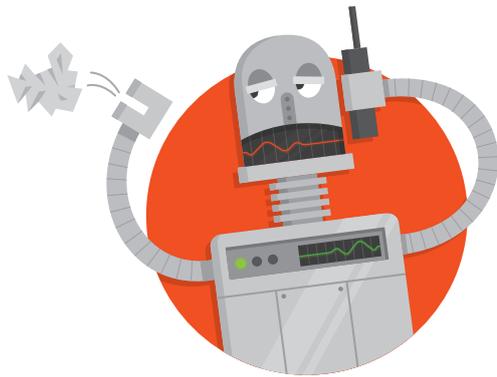


# Navigating Lead Gen Dead Ends

Following a roadmap to connect with IT buyers  
(and avoiding the detours)



# IT Marketing: Not a One-Way Street



*"Attention customer #1,538: Anonymous robotic sales rep is now ready to commence cold call. Please standby for impersonal sales pitch."*

The traditional, one-size-fits-all lead gen model is in its death throes. Why? Because the IT buyer's journey is no longer a linear path – it's more of a labyrinthine maze of touch-point tunnels involving multiple stages that often occur prior to an IT pro ever visiting a company's website (much less taking an uninvited sales call).



## Quick Tip

*"70% of IT pros' purchase decisions are complete before contacting a vendor."*

*– Spiceworks Community Poll, Aug 2014*



So, how should marketers reach and influence their prospects? They adjust their route. They go off the beaten track. They take the long road—all to forge new paths to real engagement. They steer clear of *lead gen* (blindly acquiring a list of names that wastes time, money and potentially annoys your customers) and realize *demand gen* drives quality interest for their solution, and in turn revenue for their company. And the key to demand gen? Integrated campaigns that focus on being personal (not transactional), relevant and valuable while meeting IT pros at their crucial pit stops along their buying journey.

# Grand Central of Purchasing

With the evolution of purchase habits, IT buyers are demanding the same personalized experience that they'd get at their local butcher from their office's multinational IT reseller. And yet, marketers still resort to list buying that leads to the dreaded ((frozen)) cold call. It's a route with no clear destination in mind – and it often results in a lost opportunity, or even worse, getting blacklisted. See the issue?



## Road Work Ahead

*Paving a new path.*



It's time to align what IT pros need and want (and when) with what marketers deliver. *What are the predictive signs that indicate an IT pro is moving along the buyer's journey? How and when should tech marketers engage buyers to lead them through their purchase process? Who better to go to than IT buyers?*

This playbook can act as a sort of demand gen road crew: helping tech marketers like you nurture your buyers from cold, to warm, to ready to buy. To do so, we've mapped out a quick guide featuring the purchase stages IT buyers move through, their wants and needs at each stage, examples of marketing tactics to guide them through the process and tips to help you drive a successful campaign.

# The Journey Begins...

Before you fill your funnel with demand gen fuel and put the campaign pedal to the metal, you'll want to establish a few ground rules:

## What's the goal?

Of course, you have to know where you're headed. Start by asking a few questions:

- What's the campaign's objective?
- Who are your target buyers and what do they care about?
- What's your story or value proposition?
- How will you measure success?

## Where to start?

At the beginning, you must get a pulse on where you are. Do your research. Poll or survey your target audience to gauge marketing messages, positioning, channels and assumptions before executing your programs. Remember, don't simply poll your current database—those folks know you, and what you are really after is people who don't.

## Where are we headed?

Now that that's sorted, you're ready to start your integrated campaign! Let's get familiar with the five IT buyer stages that lead prospects to become customers:

- Awareness
- Scoping
- Planning
- Selecting
- Purchasing/Repurchasing

Keep in mind that the IT purchase journey is not linear. The IT buyer might U-turn back to a previous stage or speed through a few. Be sure to make your content easily accessible for the IT buyer to maneuver through the journey as he sees fit.

