



INDUSTRY INSIGHTS

Why All Leads Are Not Created Equal

How do you assess differences in lead quality when all leads come in the same format with the same info?

It's easy to look at paid demand gen through the lens of standardization.

With few exceptions, the B2B tech industry has come to define a marketing "lead" in very consistent terms, as an individual...

- Who works for a business or government agency
- In a role related to business technology
- With a focus or interest in your product area
- Who has directly opted in to receive your content and follow-up outreach

We've also standardized on the data that should accompany a lead, and how that data is delivered:

- Demographic information: Name, title, role or function, contact information
- Firmographic information: Industry, company size
- Details about the content consumed
- Delivered in an extensible file format (such as Excel) or directly integrated into marketing automation systems

So if this represents the basic definition of a lead and what to expect, why do some providers charge a higher CPL than others? The answer lies primarily in what's not captured in your lead file – information about lead origin and activity history, topics of interest, quantity and recency of their research, and whether other influencers on their account team are also showing intent.

Data points like these are key indicators of a lead's disposition, receptiveness and readiness to convert. And though this kind of info isn't as black and white as spreadsheet demographics, it's completely knowable and quantifiable, and should be a core part of your evaluation of lead vendors.

TechTarget's 4-Point Lead Gen Guarantee to You

TechTarget created the industry standard in high-quality B2B lead generation. When you run a lead campaign with us, we guarantee we will...

1

Deliver leads based on direct knowledge of users' activity and purchase intent related to your solutions. This ensures all leads are pre-qualified and "nurture ready."

2

Exclusively use only relevant content offers, and never gift cards or other economic incentives, to generate leads.

3

Provide transparency about the specific content used to generate every lead.

4

Provide intelligence and context about the individual and the overall account from which the lead came, aiding lead scoring and optimizing follow ups.

How to Gain More Confidence in Lead Quality Before You Buy: 3 Questions to Ask Providers

Since it's impossible to capture important qualifying info in a standard lead form, how can you increase your confidence in lead quality at the point of purchase? Start by asking lead providers these three questions:

1. How do I know the leads you're selling me are prospective buyers and not just names from a database?

Demanding full transparency on where your leads came from is critical because there's a direct connection between source, quality and conversion rate.

Real leads are not just names. They are actual people in the midst of a buying journey; their online activity is a record of that journey. They use search engines to research business or technical challenges; interact with peers and experts online and off; and consume relevant content that indicates intent to purchase.

At a time when buyer research journeys offer more and more insights into prospect intent and readiness, many lead providers are moving in the opposite direction, toward lead commoditization. In order to meet the demand for lower price and higher quantity, they veer away from activity and intent toward something much closer to contact delivery.

What's the difference? Think about the impact of the following common practices on your ability to determine a lead's likelihood to purchase:

- Building user databases not through registration and content relationships, but through Web scraping and compiled sources
- Relying on "lead brokering," in which the majority of the leads you purchase come from external sources that have no insight into purchase intent
- Providing "one and done" leads that have no demonstrated activity history against relevant topics or content outside of your campaign

Real leads have an activity context. Contacts do not. There are plenty of sources for contacts, and good applications for using them. But you won't convert contacts at anywhere near the rate as leads, and you shouldn't think you are buying leads only to receive contacts.

In strong contrast to these practices, TechTarget's extensive network of owned-and-operated content communities drives organic research from in-market technology buyers. We maintain a rich database of information about their research activity over time. We know what content initially brought them into our network, as well as what they are currently most interested in. We know the focus, stage, timing and sequence of every content interaction. We know who else on their buying team is also active on this topic. And we use all of this information when we promote your content and generate leads for you.

2. What offer or promotion did you use to generate the lead?

Many lead providers use promotional tactics that have nothing to do with you or your solution, such as games, gift cards or other economic incentives. In exchange they obtain the contact's permission to have you contact them. In reality, these contacts have no interest beyond receiving the gift offer.

