

 LEAD NURTURING & ACCELERATION
BENCHMARK SURVEY

Amidst Lack Of Confidence, Practitioners Increasing Data Collection To Enhance Lead Nurturing & Acceleration



Executive Summary

Across the board, the sentiment toward lead nurturing initiatives was – unfortunately – negative: 51% of survey respondents to the “2024 Lead Nurturing & Acceleration Benchmark Survey” believed their lead nurturing initiatives needed improvement, while just 26% thought they were average. The 2024 findings starkly contrast their 2023 counterparts, where only 40% of practitioners wanted to improve their strategies and nearly one-third considered their initiatives average.

This abrupt decline in confidence is evidenced by the 51% of respondents who said their 2024 lead nurturing was very challenging, while 44% admitted it was somewhat challenging. When asked about the specifics behind those challenges, survey takers noted their top struggles included:

Developing targeted content by buyer stage/interest

53%

A shortage of data about the best leads to nurture

41%

Building the right timing/workflows for campaigns

41%

Declining response rates

33%

Lack of insights into best practices on lead nurture framework

33%

Throughout this special report, we'll cut through the weeds of lead nurturing programs to determine the areas where practitioners are struggling and the remedies to fix them, as evidenced by the respondents who saw excellent results with their initiatives. Specific topics of discussion will include:



The new strategies marketers are deploying to refine their lead nurturing approaches and tactics, with insights into the content pieces that find the most success;



How organizations are measuring the success of their lead nurturing programs;



The new average duration of a nurture campaign, as well as the number of touches and cadences practitioners are leveraging; and



A glimpse into how marketers plan to innovate their lead strategies in the future.

Identifying & Implementing New Approaches

Despite not seeing the lead nurturing success they hoped for, practitioners spent the last 12 months focused on developing new approaches and tactics within their nurture programs. Interestingly, the top three approaches all revolved around increased use of insights and buyer information, as respondents said they focused on:

Retargeting

49%

Intent data

43%

Content engagement data

41%

In a notable twist, one-third of practitioners (33%) increased the amount of ungated content they were providing to leads — despite the desire to collect more content engagement data. However, when coupled with the fact that 36% of practitioners are conducting account-based nurtures, ungated content makes sense: If organizations know who they're targeting from each account, there's no need to toss up a form fill to collect data about the buyer(s).

Additionally, there was an increased focus on retargeting, as only 37% of practitioners prioritized it in 2023. This indicates that instead of going out and finding new leads and prospects, businesses are doubling down and focusing on reheating lost or stalled opportunities.

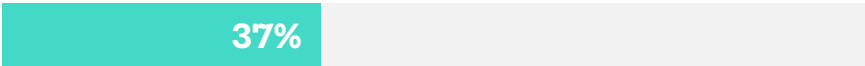


With that in mind, 73% of survey respondents noted that the No. 1 benefit of lead nurture programs is generating warmer, more sales-ready leads, and in the era of resource and time constraints, focusing on information that businesses likely already have in-house is more productive than going out and acquiring new information. Beyond generating warmer leads, the other top benefits of lead nurture programs included:

Better response to campaigns/offers due to targeting/relevant



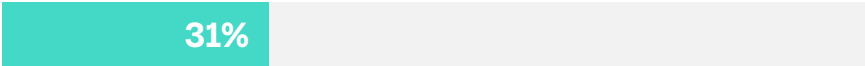
Higher acceptance of leads from sales



Ability to segment prospects based on interests/behaviors



Lower cost for qualified leads



Leads moving faster through the funnel



To translate those benefits into actual numbers, the top metrics used to determine lead nurturing success included conversion rates (49%), total revenue (46%) and lead volume in the sales pipeline (41%).

And despite the earlier noted lack of confidence in lead nurturing initiatives, the report found that lead nurturing is beneficial: Specifically, 42% of practitioners noted performance increases of more than 20% for nurtured leads compared to non-nurtured leads, while 27% pointed to a 10% increase in sales opportunities.

Segmenting Databases & Creating Nurture Content

Given the increased focus on data-driven lead strategies, survey respondents noted they're segmenting their database for lead nurturing by:

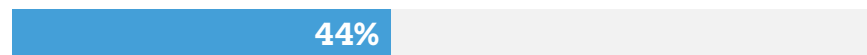
Industry



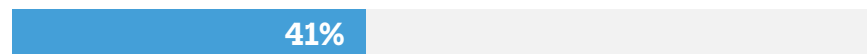
Title/role



Funnel stage



Persona



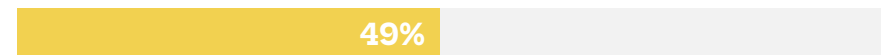
With those segments in mind, the natural next step is to determine what type of content offers each cohort should receive. There was a marginal increase in the number of practitioners that offered exclusive content for nurture programs — 33% in 2024, 31% in 2023 — and a slight decrease in those that only used multipurpose content — 53% in 2024, 55% in 2023.

