



# Time to Rethink BANT

On returning from this year's DMA Direct Marketing to Business conference in Orlando, Fla., I was surprised to have heard that B-to-B direct marketers still struggle with the results from their lead generation campaigns.

At the trade show, I heard many conversations about how sales managers are complaining to direct marketing managers that their campaigns are not generating enough qualified leads. Worse, sales seems to be increasing its criticism of marketing for not knowing how to do its job.

What sales seems to be asking direct marketers is: Why can't you deliver buyers with purchase orders affixed to their foreheads?

This age-old desire of sales boils down to the need for direct marketers to educate senior sales management on a simple, basic premise: What two-step B-to-B direct marketers do is called lead generation, *not* purchase-order generation.

Further, it's time we finally change the evaluation process of responses from lead generation campaigns from the salesperson's criteria of budget, authority, need and time frame (BANT) to the marketer's evaluation criteria of attributes, position, need, readiness and preferences (APNRP). APNRP was created and described to me by Bill Herr, my firm's vice president of business development.

Why is there a need for this change in evaluation criteria? The roles of sales and marketing are drastically different, as the chart below shows. Relying on BANT as the primary lead score criteria overlooks the dif-

ference and value each party brings to the marketing and sales process.

This difference in perception of the direct marketing process to generate sales prospects must be addressed if sales and direct marketing are to work together productively. Direct marketing managers will be well served by having a conversation with their sales managers to explain what the direct marketing process can and cannot do well. And, it would benefit them to ask for the sales team's cooperation in getting feedback on the leads generated, so they can fine tune their campaigns to produce stronger targets.

With insight on the direct marketing process, sales will better understand the value direct marketing brings to the sales function—i.e., prospect identification. Once marketing has helped identify a prospect who can afford to buy, has potential interest in buying and a need to buy, it is up to the sales team to create desire and move the buyer along the sales process.

## A Better Way to Evaluate and Score Responses

What I'm proposing is that your lead generation campaigns are not failing, but instead, the understanding and expectations of your results is failing you, because you're not looking at results from the right marketing and sales perspective.

In the past, my firm has tried to use BANT as the evaluation criteria for responses. However, we found this process emphasizes trying to gain sales qualification information too early in the sales process. And



by russell kern

**It's called lead generation, not purchase order generation, for a reason**

Direct Marketing's Responsibility	Sales' Responsibility
Identify opportunities	Advocate the company and solution
Collect contact information	Discover the needs of the buyer
Qualify and confirm	Craft a solution to meet the needs
Nurture and cultivate	Present the solution and its value
Measure and report results	Gain agreement to engage

## Sample APNRP Qualification Questions

### Attributes:

1. Please confirm a little information about your company:
  - a. How many employees do you have?
    - Under 250
    - 251 - 500
    - 500+
  - b. What industry are you in?
    - Please select:  
*[insert sample list here]*

### Position:

2. If you were to buy a solution in the area of [ABC], how involved would you be in evaluation, recommendation or final purchase authorization?
  - a. Initial evaluation
  - b. Review of competitive solutions
  - c. Authorize final purchase
  - d. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Need:

- What is your primary purpose for responding today?
- a. Looking to stay up-to-date on industry trends, developments and benchmarks.
  - b. Looking to find information on how to address a current issue.
  - c. Need to find specific information to develop an RFP or RFI.

### Readiness:

1. On a scale of 1 to 5 what is your best estimate of the importance of finding new solutions for problems like those [XYZ] product solves? (1

being very important, 5 not important in the next 6 months)  
1 2 3 4 5

2. What is your best estimate of when you might consider solutions in the area of [XYZ].
  - a. We're currently in the process.
  - b. We're planning to begin in the next 1 - 2 quarters.
  - c. I'm uncertain at this time of our plans.
3. Would you like to speak with someone to discuss your needs and possible applications?

### Preferences:

1. What would you like us to do with your contact information?
  - a. Please keep me informed via:
    - Telephone:  yes ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_  no
    - Postal Mail:  yes  no
    - E-mail:  yes \_\_\_\_\_  no
    - Fax:  yes ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_  no
2. What type of information would you like to receive from us in the future?
  - a. Category educational information, such as white papers, guides, benchmarks
  - b. Success stories, such as case studies, solution successes
  - c. Invitation to educational events, such as seminars, workshops or conferences
  - d. Product evaluation and selection information, such as RFP builders, return on investment calculations, deployment applications
  - e. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

prospects are reluctant to share information if there is no relationship established. It's equivalent to meeting a stranger on the street, telling him you're a financial planner and asking him to share his income and net worth with you.

Instead of using BANT, I'm suggesting direct marketers adopt APNRP. This will allow the sales team to understand where a respondent stands from a marketing perspective, and sales can pick up a respondent from a marketing campaign (what is too commonly called a lead) and actually begin the sales process.

Here are the definitions I propose for evaluating your inquiries based on the APNRP methodology:

**Attributes**—Respondents will be passed to the sales team when they have similar or acceptable company revenue, number of employees, and come from the business

types and industries as current highly valuable customers have. Or, they will have the attributes that match the target for a new product solution.

**Position**—Respondents will be passed to the sales team when they have a job title or a job function similar to the types of individuals typically involved in evaluating, recommending or purchasing your products, just like current customers.

**Need**—Respondents will be passed to the sales team when they have expressed interest or taken action to find out more about the problems your products solve. This means they've expressed an interest in knowing more about how your company solves their problems, or they want to learn about a given solution to help them stay up with industry trends and product developments, because as a professional, they might never know when they need to buy a prod-

uct your company sells.

**Readiness**—Respondents will be passed to the sales team when they've indicated a current interest in learning more about your solutions or in speaking with the salesperson about solving problems your product addresses.

**Preferences**—Respondents will be passed to the sales team once you've asked how they want to be contacted in the future. What is their preferred contact method, and what type of information would they like to receive from you in the future?

You might notice, none of these statements include the typical, "what is their budget," and "when do they plan to buy" statements. That's because under the APNRP methodology, it's understood that sales will do the job of discovering the answers to these questions. But, it's marketing's job to avoid wasting sales' time by having them speak only to potential best customers.

The lead qualification questions listed above are based on the APNRP evaluation method. Use them to stop the sales team's disappointment in your lead generation campaign results.

## Change to Grow

If direct marketers adopt the APNRP method, the expectations of campaign results will change, disappointment will be reduced, and the sales team will have greater acceptance of inquiries from lead generation campaigns. The APNRP methodology allows sales to have a better understanding of the "leads" that result from a direct marketing campaign.

B-to-B direct marketers create campaigns to generate sales inquiries, not purchase orders. It's the direct marketer's job to identify and help start a sales relationship. It's the job of sales to advance a prospect and eventually close the sale. ♦

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