

# Conversational Demand Generation



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## Learn about:

- The buying process today and how early marketing should get involved
- How to use content to engage prospects and stay top-of-mind
- The three factors that determine the success or failure of your demand gen efforts

2nd  
Edition

By Nick Cavalancia (CEO and Co-Founder of Conversational Geek)

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by Nick Cavalancia

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## Publisher Acknowledgments

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## Note from the Author

If there's one thing I know all too well, it's generating demand. Running Marketing for a company that expected 10K leads a *month* with a team of just 8 people was no easy feat. And yet, somehow, we managed to not just maintain that number, but to grow it over the years.

But, as is the age-old battle between Sales and Marketing, I've heard all too often the complaint about how leads weren't sales ready. Even using a demand waterfall, where we've all agreed on what constitutes "marketing qualified," "sales accepted," and "sales qualified," when the proverbial rubber met the road, the weight of the success of Sales lay on the shoulders of Marketing.

The greatest successes were found in not just offering products and services to seemingly aligned audiences, but in really getting into the head of the person potentially responding to our efforts – seeking to understand what they're thinking when they read an email, look at an advertisement, click on a text ad, peruse a landing page, or fill out a reg form.

This book is about finding that successful execution – when to execute, how to execute, and with whom to execute. Like most great marketing, it's all in the very specific details, so don't gloss over the little things in this book – they may be the gems you've been looking for to improve your demand gen game.

- Nick Cavalancia



## The “Conversational” Method

We have two objectives when we create a “Conversational” book: First, to make sure it’s written in a conversational tone so that it’s fun and easy to read. Second, to make sure you, the reader, can immediately take what you read and include it into your own conversations (personal or business-focused) with confidence.

## “Geek in the Mirror” Boxes

We infuse humor and insight into our books through both cartoons and light banter from the author. When you see one of these boxes it’s the author stepping outside the dialog to speak directly to you. It might be an anecdote; it might be a personal experience.



Within these boxes I can share just about anything on the subject at hand. Read 'em!

# The Challenge of Generating Demand



Marketing has this never-ending problem: you're required to generate LOTS of leads... everyday... all the time. Had a great number last month? That's nice. Now generate even MORE leads this month, please! It's the constant mantra that plagues our existence as marketers.

One of the challenges is, as we all know, the more leads you need to generate, the lower the overall quality of each lead. And yet, Sales expects *every* lead to be a high-quality lead. I think people in Sales truly believe there are leads out there literally holding their credit card in one hand, filling out a web form with the other!

Just getting someone even remotely interested in your product or service is tough enough. You need to find the right buyer persona, figure out where they spend their time on the Internet, figure out a catchy way to get their attention, and somehow – in the middle of this – tell them about your product and get them to react. And even if you *do* get them to respond as desired – be it clicking a link or filling out a form – that prospective customer probably isn't ready (or willing) to talk to Sales just yet anyway.

The reason is that today's B2B buyer follows a pretty standard buying process:



And, while standard, the buying process is far more complex than simply making an offer and obtaining a quality lead.

- **Problem Recognition** – The prospect realizes they have a challenge, issue, or upcoming project that needs to be addressed. It can be as vague as “cyber attacks”, as specific as “migrating mailboxes to Office 365”, or anything in between. The prospect’s goal becomes understanding the realities of the breadth and depth of the problem.
- **Information Search** – Here, the prospect is looking for ways to solve the identified problem. Can they do it themselves? Does it require assistance from a partner? Do they need to purchase a product or service to address the problem? The prospect’s goal is to identify industry leaders on the problem and potential solutions that can help.
- **Alternative Evaluation** – Every one of us knows we’re not going to take the first answer we find. The prospect does in-depth research about your offering *as well as*



your competitors'. Factors like price, functionality, benefit, and perceived value all come into play to derive a "short list" of potential solutions.

- **Purchase Decision** – At this point, we're all assuming the prospect is going to make a choice and pull the trigger. Ideally, Marketing and Sales have worked hand-in-hand to make a compelling case to choose your company. But, even at this late stage in the buying game, one of the viable choices that can be made includes simply walking away.

