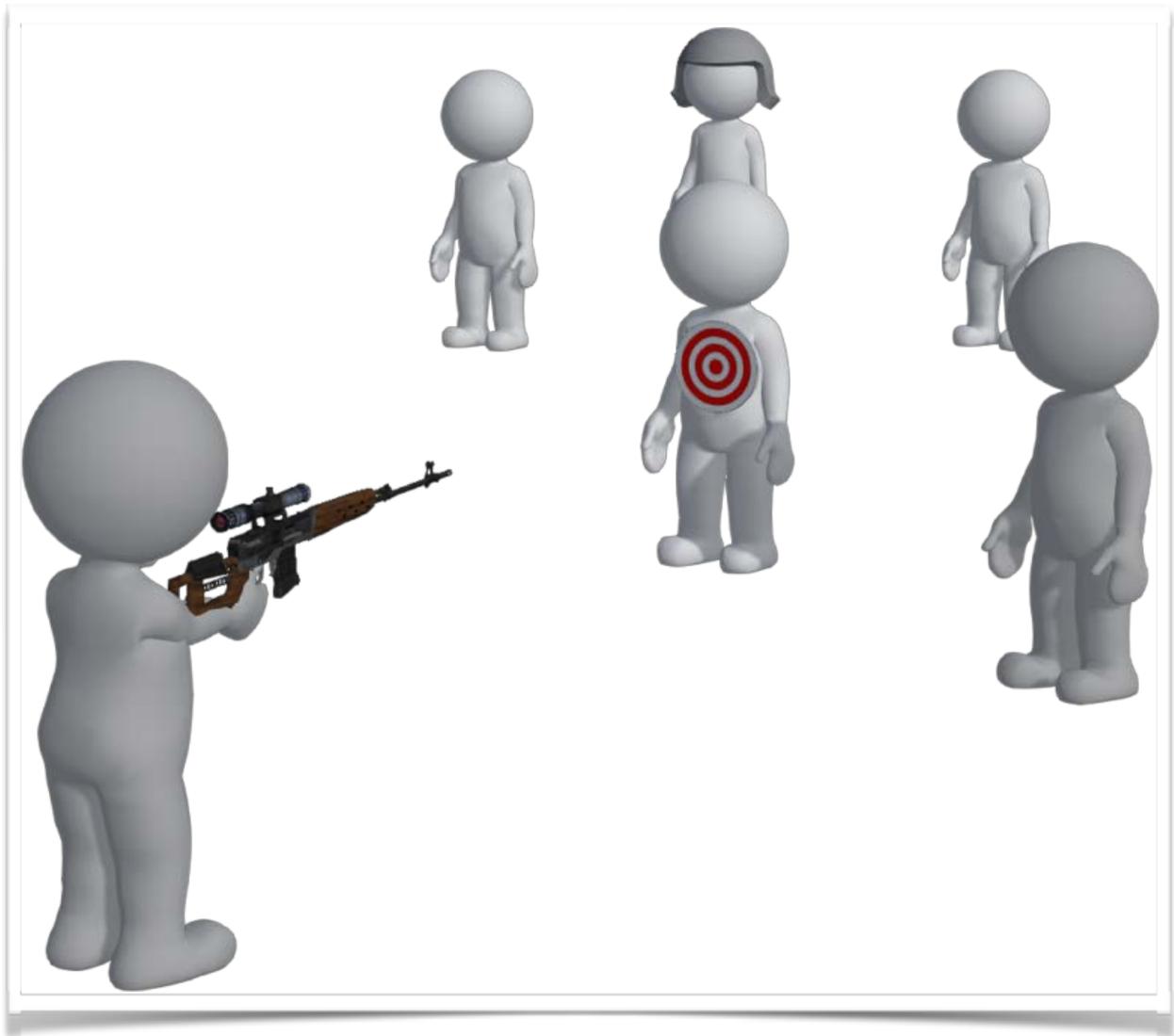

Lead Generation in a joined up world...

...why Rifle-shot marketing is right, for you, (probably)

ConversationalCRM - 17 January 2014



Lead Generation In A Connected World

Classic, default option, conventional, call it as you choose, lead generation based on cold calling is now seen both uneconomic and unacceptable. The same status, but attained a heck of a lot quicker, is starting to happen to mass e-mails; it's a consequence, partly of changes in technology but more significantly, behaviour, buyer behaviour.

But B2B businesses still do need new leads, and some organisations are meeting this challenge, although many are not.

To understand the predicament it's helpful to consider your own behaviours as a target of conventional marketing initiatives. We're all the targets of B2B marketing and we usually behave as our prospects do.

How do you react ?



You're busy working away in the office, you've a deadline, a to-do list, you're focused on getting some urgent work done, somehow they've got through, you get a cold call, how do you react?

At best you'll terse, avoid answering, or tell them where to go without listening to the reason they called. We don't like to be interrupted, we might actually be interested in the proposition but if we are we want to find out about it on our terms not as scripted by the call centre.

It's early morning, you've risen with the lark to get a head start on the day and you're ploughing through a mass of emails in your inbox wanting to clear the decks before the weekly gabfest starts at nine. You've an unsolicited email, how do you react? Half the time you bin it straight away, if it's irritating you might click the 'junk' or 'black



list' button. If it refers to you, recognises your role and leads with something you're interested in you might give it a quick scan through. We all have pretty effective filters that only let through what we're interested in.

But, when we do want to buy something, how do we go about it?

