Engagement & Nurturing Routine Best Practices

Before We Begin

Before you learn how to successfully reach buyers for the first time – and, how to nurture them throughout their buying journey – it's important that you understand what the foundation of engagement and nurturing is.

We've seen time and time again that the foundation of effective engagement with buyers is all about providing value. When you seek to constantly provide value to your buyers you are utilizing "The Law of Reciprocity" to your benefit and significantly increase the likelihood of receiving a positive response from them.

In this guide, you'll learn how to provide value on every single touch point with your buyers.

The Importance of Educating & Providing Value through Insights

On a macro level, providing value simply means being helpful.

On a micro level, providing value can be broken down into a series of helpful actions that ultimately derive from us having a deep understanding of who our buyer is. Sharing useful information on an area of interest, industry trend or competitor strategy. Introducing someone to a person that they can form a mutually beneficial business relationship with. Notifying someone of an event that would be beneficial for them to attend. These are all examples of how we as sales professionals can provide value on a regular basis.

The people who are the best at providing value all have two things in common; research and creativity.

Think out-of-the-box and be genuine. If you share a common interest in "karate" with your buyer, for instance, try sending them an awesome martial arts video to break the ice. At the very least you will have made a lasting first impression.

> ***Note:*** Remember, your primary goal in The Engagement Process is to get a response back from the buyer so you can begin nurturing and communicating further.
>
> ***Note:*** 92% of B2B buyers engage with sales professional who are known as industry subject matter experts. Positioning yourself as an expert by regularly sharing valuable insights (i.e. content) with your social networks will increase your response rate. – *Source: LinkedIn*

The Engagement Process

Definition

Reaching out to a buyer until 1) two-way communication is successfully established or 2) communication attempts are unsuccessful and seller moves on to another buyer.

Best Practices

1. Brevity is key – aim for a maximum length of 100 words (or 3 - 5 sentences) whenever possible. Explain concepts you're describing simply.

   Note: Almost 50% of your sales messages are being read on smart phones. The more your buyers have to scroll down your message, the less likely they are to read it in its entirety.

2. The format of each message should be:
   a. Context: This is the *why* behind your message being sent to the buyer. If you do not lead with context, your buyer may make a negative assumption about your intentions and not respond. Be sure to personalize the context to your buyer so that it's very clear your message is meant for them. Mention specifics!
   b. Value: What's in it for your buyer? Why should they care about your message? Remember, you're more likely to receive value (i.e. the buyer's time) if you first deliver value.
   c. Call to Action: Asking the buyer to do something such as take a meeting with you or provide a viewpoint on a subject. Be concise.

   Note: Don't ask more than one question in your Engagement messages. Force the reader to take a specific action on only one idea at a time. This will increase your response rate.

3. Leverage commonalities – buyers often operate with negative stereotypes in mind when they're contacted by unknown sales professionals. Break down these barriers and seek to connect on a human-to-human level with your buyer by leveraging commonalties to build rapport.

   Note: Sales professionals are 46% more likely to receive a response when reaching out to buyers they share at least one commonality with. – *Source: LinkedIn*

   Note: In a LinkedIn Survey of 1,500 decision makers, 87% had a favorable impression of a salesperson that was introduced to them through someone in their professional network. Use introductions whenever possible to improve your response rate!

Note: For more info on "commonalities," refer to the *Profiling your Buyer* worksheet in the Find Part 1 Module

Example Framework of The Initial Engagement Message

Hi [Buyer Name],

Line 1: States the relevance for your buyer receiving your message. This could be a referral, trigger event, commonality, research, etc. Personalization is key.

> ***Note:*** Having a "you", "your" or "we" in the opening line of your message is a great way to show your buyer that you're personalizing your message to them.

Line 2: Value can take many forms. Display value by demonstrating that you're knowledgeable about their company, objectives, industry challenges, competitors or other areas of interest for your buyer. This is typically a good opportunity to state a relatable success story you've had with similar clients or share a piece of valuable information from a third-party source.

> ***Note:*** Very rarely will buyers deem unsolicited information about your product/service, features and/or benefits as valuable! This is especially true during The Engagement Process.

Line 3: Build intrigue/call-to-action. End your messages with a direct question or action. Do not be vague. Make it very easy for your buyers to respond to your request.

If you want to schedule a call, ask them for a specific window of time on a specific date. If you want to be referred to someone else in the organization, be specific about what department they are in or what their responsibilities include. If you want the buyer's opinion, be specific and avoid questions that are too high-level which can convey a lack of sincerity.

Remember, your one and only goal here is to spark a response!

