

The logo for Blabbermouth, featuring the word "Blabbermouth" in a white, sans-serif font. The letter "o" in "Blabber" is replaced by a red speech bubble icon with a white outline. The background of the logo area is a dark grey semi-transparent overlay over a colorful geometric pattern of triangles and squares in shades of orange, teal, and grey.

Blabbermouth

A woman with dark, curly hair and glasses is smiling while looking at a tablet computer. She is wearing a light blue, vertically striped button-down shirt under a grey cardigan. The background is a blurred office setting. The image is overlaid with a dark grey semi-transparent filter.

**THE DIGITAL-FIRST
SALES PIPELINE BUILDER
THAT CONQUERS COVID-19**

CONTENTS

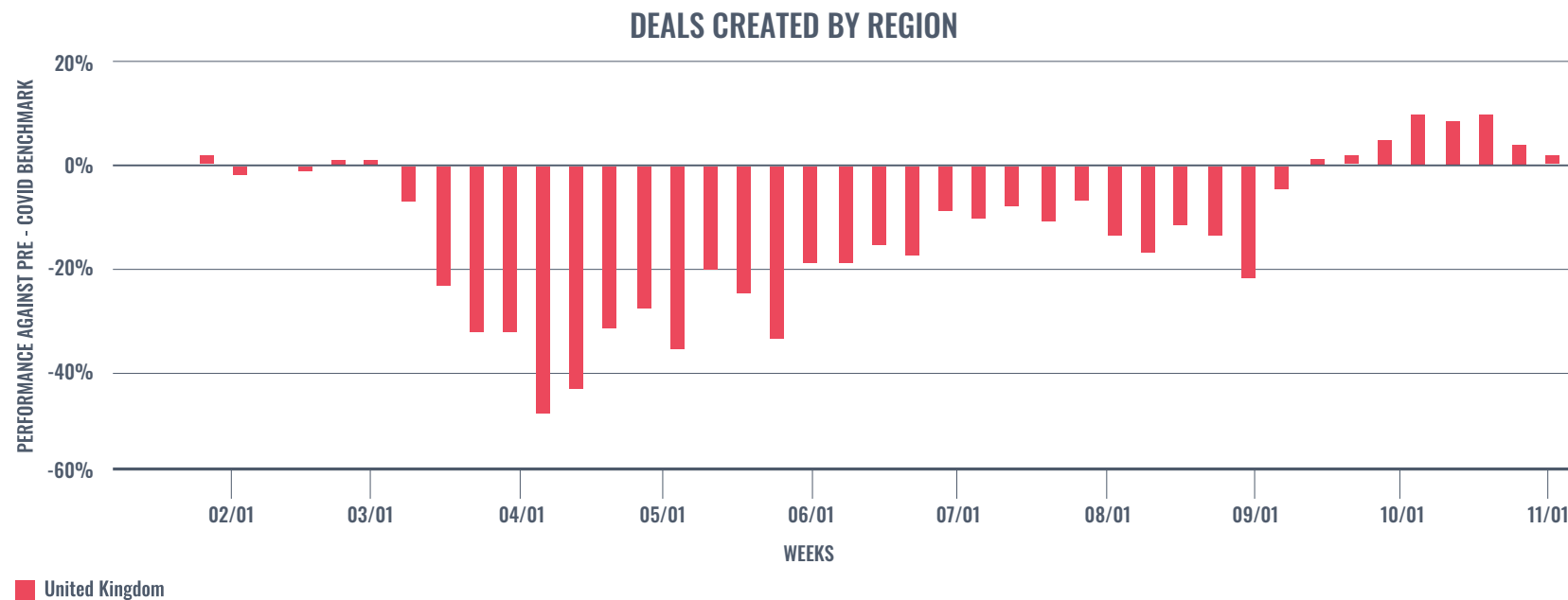
OVERVIEW	3
SALES PIPELINE	5
LEAD GENERATION	6
LEAD NURTURING	7
MARKETING QUALIFIED LEAD	8
SALES ACCEPTED LEAD	9
SALES QUALIFIED LEAD	10
CLOSED WON	11
POST-SALE	12
CONCLUSION	14



