

How to Create a Successful Customer Journey Funnel and Drive Sales?

Over time, marketing strategies have become customer-centered. It's safe to say we live in the age of the customer. To survive and thrive in the face of competition from other organizations, brands must recognize and embrace this shift by developing a streamlined, end-to-end customer journey funnel that doesn't end with purchasing. It goes beyond leads and sales; it is about converting your prospective customers into brand advocates.

Generating brand awareness is hard work, converting a potential customer to paying customer is tasking, and getting customers to become brand advocates is even more difficult. Business owners must regularly evaluate their journey map and make the necessary changes.

What is a Customer Funnel?

The customer funnel represents a customer's entire path from awareness and interest to consideration and conversion. In simple terms, it is the route an end user takes from the first encounter with your product to when they make a purchase. However, it doesn't just stop at purchase, but goes beyond.

The customer journey map is a sales cycle that begins with the end-user becoming aware of a product or service, habitually using your service, or even going as far as making recommendations to others in need of a similar product or service. It involves understanding your target market and nurturing customer experiences to ensure that no

lead falls through the cracks along the way. As you may have deduced, it accommodates many of the intricacies of end-to-end user experience, from prospect to post-sales experience.

Why Doesn't the Traditional Model (AIDA) Work Anymore?

A customer funnel is a consumer-focused marketing structure demonstrating the theoretical customer journey towards purchasing goods and services.

The idea of customer funnel marketing is over a century old. A model created by E. St. Elmo Lewis in 1898 mapped a theoretical customer journey from when a product attracted a customer to the point of purchase. This is referred to as the AIDA model for Awareness, Interest, Desire, and Action.

The stage of *awareness* is when a prospective customer notices a product, and this can be through advertising, research, or word of mouth. After becoming aware, the prospect expresses *interest* and goes through an evaluation process where they seek more information and compare the product or services with other brands.

The marketer must provide a convincing argument to sustain the customer's interest at this level. To get a customer to *desire* the product, the seller must provide all the information required, answer every question and alleviate the customer's fear while proving to them that the product or service is the best option. The final stage is the action where the prospective customer becomes an active customer

by making a purchase decision (learn more about the [consumer decision journey here](#)) or utilizing a service.

The AIDA model has been validated in lead generation and advertising and is still well known today, even though a lot has changed since the 19th century.

There is a total evolution as regards the concept of advertising today. Although the AIDA model summarizes the basic steps customers take on the path to purchase, it doesn't fully represent the complexity of the modern buyer's journey.

The ultimate goal of the model culminates in action, which translates to the purchase or utilization of services. However, the ultimate goal should not end with a single purchase. You need loyal customers that will continue buying, steer others to buy, and become advocates of your brand. The goal is to foster long-term relationships with your customers. Other aspects of the customer experience also tend to suffer when the marketing strategy centers on sales.

Considering these loopholes, the AIDA model is no longer considered a viable solution for the sustainable growth of businesses and has been modified by marketing consultants to meet the needs of the modern customer.

Modern customers do not rely on salespeople or seek out ads when they want to purchase but embark on a journey of self-discovery that leads them to the right product for their needs at the right time. This is the reason for the modern customer journey map.

The modern journey funnel considers repurchase intent. It has more than four funnel stages, each creating an opportunity to connect with a potential buyer while providing a wholesome experience that translates to a customer and brand advocate combined.

What is a Customer Journey Funnel?

A customer journey funnel is a path that customers take from initial awareness to the final purchase of a product or service. The funnel helps businesses track how well they are doing at acquiring leads and converting them into paying customers. It aims to retain and grow more customers while focusing on customer experience and maintaining customer loyalty.

This journey is usually not linear. Many customers return to their earlier touchpoints: every interaction they make with your brand as they evaluate a product or service. Hence, tracking a customer's route to purchase can be tricky, as it requires a lot of information to know exactly what your leads experience before they buy something from you. Collecting enough data can help create a picture that shows you which of your marketing efforts are connecting with people and which ones are not effective.

Although marketing executives may want to use the customer journey and marketing funnel interchangeably, they do not mean the same thing.

The journey funnel is about the customer's experience along the path to purchase, while the marketing funnel focuses on the steps a prospective buyer takes to become a customer.

The marketing funnel concerns a customer's stage of interest in your business. The customer and marketing funnels are indispensable frameworks that provide insight into the areas you need to focus your energy and resources on for the greatest return on investment. Both are not mutually exclusive and are best utilized when adopted as a package.

