

AN INTRODUCTION TO

SALES FUNNELS



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Beginner's Guide to Sales Funnels

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Introduction to Sales Funnels

Sales funnels have been around for a long time, probably since humans first arrived on Earth. When early man wanted to get a person or animal to do something, a basic sales funnel was used (OK, OK, it wasn't exactly the same! But stick with me...) Sales funnels are used to get your business from unsuccessful and unprofitable to profitable success. When your caveman ancestors needed to eat, they used the precursor to today's modern sales funnel to attract animals.

After several days of having nothing to eat but plants, a tribe of early humans would be desperate for some meat. This is because meat carries a lot more protein than plant-based foods. Protein is needed by the human body for optimal health and well-being. So after "No Meat Monday" stretched into "Nothing But Plants All Week", your plant-munching ancestors that longed for a saber-toothed tiger steak knew they had to do something.



Basically, they had to attract the type of animal they wanted to eat.

They did this by piquing the animal's interest. In the case of the long-toothed tiger in the example above, they might bait a trap with a smaller animal like a rabbit. When a saber-toothed tiger wandered by it might become interested. If the tiger had eaten recently, it may ignore the bait and move away. Eventually though, a hungry tiger walked by, took the bait, and was caught in the trap.

This meant tiger stakes for everyone in the clan.

Although you don't want to think about "trapping" your prospects to turn them into customers, this primitive hunting technique simply explains exactly what a sales funnel is.

A sales funnel is, at its core, a defined series of steps you design to guide and inform potential customers as they become familiar with your products or services, and then decide whether or not to make a purchase.

That is really all there is to a sales funnel. Men and women still use the sales funnel approach in the hopes that they will attract a mate. Just as in the early-man hunting example, a potential suitor must first let potential mates know they exist, then they need to get them interested, with the hopes that the man or woman of their dreams will take the action that is desired, join the suitor in a relationship.

Let's look at the basics of the sales funnel, so you can cater one that effectively builds your blog and your business, and develops a steady stream of prospects, customers and profits.

Why Using a Sales Funnel Is a Good Idea

The human brain craves order and process. It operates in a structured way, and understands step-by-step systems. When you logically talk to the brain in a way it can understand, you have a good chance of getting your business message across. This is why sales funnels work so well for building your business, no matter what niche or market you are in.

Think about the last time you wanted to go out to eat Italian food. Let's say you decided to try a new place. You either talked to your friends for suggestions, typed "my city" Italian restaurants in your favorite search engine, or drove around aimlessly in hopes of finding a place.

You would eventually choose a specific Italian restaurant because you became interested in some way. All of your friends raved about the place, you saw they served all your favorite foods, the price was exceptionally attractive or there was some other reason you became interested enough to choose this restaurant over others. So you took action. You ate there. If the service was good, the price was right, you didn't have to drive very far and a lot of other variables were positive, you would probably look forward to going back to that restaurant in the future.



The Different Stages of a Typical Sales Funnel

If that restaurant owner attracted you by advertising, they were attempting to get your business by starting at the top of a sales funnel. Sales funnels like the one that worked so well for your Italian restaurant owner have begun by doing one thing ... attracting your attention. That is the first step in the following proven 4 step sales funnel model which has been used by salespeople and marketers for centuries, shortened to AIDA.



- **Attention** – Attract the attention of your prospects
- **Interest** – Once you have their attention, get them interested
- **Desire** – Turn interest into desire, make them want your product or service
- **Action** – If you have done a good job in the first 3 steps of this process, your prospect takes action, and buys your product or service

If you have ever been fishing, you have been employing a classic sales funnel approach to getting fish into your boat, maybe without even knowing it. You want to **attract the attention** of fish, get them **interested** in your bait, hopefully entice them with your lure and fishing tactics in such a way that you build their **desire** to eat. In the perfect world scenario, this desire leads to the **action you are hoping for**, the fish bites your hook, and you have just landed dinner.

The process works the same for landing plenty of prospects who will hopefully become customers through the sales funnel process.

A Few More Reasons Sales Funnels Are A Smart Choice to Build Your Business for a Blogger or Online Entrepreneur

If a process is difficult and expensive, it doesn't matter how effective it is, some business owners simply can't understand or afford to implement it. This is the beauty of the simple sales cycle.

Even a beginning blogger or web-based businessperson can set up an effective sales cycle, for little or no money, and in just a few hours.

The process is easily done, easy to understand and replicate, and you can set up multiple sales processes in a very short amount of time and for little money, or no cost at all. Then you test and refine, until you create one that builds your business while producing profits as well. There are software suites, proven sales funnel tools and Internet resources that make this time-tested business builder work for any blogger, whether on a budget or with unlimited resources.

