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**LEAD GENERATION AS A MEANS  
OF ENSURING THE COMPETITIVE POSITION  
OF A TRADING COMPANY IN THE MARKET**

The growth of competition in the consumer market of Ukraine, especially in the FMCG sector, bears the need for revision the behavior of customers of the trading company and the corresponding transformation of business-processes in accordance with changes in consumer demand associated with the pandemic.

In order to stay on the market and ensure a more favorable competitive position, trading companies are actively implementing new sales technologies, expand the range of services, which requires additional informational impact on potential consumers. This, in turn, is associated with an increase in the cost of attracting new customers and generating leads.

In practical marketing and in the organization of work of sales managers the technology of formation of leads is used: classification of consumers depending on their readiness for purchase. Lead – are potential customers who, according to a certain sales funnel, are in various stages of readiness to purchase the goods and services offered by the trading company. In fact, lead – is the coldest contact with a potential customer, it can be a phone number or email left on the website of the trading company, which can be a clue to further communication and receipt of the customer.

The consumer is treated as an lead when he reacts to the communication channel, namely: left his data on the website, subscribed to the newsletter of the trade company, sent an e-mail request, or wrote a chat, or ordered a call back. However, it should be noted that not every lead becomes a buyer of a product or service of a trading company. Therefore, the following division is used [1]:

- cold lead is a consumer who is not ready to buy, he may be minimally informed, not interested, he has not yet formed a need for the proposed product, or he does not have enough money, and the purchase is postponed indefinitely;

- warm lead is an active consumer who has complete information, visits the website of a trading company, responds to advertising offers, subscribes to the newsletter, asks questions in the chat, etc.;

- hot lead is a consumer who has made a choice, is fully ready to buy and places an order to receive a product or service. If the trading company does not respond to this customer in a timely manner, or does not process the order well, the hot ice can turn warm, lose interest in the offer and eventually turn to a competitor.

Tracking and accounting of leads in CRM is currently an important tool for analyzing sales in the activities of trading companies. Information on the conversion of potential customers into active customers allows to determine the feasibility of using marketing tools and the relevance of advertising and other incentives to the needs of the target audience, as well as to assess the effectiveness of sales managers in persuading consumers to make a purchase.

You should also pay attention to such a concept as lead generation – the search for potential customers who can become buyers of a trading company. In turn, the systematic work on the definition and generation of leads ensures the constant involvement of consumers, who from potential become real customers [2].

In the practice of lead generation at the present stage, you can track the growing marketing pressure, namely: today are actively developing new strategies to attract customers and used as marketing channels social networks and multi-platform cloud messengers with VoIP for smartphones, tablets and PCs.

The intensification of marketing activities intensifies competition in the struggle for the attention of users, and now the presence of a trading company in the information field of potential customers is becoming increasingly complex and expensive. If before there was enough quality processing of incoming potential customers, today for the stable existence and development of the market operator it is necessary to look for new points of attraction and apply creative means of interaction with the target audience and more actively influence it, turning interested users into loyal customers.

An example of modern types of content for lead generation can serve such lead-magnets as:

- e-book – materials that reveal deep issues and reveal the meaning of purchasing certain products;
- customer cases – a classic method to show the benefits of the company's products on real examples of already involved customers;
- webinars – online meetings with target group leaders, bloggers with marketing and educational goals;
- selections of materials – convenient pages for paid and organic traffic, etc.

It is important to keep in mind that users choose the most convenient formats for content consumption. Maybe it's reading an article or an e-book, listening to information, or watching a video on YouTube. In the process of forming potential customers, the trading company must be sure that the maximum convenience of the perception of content for different groups of consumers.

In addition, to increase the efficiency of lead generation within the trading company, it is necessary to regulate business-processes and provide a single information environment for the work of all participants. A clear infrastructure of marketing channels that provide lead generation should be evaluated through the introduction of a system of transparent, unambiguously measurable and controlled indicators. The technology of optimal lead generation requires appropriate preparation of input data, content creation, method of collection and processing of lead, as well as careful tracking of the stages of the passage of lead after the first contact with the sales department.

It is important to analyze all stages of work with lead from the moment it enters the field of view of the trading company to the conclusion of the agreement, each step must meet customer expectations, and the actions of staff are logical and appropriate.

Thus, the turbulence of the last two years pushes the trading business to intensify the attraction of new customers and the implementation of modern strategies for the formation and generation of potential customers, we can note a growing trend of lead generation.

In this area of activity, the best option is a combination of classic communication channels and innovative technologies to work with potential customers, which in turn provides a synergistic effect and ensures a stable position of the trading company in a competitive environment.

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