You may be wondering why a funnel? Worry no more. The top of a funnel is usually broader than the base. Marketers must cast the net wide and aim to catch as many people as possible at the top of the funnel, even more than they can convert. As the potential customers move down the funnel, a number of them drop off, reducing the number converted when the lower end of the funnel is reached.

Also, more resources are needed at the top of the funnel than at the bottom because generating leads is hard to do effectively, posing one of the biggest marketing challenges.

To curb this challenge, every funnel stage must be nurtured in the context of your potential customers, marketing channels, and goals. This is where the complementary use of the consumer journey map comes into play.

How to Create Your Funnel?

Now that you have a basic understanding of this type of funnel, let's proceed to how to set it up for your business. To correctly set up a consumer journey map, it is essential to follow these steps:

1. Define your goals

The significance of defining your goals before embarking on this journey cannot be overstated. This is an important step to consider before proceeding. You must ask yourself what your strategy should accomplish, what you want the channel to achieve, what final result you consider a success, and whether you want to build brand loyalty, encourage repeat purchases, or attract new consumers. These questions guide the strategy and direct the next steps.

2. Create a map

Once you've set your goals, the next step is tracing the customer's existing journey using a map. This entails understanding what occurs at every stage of the funnel and putting measures in place to encourage consumers to move to the bottom of the funnel.

3. Establish consumer drop-off points

You need to identify where customers are dropping out of the funnel. This can be done by tracking the conversion point and customer feedback. While mapping your funnel, find out the areas that need improvement and compare them with the different stages where customers drop off. If they align, then it calls for improvement.

4. Create a strategy to curb drop-offs

Once you locate where customers are dropping out of the funnel, you need to devise a strategy to address these drop-offs. This information can stir up opportunities to improve the customer experience (see how you can measure and improve your CX [here](#)), such as creating new and relevant content, improving customer service, or redesigning your website to make it more user-friendly.

It may also help you realize the need to work on your marketing campaigns to generate added interest in your products.

5. Evaluate results

Once you have developed a strategy, you need to implement it to see how it performs. It is important to measure your funnel's results and institute the necessary changes. This involves looking at your conversion rates, customer feedback, and other metrics.

6. Repeat

The best way to improve your journey map is to track results and continue making changes over time. There is always room for improvement and optimization, and the process gets easier as you continue.

Should I Use a Template?

Business owners need to regularly evaluate their funnel for consumer journey due to the difficulties that arise in converting potential customers to paying clients. To save time, you can use a template that includes all the steps required to set up an end-to-end path. As you build out your templates, it is paramount to understand the current state of your customer experience and how you want that to change.

A successful long-term relationship with customers is built on a solid grasp of customers' needs, wants, and frustration. Technological advancements have made customer journeys more complex, resulting in poor customer experience.

As a marketer, you need to understand what your customers think and the struggles they face as they interact with your brand. Therefore, capturing your customers' experience and solving problems that arise in trying to access your products and services using a map is crucial.

One of the most significant reasons businesses use customer journey maps is to understand better how the customer experiences your product. This helps you to figure out when and how to upgrade your product or service, identify new user pain points, and remove barriers to your customer's success.

Conclusion

Digital marketing executives are constantly searching for ways to grow their businesses. You miss out on a huge opportunity by focusing on securing new customers alone. Understanding and optimizing the customer journey funnel is a powerful tool to achieve and sustain growth that benefits not just your company but also your customers.

FAQs

[What are the steps to map the customer journey?](#)

To highlight users' feelings and challenges in a visual path, follow these steps:

- Gather information about deliverables, understand what makes the most sense for the project's goals and ask colleagues, friends, and network about their experiences.
- Decide on the type of map you want to create.

- Brainstorm to develop different ideas on what the consumer journey could include and how it may look by employing user research.
- Create the first version of the customer's journey map.

And... you're done! It's that simple.

The 5 Marketing Funnel Stages You Need to Know

The marketing funnel is a conceptualization of the steps describing the sales process from start to finish.

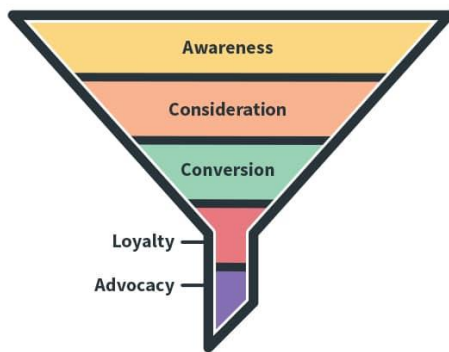
The term funnel is used to represent the path your audience takes to a buy, with some leaving this trail, deciding not to buy, and others continuing all the way to the checkout. The funnel reflects the narrowing of your potential leads down to the most promising ones over this journey.