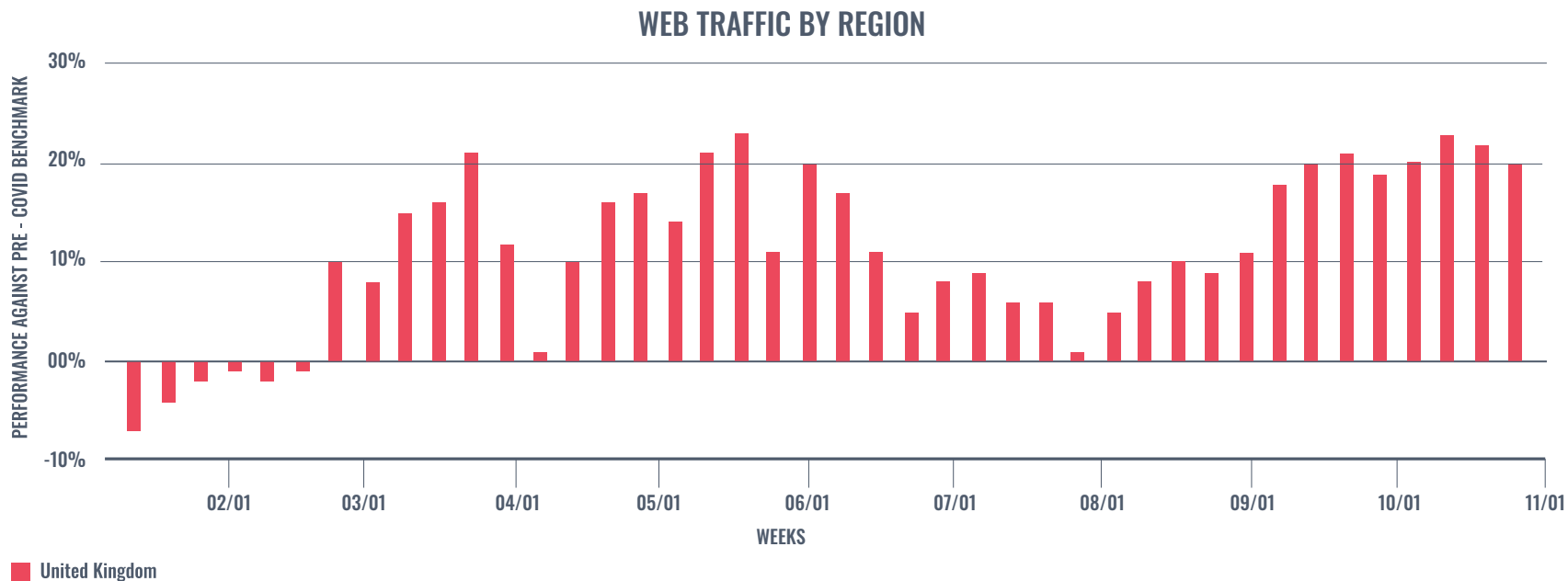
Since March 2020, the pandemic and resulting lockdowns have brought plenty of challenges to the Channel; starting relationships, winning sales, and keeping relationships positive to name a few. Those same struggles; shortening the sales cycle, uncovering needs remotely and handling tight budgets, will still be present in 2021 (certainly at the beginning), but the new year will also present the Channel with an opportunity for a fresh start.

Before we look forward, it's crucial to take stock of the last 6-9 months. Looking at the graphs below, it's clear that, while the Channel saw an initial surge in demand, generally there were massive dips in won deals when lockdown first hit, and the trend repeated when local restrictions were first introduced.