## And... you're off!



## Expert Tips

Spiceworks' Senior Product Manager Kathryn P's guide to getting good data:

- Design questions to get to the pain points IT pros are experiencing.
- Survey at least 150 IT buyers.
- Include qualifying questions to ensure that you have the right person responding.
- Be sure you've got a comprehensive set of response options for each question.



# All The Signs Leading to a Purchase

## 1 Awareness

They have a need. You have a solution. By haphazardly dialing up frozen leads, you're sure to crash and burn. After all, awareness is when IT buyers notice the problem (or future problem) that your product or service will help to solve. Therefore, they aren't quite ready to start talking solutions with your sales reps.

Fear not: There are tons of ways to build good awareness, but before you rev your engine...

### Questions You Might Ask:

1. What is my media strategy?
2. Do I have a plan for influencer marketing?
3. Are analysts discussing the problem my solution solves?
4. Are buyers talking about my brand?
5. How do I meet buyers at the right time and the right place?

### Tactics You Might Try:

**Word-of-Mouth:** It's where most awareness begins. Be there to jump into the conversation and make an impression from the start.

**Targeting:** Time to aim for the bulls-eye. No sense wasting marketing efforts on buyers who just don't give a hoot. Ensure that you get the right message to the right buyers by segmenting your audience as granularly as possible.

**Earned Media:** Organic social media and press traction add credibility and authenticity to your integrated campaign. Ensure that you outline an ironclad media strategy with a PR team focused on getting your news into the news.

**Online Advertising:** That's right, banners actually work. But don't forget that billboards of the digital universe work even better when they're targeted.



### Expert Tips

Advice from Spiceworks' Online Advertising Guru, Tom W:

- Keep banners simple – six words or less.
- Lose the button—at this day and age, it's a no-brainer that ads are clickable. Adding a button on the banner is a waste of space.
- Go with a clean graphic over busy—it focuses the eye and keeps the message clear.



### Road Blocks

Success? Awareness is difficult to measure, and therefore typically overlooked – but don't let it slow you down. It's important to find buyers on their turf. Tactics such as establishing a presence in IT forums give you a leg up on the competition.



### What IT Pros Say

*"Frankly, I identify my problems when my users start to moan, and become aware of solutions from targeted banners from trusted online sites."*

– Simon C, Network Admin

## 2 Scoping

Once a need is identified, IT pros research a list of solutions (seeking all possible roads to Solutionville!). In the process, they consult a number of different resources. Based on Spiceworks' 2014 "IT Budget Report", IT pros attribute their top three resources to: Google search, Spiceworks and vendor websites.

Of course, a little prep on your end will go a long way...

### Questions You Might Ask:

1. What resources are IT pros turning to for their research?
2. Is my Search Engine Optimization proving high rankings on search engines?
3. Have I contributed to online communities to help boost my credibility and traffic to my site?
4. Am I managing and monitoring my customer reviews?

### Tactics You Might Try:

**SEO/SEM:** Don't hack SEO by optimizing around the hottest keywords, because those landing on your site won't convert. Focus on what you do well, and optimize around that.

**Social Media Presence:** Drive fans and followers to your company or product page within social communities. Your updates will flow into their feeds, so you'll be top of mind when they're ready to buy.

**Ratings & Reviews:** Read them. Respond to the good, the bad, and the ugly. Show you care, and they'll show some love in return.



### Expert Tip

*"Based on IT pros who follow vendors in the Spiceworks Community, we've found that they spend 1.9 times more than non-followers."*

– **Ted N, Social Solutions Product Marketer, Spiceworks**



### Road Blocks

Figuring out how to best build and maintain a favorable presence is a fine art. But it's definitely a crucial milestone as your buyers scope out what others think about your products.

Naturally, nobody wants a negative review. But how you handle them is what separates you from the competition—respond, apologize and seek the right person to solve the reviewer's issue.



