



*The*  
**ONLINE LEAD  
GENERATION** *Guide*

**For Professional Services Firms**

*Marketing Strategies for a New Age*



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Note: Portions of this guide have been published elsewhere by Hinge.

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# INTRODUCTION

Today's professional services marketplace is undergoing considerable change as it adjusts to the panoply of evolving online marketing tools. Many firms – perhaps most – still favor tried-and-true lead generation techniques such as client referrals, face-to-face networking, public speaking, sponsorships and traditional direct marketing.

While recent research indicates these remain effective tools for generating business leads, the way buyers select professional services is undergoing rapid and profound change. Firms that ignore these changes do so at their own risk.

This guide is designed to help you understand the transformation that is taking place in the new professional services marketplace. It will also help you prepare for changes you may need to make in your own marketing program to become more competitive and engaging as more and more buyers turn to online tools to educate themselves and select their service firms. The series of articles in this guide will teach you how to take advantage of online marketing's seductive powers. You will learn how to:

- › Put your firm on the map and get found
- › Attract the perfect audience for your firm
- › Build trust and loyalty without a single face-to-face encounter
- › Generate a steady stream of highly qualified leads
- › Create a marketing program that scales easily as you grow

You will also learn how these new marketing techniques are cracking open the frontiers and making it far easier for a firm in Delaware to attract customers in Denver, Dublin, and Delhi.

The new marketing is upon us. Embrace it today, and we promise you will never go back.

# 1.

## *Building Your Lead Generation Plan*



## How to Build Your Professional Services Lead Generation Plan

Generating qualified leads can be a professional services firm's biggest challenge. Most professionals are more comfortable closing sales than they are at finding new prospects. It's not surprising when you consider that talking with a potential client about their specific concerns is very familiar territory. Running a lead generation campaign often is not.

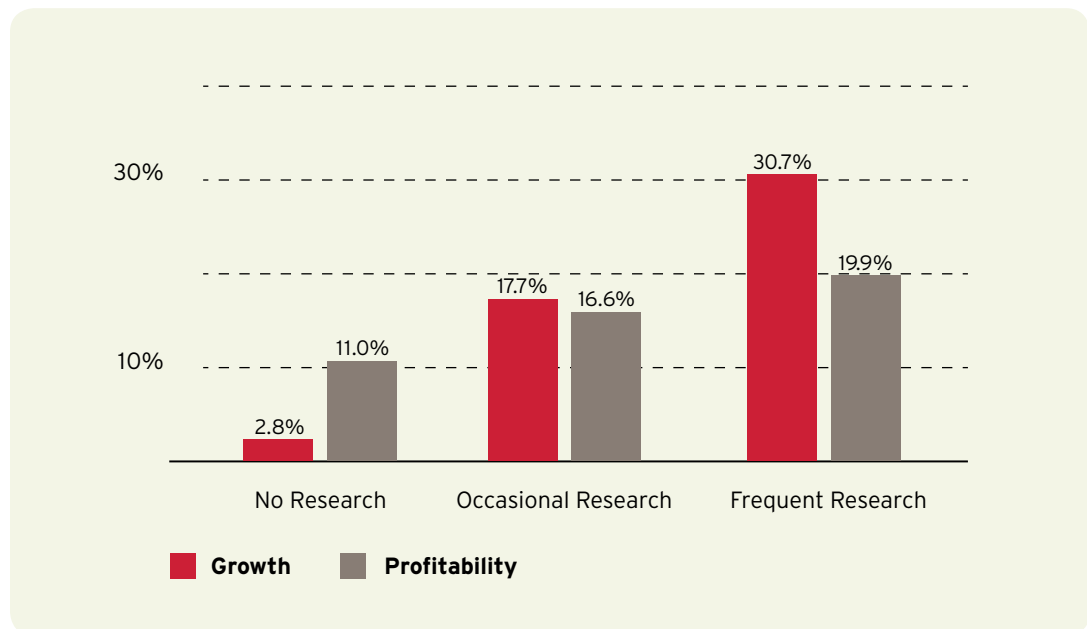
As a result, you may not put much effort into your lead generation plan. This is a costly mistake that limits growth and profitability. A *recent study*<sup>1</sup> showed that high growth firms were much more likely to have a plan.

Here are seven steps you can use to develop your professional services lead generation plan.

**1. You don't want leads, you want new clients.** Your plan should focus on generating qualified leads that are likely to turn into desirable new clients. Begin by determining, as precisely as you can, who your most desirable clients are. We will refer to these as your target clients.

**2. Refine and narrow your initial target client selection.** Look at the profitability of past and current clients, and be sure to factor in which are easy to work with. Where can you bring unusually high value? What type of client fits your firm's strengths? Where are the best growth prospects? Chances are only a small proportion of your clients are the most desirable. The 80/20 rule often applies here: that top 20% are often your best target client group. Be sure that the services you offer to this group give your firm a competitive advantage.

**3. Research your target client group.** If research sounds too difficult and expensive, consider this graph from a study of professional services firms:



Source: *The High Growth Professional Services Firm*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [www.hingemarketing.com/library/article/spiraling\\_up\\_create\\_a\\_high\\_growth\\_high\\_value\\_professional\\_services\\_firm/](http://www.hingemarketing.com/library/article/spiraling_up_create_a_high_growth_high_value_professional_services_firm/)

This chart compares firms that do not conduct systematic research on their target client group against those that perform occasional research and those that do it frequently (at least once per quarter). The frequent researchers grow 10 times faster and are almost twice as profitable as the firms that do not do research on their target audience. Suddenly research seems more practical.

The most useful research reaches out to potential clients, not just current clients. It should explore emerging trends, consider how your prospects look for solutions similar to those you provide, document what challenges they face, and even determine what associations they belong to and conferences they plan to attend. This data can be incredibly useful as you develop your lead generation plan. And as an added bonus, you will be able, if you choose, to repurpose your findings as an industry report – a valuable marketing tool.

*Frequent researchers grow 10 times faster and are almost twice as profitable as the firms that do not do research on their target audience.*

**4. Put yourself in a potential client's shoes.** What issues you are best able to help them solve? Ask yourself, "If I were struggling with these issues, what would I want to know? What would my questions be? What terms would I be searching on? Who would I be asking for help or a referral? What conferences would I be attending? What webinars would I want to watch?"

The answers to these questions will help you generate qualified leads. Remember, lead generation is not about the services you offer, it's about the problems you solve.

**5. Plan for a mix of offline and online lead generation.** Professional services buyers are changing. They look for information, education and service providers online as well as offline. Yes, they still ask their friends and seek referrals. But more and more buyers also perform web searches, use social media and post in online groups. Finding the right mix of online and offline lead generation is important (for more on this issue, see [chapter 4](#)).

**6. Select powerful lead generation partners.** Often it's easier to access your target audience if you have a partner. That partner might be a trade association or an educational institution that is already providing education or resources to your target clients. Sometimes another firm that serves your target audience – but which offers a different service or product – can be a valuable entree to prospects. It may require some work to find the ideal partner(s), but the effort will pay dividends well into the future. Many firms have built thriving practices by offering a training program through a prestigious university or trade association. Joint webinars or seminars are also proven strategies. These partners can also be great for conducting and publishing industry research (see 3 above).

**7. Select the offers, techniques and timing.** Think about what you might offer your target group. Offers come in many guises: whitepapers, webinars, workshops, e-books, videos, and many other formats. The choice should be driven by how your target audience likes to receive information. It is also very productive to have similar information available in multiple formats. For example, if you are offering information on consolidating information systems after a merger, you may want to offer a research report on best practices, a white paper series, webinars and a series of video case studies all around the same general topic. Whatever offers you pursue, be sure to develop titles that will sound practical and helpful to potential prospects.

If you are addressing very different target client groups, of course, you are going to need multiple lead generation plans. A general approach rarely appeals to disparate audiences. This is especially true if you solve different problems for different audiences.

Finally, focus on the timing of your campaigns. Start by scheduling important conferences, including their run-up and follow through. Then fill in lead generation activities in the obvious gaps. Lead generation should continue throughout the year. Ongoing campaigns are more effective than starting a program for a month or two, stopping, then restarting it six months later. Consistency helps because it allows you to be in front of your target client when they have a relevant need.

The biggest single reason lead generation plans fail is that they are not fully implemented. They start out well, you get busy, schedules slip and the campaign suffers. Even the very best plan will not generate qualified leads if it isn't implemented.