Even if the Channel experienced an intense sales period, your customers are enduring a lull in new deals across their own industries. That could have a knock-on effect unless Channel operations adapt to the market environment and provide end-users with the tools they need to accomplish growth. Some of our Channel customers have found success in focussing on particular verticals like entertainment, travel and hospitality, which have taken a massive hit recently.



The massive increases in web traffic prove that decision-makers are investing their time in carrying out more research themselves. This means prospects are entering the sales journey with more information, more confidence in a potential partner's product and are closer to making a purchase. Conversely, they will also have more research on your competitors, which is why Blabbermouth has been focusing on providing clients with a strong web presence and robust Search Engine Optimisation strategy, to maximise potential sales moving forward.



Yes, from March to September deals were lower than expected, but the massive rise of 20%+* in web traffic throughout the year shows that businesses are researching and ultimately, looking to buy.

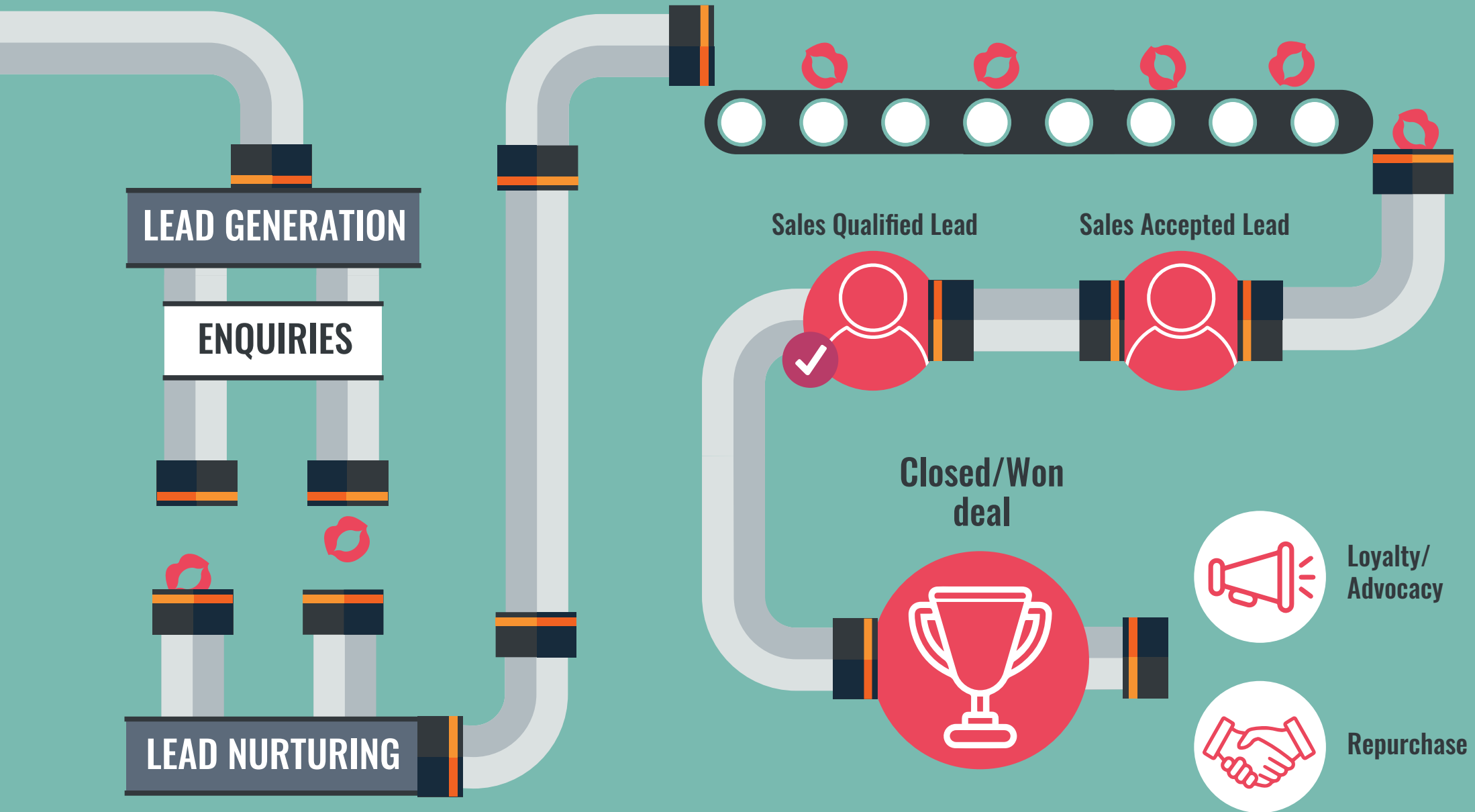
That means optimising your sales pipeline by focusing on your online presence and adopting a more digital-first approach. Considering it is quickly becoming the contact (and research) method of choice. Improving your website and internal sales workflow for digital communications is vital if your operation is to overcome the challenges that Covid-19 has brought.

