

Setting Achievable Expectations for Your Demand Generation Funnel



Success boils down to results, and there's no aspect of B2B marketing where that's more true than the demand generation funnel.

If you're not getting the business value you expect from your budget, your demand generation strategy is a failure. No way around it.

But you and your demand gen partner can't work miracles (at least not most days). If you go into a campaign expecting to book sales calls with half the CFOs on your named accounts list, you're going to be disappointed.

The key to success is setting ambitious, but reasonable, expectations for your demand gen efforts. You need to critically examine the demand for your solutions and then draw a map to revenue, based on past results and top-line goals.

And these expectations need to be quantifiable. You and your demand gen partner need to lay out a data-driven plan for finding and driving engagement with ideal customers, and agree on how you'll measure progress toward those expectations. That's because B2B marketing in the digital age is all about measurement.

This process will require some homework from your team, as well as open give-and-take with your trusted B2B demand gen partner. But it's an essential investment in getting the results your business needs to grow.

Laying the Foundation for Your Demand Generation Funnel:

Demand generation is a key component of B2B marketing, with [about half the respondents to a recent survey saying they expect their budgets to increase in the coming year](#). (We'll note that these growth rates have slowed since the end of the pandemic, when virtually all spending went digital.)

But a growing number of marketers (more than four out of ten) also say they [see a real need for improvement in their lead generation and nurturing strategies](#), according to the most recent annual benchmarking survey from Demand Gen Report.

The campaigns you run with a trusted partner should be an extension of the overall marketing and revenue strategy you've set for the whole organization. If your core practice is unsound, your partnerships will invariably fail to meet expectations.

Here are the fundamentals you need to have in place before you can establish demand gen goals with your partner that will move the needle.



1) Decide What You REALLY Need from Your Campaigns

Many B2B marketers simply look at demand gen as a volume function that ultimately converts to revenue at some standard rate. They issue RFPs that simply call for X number of MQLS/AQLs, of which they assume Y percent will ultimately result in sales.

Don't get us wrong – revenue is king. We get it. But sometimes you also want to build a little awareness about a big launch on the horizon, or maybe even learn a little about what headaches your prospects are dealing with. Your demand generation strategy should be able to deliver on all these expectations. Every customer touch is an opportunity to learn.

So work with Sales, Product, and your respective C-level to ensure you cover all the goals for the next 6-18 months, from near-term revenue to strategic positioning.

2) Be Certain of Your Markets

One of the biggest challenges our team at Bython faces is being asked to wring high-quality opportunities from the same narrow, targeted account list. The message just gets stale and, at a certain point, annoying when you are talking to the same people over and over.

B2B marketers should constantly review their Total Addressable Market (TAM) estimates to ensure they understand the scope of companies and contacts they want to talk to. This primer on [TAM](#), [Serviceable Available Market \(SAM\)](#) and [Serviceable Obtainable Market \(SOM\)](#) is a great refresher if you haven't done this recently.

One of the key benefits of working with a demand generation partner is their access to millions of contact records. You don't want to miss a chance to drive engagement with a new audience because they weren't included in an outdated TAM map from three years ago.

In addition to folding in new regions or adjoining verticals, market sizing also suggests plausible revenue and, by extension, demand generation goals. As we said earlier, a key component of meeting expectations is setting reasonable ones from the outset.



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3) Polish Up Your ICPs with Intent

Your best prospects are the ones that act like your best customers. [Ideal customer profiles \(ICPs\)](#) often focus on fixed details, such as job title, company size or installed technology. But you should also include behavioral queues, such as frequency of purchase and online research behaviors.

A trusted demand generation partner will employ first- and third-party intent data to help find prospects who exhibit these behaviors, even if they don't have a targeted job title. Purchase behavior is the best way to extend your demand generation funnel audiences, particularly if you are working with top-down revenue expectations that have been set by Sales or the C-Suite (and that happens a lot.)

4) Refine Your Customer Journeys

One of the first things we ask our customers here at Bython is “what are you going to do with this opportunity once we deliver it?”

Predicting the next best action for a qualified prospect is essential in crafting demand gen campaigns that meet expectations. If Inside Sales is going to immediately call on the opportunity, you want to be sure that Marketing has seeded that conversation with a related content asset.

And yet 67 percent of marketers told the Content Marketing Institute that they need to [better understand customer needs / preferences](#) to meet their organization's demand generation goals. That's a full 10 points ahead of the second answer, “Stronger sales and marketing alignment.”

Review your customer journeys and sync your demand generation strategy to the channels where opportunities will continue their relationship with Sales, which leads us to our final point.

5) Get on the Same Page with Sales

It may have placed second on the CMI challenge list, but more than half of respondents said misalignment with Sales is still a big issue for them. If Sales can't (or won't) sell to the opportunities you pass to them, the king of all expectations, revenue, will not be served.

P.S – *We know that Sales may just want to talk to that “wish list” of named accounts. That's why homework assignment two, sizing your markets and finding new hunting grounds, is so important.*

Expectations = Collaboration with Your Demand Gen Partner

With these building blocks in place, you can work with a trusted partner to set meaningful expectations for your demand generation strategies. That process should kick off at the start of every program.

Interrogate the RFP


Our sales team works with our customers at the front end to understand their overall goals, not just MQL/AQL quotas. This includes questions about market estimates, next-year growth plans, and lifetime customer value – the metrics that drive long-term growth for your business.

We don't always get answers to these questions from the outset. Many B2B marketing leaders still view demand gen as a commodity play (which, honestly, is why it sometimes fails to meet expectations.) But as our relationship with our customers grows, we aspire to become a real strategic asset, not just a leads mill.

View Digital Demand Gen as a Key Component, not the Whole Strategy

If Sales wants you to drive engagement with 100 C-level contacts from a target list of 1,000 companies, you're not going to meet expectations unless you get really creative. Email, inbound and display can be part of the equation, but you'll also need to incorporate phone, trade shows and maybe even postal.

Sometimes, "We're just not able to do as you suggest" is the right answer from a digital demand generation partner. Be willing to have your assumptions challenged and build flexible, multi-faceted programs that get the job done.



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Set (and Document) Clear Campaign Metrics

Data hygiene and completeness should be table stakes when working with any demand gen partner. If a contact record is wrong, you are due a make-good ... no questions asked. And you should also expect to have your questions answered promptly. *That's a no-brainer.*

To meet revenue goals and other business expectations, you need to go a step further and develop two sets of metrics on how well your campaigns perform.

NEAR-TERM: The best immediate measurement of an opportunity (and one we work from most often at Bython) is whether it advances to the next step in the customer journey. This is a pretty clear marker for the overall quality of the opportunity.

You should also quantify delivery pacing and, if at all possible, the time between last activity and when the opportunity hits your CRM – factors that can be optimized as a campaign is running.

LONG-TERM: These [Key Performance Indicators \(KPIs\)](#) can range from contribution to gross company revenue to Customer Acquisition Cost (CAC). Each company will have different measurements, but at some point you will be challenged to prove your programs are profitable.

Long-term metrics are invaluable in refining the expectations for your next campaign and overall demand generation funnel.



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Expectations Are Fueled by Sound Strategy

Setting meaningful expectations for your campaigns relies on you having first established a data-driven demand generation strategy that reflects both your revenue needs and market opportunity. From there, you can work with your demand generation partner to build innovative campaigns that deliver the business value you expect.

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