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FIVE LEVERS TO IMPROVE DEMAND GENERATION ROI THIS QUARTER

Executive Summary

Most teams respond to ROI pressure by adding campaigns when the real opportunity lies in fixing conversion leaks within current workflows. The key is knowing where to focus optimisation efforts for the greatest impact.

This guide gives VPs of demand generation five sequential levers that lift pipeline efficiency within a single quarter using existing infrastructure and budget.

Key insights:

Audit existing programs for conversion drop-off points before requesting additional budget or headcount

Prioritise lead qualification improvements where sales teams report the greatest friction

Implement structured lead scoring to capture the qualification improvements that protect sales capacity from low-probability opportunities

Reduce speed-to-lead response times so that purchase intent does not decay while leads sit in handoff queues

Apply each lever sequentially within 90 days, targeting specific conversion leaks from qualification through pipeline velocity

Read the full guide to identify which of the five levers will deliver the fastest ROI improvement for your current demand generation programs.

Why do funnel-fix efforts fail to produce measurable impact?

Funnel-fix efforts fail to produce measurable impact because the instinct to launch additional campaigns creates a compounding problem of more volume flowing into a system that already leaks qualified opportunities at every stage. This response treats symptoms while ignoring the structural gaps that caused the slowdown, resulting in higher costs per acquisition and accelerated budget depletion.

INFUSE Voice of the Marketer 2026 funnel benchmarks reveal where typical B2B conversion breaks down. In NAM, 20% of website traffic converts to form fills, 25% of those forms produce scored leads, 18% of scored leads convert to meetings, 24% of meetings become opportunities, 18% of opportunities generate pipeline, and 17% of pipeline converts to revenue. The cumulative effect of these stage-level rates means small inefficiencies at any single point translate into substantial pipeline erosion before sales teams ever engage.

Net-new programs inherit the same dysfunction they are meant to solve. Campaigns built on existing qualification criteria perpetuate the scoring blind spots that sales teams already flag as friction points. Handoff delays between marketing automation and CRM systems persist regardless of how many new leads enter the database. Understanding how demand generation differs from lead generation clarifies why volume-first tactics fail to address these structural issues.

Conversion optimisation must begin with loss reduction. Plugging leaks in existing workflows delivers faster ROI than launching parallel programs that duplicate the same failure modes. Teams shifting budget toward demand generation ROI operate from this principle.

Demand generation vs. lead generation: discover the difference

Lever 1: Tighten lead qualification to fix B2B marketing funnel leaks

Poor lead qualification drives a large share of failed deal outcomes in B2B sales. This lever addresses qualification gaps through systematic criteria refinement, reducing the volume of unqualified leads that consume sales capacity without generating revenue.

Step 1: Audit title and role fit

Distinguish decision makers from researchers by mapping job titles against actual purchasing authority. A director-level contact at a 50-person company often holds budget authority, while the same title at an enterprise organisation may indicate an influencer role. The INFUSE **B2B lead generation** reference frames role-based filtering criteria teams can apply during this audit.

Step 2: Validate company firmographics

Screen for company size, industry vertical, and technology stack alignment before leads enter the scoring model. **Firmographic** mismatches, such as targeting enterprise solutions at small and medium business (SMB) prospects, waste outreach cycles on accounts that cannot convert, regardless of engagement level.

Step 3: Layer behavioural intent signals

Evaluate content consumption depth, engagement frequency, and recency to separate active buyers from passive researchers. Weighted signal scoring prioritises prospects demonstrating purchase-ready behaviour patterns, which is the structural foundation of **intent activation**.

Step 4: Implement lead scoring with ROI tracking

Structured lead scoring improves return on lead generation investments compared to unstructured qualification by automating the consistent application of criteria across every lead entering the pipeline. Configure scoring thresholds in CRM platforms to automate qualification decisions based on the criteria established in steps one through three.

Step 5: Test threshold adjustments incrementally

Tightening qualification too aggressively creates lead starvation that undermines pipeline coverage. A/B test threshold changes in 10% increments while monitoring volume impact over two-week cycles. Track what percentage of marketing qualified leads (MQLs) sales rejects within 48 hours, and target quarter-over-quarter improvement on that rejection rate.

Explore the dangers of only focusing on bottom of funnel prospects

Lever 2: Close the MQL-to-SQL conversion rate gap

Response time determines whether marketing-qualified leads convert or stall. Most organisations measure handoff time in hours or days, creating hidden inefficiencies that reduce returns on every lead generation investment.

INFUSE Voice of the Marketer 2026 funnel benchmarks illustrate the size of the MQL-to-sales-qualified-lead (SQL) opportunity. Leads-scored-to-meetings-booked conversion runs around 15%, with NAM at 18% and APAC leading at 26%. This nine-point spread between regional best and global average indicates that MQL-to-SQL conversion is a function of handoff discipline and follow-up speed.