Straight off the bat, here are the five marketing funnel stages:

1. Awareness
2. Consideration
3. Conversion
4. Loyalty
5. Advocacy

Let's dive straight in and explore the marketing funnel further.

What is a marketing funnel?



(Source: code95.com)

At the top of a marketing funnel, you have many potential leads.

As your customers move from gaining awareness of your brand to considering a purchase, to making their final decision to buy or not, the number of potential leads decreases.

The likelihood of these leads continuing all the way to the checkout is higher, as they have already committed to the initial stages of their decision.

By the time your audience gets to the bottom of the funnel, you will be left with the small portion of potential leads that actually converted to a purchase and have become fans of your brand.

Depending on the size of your audience, this could be any number of people.

The goal of [conversion optimization](#), and visualizing your customer journey as a funnel, is to strengthen the areas where your potential leads are dropping off, so you have more of them getting all the way to the bottom and boosting your revenue. In this guide, we cover the 5 digital marketing funnel stages you need to know and why. Use the marketing funnel as a concept to better understand the customer's journey through your site.

With powerful automation features, DirectIQ offers ideal solutions to effectively utilize your marketing funnel, and engage with your audience. [Click here to sign up for a free account](#) and give it a try!

What is an example of a marketing funnel?

An example of a [marketing funnel](#) would be if you were to promote a new product launch.

Your potential customers would first become aware of the product through marketing channels such as social media, your website, or advertising.

Then, they would enter the consideration stage, evaluating whether this product is right for them and researching alternatives.

After that, they would reach the conversion stage, deciding to buy the product and going through with the purchase.

Finally, they would enter the loyalty stage, becoming a repeat customer and advocate for your brand.

You can think of a marketing funnel as a tool that can be used to map out and track the journey your potential customers take from awareness to purchase.

What are the benefits of a marketing funnel?

There are several benefits to using a marketing funnel as part of your sales and marketing strategy.

Some of these benefits include:

- Helping you to better understand your customers and their needs
- Allowing you to track the progress of your potential customers through their journey
- Enabling you to focus your marketing efforts on the most promising leads

5 Stages Of The Marketing Funnel

1. Awareness

All variations of the marketing funnel begin with awareness.

It is at this stage that a lead becomes aware of your brand or your products.

It is essential to develop a digital presence, fostering familiarity with your name, so the people who are most likely to buy your products are aware of your authority in the field.

As an online business, your exposure strategy should consist of 4 primary tactics, including:

- Content marketing
- Social Media
- Organic Searches
- Paid advertisements

The miracle of [content marketing](#) is that you can build familiarity with your brand before people even know what you sell.

The primary purpose of your content offering is to give your audience information, advice, and guidance they may be looking for as the need or desire making them perfect candidates for your products arises.

By harnessing the power of [social media](#), getting people to share your content, you can take advantage of the legitimacy of “word-of-mouth” that traditional advertising often lacks.

Share your content with relevant communities on social media, chat with like-minded individuals and provide solutions to issues within and surrounding your industry to reflect your expertise.

Building a presence on social media is all about giving your audience value.

What could you provide more information on that would add value to your audience’s perception of your brand?

[Organic searches](#) can also help get you content exposure.

If users search for information and discover your company in one of the top results, they are likely to see you as a leader in your field.

This is not only for the quality of your content but because ranking high in searches implies the information you provide is considered to be relevant and valuable.

[Paid ads](#), like banners and pay-per-click (PPC), can also be used to generate exposure. Think of the big-brand Christmas ad.

Its primary job is not to advertise products but to make the most of the [holiday](#) spirit, playing on [heartwarming stories](#) and nostalgia to put their brand in people’s minds under an emotionally-positive light.

By leveraging the demand for information, advice, and guidance in your area of expertise, you can begin to establish your business at the forefront of its industry.

Drop subtle hints, benefits, and descriptions of the type of products you sell in each piece of content you create and distribute.

Help customers to add to the basic knowledge that you exist, by learning what type of business you are.

2. Consideration

As a potential lead moves out of the phase of awareness, they enter a [period of consideration](#). It is at this stage that you begin to strengthen your relationship. The customer has developed a more specific desire to explore your company. They want to know about you, your products, and services and how they can benefit them.

In turn, you will be able to glean more information from customers about themselves, enabling you to provide targeted solutions and content that explain exactly what your company and your products could do for them.

It is estimated that [consumers are 75%](#) of the way to making their decision to buy from your brand before they ever begin to check out.

