CONTENT 4 DEMAND

The LEAD NURTURING Playbook

12 Examples Of Nurturing Campaigns Your Company Can Deploy To Drive Pipeline and Get Results

Executive Summary

Lead nurturing is an essential B2B marketing tactic. It's the best way to build relationships with prospects and to make the best possible use of your marketing resources.

In fact, according to Forrester Research, organizations that excel at lead nurturing generate **50% more sales-ready leads at 33% lower cost**. In addition, an ANNUITAS study found that nurtured leads **make 47% larger purchases** than non-nurtured leads.

If you want to excel at lead nurturing, though, you need to know how to play the game. As the leader of your marketing team, it's your job to know which lead nurturing "play" works best in a particular situation.

That's where we come in. On the following pages, we'll lay out a dozen of the most important lead nurturing programs. We'll show you why to call a particular lead nurturing play, and we'll cover the content options, cadence and campaign tactics you'll need to run a successful campaign.

The New Prospect Nurture	The Drip Nurture	The Remarketing Nurture	The Sales Acceleration Nurture
The Long Sales Cycle Nurture	The 'Wake The Dead' Nurture	The Job Role/Title Nurture	The Industry-Specific Nurture
The Company Specific Nurture	The Cross-Sell/ Upsell Nurture	The Customer Retention Nurture	The Event Follow-Up Nurture

DIFFICULTY LEVEL

- **Rookie:** These nurtures should be part of every company's basic marketing mix.
- **Veteran:** Consider adding these nutures to your own playbook as you gain experience.
- **All-Pro:** These nurtures are usually part of a mature and technically advanced program.

THE NEW PROSPECT NURTURE

LEVEL: ROOKIE

The scenario:

New prospects are often a blank slate for marketers. These are individuals who have raised their hands – for example, by filling out a short form to download a piece of content – but have not yet shared much information about themselves or their companies.

The play:

This is a common starting point for many companies' lead nurturing efforts. The lessons they learn here will serve them well as they roll out additional nurturing tracks. Like all nurtures, the goal is to accelerate a new prospect from initial interest to consideration, but don't push the pace with a "speed dating" approach to the process. The goal is to get prospects to interact so you can learn more about them.

Keeping that in mind, begin with a simple, straightforward approach to your new prospect nurtures. Expose your new prospects to a wide variety of content types and topics. Keep the content informative but light; this isn't the time to offer the prospect a long webinar replay or a heavyweight white paper. Emphasize thought leadership content rather that is suitable for early-stage prospects.

As your prospects interact with this content, respond to offers and provide additional information (such as through progressive profiling), you'll gain the intelligence you need to move them into more specific nurturing tracks.

PRO TIP:

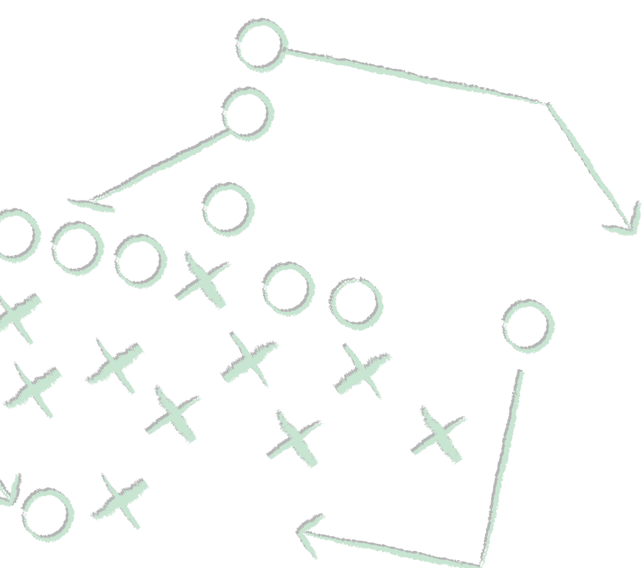
New prospect nurtures are usually show the fastest returns for shorter sales cycles (less than 6-9 months); otherwise, consider using a long sales cycle nurture (see below).

The Drip Nurture

Level: Rookie

The scenario:

Some prospects simply don't respond to your nurturing campaigns, but they don't ask you to stop communicating, either. There's value in maintaining contact with these individuals, since some of them will eventually turn into active buyers.



