Nurture MQLs for Successful Sales

A BEST PRACTICES GUIDE

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Introduction

Welcome to the EM360 best practices guide on converting MQLs to SQLs. This guide is designed to equip you with a comprehensive set of best practices, strategies, and tactics aimed at transforming your MQLs into high-quality SQLs.

Tech marketers now need to prove they can quickly and efficiently assist businesses in achieving new marketing goals, while constantly demonstrating a clear return on investment. Throughout this guide, we'll explore proven methodologies, data-driven approaches, and the latest industry insights to empower your teams to nurture and convert MQLs effectively.

Whether you're looking to refine your existing strategies or maximise lead conversion, this guide serves as your roadmap. By implementing the insights and methodologies presented here, you'll not only enhance the quality of your leads but also drive revenue growth and foster long-term customer relationships.

Let's dive in and unlock the strategies that will elevate your MQL to SQL conversion processes and drive your business toward sustainable success.

MQLs: Crucial to a Successful Demand Generation Engine

An MQL, or Marketing Qualified Lead, is a lead that has not only engaged with your content but has gone a step further and acted on the content – i.e., downloaded a resource or listened to a podcast.

By taking this step they have indicated an interest in the solution your company offers and have acted upon that interest - making them a promising lead.

SiriusDecisions Lead Spectrum

LEVEL 1	**A response from an individual to a marketing campaign, or someone who has taken proactive steps to demonstrate interest in your message, product, or service.**	
LEVEL 2	**A meaningful interaction (via phone or email) with an individual meeting the requirements of a fully qualified company and audience.**	***MQL***
LEVEL 3	**Level 2, plus the individual demonstrates a specific need for and interest in your product or service.**	
LEVEL 4	**Level 3, plus the individual is in the process of defining a requirement for your product or service.**	
LEVEL 5	**Level 4, plus the individual has the responsibility, budget and a defined timeline for purchase.**	

What an MQL is...

A contact that:

- Matches your target persona
- Has engaged with your content
- Has acted on the content - either downloaded or listened
- Is at the top of your sales funnel
- Is a *prospective* customer

An EM360 MQL has also:

- Confirmed this action
- Verified their work details
- Agreed to receive follow-up communication
- Potentially engaged with multiple assets

What an MQL is not:

- Always BANT qualified
- Ready to buy immediately/sales-ready
- Eagerly waiting to be contacted by SDRs
- Necessarily a decision maker

How to Approach These Leads

The general flow within a demand generation engine is: Marketing Qualified Leads turn into Sales Qualified Leads (SQLs), which then turn into customers.

The key here is to develop trust. But how can this be done without losing the lead?

Striking a balance between aggressive and welcoming sales tactics

Despite this show of interest, it is crucial that the leads are first nurtured by marketing and then passed on to sales. There is a thin line between blowing up a lead and taking a lead to the next stage. This is why we highly stress the importance of marketing and sales being aligned on internal processes, and regularly revising strategies to find the right number of touchpoints before a sales proposal.

Focusing on the bigger picture: Establishing a relationship with the MQL

By remembering that an MQL is a prospective customer and not sales-ready, the goal changes from trying to ink a deal to establishing a relationship with the MQL. This long-term strategy of building a trusted relationship will work to move the lead down the sales funnel as well as attract other prospective customers to you.

Providing value before asking for information

The goal is to slowly reel them in by continuing to provide content and resources that speak to their unique pain points. Studies show that over 70% of the sales process is conducted without the buyer ever contacting the solution provider. Ultimately, the services offered by your company will potentially be purchased by the leads to solve their business-related problems. Meanwhile, you also become a voice of expertise in your industry that can be trusted and relied upon.

Offering freemium services

Offering a freemium product or service is one of the best ways to engage B2B buyers. These days, B2B purchase decisions require input from between six and ten different stakeholders. Offering a freemium service (meaning access to a limited version of your tool or product) allows stakeholders to better understand your offering and the value you provide. Many of our clients leverage this strategy ourselves, by offering an always-free version of their SaaS tool as well as a free, two-week trial.

Let's Dive Deeper into Nurturing MQLs

There is no single practice that works for all organisations in all industries. Depending on your sales cycle, you definitely want to plan ahead. It takes a proper nurturing program and a consistent workflow or cadence to convert these MQLs. Outline a roadmap to success with different touchpoints and align this with your MarTech or SalesTech stack. We will be providing some examples below.