Thus, it is critical to address all issues and FAQs on your website to make it easy for customers to move from consideration to conversion.

Product “how to” guides, showcases, and solutions to common “pain points” can be used to provide your leads with the information they need to know that will make or break their purchase decision.

[Videos are a great way](#) to show what your products can do.

[Infographics, blog posts, and e-book guides](#) can also do an excellent job of demonstrating your products in action.

This is what customers need to see.

They want to know how the type of products you sell could be beneficial to them, and in what ways.

Making the most of the online customer’s need to see your products and their functionality, you can present them in the best way possible.

Make it easy for them to imagine how a purchase with your company could add value to their lives.

3. Conversion

When you have convinced your potential customer that your product is something worth having, it is time to reel them into making a decision.

It is at the point of conversion that you need to make it clear why buying from you is the best option, why buying now is the best option, and how easy it is to make a purchase through your online store.

Convince your leads that buying from you is the right choice.

You may have convinced your visitors that purchasing a particular type of product will give them benefits. Now you need to tie them down to your brand.

Whether your industry is highly competitive or not, there is always another option to buy something from somebody else.

What can your products do that others in the same price bracket cannot?

What support does your company offer its customers?
Do you provide free delivery where your competitors don't?
Is your price lower than your competitors?
These could all be factors influencing your customer's choice to stick with you or go for a similar product from another brand.

What is the goal of the conversion stage?

The goal of the conversion stage is to assure your potential customers that they are making the right decision by choosing to buy from you.

Here are three key tips for you to consider:

- Demonstrate how easy it is to make a purchase on your website or online store
- Give visitors the confidence that they will be happy with their purchase
- Make it clear that your company is the best option for their needs

Remove obstacles from your buyer's path to a purchase.

Anything you can do to remove steps from your buyer's journey to making a buy can help.

If you require customers to create an account when they make a purchase with you, are you sending them away because they "already have an account with Amazon" so it's quicker?

Removing this requirement, or offering one-click signup to users through their social media accounts can both increase the percentage of customers that make a purchase with your site.

Make the Sale.

No one likes filling in forms.

The more information you have about your customers, the more precisely you can retarget them for later sales, yes.

But this info can always be collected at a later stage.

The most important thing you can do once your buyer clicks to check out is to make your payment gateway form as quick, comfortable, and painless as possible.

This means not asking for too much information, providing a multiplicity of options for common (Visa/Mastercard) as well as alternative payment preferences (such as Paypal and Bitcoin).

At the conversion stage, your buyer already has a degree of purchase intent.

They have established that this type of product is something they need or want.

Make them aware of why your business is the only choice to buy from, and smoothen their path to their buy.

4. Loyalty

When a lead becomes a customer, you need a plan for keeping in contact and [building their loyalty](#).

Without a way to stay in touch with your online customers, they may leave your store and forget about you before the next time they need your products.

You want to add customers to your brand community so you can keep them coming back for more.

Mailing List: It is essential to ask buyers to sign up to your mailing list when they do make a purchase.

And it is crucial to make sure you offer them a good incentive for doing so.

Give a free gift or a discount to everyone who signs up during checkout.

Ensure you tell them the value they will gain from doing so.

If you are going to send them regular content covering various topics, make this clear, and explain how they could benefit from the type of content you will send them.

At [DirectIQ](#) we provide a variety of ready-made templates for sending weekly newsletters and marketing emails to your customers to ensure they are consistently engaged by your brand.

Social Media: Some people don't check their email often and rarely engage with commercial emails that they receive.

But many of those people also have social media accounts.

Offer follow buttons for all your social media accounts on your order confirmation page.

Also, provide them in all your emails.

Tell customers what following you will get them – whether it is exclusive weekly content about how best to use your products or monthly competitions, exclusive to social media.

Recommendations: Display recommendations for similar products on your payment confirmation page post-purchase to instantly “upsell” your customers on another add-on, plug-in, or accompanying product.

Customers who have just spent money in your store are more likely to buy again, so take advantage of this.

E-Commerce giants such as [Amazon](#) suggest recommendations in an incredibly sophisticated manner, and indication of how profitable they consider them to be.

5. Advocacy

You only reach the [advocacy stage](#) of your marketing funnel once your customers become fans.

As opposed to merely being a business from which they can buy products, you want to be a brand that they talk about and share with their friends.

How?

By offering them the same kind of high-quality content you provided them with initially but [tailored to their customer-type](#).

Establishing points of contact with your customer are critical to success.

You probably know more than any other business in your area about your specific pool of customers.

