



## 6 Elements of an Effective Drip Marketing Campaign

**By Barbara Bix and Tiffany Mura**

There are many reasons for not making a sale. In today's climate of information and work overload, companies increasingly have trouble elevating their marketing messages above the clutter to be top-of-mind when their prospects' needs arise.

And, because no one can predict when a prospect's needs will arise, and no company's salespeople can be everywhere all of the time, this may seem like an insurmountable challenge.

The key to overcoming this is to develop a system that helps meet all of these issues. That system should consist of marketing campaigns with strategically timed and appropriately tailored communications for each of your prospects.

The goals of the campaigns should be to deliver consistent communications at regular intervals, to elevate your message above other information that prospects are receiving, and to motivate recipients to "raise their hands" when they are ready to purchase.

These structured communication plans, often referred to as drip campaigns, require careful consideration of each prospect's unique situation.

Here are six areas you must address to develop an effective campaign and ultimately "be there" when your prospect is ready to buy.

### **1. Clarify Whom You Want to Reach**

You must first identify whom at the target company you want to reach with your drip campaign. Typically, only one person has the final say in approving purchases, but the evaluation process often involves multiple decision makers.

Resources you may use to identify these people include direct reports, technical advisers, financial department employees, procurement department employees and even industry pundits. Be sure to thoroughly research this information: Anyone who influences the decision can delay or even prevent the sale so it is critical that your messages reach all the appropriate parties.

### **2. Understand Their Concerns**

In addition to identifying the client stakeholders who influence the decision-making process, you must also determine each individual's role and unique concerns.

Not surprisingly, we have found that one of the best ways to learn more about what is important to buyers when evaluating purchases is to ask them. Buyers often value features or benefits that the seller might take for granted – not the ones that seller is featuring as new and exciting.

In addition, the various influencers in the purchasing process may have different concerns, so you will need to customize your messages to address each individual's needs. For example, an email sent to technical advisors might direct them to an IT white paper, whereas a communication sent to CFOs may point them toward an industry analyst's report.

### **3. Figure Out Where Your Prospects Get Their Information**

Knowing which sources of information your prospects, and their key decision influencers, rely on will help you direct your messaging.

For example, how did your prospects find out about some of the other services that they purchased recently? To what

trade associations do they belong? What trade publications do they read regularly? Answers to such questions will help you decide which communication forums are best.

Surveying your prospects and previous clients can also guide campaign planning. People tend to be poor analysts; that is, they are often not accurate in forecasting their own future behavior. However, they are great reporters of actions that they have taken in the past. Asking clients and prospects to respond to a short survey on previous buying behavior can be enormously informative.

#### 4. Use the Correct Message Frequency and Volume

Once you have confirmed that you are selling to the right individuals and using the most appropriate methods to communicate with them, you should contact them at regular intervals. The more often you interact with your prospect and the more relevant the information you provide, the more effective your campaign will be at rising above the clutter.

#### 5. Simplify the Message

Clarity, simplicity, and brevity – regardless of the method of communication – are critical to ensure that your prospects attend to your messages. This is especially true with email. Current statistics indicate that business people spend an average of only thirty seconds reading and responding to an email, which is not much time to absorb your message.

Focus on the information needed to capture your prospect's attention, and then send no more or no less than that. Otherwise, you run the risk of your message being ignored.

If you are not sure which of several messages will have greater resonance, you are better off sending several simple messages instead of a complex one.

Don't worry about sending too many messages, because people tend not to notice the ones that aren't germane to them at the moment.

#### 6. Make Your Messages Consistent

Because it takes an average of seven impressions to make an impact, and because drip campaigns consist of multiple interaction points, it is essential that you give your prospects consistent information. There is nothing more confusing to a prospect during the purchase process than receiving conflicting or inconsistent information from a potential provider, and it can threaten the likelihood of selecting you at purchase time.

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While conducting a drip marketing campaign won't turn every lead into a client, it does increase the odds. Such campaigns require you to take greater care in identifying your prospects, addressing their needs, and crafting your communications to them. That, in turn, increases your company's position in prospects' minds for when their time of need arises. (You'll also have boosted your bottom line by wasting less time and money on leads that don't matter.)

While all this requires a great deal of insight and planning, when done properly, drip marketing campaigns can be one of the most useful tools in your marketing efforts.

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