The play:

The drip nurture belongs in every B2B marketing playbook. As the name implies, it exposes prospects to a steady flow of general-purpose content marketing assets. The goal is to maintain a basic level of engagement and to keep a prospect aware of your brand – often over a period of months or years – without annoying or alienating them.

Most drip nurturing campaigns work with a very limited knowledge of a prospect's interests or preferences. Simple, general-interest content is the rule here; newsletters, for example, are commonly used in drip nurturing campaigns. Many marketers also vary the content topics and formats over time, looking for the offer that resonates with a particular prospect.

In other cases, however, drip nurturing is an option when a prospect drops out of a more targeted nurturing track, perhaps due to a change in their buying timeline or purchasing needs. By all means, when you have additional intelligence on a prospect, use it in your drip campaigns.

PRO TIP:

"Slow and steady" is the best approach to any drip campaign. A slow cadence (for example, a new content offer once a month) will achieve your goals without risking over-exposure.

The Remarketing Nurture

Level: Veteran

The scenario:

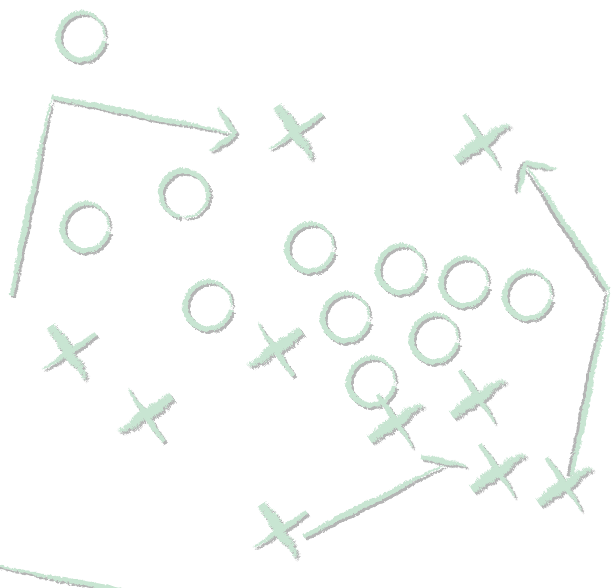
Inevitably, a certain number of leads are passed to sales, qualified as opportunities, sent to a sales rep – and then stall out. According to some studies, up to 80% of these individuals eventually make a purchase, and it's vital to stay engaged with them until they're ready to do so.

The play:

Remarketing nurtures depend upon your ability to understand why a qualified opportunity stalled out. Always ask your sales team to provide a specific reason for the loss, and then use that information to craft your remarketing campaign.

As an example, consider a prospect that was forced to put off a purchase due to budget issues. The need and the interest are still there; it's simply a matter of staying engaged with the prospect and maintaining a relationship that will pay off when they're ready to buy.

Also keep in mind that the data you gathered during the process of qualifying the prospect is a vital resource for your nurturing campaign. Armed with specific and accurate information, you can deliver personalized and highly targeted content that will resonate with the recipient.



PRO TIP:

Prospects can be moved between remarketing and drip nurtures based upon the reasons for losing the opportunity and the likelihood that they'll buy within a fixed time frame.

The Sales Acceleration Nurture

Level: Veteran

The scenario:

Your marketing organization understands your buyers' journeys and has a good understanding of its demand gen funnel. Yet you also notice that many leads get "stuck" at specific points in the process, and you need a plan to get them moving again.

The play:

A sales acceleration nurture is designed to unplug these bottlenecks and to keep qualified leads moving swiftly along the path to a closed deal.

This campaign demands an especially robust lead scoring model, combined with progressive profiling and data-enrichment tools. The data you gather should reveal a lead's individual pain points, identify exactly where they are in the buying cycle, and indicate what objections or obstacles might be slowing the decision-making process.

As an example of this process, a financial software company might notice that late-stage leads are taking longer than usual to convert. A progressive profiling question such as "how long does it now take you to close your books?" can reveal a pain point that your sales team can address and resolve once they have identified it.

PRO TIP:

It's important to offer appropriate content for sales acceleration nurtures; once you identify pain points or objections, your content can address these issues. But data gathering, including progressive profiling and tracking your prospects' web site activity, is the real key to success here; without this, you won't get the intelligence you need to jump-start the sales process.

