

The Ugly Truth About Free Marketing Leads

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A marketing lead is the identity of a person or company who might be interested in purchasing goods or services. It's the first stage of the selling process. The lead may have a business associated with them. Free marketing leads often come from trade shows, advertising, or even rude, aggressive techniques like cold-calling numbers from your local phone book. Cold calls, incidentally, aren't very effective.

Think about it-you don't know who these people are, what they need or want, and they aren't at all aware of your product or service.

Contact information doesn't become a marketing lead unless and until the person behind the contact information has some specific reason why they'd be more interested in your product or service than the man on the street. In other words, you have to know something about them. What they like, and more importantly what they need, especially if what they need has something to do with what you do or sell.

If you drop the words "free marketing leads" in your search engine, chances are it will generate page after page of hits. Chances, are almost all of these hits will be pretty dodgy, ranging from Multi-Level-Marketing schemes (that's the polite name for pyramid scams) to "companies" whose sole purpose is to rip you off by selling you lists of free leads. Wait a minute-if they're selling you leads, then the leads aren't free, right? You'd think. But apparently there truly is a sucker born every minute.

Another kind of "free marketing lead"-one of those kinds that at some point in the chain, you'll probably be expected to cough up some cash for-is lists of emails. Often the seller of the list claims that these emails are pre-filtered to be relevant to exactly what you are selling. Often enough, this same seller sells the same list to every would-be marketer, regardless of what that would-be marketer is actually trying to market.

In other words, these leads have the proverbial snowball's chance in a well-known, hot, unpleasant place of ever generating sales. They're basically a way of cold calling. In other words, if you've always dreamed of becoming a spammer, this is the way to go.

Sales leads are, obviously, leads that can lead directly to sales. Marketing leads are slightly different. These are targeted leads that are brand-specific rather than product specific. What makes your brand special? Do people know what you do? How you do it? Who you are? Think about who needs what you do. This is the first step in generating genuine marketing leads.

Perhaps the best, most honest, most dignified source of free marketing leads is your own website. People who visit your website do so for a reason. If they visit more than once, they're genuinely interested in what you do, who you are, and how you do what you do. These are genuine free marketing leads, and about as precisely targeted as you could hope for. Are you going to follow up, or are you going to let them slip away?