

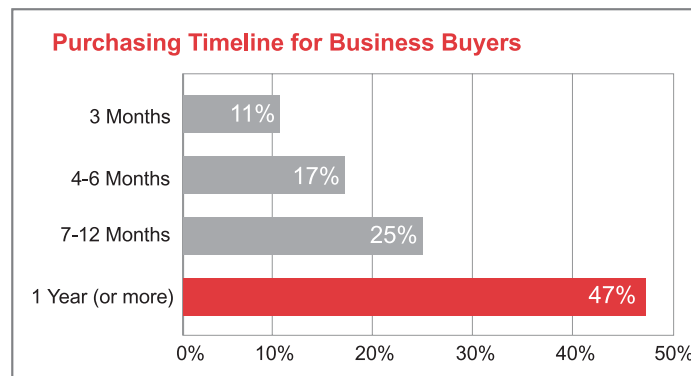
## Drip Marketing: Leveraging Awareness to Improve Conversion

By Pamela Lockard

In the world of business-to-business marketing, buying decisions often take months, and involve entire committees and multiple layers of approval. During these long gestation periods, it pays to remember, “out of sight is out of mind,” and take action to ensure they DO keep you in mind. A direct mail series, sometimes called a “drip” campaign, is a proven and powerful way to create awareness, build trust and improve conversion.

### Problem: Slow Conversion

In a **Cahners** Business Information study of 40,000 business inquiries, first-time purchases were tracked from the date of first inquiry. It was found that business-buyer inquiries often convert slowly.



### Solution: Stay in Touch

While prospects are preparing to make a purchase and shopping around, this is the optimum time to stay in touch. Doing so increases the chances your company, not a competitor, will be awarded the business.

Drip marketing uses persistent, steady communications to cultivate top-of-mind awareness and create a preference for doing business with you. As the name implies, drip marketing works like irrigation, watering small amounts over long periods of time. Using postal mail or email, the goal is to keep the drip of messages from drying up.

### Drip Means Higher Conversion and Better ROI

According to survey data from Vistage, the world’s largest CEO membership organization, drip marketing really works. Member companies who have an active drip program reported that drip campaigns provided 15% to 20% additional qualified leads. One executive commented that prospects who received steady, relevant drip communications were “better customers, consistently producing nearly double the usual customer-order value.” Others cited improved close rates.

## The Sales Process Dilemma

Sales workers are usually paid by commission with no immediate incentive to work leads that require more time. If a process isn't in place to stay in touch, slow prospects may be orphaned, and lost. Drip marketing keeps the company in touch with prospects, rather than depending on sales people who may be here today and gone tomorrow. An effective approach is to route warm leads to sales and retain the rest for incubation in a slow drip campaign.

## Provide a Steady Drip of Relevant Communications

With the advent of the Web and email, prospects now have an unprecedented number of choices. The need for relevant communications is imperative. A customer-centric attitude is the place to begin. Ask yourself what kinds of information your business prospects need and use in their daily work. This is a larger picture than just presenting the benefits of your product and service. This is the time to engender a relationship of trust, built around their needs, not yours.

For example, a recent Forbes survey documented that a majority of business buyers use white papers or case studies to evaluate technology products and services before making a purchase. Almost all of the respondents (93%) said high-quality white papers supplied by vendors positively influenced their image of those companies.

### Drip Campaign Components

Depending on the target audience and the types of products and services being offered, drip marketing plans can include a broad range of components and delivery channels.



## Get Creative

Learn what sorts of information your prospects really need, and supply it to them, no strings attached. You are limited only by your budget, your imagination, and what your prospects are most likely to appreciate. Once you have conducted a few campaigns, you will get a feel for the kinds of information your prospects value most and respond to best.

## The Ultimate Way to Warm Up Leads

Everyone loves opening a package. When a prospect shows interest in your service or product, it makes sense to send them something memorable. A useful promotional gift imprinted with your logo is often appreciated. But making it only about them is even better. A printing company based in Seattle, Washington sends its prospects (and loyal customers) a box of ripe, juicy Washington apples during the holidays. There's a promotional gift that engenders warm friendship!

## Build Momentum

Advance your case with each communication without being redundant. The key is to provide small bits of information about your service or product so that every mailing provides additional reasons to buy. Pre-planning is an absolute must. It's a big job on the front end, but once established, your drip marketing plan can be replicated for multiple groups of prospects until an update is needed.

### **Follow-Up Phone Scripts**

Drip marketing provides multiple opportunities to call on prospects, so it's important to include phone scripts when creating your plan. If contacts can't be reached by phone, a voice mail message works almost as well – as long as it's delivered in an upbeat, friendly tone – and is all about their needs. With a phone script in hand, follow up calls can often be handled by any staff member.

### **Courtesy is a Winning Strategy**

Business prospects usually need approval or buy-in from others before purchasing. When sending a brochure or case study, enclose multiple copies for internal distribution, along with a personal handwritten note. Courtesy, delivered with a personal touch, virtually ensures a second glance.

### **The Bottom Line**

Studies show that nearly half of business buyers wait more than 12 months before purchasing. It's a safe bet they are researching and shopping around during this time. A drip program helps you keep your company "in sight and in mind" and translates steadily into higher conversion, awareness, trust and loyalty. Higher conversion means better ROI for every marketing dollar.

*For help in creating relevant, effective drip marketing campaigns, think of DMN3. It's what we do. Call 1-800-625-8320 or visit [www.dmn3.com](http://www.dmn3.com).*

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