The Long Sales Cycle Nurture

Level: All-Pro

The scenario:

Companies with very long sales cycles – often nine months or longer – face special challenges as they move prospects through the funnel. That's especially true when your marketing team has limited information about a pool of early-stage prospects.

The play:

A long sales cycle nurture is the marketing version of a marathon: It's not terribly complicated, but it demands a lot of focus, consistency and endurance in your marketing efforts. The goal is to keep prospects engaged and interested in your product or service while they move through the buying cycle, often over the space of many months.

An effective long sales cycle nurture requires an especially rich assortment of content marketing assets. Early-stage content will initiate the conversation, engage the prospect and keep your solution front-and-center for them. During the later stages, content such as ROI calculators and very specific case studies, delivered in a variety of media formats, will keep a prospect focused on your solution they move closer to a purchasing decision.

Remember, however, that other nurturing campaigns may be more appropriate as you learn more about a prospect. A company-specific nurture, for example, may be more useful if you identify multiple decision-makers associated with the same account and want to target them with a coordinated effort.

PRO TIP:

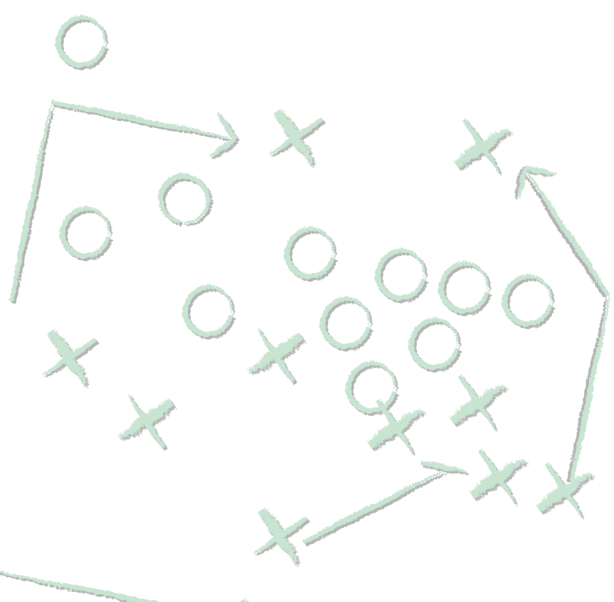
Content audits can be especially useful for running long sales cycle nurtures, since these campaigns require an especially wide variety of content designed for every stage of the buying cycle.

The 'Wake The Dead' Nurture

Level: Veteran

The scenario:

Every contact database accumulates prospects that sit idle for months or even years at a time. Some marketers assume these "dead" or previously disqualified prospects are a lost cause – but smart marketers know there's often more here than meets the eye.



The play:

A "wake the dead" campaign starts by identifying a pool of idle prospects – typically those with no sales or marketing activity for more than six months.

Most of these prospects have either solved their problem, moved on to another job or otherwise fallen off the map. A few, however, are still looking for a solution, and it's possible they'll jump at the opportunity to re-engage with your company.

In practical terms, waking the dead demands an aggressive approach. Step up the frequency of your content offers (once a week or more is often appropriate). Work to get the prospect's attention and deliver an assertive call to action. The point is to get a response, shake out the most promising prospects and set up your sales team for some quick wins.

PRO TIP:

Experience shows that "wake the dead" campaigns work best with late-stage content. When these folks still need a solution, they often need it immediately, and your content should move them down this path. Also consider experimenting – sometimes aggressively – with these campaigns. What have you got to lose?

Instant Replay: Wake The Dead

A major provider of technology solutions for government contractors maintained a growing database of disqualified or stalled opportunities. The company's marketing team decided to run a "wake the dead" campaign to re-engage these accounts; the goal was to identify still-viable opportunities and to move the rest into a long-term, slow-drip campaign.

The company's campaign contained six pieces of content; it spanned multiple formats, including white papers, an article, an executive briefing and two industry studies. The campaign was delivered relatively quickly, over the course of several weeks.

The results of the campaign show the true potential of a wake the dead campaign: This supposedly "worthless" list of contacts created or influenced 27 opportunities, generated a $200,000 immediate win and added more than $5 million to the company's pipeline. The cost of the campaign – including some content creation and setup time – was negligible compared to the returns.

The Job Role/Title Nurture

Level: Rookie

The scenario:

Many B2B purchases today involve multiple decision-makers within an organization. For some purchases, everybody from the CMO to department managers and front-line developers will have a say in the process.