You have data on their locations, product interests, names, and the possible reasons they may be buying your products.

Through [email and social media](#), you can begin to target them more specifically with content that is relevant to only their customer-type.

Email is your best asset here.

Targeted email campaigns have been said to generate up to 760% increases in revenue.

Email is well-known for getting you the [best returns](#) on your investment.

By segmenting your mailing list into different customer types, using the information your contacts have provided with, you can target them with specifically relevant email content that will keep them engaging with your business even when they aren't ready to make a buy.

When they are, because they love the support and advice your brand give them, they will come straight to you.

With [DirectIQ](#), you can tailor your emails to each segment of your audience according to any metric you have gathered on them.

Give customers content that speaks to who they are.

Marketing Funnel Stages (Essential Tips)

Add Value

All relationships rely on each party gaining some value.

If the payoff is not worth the execution (e.g. clicking around your site or filling in a form), you will be losing customers.

The concept of the marketing funnel is productive because it tells us where we need to add value.

By increasing the value you give to customers at each stage, relevant to a particular phase of the buying process, you can gently nudge your visitors all the way to the checkout and beyond to become advocates of your brand.

Monitor Your Funnel

Optimizing your marketing funnel requires research and an understanding of what makes your customer tick.

It means evaluating your success in getting more people into the funnel, nudging more down through it, and doing your best to turn them into advocates for your business.

What does your audience want?

Your data will tell you.

Keeping an eye on specific metrics that indicate customer engagement and interactions with your marketing streams and campaigns can be of enormous benefit.

Analyzing this data will reveal the areas of your marketing funnel where you are losing customers so you can remove or adapt whatever obstacles are getting in the way of their purchase path.

For each change, you make to the buyer's trail through your site, monitor subsequent site data to establish its success.

This will allow you to compare the viability of different versions of your site so that each change you stick with is the one that generates the highest returns.

Use the knowledge you glean from this article to evaluate the buyer's path through your own business' buying process and optimize it for higher conversions and more promising leads.

You can check out our newest article about [Email Marketing Funnels](#) to get more information and insights on this matter.

MARKETING FUNNEL

- [Customer Driven Marketing Strategy](#)

The Cambridge Dictionary defines a funnel as "an object that has a wide round opening at the top, sloping sides, and a narrow tube at the bottom, used for pouring liquids or powders into containers with narrow necks".¹ So, "What does this have to do with marketing?", you might ask. Well, the marketing funnel is a concept all marketers must be familiar with, and its model is shaped exactly like an ordinary funnel. It starts wide at the top and gets narrower at the bottom. It represents how marketers can guide customers through their purchase journey. The wide opening represents the larger group of consumers who are aware of a [product](#), and it narrows down to the select few customers who end up purchasing the product. Read along to learn more about the strange relationship between funnels and marketers.

Create Marketing Funnel notes faster than ever before

Marketing Funnel Definition

The marketing funnel plays a foundational role in many companies' marketing plans. It describes customers' purchase journeys from awareness to action and helps marketers gain insight into the customer experience. So, let's first look at the marketing funnel's definition.

The **marketing funnel** is a tool marketers use to describe the customer purchase journey.

It is called the marketing funnel, as the model is shaped like a funnel. At the top of the funnel (the widest part) is the awareness stage, as many potential customers are aware of the [product](#) or brand. The funnel gradually decreases throughout the customer purchase journey, narrowing down to the number of customers who take action. Let's now look at this model in more detail in the following section.

Marketing Funnel Stages

The basic model of the marketing funnel is based on the AIDA model, which stands for awareness, interest, desire, and action.

The **AIDA model** is the basis of the marketing funnel. AIDA is an acronym for awareness, interest, desire, and action.

Figure 1 below shows the marketing funnel.

The funnel starts with **awareness**, the widest portion of the funnel at the top. During this stage, the marketer's job is to inform consumers about the existence of a product. Specifically, a product that fits their wants and needs or solves a problem they face. This is where customers start their journey with the brand.

[Check out our explanation of **Brand Awareness** to learn about this topic in more detail.](#)

The next layer of the funnel is **interest**. Here, the funnel starts narrowing down as not all consumers will be interested in buying the product. Although they may be aware of its existence, it might not suit their wants and needs. During this stage, the goal is to ensure customers that they are searching for a product in the right place.

The third stage of the marketing funnel is **desire**. In this stage, potential customers will likely evaluate other alternatives and seek information on all available options. This step is crucial for marketers as they must ensure that customers have access to all the information they need to make a decision.

