

# Ultimate Guide To B2B Sales Funnels

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In our latest ultimate guide, we cover everything you need to know about the B2B sales funnel. The B2B sales process can be complex and usually takes place over long timeframes. A quality funnel helps you simplify (and improve) the entire process.

We've kept this guide as actionable as possible, so be sure to save it for future reference. Follow even just a few of our suggestions below and your B2B sales will be better because of it.

Let's get started!

**What Is A B2B Sales Funnel?**

**Why Is The B2B Sales Funnel Important?**

**Important Actions For Each Stage Of The B2B Sales Funnel**

**5 Tips For Building An Effective B2B Sales Funnel**

**Common Mistakes And How To Avoid Them**

**Tools And Resources**

**Conclusion**

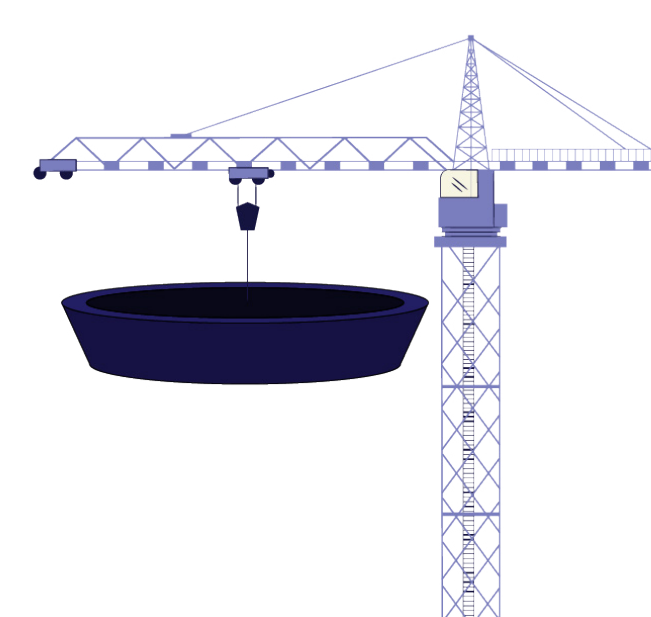
## WHAT IS A B2B SALES FUNNEL?

A B2B sales funnel (sometimes called a pipeline) is a visual model. It will typically show the entire process a B2B lead goes through before becoming a customer. This covers everything from "first contact" with a company all the way through to a closed deal.

While a "funnel" can be broken down in many different ways, most marketers agree that there are three **main stages of each funnel**. Each stage of the funnel corresponds to a different level of engagement from your leads. Here are those three stages.

- **Top of Funnel (TOF):** Often called the "awareness" stage, this is where potential leads discover your brand or product while researching a particular problem they have.
- **Middle of Funnel (MOF):** Also known as the "consideration" stage, the second stage is where prospects are actively engaged with your content and any solutions you may offer.
- **Bottom of Funnel (BOF):** This is the "decision" or "purchase" stage, and it's the point at which leads are ready to buy and a sales team becomes especially important.

While this represents a simplified version of a sales funnel, it's quite accurate in terms of the "journey" a lead typically goes through. For the rest of this guide we'll be diving into these three stages in more depth.



## WHY IS THE B2B SALES FUNNEL IMPORTANT?

Generally speaking, B2B sales are often more complex than B2C. For one, there are usually multiple decision-makers. Most B2B services and products will also be more expensive. With all this complexity of B2B sales, a good sales funnel can help simplify it.

That said, here are three specific reasons a B2B sales funnel is so essential:

- **Longer sales cycles.** With B2B deals, the timeline in which decisions are made is much longer. Indeed, depending on contract sizes and overall complexity, the timelines can stretch to months or even years. With a clear and effective B2B sales funnel, you are able to prioritise the nurturing and follow-up that is necessary for a sale.
- **Team alignment.** It's a cliché in the business world that is too often true: sales and marketing teams operate in silos. While this is **unavoidable** to a certain extent, a B2B sales funnel can help fix it. Clarity makes teamwork easier. A clear funnel encourages both teams to cooperate around shared metrics and definitions. This makes effective cooperation more the norm than the exception.
- **Predictable growth.** A well-managed funnel makes it easier to measure things. Because of its simplification of complex processes, a sales funnel shows you what to measure — and when. The end result is **better numbers** throughout your entire business. This predictability aids in budgeting, allocation of resources, and long term planning.