Full of facts and insight, this sales strategy will help you to build a strong sales pipeline and win more sales, while our Top Tips are packed with advice for field sales teams, in how to adapt to a digital-first approach, fit for 2021.

*Hubspot COVID-19 Marketing and Sales Benchmark Data

A BREAKDOWN OF B2B SALES PIPELINE STAGES

The sales pipeline is the lifeblood of B2B growth. It's also one of the most diverse, confusing concepts in the industry. There are infinite ways to segment pipeline stages and plan corresponding sale activities.



TOP TIP

EMBRACE YOUR BRAND'S LANGUAGE

Remember emails are forever, and automated ones may be sent far more often than you expect. Your calls may be recorded more frequently too.

So, make sure your messaging mirrors the language and tone of your business.

LEAD GENERATION

Have you considered where your next sale going to come from? Some Channel businesses may leverage a form of inbound marketing for lead generation, which will only increase, as companies rely more and more on their website to attract potential customers.

Whether Direct or Wholesale, inbound marketing (using the 'Attract, Convert, Close, Delight' approach), is an ideal strategy for educating your potential customers and expanding their interest.

While the three most common marketing methods have typically been email, in-person events and telemarketing, developing a multi-channel campaign that reaches your leads through their preferred methods of contact is key.

Chatbots especially (combined with strong SEO) will become an increasingly integral aspect of how you attract new leads, given that traditional events and telemarketing are starting to fall by the wayside.

Speaking plainly - it's about having an immediate response. However your prospects get in touch, you must be able to reply as soon as they show an interest and in the same manner. If you use another form of communication, you run the risk of invading their privacy, and they will look elsewhere if you leave your response too late.

COMPANIES WITH MATURE LEAD GENERATION AND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES HAVE A 9.3% HIGHER SALES QUOTE ACHIEVEMENT RATE.

(Source: CSO Insights)

LEAD NURTURING

Depending on the quality of your CRM and inbound marketing, lead nurturing can take up valuable time, with staff reaching out to every Tom, Dick and Harry that shows interest. But robust and automated lead nurturing strategies can generate 50% more sales-ready leads at a third less the cost. (Source: DemandGen)

Automation saves time and keeps that outreach consistent and it also helps you manage the quality and regularity of that content to ensure that your prospects feel that they are treated like human beings, not a wallet with an email address.

Leveraging automation, and personalisation capabilities within your marketing platform (especially emails & landing pages), ensures that prospects are provided with appropriate, personalised content when shown to be interacting with your existing collateral, and helps to save your team's time for more pressing matters.

**GARTNER ESTIMATES A 5%
REDUCTION IN MARKETING
WASTE THROUGH
AUTOMATING FULFILMENT.**

(Source: Gartner)

TOP TIP

BUILD AN INSIDE SALES INFRASTRUCTURE

From the get-go, create a strong workflow, with the tools that will replace face-to-face meetings like chatbots, video conferencing, online proposal documents and webinar presentation services

TOP TIP

PRACTICE YOUR RAPPORT

If you're traditionally a F2F seller, using new systems can be highly distracting and confusing, especially when you're trying to build a rapport at the same time.