The final stage of the marketing funnel is **action**. This is the most narrow part of the marketing funnel, as, by this point, only qualified potential customers remain. Logically, not every customer aware of the product will take action

to buy it. As a result, at this stage, we are left with the customers who are most likely to buy the product. The role of marketers during this stage is to encourage customers to act as soon as possible and purchase the product.

How do Customers Make Purchase Decisions?

Before we dive deep into the steps marketers can take to guide customers through the marketing funnel, let's take a quick look at consumer decision-making, specifically regarding purchasing. The steps of the customer decision-making process are as follows:

1. **Problem recognition** - In the first step, customers recognize that they are facing an issue. This step usually involves recognizing a want or a need that is unmet. For example, a customer might have just broken their washing machine and needs a new one.
2. **Information search** - During this step, customers gather information either online or in person about [product](#) options and specifications. In this stage, the customer would assess the different functions they need from a washing machine. For example, they might want it to be a specific size or have washing and drying functions.
3. **Evaluating alternatives** - Once the customer has gathered sufficient information, they assess the different alternatives to find which [product](#) suits their needs the most. Here, the customer evaluates which brand or [product](#) meets the size, functionality, or price aspects they are looking for and eventually chooses the washing machine that meets it.
4. **Purchase** - The penultimate step is the purchase decision. The customer actively purchases the product.
5. **Post-purchase** - However, the customer buying process does not end with a purchase. There are various actions a customer can take after purchasing a product based on their satisfaction level. For example, a dissatisfied customer could post a negative review about the product or brand online. On the other hand, a satisfied customer might become a repeat purchaser and loyal to the brand. Based on the example, if the customer was satisfied with a Miele washing machine, they might also consider buying a Miele dishwasher in the future.

Marketing Funnel Strategy

The overarching strategy behind the marketing funnel is that marketers should attempt to guide customers through the stages of awareness until action through various marketing efforts. First, let's examine marketers' different strategies to guide customers through each stage.

1. **The awareness stage** - During this stage, marketers' primary objective is to capture their audience's attention to make them aware of the brand and the products they sell. Marketers must understand their target audience and make target customers aware of their brand through various communications tools such as advertising, social media, [direct marketing](#), search engine optimization (SEO), etc.
2. **The interest stage** - How can marketers reinforce interest in a [product](#)? The marketer must reiterate how the brand or product can solve the customer's problem. It is also vital that the company provides customers with all the information they are looking for. For example, email campaigns, webinars, blogs, etc., can be effective methods. This way, the marketer can start nurturing the relationship with leads and cultivate the beginning of a potential long-term customer relationship.
3. **The desire stage** - Desire tends to be the longest stage of the marketing funnel. During this stage, marketers should help customers make the decision to purchase the [product](#). Some methods include maintaining customer communication, answering questions or queries, or presenting them with reliable reviews.
4. **The action stage** - This stage is the final step of the funnel, where customers have already decided to purchase the product. Marketers' main goal during this stage is to convince customers to purchase as soon as possible. How can they do that? Through promotions, exclusive discounts, tailored offers, bundles, etc. Marketers must also ensure that the brand leaves a positive impression on the customer to convert the one-time customer into a loyal one.²

The **marketing funnel strategy**'s objective is to guide customers through the funnel effectively with the help of various marketing activities.

However, since its introduction, the marketing funnel has been extended to include customer retention, as, to build long-term relationships with customers, marketers must look beyond the 'action' stage. As a result, the marketing funnel can be elongated with a few additional steps to showcase the retention phases. After an active purchase, we can characterize customers as:

- **Triers (non-rejecters)** - Customers who have purchased from the brand - were satisfied with it - but have not repurchased it in the past couple of months and are not planning on repurchasing it in the next couple of months.
- **Recent users** - Customers who have purchased the [product](#) or brand in the past couple of months but are not regular users.
- **Most often used** - Customers who purchase from the brand and use it most often but also use similar products from a different brand.
- **Loyal** - Customers who always purchase from the brand.³

The extended funnel shows how important it is for marketers to look beyond a one-time purchase and strengthen the relationship with new and existing customers. Satisfied and loyal customers are known as the company's **customer retention capital**³ and act as one of its most valuable assets.

Marketing Funnel B2B

The marketing funnel model is the same in business-to-business (B2B) environments as in business-to-consumer (B2C) environments. It starts with awareness and progresses to action and loyalty. We can divide the marketing funnel into three sections in B2B and B2C settings.

Top-of-the-funnel (TOFU) relates to the initial steps of the marketing funnel (e.g., awareness).