### What IT Pros Say

*"At the scoping stage, I scan vendor's websites and online communities to see if they have a solution that I should look into further."*

– **Rob T, Systems Administrator**

## 3 Planning

When you come across your buyers on this leg of the journey, they'll likely be kicking their tires and deciding if your solution ticks all the boxes. It's a great opportunity to educate them, illustrate why your product is superior, and steer potential customers in the intended direction.

### Questions You Might Ask:

1. How can I easily show my product's cost-effectiveness and efficiency?
2. Can my buyers calculate the ROI my product will deliver?
3. Now that I have their attention, is my brand approachable, helpful and trustworthy?

### Tactics You Might Try:

**Content is King:** The key during this phase of the buyer's journey is providing the right content at the right time. Remember, lose the marketing fluff—IT buyers want helpful, nitty-gritty techie info—so give it to them.

**Infographics:** Who doesn't like a snazzy picture that's loaded with stats and quick takeaways? For time-constrained IT pros, content that gets right to the point (and has data-rich ammo to back it up) is exactly what they're looking for – plus it's super-simple for them to share on the world wide web.

**Email:** Get it in gear. Be sure to focus your content and message on your target audience—but also think about the multi-touch strategy and the story you're trying to tell.



### Expert Tip

*"Make sure your offer is relevant (and maybe solving a problem). And make it very clear what you want them to do. Don't have several calls to action—keep it focused."*

– Megan M, Email Marketing, Spiceworks



### Road Blocks

Get to the point and give IT pros the quick facts upfront that will help them make their decision – like cost, time for implementation and upkeep, warranty, etc.

Know your tech—and more importantly—SHOW your tech! The technology of your solution should lead how you'll position your marketing efforts.



### What IT Pros Say

*"Now I want the key information in one leaflet, email, or easy-to-read place – info like cost, ongoing cost, extra cost for additional features, and warranty support."*

– Stefano P, IT Consultant

## 4 Selecting

Two roads diverged... your buyers are making a short list and checking it twice. They're doing in-depth research on the vendors they're considering and weighing the pros and cons of cost, implementation and ROI. Time to lock down a plan of action so you can separate yourself from the pack.

### Questions You Might Ask:

1. How do I differentiate myself from my competitors?
2. Where can I show my product in action?
3. How can I highlight the ROI for my customer?
4. What free offerings and product trials can I, well, offer?

### Tactics You Might Try:

**Case Studies:** People want to hear from those that have gone before them. Pull together a whiz-bang case study that features a customer that your target market relates to and tells the story of the full purchase process, from implementation to customer support.

**Webinars:** The key to staying top of mind when it's time to buy? Deliver valuable content on the latest IT trends and give them the opportunity to have their questions answered LIVE.

**Videos:** A picture's worth a thousand words. Deliver engaging video content to help inform your buyers—while providing a bit of entertainment to separate your brand from the masses.

**Free Trials:** Ever bought a car without taking it for a test drive? Yeah, IT buyers haven't either. They want to get behind the wheel and take your product for a ride before signing on the dotted line. Let them. Anywhere from a 60 to 90 day free trial is plenty of time for your potential customers to take your product for a spin.



### Expert Tips

More advice from Spiceworks' Sr. Product Marketer, Kathryn P:

#### IT pros want content, so give it to 'em!

One way that we see vendors successfully do this is with webinars. A few quick tips:

- Keep a 1 hour time limit (45 min content, 15 min Q&A).
- Highlight case studies when applicable.
- Always end with a "call to action".
- Remember to repackage and re-use your content.



### Road Blocks

You'll want to determine how the products should be seen in action (think: demos) and anticipate the questions IT buyers will have by answering them upfront.

Ease of purchase is a major pain point for buyers. Word of advice: Make your products easy to buy.

Your buyers are going to have individual questions during this stage. It's a good idea to have individuals designated to answer them.



### What Pros Say

*"When selecting a vendor, I want to watch a webinar that shows a test example so I can evaluate how easy it will be to roll out and train my users to use – and of course, how it's going to achieve my goal."*

– Rob T, Systems Administrator

## 5 Purchasing / Repurchasing

The finish line is in sight. But here's the catch: There is no finish line. Once you've closed the deal, the road really opens up. Continued customer support means repeat business... and new buyers spreading good word-of-mouth mojo. Ah, the purchasing circle of life!