In addition, tracking is critical to the success of any campaign. Be sure to track the costs, generated leads, resulting proposals, win ratio, and long-term client value. This makes many subsequent decisions easier.



## Want to do it yourself?

From step-by-step How-Tos to in-depth courses, Hinge University will give you the skills and know-how to elevate your brand.

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# 2.

## *Better Client Targeting for Better Leads*



## Seven Steps to Improve Your Target Marketing

If you want to grow your firm faster and be more profitable (and who doesn't?) one of the key disciplines you need to master is better client targeting. Our research shows that high growth, high value firms are over three times more likely to have a clearly defined target group of clients. But that's not all. Data from the same study also show that firms which conduct structured, systematic research on their target clients grow faster and are more profitable.

So the evidence is clear. A well-defined and -understood target client group helps you grow and prosper. But how do you pull that off? Here are seven key questions you must be able to answer in the affirmative to maximize the positive impact of client targeting.

### **1. Have you analyzed your current clients to determine how to define your best target group?**

Your current clients are usually the best place to start. Look at profitability and their compatibility with your team. Do you have something special to offer them? In short, you are looking for what is already working. This step will help you make sure you are targeting the right types of clients.

### **2. Do you understand their problems, concerns, fears, hopes and daily reality?**

This is a bit trickier but really starts to pay dividends. Don't just focus on the hard demographics of your target audience. Try to learn what's going on between their ears. When you understand the pressures they are experiencing you can develop service offerings that will make their lives easier.

### **3. Can you get specific?**

Ah, there is the question. If you have sufficient information to describe your target client in detail, you are more likely to find and attract qualified prospects. This knowledge will help your entire marketing program – from brand development to your marketing plan.

### **4. Do you conduct regular research on your clients and/or their industry to anticipate clients' needs and uncover trends?**

This question relates directly back to the *research*<sup>1</sup> I cited in my opening paragraph. Systematic, structured research (not to be confused with the "informal research" many of us do on our clients) will put you in a position to understand the trends affecting your clients – in a way that allows you to anticipate what services they are likely to need. This way, you can position yourself to offer those services in advance of your competitors. This beats reacting to the market any day.

### **5. Can you identify the best channels to communicate with your target audience?**

While most of the prior questions focused on developing better targeting and a better message, answering this question helps you deliver that message. Where do your target clients get their information? Which blogs do they read? Which trade press outlets work best? What associations do they belong to? If you don't know the answer to these questions you will be less effective reaching your best prospects.

<sup>1</sup> <http://spiralingupbook.com/>

#### **6. Does your firm have credibility with your target audience?**

If you don't, you'll need a way to either build credibility or borrow it by partnering with someone who has it already. Here is a little shortcut. Sometimes the structured research that you are doing to understand the target audience can be used to build credibility. Sharing some of the more insightful findings through the channels that you identified in step 5 can be an effective way to generate credibility.

#### **7. Have they heard of your firm?**

This final point speaks to visibility. You may have a great reputation, but if few people in your prime target audience have heard of your firm, you will have limited traction. Here again there is good news. Visibility is one of the easier problems to solve if you understand your specific target well, have a credible message and understand where your customers turn for information.

As you reflect on these seven key questions, it becomes easier to see how your client targeting – and your whole business development program – can be improved.



## Need some help with your website?

Hinge can create a custom website that sets your firm apart through our High Performance Website program.

**Let's explore how we can help:**  
[leadgen@hingemarketing.com](mailto:leadgen@hingemarketing.com)

703 391 8870 | [hingemarketing.com](http://hingemarketing.com)

## Is Researching Your Clients and Prospects a Good Idea?

Is researching clients and prospects worth the investment? This question arises with enough frequency that it has caused me to think through the issues involved. It typically comes up in the context of a rebranding effort. The first step in any branding effort is, or should be, getting the strategy right. Building a brand on a flawed strategy is the equivalent of erecting a building on a flawed foundation. Never a good idea.

Our recommended approach involves not only understanding the internal view of your firm but also how your firm is perceived from the outside.

Concerns usually center around three main points.

- 1. I already know my clients.** It's unlikely that you will learn anything we don't already know about our clients, competitors, or marketplace.
- 2. Don't rock the boat.** It might upset our clients and even cost us business.
- 3. So what?** Even if you do learn something new, what's the upside? Will it outweigh the costs?

These are all valid concerns and very understandable. However, the reality of the situation turns out to be very different. Let's delve into each of these points.

### *I already know my clients.*

Not as well as you might think. True, you very likely do know a lot about your clients, their businesses and your competitors. But that knowledge is all from your perspective. We refer to it as your "internal brand." It's how you see reality looking out. Your firm, however, often looks very different from the outside looking in – your "external brand."

*65% of the time, your clients admit they don't really know all that your firm does.*

For example, our *research*<sup>1</sup> shows that when we ask a firm who their competitors are, and then we ask their clients and prospects the same question, we find that the average overlap is only about 20%. That means that from the market's perspective you don't know 80% of your true competitors.

Our research also shows that about 65% of the time your clients admit they don't really know all that your firm does. Even worse, most clients wish you could perform services that (in over 85% of the cases) you already offer!

Research on clients and prospects has another benefit, as well. It almost always uncovers a hidden strength – one that a firm's clients see but which the firm itself didn't realize they had. Some things you just take for granted. You're too close to see them. And of course there are all those hidden weaknesses that surface as well.

<sup>1</sup> [www.hingemarketing.com/library/article/how\\_buyers\\_buy\\_professional\\_services\\_buyers\\_study/](http://www.hingemarketing.com/library/article/how_buyers_buy_professional_services_buyers_study/)

When we put it all together, we find that firms have a 50-75% understanding of their external brand. On a significant number of issues they are just flat out wrong. In part, this is because many clients won't tell you when they are unhappy with your service. They don't want to hurt your feelings with critical comments. Or some clients may not give you positive feedback because they fear you will raise your prices if you find out how valuable you are to them.

### ***Don't rock the boat.***

Will talking to clients irritate them or dredge up old issues? While this is certainly an understandable concern, it turns out to not be an issue in reality. If clients don't want to be bothered, they simply don't participate in the survey or interviews. We find that most clients are both willing and very forthcoming. Most feel good being asked for their perspective, and the interview process tends to reflect well on the firm. As to loss of business, it simply doesn't happen. It's far more likely that a new opportunity will surface.

What if your clients are government employees? Many people are convinced that their government clients simply will not participate. While there are instances when they can't participate in an interview, these situations are rare. In reality, government clients respond very much like private sector clients do.

### ***So what?***

Up until a few months ago investing in research was a leap of faith. We knew from direct experience that systematic research resulted in smarter strategies and stronger competitive advantages, but we had no way of proving it. All that changed with our most recent *research study of high growth, high value professional services firms*<sup>1</sup>. At the last minute we added a question to find out if firms conducted systematic, structured research on their target client groups (client, prospects, potential prospects) – exactly the type of research we are talking about here.

Frankly, we weren't expecting to see much of a relationship between research and bottom line results. Boy were we wrong.

We broke firms into three groups: 1) those that did no such research (most firms don't); 2) those that did it occasionally; and 3) those that did it frequently (at least once per quarter). When we saw the results, we checked and rechecked them. Companies that conducted structured research, even occasionally, were more profitable and grew faster than those that did not (See chart on [page 5](#)).

Similarly, firms that conducted frequent research were even more profitable and grew even faster. And remember that profitability had to, by definition, take into account the cost of the research. It simply doesn't get much clearer or more compelling than that.

<sup>1</sup> [www.hingemarketing.com/library/article/high\\_growth\\_professional\\_services\\_firm\\_how\\_some\\_firms\\_grow\\_in\\_any\\_market/](http://www.hingemarketing.com/library/article/high_growth_professional_services_firm_how_some_firms_grow_in_any_market/)

### ***Bonus benefit.***

It turns out that there is another benefit associated with this type of research, one that is sometimes overlooked. In professional services firms, it is often a major challenge to get staff to change their behavior and support a new brand strategy. In the absence of a compelling reason to change, old habits die hard.

We have found that client and prospect data can be a powerful motivator for change. Hard data support stronger arguments than an edict from the management team or the opinion of a marketing consultant. Objective data turns out to be a great lever to encourage positive change.

So when you take into account the arguments for and against doing research on your clients and prospects it becomes clear why we are strong advocates of the practice. It allows you to get a clear picture of both your external and internal brands as they currently exist. That gives you a solid foundation on which to build your new brand.