The play:

Your job starts with a solid understanding of how different job roles influence decisions to purchase your product or service. Who usually defines the problem to be solved, who goes looking for a solution, and who makes the final purchase decision?

Once you gather this data from your marketing automation and analytics tools, it's time to build nurturing campaigns that match specific content to particular job roles. An eBook or webinar, for example, can educate managers on the value of your solution, while case studies and testimonials can validate their recommendations to the CMO or CEO.

Also take care to craft campaigns that offer the right messaging cadence for each target job role. A nurturing campaign aimed at a busy CEO, for example, may demand fewer touches – but each touch will deliver extremely high-value content.

This one would be great to include a sidebar example—we did an Ebook with Innotas a few years back titled the CXOs Guide to IT Governance…that might work…or there was a Teradata WP targeting CMOs?

PRO TIP:

This type of nurturing campaign can evolve into a company-specific nurturing campaign as you identify multiple job roles associated with the same company and develop coordinated campaigns.

The Industry-Specific Nurture

Level: Rookie

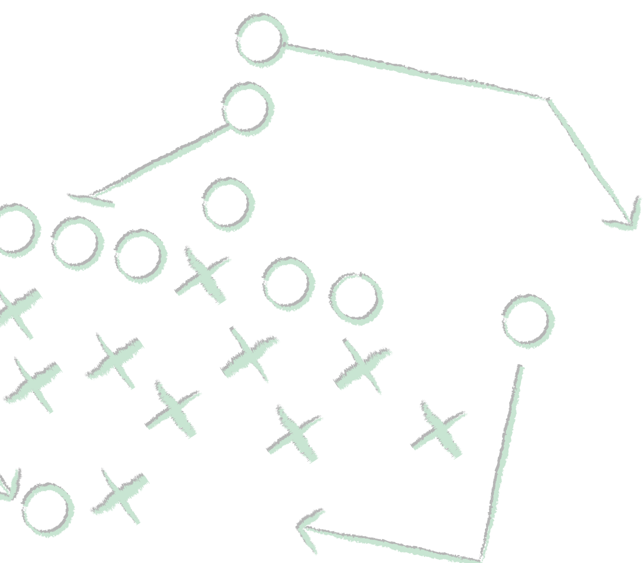
The scenario:

Does your company tailor its products or services for particular industry verticals? If so, then you should consider nurture campaigns that target prospects in these industries with relevant, customized content.

The play:

Most prospects assume (usually correctly) that their own industry wrestles with unique business challenges. Naturally, when they buy products or services, they want to deal with B2B sellers that understand those challenges and offer highly relevant solutions.

For these types of nurturing campaigns, case studies and executive briefings can be powerful selling tools – if they're used properly. Tailor your case studies to show prospects how your product or service has helped similar companies in the same industry; do the same with briefings or testimonials featuring a company executive's industry peers.



PRO TIP:

Tools that append industry data to online forms allow you to launch industry-specific nurturing campaigns without having to request this information from a prospect. These nurturing campaigns can also be combined with job- or company-specific nurtures.

The Company-Specific Nurture

Level: All-Pro

The scenario:

Many B2B purchases – especially big-ticket items – depend heavily upon the decisions of buying committees. These scenarios present marketing organizations with especially complex lead nurturing challenges, but they can also deliver very high ROI.

The play:

Company-specific nurtures ensure that each decision-maker on a buying committee gets the right information at the right time. This isn't just about understanding the needs of a particular industry or matching content to a specific job role. Instead, the company-specific nurture requires the ability to "triangulate" your marketing activities across multiple targets throughout a long buying process.

The first step in achieving this is to identify all of the relevant decision-makers within a single company, and to understand the roles they play on a buying committee. Once you have this data, the next step is to deliver a coordinated set of marketing touches, along with an appropriate content mix, for each decision-maker.

Company-specific nurtures take job- and industry-specific nurtures to the next level. They demand especially robust data gathering, analytics and reporting capabilities, perfect timing, and a very mature content marketing strategy that incorporates the tactics used for job- and industry-specific nurtures.