## IMPORTANT ACTIONS FOR EACH STAGE OF THE B2B SALES FUNNEL

Now that we know what a B2B sales funnel is and why it's important, let's dive into the details. Below you will find each of the three stages we mentioned above. For each of these three stages, we cover what the key objective is at that stage and actions to achieve it. Keep this handy — most of our suggestions are applicable to just about any organization.

### Top Of Funnel (TOF): Awareness And Lead Generation

#### Key Objective:

Attract potential leads who match your ideal customer profile and encourage them to engage with your brand. Prospects here are exploring possible solutions to a particular business challenge.

#### Important Actions:

- **Quality content marketing.** Publish blog posts that educate your audience on their problems, in-depth whitepapers, or videos that address common B2B **pain points**.
- **SEO.** Center your content targeted keywords that people are using when searching for a solution. This will get them on your website where you can further educate them.
- **Virtual events.** Free, topic-focused **events like webinars** are a great way to demonstrate your expertise. It's also a good way to inject a little bit of personality.

### Middle Of Funnel (MOF): Consideration And Lead Nurturing

#### Key Objective:

Qualify and nurture the leads you already have by providing them with more detailed, solution-oriented content. At this point, prospects are more seriously evaluating whether your offer can solve their problems.

#### Important Actions:

- **Targeted email marketing.** Create email automations that highlight product use cases or industry success stories. There are a ton of different things you can do here, so be sure to check out **our guide to email marketing**.
- **Case studies.** Create and distribute in-depth success stories. These case studies should show the tangible ROI that users can expect when investing in your solution.
- **Product demos.** People don't just want to know that your solution works — they want to know **how it works**. Product demos are a great way to sell your service. You can also offer a personalized demo for **high value prospects** that show high purchasing intent.

### Bottom Of Funnel (BOF): Decision And Closing the Deal

#### Key Objective:

Create the environment that is necessary for a final purchasing decision. By now, prospects have likely compared multiple vendors and have a list of final options. Your job is to show them why your solution is the best.

#### Important Actions:

- **"High-touch" sales engagement.** At this point, B2B leads that are about to buy deserve a more personal touch. This might include a deeper product trial, an in-depth briefing to decision-makers, or even on-site visits.
- **Personalized proposals.** Show exactly how your product or service will meet an account's specific needs. This should include their potential cost savings or revenue gains.
- **Negotiations.** Before a B2B client buys, there is usually some kind of negotiation. Be prepared for detailed discussions about contract terms. Assuming they are ready to get started, this is also a chance for your team to **upsell a new client**.



## 5 TIPS FOR BUILDING AN EFFECTIVE B2B SALES FUNNEL

### 1. Define The Ideal Customer Profile (ICP)

We mentioned an **ideal customer profile** at the beginning. This is known as an ICP, and it's an essential step for any company that's creating a B2B sales funnel. The fact is, not every lead will be a good fit. There are naturally certain industries, company sizes, and buyer personas that are a better match for your solution. These are easier to market to. Target them, and you have a much better ROI on your time.

The best way to create an ICP is to look at who **your customers** actually are. Try to spot any trends. What are the industries that most typically buy from you? Which demographics do they match? This provides you a snapshot of who you should be centering your B2B sales funnel on.

### 2. Align Marketing And Sales

Both your marketing and sales team are critical for your business. One brings leads in, and the other converts them to customers. This sounds great in theory. The problem is, oftentimes, **these teams don't communicate very well**. This is a missed opportunity if you want a B2B sales funnel that works.

The most important step you can take is scheduling regular check-ins. These don't have to be overly informal. A simple meetup between your teams can work wonders. Just be sure you are discussing the things that matter. That is probably some combination of **pipeline metrics** and overall lead quality. Approach this correctly, and your marketing team will know exactly when to hand off leads to sales, and your sales team will know exactly the kind of marketing that gets people to buy.

### 3. Produce Tailored Content

We have written many times about **the power of content marketing**. No matter what your industry is, no matter what you sell, and no matter who your audience is - people want good content. This is especially true in the B2B industry. Because B2B products and services are usually on the pricier side, potential buyers expect content of a certain quality.

There are a number of best practices you should follow in your content creation. First, make sure you stay on top of **B2B content marketing trends**. This will ensure your content is always relevant. You should also be sure to create **different kinds of content**. A quality CRM will make it easy to track all interactions you have with leads. If you are creating high quality **content on social media**, you might also consider a tool like **Buffer**. Have — don't forget email marketing. There are **a ton of ESP's** out there that will help you set up money-making automations. Email is also a great chance to segment your audience so you can follow up with customized deals.