## How Professional Services Buyers Are Changing: 5 Trends That Will Shape Your Firm

As I talk with professional services executives and look at the data, it's becoming clear that professional services buyers are changing. And the changes are not insignificant. While it's easy to ignore changes that happen over time, you do so at your own peril. Why? Because these changes are already having a profound impact on the entire industry, and the longer you wait the harder it will be to catch up.

Here are five trends that will likely shape the future of your firm.

### 1. Buyers expect more.

Buyers want to hire a firm that does exactly what they want done. In other words, they want someone who has a track record – in their industry – of solving the exact problem they are facing. This obviously favors the specialist. (Find out more in our free research report, *How Buyers Buy!*.)

### 2. Buyers are changing how they search for solutions.

Yes, referrals still matter, but not just from friends and colleagues. Referrals also come from online resources such as social networks and online forums. And, of course, there's search. Increasingly professional services are being found through Google and other search engines. Buyers also look for convergence. Are you referred by multiple sources in multiple channels?

### 3. Your website can make or break you.

Almost all buyers rule out some firms because their websites are not compelling. Confuse them and you will lose them. And the worst part is that you will never know that it happened. Have you ever had someone say they made a referral but the person never contacted you? The answer may lie in your website. (You can read more about lead generating websites in *section 5* of this guide.)

### 4. Trust is being built differently.

Getting to know people through professional associations or on the golf course can still work. But who has time? More and more, *trust is being built through education and sharing expertise online!* Your buyer has a need. They research solutions, get educated a bit and contact the folks who were most helpful and authoritative. Sound familiar? This trend is fueling the rise of content marketing.

### 5. Geography is collapsing.

With the rise of communications technology and the globalization of markets, local presence has become less important. It's more important for buyers to find someone who will understand and solve their problem, regardless of where they are located. Is face-to-face still important? Sure. But video is growing very, very fast.

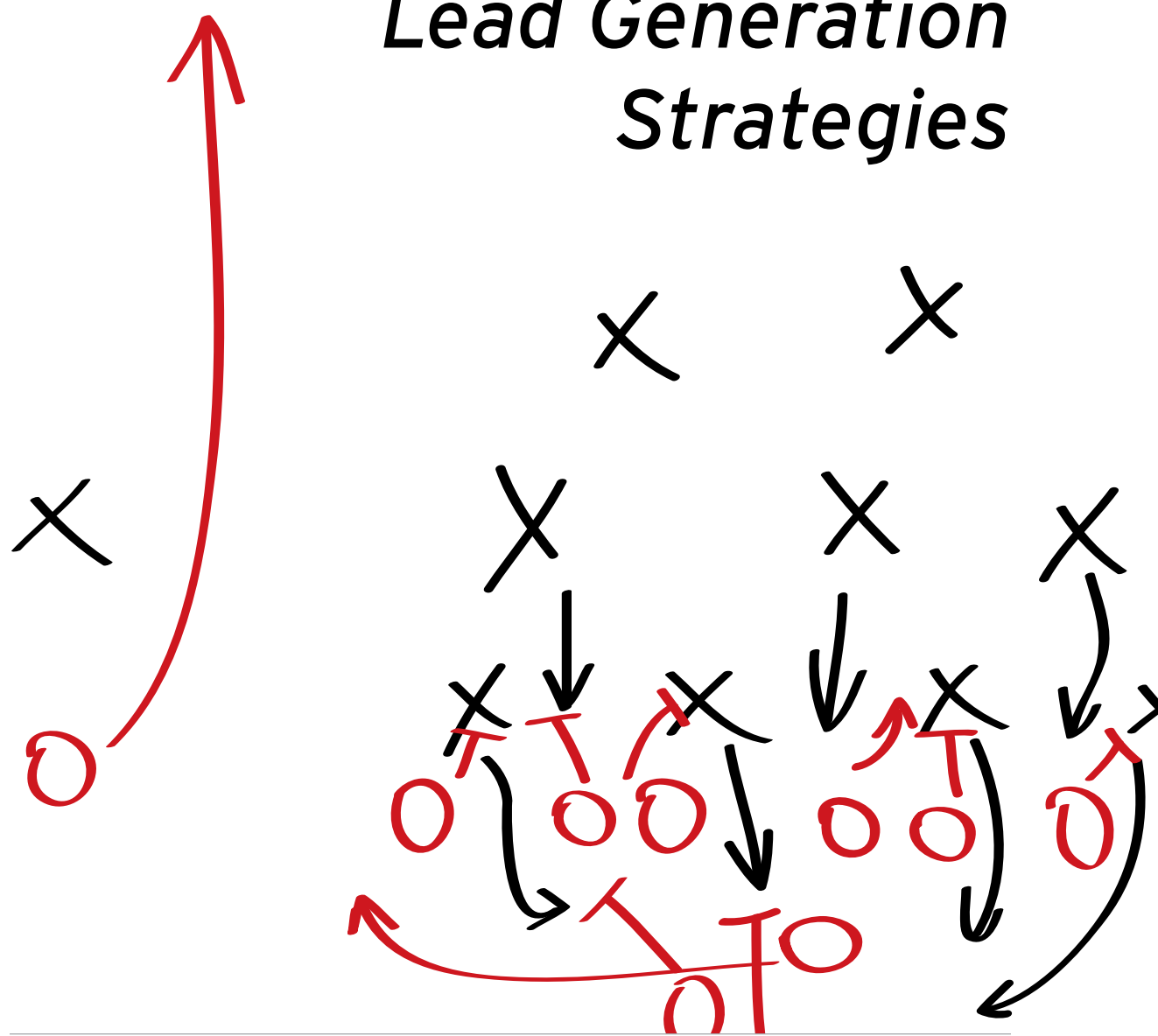
What does this mean for your firm? We imagine there will always be a place for the local generalist. But forces are shrinking that space. The forces of change are favoring firms with clear and well-articulated market positions. Specialists are on the rise. Trying to be everything to everyone or following the herd is becoming a risky strategy. Adapt or shrink.

<sup>1</sup> [www.hingemarketing.com/library/article/how\\_buyers\\_buy\\_professional\\_services\\_buyers\\_study/](http://www.hingemarketing.com/library/article/how_buyers_buy_professional_services_buyers_study/)

<sup>2</sup> [www.hingemarketing.com/blog/story/content\\_marketing\\_for\\_professional\\_services\\_firms\\_5\\_hidden\\_opportunities/](http://www.hingemarketing.com/blog/story/content_marketing_for_professional_services_firms_5_hidden_opportunities/)

# 3.

## Lead Generation Strategies





## Lead Generation Strategies for Professional Services Firms

Acquiring new clients begins with your lead generation strategies. In the absence of a plan built with a solid lead generation strategy, you are at the mercy of chance. And that is not the best way to build your firm.

In fact, *our research of high growth, high value professional services firms<sup>1</sup>* shows that they are more likely to have a plan and they are more focused on attracting new clients within a well defined target audience.

### *Lead Generation Concepts Defined*

**Lead generation** is the process of establishing contact with potential new clients. It is the start of your business development funnel.

**Lead qualification** is the process of screening leads to determine if they would be good clients for your firm. Sometimes you may use global criteria such as potential client size or industry. Other times the criteria are more related to a prospect's readiness to buy your service now, such as the availability of a budget.

**Lead nurturing** is the process of building a trusting relationship with the potential client until the time is right for them to enter into a business relationship with your firm. This is usually concluded by the emergence of a specific opportunity for which your firm will prepare a proposal.

**Lead generation strategies**, as we use the term here, is how you will generate, qualify and nurture leads to the point where a legitimate opportunity emerges.

### *A Spectrum of Lead Generation Strategies*

Some lead generation strategies are so common among the professional services that they have achieved an almost mythical stature. **Face to face networking** and **referrals** are two that come to mind. **Trade show exhibiting** is also nearly as common. Some professional services marketers have almost come to believe that these are the best – or even the only – strategies to develop business.

There is another group of strategies that are also very common and are oriented toward making a specific offer to potential clients. The offer may be for a specific service or for a piece of useful content, such as a white paper or a seminar. Examples of these approaches include **cold calling, direct mail, advertising in trade publications** and **email blasts**. These are also commonly referred to as outbound marketing or push strategies.

Another related set of strategies offers intellectual content that might be useful to people. This is often referred to as **content marketing**. If the content is of sufficient quality, some potential clients will contact you when they need services. Common content strategies include **speaking engagements, publishing articles or books, video, newsletters, blogs** and **webinars**.