In most cases, your activities must utilize email automation at the forefront to develop the MQL over several months by building trust and brand awareness, and encouraging no-pressure open dialogue.

In order to draw these leads in, you will need a library of informational content that addresses their pain points that you can share with strategic outreach. For each subject your content covers, you should have a version for each targeted leader that addresses what they are thinking about.

Types of content you can use:

- Newsletters
- Event promotion
- Case Studies
- Whitepapers/in-depth blogs
- Product demos
- Free trials

What happens if you bombard them with emails and calls/use aggressive sales tactics to convert them quickly?

When you get a new lead, especially one from a highly preferred client, it is easy to begin throwing all of your content and marketing in their direction to try and encourage them to buy. However, MQLs are leads in the very early stages of discovery and will become disinterested in aggressive sales tactics.

Do remember that not every solution will be right for every company and that the best sales are the ones that result in great business-client relationships and opportunities for upselling and cross-selling in the future. It is helpful to monitor and analyze the people who become disinterested during any part of the process and apply these findings to improve your process and decrease churn rates.

You need to realize that there is an average sales cycle in every organization, and it is only fair to try and not push these leads towards buying from you just for the short run. These leads already use certain solutions/vendors and sometimes it takes some time for them to shift to a different solution provider and change current practices.

Being too aggressive might prevent you from truly understanding the customer's needs or objections. If you do so, they are far more likely to unsubscribe, viewing you as an annoyance, than they are to become more interested. This means missing out on valuable feedback that could improve your product or sales approach.

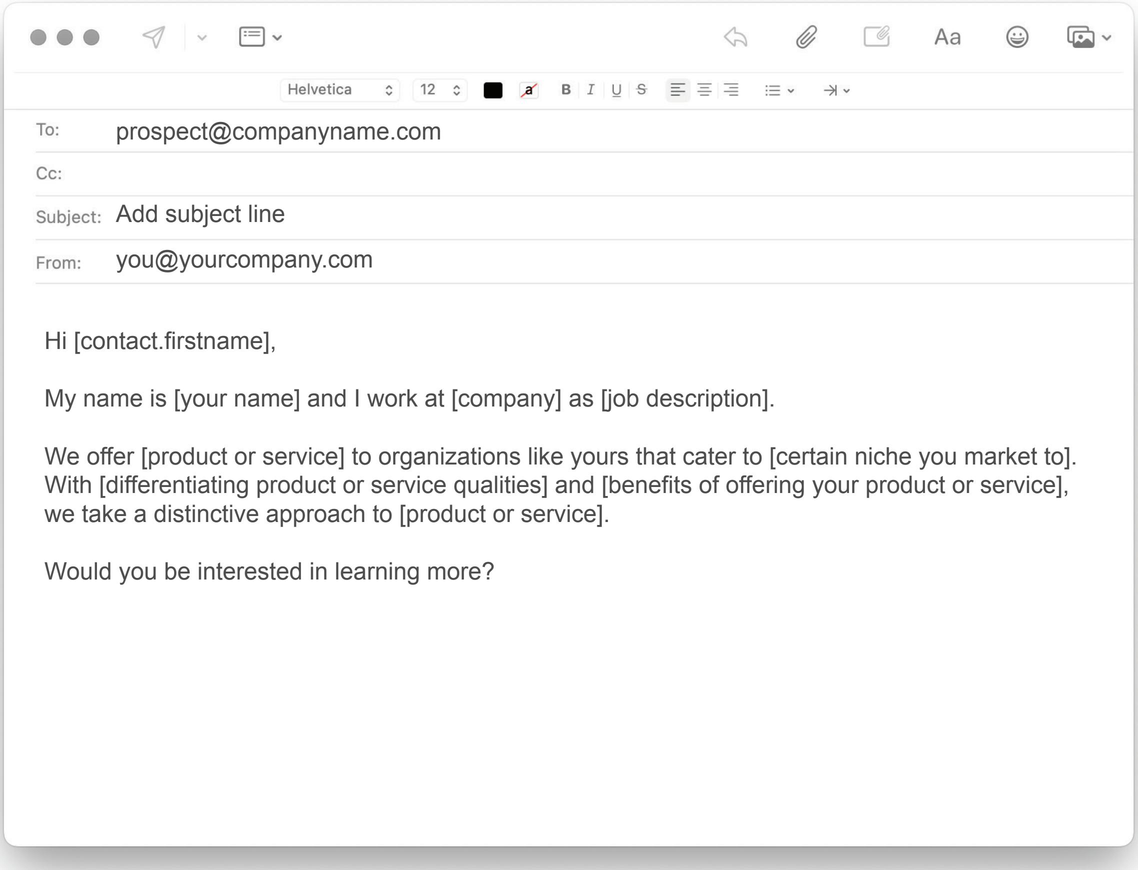
On the other hand, lead freshness is paramount to a full sales funnel; doing too little in this critical early period can mean they will likely forget about you and buy from the company that has better addressed their pain points with content.