Breaking Down the 4 Sales Funnel Components Further

There are many different ways to complete each step of the sales funnel process. For instance, you can use online ads to attract attention to your blog. You may decide to make videos and place them on YouTube, Vimeo and other video sharing sites to get the attention of your prospects. Let's look at each stage of the 4 step sales process in order, and discuss a few simple and effective ways to help fill that part of the funnel.

1 - Attracting Attention

This is the phase that is so important, because it fills your funnel at the top. You need to attract attention to your blog. The following free and paid methods for letting people know your business is out there have proven effective for beginning the sales funnel process.

- **Blog Content**

Blog posts, your About Us page, and any other content on your blog can attract attention to your business. This is why optimizing your content for search engines is so important. When your blog content is structured and written properly, search engines like Google will send you lots of free traffic.

This begins filling your sales funnel at the top. When your content really makes a positive difference in the lives of your prospects, they move further in the sales funnel by developing a desire to know more, and hopefully end up making a purchase.



- **Offline and Internet Ads**

Pay Per Click (PPC) advertising is a common online method for letting people know about your blog. You can also contact business owners with large email lists in your market, and pay them for a solo ad. An ad goes out to their list and tells their followers about your blog, business or offer. This is a great way to build your list as well while also getting the word out about your business, and you can target the exact prospect pool you are looking for.

You can advertise in forums, on social media sites like YouTube and Facebook, and anywhere online that your target audience hangs out.

Don't ignore off-line, "real world" advertising methods. You may be able to reach an entirely different group of eyeballs for your offer when you advertise off-line rather than on. You can use free advertising services like Craigslist, or pay for traditional ads in print magazines and newspapers. Slap a car magnet on your vehicle letting everyone know about your blog, and any time you drive anywhere, you are attracting attention to your business.

You can pay for banner ads and display ads on the top blogs in your niche. As mentioned earlier, really good blog content will draw you free search engine traffic. You could also pay the search engines for traffic, do free advertising on popular social networks by posting frequent updates, Tweets and messages, and create content for article directories.

- **Videos**

The time to jump all over video for getting the word out about your business is right now. Video has absolutely exploded as an inexpensive or free, super-effective way to create attention online. This means placing videos not just on YouTube and the other video sharing sites, but also on your blog. Consider the following statistics.



- In 2017, online video accounts for an incredible 74% of all online traffic. (KPCB)
- 4 out of 5 consumers say demo videos are helpful in making buying decisions. (Animoto)
- Snapchatters view 10 billion videos each and every day. (AdWeek)
- As many as 500 million people watch videos on Facebook each day. (TubularInsights)
- YouTube claims more than 1 billion users, 1/3 of everyone on the Internet, and 1 in every 7 people on the planet. (YouTube)

Video is powerful. Video content is processed by the human brain 60,000 times faster than text-based content. In a world where people are continually receiving more and more marketing messages daily, and are extremely pressed for free time, this means you can quickly get a message across about your business and make a real impression.



- **Press Releases**

Press releases still work well online. There are free press release sites which will publish your PR without charging a penny. However, the best way to harness the power of PRs is to use the paid options offered by the following top press release distribution services.

- 24-7 Press Release
- eReleases
- PR Newswire
- PRLog
- PR.com
- PRWeb

2 - Interest

Attracting attention means letting people know you exist. Tell them about your blog, whether you use offline or online advertising methods, SEO tactics, frequent social media posting or other proven attention-getting methods. Once someone knows about your blog or business, there is no guarantee their attention will lead anywhere. That is why you have to get your audience interested in what you have to say. The following methods do that effectively.

- **Great Headlines**

Once you have attracted someone to your blog, how do you keep them hanging around? You do this with click-magnet headlines that absolutely guarantee your visitors read your content. Don't underestimate the power of a great headline. You may have the best content in the world and a great offer, but if your headline doesn't get people reading what you have to say, your business is sunk.

- **A Unique Hook**

What makes your business different from everyone else in your market? There is no better way to create interest than by being interesting! Do things differently. Look for a new slant on an old problem. You can be handing out pretty much the same information as your competition, but when you are unique and memorable, you stand out from the crowd.

- **Problem-Solving, Question-Answering Content**

Figure out what the top 5 or 10 problems are that plague your target audience. Dig down deep and create outstanding pieces of content that answer those questions. Make this information free and available on your blog.

Use the attention-getting methods listed above to drive traffic to these valuable and content rich web pages. Whenever you create text or video content that answers nagging questions and solves big problems in the minds of your target audience, you are going to keep those people interested.