<sup>1</sup> [www.hingemarketing.com/library/article/spiraling\\_up\\_create\\_a\\_high\\_growth\\_high\\_value\\_professional\\_services\\_firm](http://www.hingemarketing.com/library/article/spiraling_up_create_a_high_growth_high_value_professional_services_firm)

Finally, there are strategies that rely on leads finding you. They are commonly labeled *inbound marketing*<sup>1</sup> or pull strategies and are often closely paired with content strategies. **Search engine optimization (SEO)** or **pay per click (PPC)** are the most notable. **Social media** may also fit in here as a way to distribute content. Of course you can think of social media as another form of networking. In that regard, perhaps this is not so much a spectrum of possibilities as a circle!

With such a wide range of available strategies, the question becomes which ones are right for your firm? Here are some guidelines for selecting a balanced mix.

## Selecting Lead Generation Strategies

When selecting your strategies, you must start with a clear idea of your ideal target client. The clearer you are about who you are trying to attract, the easier it will be to generate, qualify and nurture the lead.

Here are five principles to keep in mind when selecting your lead generation strategies:

- 1. Make sure you cover all three phases of the lead generation process.** You need to find, qualify and nurture the lead. SEO or PPC, for example, can both be used to find prospects. And by offering content relevant to well qualified prospects you can at least indirectly qualify the lead. But you need to use other techniques to nurture the leads, such as an e-newsletter or other educational content.
- 2. Use techniques appropriate to your target client.** Some simply may not fit. Others can be ruled out because they don't align with your brand. Cold calling often is ruled out for this reason.
- 3. Consider cost.** Different lead generation strategies have different cost profiles. According to Hubspot, leads generated from inbound campaigns such as SEO, PPC or blogging cost 62% less than leads coming from outbound sources such as direct mail, telemarketing or trade shows.
- 4. Diversify your lead generation strategies.** Testing multiple strategies can help reduce the risk that a single approach fails to work. We also know that professional services buyers often check multiple sources when searching for a firm. Being visible in multiple channels is a plus.
- 5. Balance traditional and digital approaches.** Traditional and newer online approaches each have their strengths and weaknesses. Balancing the two can make for a more robust lead generation strategy.

<sup>1</sup> [www.hingemarketing.com/blog/story/inbound\\_marketing\\_for\\_professional\\_services\\_firms/](http://www.hingemarketing.com/blog/story/inbound_marketing_for_professional_services_firms/)

## 10 New Business Lead Generation Ideas

Are you maxed out on networking events and asking clients for referrals? Looking for some new approaches to lead generation and lead nurturing? Well here are 10 ideas to consider (or reconsider) for your new business lead generation campaign.

### **1. Write something really, really useful.**

I'm not talking about a self-serving fluff piece here. Take a problem that your target audience is struggling with and provide some clear, easy-to-understand guidelines for understanding or solving it. Perhaps there is some complex new legislation or a rapidly evolving technology that folks need to understand. Make it very clear and simple and you will be a hero. (See below for ideas on distributing this wonder piece).

### **2. Identify individuals who consult with your target audience on higher level issues.**

Why higher level issues? Because they are often asked for implementation advice and referrals. These individuals don't have the capabilities to implement themselves, but they are in a position to recommend your firm. Once you find them, establish a relationship and gain their respect.

### **3. Partner with an association on a special project.**

Don't just attend meetings and trade shows. Come up with a special research study or educational program and partner with an industry association to make it happen. By doing the work, you take the burden off overextended staffs. If the material is unbiased, it can position your firm as an expert on the topic and provide new visibility and recognition. If you choose your project carefully, it can be a win for everyone and a great source of new leads.

### **4. Do a research study.**

Conduct a research study, then make the results widely available. A well-conceived study will help position your firm as an expert – and you might even learn something valuable! This is an approach we have found to be very successful. A research study works well as the project for idea number 3 above.

### **5. Offer a free analysis.**

A proven lead generation technique involves offering a free analysis of some aspect of a potential client's business that you are well suited to address. For example, you could provide an analysis of how much money a company could save by using your solution. This offer serves two important functions. First, many potential clients don't pursue services that might help them because they don't have time to do the front-end analysis to make the case. Second, this gives you a chance to establish a relationship with a company that can tangibly benefit from your services. If you aren't able to provide value to an interested prospect, you no longer need to expend resources pursuing them.

### **6. Develop a well researched list of target clients.**

Build a highly targeted list of prospective clients, then try to network with them using LinkedIn or through other mutual contacts. A well researched target list can make you much more efficient. You'll be surprised how it increases your effectiveness.

**7. Try a personalized letter (or express mail package) to break through the clutter.**

I'm not talking about a traditional direct mail campaign here. I'm talking about an old fashioned business letter. Seem retro? Exactly! With the rise of e-mail we receive fewer and fewer letters outlining a business proposition. The result is that they get attention. Make sure that the letter is relevant and not just a blind offer of your services. For example, you might point out that you noticed a specific opportunity or need, and you believe you might have a novel solution that can save them time and money. Focus on your target clients (see number 6).

**8. Write a book.**

Afraid it's too hard? Perhaps it's not as bad as you fear. These days there are a lot of people who can help you with the writing and publishing tasks. A book is perhaps the crown jewel of all credibility builders. Being a published author also makes it much easier to garner speaking engagements – which also generate leads. Don't forget to give the book its own website. Consider giving away electronic versions of the book, as well.

**9. Shoot a video.**

Produce a video case study, then e-mail the link to your list. The open rates and click through on video email are usually much higher. Don't forget to use the word "video" in the subject line. Post the video on YouTube and put it on your site, as well.

**10. Turn your website into a lead generator.**

Most professional services websites just lie around all day being lazy. It does not need to be that way. By adding valuable content (as described above), adding specific offers and calls to action, and doing some search engine optimization you can generate many more leads. This approach has been a winner for us at Hinge. Last year we attracted more new business from our website than from any other source. That's not because other sources of leads decreased. It's because our website has become so effective. (See section 5 for more ideas in this vein.)

*Last year we attracted more new business from our website than from any other source. That's not because other sources of leads decreased. It's because our website has become so effective.*

Lead generation ideas work together. One reinforces the other. And when it comes to new business lead generation, it's good to have some shortcuts!

For more ideas on lead generation, download our free research study [How Buyers Buy!](#)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [www.hingemarketing.com/library/article/how\\_buyers\\_buy\\_professional\\_services\\_buyers\\_study/](http://www.hingemarketing.com/library/article/how_buyers_buy_professional_services_buyers_study/)

# Top 10 Online Lead Generation Techniques for Professional Services

Professional services firms have been relatively slow to adopt online lead generation techniques. It's not surprising given that many commonly used online lead strategies such as contests or sweepstakes are simply inappropriate for many professional services firms and their clients.

Further, many professionals still hold the mistaken belief that the only way to generate new client leads is through referrals and networking. Hello... the world is changing! A new model of business development is already generating significant flows of qualified leads for many professional services firms.

## *Online Lead Generation Techniques that Work*

Like traditional lead generation, the new model is founded on demonstrating expertise and building trusting relationships – but now these goals are accomplished online. While online marketing continues to evolve, here are ten proven lead generation techniques that are working for professional services firms today.

### **1. Search Engine Optimization (SEO)**

Many potential clients want to learn how to solve the challenges they face. If a prospect is even remotely computer literate (and these days what executive doesn't have a computer or a smart phone?) one of the first things they do is Google their question, problem or issue. SEO gives you the tools to match qualified clients with your online content. And if you play your cards right, you'll end up on their short list when they are looking to purchase services.

### **2. Pay Per Click (PPC) Advertising**

Another proven way to get on your prospects' radar is to buy your way onto search engine results pages for relevant key words. This technique gives you greater control over the key words with which you want to be associated. As the name implies you only pay when someone clicks on your link. Many times, PPC leads are of higher quality because the potential client is often searching for a specific solution. In addition, PPC is completely trackable and typically is less expensive than traditional print advertising. That's an attractive combination.

### **3. Lead Generating Website**

Most professional services websites are not designed to generate leads. As a matter of fact, many are almost "anti-lead generators." Jargon-filled, firm-centric website abound in the professional services – and they are completely passive and unhelpful. If visitors do not understand what you do or what problems you can solve for them, they will go elsewhere. Contrast this with a *lead generating website*<sup>1</sup> that is designed to make it easy for clients to understand your value proposition, download valuable information and request a proposal. The impact on online lead generation can be dramatic.