Now that I've covered a high-level version of the B2B buying process, the question should be asked of you: *Where in the process do you think the customer engages your company?*

It might surprise you to find out that the average B2B buyer gets **57%** of the way through the purchase decision *before engaging a sales rep*<sup>1</sup>, with that number reaching *as high as 70%*<sup>1</sup>. In essence, most of the time, *you're not even in the conversation.*

**What's necessary is for you to get in early within a given prospect's buying process, using nurturing to drive sales.**

*So, how do you ensure you are top-of-mind early on?*

We throw around terms like *lead generation* and *demand generation* – sometimes interchangeably, thinking one or the other is the answer. Generally speaking, *demand generation* involves driving awareness and interest in your company's products and/or services. But, Sales is only interested in you *generating leads* they can follow up with. So, is there a difference? If you consider one to be of higher quality (demand gen) than the other (lead gen), then there *is* a difference. But, if

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<sup>1</sup> CEB, *The Digital Evolution in B2B Marketing*

you're like most marketing departments, there is no separate budget for lead and demand gen, so the two tend to coincide.

And, because today's demand generation efforts need to serve both interests simultaneously, there are a few factors that will determine the success or failure of your efforts to get in front of your prospective buyer early in their buying process:

- 1) The **content** you use to drive interest
- 2) The **persona** you focus on
- 3) The **media** by which you obtain leads

I'll spend the remainder of this book discussing each of these three factors, all in an effort to help you focus in on how to generate demand.



Remember, your buyer has a problem and is in pain. Your job is to create an emotional connection with the buyer through either tapping into their pain to make them want to solve the problem even more, or by generating a positive connection by getting them excited that you can take the pain away! The remainder of the book has this goal in mind.

## Choosing the Right Content

I've spent lots of time with marketing teams consulting on what kinds of content assets will be the most impactful for them. Some jump right to white papers, others focus on buying guides, and some just want to focus on getting their website messaging correct. If you're going to start the discussion by selecting an asset first, there is no single correct answer.

The better place to start is with the buying process itself. You want to get in front of a prospect as early in the buying process as is possible. And each step in the buying process requires a different tone of content from you:

- **Problem Recognition** – they just want to understand really how bad a problem it is.
- **Information Search** – they want to understand their options around how to solve the problem. No pitch yet; just what their options are.
- **Alternative Evaluation** – they want to know how your company solves the problem, along with details on your product or service.
- **Purchase Decision** – they want to understand why they should do business with your company over the competition.

So, you can see that a single piece of content simply isn't going to work; you need *several pieces of content* with different purposes. You can reuse solid content, but the messaging goal for each needs to align with the buying process.

Think of marketing content as one side of a conversation between your company and the prospective buyer. They look on the Internet for some content around, say, "ransomware," so they're telling you "I'm concerned about ransomware." Your content is the response. Depending on where they are in the buying process, your response (via your content) can be "Let me educate you on ransomware and what to do about it," or "Here's the current state of ransomware," or even "Here's how we protect your business against ransomware attacks." If they decide to click and consume your piece of content, you now know how far along the buying process they are, and how best to nurture them moving forward.

The challenge is, if you choose to utilize a single piece of content, you may not capture the attention of your prospect, simply because *you aren't meeting them where they are in the buying process*. If your content is all about how your company solves the ransomware problem (which is interpreted by the prospect as a sales pitch), and the prospect isn't ready yet to even think about a vendor to solve the problem, they're going to pass and you'll miss the opportunity altogether.

### **How Should Your Content Be Branded?**

The more prominently your brand shines on a piece of content, the greater the skepticism toward the content. That doesn't mean you go to the opposite extreme and have a great content with next to zero branding either. You need to strike a balance that allows the prospect to create that emotional connection with the content, and have appropriate branding that allows them to come to their own conclusion that you are a viable candidate to address their problem.

There are lots of ways to align your brand with a piece of content:

- **Sponsorship** – Content created by a notable third-party tends to take the prospect's defenses down. They realize the content isn't a pitch or biased and, therefore, are far more willing to read it. Sponsorship usually includes logo placement, and perhaps some boilerplate content about your brand or product. In some cases, it also may include an advertisement as the call to action at the end of the piece.
- **Author Attribution** – Vendor-neutral content attributed to a high-ranking member of your organization and placed as thought leadership or educational content on a third-party website provides solid awareness of your

brand, but does little in the way of promoting your product or service.

- **Expert Advice** – Leveraging a member of your company to act as an industry expert to speak on a relevant topic on a vendor-neutral webinar or podcast is a fantastic way to get the prospect emotionally connected with both the speaker and, therefore, your brand.
- **Branded, But Topical** – Creating content that’s completely a branded piece, but is topically relevant to the prospect’s place in the buying process, is still an extremely viable method of getting a prospect to understand they should turn to you when they decide they are in their time of need.



