HOW TO ATTRACT MORE PROSPECTS

ACT-ON SOLUTIONS GUIDE

YOUR GUIDE TO:

Optimizing Your Demand
Generation Engine and Strategy

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WHAT IS DEMAND GENERATION

and Why Should You Care?

Demand generation is the process of developing and executing a series of strategies, tactics, campaigns, and assets to attract new prospects, convert quality leads, and increase consumer awareness and interest at every significant touchpoint along the customer journey.

01

Attract new prospects

02

Convert quality leads

03

Increase consumer awareness

But it's about more than just generating leads; it's about creating higher quality leads, shortening the sales cycle, and producing revenue that's directly attributable to specific actions. And it's about doing so while respecting your customers' intelligence.

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The days of the hard sell are long over.

Today, effective demand generation is founded on presenting relevant and useful information that instructs, guides, and persuades your prospects to engage with your content and brand and to take desired actions.

Yet, despite the fact that 73% of marketers cite "Focusing on lead quality over lead quantity" as their top demand generation priority, many companies are struggling to make the switch from a sales-based approach to a customer-centric model. It's understandable. Modern demand generation strategies represent a major paradigm shift, and marketers sometimes find it difficult (or simply don't have the time to adjust) to a new playing field. It's no longer a set of tactics but rather an entire marketing strategy unto itself, which means that it involves multiple channels and mediums.

73% of marketers cite "Focusing on lead quality over lead quantity" as their top demand generation priority.

Demand Gen Report

Let's examine a few of the most effective demand generation channels (and the challenges of each) that are preventing marketers from reaching their goals.
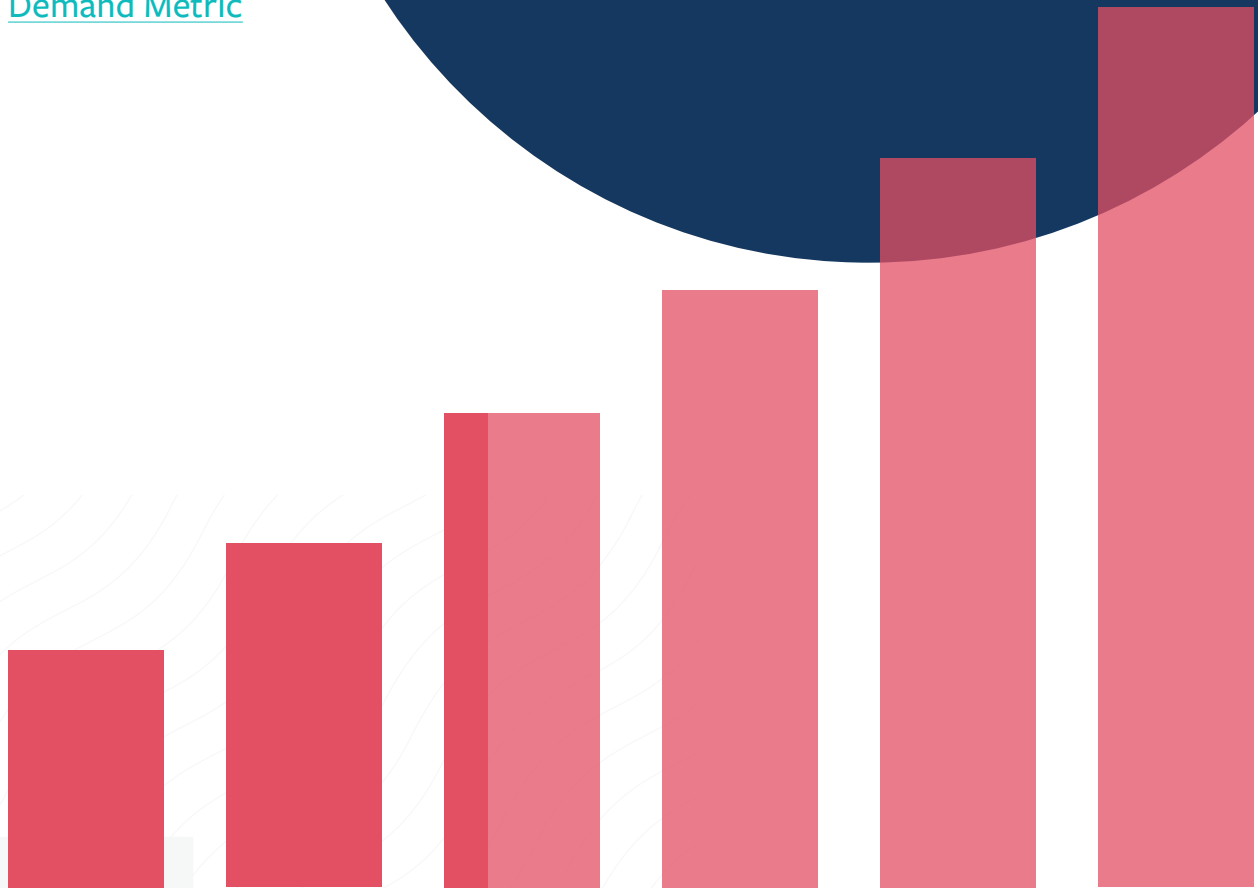
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Content marketing costs

