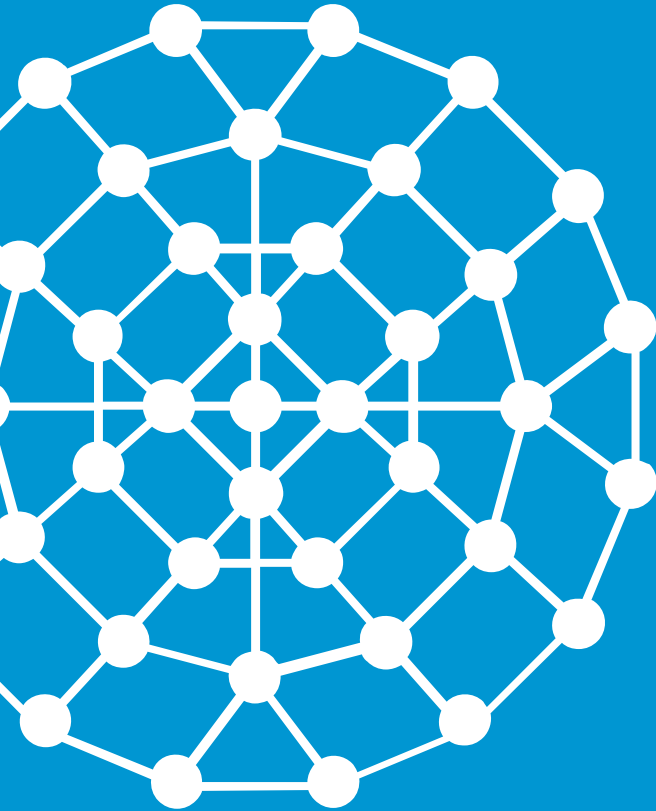


CHANNEL STRATEGY AND CREATING A SALES FUNNEL



The days when a sales team could work with their marketing departments to build lists, send out mass email campaigns, rely on chance meetings at trade shows or employ cold calling are in the past.

Today's sales funnel requires a web of interconnected channels, each with their own communication specialisms and audiences. At the top of the modern multi-channel funnel sits not just calls, events and referrals, but also social media, SEO, varied content formats, paid search, and much more.

In this CPSA strategy white paper, we will consider how to construct a powerful multi-channel sales funnel and the culture needed to build solid and sustainable sales strategies.

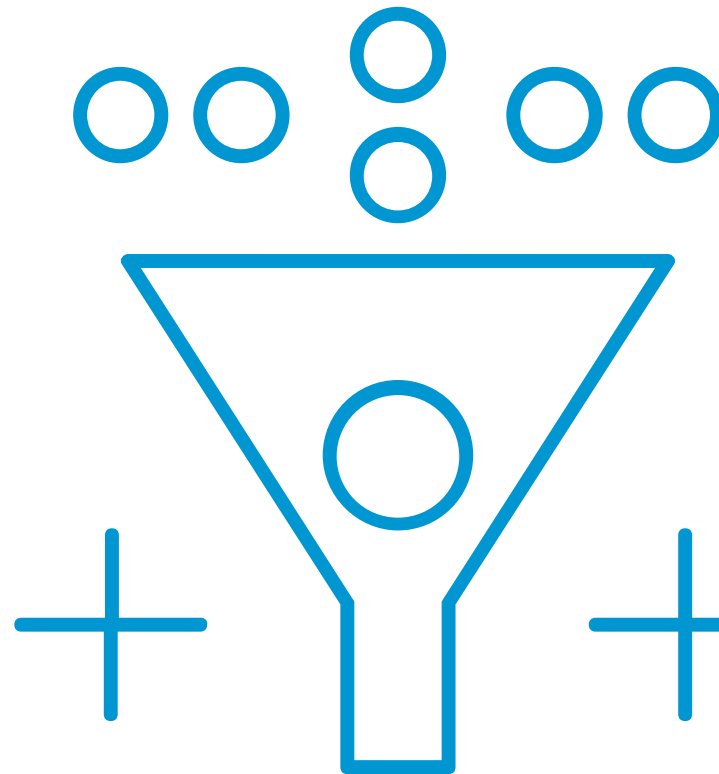
WHAT DOES A SALES FUNNEL LOOK LIKE TODAY?