Outreach Plan: From Lead To Sales Opportunity

Here's a clear step-by-step process of the ideal way to move an MQL from lead to opportunity, spaced over a 30-day period:

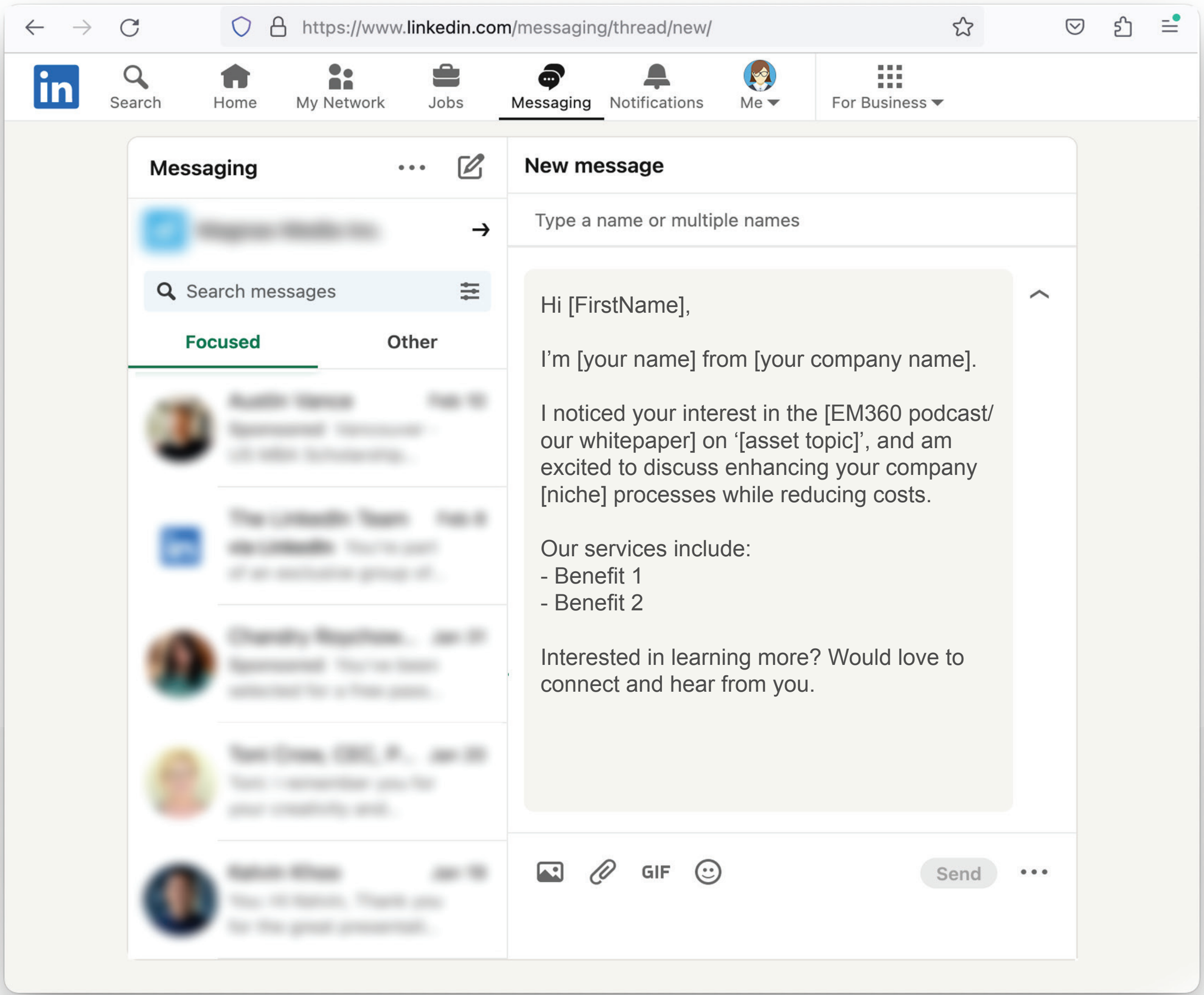
Day 1:

Once you get an MQL, it's time to introduce yourself and your company to the individual with a short email including a call to action that would intrigue them. This first nurture email should be focused on providing value rather than setting an appointment immediately.



