



How to Choose the Right Lead Gen Company?



CIENCE
Sales Conversations Start Here

How to Choose the Right Lead Gen Company?

We asked our management 2 questions:

1. If you had a list of lead generation companies and you were to pick one, what things would you take into account in the first place?
2. What would be the stop signals for you?



John Girard
CIENCE CEO

THE 4 QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING THE DISCOVERY CALL:

1. What is your process for generating leads? It should be tailored to the task at hand, not purely automated.
2. How do you measure the success of your tactics?
3. How many clients do you have and how much experience with our industry?
4. What do you think about your role in the sales process? What should happen after you deliver us leads? This question will give you an idea of how sophisticated they are.

To understand if a company will provide an accurate list and efficient outreach, you need to look at the case studies or public reviews by other customers. That shows what the lead generation companies are capable of.

When working with the provider, check their performance at each of the “gates.” To get an appointment, you need a conversation. To get that you need good emails sent at the right time to the right person. To get that you need to have the contact info of the right person. To get that you need to know who you are looking for and how to go find them!

As concerns stop signals, I suggest listening for vocabulary that indicates they know sales specialization. This is what question 4 is about. If they say “we just give you good leads” that’s not enough. They should be able to adjust based on a deep understanding of the sales process. Also “too good to be true” pricing is a sign that it’s based on a bad list.

One more stop signal is when lead generation companies give you a price before asking questions and understanding who you are. That’s a bad sign! There’s also a method I think inefficient. Anything relying on “lists and databases” is likely to be very inaccurate.



Eric Quanstrom
CIENCE CMO

I'D CONSIDER 4 IMPORTANT THINGS:

- **Expertise.** I'd read the site to determine how well they understood and communicated sales development activities, tasks, process, and projects. I'd also look for professional certifications, division of labor (sales specialization), and the ability to articulate lead gen methodologies used to reach your target personas.
- **Social Proof.** I'd look at what current customers said about them, who they've worked with– the breadth and depth of those engagements– to the extent I could determine them.
- **Industry.** I'd want to know what they've done in my particular industry. I'd also want a broad scope of industries worked with to ensure creativity of strategy and variety of tactics.
- **Price.** This is a signal to the market of value, and also of scale. I'd seek to find vendors who can clearly explain what you get for your purchase (to calculate ROI). I'd also look to understand what kinds of engagements might scale with success (e.g. time to market, number of resources, contract lengths).

We talked a lot to many potential buyers and listened to their problems. To help them make the best purchase decision, our marketing team created the following [Buying Guide](#).



Michael Maynes
CIENCE VP Sales

The first criteria will be the quality of the leads that I get. You can check it with test leads. In addition to that, I would want to be in control of how leads are qualified, e.g. specific titles, industries. In other words, that should be the leads that fit my Ideal Customer Profile.

I will also look at how leads are generated. For example, there are lead generation companies that load a list of 1000 prospects and start calling them over and over. And sometimes it happens so, that people don't even know why they're scheduling appointments. They might you get the right person from the right company, but the steps involved in this process make this particular prospect less qualified.

In order to understand that lead generation companies don't do their work efficiently, I need to understand their process: what's involved?

1. Are they paying attention to my buyer persona?
2. Do they care about my brand and how do they represent it?
3. Do they understand my value position on the market?

There are many companies that don't even care about the name of the organization. They simply make 100 dials and get bad appointments. So I'd like to see some examples of the process: what the onboarding engagement looks like.

I would also want to know the campaign strategy. I'd be interested in campaigns that have multiple channels (e-mails, calls, LinkedIn) and that are more buyer-centric. The latter means that you put the buyer first. You show that you're interested in the prospects, their problems and try to provide some solutions.

I want to know what kind of information I would get at the end of the campaigns. I need to know open, conversion rates, and other metrics. If I make an investment, I have to learn apart from getting appointments. I can get 20 meetings. It's great. But why did I get them? Why didn't I get 50 instead? Was it a language use that attracted or scared away people? Regardless of the number of appointments you get, you need a lot of transparency on what's being executed and what's not.

In addition to that, data collecting enables you to do the market analytics, to test a theory about your product and its value proposition. I'd rather do it at the top of the funnel, where there are a lot of prospects and I can get many feedbacks, rather than at the later stages, where I risk my opportunities during the negotiations or deal closing. Finally, I'd like to see some examples of the content they create: email templates, phone-calls, posts on blogs and social media.

Stop signals:

1. Purchased list
2. Mono-channel sales development campaigns, i.e. the outreach is via email only or only calling.
3. Self-centric campaigns – when the main emphasis is on the seller, not the buyer.
4. Non-data-driven approach.

