



Laura Noonan

# LEAD NURTURE

The Art of Generating, Capturing and Selling

When it comes to generating leads, the phone proves time and again to be a highly valuable tool. In fact, many auto dealers find their phone leads are more qualified than online leads. Yes, the Internet is where many dealers are sending buyers when they're researching a vehicle purchase, and online advertising has gained a fair share of dealer's advertising budgets; the phone, however, tends to bring in serious buyers and fewer junk calls than online leads, which can generate duplicate contact forms by users or fraudulent spam inquiries.

The May 2008 Pew Internet & American Life Project study, *The Internet and Consumer Decisions*<sup>1</sup>, concludes that although people use the Internet to sort through product choice, it is not the only method they use to research a purchase, and the Internet is not the place where buyers often close the deal. According to the study, more often than not, purchases are carried out offline.

There are various reasons that people prefer to go through with a purchase offline versus online. A second Pew study, *Online Shopping*<sup>2</sup>, finds that:

- 43 percent of Internet users have been frustrated by the lack of information they find while researching goods or services online.
- 32 percent of Internet users report being confused by the information they do find online during their research.
- 30 percent report feeling overwhelmed by the amount of information they find.

With the phone being a primary offline consumer choice, it is clear that finding

ways to increase incoming calls to your dealership is a strong lead generation tactic — these leads are the infamous “low-hanging fruit.” Prospects who call in to your dealership are interested enough in your brands and service centers to take the time to engage in a personal conversation, offering their name and contact information directly, rather than anonymously through an online contact form.

So, let's break down the phone lead capture cycle:

## GENERATE more qualified leads:

Using your dealership's phone as a lead generating tool is the most effective way to bring the low-hanging fruit or “buyers” into your sales cycle. A vanity 800 number placed in your advertising and marketing materials will get you 30 to 50 percent more potential customers than a numeric toll-free phone number. And, in the case of one marketing manager at a dealer group with whom I've spoken, their phone leads close twice as often as their online leads, further demonstrating that the phone is a highly effective way to communicate with buyers.

## CAPTURE caller data and experiences with an advanced tracking system:

Asking a caller for their contact information — names, addresses and phone numbers — is great for relationship building, but you need a backup system to combat the inevitable occurrence of human error. Incoming phone leads can be tracked with reporting and recording software services. This not only provides a computer backup of caller information, but the recorded conversations are invaluable to gain firsthand insights on your selling team's capabilities, the customer experience and how employees are responding to sales and service inquiries.

## NURTURE & SELL to buyers – cultivate your database and the relationships will blossom:

With a call tracking system, you can download valuable demographic information (such as average household

income and average home value), which empowers you to tailor your communications and make them as relevant as possible to the caller. And, adding this information into your CRM system makes the call data all the more valuable. For example, you can use the addresses and demographics to build your database, and leverage the average household income data for a specific market area to identify their purchase power. And remember, *they* called *you*. They are already interested in what's on your lot. Take care of them and let them grow into sales opportunities. Add these new leads to your mailing and prospect database, and include them in future advertising, promotional and marketing campaigns. Most importantly, as we all know, stay in touch with them on a regular basis to continue building awareness and maintain a business-customer relationship to reap future service dollars and car purchases.

Using the telephone as an effective offline lead generation tool is not only tactically effective but also cost effective, and will quickly develop and enhance a strong database from which you can better leverage your marketing efforts and optimize your dealership's performance.

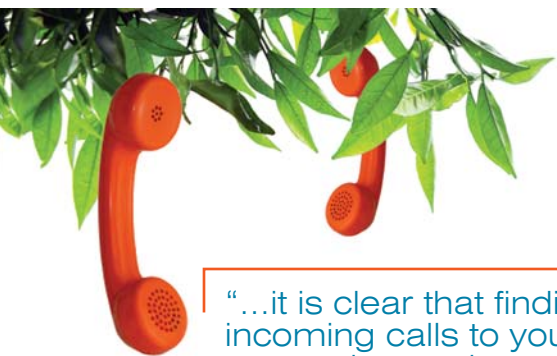
Take this simple approach: Implement a proven consumer response tool (preferably a vanity 800 number to generate 30-50 percent more incoming leads) with an advanced call tracking and lead capture system and you're effectively expanding your target audience, building your lead database for future communication and advertising efforts, and growing your sales opportunities.

<sup>1</sup> *The Internet and Consumer Decisions*, Pew Internet & American Life Project, May 18, 2008

Author, John B. Horrigan, Associate Director

<sup>2</sup> *Online Shopping*, Pew Internet & American Life Project, February 13, 2008  
Author, John B. Horrigan, Associate Director

Laura Noonan is the vice president of marketing and Corporate Communications of 800response. She can be contacted at 866.388.1397, or by e-mail at lnoonan@autosuccessonline.com.



“...it is clear that finding ways to increase incoming calls to your dealership is a strong lead generation tactic — these leads are the infamous ‘low-hanging fruit.’”