62% less than

traditional marketing and generates about

3 times as many leads.

Demand Metric

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CREATING THE RIGHT CONTENT

Effective demand generation is about moving your prospects through the sales funnel, not berating them with self-promotional materials. Therefore, you should be more focused on delivering high-value marketing materials that educate your audience and inform their customer journey and less focused on your brand and what you're selling.

datasheets

blogs

ebooks

The problem, of course, is that producing great content that resonates with your audience at every step along their journey and builds trust through thought leadership is difficult to achieve consistently over time. Most marketing teams are relatively small, so a handful of marketers are expected to wear several different hats — limiting their ability to do one thing extremely well.

And even somewhat larger teams with dedicated content specialists and strategists still struggle to write purposeful content and distribute those materials to their target audiences at the right time (more on that in a bit). Part of the reason for this is that not all content and demand gen marketers truly know their audience.

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To solve this problem, you need to dig into the data (both quantitative and experiential) to determine your key personas and create content that is suited for them and their unique needs. Gather useful information from your various analytics tools to gain a better understanding of your core customers and verticals, ignoring assumptions and letting the raw data act as your guide. Once you have a clearer picture of your target audiences, you can work to optimize your current content and identify related topics that will help answer your potential customers questions, foster trust, and nurture them through the sales funnel.

Another reason that demand generation strategies can fall flat is that, often times, key stakeholders want immediate results (more leads, more pipeline, more revenue — you've heard it all before). And their understanding of how to achieve those results and how long that can take can be... well, misguided. Again, demand generation is a process, not a tactic. So you need to build out your demand gen content in a way that meets your prospects where they're at in their journey.

In the next section, we'll figure out how to do just that!

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87%

OF B2B BUYERS

say online content has a moderate to major effect on purchasing decisions.

CMO Council

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DISTRIBUTING CONTENT THAT CONVERTS

For years now, we've been hearing marketers shout from the rooftops over and over again that "CONTENT IS KING" — but that's only partially true. Creating personalized content that engages and converts is the true and rightful king.

The modern B2B consumer isn't interested in impulse buying. In fact, on average, B2B buyers consume roughly 7 pieces of content before making a purchasing decision, and more than 60% of buyers make purchasing decisions based solely on information and recommendations they've acquired via digital content. This means you can't only rely on your salespeople to make the case for your brand and need to be creating informative content at the top, middle, and bottom of the sales funnel (TOFU, MOFU, BOFU, respectively). And if you want to retain existing customers and improve those relationships, you should also be developing content to upsell and cross-sell to that specific audience segment.

60% of buyers make purchasing decisions based solely on information and recommendations they've acquired via digital content.

Blue Corona

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Most importantly, though, you need to be getting all that great content you're producing in front of your various audience segments at key touchpoints. Here's an example of how, when done right, a prospect might engage with your content as they move through the sales funnel:

1 Quality search engine optimization (SEO) leads your prospect to a blog with intelligent personalized content recommendations.

2 While reading, the prospect views an informative webinar embedded in the blog.

3 Once finished reading the blog, the prospect clicks on the content recommendations and is redirected to a piece of gated content. They then enter their email address to download the content.

4 Now that they've moved from an anonymous visitor to a known prospect, you can enter the prospect into an automated program and begin sending helpful content around their specific needs and interests (based on the behavior they've already exhibited).

5 Next, the prospect clicks on the third email in a topic-based email campaign and reads a customer success story or case study, which demonstrates your value and inspires trust in your brand.

