

# Nurturing Leads

through SMS

# What is a lead?

A lead can be defined as a “potential sales contact”. If any individual or company shows enough interest in a sales pitch to share their information then it’s a successful lead. In the current market leads are typically generated because of referrals or as a direct response to marketing strategies.

The concept of generating leads has evolved with the constantly fluctuating business approaches and sensibilities. What makes “lead” difficult to define is the expansive assortment of qualification standards and points within the purchase cycle.

## “Complete That Survey...”

Due to the power of the internet in the current state of commerce, one of the most basic online leads is web forms. A series of questions result in the download of a gated asset. Such forms are easy and cater to all kinds of consumers. Such forms, once completed are regarded as “leads” and this makes them eligible for branded communications. It doesn’t matter if the lead has no intent of purchase. Inbound web form completion may not lead to results but it is an important piece of consensually provided data by a “potential customer”.



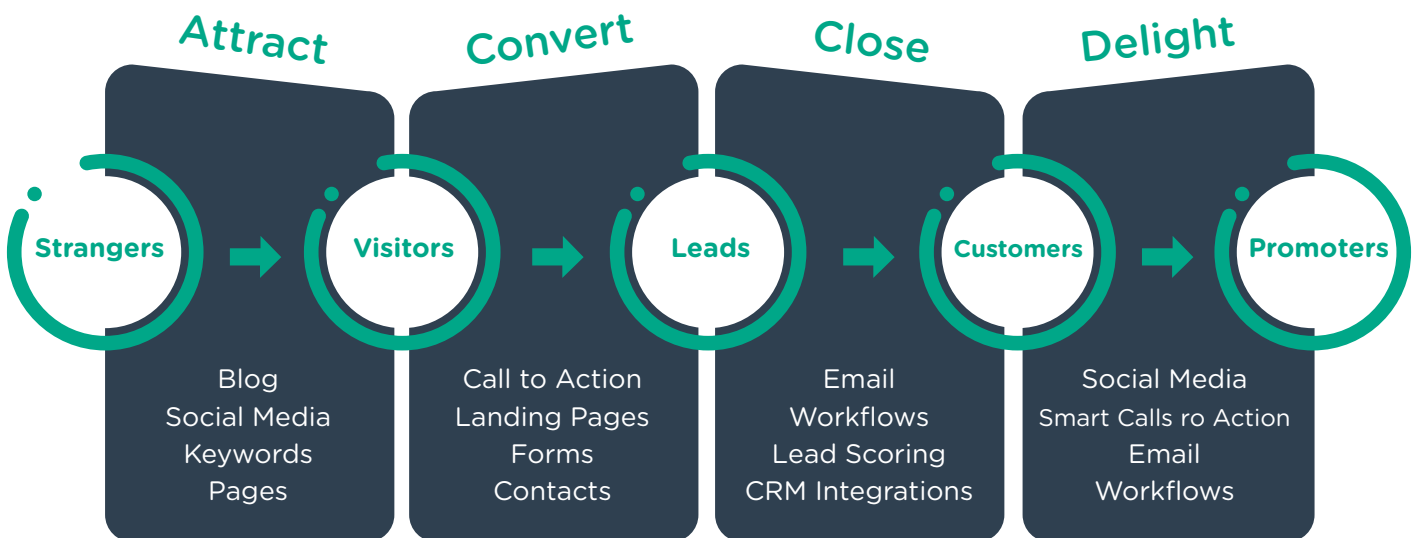
# Sales Ready Leads

Sales-ready leads, on the other hand, are completely different. These leads are thoroughly assessed to ensure that they are a good match for the company and what they're offering. These leads don't run cold and are always followed up by a sales representative to (hopefully) close a sale.

# The Transition from Leads to Clients

In the current market traditional methods of generating leads are not viable. The internet boom has paved way for a more direct mode of communication through electronic media, social media, email marketing etc.

## Inbound Marketing Methodology



## Incorporate a Proper CRM

Out of every four sales teams three suffer failure because they do not have a proper “customer relationship management solution” in place. This is considered the first step in the sales process for a reason, registering leads, tracking successes and failures are an equally important. There is an increase of **27%** in customer retention when a proper CRM strategy is applied.