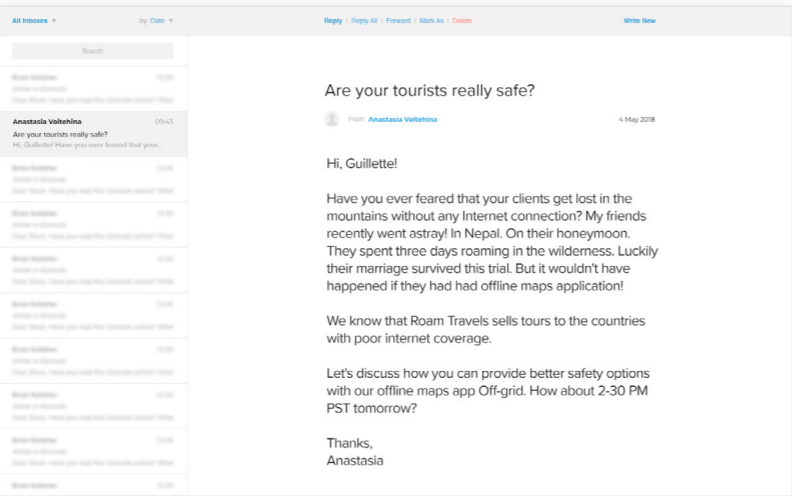


Olesia Maksymenko
Head of Sales Development
Department

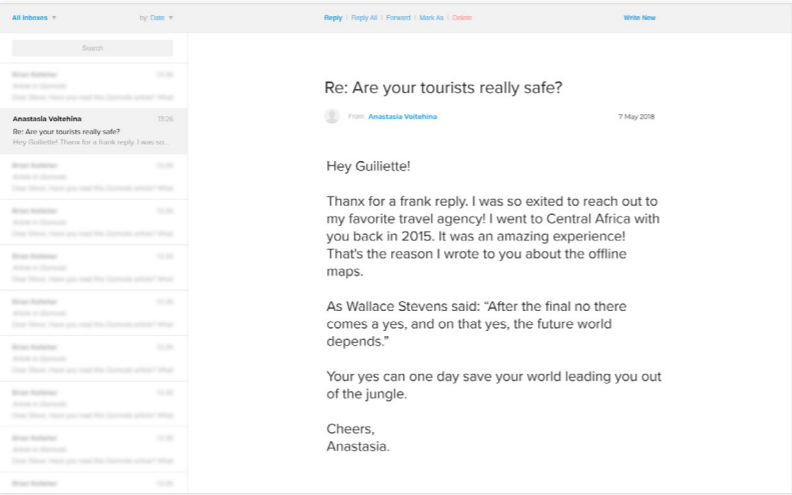
The most important thing for me would be their experience in my industry and the success stories of their customers. I would also ask them about their methods to check whether they're up-to-date. For example, recently Facebook updated its rules. Those companies that managed to adapt to them are winners.

What works in 2018 in lead generation:

- 1. Personalization.** It's important to show to a lead that we know why we reach out to them and what the outcomes of our cooperation are.
- 2. Storytelling.** Here's an example. You sell offline maps for travel agencies that provide tours to exotic locations. A good email would be:



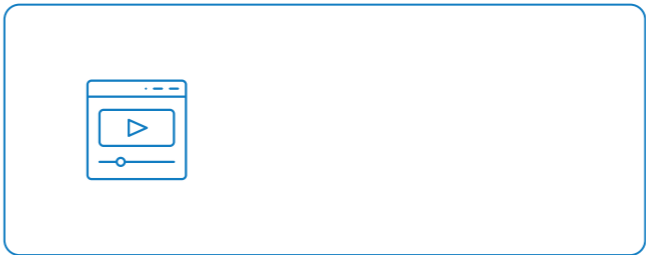
- 3. Communication.** Let's take an example from the previous item: offline maps. If Guillette replied she had never had problems with her tourists, reply-handling almost always wins the day:



This style is pretty non-standard, but such letters attract attention. Prospects get interested in continuing conversation. Dare to go out-of-the-box!

Obviously, these examples are somewhat simplified, but they help to understand how you start and maintain a conversation with a prospect.

- 4. Outreach that stands out.** For example, images, gifs or tools that enable to insert customized video in an email for a more effective outreach.



Important aspects of lead generation:

- 1. Channels (emails, calls, social networking websites).
- 2. The rate of touches (e.g. 2 emails, 5 calls, 3 messages on social networks).
- 3. The message of emails should be catchy and have a human feeling rather than standard marketing text.
- 4. The ability of SDRs to answer any prospect questions and overcome objections.
- 5. Responsiveness by SDRs (the key to increasing engagement).