PRO TIP:

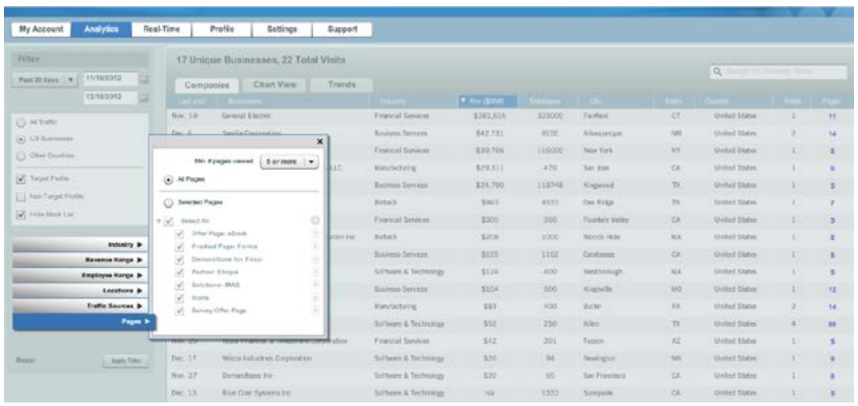
A company-specific nurture can be complex and challenging to implement. It often makes sense to focus these efforts on a handful of very high-value customers that can deliver a significant return on your campaign investment.

Instant Replay: Company-Specific Nurture

Web analytics provider Demandbase has had great success building account-based lead nurturing programs. Using the company's own technology, Demandbase takes a basic three-phased approach to targeting and nurturing specific accounts:

First, the company starts by identifying target companies that have engaged with high-profile content on its web site.

Identify the target companies engaged with content on your website



Next, Demandbase identifies relevant contacts from that account and places them into nurture programs with content offers specific to their industry and company size.

Drop relevant contacts from those accounts into nurture programs

Filtered By: Edit
Account Name contains Blue Coat Clear
AND Title contains marketing Clear

First Name	Title	Mailing City	Mailing State/Province	Mailing Country	Account Owner	Account Name
Andie	Regional Marketing Operations	Sunnyvale	CA	US	Scott Loftin	Blue Coat Systems, Inc.
Rick	Marketing Ops Mgr	-	-	US	Scott Loftin	Blue Coat Systems, Inc.
Meriann	Manager or Director of Marketing	-	CA	US	Scott Loftin	Blue Coat Systems, Inc.
Alice	Marketing Manager, Demand Gen	Sunnyvale	CA	US	Scott Loftin	Blue Coat Systems, Inc.
Kerry	Sr. Director, Americas Marketing	Sunnyvale	CA	US	Scott Loftin	Blue Coat Systems, Inc.
Toussaint	Marketing Operations Analyst	-	CA	US	Scott Loftin	Blue Coat Systems, Inc.
Manu	Director, Marketing Operation	Sunnyvale	CA	US	Scott Loftin	Blue Coat Systems, Inc.
Sheri	VP of Marketing/Business Development	-	-	-	Scott Loftin	Blue Coat Systems, Inc.

Grand Totals (8 records)

Finally, by supplying these account-specific contacts with content offers that are relevant to their firmographics or buyer profiles, the company watches for increases in activity rates. Increases in open rates or site visits often triggers alerts to their sales team for timely follow up with that account. These sales follow-ups, in turn, use the intelligence gathered from that account's behavior when responding to targeted offers.

Push them content relevant to their account firmographics or buyer profiles

The New Prospect Nurture

Level: Rookie

The scenario:

New prospects are often a blank slate for marketers. These are individuals who have raised their hands – for example, by filling out a short form to download a piece of content – but have not yet shared much information about themselves or their companies.

The play:

This is a common starting point for many companies' lead nurturing efforts. The lessons they learn here will serve them well as they roll out additional nurturing tracks. Like all nurtures, the goal is to accelerate a new prospect from initial interest to consideration, but don't push the pace with a "speed dating" approach to the process. The goal is to get prospects to interact so you can learn more about them.

Keeping that in mind, begin with a simple, straightforward approach to your new prospect nurtures. Expose your new prospects to a wide variety of content types and topics. Keep the content informative but light; this isn't the time to offer the prospect a long webinar replay or a heavyweight white paper. Emphasize thought leadership content rather that is suitable for early-stage prospects.

As your prospects interact with this content, respond to offers and provide additional information (such as through progressive profiling), you'll gain the intelligence you need to move them into more specific nurturing tracks.

PRO TIP:

New prospect nurtures are usually show the fastest returns for shorter sales cycles (less than 6-9 months); otherwise, consider using a long sales cycle nurture (see below).