This is not a lead by any definition. A lead is someone who at least responded to a relevant content offer from you. Lead providers should not only tell you what the offer was, but guarantee that the lead wasn't otherwise incentivized.

TechTarget never uses paid incentives to generate leads. 100% of the leads you get from TechTarget opt in to relevant content provided or sponsored by you. Every promotion we send on your behalf goes to a prospect with a demonstrated record of previous activity and interest in your solution area.

This practice enables TechTarget not only to pre-qualify prospects for you, but to drive efficiency. Prospects with recent activity related to your solution convert better, both when we initially generate the lead for you and when you start nurturing them post-delivery.

3. What other proof do you have that the account where the lead works is in market for my solution right now?

Businesses never rely on one person to make complex, expensive enterprise tech purchases. The average purchase decision involves at least a half-dozen decision-makers and influencers across the account. A key part of lead quality is understanding not just the source and activity history of the lead you received, but that of other contacts on his or her buying team.

The goal of lead gen is to build a database of prospects that can be efficiently nurtured into pipeline.... Filters may actually decrease your potential by disqualifying prospects with strong intent or interest.

B2B Demand Gen is Not a Numbers Game

There are a limited number of real buyers in every tech market. Look for lead providers that are invested in driving not just names in a spreadsheet but pre-qualified prospects that have the best-possible chance to convert to pipeline.

	Other Providers	TechTarget
Goal	Add contacts to your database	Identify where projects are happening; Engage buyers with your content
Deliverable	Cheapest possible contacts	Highest possible quality
Lead source	Unknown/not listed	Directly generated
Promotions	Not based on intent	Based on intent and previous activity
Reporting	No detail on lead/account activity	Purchase research details for each lead
Opt-ins	May use gift cards or gamification	Always based on content

Lead providers that broker leads will have no insight into relevant account activity. If they say they do, they are likely deriving it from third-party overlays that have no connection to your lead's activity. Ask your providers to offer insight into what they know about the overall account. It's a key factor in trusting that the leads you're buying are truly qualified.

At TechTarget, leads come from accounts exhibiting true purchase intent. When you enlist TechTarget for lead generation, you get more than a set of defined data points in a standardized spreadsheet. Along with each lead, you receive insights into the relevant research activity from both the lead and his or her extended buying team. Furthermore, our client consulting managers help you assess activity and optimize quality through insight into what content is driving the most impact during your campaign. These steps are key to identifying and enhancing lead quality far beyond what you can see in a spreadsheet. They're critical in helping you reach the outcomes you seek.

The Unintended Impact of Lead Commoditization: Pushing Costs Downstream

The industry's push toward commoditization and contact generation at scale ultimately drives up your overall costs and slows down delivery of real value. When you think about demand gen in terms of quality, it's clear there are a lot fewer "real" leads available than you may have thought. As long as you emphasize quantity over quality, there's a much higher chance the leads you're buying are merely spreadsheets of compiled names masquerading as qualified prospects.

In the end, the money you save in CPL will be far less than the increased costs of trying to convert unqualified and uninterested contacts into sales opportunities. When contacts are generated in mass volumes they dilute your pool of real opportunity, resulting in wasted time and increased cost as human capital is left to sift through the noise.



EMAIL US TODAY

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Learn how TechTarget's approach can deliver better lead quality and demand generation optimized with intent insight.

About TechTarget

TechTarget (Nasdaq: TTGT) is the global leader in purchase intent-driven marketing and sales services that deliver business impact for enterprise technology companies. By creating abundant, high-quality editorial content across more than 140 highly targeted technology-specific websites, TechTarget attracts and nurtures communities of technology buyers researching their companies' information technology needs. By understanding these buyers' content consumption behaviors, TechTarget creates the purchase intent insights that fuel efficient and effective marketing and sales activities for clients around the world.

TechTarget has offices in Beijing, Boston, London, Munich, Paris, San Francisco, Singapore and Sydney. For more information, visit techtarget.com and follow us on Twitter [@TechTarget](https://twitter.com/TechTarget).



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