<sup>1</sup> [www.hingemarketing.com/blog/story/lead\\_generating\\_high\\_performance\\_websites/](http://www.hingemarketing.com/blog/story/lead_generating_high_performance_websites/)

#### 4. Online Networking

I could have called this technique “social media,” but I wanted to make a point. The essence of social media is not which platform you choose. It’s the quality and reach of the networking you do. While the style of interaction may vary greatly from Twitter to LinkedIn to Facebook, it is still about making the right connections with the right people. *Online networking*<sup>1</sup> can produce the reputation and referrals associated with traditional business networking. Expect to get results in proportion to the level of your investment of time and attention.

#### 5. Webinars

A webinar is the online equivalent of a seminar or other educational event. The lead generating webinar is typically offered free of charge. Because it requires registration, you can collect basic information on a session’s attendees. Like its offline cousin, a webinar should be educational – not a thinly veiled sales pitch. The key to a successful webinar is to select topics that are of great interest and value to your ideal target client. Over time, attendees come to trust your firm and will be likely to consider you when they have a relevant need.

#### 6. Industry Research Reports

A proven online lead generating strategy is to offer executive summaries or full research reports on the industries you serve. You benefit in two ways. First, these documents are an excellent lead generator. Second, they boost your credibility and strengthen your online brand. Be sure your research topics are of exceptional interest to your target client group. In addition, these research studies can be an excellent vehicle for partnering with a trade association or a noncompeting firm to reduce your marketing cost and increase your credibility.

#### 7. Online Marketing Videos

Video is everywhere today, and for good reason. It is an ideal marketing medium for professional services firms. Nothing builds credibility like a flagship client explaining how your firm solved their problem. It’s almost like automating the referral process. Video can be used to present your firm, explain complex services or introduce your team. In each of these roles, video can play an important lead generating and lead nurturing function.

*The essence of social media is not which platform you choose. It’s the quality and reach of the networking you do.*

#### 8. White Papers or e-Books

One of the most common online lead generating techniques, white papers can establish credibility and generate qualified leads. You can offer the white paper on your website (either available free or behind a registration screen), or you can distribute it through third-party services. White papers also make great pay-per-click offers. A variation on the white paper is the e-book. Typically longer than a whitepaper, it serves a similar function. If your e-book goes into great depth on a subject, it can generate a great deal of buzz and establish your reputation.

<sup>1</sup> [www.hingemarketing.com/blog/story/social\\_media\\_in\\_professional\\_services\\_5\\_trends\\_that\\_are\\_shaping\\_the\\_future/](http://www.hingemarketing.com/blog/story/social_media_in_professional_services_5_trends_that_are_shaping_the_future/)

### 9. E-newsletter

If your e-newsletter offers high-quality, educational content, you can generate a significant number of new leads when people sign up. And your e-newsletter is a great way to nurture the existing leads on your list. Many firms also use e-newsletters to announce new services and make specific offers. To build your subscriber list, offer a free e-newsletter subscription on your website or in your email signature block. Just remember, the better your content, the more people will read it and remember you.

### 10. Blogging

I left blogging for last because of its unique role in online lead generation. To be honest, blogs don't generate a lot of direct leads. But blogging is probably the most effective driver of leads to your website. Because a blog allows you to create a wide range of keyword-laden content that can be found in the search engines, it can draw a lot of qualified prospects to your website (this assumes that you host your blog on your website – which I strongly recommend). You can further promote your blog posts on Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook. Without a blog, your SEO efforts will be handicapped.

These ten online lead generation techniques alone could become the cornerstone of a robust marketing plan. Add in traditional marketing tactics, such as face-to-face networking and tradeshow marketing (if appropriate), and you have a formidable strategy for building preference in the marketplace. Online marketing and traditional marketing make a powerful combination.



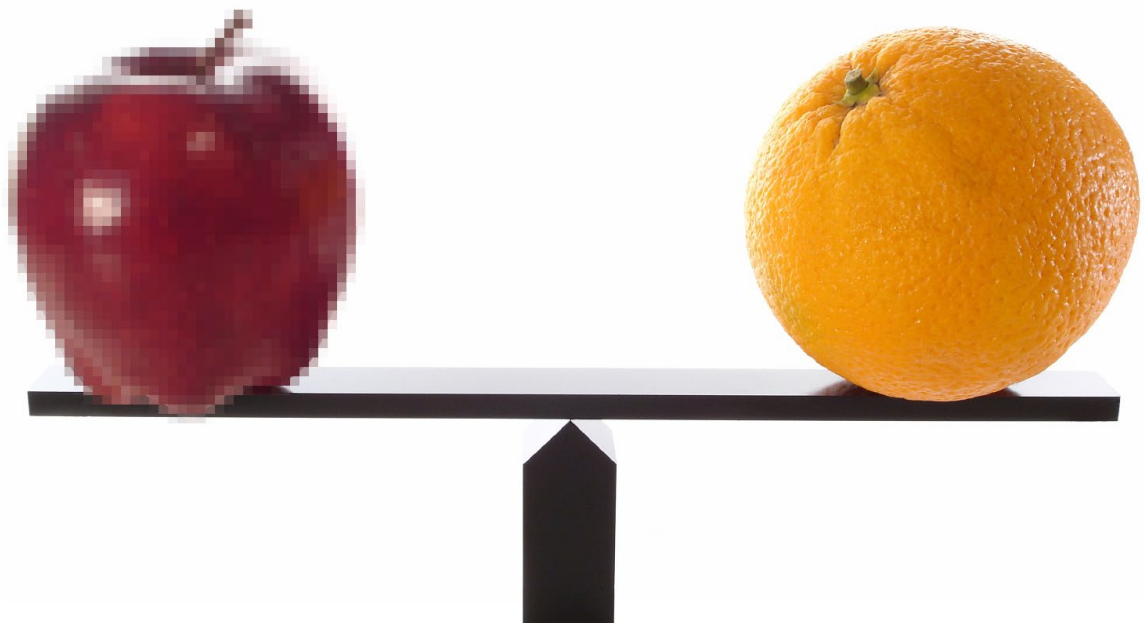
## Want to do it yourself?

From step-by-step How-Tos to in-depth courses, Hinge University will give you the skills and know-how to elevate your brand.

Check out Hinge University: [HingeUniversity.com](https://HingeUniversity.com)

# 4.

## *Balancing Traditional and Digital Marketing Strategies*





## Traditional vs. Digital Marketing 1: A New Model Emerges

There is a growing debate over the role of traditional marketing vs. digital marketing in professional services. What is the proper role for social media? Are sponsorships good investments? It seems that many folks are struggling to understand the tradeoffs and make the right choices.

We decided to spend some time to sort through the current state of affairs and try to bring a bit of clarity and perspective to the situation. We hope it may make decision making a bit easier.

We've broken the topic into two parts. This first part lays the groundwork to understand what is happening and why. The second part will focus on strengths and weaknesses of the two models and how to strike the right balance for your firm.

### *The Traditional Marketing Model for Professional Services*

Sometimes you are so close to something you can't really see it clearly. That's the case for the traditional model of professional services marketing.

It goes something like this:

**Step 1.** You meet someone, often through a referral or at a networking event

**Step 2.** You develop a relationship with them – through repeated contacts, working together on trade association boards, golf, lunch, etc

**Step 3.** They develop trust in you

**Step 4.** You get work

Sound familiar? It should, as it has been the dominate model for how to market professional services for decades. In fact, many people believe it's the only way. Every time you hear "It's all a relationship business," that's a vote for this model.

The dominance of this model has steered people toward certain marketing approaches, such as networking events, volunteer activities, sponsorships, and cultivating referral sources. People in this camp rely on collateral pieces to explain their services and use limited advertising to "build awareness." Their main thrust, however, has been on establishing personal relationships.

If this model had a tagline it might be "It's not what you know, it's who you know."

## ***The Digital Marketing Model For Professional Services***

Today, a new model is emerging. It's taken a good while for it to take hold, but it is quite different in tone and approach. It goes something like this:

**Step 1:** A prospect finds you, often through online search or by referral to something you've written

**Step 2.** They find your work helpful and like your approach

**Step 3.** They develop trust in you

**Step 4.** You get work

Notice that you end up in the same place, but you get there in very different ways. Now, some folks don't believe that you can get business in this way. They're wrong. We can say this with such conviction because we see it happen every day... to our own firm, our clients and many others in the professional services.

This new model is associated with a different set of techniques. Lead generating websites, social media, search engine optimization and content marketing are a few that come to mind. Advertising is often of the pay-per-click variety. Useful content leads the way, relationships follow.