The Cross-Sell/Upsell Nurture

Level: Veteran

The scenario:

A closed deal shouldn't be the end of the road for your customer relationships. In fact, B2B marketing teams play a key role in upselling customers or introducing them to additional products and services.

The play:

This nurture play demands the ability to identify the people implementing your product or service, since they're often the ones who will drive a cross-sell or upsell decision. Your customer service team plays a key role here, since they can provide the intelligence that leads you to these implementers.

Next, your marketing team needs to understand the trigger points that identify a potential cross-sell or upsell opportunity. You may, for example, use customer service records to determine when a new customer has completed their onboarding process and learned how to use your entry-level solution. This, in turn, could be a good opportunity to offer them a discount on your premium-tier product.

Content marketing plays a relatively minor role in this sort of nurturing campaign. Some companies, however, do place their customers in drip nurturing or customer retention campaigns, both of which incorporate certain types of content.

PRO TIP:

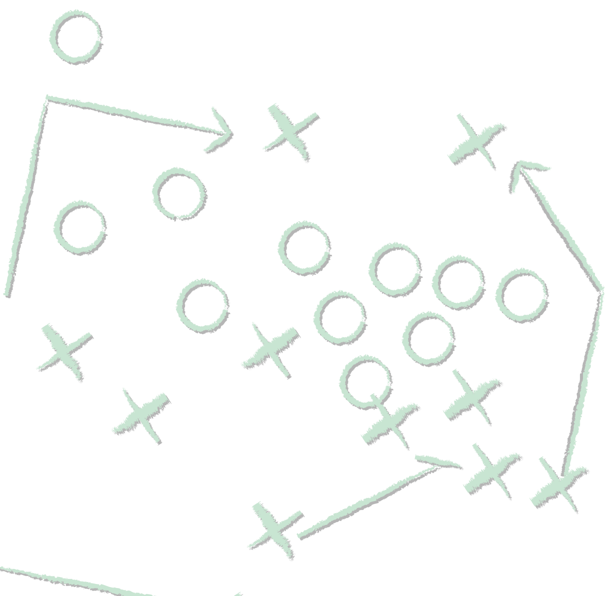
Cross-sell nurtures can work hand-in-hand with new customer referral programs. If an existing customer is ready to do more business with you, they're also far more likely to recommend you to their professional colleagues.

The Customer Retention Nurture

Level: Rookie

The scenario:

Customer churn is toxic to a company's bottom line. That's why it's important to maximize the value customers get from your product or service, keep them engaged and build loyal, long-term relationships.



The play:

A customer retention nurture begins with a strong on-boarding program. Your content should be practical, goal-oriented and dedicated to revealing the full value of your solutions. Quick-start programs, best practices guides and high-touch follow-up activities all fall under this umbrella.

Don't forget, however, that this is a nurturing campaign – not just a document dump on a new customer. Your customer retention efforts should follow a carefully defined workflow; this is a long-term relationship, not just a one-time activity. As with your cross-sell and up-sell programs, it's important to work with your customer service team to offer the right content as the right time in the relationship.

Also, as noted above, it's often possible to integrate a customer retention nurture with a drip nurture, customer referral programs and cross-sell/upsell campaigns. Just be careful not to burden your prospects with overlapping programs, and be sure your campaigns are reaching the appropriate decision-makers.

PRO TIP:

Customer retention "content" can take unconventional forms. A user group or online community, for example, can empower users, increase customer loyalty and reinforce your brand.

The Event Follow-Up Nurture

Level: Rookie

The scenario:

Events, whether they're in-person tradeshows or online webinars, are a great source of hot leads. Unfortunately, too many companies drop the ball when it comes to following up – and they sacrifice a lot of revenue in the process.

The play:

Even when marketers plan event follow-ups, these "campaigns" often consist of generic one-touch efforts. This is a waste of time and resources.

Instead, begin by crafting follow-up messages that are customized for each event or activity. It's a simple step, and it's absolutely necessary to establish your credibility.

Second, plan a three- or four-touch campaign that offers appropriate follow-up content to your prospects. A webinar attendee, for example, might respond to a white paper that addresses the same topic; a trade show visitor might enjoy a short video that recaps the event.

As always, combine these content offers with a progressive profiling and analysis strategy. Your end game should be to move these prospects into more specific nurturing campaigns (when necessary) or to get them qualified and passed quickly to sales (when possible).