Stop signals:

- 1. Inaccurate leads.
- 2. The company doesn't have software for outreach or uses an outdated program with a limited number of functions, is difficult to use, especially when it comes to reporting.



Taras Ilnytsky

Head of Data Enrichment
Department

First, I'd ensure research proficiency. Not all outsourced lead gen firms do this well, or at all. I'd read the reviews because they reflect customer experience. I'd take a look at their portfolio, as well as the clients they worked with. I would also check if they have any partners since it indicates they've been on market for several years and have built their own network.

Important aspects of data enrichment:

1. Ask your potential vendor to send you 100 test leads. Check if they're accurate and fit your buyer persona. I wouldn't work with lead generation companies that don't provide a free sample.

2. Ask what programs a company uses. If they don't have the right software, research will be longer and the quality of leads will be under question.

3. Ask if they do research upon request or they have a ready-made contact list. If they have a list, they're most likely resellers who purchase list from platform providers. In this case, you'll pay more due to inaccuracy levels.

4. Ask if they use human intelligence. People can provide their expert opinion. Furthermore, they can go beyond any preset list of requirements. For example, if a machine looks for Marketing Managers, and a person's position is Demand Gen Manager, a tool will most likely miss him or her in the list.

Things you should be aware of:

Scraping – a robot that searches for data on the Internet instead of people. First, it's illegal, because many state registries forbid this practice. Second, data quality is low (you will receive less than 25% of accurate leads), because most actual data is contained on social networking websites that can't be scraped.

How to tell a scraping business from the lead generation companies? They offer huge contact lists at low prices.

Scrapers differ from subscription-based data providers. The latter search information using legal methods, for example from email signatures. The main drawback of platforms is that they update data once in 3-6 months. When you order research services instead of a ready-made list, you will get the most up-to-date information.



Rade Kemalova

CIENCE Internal Team
Manager

I would look for the rating of lead generation companies. I suggest Clutch as a credible source. I would also estimate the work of their inbound team. How fast do they answer my questions? Do they provide comprehensive answers?

During a discovery call, I would ask about their strategy. How do they organize any lead generation process? Does one SDR fulfill all functions: campaign management, data enrichment, template writing, outreach to leads? Or do they have different people running these processes? I'd rather work with a team of professionals because one person can't do all these tasks efficiently.

When evaluating pricing, I would stick to the golden mean. I'd also estimate any promises of lead generation companies. Beware of the company who will "guarantee" results, as your mileage will always vary. For example, the abundance of conferences and receptivity in biotech makes it easy to set up to 20 appointments in a week.

However, if you target law firms, getting 2 appointments in the same time period will be a struggle. In this case, you need to rely on your own sales prospecting industry experiences and industry statistics (averages).



Anna Svetlichnaya

Head of Sales Operations
Specialists Department

I suggest doing as follows:

1. Research the history and background of different companies to see which one is the best fit for your needs. Review case studies to get a basic understanding of a particular organization's expertise both in lead generation and appointment setting.
2. Identify the experience of this company within your industry, analyze its target market. Are there any successful cases of providing services to companies in the same field?
3. Be attentive during the discovery call. A salesperson you're talking with should ask more questions and identify your needs rather than recite their capabilities and uniqueness. A Sales Rep is usually the face of the company, so pay attention to his/her manner of communication, integrity, and the way information is communicated to you.
4. Find out if they are tech-savvy and utilize the newest tools and software. Also, identify milestones, which are carried out solely by human touch.
5. Figure out if the pricing is reasonable and affordable for your company.

On a separate note, it would be helpful to have a call with an SDR who's currently working at this company to learn his/her background, evaluate the level of communication skills etc. Obviously, it doesn't mean that this person will work on your account. However, you'll be able to align your requirements with current employees and decide whether you want to proceed or not.

Special focus should be on the quality of test leads: Are they are easy to review, fit your Ideal Customer Profile, and were delivered on time. It will be easy to identify if these leads are up-to-date after the first outreach. You'll need to check the percentage of bounced emails and types of responses you receive. In case you get negative replies, saying that people are no longer with their companies, this is a trigger for you that the list might have been bought. At the very least it's dated.

Overall, here are the main things that matter when choosing a lead generation company:

1. Expertise within the business, it's adaptability to present-day realities and reputation in the marketplace.
2. Ability to align its processes and activities with your needs.



Andrew Khvatov

CIENCE Internal Team Lead

I would look at 4 things:

1. Reviews from their customers
2. Their content: articles and videos that educate
3. Case studies: how they solved particular problems for sales teams.
4. Their overall online presence: a shady business wouldn't want to attract attention to their website or account on social networks.

I would also want flexibility. I see it as a client-oriented problem-solving approach. In this case, a company adjusts its offer to the needs of my business rather than offers a fixed set of services.



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