Day 4:

Send a LinkedIn connection request with a note. It is likely that the email you sent on Day 1 gets buried in their inbox. Your note should not be selling them or asking them to speak with you. Instead, comment on something they have posted or ask a thought-provoking question about their company or background. The goal is to create a connection and open the possibility for a conversation.



Day 7:

People love to receive personalised emails. In this case, it is important to research the prospect, their company, and what their concerns may be that you can address. Sending targeted personalised emails and sharing content that addresses their pain points and is relevant to them will go a long way in ensuring you are memorable.

Day 9:

This is where we advise including calling into your lead nurture process. This extra touchpoint can help with driving engagement and being on top of your prospect's mind. We recommend you leave a concise message if it goes to voicemail.

Hey [name] - I hope you are well. How has your day been so far?

I don't want to take much of your time, my name is [your name] from [your company name]. This is further to some emails we sent you and a [podcast/whitepaper] on [asset topic].

I am curious if you're open to chat regarding [certain niche you market to] in the coming week?

YES = (BOOK A CALL)

NO = (Discuss your benefit statement and how your company helps similar organizations)

Maybe a demo of our system design and feature set would be of interest? What are your thoughts?

Day 14:

It's time for that emotional push. Nothing works better than an inspirational email that brings a smile to their face. This also shows your human side which is always an attractive feature for a buyer because it shows that there is a person behind the email and not a text generator. From this point, the frequency of your communication should change to weekly rather than every three days.

Day 19:

Familiarity of voice is important and calling is very much personality-based so make sure to use your personal touch. Depending on the last conversation you had with them (or if you left a voicemail) and the form of touchpoint they responded to/engaged with, drive the phone call in a personalized way (search them on LinkedIn or X/Twitter prior to calling).

Day 25:

At this point, you will want to send a message that includes a link to your demo or video showing what your solution can do for them. Remember, this isn't about what your solution can do, but what your solution can do for them.

Day 30:

At this point, you will want to continue with weekly or bi-weekly communication that continues to share value-added content. As you interact with the lead, continue following your marketing best practices so you don't miss changes in their funnel position.

Do's and Don'ts

DO'S

- Be clear on the kind of content you are going to use
- Concentrate on generating content that solves your customers' problems by giving them solutions they can easily put into action
- Keep your content relevant to what your audience wants or needs to know. This could be a thought leader interview or a solution to an industry problem or business challenge.
- Repurpose your podcast content on other platforms
- Use key quotes from your podcast episode to create social media posts
- Include captivating CTAs (call-to-action) in every episode
- Drive traffic further by retargeting visitors with content that brings them further through your sales funnel and encourages them to purchase your product. Examples of this type of content include webinar sign-ups, case studies, and white papers.

DON'TS

- Do not hold onto a lead in your sales pipeline for months and months, unless there is a positive signal. Instead, put it back into marketing nurture and reach out after some time.
- Do not use aggressive sales tactics but rather more consistent touch points.
- Do not leave unnecessary room for uncertainties and doubts that may lead potential customers to choose alternative options for their purchase.
- Do not continuously question the leads about the past i.e. trying to re-confirm an action they undertook, instead focus on building a relationship for the future.

Tips and Tricks

- Trying to question the leads about the past makes them more likely to get agitated and say no
- Not all leads should be nurtured the same way
- Pushy does not mean persuasive
- Build authority by offering training - Webinars, live events, podcasts, and videos allow you to train people on more detailed or technical tasks.
- Alignment between marketing and sales teams is very important
- Quality > Quantity
- Personalization is key, it makes you unique from other vendors
- Give information (about you, information guides, tips, use cases), then demand information (their pain points, availability to speak)
- Be creative - use videos/ voice notes
- Show persistence over different platforms, this creates a cumulative snowball effect
- Help rather than sell

FAQs

What can we expect the average conversion rate to be?