6 Combined, these actions meet the criteria for your team's marketing qualified lead (MQL) threshold, so a Sales Development Representative (SDR) emails the prospect a datasheet focused on your company's solution to their problem.

7 After a follow-up phone call, the SDR sends the prospect an eBook outlining how to discuss the benefits of your solution with their executive team.

In the model above, the SDR is a vital component, but it's ultimately the content that generates the demand — and it does so at a steady, comfortable pace. This is a great flow for your prospects and one that works for us day in and day out. This flow only works, however, if you are able to keep track of your customers and respond at the perfect time, which may seem like an immense and improbable task when you're engaging with multiple contacts at the same time. But there's another exceptionally easy and effective way to get your prospects to enter the sales funnel and interact with your content at the appropriate time: website personalization.

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78%

of CMOs believe **custom content is the future of marketing.**

Demand Metric

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LEVERAGING WEBSITE PERSONALIZATION

to Improve and Expedite the Customer Journey

Regardless of where you're at in your marketing journey, you've likely been hearing a lot about website personalization, but that phrase means different things to different people. In simplest terms, website personalization is the practice of tailoring your users digital experience by providing them with intelligent content and service recommendations. By using machine learning and artificial intelligence, digital marketers are able to deliver customized customer journeys that intuitively move prospects and customers through the sales cycle.
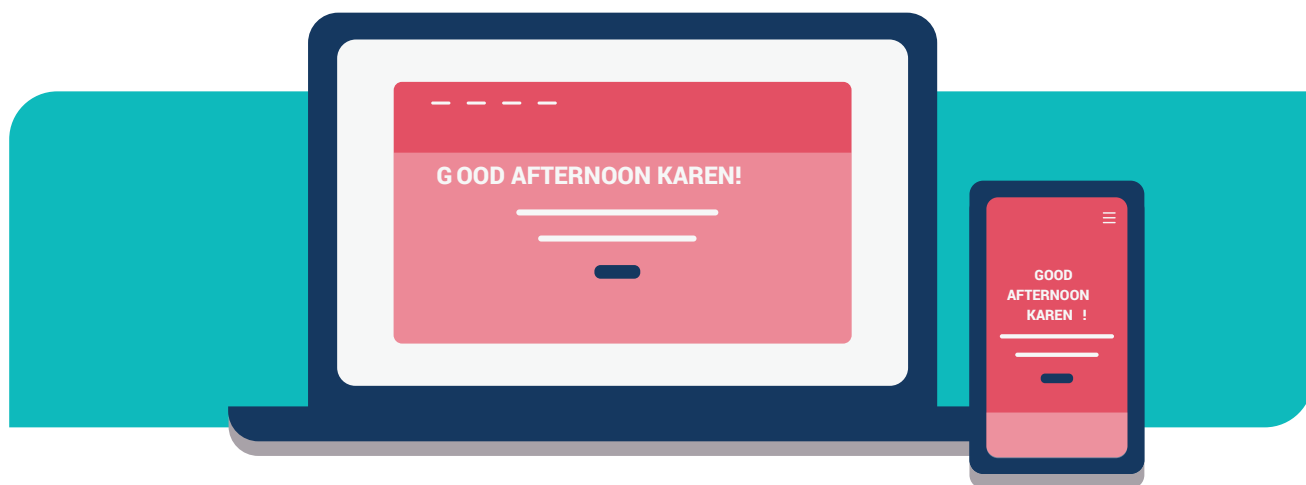
Website personalization has been around for a while now and continues to improve and evolve, but due to high costs and complicated implementation, not many organizations have been able to employ and execute this tactic until recently. Thankfully, modern solutions are more effective and affordable than ever before. They're also much easier to implement and optimize, which means better traffic and more conversions for your organization at an accelerated pace with less of a manual lift from your marketing team.

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However, in order for your website personalization strategy to be effective, it needs to be closely tied to your content marketing strategy. So before you begin researching the right solution for your organization, you need to check all of these items off your list:

Perform a thorough content audit to identify existing content gaps and make sure all of your resources and messaging is consistent and up to date.

Ensure that you have a nice balance of content throughout each touchpoint along the sales cycle (as mentioned above) and that your library consists of high-value thought leadership pieces and brand-specific content alike.