Therefore, you will need to practice using your new digital tools, for example before giving a sales presentation online.

MARKETING QUALIFIED LEAD

ABM is very different from traditional inbound marketing but compliments it incredibly well. By focusing on a handful of targets and nurturing each decision-maker personally, you can quickly build a relationship and shorten the sales journey. It's a reliable method of finding your next big win, especially if you're looking for your next strategic partner or know a handful of businesses that already fit your buyer personas.

What's more, you can use your existing lead scoring to better identify those who are most likely to purchase or leverage your current buyer personas and existing industry knowledge to cherry-pick the accounts you want to target. However, your sales and marketing strategy is only as good as the platform you use.

No matter your CRM or marketing strategy, without the raw data and comprehensible analytics, you will be unable to identify who is most ready to purchase, the efficacy of your content or decide what content works and what needs further development.

Disjointed CRM solutions, without API integrations for your existing platforms, will remove your ability to discover those valuable insights and will increase the sales journey and the time taken for your team to nurture leads.

62% OF MARKETERS SAY THEY CAN MEASURE A POSITIVE IMPACT SINCE ADOPTING AN ACCOUNT BASED MARKETING STRATEGY.

(Source: CSO Insights)

SALES ACCEPTED LEAD

Ensuring the internal journey of your leads is as smooth as possible is essential – you don't want your sales team having to go over the same questions around budget for example that they've already answered through previous stages. Not only can this frustrate your prospects, but it tarnishes your credibility too. It may also give the impression of a more disjointed operation, causing leads to question what the experience would be like if they were to become a customer.

That's why it's crucial that all the data generated from your leads can freely move across your marketing and CRM platforms. With so many applications for various tasks, it can be a struggle to find the right software with the right APIs to ensure a consistent experience. Your experienced marketers, strategic partners or even marketing agencies, will have the knowledge to point you in the right direction and recommend a robust solution.

87% OF SALES AND MARKETING LEADERS SAY COLLABORATION BETWEEN SALES AND MARKETING ENABLES CRITICAL BUSINESS GROWTH.

(Source: LinkedIn)

TOP TIP

YOU'RE A LONE WOLF NO MORE

Traditionally 'outdoors' salespeople will start working closer with marketing than before, especially with ABM strategies.

So, make sure you're part of the team, supporting your colleagues when possible. You never know when you may need a helping hand...

TOP TIP

TRULY LISTEN TO YOUR PROSPECTS AND RECORD THEIR RESPONSES

Nothing beats a salesperson invested in listening to a prospect's needs. Answer questions, follow-up on content downloads, and maintain responsiveness to help prospects navigate through the sea of conflicting information.

SALES QUALIFIED LEAD

Given the stat below, you shouldn't just be recording the issues your prospect or existing customer is looking to solve. Instead, track as much information as you can, but not just as a prospect, who they are as a person too. Keeping all the relevant data to hand helps you quickly establish a rapport, as well as an understanding of who you're talking to and how you can solve their pain points.

Now that your salesperson has been well-nurtured throughout the process, what happens if they fall ill? Keeping that continuity is vital if leads are going to continue through your pipeline. With Covid-19, typical winter illnesses, burnout and extended holidays all to be considered, it's worth planning how your teams can overcome a missing staff member for at least a couple of weeks.

This is where having all your customer data in one platform helps. Alerts, previous conversation info, budget, interests, even fun facts about the people you speak to - all in one place, means that your staff can easily pick up where others have left off.

78% OF BRANDS SAY THEY STRUGGLE WITH 'DATA DEBT' OR NOT HAVING ENOUGH QUICK DATA ABOUT THEIR CUSTOMERS TO LAUNCH RELEVANT PERSONALISATION TACTICS.