Prospects need to get to know how much you care about *their* problem before they’re willing to entertain listening to your pitch. Use content to get their emotional buy-in with solid education, and they’ll come to their own conclusion that your company is the expert!

My recommendations of which content branding fits where, based on the buying process, are as follows:

Process Step	Branding Method	Topic Focus
<b>Problem Recognition</b>	Sponsorship Author Attribution Expert Advice Branded, But Topical	Education on the problem
<b>Information Search</b>	Sponsorship Author Attribution Expert Advice Branded, But Topical	Education on the problem and how to solve it

<b>Alternative Evaluation</b>	Branded, But Topical	Your solution and how it solves the problem
<b>Purchase Decision</b>	Branded, But Topical	Competitive Analysis, Case Studies

## Use the Content Title as a Filter

This is one of the most important factors in demand generation. Literally, if you take nothing else from this book, read this section. When you put content out into the world to generate leads and demand, you truly want those people that are interested (in varying degrees of intensity) in solving a problem you help with.

So, the title of your content becomes a critical part of the equation. Too broad a title and you get people that are doing research, or are just interested in the topic in general. What you want is a title that says “If you’re not trying to solve this problem, please don’t bother registering for it.”

It sounds a bit harsh, I know. But, in reality, do you want a bunch of leads from people not in your target market registering so that Sales can yell at you about how bad the lead quality is?

Choose your wording carefully. Indicate some level of complexity, specificity, and need in the title, if possible. For example, if you worked for a software company that automates the moving of business email to Office 365, which of the following two content titles more-clearly defines the kind of person that should be reading the associated piece?

*Moving to Office 365*

*Simplifying the Enterprise Migration to Office 365*

Both titles generally convey the same message: “This content is about making the move to Office 365.” It’s the use of specific terms in the second title – “Migration” and “Enterprise” – that

begins to narrow the focus (and, therefore, the audience) to generate interest from only the right type of person (read: a higher-quality lead) – someone in charge of a migration of a larger company to Office 365. The term “Simplifying” is used to create that emotional connection with the reader; only those who already believe it’s going to be tough and, therefore, need a way to make it easy are going to be interested in your content.



This same “self-filtering” methodology can be applied to paid search advertising, trade show booths, etc. where having the wrong person respond wastes company resources and budget. Use messaging to draw the right person in, and make the wrong person go away as quickly as possible.

But even with the right content with the right title, positioned to meet the needs of the buyer where they are in the buying process, you still need to make sure the right people see the content in the first place.

## Choosing the Right Persona

During the entire B2B buying process, you have, on the average, only 12% of your customers’ total mindshare<sup>1</sup>. That’s it – just 12%! So it’s not only important to be influential early on in the process, but also to ensure you are reaching the right person.

What most marketers do is attempt to identify a specific title within a company and then try to find a way to gain access to those people specifically. But the number of people involved in

B2B solutions purchases has climbed from an average of 5.4 two years ago to 6.8 today<sup>2</sup>. That's almost *7 people!*

And, remember, you're not *shopping* for leads – demand gen isn't like going to MCDonalds. Sure, you *can* “have it your way” by using filters around title, qualification lists, etc., but the question then becomes *how much opportunity are you missing with the take-out menu of lead specifications?* You pick out the 5 specific job titles you think you want, but what about the other 25 titles that are also buying?

The right answer is to use far more open filters, casting a wider net (but one still within the realm of the “pond” of the target persona) to capture more of those 6.8 decision makers, and let the nurture stream drive sales. So, for example, if you think you're looking for the VP of a given department, it may better serve you (considering you're going to use the title of the content as another filter) to widen the list to include any title within the department.

Now that you've got solid content with a self-filtering title, and a reasonably wide range of personas to target, the last piece of the puzzle is to make sure you can a) reach those people, and b) ensure the medium delivers a quality lead.

## Choosing the Right Medium

Once you have content created, you want your content to be displayed at the center of the universe where your specific target persona(s) live, eat, sleep, and breathe. If you sell wedding dresses, you need to be on websites all about weddings, at bridal shows, etc., right?

