

## *Lead Generation Through Customer Empowerment*

Vancouver-based Julie Bevacqua is a B2B marketing leader who helps businesses of all sizes and budgets to implement initiatives that build brand awareness, generate more leads, and close more sales. “Lead generation is the lifeblood of any B2B organization. Without a consistent flow of prospects who have, in some way, shape or form, expressed an interest in your company’s products or services, your revenue stream would dry up,” says Bevacqua.

Traditionally, lead generation was accomplished through distraction marketing, aka outbound marketing—or, as Seth Godin calls it, “interruption marketing.” Tactics such as print and broadcast advertising, cold calling, direct mail, and email blasts interrupt the prospect and present a message persuading them to buy. Many companies still use this outdated approach to generate leads but, in the new world of marketing, B2B marketers are changing course and using inbound marketing programs to their advantage.

Chris Brogan, social media expert and CEO of Owner Media Group, says, “The new lead generation shifts your methods as a marketer from ‘talk about your dumb product’ into ‘empower the users.’” The focus has shifted to fostering relationships through building communities and interacting with your target market. Bevacqua, CMO and co-founder of Yocale, says, “The goal is to inform and educate your customers and prospects, finding ways to help and empower them.”

Content marketing is a vital piece of B2B lead generation. A strategic content marketing plan—including elements such as whitepapers, blog posts, reports, case studies, webinars, videos—will help you attract prospects and build credibility. “By providing valuable information and educating your customers about topics they care about, you establish a reputation as a thought leader in your industry; this authority garners trust and generates more leads and, ultimately, more sales,” says Bevacqua.

With the emergence of the self-directed buyer, B2B marketers must find ways to adapt to the changing buying cycle. A content-based lead generation strategy—termed “permission marketing” by Seth Godin—will help companies build ongoing relationships with their customers, boost lead conversions, and keep their bottom line buoyant.