Review content performance to gain a crystal clear understanding of which pieces are performing well, which pieces could use a refresh, and which pieces are no longer effective or relevant.

Most importantly, you need to develop and follow a strict taxonomy for how you're organizing and labeling your content on your site. How you classify your content will have a major impact on how your website personalization tool actually delivers intelligent content, product, and service recommendations to your various audience segments. So it's critical that your team is aligned on how you're categorizing your content and adhering to a defined taxonomy consistently.

The brunt of the work with website personalization comes before you actually launch the solution, but if you're diligent about creating a strong content strategy as a framework to customize the user experience, you should expect to see better web traffic, increased time on page, and more conversions. And best of all, the data that you collect through your website personalization efforts will impact the lifecycle of your content strategy, allowing you to alter, update, and augment your approach based on the data you collect.

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DEVELOP LANDING PAGES AND FORMS THAT CONVERT

In today's lead-based marketing landscape, you'd think every organization would be gating all of their high-value assets, but you'd be wrong. Many marketers choose not to gate prime assets to encourage organic sharing, boost SEO, and collect inbound links. Not to mention that, traditionally, gating content has required a lot of work with no guaranteed ROI. These are all good reasons to offer content assets freely, but when compared with the benefits of gating content, it's no contest.

Of course you want to generate more traffic with your content and for your users to be viewing and reading that content. It's great for brand awareness, and many marketers use these vanity metrics to give the illusion of success. But when it comes to demand generation, conversions are the name of the game, which means collecting contact information is priority #1. If you don't have this valuable information, you can't deliver personalized content on your website; you can't drop known prospects into targeted automated email drip campaigns based on their industry, interests and pain points; and you can't know where they're at in their customer journey.

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Using videos on landing pages can **improve conversions by as much as**

86%

Eyeview

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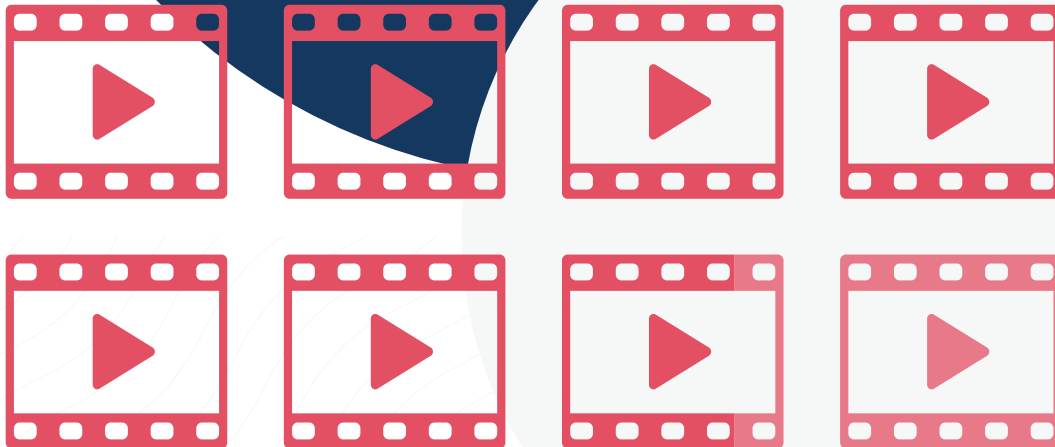
When gating your content, the two major tasks are developing your landing page and creating forms that convert. The former involves a close adherence to established best practices, including:

> Deliberate, relevant copy that matches paid and organic keywords you are trying to rank for, as well as any ad copy that got your visitors to click to the page. Vital information should be placed above the fold.

> Adding short- and/or long-form video content. Leveraging video on landing pages has been proven to drastically increase conversions.

> Using succinct language that states what you're offering, the benefits of that offering, and the desired action you want your users to take to receive the offering.

> Clear, concise, and prominent CTAs that explicitly states a single desired action.

> Creating unique landing pages for each traffic source. What resonates with your visitors from social might not resonate with your visitors from Google Ads.

> Keeping your design simple and consistent and eliminate any navigational elements. Take advantage of negative space and avoid busying up the page with conflicting elements.

Remember, the lone purpose of a landing page is to get your users to convert, so keep it simple, keep it relevant, and ditch the navigation. Your chief concern is getting that contact information, and all of your efforts building your landing pages should reflect that goal.