If this model had a tagline it might be "You're exactly who I'm looking for."

## Traditional vs. Digital Marketing 2: Finding the Right Balance

In the traditional business development approach you meet people, often through referrals or networking, and develop a relationship. As people come to trust you, typically through repeated interactions over time, you are in a position to do work for them.

In the digital marketing model, people find you, typically through paid or organic search, social networking, or after reading something you've published online. They become familiar with your work and develop trust because they find your approach helpful. Work follows.

Both approaches involve a trusting relationship, but they get there in very different ways. One cues off of a personal relationship, the other off of sampling your work or ideas. In one you find the prospect; in the other they find you.

So which is better for your professional services firm, traditional or digital marketing? How do you find the right mix? Let's start by analyzing the strengths and limitations of each approach to developing new business.

### **Strengths of Traditional Marketing**

- > Tried and true. People are comfortable and familiar with it.
- > Locally oriented
- > Built on face-to-face interactions, so you can learn a lot about potential clients

### **Limitations of Traditional Marketing**

- > Limited access to distant markets
- > Long business development cycles are common
- > Hard to scale without adding significant overhead (people and offices)
- > Hard to measure and project results

### **Strengths of Digital Marketing**

- > Geography is less important. Can go national or global more easily
- > Very scalable
- > Costs per opportunity decrease with scale
- > Shorter business development cycles are possible
- > Easier to measure and project results

### **Limitations of Digital Marketing**

- > Global reach equals global competition
- > No local familiarity
- > Need to invest over time to see success
- > No face-to-face contact to read the prospect or reassure

## Finding the Right Balance for Your Firm

Let's start with the nature of your firm and your aspirations. The traditional approach to professional services marketing clearly favors locally oriented generalists. Digital marketing is much better suited to more narrowly focused specialists with larger aspirations. If you clearly fall into one camp or the other, that can be an important consideration.

If you love to write and share ideas or you are a gregarious extrovert, that could clearly impact your personal commitment to one approach or the other.


How about mixing the two approaches? This makes a lot of sense for a couple of practical reasons. First, if you line up the strengths and limitations of traditional vs. digital marketing you see almost a mirror image. The strength of one approach offsets the limitations of the other. Combining elements of both you can develop a balanced business development plan.

**By combining elements of traditional and digital marketing, you can develop a balanced business development plan.**

There is a second compelling reason to combine the two models. In our *research on high growth, high value professional services firms*,<sup>1</sup> we found that the fastest growing, most profitable firms typically rely on some of each. Both average and high growth firms value networking and referrals about equally. The high growth firms differ in that they also place a very high priority on finding well defined target customers. They are also more likely to spend more aggressively on their online presence.

### Want to learn more?

Here are 3 great ways to keep abreast of the latest and greatest professional services lead generation techniques.

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[www.hingemarketing.com](http://www.hingemarketing.com)



<sup>1</sup> [www.hingemarketing.com/library](http://www.hingemarketing.com/library)

# 5.

## *The Lead Generating Website*



## Why Your Professional Services Website Doesn't Generate More Leads

The holy grail for most professional services marketers is being able to generate qualified leads in a scalable and cost effective manner. For most firms that translates into generating leads with digital marketing.

Does your website generate enough qualified leads? If not, you are probably falling prey to one or more of these fatal mistakes:

### 1. You don't believe it's possible.

This is the biggest single barrier for most professional services marketers. They haven't given their website sufficient attention, so it's not working. Since it's not working, nobody believes it can work. In virtually every study that we have seen, professional service providers can *use the web to generate qualified leads or teaming partners for government contracts.*<sup>1</sup> Networking doesn't work if you don't network. Direct mail doesn't work if you don't send anything out. It's no different for digital marketing.

### 2. You overwhelm and confuse your visitors.

Sadly, many professional services websites are confusing, jargon filled, impenetrable messes. A visitor cannot tell what these companies do or why they should care about them. To "play it safe," many firms try to be as broad and vague as possible so as not to turn away any potential customer. Instead, their websites are inscrutable and turn off many potential clients or partners.

### 3. It's all about you.

Why shouldn't your website be all about you – it's your website after all? Aren't visitors coming to learn about you? No and no. Visitors are coming to solve a problem they have, and they are looking for a firm with services that can help them – that is what the visitor cares about. You have less than 10 seconds to let them know that they are in the right place. If visitors can't quickly determine that your firm might offer a solution to their problem, they will be gone in a flash. So don't build your site around the way you organize your services or internal structure. It will only confuse your web visitors, and you are likely lose them. Instead, build your navigation around client needs. Clarity and simplicity always, always win.

<sup>1</sup> [www.hingemarketing.com/blog/story/70\\_percent\\_solution\\_a\\_new\\_approach\\_to\\_professional\\_services\\_marketing/](http://www.hingemarketing.com/blog/story/70_percent_solution_a_new_approach_to_professional_services_marketing/)


#### 4. No one can find you.

If someone knows the name of your firm they should be able to find you, right? That is a start. But what if they only know what their problem or need is? Can they find you then? Here's a good way to find out. Look at you web analytics (you have them, right?) and check the keywords section. What are visitors searching on when they find your site? If it is only variations on your firm's name or the people in the firm *you are missing out on a ton of new business.*<sup>1</sup> If folks are finding you based on a variety of relevant search terms, you are on the right track.

#### 5. You show up in a cheap suit.

Most of us would not think of showing up at a networking event or prospect meeting in ill fitting, poor-quality clothing. Yet many firms have websites that are so poorly written and built that visitors can't see past them. Valuable prospects and potential hires will form critical impressions about your firm based on their *initial impressions of your website.*<sup>2</sup> They will wonder "Is this a firm that's in my league? Or are they amateurs?" Ask a few people if they have ever ruled out a firm because of what they saw or didn't see on a website and you will get all the proof you need.

Fixing these five problems may not solve all of your lead generation problems, but it will get you much closer to having a sustainable, scalable source of new business.



Need some help with your website?

Hinge can create a custom website that sets your firm apart through our High Performance Website program.

**Let's explore how we can help:**  
[leadgen@hingemarketing.com](mailto:leadgen@hingemarketing.com)

703 391 8870 | [hingemarketing.com](http://hingemarketing.com)

<sup>1</sup> [www.hingemarketing.com/blog/story/seo\\_for\\_professional\\_services\\_firms\\_taking\\_the\\_next\\_step/](http://www.hingemarketing.com/blog/story/seo_for_professional_services_firms_taking_the_next_step/)

<sup>2</sup> [www.hingemarketing.com/blog/story/can\\_your\\_professional\\_services\\_website\\_pass\\_the\\_3\\_second\\_test/](http://www.hingemarketing.com/blog/story/can_your_professional_services_website_pass_the_3_second_test/)

## Lead Generating High Performance Websites

Professional services firms are changing the way they think about and use websites. Not very long ago the service website was an extension of a firm's print collateral. It was little more than an online brochure, presenting basic information about the company. More recently, however, the function of the website has begun to shift from providing general information to generating qualified leads.

### What Is a High Performance Website?

If we consider lead generation alone, we can offer up one possible definition of a high performance site: If 50% or more of your business is coming through the web, you've got a high performance website.

Sound like pie in the sky? In fact, many service firms today are exceeding that threshold. And they are doing it by crafting their sites to encourage responses from their visitors.

*If 50% or more of your business is coming through the web, you've got a high performance website.*

Here are just a few elements you should consider when transforming your site into a lead generating tool:

**Clear calls to action:** The best performing websites are built with specific objectives in mind. This means telling the visitor exactly where you want them to click. You can use the sidebar of your website to feature buttons that encourage the visitor to take action. Some examples:

- > Request a Proposal
- > Download Our Research Study
- > View Our Case Studies
- > Watch Our Webinar

These calls to action create clearly defined pathways for the visitor. These pathways make it easy for a visitor to take the next step in a multi-stage customer development process. Here are some examples of calls to action from an IT services company that wants to get a visitor more engaged:



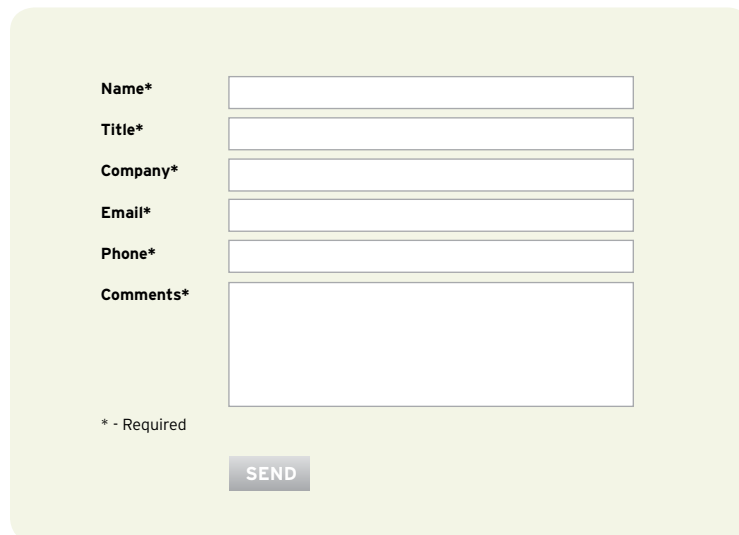


**Conversion Forms:** If your goal is to have prospects contact you, then you must make it as easy as possible for them to send you a message. Including a simple form on your contact page is a must for any high performance website – visitors can write a few words and click Submit without leaving the page. A surprising number of firms don't include forms on their websites. Adding a form to your site removes any friction between the visitor and your goal. They just work.