While the tools and mechanics have moved on, the essential premise of the marketing sales funnel format remains the same. The **funnel represents a series of steps designed to direct visitors toward a buying decision**. This is achieved by developing a marketing and sales process which creates and nurtures awareness, interest, consideration, intent, evaluation, purchase and implementation.

In today's world of social selling and online branding, the sales funnel is filled from the top by numerous online and offline sources - all designed to engage with leads in specific ways with segmented hoped-for buying behaviours.

Unlike the traditional model, buyers today don't necessarily begin their purchasing journey at the top of the funnel (the awareness stage) then steadily work their way down. Prospects are much more educated and empowered than before digital became the norm. Modern prospects move up and down the funnel fluidly. Indeed, unparalleled and instant access to information means some potential buyers could, actually, enter your sales funnel in the middle, instead of at the top.

Because of this change in behavior, your marketing MUST include educational offers and ways to capture contact details at every stage of the funnel: top, middle and bottom. The most effective sales processes today recognize and supports the digitalisation and shift in buyer behavior.



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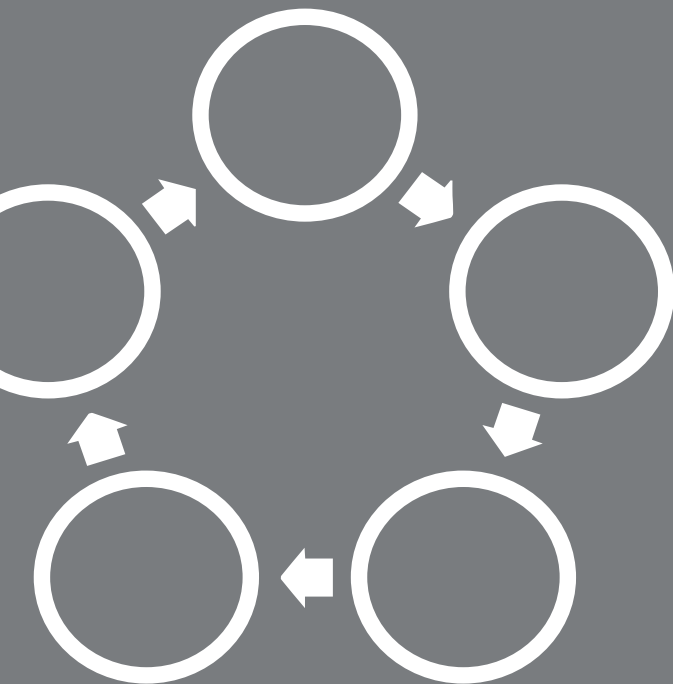
THE COMPONENTS OF A MULTI-CHANNEL SALES FUNNEL

“A modern sales funnel strategy is focused on content creation and distribution.”

Today’s Canadian consumers enter sales funnels through multiple channels. A modern sales funnel strategy is focused on content creation and distribution. It connects social media, ads, data and analytics, email, events, video, phone, PR, data capture, webinars, infographics, SEO, and most importantly, the brand’s website.

It is no longer sufficient for sales teams to be looking at how much you are spending on marketing. Instead, the focus is more on what you are getting in return. Cost per sale, cost per lead and metrics like website visitors, conversion rates and leads are key performance indicators (KPIs) that your sales and marketing teams should be reviewing on a regular basis to better understand and adapt to how prospects enter and engage in your sales and marketing funnel.

Let’s consider the four main stages in the sales funnel and the types of content you should offer.




1. THE AWARENESS STAGE

According to Adweek, over **4 out of 5 buyers do online research before making a purchasing decision**. These people look for information and answers relating to a problem that points back to a product or service need. By the time they interact (if at all) with a real salesperson, they are much more likely to already understand the features and benefits. This means that the buying conversation can be more detailed and the time to purchase can be reduced.

One of the most impactful ways to project the value of a brand and capture the attention of prospects is through optimized, high-value written content like blog posts, ebooks, white papers, and reports.

Engaging top-of-funnel content can also include videos, social media content, courses and certifications, podcasts, slides, surveys and other types of educational content.

A decorative graphic on the left side of the page consists of blue lines forming a stylized window or browser interface. It includes a horizontal line at the top, a vertical line on the right, and a horizontal line at the bottom. Three small blue dots are positioned in the top right corner of the window. Below the window is a large blue magnifying glass icon.

“These people look for information and answers relating to a problem that points back to a product or service need.”