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When it comes to building out your forms, less is more. Your forms are the most critical component of your landing pages, so many of the best practices you should be following are similar to those of the landing page as a whole. Chiefly, you want to keep things as simple as possible to keep your audience focused on the task at hand: sharing their contact information to move from an anonymous visitor to a known lead.

Here are a few best practices to keep in mind when creating and posting your conversion forms on your demand generation landing pages:

01 The fewer the form fields the better. Ask for only the most critical information such as email address, first name, and phone number. If nothing else, you must get that email address to continue nurturing the lead in your marketing campaigns.

02 Your form fields should be laid out in a single column. This helps provide clarity and gives the impression that the form is easier to complete. Using multiple columns can confuse your visitors and distract from the conversion goal.

03 Start with the easy stuff. Your prospects are more likely to complete the form if it starts simple and gradually progresses into more complicated fields. So, start with the name, move to the email address and phone number, and if you want to add more fields, make sure you save the most complicated for last (e.g., company revenue).

04 Your form's title should act as a CTA, which means you should use direct language to describe what you want your users to do and what they'll get in return. For example, "Subscribe to Our Newsletter."

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90%
OF VIEWERS

who read your headline will also read your call to action.

MarketingSherpa

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To improve conversion rates, you should use progressive profiling, which allows you to gather information gradually each time a prospect engages with your content.

PROGRESSIVE PROFILING WITH ADAPTIVE FORMS

Sign-up for Our Newsletter

First name

Email address

SIGN-UP

Download our eBook

Phone number

Job title

DOWNLOAD

Adaptive forms allow you to request information in 2-3 fields in one session and will then ask for separate information in 2-3 fields in the next. So you might get a first name and an email address during the user's first touch and a phone number and professional role in the next. This way you can gather tons of great information to leverage in nurture campaigns while also keeping conversion rates high.

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BE AUTHENTIC ON SOCIAL MEDIA

to Engage and Convert Prospects

At last, we've come to perhaps the most frustrating and mystifying demand generation channel of all: social media. Social can be an especially tough nut to crack, and one of the main reasons for this is that consumers have become extremely socially savvy. They know exactly what an ad looks like. They know exactly what click-bait looks like. And they know exactly what sponsored content looks like.

As such, you shouldn't be trying to deceive your audience. Not only is it disingenuous and unethical, but it's also not going to work. Instead, you should be making a concerted effort to be more honest and more authentic. You want to build trust, not fool someone into clicking on your post and immediately bouncing from your site when they realize they've been duped. That's a zero sum game for both parties.

Instead you should be providing informative and entertaining content that entices your followers to actually engage with and click through your content. This means promoting your blog, eBooks, webinars, and other branded content, but it also means curating content from relevant thought leaders in your space and focusing on educating your prospects about their upcoming purchasing decision. Like all things demand gen, social isn't as much about promoting your products and services as it is about making your prospects feel comfortable with your brand and giving them the information they need to make intelligent buying choices.

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LinkedIn makes up more than

50%

OF ALL SOCIAL TRAFFIC

to B2B websites and blogs.

Foundation

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THE KEY TO MORE SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT?

Employee Advocacy

If you're serious about social, your first step should be to invest in a single source of social truth. You need a platform that allows you to schedule posts, track key performance indicators (KPIs), understand the social landscape, and integrate your social data throughout your entire marketing ecosystem — all in one central location.

If you're using Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc. in isolation, you're not going to be able to pull together that valuable information and glean key insights about how to best optimize your campaigns. In fact, the inability to consolidate and understand valuable metrics is one of the leading causes of social media marketing abandonment. So if you want to deliver better campaigns with better results, your social efforts should be housed under one roof.

