

Easy Guide to Creating a Profitable Sales Funnel

Sales Funnel Stages

Sales funnel stages are the steps in the funnel that represent what the prospect is experiencing and how close they are to becoming a customer. There are six stages in a sales funnel, and they correspond to the eight pipeline stages that every sales team should have. They can also be customized for your business.

The six sales funnel stages are:

1. Awareness

In the Awareness stage, you are making prospects aware of your company, products, and brand. This is the introductory phase where they are learning who you are, what you do, and how you are unique. This stage corresponds to the prospecting and lead generation stage of your pipeline stages.

2. Discovery

The Discovery stage is where your prospect's interest is piqued. They are curious about your company and products and want to learn more. In this stage, you are sharing valuable educational content related to your prospect's problem or need. This stage occurs while you are qualifying your prospect, conducting initial meetings, and defining their needs.

3. Evaluation

At this stage, your prospect is evaluating you, your company, and your products and services. They are taking a closer look at what you have to offer than they were in the discovery phase. They are also looking at other options to see how you compare to them. At this point, you have probably sent them an initial quote or proposal and are answering any detailed questions they have.

4. Intent

In the Intent stage, your prospect has made a decision to buy from you, but the deal hasn't closed yet. They plan to buy but want to make sure your quote or proposal encompass everything they need at a price they are willing to pay. Here, you are negotiating terms or finalizing your proposal. Objections around price and other key terms usually surface here.

5. Purchase

At this stage, the deal is closed and your prospect is now your new customer. This is the honeymoon phase and presents the best opportunity to ask for referrals. The corresponding pipeline stage is closing the deal.

6. Loyalty

If your product or service is delivered over time, you have an opportunity to identify other needs that your products can meet and make additional sales. If your product is more of a one-time purchase, you can create a strategy to continue building relationships with your new customer so they keep you top of mind and buy from you in the future.

How to Setup a Sales Funnel

After the stages of your sales funnel have been defined, you will need to set it up in order to make it a reality. Setting up and executing an effective funnel requires planning and use of technology. You need to plan your prospect's experience ahead of time and use tools to facilitate actions that create the prospect experience.

We've created a sales funnel template so you don't have to create one from scratch. Download the template to follow along and set up your own.

There are four steps to setting up a sales funnel:

1. Map Out Your Prospect Experience

The first thing you need to do is to map out your prospect's experience within each stage of your sales funnel. This is what your prospect will experience when they interact with you at each stage. You can use post-it notes or you can use Salesforce Essentials to create and visualize your sales funnel.

Here's an example: To create your prospect experience in the Awareness stage, think about and articulate what you will do or say to your prospects when you first meet them. Then think about how your interaction will make them feel. Consider your prospect and their needs as you're doing this. Then, document your actions and your prospect's experience for this stage. Repeat this throughout the entire sales funnel.

2. Align Your Sales Funnel With Your Pipeline Stages

After you've mapped out your prospect's experience, make sure they align with your team's pipeline stages. You can do this on paper or in CRM software like Salesforce Essentials. Sales pipeline stages are stages in your sales process, while your sales funnel stages are the stages in your customer journey. Refer to our article on how to create an effective sales plan for more information about pipeline stages and how they relate to your sales strategy.

3. Define Activities for Each Sales Funnel Stage

After you've aligned your sales funnel stages and your pipeline stages, list each sales activity you will engage in to create the prospect's experience in each stage. For instance, if you plan to send white papers, articles, and videos to your prospect during the Discovery stage to create trust, document these activities.

4. Incorporate Sales Funnel Activities Into Your Sales Process

Once you have identified the activities that will help increase customer engagement or build trust, you will be able to incorporate your funnel activities and related tasks to your corresponding pipeline stages. Doing this will keep you focused on performing the right sales activities for each pipeline stage. Setting up your sales funnel is the key to creating powerful prospect experiences. It is important that you map them out ahead of time to ensure your sales process is in alignment with the customer's journey. CRM software set up to mirror your funnel activities can then help you manage and stay focused on the most important tasks during each stage in the process.

For example, during the Awareness stage, you could sponsor a local event filled with your target audience and collect contact information from event attendees to get them into your sales funnel. Or you could create a social media ad with a lead magnet and link to a lead capture form to collect prospect contact details.

Once you get your prospect's contact information at the event, you can invite them to an educational webinar. At the same time, you can further qualify them by asking qualifying questions during the webinar registration process.

Now let's get you started with your own profitable sales funnel!

What do you want to sell?

How are you going to lead your prospects to buy your product from you step by step?

If you need help with strategizing your funnel, reach out! I'd be happy to help!