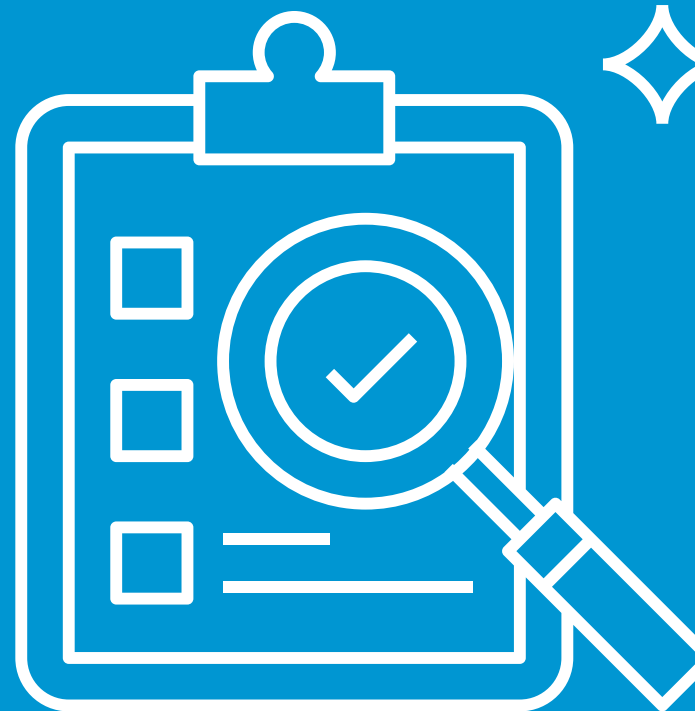
2. THE EVALUATION STAGE

Evaluation is a critical juncture in the buyer's journey because this is where prospective customers start eliminating solutions that aren't right for their needs.

Companies with middle-of-the-funnel engagement and lead management strategy which embrace the multi-stage funnel can enjoy a **4–10 times higher response rate compared to traditional, less-segmented email blasts and outreach.**

Well-nurtured leads produce, on average, a 20% lift in sales opportunities.

People in the mid-point of your sales funnel are likely to be looking to you for content which demonstrates that you're the experts in your industry. For this reason, the most effective types of content in the evaluation stage are often materials such as expert guides, live interactions, webinars, explainer videos, and whitepapers that compare your features and benefits with those of your competitors.



“Well-nurtured leads produce, on average, a 20% lift in sales opportunities.”

3. THE PURCHASE STAGE

Many websites are packed with calls-to-actions for demos, trial offers, downloads, and estimate request buttons. This is despite the reality that most of their audience isn't ready to buy initially.

The **most effective types of content in the purchase stage** tend to be case studies, trial offers, demos, and product literature.

By itself, a bottom-of-the-funnel offer isn't likely to convert a lot of leads into customers. Reports from companies including Google and CEB's *The Digital Evolution in B2B Marketing* suggest that people get up to 60 percent through a buying process before they're ready to talk to anyone about making a purchase.

However, when you have the funnel and activities mapped out to match the buyer journey, you're able to combine the compelling nature of that final offer with all the engagement and trust you've created leading up to that stage. The result? You're much more likely to see a jump in overall conversions.