Much as we would when we buy a domestic appliance, let's say a new TV. Gone are the days when we'd go down to Curry's and talk to one of those nice, knowledgeable and helpful salesmen in those attractive shiny suits. That's the last thing we want to do. We do some web research, we ask around for recommendations, we look at reviews, from our peers, from people and organisations that we know and trust. It's only when we've got a good idea of specifically what we want do we enter into a sales conversation, on our terms, to check out the details and get the best deal we can.



Do you think your approach to B2B purchases is any different?

There's been a radical change in the way that people buy and sellers have to understand and respond to that change if they're to survive and prosper.

In a connected world the buyer is in control, they call the shots. Invariably the initial stages of a dialogue are on-line as various options are checked out, unless you've already got a good relationship (*check out our wise words on the value of account management*) in which case the prospect may seek your opinion. Typically the buying process only becomes a dialogue, a conversation when it's clear to the buyer that it's worth having; and they want to choose who they talk to, and they probably want to check on LinkedIn that they're talking to someone worth talking to.

Think about the amount of information you're bombarded with, there's such a quantity of both noise and content hitting us that we've become really adept at filtering out everything that's irrelevant or not a priority.



Time is short, what commands interest is the specific and relevant, generalities fall by the wayside. To survive we've all developed our own "watch list" of things we're interested in that we scan for and pick up on.

Today the key to successful marketing is to understand our prospects well enough to know, or make an educated guess about what's on this watch list, what keeps them awake at night, what might get them excited.

General messages just don't work like this, At the broadest level, is everyone bothered about global warming? No. It's only by separating your prospects into very specific groups and getting to know them well can you engage at this level. Moving the conversation up a level from transactional and testing to meaningful and verbal means offering something of value to prospects, a proposition that's evidently closely aligned with their issues.

This is the key to effective riflshot marketing.

So, there needs to be a radical change in the way we do lead generation

With buyers in control the balance between inbound and outbound marketing



initiatives has to change, we have to attract more prospects to contact us because it's becoming increasingly difficult to contact them.

A direct approach to a potential prospect still has to be done and it can be done effectively and without annoyance (unlike a cold call) if it's done the "riflshot" way, with care.

The best marketers do it, and so do the best sales people, but it just takes time and effort so it's rarely done well. The first step is research, both to find the right person to approach and all about them, what they're doing, what they're talking about.

Only then can you craft the first electronic communication, in the channel of their choice, to gain their interest and start a conversation.

Start by mentioning them, something they're doing that's linked to the topic you want to raise, make it really personal, that's not just 'inserting name here'.

Naturally it has to be well presented and with some creativity to enable it to stand out from the noise. Explain how you think you can help them with one of the things you believe is on their "watch list", how you've helped someone in a similar situation. This is your call for them to engage with you in conversation, if you make it convincing enough they'll choose to talk to you. It's not a cold call, it's a reasoned, informed business proposition; the only problem is that it's expensive, it takes time and effort to do it well.

The same "rifleshot" approach can be applied to inbound initiatives which have to be much more than the simple SEO of a decade ago. Targeting specific groups, understanding their interests & needs, where they hang out, who with. Which forums, discussions, on-line groups, you're going to tempt them with some interesting content that you're going to throw like bread on the water but in forums, on updates or twitter, wherever your prospects are.

Your intention is to attract them to your web site (or microsite) where you can consolidate that interest with more content and then offer something of real value, maybe a white-paper or useful tool in return for their contact details. This allows them to do their research, check you and your company out so they can choose to be interested, choose to have a conversation.

And knowing who they are can help you make a decision when the time is right to contact them.

Turning "Interest" into "Sales Ready"

The chances are that the first expression of interest from a prospect won't show that they're sales ready. It's early days, interest has to be built up, some level of qualification has to be done and some level of need established. A trickle of interesting comment has to be provided together with the opportunity to access more detailed content on demand. You're building credibility and you're building trust. A consistent, informed and intelligent



conversation needs to be held over (maybe many) months until the time is right for sales intervention. Maybe an email each month that stimulates interest and keeps your brand in front of mind, your CRM should handle that, maybe it's about making a call once every three months or so to find out how things are going, explore whether there's a business opportunity yet. This is contact nurturing, it's the link between sales and marketing that's all too often missing and it's critical if good leads are not to be wasted

Are you "Rifleshot" Ready?



How well can you adapt to this new paradigm, how well are you going to survive this climate change? Find out if you measure up to the connected world challenges by answering these questions;

1. Do you really understand your prospects?
 - Can you define them as specific groups? If not find out who they are.
 - Do you know what makes them tick? If not ask them!
2. Do you have (and can you manage) accurate, up to date, lists of prospects?
 - Is your data quality measured and up to standard?
 - Is it comprehensive enough to enable you to segment your contacts effectively
 - Have you eliminated duplicates?
3. Do you have great content that will attract and hook them?
 - Do you have topical content that they're interested in? (not that you're interested in!)
 - Have you got high value content? (that they'll disclose their contact details for)
4. Can you effectively hold (and track) digital as well as verbal conversations?
 - Is your email platform integrated with your CRM?
 - Do you have links to social networks from your CRM?
 - Can you integrate landing pages or pages on your web site?
5. Can you track and keep on record your prospects behaviour?

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- Is it possible to see everything about a prospect in one place?
 - Can you track click throughs and web activity?
 - Can you easily identify prospects that suddenly show interest?
6. Can your team hold intelligent, high level business conversations?
- Do you have experienced worldly-wise callers?
 - Can they use all email and social networks as well as voice communication?
7. Can you automate your initiatives?
- Lots of rifleshot initiatives means lots of work, can you manage this?
 - Can your staff use these tools?

If it seems too much for your CRM you should look at ConversationalCRM
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