There's a definite correlation between nurture-exclusive content and lead nurturing success, as 100% of respondents with "excellent" lead nurturing programs said they used nurture-exclusive content,

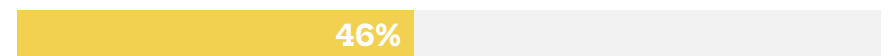
while only less than one-third (31%) of those with programs that "need improvement" could say the same.

With content in mind, the top tactics across the board to support nurture initiatives include:

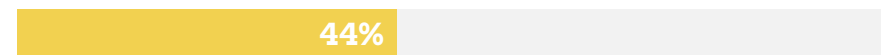
Email newsletters



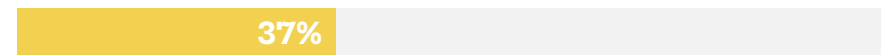
Webinars



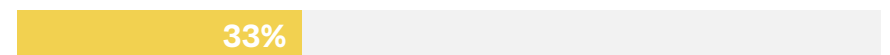
Custom content, such as case studies and reviews



White papers



Research-based content



Despite marketers' best efforts, inevitably, even the most properly structured lead nurture initiatives won't execute or generate the desired results. While 37% of practitioners aren't sure what percentage of leads are returned for additional nurturing, 27% report that up to half their leads are cycled back to the start of a campaign.

Crafting the Most Successful Lead Nurture Cadence

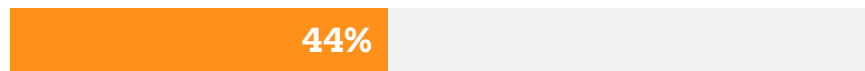
Despite a preference for and focus on retargeting campaigns, the survey revealed that the most popular type of lead nurture sequence was early stage, bringing in 83% of the vote. This implies that despite wanting to jumpstart lost opportunities, practitioners still recognize the importance of establishing a strong foundation early in the buyer's journey to create a more comprehensive journey with less risk of stalling.

Of course, early-stage campaigns weren't the only focus of the survey respondents and here the theme of retargeting was seen more accurately, as rounding out the top five campaign types were:

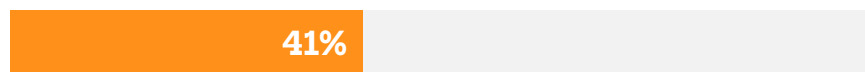
Marketing qualified



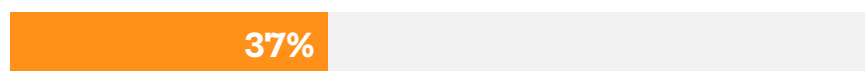
Warm-up campaign



Advanced-stage

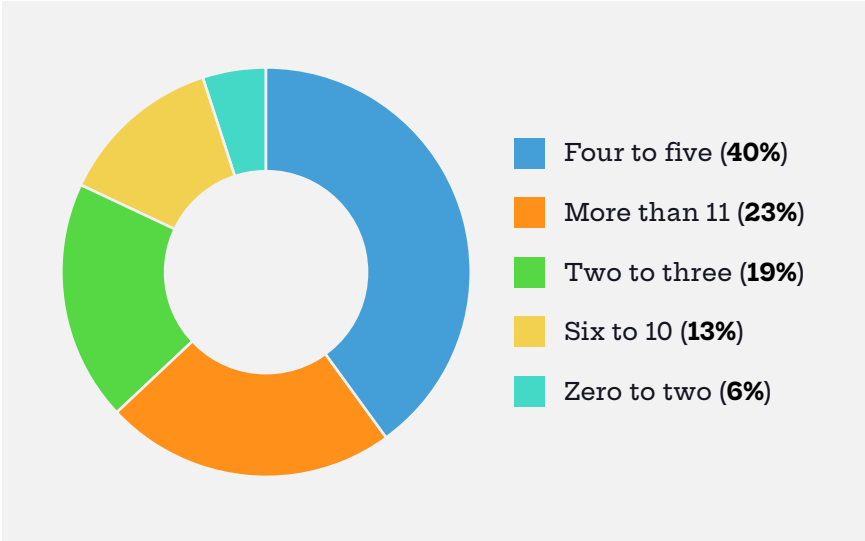


Current client



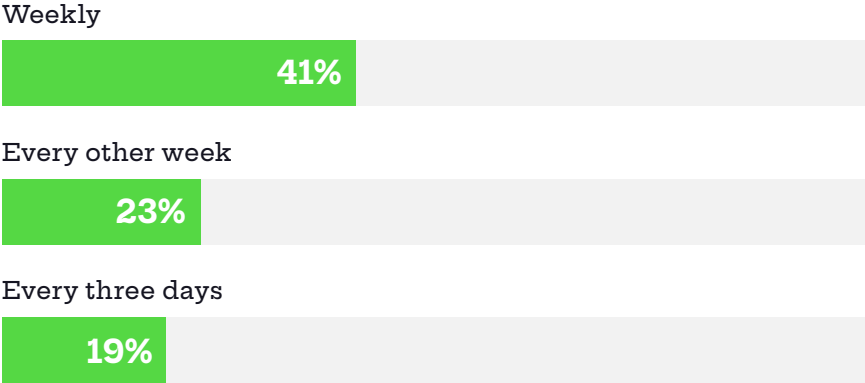
The sweet spot — so to speak — of lead nurture programs was one to 10 per year, as indicated by 60% of respondents. However, on the fringes of that number were more than 21 (19%) and between 11 and 20 (21%), which shows that practitioners are operating with a hyper-focus on specific accounts and leads instead of the traditional spray-and-pray methods.

Across those programs, the most popular number of touches to include consisted of:



Those who rated their nurture programs as excellent were more likely to focus on more than 11 touches (57%), compared to 16% of poor/inadequate campaigns. There are several key benefits to increased touches, specifically around brand building and sales cycle length. Given that time is of the essence, marketers need to generate awareness as quickly as possible amidst shortening sales cycles.

For further context, the typical sales cycle of those with excellent nurture campaigns is three to six months, while those that are poor/inadequate often face cycles that last between six to nine months. In terms of when those touches are deployed, the typical cadence of nurture programs is:



Conclusion

Looking ahead, practitioners indicated that they have several goals regarding the future of their lead nurturing initiatives. Over the next year, marketers intend to:

Increase conversion rates

77%

Increase the number of opportunities entering the pipeline

74%

Generate warmer, sales-ready leads

69%

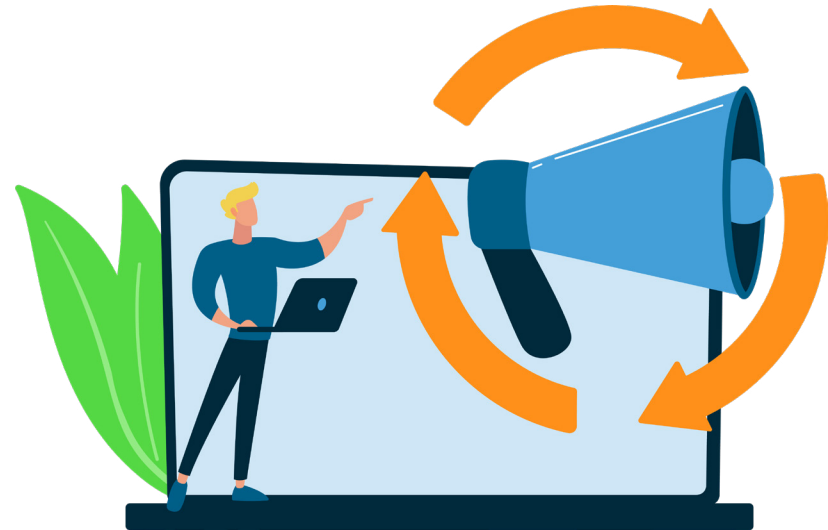
Improve segmentation of prospects based on interests/behavior

47%

Institute 'always on' nurturing

41%

It's clear that despite a lack of confidence in current strategies, practitioners are focused on increasing the success of their lead nurture initiatives by closing more deals and generating more accounts to nurture. As demonstrated by the survey results, companies that are seeing success with their lead nurture initiatives are running campaigns with multiple touches, resulting in accelerated sales cycles. To properly succeed with lead nurturing, practitioners need to focus on building brand awareness and forging strong connections with existing leads and new prospects.

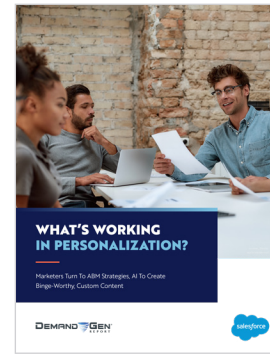




What's Working in Marketing Measurement & Attribution



Content Preferences Benchmark Survey



What's Working in Personalization



State Of Lead Generation



Demand Gen Report is a targeted online publication that uncovers the strategies and solutions that help companies better align their sales and marketing organizations, and ultimately, drive growth. A key component of the publication's editorial coverage focuses on the sales and marketing automation tools that enable companies to better measure and manage their multi-channel demand generation efforts.

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