition: those that succeeded at it remained salespeople. Those that didn't usually found other careers. This was because salespeople were usually "flying blind" not knowing if the person they were calling was even remotely qualified as a prospect.

Today cold calling is normally done as a part of lead management. This calling is frequently done by an inside sales rep to qualify and make the lead "hotter" before sending it to a sales rep who will be going for the close. The lead being contacted is a "warm lead"—someone who has shown some kind of interest in your product or service. They've requested more information, or downloaded a white paper from your web site, or taken some other action. In other words they're not totally "cold" and are to some degree qualified.

Nonetheless there is still a very narrow window in which to interest them, and an inside salesperson must have some basic operating actions and skills to bring prospects up to being "sellable."

Here are five basic tips that will take you quite a ways into accomplishing the purpose of cold calling.

1 Contact the Lead as Soon as Possible

If you think back to the last time you yourself were interested in a product or service, you'll find you were the most interested at the time you were actually checking it out. As time passed following your investigation you became involved with other things and didn't think all that much about it. After a long time has gone by, you may have forgotten about it altogether.

Some companies have a policy to **contact leads literally within minutes when possible**. The person likely still has the issue they're trying to solve in mind, and you're tapping right into it.

2 Know How to Gently Persuade

This is a basic sales skill that is acquired over time, but it certainly can be coached by sales managers and experienced sales reps to get someone off the ground. It is a fine balance between "being pushy" and "being friendly, polite and personable." You're gently but firmly persuading someone into taking the next step in your sales process—and the real experts at this leave the person thinking it was their idea.

3 Know Who You're Calling

The most irritating thing that can happen is when someone gets a call from a salesperson that obviously doesn't know the first thing about the prospect's company, the problems they might be encountering or the prospect's job description. The inside sales rep (or script they are following) may try to make up for it by **taking shots in the dark**—which is about the **fastest way for the inside rep's pitch to go south fast**.

Take a couple minutes to find out who you're calling. Look their company up online. See if you can find out what kind of issues they're trying to resolve that your product or service would assist in. Get ahold hold of your contact's job description and know something about what they do. And of course go in knowing the method with which they showed interest—e.g. they downloaded a white paper, filled out a form for more information, etc.

Most or all of this information should be available in your CRM solution (see #5 below).

Make sure this kind of information is liberally utilized during the conversation. It adds a personal touch and lets the person know you're not just trying to pitch a voice on the other end of the line.

Any scripts should be adjusted to take this information into account.

4 Don’t Give Up Too Soon

Many inside reps make 1 or 2 attempts at cold calling a prospect, then leave it and never try again. It has been found through research, however, that **sales often occur when someone has been contacted 8 or 9 times**.

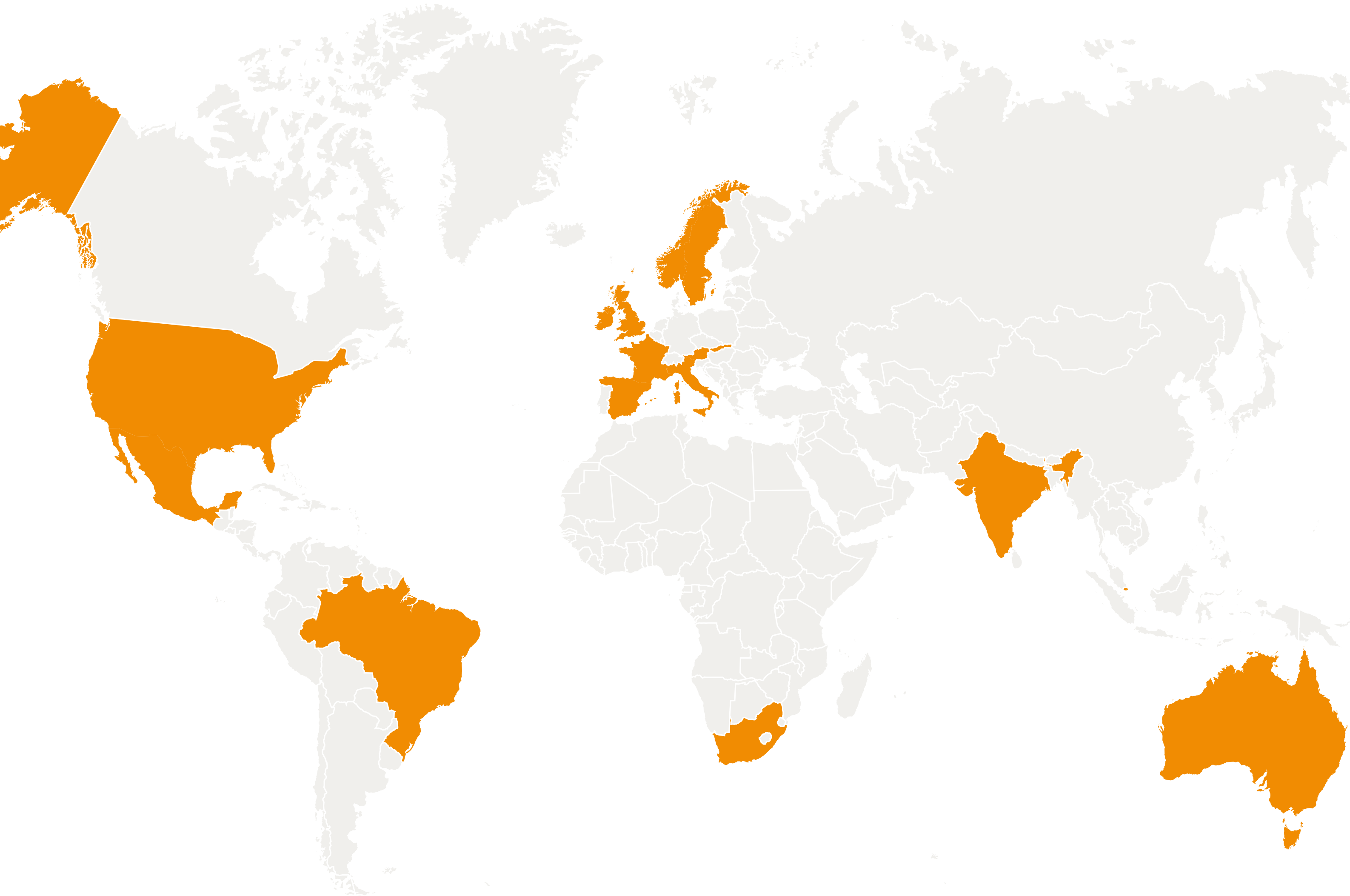
Along with being gently persuasive, also be gently persistent. Any experienced salesperson will tell you it often pays off.

5 Use Your CRM Solution

If you’re company is utilizing a leading-edge CRM solution, there should be some amount of information about your prospect or prospect company right in CRM. Make sure to look it over so you have all your information complete before making your call. When your call is done, make sure you enter the information you acquired as well as the steps you took into CRM so the next person will be able to see it. If you have done your job well, that next person will be the sales rep who will eventually close the sale—so provide all the information you can.

Cold calling can be done well as part of a successful lead management program. Apply these basics and increase your lead-to-sale conversions.

Pipeliner



Contact

Website: pipelinersales.com
Email: info@pipelinersales.com

Phone: 1-888-843-6699

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