Three conversion killers operate at the MQL-to-SQL handoff:

1. Response delays allow purchase intent to decay as buyers continue researching competitors or lose urgency
2. Missing context forces sales representatives to start conversations without engagement history or intent signals
3. Undefined rejection criteria create finger-pointing between marketing and sales, with each team blaming the other for pipeline shortfalls

Machine learning lead scoring addresses all three killers simultaneously by processing behavioural signals in real time, enabling sales to respond while interest remains active. Automated prioritisation attaches engagement history and intent context to every lead record so sales enters conversations informed, which is what **demand intelligence** workflows depend on to convert.

Mandate that sales logs rejection reasons within 24 hours using standardised codes. This feedback loop enables marketing to refine scoring models based on actual sales outcomes rather than assumptions, and is the bidirectional **data orchestration** flow that downstream attribution reporting depends on.

Track MQL-to-SQL conversion rate weekly, average response time daily, and rejection reason distribution monthly.

Lever 3: Re-engage mid-funnel accounts you have already paid for

Re-engaging mid-funnel accounts converts previously paid-for acquisition spend into pipeline additions at the lowest customer acquisition cost (CAC) available within existing programs. Stalled opportunities from prior quarters represent sunk-cost database records that marketing teams can mine for conversion rather than treating them as losses.

Reactivating stalled accounts starts with identifying the highest-potential opportunities and applying a structured process to bring them back into active evaluation. This can be achieved through the following steps.

Step 1: Score dormant accounts for reactivation priority

Rank stalled opportunities by three factors: original engagement depth, deal stage reached before stalling, and current intent signals. Accounts that reached late-stage evaluation warrant higher priority than those that stalled at initial qualification.

Step 2: Deploy intent-triggered re-engagement sequences

Configure alerts for renewed research behaviour from dormant accounts, including website visits, content downloads, or third-party intent spikes. Launch automated sequences within 24 hours of signal detection, referencing prior conversations to demonstrate continuity.

Step 3: Expand into unconverted buying group members

Original deals often stall because outreach only impacted one or two stakeholders. Identify additional decision makers and influencers within dormant accounts using organisational mapping, then initiate parallel outreach tracks addressing their specific priorities.

Step 4: Build targeted nurture tracks addressing original stall reasons

Categorise dormant accounts by why they stalled, whether budget constraints, timing issues, competitive selection, or internal reorganisation, then assemble nurture tracks that directly counter each original objection. **Funnel-stage content sequencing** gives teams a starting library for each stall category without producing new assets from scratch.

Step 5: Treat reactivation as an ongoing process, not as a one-time campaign

Schedule quarterly reviews of dormant account pools, updating scores based on fresh intent data and removing accounts that show no signals for 18 months or longer.

Lever 4: Reallocate channel spend to optimise demand generation programs

Channel reallocation shifts budget from underperforming channels to those demonstrating stronger pipeline contribution, creating meaningful ROI improvement within existing spend rather than requiring new budget. Channel-level ROI evaluation should compare performance against internal historical baselines rather than industry averages that often reflect different business models.

Relying only on last-touch attribution can lead teams to cut channels that influence buying decisions but rarely receive conversion credit. Brand campaigns, thought leadership, and educational content often support pipeline indirectly, and removing them can weaken the performance of channels that drive conversions.

Mapping each channel's contribution to specific pipeline stages reveals true cost-per-opportunity rather than surface-level cost-per-lead metrics. Stage-level tracking depends on **first-party data** feeds that follow accounts across the full buyer journey.

This stage-level visibility helps teams decide where to invest: increase spend on channels that outperform historical benchmarks, optimise channels performing near baseline, and cut channels that consistently underperform and show little influence on pipeline progression.

Quarterly reallocation cadence allows teams to respond to performance data while maintaining sufficient sample sizes for reliable analysis.

Lever 5: Accelerate pipeline velocity improvements through enablement

Marketing teams carry 56% responsibility for lead generation, while also owning 46% of revenue outcomes (INFUSE Voice of the Marketer, 2026). Most teams concentrate resources on funnel entry while neglecting the stage-to-stage velocity that determines actual revenue contribution. Faster progression through pipeline stages generates more closed revenue from existing opportunities without requiring additional acquisition spend.

Improving pipeline velocity starts with identifying where deals stall and equipping sales and marketing to move opportunities through the funnel more efficiently. The following steps help to achieve this.

Step 1: Identify stage-specific stall points

Analyse CRM data to determine where deals spend the longest time. Calculate median days-in-stage for each pipeline phase, flagging stages that exceed benchmarks by more than 30%.

Step 2: Deploy late-stage objection content

Create materials that arm sales for final negotiations:

- Competitive comparison guides addressing specific displacement scenarios
- ROI calculators with industry-specific inputs
- Executive summary decks for CFO-level approval conversations

Step 3: Execute buying group coverage plays

Ensure all decision makers receive relevant touches throughout the evaluation. B2B buying groups now average nine people (INFUSE Voice of the Buyer, 2026), so single-contact coverage leaves eight stakeholders outside the engagement strategy. That ratio caps how many qualified leads any single-thread play can produce.