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<sup>2</sup> CEB, *The New Sales Imperative* (2017)



There are plenty of ways to generate demand today. Each has its pros and cons:

- 1) **Your Website** – Here you can control the message, the visitor experience, and what details need to be collected at registration. But, since the world doesn't revolve around your company, don't expect a ton of leads from this method of placement without some kind of proper external promotion from one of the vendor types listed here.
- 2) **Media Publication Sites** – Leveraging sites relevant to your industry is smart; they are generating content to draw in your potential buyer. Do keep in mind that they already have a ton of their own content, content from other businesses to promote, and *then* your content. The potential for oversaturation exists, with most sites being *very* aware of this and working to target only those audience members that would have interest in a solution like yours. With vendors like this, I'd suggest utilizing multiple advertising products (e.g. newsletters, in-page ads, dedicated email blasts, content listings, etc.) to create awareness with – as well as lead gen from – their audience.
- 3) **MQL/Shared Lead Vendors** – These types of vendors promise “sales-ready leads” based on using search to drive folks to their sites where they fill out a “get a quote now” type of form. A great example is the “top 10” sites that list the top 10 vendors in a particular space, providing comparisons between them. What's truly happening here is you are paying a CPL on a lead that could have gone to your website with a little SEO work, but went to this comparison site instead. Plus, the comparison site is generally sending that same lead

to the multiple vendors being compared in the same space.

- 4) **Broker Vendors** – These aren't lead gen vendors, they're brokers. You use these types of vendors when you are unfamiliar with where to find leads. These types of vendors basically outsource your request for leads to third-party lead providers. The challenge here is you have zero idea how their leads are being generated and where they come from. You're basically just paying margins for a broker when you can do it yourself and have more control over the process and quality of leads.
- 5) **Lead Generation Vendors** – At the end of the day, you want a solid lead that has demonstrated some interest in either solving a problem or having your company solve the problem. This kind of vendor tends to have a number of identification methodologies to ensure a solid lead – from content syndication, to phone-based lead gen, to providing assistance throughout the entire buying process. Of the five ways listed here, this type of vendor is an interesting midway point between “your experienced outsourced lead gen team” and “the company with access to your target buyer.”

Each of these options have their merits... with some having fewer benefits than others. In trying to choose where to put your “demand gen eggs,” consider which methods can get your message in front of the largest group of the right people, keeping in mind the entire buying process. Lastly, I've found over the years that nobody tells your story as well as you do, so choose an option that also allows you to retain control over the prospect experience while generating that lead to ensure your message and the value your solution brings isn't diminished just to get a lead.

# The Big Takeaways

- 1) **Lead Nirvana** - You want a killer lead to hand to Sales. It just doesn't exist – or if it does, it's really, really rare. You need to get in front of your prospective audience as early in the buying process as is possible with content that meets their current needs... and then nurture.
- 2) **Content is King** – You need lots and lots of content. It's all about tone and the appropriate balance of “our solution is awesome” and “let me educate you on the problem.” Definitely repurpose content, but do it to meet the needs of the prospect within the buying process.
- 3) **There's More than One Buyer** – The buyer you think you want to target is only one of a larger number of individuals who are also involved with the buying process. So, expand your personas to include a much wider group of roles within an organization.
- 4) **Find the Right Lead Gen Partner** – You need lots of high-quality leads; it can't just be “lots” and it can't just be “quality.” Choose a partner that has your marketing funnel in mind and understands where they play a role within it.

## Vendor Sponsor Chapter – PureB2B



I think I made it clear that your demand gen goal is to get a prospect's attention early on in the buying process and then nurture them. But, in practical application, the question still remains *where do you find that person?* There are plenty of marketing partners on the Internet claiming to provide you access to a unique audience of prospective buyers, but in many cases, they simply either have a very large email list or use third-party tools to pull email lists as needed.

*And, at the end of the day, that's not what you're looking for.*

In fact, you can do that *yourself*. Partnering to meet the company's demand gen needs, you're dictating that the partner must have two things:

1. **An intelligent way to identify someone who is actively engaged in trying to solve a problem** – this should be the minimum metric to get you in the door. Otherwise, you’re just paying a partner for a list you can get yourself for pennies per name. Your demand gen partner needs have the ability to connect you with the right person and the right time.
2. **A means to keep their database of contacts constantly updated and fresh** – The promise of getting you to the right person *gets you in the door*. But, over time, you may just be hitting the same stale list of names, with a diminishing return each time. The demand gen partner should have a means to infuse new decision makers and influencers into the database, providing you with opportunity to connect with different prospects over time.



The idea of getting a “lead holding a credit card” just isn’t reality; it’s possible to find someone who is walking down the path to purchase, but it’s somewhat a “unicorn” to find someone that’s ready to buy *today*.

Your demand gen budget needs to show a return – both in marketing *and* sales – so you must choose a partner that knows your audience, grows that audience, and can expose the audience that is potentially interested in your product or solution.

## PureB2B

Unlike most lead gen vendors, which focus on the size and demographic of their audience, PureB2B promotes themselves as a vendor that focuses on *Uncovering In-Market Buyers*.