## Offer Value

If you are looking to convert a potential lead into a customer, do your homework; study the consumer and make them an offer they literally can't refuse! Drive your marketing strategy by offering the consumer something that can benefit them. To offer expertise research and knowledge are required; if you can answer questions effectively you are bound to turn leads into customers. Around **58%** of all consumer reports state that customers are dissatisfied and don't purchase or avail a service because the sales person is unable to answer all their questions.

Personalization is another aspect that adds value to a marketing campaign. If a customer relates and connects to what you are saying or offering the click through rate is **14%** higher while the conversion rate is increases by **10%**.

## Speedy Responses

The consumer of today is impatient and used to neat resolutions. They want quick responses and faster solutions, if you take your sweet time answering their queries, they will simply move on to the next company that is offering similar services, only faster.

If an email is answered within five minutes the prospective lead is nine times more likely to become a customer.



# SMS, MMS

Almost 74% of companies today use SMS in their marketing plans. Connecting with a consumer visually and textually can turn leads into customers. Since this is the age of the smartphone and everything is accessible and seconds away from consumers nothing can beat the power of SMS marketing.

The number of smartphone users around the world is increasingly rapidly. The expected number of smartphone users in **2016** is estimated at a whopping **2.08 billion**.

This figures rings with opportunity for mobile marketers. Not just this, the reason every company opts for mobile marketing is due to the statistics.

**90% of texts**  
are read within three minutes

The open rate is **98%**

If done properly and carefully  
the opt out rate for SMS/MMS  
marketing is less than  
**2%**



Video and visual content is definitely the future. The consumer has less time and likes to receive quick and effective packets of information which makes MMS the perfect way to promote a visual while offering a degree of personalization to a lead. Multimedia messages are clear, less fussy and offer a visual understanding of a particular service or product, something that most people are looking for. Video promotions have taken the market by storm, with **74%** of visual content spread across the news media. **77%** consumers are looking for videos rather than written content for guidance and information.

## SMS: An Effective and Lucrative Communication Channel

For such a mammoth and lucrative resource the SMS approach is relatively underused. What makes SMS a powerful communication tool is also the reason why it can be dangerous. While every company wants to be in constant touch with their consumers, not every consumer wants a constant reminder or one late at night. SMS is a sensitive marketing tool; while it can generate leads it can also annoy potential customers. Even startups are sometimes scared to try this strategy. Your profits can shoot through the roof if SMS marketing is focused properly.

If you think about a small American, Seattle based company; Seattle Sun approximately **4750** people opted-in for their SMS campaign. The promotions, reminders and text offers/coupons, offered the company **196,000** new sales.

SMS marketing channels have an open rate of **98%** versus the much lower **22%** for emails. You can't go wrong with bulk SMS marketing strategies and here are a few facts why that is so.

- SMS marketing can be done by small and large companies alike. There is very little budget involved and the potential customer reach is literally a billion!
- The average response time for a text is **90** seconds versus the longer period of **2.5** days for an email.
- More than **75%** people prefer receiving promotions via SMS
- **83%** people prefer receiving at least two coupons, promotions and/or offer in a month.



# The SMS Cycle

## Step 1: Know the Audience

Since phone conversations have a very human element, it gives time for a sales representative to talk and get to know their consumer on a personal level. Perhaps at a point nothing beats that kind of communication, however, time constraints and the possibility of human error make it an archaic practice now. In order to really connect to larger audience it is important to conduct extensive research on the market share you are catering to. Build a content strategy around their preferences, likes and dislikes, know what time they like to read promotions and messages.

