

# Designing Your Lead Scoring System; Critical Questions to Consider

Marketing Automation platforms, like MarketFirst, allow you to easily review and score leads as hot, warm, and cold. Identifying hot leads and quickly getting them to Sales is critical. Automatically nurturing warm and cold leads prevents leads from getting lost and a good lead nurturing campaign coupled with lead scoring can keep the prospect engaged and can reevaluate scores with every touch.

Much of the conversation around how best to set up lead scoring tends to focus authority, interest and behavior. Their title, which whitepaper they downloaded and what this means in terms of their propensity to purchase.

These are all great discussions to have, but there are critical questions that need to be considered in order to build a lead scoring algorithm that will truly work in a business environment:

- What are Your Outputs? Are you using lead scoring to determine which leads to hand off to Sales? What data should you provide them? Which leads to nurture further? Which accounts to get deeper visibility into? All of the above? Understanding your lead scoring outputs first is key in understanding how you want to approach the scoring of leads.
- How does Time affect your Scores? It's necessary to think through how the relevance of your prospect actions, and hence their lead score, degrades over time. An action 6, 12, or 18 months ago will likely not have the same relevance as the same action last week. For scoring interest level, this time factor is crucial, whereas for scoring on buyer role, this may not change as rapidly over time.
- What Dimensions are Critical? In lead scoring, it is important to clearly define what the question is that you are asking, and to build your scoring algorithm to match that question. If multiple lead scoring dimensions are merged into one, you will likely run into a challenge. Two of the most commonly used scoring dimensions are who the prospect is (title, industry, and revenues) and how interested the prospect is (web interest, search, and downloads).
- How do you score leads so they are manageable? When building a lead scoring algorithm, there are often a few buckets of data that come into play. For example in scoring the lead explicitly (who they are), you may look at title, industry, and revenues to determine whether the individual is highly qualified. To do this, it is often best to cap the scores available for each individual bucket.
- Are your scores loosely mapped to the ranks that determine follow-up? If you are going to teach Sales to follow up with leads that are defined as "A leads", you need to build in the flexibility to slightly adjust the bar on what makes a lead an "A lead" over time, without retraining sales. The best way to do this is to have both a lead score (a number such as 0-100) and a lead rank (a

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letter or grade such as A, B, C). Mapping the lead score to the lead rank allows you to adjust your criteria while Sales does not change their process.

- Do you want to push A leads to Sales? Clients aren't dumb, they realize that their responses and behavior may result in a sales call; especially if they requested to be contacted now. Consider pushing hot leads and relevant contact information and lead scoring data immediately to Sales as an email. Afraid the rep won't take action? Take an extra step and make the Sales rep confirm that they have received the lead.
- Do you allow Sales to cherry-pick more leads? In many environments, especially when lead scoring has been implemented and only good leads are passed to sales, the sales team will feel as though they need more leads. They will ask for the lead funnel to be opened up to them so that they can "Cherry Pick" leads that they deem to be good. Allowing sales to cherry pick has opportunities as well as significant risks, however, and should be discussed carefully upfront.
- If Sales does not take action, do you want to Claw Back the Lead?: In an ideal world, sales follows up with all hot leads. However, this is not the reality that most organizations live in, so a process is needed for automatically clawing back the sales lead into marketing if it has not been followed up on in a short time period. Once the lead has been clawed back, it can be re-allocated to another sales person, re-entered into a nurture program, or passed to a partner channel.
- Have You Provided Sales with disposition and nurture Options?: If leads are not being followed up on by sales, it is difficult to adjust your processes unless you know why. Providing sales with options for lead disposition, including automated nurture programs that will continue to educate the lead until it is again ready for sales, can provide both great insight into reasons for lead rejection and foundation for better nurturing of leads.
- Which leads should you push from your lead scoring program to CRM? Clearly A leads should be pushed but what about B and C leads? If you're using an automated lead nurturing campaign you'll need to ensure that its messages are aligned with the sales process to avoid conflicts. For example your lead nurturing shouldn't send a discount promotion to a contact if Sales is engaged is actively engaged.

Designing your lead scoring rules is best accomplished when marketing and sales participate together. It's important that the rules are flexible so they can easily be changed to increase or decrease the lead flow to Sales. In a perfect world closed deals can be tied to leads to support marketing performance reporting and continuous improvement.

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By thinking through these critical factors up front, your lead scoring process will avoid a number of challenges on its road to adoption and success, and will succeed in driving revenue for your organization.

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