Forms are also important for tracking purposes. Using analytics programs, you can measure how many times people submit your form and get an idea of where those people came from.

Here is a basic form that helps capture information here at Hinge. We've intentionally kept the number of fields low to encourage people to use the form.

*If you want prospects to contact you, then you must make it as easy as possible for them to send you a message.*



The image shows a contact form on a light green background. It consists of the following elements:

- Name\***: A single-line text input field.
- Title\***: A single-line text input field.
- Company\***: A single-line text input field.
- Email\***: A single-line text input field.
- Phone\***: A single-line text input field.
- Comments\***: A larger, multi-line text area.
- \* - Required**: A small text label below the input fields.
- SEND**: A grey button with white text located at the bottom center of the form.

**Retention Elements:** Once visitors get to your website, you should try to find a way to bring them back again. Many visitors are in the early stages of the buying process. To turn them into qualified prospects you have to nurture them, which takes multiple touches.

You can encourage visitors to come back to your site in many ways. For instance, you can put offers on your site for newsletter subscriptions, blog feeds, and free white papers. As visitors receive newsletters and blog posts, your company stays top of mind.

**Search Engine Authority:** None of your website's elements matter if nobody comes to your site in the first place. The heart of a high performance website lies in its search engine authority. If you have authority with search engines, you will rank well and gain consistent traffic.

Search engine optimization (SEO) is a complex topic, which we introduce at a high level in the next article. From keyword research and implementation to link building, SEO is a long-term initiative that all high performing websites must tackle.

### **Now What?**

Retooling your website may seem like a daunting task, but it is a necessary step if you want to generate a significant portion of your leads online. A great starting place is to begin looking at other professional services websites and evaluate what you may be missing. Consider the tips above for your next design and you will be one step closer to fulfilling your company's online potential.

In today's professional services marketplace, the almighty referral has a new rival: the high performance website.

### **Examples of High Performance Websites**

- > *HubSpot:*<sup>1</sup> This software company does a great job of making things easy on the visitor. Basic pathways and calls to action make it very obvious how to navigate the site and contact the company.
- > *Ian Brodie:*<sup>2</sup> This professional services consultant has mastered the concept of retaining prospects through free reports and other outstanding content. He claims that *70 percent of his business is generated by his website.*<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [www.hubspot.com/](http://www.hubspot.com/)

<sup>2</sup> [www.ianbrodie.com/](http://www.ianbrodie.com/)

<sup>3</sup> [www.ianbrodie.com/get-clients-online/clients-from-website/](http://www.ianbrodie.com/get-clients-online/clients-from-website/)

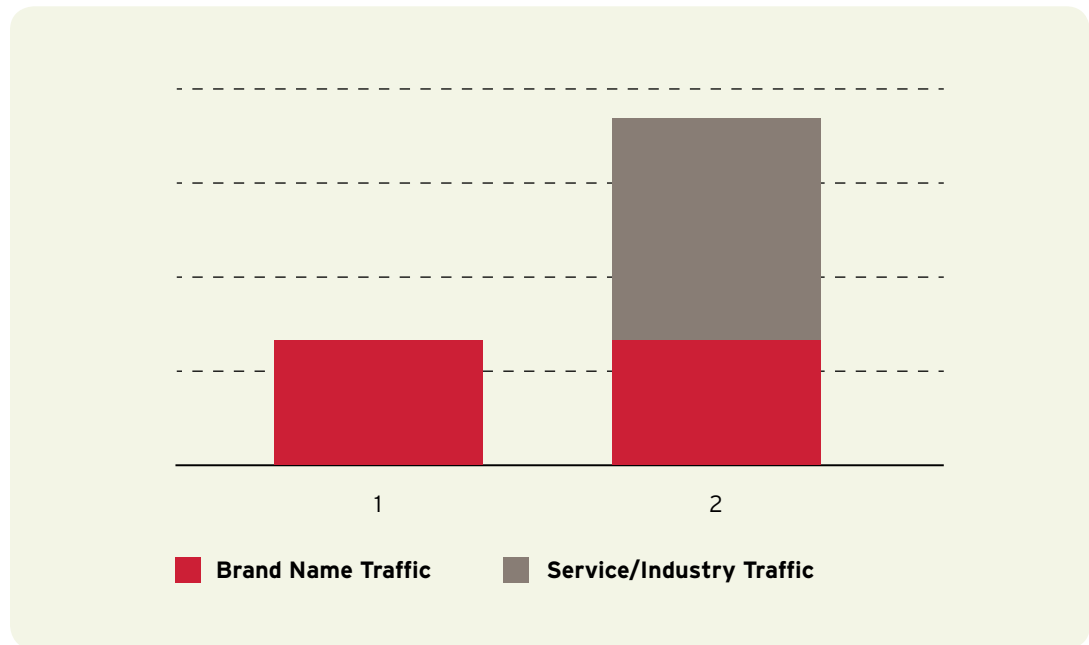
## SEO for Professional Services Firms - Taking the Next Step

Typical professional services firms receive search engine traffic from visitors searching on their company brand name. For example, a firm called McVey Lemen Consulting may receive Google traffic from people searching on “McVey Consulting,” “McVey and Lemen,” or “Lemen, McVey.”

Showing up in search engine results for these terms is a good first step because when you meet people offline, they can easily find you. Unfortunately, most firms stop there.

The next step in the process – a giant one – is appearing in search engine results for services you offer. For McVey Lemen Consulting might want to rank for “consulting services in Washington, D.C.,” for example.

The graph below illustrates how focusing your SEO efforts on service or industry related keywords can increase the amount of relevant traffic to your website.



Because there are a limited number of people who know about your company, your search engine traffic hits a ceiling in scenario one. In scenario two, however, the red bar shows additional traffic from people that may not know you but are searching on a need they have. And those need-based visitors represent valuable leads that can produce a great deal of revenue.

As more and more people use Google to find solutions to their business problems, it becomes increasingly important to focus on service and industry terms.

Does your firm rank in search engines for industry or service terms?

## Why Link Building is Critical to Your Link Building Success

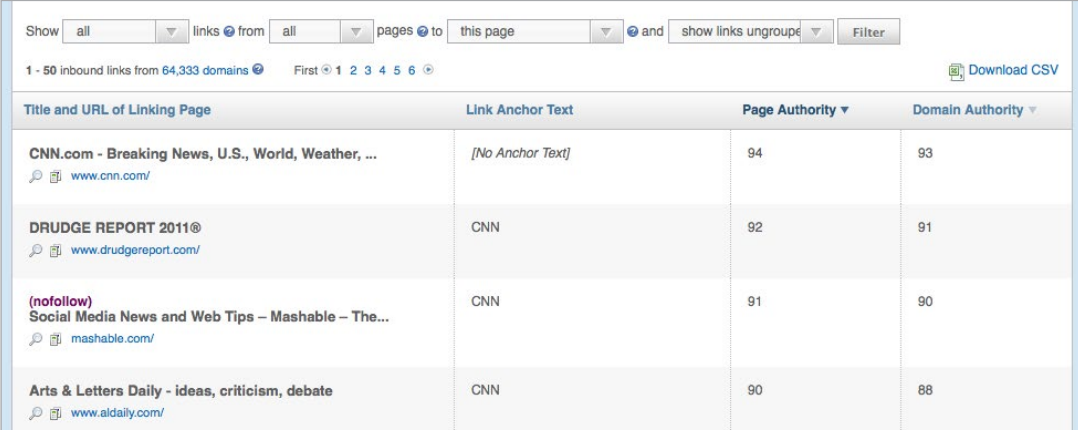
Although there are many factors contributing to your search engine rankings, perhaps the most significant is the number of high quality links pointing to your site.