- **Your Main Landing Page**

When a fish hears or sees your bait or lure "plunk" into the water nearby, you have attracted its attention. Depending on whether the fish is hungry or not, the water temperature, and whether or not it is breeding season, that interest may be mild, strong or neutral. It's your job to create interest, by using the right bait and fishing techniques. Your main landing page is where you should be sending everyone you attracted at the top of your sales funnel.

Your landing page is how you build your email list, which is where you will create desire and hopefully a call to action that leads to a sale. Your landing page is your bait to move someone from interest to desire. Your landing page copy, how it is optimized for the search engines and how it is structured, as well as the opt-in freebie you are offering, are the techniques you use to get someone to sign up to your email list.

Your landing page is far and away the most important interest-builder in any online business.

This should be simple, short and straightforward. Mention a few reasons why someone should sign up to your email list, and offer them a high-value product in return for doing so. Here is where you are moving uninterested or mildly interested people out of the sales process, and funneling interested web surfers closer to making a buying decision.

3 - Desire

Attention and interest are two different things. Of course, you have to attract attention to your blog before you can develop interest. Once you develop interest, someone actually wonders what it is you have to say or offer, you need to appeal to their emotions, especially desire. You can do that with the following marketing methods.

- **Case Studies, Testimonials, Social Proof**

Social proof is extremely powerful. Some effective sales techniques include simply showing an interested prospect lots of happy customer stories, testimonials and case studies. People receive more marketing messages now than ever before. Because of this, they are much more likely to believe a customer they can identify with rather than your salespeople or sales page.

In the B2B (business-to-business) environment, case studies are extremely powerful. They interview a customer in depth, revealing how a product or service that you offered solved some huge problem. In the B2C (business-to-consumer) world of marketing, where many bloggers exist, case studies are known as testimonials or happy customer stories. These can be text-based, video or audio, and they create desire by showing you exactly how your offerings work in a real-world environment for a "real" person.

- **Email Autoresponder Series**

If you spend all your efforts driving free and paid traffic to a landing page, and then send those who sign up to your list an email autoresponder series, you can build an effective, set-and-forget sales funnel for little or no money. The best way to take someone from attention to desire is to constantly interact with them. Ask them questions. Send out surveys. Continue to send exceptional content through your email autoresponder series, asking for nothing in return.

Would you believe that it is easier to develop desire if you are able as a marketer to talk to someone 7 times rather than just once?

I hope you agree with that statement. It has been shown that on average, across all markets and niches, it takes approximately 7 communications with a prospect before he or she makes a buying decision. This is very easy to do with an email series that automatically goes out on a previously set schedule, automating your sales funnel experience.

- **Stop Pain, Create Pleasure**

Did you know there are only 2 major desires upon which almost all buying decisions are made? People want to stop pain, or receive a pleasure. Of these two, sales and marketing professionals understand that **relieving pain is the most powerful motivator**. If you can develop content that stops pain and simultaneously offers pleasure, whether it be videos or blog posts, emails or articles, you will never lack for customers.

Sometimes it pays to get a professional involved.



This means hiring a copywriter that understands proven techniques and strategies, ways of writing and structuring content, that create high levels of desire. If you don't have the means to hire a copywriter, just make sure the content you create tells a story and involves emotions. Emotional storytelling will always be the easiest way for the low-budget blogger to develop desire in his or her audience.

4 - Action

Every sales funnel needs a call to action. You have to tell your prospects exactly what to do, how to buy your service or product. Keep the following thoughts in mind when your sales funnel narrows to the point where you want to turn a prospect into a customer.

- **Ask for the Sale**

There are a couple of major schools of thought regarding email advertising as far as when you should ask for a sale. Many believe that you should make an inexpensive offer the first time someone joins your email list. When you think about it, this makes a lot of sense. That person is interested in what you have to say. You have created enough desire so that trading an email address for your opt-in freebie and future content looks attractive to the prospect.

After your "Thank You for Joining My Newsletter" email, offer a product or service that solves a big problem, and charge very little for it. This creates trust and respect on the part of your subscriber.

The second school of thought is to wait before you make an offer of any kind. In this process, you send out 5 or 7 emails in a row with valuable, free content. In each one of them you may hint that you have created a product or service that is just what your audience has been looking for. However, you never ask for a sale until you have developed a real relationship with your list. After several emails, you send your list members to your sales page, which we will talk about next.

- **A Great Sales Page**

Like a high-converting opt-in box, an efficient sales page should not be one word longer than it needs to be. However, there is a lot of work to do on a sales page. You have to overcome objections, mention benefits instead of features and have a truly killer headline, frequently testing and tweaking to get the best possible conversions.