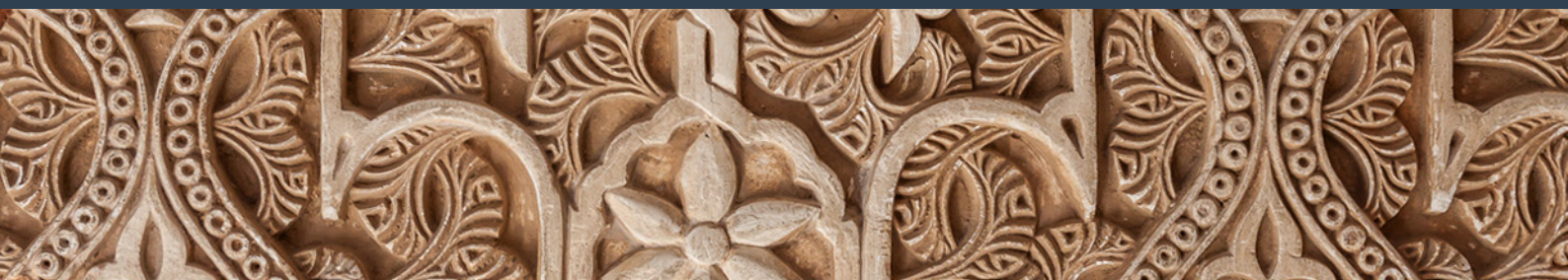
Thanks to social media and the multiple surveys and stats easily available to companies now, “knowing thy audience” is easier without a need for one-on-one conversations.

## Step 2: Content is King

SMS stands for “Short Message service”, let’s keep it that way! There is no need to bore your consumer with unnecessary data and details. Try to build a message that caters to your consumer base while being precise and to the point. Your SMS should be composed in the manner that it provides your product/service information wrapped in an exciting offer or statistic that can generate a potential lead.

## Step 3: Success in Bulk

SMS marketing is not just about saving time, it’s also about reaching a larger audience. Many companies have increased profits from reaching a wider audience alone. Let’s take a moment and thank the Mobile gods for the creation of “automated SMS”. Personalized and in large numbers; a mobile marketer’s dream, if there ever was one.



## Step 4: ALWAYS follow up!

After a kick ass SMS that has gotten leads, don't wait for these leads to turn cold before you decide to follow up with an email, voice message, call, survey or even another SMS, ANYTHING! But do not, under any circumstance, allow your consumer to forget you. Today's customers have a very short memory and before you know it, they are moving to the next best thing.

## Step 5: Immediate Responses

What happens when you make a two year old wait for candy? Not that the consumer is a two year old, just that the patience level is just about the same. The consumer needs to feel important and special by their company. It is very important to respond immediately to queries; this can turn a potential lead in to a lead to a customer faster than you can type lead! Quick responses are often the difference between a potential and a definite consumer.

## Step 6: Keep them Engaged

Once a lead is converted in to a consumer, the responsibility of providing them with constant communication only increases, do not make them feel like now that their attention is not important. Cater to them with different information and data, make them feel special with discounts, sale reminders and special promotions designed to cater to them alone.

The way a company speaks can do wonders. While a lot of company still think that SMS marketing is an unpredictable tool but, if utilized properly nothing beats the results.





# SMS Success Stories



Aer Lingus

## Aer Lingus

Aer Lingus used to rely on emails to inform their passengers regarding any delays and cancellations. This became a problem because it was ineffective not to mention expensive with call center agents depleting the airlines resources as well as time. It was not feasible for agents to call thousands of contacts at once.

Once the Company incorporated the SMS Gateway within their communications system, the company not only saved money but reached their customers far better. Once this system was implemented Aer Lingus encountered an issue with their flight to Malaga which required customers to reach the airport **90 minutes** prior to the time of their flight. The airline notified all their passengers via SMS and the result was great! More than 75% people showed instead of the usual **10%**.

Another event that was aided by a well-placed SMS strategy was Iceland's volcanic ash cloud of 2010. Air Lingus sent out critical updates and texts to those passengers that were stuck all across Europe