There is no standard or expected average conversion rate from MQLs as it can vary significantly depending on various factors such as industry, lead scoring, product or service offering, target audience, and the effectiveness of your marketing and sales processes. However, we say about 10-12% of MQLs across our campaigns convert to SQLs. The leads will be drip-fed to you in an agreed timescale until the fulfilled lead quota is met. It's essential to continuously track and measure your conversion rates to identify areas for improvement and optimize your internal processes accordingly.

Once we are handed our MQLs, what should we do with them?

Depending on the industries, job levels, and regions the leads come from, they can be qualified and scored based on the level of engagement. You can then segment these based on different factors (e.g. job level) within your ICP, send these groups tailored and personalized content, and pass the most qualified MQLs to the sales team. Read more on how to nurture MQLs in the sections above in this guide.

When does the EM360 content syndication program work best?

The EM360 content syndication program works best when the syndicated content is high-quality and relevant to the target audience, and we can confirm we have a wide network within our database to get a strong engagement from. Additionally, it can work well when you have the resources to manage and measure the program effectively and can continuously refine your strategy based on the results.

How does the EM360 podcast improve content quality for a lead generation campaign?

Podcasts have proven to be a great piece of content for syndication and have definitely valued clients more than other pieces of content. The presence of an industry leader as a host adds authority and makes the podcast more engaging. EM360 also creates a podcast snippet which we push to social media channels, along with the full podcast, to entice the listeners. The podcast mp3 file and snippet can be repurposed for promotional materials and to attract new listeners.

What criteria does EM360 follow to qualify an MQL?

Our tele-verification process is as follows:

- Do you remember listening to the podcast on (day)?
- Are all the fields we have for you correct (go through, email, job title, phone, etc)?
- Would you like to remain opted in to EM360 and partners? (This is a 2nd Opt-in which is very important for GDPR or CCPA)
- Would you be open to receiving further communication from (Company Name)?

Leads must answer all of the above questions positively to be qualified as an MQL.

What is the best form of content to use for a lead generation campaign?

The best type of content to use for a content syndication program is content that is high-quality, informative, and relevant to the target audience. Whitepapers and e-books, infographics and podcasts are highly engaging. Podcasts work the best for our subscribers and can provide valuable information and thought leadership on a particular subject.

How vast is EM360's database and which regions and industries can EM360 target?

There are over 640,000 subscribers within the EM360 community across three continents and across all industries.

Please complete the "Tell Us Your Audience" form for a more detailed breakdown of your ICP: **https://em360tech.com/tell-us-your-audience.**

How can I track the work EM360 is doing behind the scenes?

All the members of the campaign management team will be working with you to ensure a timely, successful and measurable campaign. We will provide you with regular updates and address any of your concerns via email. Regular review calls every two weeks will be held to discuss the status and performance of the campaign and get your feedback. We also share campaign reports that showcase the marketing statistics, batch breakdown, regions, and industries split.

Can EM360 book on-demand meetings?

We run podcast creation and content syndication campaigns to generate top-of-funnel MQLs. As a general practice, these need to be nurtured and then pushed to your SDRs to book meetings. The interest would be built gradually after we pass these on to you, so we are unable to book meetings at an early stage, only based on engagement with the assets. We have run this service in the past and our subscribers prefer to book a call directly with the sales team they are buying the solution from.

What EM360 Customers Have Achieved So Far

To read more about our customers' experiences and how their lead conversion journey has been, you can click on the case studies below:

"EM360 Were A Joy To Work With!"

Suzanne Serwatuk

Marketing Director at Safe Software

"We Highly Recommend EM360!"

Gemma Brown

International Marketing Manager at Dremio

"Hit Your Targets With EM360!"

Anna Bravo

Global Marketing & Comms Manager at HID Global

Conclusion

The campaign management team here at EM360 works closely and regularly with your marketing team. We also provide personalised assistance to SDRs with their follow-up approaches if need be.

This guide holds a few tips and tricks to make your nurturing process simpler. Additionally, a well-defined and measurable strategy, clear goals, and effective distribution channels can help to ensure the success of a content syndication program.

If you'd like to explore these approaches in more detail or have any questions, please contact our campaign management team and they will be happy to assist more.

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