The Diversified Engagement Process

The below visual serves as an example framework for how you can incorporate social selling touch points into your existing sales process. It's key that you start to engage buyers online in a diversified manner.

Notice the importance placed on changing "discussion topics" with every touch point. If you have been unsuccessful in your first engagement attempt, do not continue to try and engage your buyer using the same topic of discussion. Focus on finding different commonalities, interests (both personal and professional) and other points of value to spark response.

As a guiding principal, always engage your buyer where they are most likely to respond. If you see that your buyer is not active on social, you may want to try one or two attempts to contact them via social but don't focus too much time on it. Conversely, if you see your buyer is very active on social and is even posting/publishing content, use this to your advantage and comment on their post. The mix of how much or little social engagement you use will vary depending on the specific buyer you're targeting.

Remember, use this approach as you reach out and attempt initial contact with a buyer. Once communication is established, you should move on to The Nurturing Process framework.

	Diversified Engagement Process				
	Attempts / Touchpoints				
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Discussion Topics	***Topic # 1***	***Topic # 2***	***Topic # 3***	***Topic # 4***	***Topic # 5***
Type of Outreach					
Phone Call	X		X		X
E-mail	X				
Private LinkedIn Message (InMail or Group)		X	X		
Introduction /Referral (LinkedIn or Email)				X	
Twitter @ Mention					X
Commenting on Buyer's Content		X		X	

Note: Using multiple types of outreach during your engagement attempts has be shown to increase successful communication by up to 8%. - *Source: LinkedIn*

Note: The average sales professional only makes 2 attempts to reach a buyer before giving up. Separate yourself from your competitors by using the Diversified Engagement Process. - *Source: Sirius Decisions*

Note: Buyers will often check out your LinkedIn Profile when receiving messages from an unknown recipient. Having a poor quality Profile can significantly decrease your response rate. Make sure to follow LinkedIn Profile Best Practices

Subject Line Best Practices

When e-mailing or sending a social media message, it's important (if available) to write a captivating subject line. Here are some best practices to increase the likelihood that your message is read.

Best Practices

1. 50 characters or less is ideal as readers may lose interest with long subject lines.
2. Questions perform well as they offer intrigue.
3. The terms *help* and *value* do very well as they convey a position of wanting to serve the reader.
4. Personalization: mentioning of the buyer's name or something of interest to the recipient.
5. Pronouns perform well also: *we*, *you* or *your* are examples.
6. Timeliness: subject lines that mention dates or convey urgency perform better than those that don't.

In addition to these, avoid the following terms to ensure that your messages are not trapped by a SPAM filter.

1. Any mention of language like "Click Here"
2. Excessive use of exclamation marks (!!!)
3. Any mention of "money"
4. Irregular CAPITALIZATION or **bolding** of characters.
5. Avoid sending BCC messages to multiple parties within the same company.

The Nurturing Process

Definition

Ongoing communication with a buyer for the purposes of 1) constantly adding value and 2) staying top-of-mind with them throughout the entire buying journey.

Best Practices

Use the following best practices when you nurture buyers. Remember, nurturing happens after you've successfully engaged with a buyer by provoking an initial response.

The best approach to Nurturing involves using a combination of both passive and direct touchpoints throughout the buying journey. A passive touchpoint can come in the form of a

Profile view, engaging with a buyer's content (like, comment, share) or mentioning them in one of your social content shares. This has the benefit of helping you staying top-of-mind with the buyer and can positively influence their perception of you as a valuable information resource.

Direct touch points are more traditional in nature and are used most effectively when you need a response and/or are presenting the buyer with new information. These touch points include phone calls, voicemails, emails and direct social messages.

1. Brevity is key – as described in The Engagement Process above.
2. The format of each direct touch point message should be: Context, Value, Call-to-action as described in The Engagement Process above.
3. Know what stage of the buying journey the buyer is in and find relevant content that will provoke and inspire them to continue conversations with you. The three main buying journey stages are defined by the progressive set of questions buyers ask themselves below:
   a. **Why** do I have a problem? - This stage is the longest in the buying journey and you will have to find content that will educate and convince the buyer to move from their status quo position. Your objective is to cause a **priority shift**, which is simply enabling them to understand that a problem does exist.

      Note: "Why" content NEVER mentions your product/service by name. Much of this content will come from 3rd-party source. High-level blog posts and short videos that highlight challenges are good examples of effective "why" content.
   b. **How** do I solve this problem? - Once the buyer understands that they do have a business challenge that requires solving, "how" content should provide practical solutions and examples of how it can be overcome. This content allows buyer to take a deeper dive into their challenge and potential solutions. Look to your internal content assets like eBooks, Whitepapers and Webinars to help in this stage.
   c. **Who** do I choose to solve this problem with? - Lastly, now that the buyer has a clear set of tactical solutions in mind, it's time to illustrate why they should work with you and your company. Case studies, Success Stories and Testimonials are examples of effective content at this stage.