### 4. Leverage Tools

The best B2B sales funnel will happen automatically. Leads will come in, be educated about their problem, be introduced to your solution, and (ideally) become a customer. This is the ideal outcome — and it's so much easier when you are leveraging the power of the right tools.

There are a number of things you should consider using at your organization (see our section on "Tools And Resources" for some ideas). A quality CRM will make it easy to track all interactions you have with leads. If you are creating high quality **content on social media**, you might also consider a tool like **Buffer**. Have — don't forget email marketing. There are **a ton of ESP's** out there that will help you set up money-making automations. Email is also a great chance to segment your audience so you can follow up with customized deals.

### 5. Monitor And Optimize Continuously

A B2B sales funnel is not static. As market conditions or your own product change, so should your funnel. This is why continuous monitoring is essential. Not only does it allow you to improve what you already have, but it makes it easier to catch inefficiencies early on.

First, be sure that you are focusing on **the right metrics**. This should include overall conversion rates between stages and the average deal sizes. Remember — numbers don't lie. Similar to our advice above, you should also make it a point to have regular meetings among your team. This gives everybody a chance to discuss what's working (or not). Lastly, maintain a healthy sense of experimentation. Your B2B sales funnel is never going to be perfect, but you can get close if you are always trying new things.

## COMMON MISTAKES AND HOW TO AVOID THEM

At this point you know a few things. You understand what a typical B2B sales funnel looks like. You have a good overview of the three stages, important actions you should be taking at each one, and some best practices to always keep in mind.

But what are the "funnel killers?" What are the things you should try to avoid at all costs? Below you will find five common B2B sales funnel mistakes — as well as our advice for avoiding them.

### 1. Lack Of Clear Handoffs

Your leads should move through a natural process between your teams. Without this well-defined system, qualified leads can stay "stuck" in your funnel for weeks before your sales team picks them up. Implement clear communication between teams and stay on top of real time notifications about leads.

### 2. Quantity Over Quality

Flooding your funnel with poor quality leads is not the way you want to approach business. Instead, you need to focus on **the quality** of the prospects that you are bringing in. Make sure you establish a lead scoring system so this is your default way of doing business.



### 3. Ignoring Existing Customers

It's normal to want to bring in more leads and new customers. This is a missed opportunity. Many B2B sales funnels are designed solely for new business, but **upsells and cross-sells** to existing clients should be a normal part of your flow. Be sure you are always offering existing customers something new to buy.

### 4. No Postmortem Analysis

Inevitably, you will have a sales funnel that falls flat. You don't get the results you want or your revenue isn't nearly what you expected. This is where it's important to analyze what hasn't worked. This is called a **"postmortem analysis"**. B2B companies that make this a normal part of their funnel building have the ability to refine strategies and look for future opportunities.

### 5. Under-Utilizing Analytics

Again: numbers don't lie. If you tend to "rely on your gut feeling", you will almost certainly be led to misguided strategies. This is where analytics comes in. Use the right tools (see below) and you will have access to data that can help you continuously improve your funnel.

## TOOLS AND RESOURCES

A B2B sales funnel is only as good as the tools you use to build it. In this last section, we wanted to give you some options. Below you will find five different kinds of tools or software that most B2B sales funnels will benefit from, as well as two of our favorite picks for each.

### Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

- **HubSpot CRM:** Friendly and scalable with marketing automation features.
- **Pipedrive:** User-friendly and focused on pipeline management.

### Lead Generation / Prospecting

- **LinkedIn Sales Navigator:** Advanced search and filtering for targeted outreach.
- **Hunter.io:** Email address-finding tool for connecting with decision-makers.

### Marketing Automation

- **Market o Engage:** Everything you need to automate your most important marketing tasks.
- **Mailchimp:** Email marketing tool with automation capabilities.

### Analytics / Reporting

- **Google Analytics:** Website traffic analysis for lead generation insights.
- **Tableau:** Advanced data visualization for sales reporting.

### Scheduling Meeting

- **Calendly:** Automated scheduling tool.
- **Acuity Scheduling:** Appointment booking software with customization options.

## CONCLUSION

Almost any B2B company can benefit from building out a B2B sales funnel. It helps you visualize how exactly leads become customers, and makes it easier to provide the value that prospects need at each stage of the buying process.

We hope you take action on this guide and see the results that are possible. If you ever need help with your own funnel or have any questions, just let us know!