EMPLOYEES + **SOCIAL MEDIA** = **SOCIAL ADVOCACY**
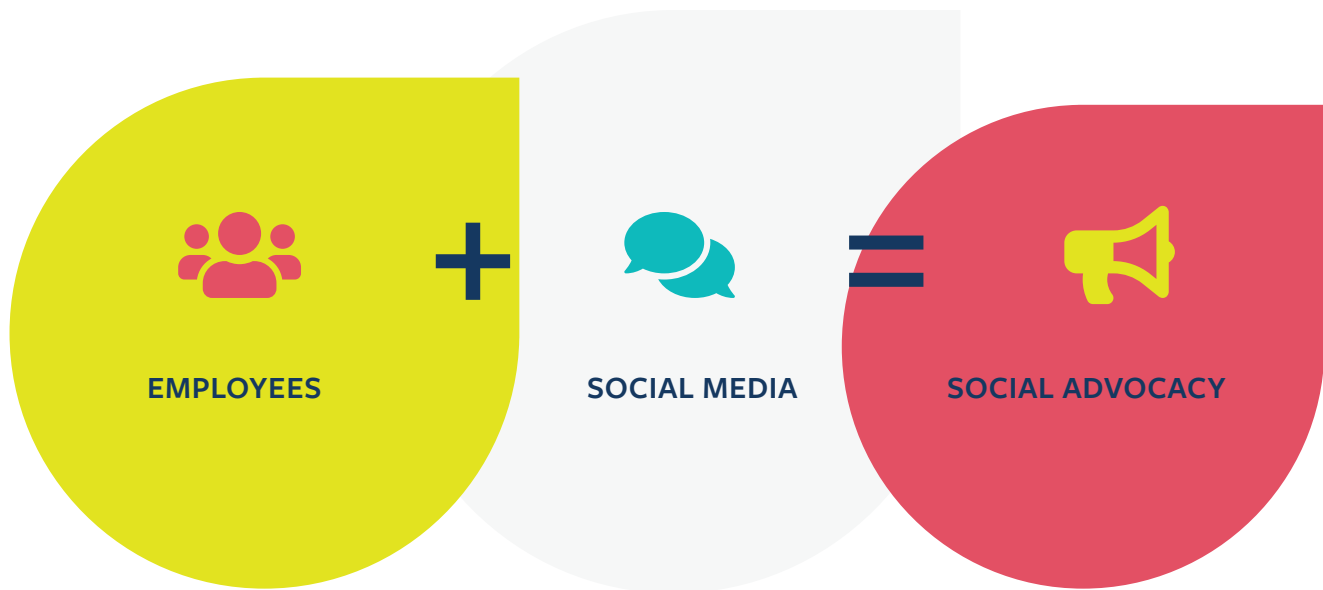
The key to using social media successfully in a B2B setting is promoting social advocacy. Therefore, the platform you choose should include a component that allows your employees to easily connect their social profiles to the organizational tool and then share your company's posts with their friends and followers. Social advocacy empowers your employees to act as brand ambassadors and also tracks how often their sharing your company's content and how successful those sharing efforts are. It's an especially easy and effective way to help your sales reps connect with prospects and customers alike. Social advocacy can increase the amount of impressions, clicks, and conversions on your social media platforms, which will ultimately help fuel your demand generation engine.

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ACTIVATE AND ACCELERATE

Your Demand Gen Engine with ACT-ON

The challenges listed previously can be difficult and time-consuming to overcome, but the Act-On platform is designed to help marketers of all experience levels and skill sets eliminate any barriers along your omnichannel path to marketing maturity.

Whether you're struggling to....

develop content that ranks well and attracts new prospects

provide a personalized user experience

generate conversions on your dedicated landing pages

or optimize your social media campaigns...

Act-On's marketing automation software can help you achieve and exceed your marketing goals.

And for customers who want to rapidly increase their marketing velocity, we go the extra mile with Act-On Accelerate — our end-to-end Marketing as a Service solution that helps evolving marketers align their marketing strategy with our platform for immediate and sustained success.

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If you'd like to learn more about Act-On, please read what our customers are saying about us online. We're proud of what they've achieved with our help, and we'd love to do the same for you.

Horizon

Horizon Distributors Experiences a 200% Increase in Leads Since Switching to Act-On

Download ⟶

AuditFile

AuditFile Achieves Conversion Rates as High as 67% Thanks to Act-On's Easy-to-Use Automation

Download ⟶

bisco industries

Bisco Leverages Act-On Marketing to Generate $100,000 in Quotable Opportunities Within Four Months

Download ⟶

Let's set aside some time to talk about your marketing challenges.

CONTACT US

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ABOUT ACT-ON SOFTWARE

Act-On Software is the world's growth marketing leader, offering solutions that empower marketers to move beyond the lead and engage targets at every step of the customer lifecycle. Act-On makes customer data actionable so marketers can strategize smart, effective solutions to grow their businesses and generate higher customer lifetime value – all with the fastest time-to-value.

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