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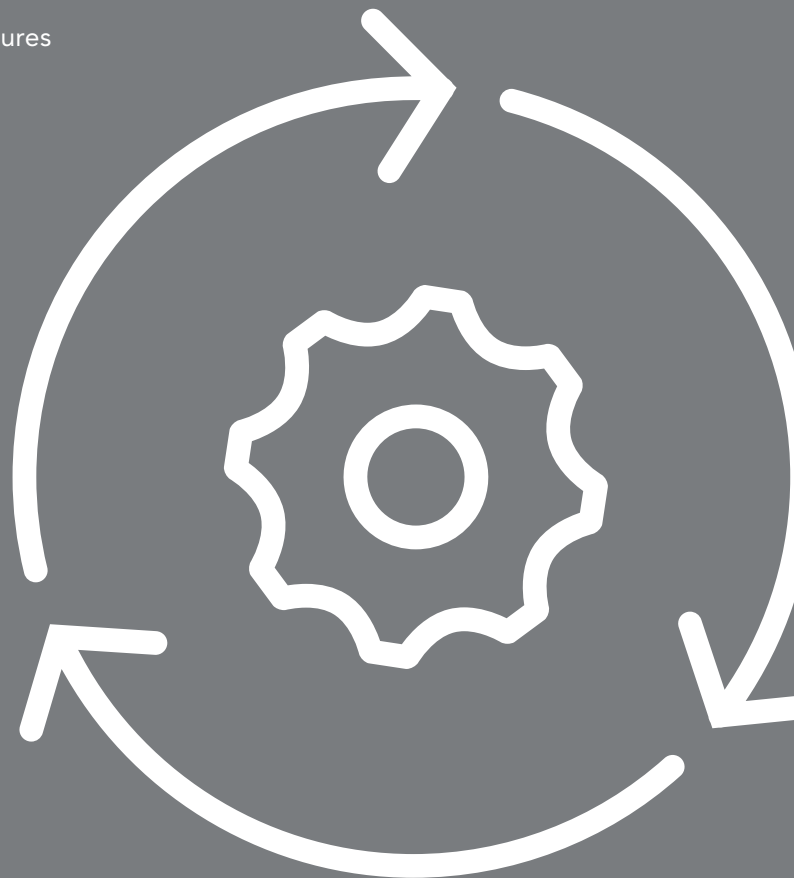
4. THE IMPLEMENTATION STAGE

For many companies, the sales funnel does not end with the purchase. **Retention and account growth are vital to, for example, SaaS business models.**

By offering the support and account management which allows new customers to better learn and understand your products and services, you increase the likelihood of full adoption and long-term use.

Ensuring that your customers understand the full list of features available to them at their price point will foster more use, potential for upsells and opportunities of referrals from happy customers.

“Ensuring that your customers understand the full list of features available to them at their price point will foster more use”



SUMMARY

Salespeople no longer control the funnel process because the digitalisation of the sales process means it is not possible to control prospects' access to information or their feelings toward your business. Effective sales funnels today have engagement at the goal and content at their core. They are fed at the top by numerous interconnected communication channels.

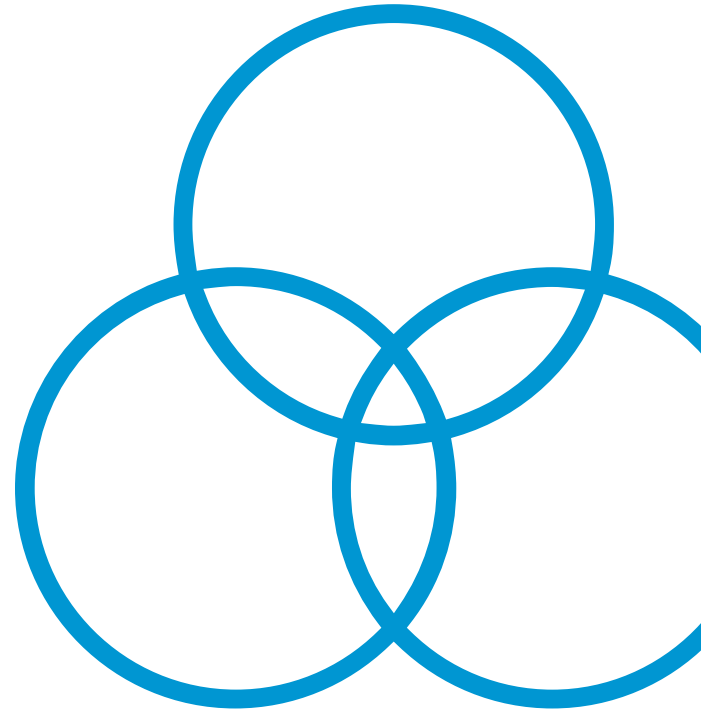
Because of this major shift in buyer behavior, marketing efforts which feed the sales funnel should center around providing high-quality educational content at each stage of the funnel.

The modern salesperson must be able to understand the uses and potential of social media networks, analyse website numbers, use online survey tools, share meaningful content and build an authentic brand.

Your system should be able to use white papers, podcast, infographics and videos to grow your stature as a trusted resource. The best salespeople today are those that can **manage their part in a multi-channel sales funnel.**

Without defining the stages in their funnel, they can't possibly nurture leads effectively. This means they're making little to no concerted effort to move customers to the purchase stage.

So stop selling and start educating. Be sure to match your sales process with your marketing process and embrace the new, fluid, sales funnel.



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