Middle-of-the-funnel (MOFU) can be characterized by the middle stages of the marketing funnel (e.g., desire).

Bottom-of-the-funnel (BOFU) includes the last stages of the marketing funnel (e.g., action and loyalty).

So, what marketing strategies and tactics can we use at each step of the funnel in B2B environments?

- **TOFU activities** - [inbound marketing](#), SEO, pay-per-click (PPC), [content marketing](#), digital ads, webinars, etc.
- **MOFU activities** - surveys, reviews, testimonials, emails, trial offers, etc.
- **BOFU activities** - answering questions, offering outstanding customer service, post-sales support, etc.

Marketing Funnel Examples

Finally, let's observe an example of the marketing funnel. Imagine a new sustainable clothing brand, I&N, trying to pull consumers through the marketing funnel.

The company has already segmented the market and identified its target customers. Its goal is to make this group of customers **aware** of the brand. It uses paid and organic social media and various digital advertisements to create awareness. The ads lead customers to a landing page through which they can sign up for the brand's newsletter.

To create more **interest** in its products, I&E uses [email marketing](#) to encourage customers to make a purchase. The brand also creates a blog to inform customers about how it is using a sustainable supply chain and helping local communities. Marketers at I&E hope this will build [brand equity](#) and pull customers to the **desire** stage.

[Check out our explanation of **Brand Management** to learn why **brand equity** is crucial for marketers.](#)

During the **desire** stage, I&E counts on its customer support team to answer any questions potential customers might have about shipping and delivery costs, return policies, refunds, etc. Finally, I&E offers sales promotions and

"limited time only" offers to pull customers to the **action** stage and encourage a purchase. The brand also sends customers a special “Thank You” email and a customer survey to fill out after making a purchase.

Marketing Funnel - Key takeaways

- The marketing funnel is a tool marketers use to describe the customer purchase journey.
- The AIDA model is the basis of the marketing funnel. AIDA is an acronym for awareness, interest, desire, and action.
- The marketing funnel strategy's objective is to guide customers through the funnel effectively with the help of various marketing activities.
- The marketing funnel can be extended to include customer retention.

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More explanations about Customer Driven Marketing Strategy

How the Marketing Funnel Works From Top to Bottom

By Skyword Staff on October 2, 2020

There is a lot of debate surrounding the marketing funnel—from who owns it, be it marketing or sales, to whether or not it's still relevant to today's consumer buying process.

Here, we'll explain what you need to know about the marketing funnel, and dive into recent changes and rising challenges for marketers. I'll compare B2C and B2B uses of the funnel, break down the hype around the marketing vs. sales ownership debate, explain how the funnel can be flipped to create more leads, and explore nonlinear approaches to the funnel.

First, let's establish a basic framework for the funnel, so we can better address these issues.

What is the marketing funnel?

The marketing funnel is a visualization for understanding the process of turning leads into customers, as understood from a marketing (and sales) perspective. The idea is that, like a funnel, marketers cast a broad net to capture as many leads as possible, and then slowly nurture prospective customers through the purchasing decision, narrowing down these candidates in each stage of the funnel.

Ideally, this marketing funnel would actually be a [marketing cylinder](#), and all of your leads would turn into customers. Though this is not a reality for businesses, it is part of a marketer's job to turn as many leads into customers as possible, thus making the funnel more cylindrical.

It's important to note that there is not a single agreed upon version of the funnel; some have many "stages" while others have few, with different names and actions taken by the business and consumer for each. In the diagram below, we've done our best to pull out the most common and relevant funnel stages, terms, and actions so this information is useful to as many marketers as possible.

Marketing funnel stages and conversions

I'll take you through the funnel stage by stage so you have a full understanding of how it works.

Awareness: Awareness is the uppermost stage of the marketing funnel. Potential customers are drawn into this stage through marketing campaigns and consumer research and discovery. Trust and [thought leadership](#) is established with events, advertising, trade shows, content (blog posts, infographics, etc.), webinars, direct mail, viral campaigns, social media, search, media mentions, and more. Here, lead generation takes place, as information is collected and leads are pulled into a lead management system for nurturing further down the funnel.

Interest: Once leads are generated, they move on to the interest stage, where they learn more about the company, its products, and any helpful information and research it provides. Here is an opportunity for brands to develop a relationship with the people in its lead database and introduce its positioning. Marketers can nurture leads through emails, content that is more targeted around industries and brands, classes, newsletters, and more.

Consideration: In the consideration stage, leads have been changed into marketing qualified leads and are seen as prospective customers. Marketers can send prospects more information about products and offers through automated email campaigns, while continuing to nurture them with targeted content, case studies, free trials, and more.