Leveraging a number of approaches that include *lead generation, digital marketing, account-based marketing* and *database marketing*, PureB2B accelerates the sales process across multiple vertical markets by targeting 6 key buyer personas:

- Information Technology Buyers
- Human Resources Technology Buyers
- Finance Technology Buyers
- Sales Technology Buyers
- Marketing Technology Buyers
- Business Technology Buyers

PureB2B differentiate themselves from other lead gen vendors in a number of ways:

## **1. Activity-Based Intent**

With more than 62 million Enterprise and SMB technology buyers within their engaged audiences, PureB2B monitors what prospective buyers are consuming. Their core effort revolves around identifying how much content is being consumed by a given contact (email opens, click-throughs, downloads, engaging with qualifying team, etc.). This allows them to identify *intent*, which increases your conversion rates by focusing on the most engaged potential prospects.

## **2. How They Build Their Audience**

PureB2B utilizes a research-based methodology that empowers them to identify and engage a constantly fresh audience. This methodology allows the audience to remain scalable, while eliminating audience fatigue.

### 3. 300 Years of Combined Demand Gen Experience

We all know experience in Marketing is probably the most valuable asset. These days, it's far more likely your demand gen partner will assign you a "campaign manager" that's fresh out of college on your next lead gen campaign. Just getting a program up and running is a task – let alone successfully collecting a material number of high quality leads. Every member of the PureB2B team has at least 6-8 years of experience in the lead and demand generation space.



One constant with PureB2B is that they place a great deal of emphasis on being *data-driven* and *performance-based*.

### PureB2B Services

Since I've implied they're not a traditional lead gen partner, the question remains, *what services are they offering?*

PureB2B's services can be boiled down to three offerings:

1. **Top-of-Funnel Programs** – Think content syndication, but with the potential to add account-based marketing (where the syndication focuses on a target list of accounts). If you're looking for ToF leads, the focus here is a cost-effective, unique set of contacts with which to market your content.
2. **Bottom-of-Funnel Programs** – Here, you need more than a name and a click; you want names that are as close to that nirvana of "ready to buy" as possible. PureB2B offer 100% research-based identification of prospects that provides you with a deep level of

understanding of where each prospect is in their buying process, what their needs and goals are, and what they need in a solution.

3. **Branding / Research Content** – PureB2B offers a range of additional services to solve the challenges of any demand marketer. Their survey-based research engine helps generate data-driven content which can be promoted through email and displays targeted at highly curated networks.
4. PureB2B can help you identify the top prospective buyers based on email engagement with social content, case studies, surveys, giveaways, and brand buzz.

## Getting Demand Gen Results with PureB2B

At the end of the day, demand generation is about getting someone to raise their hand to identify themselves as having some level of interest in what you're selling. For some of you, that may be as simple as utilizing commodity email-based lead gen. But many of you recognize the value of (and, quite frankly, may require) leveraging intent data and research-based lead gen to identify the right hand-raisers.

No matter where you fit in the demand and lead generation spectrum, PureB2B can provide you with the customized and highly targeted campaigns necessary to ensure positive sales and marketing ROI.



# NOTES

# NOTES



# PureB2B

## Your Source for B2B Lead Generation

PureB2B's custom and scalable lead generation solutions, integrated with intent-data from our global audience network of over 62 million technology buyers, enables you to capture your target in-market leads at any stage of the buying cycle

### The PureB2B Global Audience of Over 62 Million Technology Buyers



IT 23.9m+



HR 6.5m+



Marketing 7.1m+



Business 16m+



Sales 4.7m+



Finance 3.8m+



### Our Lead Generation Solutions



PureABM



PureSyndication



PureMQL



PureFunnel



PureIntel



PureResearch



PureSDR



PureSurvey



PureDisplay



PureContent

[WWW.PUREB2B.COM](http://WWW.PUREB2B.COM)

Let's face it, Sales needs quality leads and you need to put in effort to get them. You've got a good message, but you need visibility, and you need to deliver that message in the most engaging way possible. Moreover, you need to make sure you're addressing the right audience, otherwise you're wasting resources. This book helps decode the mysteries of effective demand generation so you can feed the Sales engine and keep your business running.



### About Nick Cavalancia

Nick Cavalancia, CEO and co-founder of Conversational Geek, is a three-time marketing VP who has spent nearly two decades helping tech companies align their message, strategy, and execution with their prospective buyers. In addition, Nick writes and speaks for some of the most recognizable companies today.

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