(Source: Experian)

CLOSED WON

Especially given the graphs in the introduction, and the financial struggles of SMEs in the current environment, pricing should be flexible to a point and ensuring wiggle room in your proposals is important. But reasons 2-5 are all about timing and communication, therefore dealing with your prospect's objections as quickly as possible is essential.

This is where the quality of your lead generation and nurturing can benefit. If you've truly built that rapport and proven to be a valuable asset to your prospect, closing the deal will be a natural progression.

That's why adding value early and creating trust is so vital. Ultimately, you're proving to your prospects that you can supply the right solution that will improve their business. By showcasing your knowledge and experience and educating your leads in a purely advisory capacity, prospects have more conviction and confidence in your brand, leading to a shorter sales journey and a better win-rate.

ALMOST HALF OF ALL DEALS ARE LOST BECAUSE OF BUDGET. 25% ARE LOST BECAUSE OF TIMING. LACK OF AUTHORITY, TIME TO REVIEW, AND URGENCY ARE THE THIRD, FOURTH, AND FIFTH MOST COMMON REASONS.

(Source: HubSpot)

TOP TIP

OVERCOME OBJECTIONS QUICKLY

Overcoming these 3 key reasons quickly gives you the best chance:

- They're not yet a believer in your brand
- You haven't explained the product's value
- They're establishing points for future negotiation

TOP TIP

DIVERSIFY YOUR PORTFOLIO

Managed services are a massively growing sector within the Channel. From cybersecurity to IT support, energy to data storage.

Not only do these give you the potential for further revenue once a need arises, but helps to increase your revenue long-term, rather than with a one-off purchase.

POST SALES

Now that you've got a customer through the door, you need to provide consistent value to make them into a promoter of your business. Strong customer support and regular touch-bases show you care and give you the opportunity for cross/upsells in the future, and those catch-ups will provide you with the context you need to identify the right value-add services.

Don't simply move on once you've won their favour, consider how you'll maintain that relationship months and years down the line. Existing customers are your best and most reliable source of future income, so keep educating and supporting them too and gently push them to advocate for your operation and recommend your services. Word of mouth and trusted recommendations are great lead generation tools, as well as a method of gaining credibility and increasing website visitors who may be searching for an answer from a trusted source.

80% OF MARKETERS SAY ABM IMPROVES CUSTOMER LIFETIME VALUES, WHILE 86% SAY IT IMPROVES WIN RATES.

(Source: TOPO)

THROUGHOUT THIS ENTIRE SALES STRATEGY, THE ONLY DEFINITE (FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW) IS THAT SALES AND MARKETING IN THE NEW NORMAL WILL BE MORE INTERTWINED THAN EVER BEFORE. GIVEN THE CHALLENGES OF REMOTE WORKING, DIRECTORS AND BOARD MEMBERS NEED INCREASED VISIBILITY OVER PERFORMANCE AND ROI.

A combination of a robust web presence, the right sales & marketing strategy, leveraging automation and personalisation in your outreach, and a well-connected CRM that links to your other systems, all comes together to support your future growth in this remote economy.

Not only will these aims help save your team time, but your business will be more responsive to your prospects, educating them on-demand and providing the value they need when researching their next partners.

Considering that research is happening right now across all industries and it's happening earlier in the sales cycle, you must get these tools in place soon to put yourself in the best position to win the race to success.



CONCLUSION

There's no doubt that we're all moving further into a digitally dominated world. Maximise your business potential by partnering with a marketing agency that already leverages those online tools and also specialises in the IT & Telecoms Channel.

INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT HOW OUR SERVICES CAN HELP YOUR SALES TEAM CLOSE MORE DEALS?

[CLICK HERE TO CONTACT US](#)





Blabberm**outh**

BLABBERMOUTH MARKETING

3rd Floor, Holmes Mill, Greenacre Street,
Clitheroe, Lancs, BB7 1EB

0800 977 3089, info@blabbermouthmarketing.co.uk