Intent: To get to the intent stage, prospects must demonstrate that they are interested in buying a brand's product. This can happen in a survey, after a product demo, or when a product is placed in the shopping cart on an ecommerce website. This is an opportunity for marketers to make a strong case for why their product is the best choice for a buyer.

Evaluation: In the evaluation stage, buyers are making a final decision about whether or not to buy a brand's product or services. Typically, marketing and sales work together closely to nurture the decision-making process and convince the buyer that their brand's product is the best choice.

Purchase: You're here! This is the last stage in the marketing funnel, where a prospect has made the decision to buy and turns into a customer. This is where sales takes care of the purchase transaction. A positive experience on the part of the buyer can lead to referrals that fuel the top of the marketing funnel, and the process begins again.

How does the marketing funnel differ for B2C and B2B brands?

To help you better understand how the marketing funnel differs for B2C and B2B brands, take a look at the modified diagram below, which outlines B2C and B2B consumer actions and conversions in each stage of the funnel.

Key differences between B2C and B2B marketing funnels:

- Most B2C consumers navigate the funnel alone or with a small group of trusted advisors (usually friends and family), while B2B consumers typically have a larger, cross-departmental buying group. The average B2B buying group is [5.4 people](#).
- B2C consumers may never directly interact with a company representative, especially on ecommerce websites, while B2B consumers typically interact with a sales representative in the lower end of the funnel.

Nonlinear funnels

Some experts argue that the marketing funnel is no longer relevant because the buying process is no longer linear.

Leads are coming into the funnel at different stages. Sometimes this happens because they are referred and already know they want to buy a brand's product, so they jump in at the intent stage. It also might happen because they have pursued their own education and jump in at interest or consideration.

As access to information has increased due to technological advances (meaning, the rise of the internet), customers are increasingly doing their own research and depending on digital content to inform them about products. In fact, [CEB reports](#) that B2B customers are traversing 57 percent of the funnel on their own, before encountering a sales rep.

One alternative to the marketing funnel is [McKinsey's](#) consumer decision journey, which employs a circular model to show how the buying process fuels itself and to highlight pivots or touch points.

However, some experts also doubt this approach. "Brands may put the decision at the center of the journey, but customers don't," write Mark Bonchek and Cara France in a [Harvard Business Review](#) article.

There still isn't a perfect model, so both the customer decision journey and the marketing funnel will continue to be used by marketers, and are therefore still relevant.

Marketing vs. Sales: Owning the funnel

There is a heated debate happening in the marketing and sales worlds over who exactly owns the funnel.

One side argues that as consumers have become more dependent on digital content to inform their purchasing decisions, marketers have taken on more responsibility for the funnel, as they continue to nurture prospects through the purchasing process. Take a look at the diagram below to see how marketing and sales ownership of the funnel has changed.

However, there are even some who see the funnel as being split vertically, with [both sales and marketing owning the full funnel](#). They argue that the sales people are increasingly becoming thought leaders to drive awareness by doing outbound outreach. In this scenario, both marketing and sales would work to nurture leads and prospects from awareness to purchase.

Flipping the funnel: Marketing and the customer experience

An increasingly common practice for marketing, sales, and customer service and experience managers is to "flip the funnel" into a customer experience funnel. This funnel outlines the process of turning customers into advocates, which in turn refuels the top of the marketing funnel by driving awareness and lead generation. Here's our diagram of the customer experience funnel:

The customer experience funnel explained

We've distilled the most important stages of the customer experience funnel and explained them below.

Repeat: After a customer has made a purchase, the next step is to make them a repeat customer. This means [improving retention](#) and nurturing customers to make more and bigger purchases. Marketers continue bottom of funnel activities to encourage repeat actions by the consumer.

Loyalty: In the loyalty stage, customers develop a preference for a brand, beginning to identify with it and personalize products. This is where engagement is key, and marketers can help nurture this personal connection to a brand through community development, engagement, and outreach.

Referral: Once a customer is loyal to a brand, they are more likely to provide business referrals and recommend brand products.

Advocacy: Turning your customers into advocates is the ultimate evolution for nurturing current customers. Evangelism in the form of writing product reviews, posting about products on social media, and more can help drive more new leads for your marketing funnel. Having an external recommendation not connected to a brand can strongly influence prospects. Marketers can work to develop their communities to better support advocates, ask them to participate in case studies, or engage them around consumer-generated content on social media.

The ultimate goals are to increase number and size of purchases and to drive more awareness and referrals to fuel the marketing funnel.