If you have done a really good job creating desire, you may need to do nothing more than literally ask for the sale in an email. In most cases, however, you will want an influential and persuasive sales page in place. This is because if someone has already decided to buy from you, they will simply scroll down your sales page and hit the buy button. On the other hand, if someone is on the fence, a well-written sales page can turn the person from a simple tire-kicker to a happy customer.

The Simple and Easy but Incredibly Effective 3 Step Sales Funnel

The more steps in your sales process, the greater chance that something can go wrong. People desire instant gratification these days, especially web surfers. Year after year marketers find that the attention span of the people that make up Internet traffic becomes shorter and shorter. This means your sales process could maybe benefit by becoming shorter as well.

There are plenty of reasons the following 3 step sales funnel works so well.

First off, it's easy for just about anyone to implement. Even if you have to hire someone else to handle each step, the free tools and technologies available to do so mean that you won't have to pay an expert much to develop this sales funnel for you. Here it is in all its simple beauty, a sales funnel that 5-figure-a-month online bloggers and marketers consistently use to build and grow their businesses.

- 1. Landing Page**
- 2. Opt-in Bribe**
- 3. Email Autoresponder Sequence**

That is it, a simple but deadly effective sales funnel that beginner and veteran level Internet marketers and bloggers use all the time to build successful online businesses. Once it is set up, all you do is send targeted traffic to your landing page. The process works automatically, 24/7, night or day, building your business and growing your profits. Now let's take a look at the top tools, services and software you can use to quickly create a simple, high-converting sales funnel.

Landing Page Software

There is no need to learn how to code and program to make effective, high-conversion landing pages. This is where you send all of the traffic you have collected in the attention-getting and interest-building stages of your sales funnel. Marketers call this target page a landing page for a very good reason.

You eventually want every person that you interact with on the web to land on this page, in the hopes that they will sign up to your email list. The following landing page providers and software suites offer plenty of features. They allow you to track and tweak your landing page with just a couple of clicks of your mouse, so you can develop the highest converting page without much effort on your part.

Paid Services

- SimpleLeadCapture
- LeadPages
- Lander
- Landingi
- InstaPage
- WishPond
- PageWiz
- UnBounce
- OptimizePress

Free Services

- IM Creator
- KickOff Labs
- LaunchRock
- IncomePress Free Landing Page Generator
- Beaver Builder

WordPress Themes and Plug-Ins

- Onesie
- Launchpad
- LaunchEffect
- WP Landing Pages

There are dozens, if not hundreds, of WordPress themes and plug-ins that can make great landing pages for you. A quick web search for "WordPress landing page themes" or "top WordPress landing page plug-ins" will show you what other bloggers and Internet marketers believe are the best products to use for creating your landing page.

Opt-In Bribe Creation

How-to lists and checklists make really effective opt-in bribes (also called lead magnets). Since the free piece of content you are offering your prospects in return for signing up to your email list can be video, audio or text-based, there are any number of ways to create this opt-in freebie. Just make sure your **content delivers a quick win for your audience. It should also focused on one single, super-specific problem or issue.**

Lead magnets are easy to make. Just save any text or word processor-based content as a PDF. They are also easy to understand and consume for your audience. The top email autoresponder services listed below integrate easily with your landing page and opt-in bribe, making for a simple sales funnel process that even beginner bloggers can implement.

Email Autoresponder Services

The following services totally automate your email communication process. You create emails one time and build them in a sequence. Once you load them into your autoresponder service, whenever someone signs up to your list, the emails begin to go out on whatever schedule you create. This is incredibly powerful. It takes you away from your computer, and means you don't have to personally and manually respond to someone when they join your list.

Aside from creating an autoresponder sequence, you can also send out "broadcast" emails. This is great for whenever you want to alert someone to a special affiliate offer you are promoting, or you would like to announce a blog post you just published.

The following services have long been noted as the best in the business for handling your autoresponder needs.

- AWeber
- MailChimp
- iContact
- Constant Contact
- InfusionSoft
- GetResponse



The Wrap-Up

If you have a landing page to collect email addresses and a good lead magnet, followed by an engaging autoresponder sequence and call to action, you have an effective sales funnel in place. Then all you have to do is drive traffic to your landing page.

Use as many methods for getting attention to your landing page as you can, online and off. Publish blog posts and other free content that offers information people would happily pay for. Post videos to the top video sharing sites as well as your website, as they help create an intense interest. Use your email autoresponder service to deliver your opt-in bribe, and create desire by building relationships and answering questions, solving problems that your audience has.

Finally, ask for the sale.

You need to have a call to action eventually. This is where some marketers and bloggers have a difficult time. They don't see themselves as salespeople. Just remember that if you have created attention, interest and desire, your audience will be begging you to give them more information. This is where a high-value product for a decent price makes all your sales funnel work successful, turning someone from a prospect to a customer.