### Questions You Might Ask:

1. How are we merchandising our products online?
2. How and where we should be retailing our product?
3. What's the ease of purchase like for the IT pro?
4. What's my support plan for customers?
5. What am I doing to foster lasting relationships with my buyers?

### Tactics You Might Try:

**Community Accounts:** Establish a social presence as a brand rep in forums where your buyers hang out to create a direct line of communication with a human before, during and after IT pros purchase.

**Intent:** Get a clear read on where your buyers are in their journey. Define and learn where they turn from an inquiry to a marketing - qualified lead, then continue to track and optimize.

**Word-of-Mouth:** Post-purchase support might be the single most crucial stretch of road. Repeat business will likely end up being the bulk of your business and attribute to the bulk of your *new* business.



### Expert Tips

More advice from Spiceworks' Social Solutions Product Marketer, Ted N:

Successful community brand reps:

- Try to respond within 24 hours.
- Respond to negative feedback with an apology and next steps to fix the problem.
- Act human – the more people like you, the more they will listen (and think highly of your brand!).



### Road Blocks

A deal can fall through based purely on purchasing logistics. Don't make the mistake of neglecting purchase experience right as buyers are reaching for their wallets.

Humans, not leads: Treating your buyers like actual people instead of numbers is easier said than done. But a little effort can go a long way.



### What IT Pros Say

*"During and post-purchase, it is crucial to have a human representative from the company that I can contact with any questions or issues."*

– Gary W, Network Admin

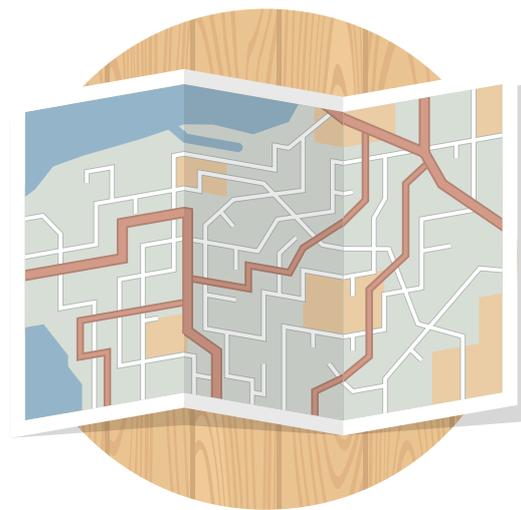
# There's More on The Horizon

The milestones fade off into the sunset, but it doesn't mean there aren't many more touch points to come. Your "always-on" marketing plan always needs new, personalized content to feed your IT buyers. And your post-campaign measured results become pre-measurement for your next campaign. Sound like an endless journey? Yep, it is.

After all, list buying and rentals are sputtering to a dead stop. Smart, lasting, fully engaged plans are the campaign machines of the future. Campaigns that give IT buyers what they want—when they want it—are the limitless vehicles that savvy marketers will drive from one initiative to the other.

**Rev your engine now – you've got the know-how, tools and benchmarks.**

## Map your plan... and drive it home!



Need some roadside assistance? Email [roadcrew@spiceworks.com](mailto:roadcrew@spiceworks.com)

**SPICEWORKS**  
Where IT goes to work.™

### About Spiceworks

Spiceworks is the professional network more than 6 million IT professionals use to connect with one another and over 3,000 technology brands. The company simplifies how IT professionals discover, buy and manage more than \$600 billion in technology products and services each year. Headquartered in Austin, Texas, Spiceworks is backed by Adams Street Partners, Austin Ventures, Institutional Venture Partners (IVP), Goldman Sachs, Shasta Ventures and Tenaya Capital. For more information visit <http://www.spiceworks.com>.

Follow Spiceworks on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/spiceworks>

Connect with Spiceworks on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/Spiceworks>