Google and other search engines see links as votes. Every website that links to your web page is a vote for your authority. Of course a link from a credible site like the *New York Times* is going to be much more beneficial than a link from a site with little exposure. Nonetheless, it is important to do what you can to have other sites point in your direction.

Running a link building campaign kills two giant birds with one stone. Not only are you increasing your search engine chances, but you are also driving traffic directly from those other sites to yours. Here are a few popular methods for acquiring links:

- 1. Linking Partnerships:** Find sites that have similar or complementary content to yours. Ask the website owner if they will link to your site if you return the favor.
- 2. Directories:** Find credible directories in your industry and have your site listed. Be careful to avoid spammy or low-quality directories.
- 3. Content Creation:** Companies often use blogs, white papers, webinars and other useful content to attract links. If readers truly find your content appealing, there's a good chance they will share it with friends.

To find out approximately how many links point to your website, navigate to [www.opensiteexplorer.com](http://www.opensiteexplorer.com)<sup>1</sup> and enter your URL.



| Title and URL of Linking Page  | Link Anchor Text | Page Authority | Domain Authority |
|--|------------------|----------------|------------------|
| CNN.com - Breaking News, U.S., World, Weather, ...<br><a href="http://www.cnn.com/">www.cnn.com/</a>                 | [No Anchor Text] | 94             | 93               |
| DRUDGE REPORT 2011@<br><a href="http://www.drudgereport.com/">www.drudgereport.com/</a>                              | CNN              | 92             | 91               |
| (nofollow)<br>Social Media News and Web Tips – Mashable – The...<br><a href="http://mashable.com/">mashable.com/</a> | CNN              | 91             | 90               |
| Arts & Letters Daily - ideas, criticism, debate<br><a href="http://www.aldaily.com/">www.aldaily.com/</a>            | CNN              | 90             | 88               |

Open Site explorer will list all of the links it finds. I recommend spending some time evaluating the types of sites linking to yours. Think about why they are linking to you and how you can find more sites like these. Embrace the power of a link and you will begin to find your web traffic move to new levels.

<sup>1</sup> [www.opensiteexplorer.com](http://www.opensiteexplorer.com)

## Can Your Professional Services Website Pass the 3 Second Test?

By now almost every executive has heard about how important it is to capture your website visitors' attention in the first few seconds of their visit. If not, they are gone and the result is a very high "bounce rate." While there is certainly a lot of truth in that observation, how does it apply to your professional services website? After all, you don't run a consumer site that sells advertising or pushes discounted electronics.

Do the same rules apply to professional services websites? Yes, but with a twist. When a potential client visits your site, they form a quick impression. Think of it as your 3 Second Test.

Within the first 3 seconds of reaching your site a visitor in your target audience will be looking for positive responses to three critical questions. Miss any one of these and the chances of a positive relationship drop dramatically.

### **Question 1. Am I in the right place?**

Is this the right firm? This should be the easiest question to get right, yet many firms find ways to sow confusion, even at this basic level. Lack of clarity, an inconsistent brand identity or poor implementation can give visitors the impression that this isn't the company they were looking for. Not a good way to start a relationship.

### **Question 2. Are they in my league?**

Like it or not, people are prone to making snap judgments. Is your firm the type that they would do business with? That can depend on what their gut tells them. If you pursue sophisticated clients with an amateurish website, you're likely to blow it. A poor website makes you look like you don't know what you are doing. It may not be fair, but that's how it works.

Mike Schultz and John Doerr in their book, *Professional Services Marketing*,<sup>1</sup> liken the situation to showing up to a meeting with a potential client with ill fitting, rumpled and dirty clothes. If you don't inspire confidence, you create barriers to success. We have seen more than a few firms being ruled out based on the initial impression created by their website. It works the other way, as well. A strong initial impression can give you a head start on the competition as well. We like that much better.

### **Question 3. Is there something here for me?**

This may be the most challenging question on the test. You have to provide something of interest or value right from the beginning. A headline or graphic that screams relevance or captures interest is how many of the most effective sites do it. They compel us to want to learn more.

It's easy to blow this one. Just serve up a dense page of jargon that offers nothing of value and your prospects' eyes will glaze over. This situation is soooooo common. Try this instead: describe – in plain English – how your service helps your customers and why people choose you over a similar service. What a difference it will make!

So that's my 3 Second Test. How does your professional services website score? Not sure? Have someone from your target audience (preferably one who is not familiar with your firm) look at your homepage for 3 seconds and see how they answer.

<sup>1</sup> <http://professionalservicesmarketingbook.com/>

## Traffic Conversion: The Neglected Middle Child

When using your website as a lead generation tool, there are generally three activities on which to focus:

**1. Traffic Acquisition:** The goal here is to generate visitors to your website. There are many ways to do this including search engine optimization, pay-per-click advertising, email lists, social networking and offline advertising. Most companies spend the most resources on this part of online marketing.

"How many visitors did we get this week, Fred? 6,000? Wow!"

**2. Traffic Conversion:** Once you have visitors, your goal is to get them to take action. Convert the visitor into an actor by asking them to fill out a form, download a white paper, subscribe to a mailing list, or comment on your blog. Visitors are not important to you until they take meaningful action

"Hey Fred, did anyone contact us this week? Really? No website leads?"

**3. Traffic Retention:** After establishing contact with your audience, the next step is deepening the relationship. You must gain your prospects' trust over time by following up with them via email campaigns, newsletters, blog posts and other valuable content. You are not hard selling them like a spam email, but rather offering an open line of communication so that you are not forgotten.

"Fred, make sure you blog this week or else our readers will forget us!"

Being the middle child growing up, I can't help to feel bad for traffic conversion. Most professional services firms we work with have a pretty good understanding of how to get visitors on their site. Additionally, they understand the importance of nurturing leads through newsletters. However, it amazes me how often the conversion process is overlooked.

There are many factors that contribute to whether or not a visitor takes action.

- > Do they trust your site or are they anxious?
- > Is your site straightforward and clear or are there parts that cause confusion?
- > Do they feel alienated or do they feel understood and accepted?

From which graphic elements to use to what language is conveyed, there are many pieces that go into influencing a visitor. The bottom line is that most people are comfortable enough without doing anything and don't want to take action. It is your goal to appeal to their emotions and force them to leave their comfort zone.

Is there a single right way to set up a website or landing page? No, because every audience is going to react differently. That is why it is important to continually test and tweak your website to ensure that all of that traffic you are paying for is also being marketed to properly. You will be doing your company a favor if you focus a bit less on driving traffic and a bit more on what that traffic is doing once it's there.

## ABOUT HINGE

Hinge specializes in branding and marketing for the professional services. We are a leader in rebranding firms to help them grow faster and maximize value.

Our comprehensive offerings include research and strategy, brand development, award-winning creative, high performance websites and marketing outsourcing.

Hinge conducts groundbreaking research on professional service companies. We have identified a group of firms that grow 9X faster and are 50% more profitable yet spend less than average to get new business. We can show you how they do it.

To view our full library of research reports, white papers, webinars and articles, please visit [www.hingemarketing.com/library](http://www.hingemarketing.com/library)

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### ***Help Us Make this Guide Even Better***

We want to hear from you. If you have any suggestions to improve this resource, please drop us a line: [info@hingemarketing.com](mailto:info@hingemarketing.com).

Thank you!



# HOW HINGE CAN HELP

## High Performance Website Program

The High Performance Website Program makes your website into a lead-generating machine – bundling a beautiful new site with a suite of powerful online tools. Designed from the ground up to attract the right visitors from search engines, a high performance site uses educational content, smart offers, and custom features to engage and convert qualified leads.

For more information, call 703 391 8870 or email us at [info@hingemarketing.com](mailto:info@hingemarketing.com)

## Take the Next Step

Choose the option that's right for you.



### Want to do it yourself?

From step-by-step How-Tos to in-depth courses, Hinge University will give you the skills and know-how to elevate your brand.

**Check out Hinge University:**  
[HingeUniversity.com](http://HingeUniversity.com)

OR



### Need some help with your website?

Hinge can create a custom website that sets your firm apart through our High Performance Website program.

**Let's explore how we can help:**  
[leadgen@hingemarketing.com](mailto:leadgen@hingemarketing.com)