## BMW

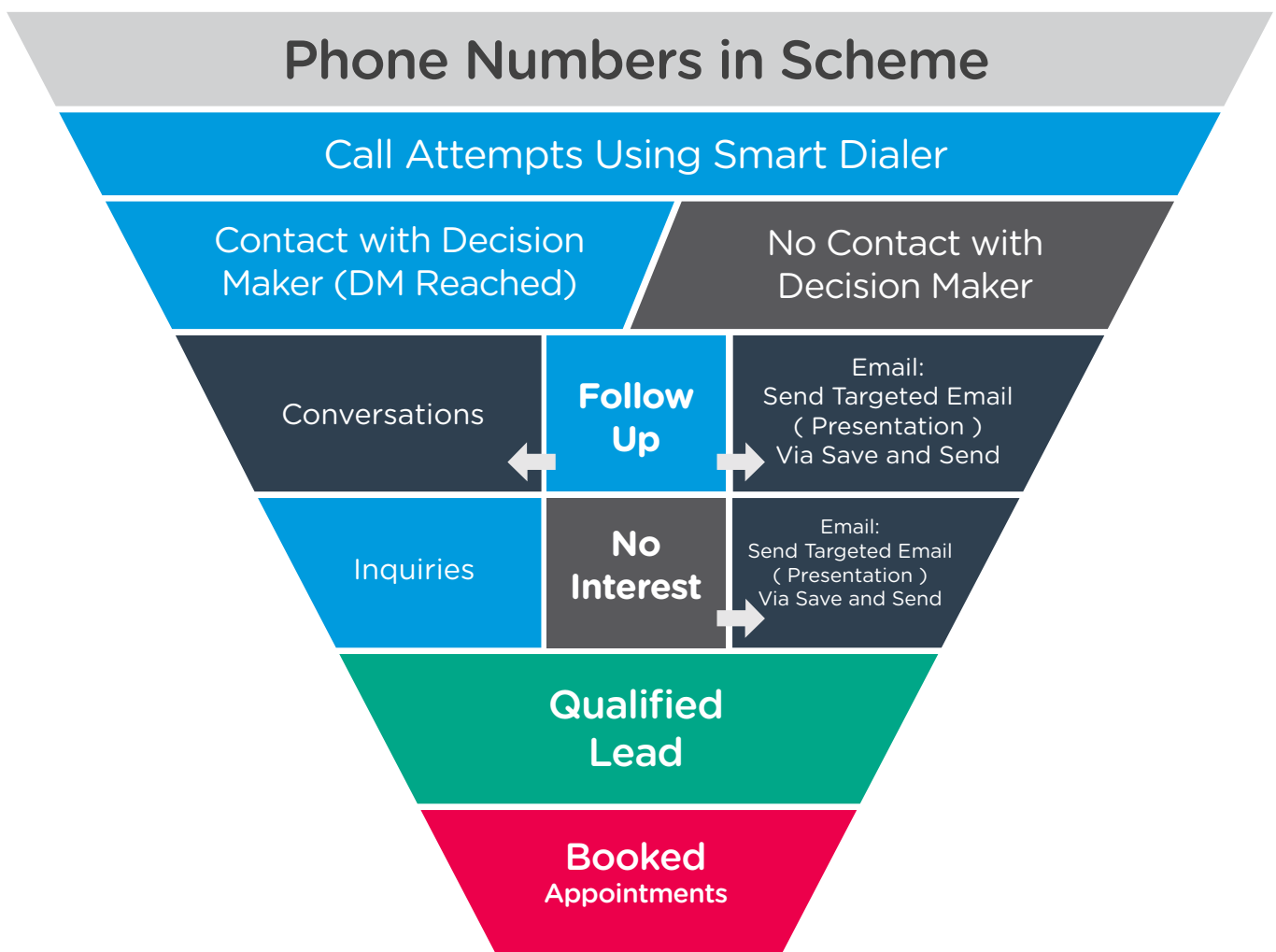
BMW initiated a MMS campaign using images, videos, links and audios to create awareness regarding the importance and need for snow tires during winters in Germany. The targeted audience was impressed and this campaign landed them a database of **1,200 customers**, a great start to a great campaign.



# Key Strategies to Nurture Leads via SMS

Previously sales personnel communicated with potential leads on call. However, it's not easy to take out time for each and every customer and spend hours explaining and talking to them regarding your service/product. The aim of the sales team should be to get the message across while saving precious time and keeping things personalized.

**Here is how the cycle goes.**



Now, if the calls were turned into SMS, not only are the messages being forwarded faster, time of the company and the consumer is being saved. SMS can be just as effective; the trick lies in making your words count. There should be an immediate hook for the consumer and if the consumer is interested you have a lead from few sentences as opposed to long conversations that might not be as productive.





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