PRO TIP:

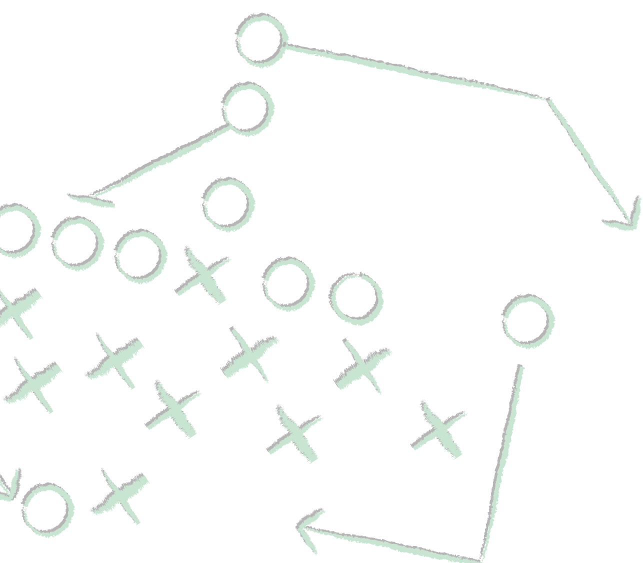
The time to design an event follow-up nurture is before the event takes place. It's too easy to get overwhelmed with the planning for an event – and by the time your calendar is clear, it's too late to launch a good multi-touch follow-up campaign.

Conclusion

Which Nurtures Are Right For You?

The goal of this playbook isn't to show you what you should be doing with lead nurturing – and it definitely isn't to suggest that your organization should use all of these campaign suggestions. Every B2B marketing organization plays a slightly different game with different goals. And that means every organization will adopt a slightly different mix of nurturing campaigns.

In the end, our best advice is this: Get started with one or two foundational nurturing plays, and then experiment with other nurtures as your campaigns mature and evolve. Build your content libraries, take full advantage of marketing automation, and learn how to use progressive profiling technology to your advantage. Finding the right lead nurturing mix will take time, and you'll make some mistakes along the way – but you'll also reap major benefits in the long run.



About

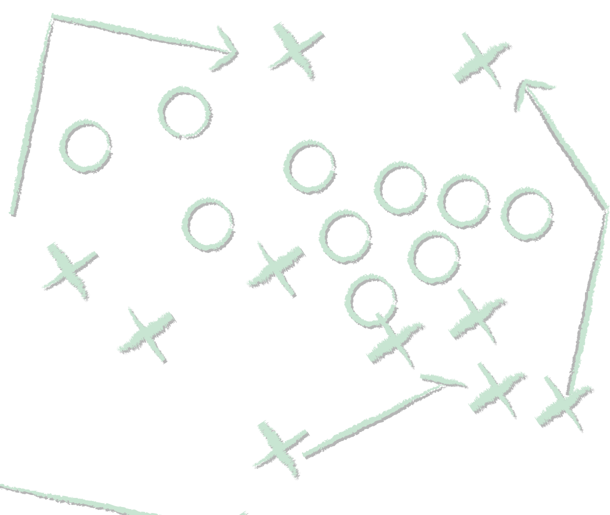
Content4Demand

Content4Demand is a division of G3 Communications, a B2B firm specializing in e-media & custom content solutions.

Since 2007, we have published DemandGen Report (www.demandgenreport.com), an e-newsletter that reports on best practices in sales and marketing automation. Because we live and breathe in the space every day, we have an in-depth understanding of demand generation, lead nurturing, and have close relationships with the automation solutions providers that drive the industry today.

Over the past five years, we have used our knowledge of content marketing and our publishing background to grow an expertise in custom content strategy and development. In that time, we have created hundreds of E-books, white papers, webinars, case studies, executive briefs and other forms of custom content for B2B solutions providers like Oracle, Marketo, Eloqua, SAS, FIS, Citrix, NCR, Hubspot, Salesforce and many more. Our engagements with our clients vary from a single piece of focused content to a quarterly or yearly integrated campaign.

With an expertise in publishing content across traditional and emerging channels, we specialize in working with our clients to develop digitally based content that is on point with your messaging and optimized to drive leads and thought leadership.



CONTENT 4 DEMAND

@Content4Demand

Demand Creation Specialists