Example Framework of Nurture Message

Hi [Buyer Name],

Line 1: States the relevance for your buyer receiving your message. Use referral, trigger event, commonality, etc. but also use past conversations and what you've learned from them.

Line 2: The objective is to continuously add value through further discovery of insights that you've learned about from previous encounters and other market knowledge as well. The key is to tie your understanding with potential ideas and solutions.

Line 3: The call-to-action in the nurturing process provides you choice. While you can ask a question and invite the buyer to another conversation, you can also simply stay top-of-mind by conveying knowledge and expertise. This soft approach can be equally as powerful at different stages of buying journey.

The Diversified Nurturing Process

The below visual serves as an example framework of how you can incorporate social selling touch points into your existing nurturing routine. It's key that you start to engage buyers online in a diversified manner. Remember to use a mix of both direct and passive touch points. Also, unlike The Engagement Process, the Nurturing Process can continue for many more interactions than just the five touch points depicted here.

		Diversified Nurturing Process				
		Nurture Touchpoints				
		1	2	3	4	5
Discussion Topic		***TOPIC #1***	***TOPIC #2***	***TOPIC #3***	***TOPIC #4***	***TOPIC # 5***
Type of Outreach						
DIRECT	Phone Call				X	
	E-mail			X		
	Private LinkedIn Message		X			X
PASSIVE	Public LinkedIn Mention (Tag)	X				
	LinkedIn Profile View	X			X	
	Engaging with Buyer's Content (Likes, Comments, Shares)		X			X
	Twitter @ Mention	X			X	

Asking For Introductions on LinkedIn

Asking one of your network connections for an introduction to a buyer on LinkedIn is a very powerful engagement strategy.

> **Note:** when asked in a LinkedIn Survey, 88% of buyers said they would likely engage with a sales professional that was introduced to them by trusted peers in their network.

Introductions can be easy to come by if you first put yourself into your middleman's mindset. Ask yourself *"If I were asked to introduce someone, what would I need to know about the proposed interaction to feel comfortable?"* Also consider, what would you be fearful of if asked for an introduction?

When writing an introduction request you need to make sure that you put the middleman's mind at ease. After all, if someone introduces you to one of his or her contacts and you lead with a hard pitch that irritates the buyer, you have made the middleman look bad. If, however, you lead with value and build the buyer's intrigue about your area of expertise, you have made the middleman look like a rockstar. This should always be you goal.

Key Considerations:

1. Fear – Your middleman will be afraid of:
   a. Looking bad in their peer's eyes.
   b. Pestering their peer with unwanted solicitations.

2. Value – Your middleman will be mindful of if the introduction is valuable to:
   a. Their peer
      Will the interaction help their peer overcome a challenge or present a new unique solution for consideration?
   b. Themselves
      Reciprocity is a very important with introductions. If your perceived value is already high enough, your middleman will be happy to introduce you to others. If, however, your interactions with the middleman have not been as strong you will want to find a way to reciprocate the value of their facilitating an introduction i.e. also providing them with a valuable introduction, Profile Recommendation, free entry to a company event, etc.

3. Perception – Your middleman will consider their perception of you when weighing their decision. Do they think of you as an "expert" or a "pushy sales professional?" Make sure your LinkedIn Profile is fully optimized to support your perception as an industry expert.

4. Effort – How much effort is required for the middleman to make the requested

introduction? Have you made it easy for them by coaching them through the process with suggested messaging? The easier you make the introduction, the more likely it will be successful.

To aid the middleman in their decision on whether or not to proceed with the introduction request we must provide them with logical context. Be specific about **why** you want to be introduced, what **value** you can provide the buyer and what **context** you have for believing your introduction would be of benefit to the buyer.

Conclusion

What you have read above is a collection of best practices that have proven to be effective when engaging and nurturing buyers throughout a sales process. That said, every buyer is unique. A variety of factors can influence your interactions with buyers and weigh on your success rate. Company size, industry norms and decision-maker level should all be taken into consideration when reaching out to a buyer.

With this in mind, let your intuition guide you. Aim to provide value on every interaction and be genuine in your communications. Engage buyers the way that you would want to be engaged if you were in their position!

Happy selling ☺

Please send questions or comments to: Dave@salesforlife.com