Step 4: Synchronise sales-marketing account intelligence

Establish shared visibility into account status and next-best-action recommendations. Weekly pipeline reviews should surface accounts where marketing air cover can accelerate stalled opportunities.

Step 5: Measure days-in-stage reduction

Track velocity improvements at each pipeline phase following enablement deployment. A reduction in average cycle time translates directly to increased quarterly revenue from the same pipeline volume.

How to sequence these demand generation quick wins for the fastest impact

Five levers exist, but limited bandwidth requires prioritisation that demonstrates measurable results to leadership within the first reporting cycle.

Weeks 1-2

Qualification improvements

Tightening lead scoring criteria and reducing response time delivers immediate conversion lift without additional spend. Measure success through MQL rejection rate and average response time.

Weeks 3-4

Mid-funnel reactivation

Mining stalled opportunities and dormant nurture lists generates pipeline additions from assets already owned. Measure success through reactivation conversion rate and new pipeline dollars from the dormant account pool.

Month 2, first half

Channel reallocation

Shifting budget toward higher-performing channels requires cross-functional coordination, but compounds gains from earlier qualification fixes. Measure success through quarter-over-quarter cost-per-opportunity trends by channel.

Month 2, second half

Velocity plays

Sales enablement deployment and buying group coverage demand more setup time, yet accelerate deals already in motion, while running in parallel with channel reallocation. Measure success through median days-in-stage reduction across priority pipeline phases.

Ongoing

Measurement infrastructure

Establishing attribution and velocity tracking ensures each improvement generates reportable data for subsequent budget conversations. Measure success through attribution completeness by program and reporting cycle predictability.

Explore the CMO guide to modern content activation

Key takeaways

Optimise within existing programs before requesting new budget: Pipeline gains compound when teams fix conversion leaks across qualification, handoff, mid-funnel reactivation, channel allocation, and velocity before adding net-new campaign volume. The same activity surface, structured around documented leaks, often produces measurable revenue gains within a quarter.

Map obstacles to targeting gaps: Budgetary constraints ranks among the top obstacles for over half of marketing teams, making precise audience targeting a prerequisite for efficient spend allocation.

Validate qualification criteria: Structured lead scoring protects sales capacity from low-probability opportunities, confirming that systematic validation compounds ROI gains across every downstream stage.

Build response infrastructure: Speed-to-lead discipline treats response time as a structural capability rather than individual effort, preventing intent decay during handoff windows.

Refresh channel allocation quarterly: Digital channels now dominate B2B sales interactions, demanding regular reallocation based on performance data rather than historical budget patterns.

Treat ROI improvement as continuous: Pipeline optimisation requires ongoing measurement and adjustment, not annual planning cycles that allow inefficiencies to compound undetected.

TURN FIVE LEVERS INTO PIPELINE RESULTS THIS QUARTER

Our INFUSE demand experts build campaigns grounded in real buyer behaviour and market intelligence.

Speak to a demand expert to apply research-backed optimisation strategies that improve demand generation performance and pipeline outcomes

FAQs

What is the fastest way to improve demand generation ROI without new budget?

The fastest ROI improvement available without new budget is tightening lead qualification criteria and reducing speed-to-lead response time. Both deploy within two weeks, require no additional spend, and produce measurable conversion lift from existing lead volume.

How do you identify the biggest leak in a B2B marketing funnel?

Funnel leaks surface through stage-by-stage conversion rate analysis compared against benchmarks. INFUSE Voice of the Marketer 2026 research documents typical B2B conversion rates across six funnel stages, providing anchor points for internal comparison. Stages where the organisation's conversion rate falls meaningfully below the benchmark indicate structural leaks worth prioritising.

How does MQL-to-SQL conversion rate relate to demand generation ROI?

MQL-to-SQL conversion rate directly determines how much marketing investment produces sales-workable pipeline. Low conversion rates at this handoff mean a large share of acquisition spend never reaches revenue-generating stages, inflating cost per opportunity and cost per closed-won deal. INFUSE Voice of the Marketer 2026 data shows this conversion varies substantially by region (NAM 18%, APAC 26%), indicating that organisation-specific performance is not fixed.

What should marketing teams measure during a 90-day optimisation sprint?

Teams should measure four metrics across a 90-day sprint: MQL rejection rate at qualification, conversion rate at each funnel stage, cost per opportunity by channel, and median days-in-stage across pipeline phases. Each metric maps to one of the five levers and produces quarter-over-quarter comparisons that quantify the impact of each fix.

Why does re-engagement of dormant accounts outperform cold outreach?

Dormant accounts outperform cold prospects because prior engagement established buyer context, topic familiarity, and some level of brand awareness that cold outreach must build from zero. Acquisition investment spent on the original engagement is not recovered when an account stalls, making re-engagement a strategy for capturing value from sunk costs rather than generating new costs.

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