

Exactly How To Generate Leads In a Downturn

23 marketing innovators reveal their bulletproof demand gen strategies to drive high-quality leads in recession

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Lead Generation Secrets

Many companies have forgotten they sell to actual people. Humans care about the entire experience, not just the marketing or sales or service. To really win in the modern age, you must solve for humans.

— DHARMESH SHAH, CTO & CO-FOUNDER OF HUBSPOT

Recession breeds innovation. The best CMOs are predicted to come from the “performance marketing” pedigree. Return on investment is the name of the game. Impressions and MQLS will no longer withstand the board meeting gauntlet. In 2023, every member of the revenue team will be held accountable.

Forego spam, white noise, and time-wasting marketing instruments and embrace more precision, trust-building, quality, and empathy to cut through. After all, the ultimate LTV to CAC equation equals CFL: customers for life, a mantra at Salesforce.

That’s why: NRR is the new ARR.

Some unique strategies in this paper are live audits, providing coloring books to parents staying home with their kids, and looking for a movie star Q Score for your podcast guests. Hard-hitting refinements to time-tested strategies include: redefining your ICP, improving marketing & sales alignment, more advanced ABM leveraging intent signals, and new dimensions on partner-channel growth (eco-system-led).

We hope you enjoy the world-class level of innovation here and find immediate utility in applying these tips to make Q1 your bounce-back quarter. New year, new you!



Latané Conant

CMO, 6sense

Start by deanonymizing your web traffic

If the looming recession that we keep hearing about comes to pass (and even if it doesn't), marketing leaders need to be hyper-efficient in bringing in business. One of the keys to efficiency is to think in terms of accounts instead of leads. B2B buying teams these days can include between 14 and 23 people, according to [Gartner](#). The more buying team members you can identify and engage early on (and throughout the buying journey), the stronger your competitive advantage will be.

Next, take a look at your lowest-hanging fruit: the people who are already seeking you out. Marketing teams spend tons of valuable time and resources driving traffic to their websites, but [97% of those visitors are anonymous](#) — meaning they don't fill out a form or contact you to let you know who they are. Yet only [26% of organizations](#) in a recent survey said they identify web traffic that doesn't fill out a form. Start by deanonymizing your web traffic so you can run targeted campaigns to those accounts.

And of course, those campaigns need to be personalized and timely to be effective, which means you don't just need to know who your potential buyers are. You need to know a lot about them, including things like who's on the buying committee, what their current tech stack looks like, what keywords or topics they're researching, and the current stage they're at in the buying journey.

With all of this information, you can bring in good accounts and move them through the buying journey so they convert into opportunities and, eventually, customers.



Jenn Steele

CEO, Kissmetrics

Change your messaging, your offers, and your campaigns

Downturns make nearly all of go-to-market harder to execute, and lead gen is no exception. As your prospects' priorities change, your messaging absolutely has to change, or you'll lose them. So think about your prospect. What's their industry going through? What are they personally going through? And how can your company help?

Once you answer these questions, look at what you're currently doing for lead gen. My guess is that the message doesn't work with what they/their company is dealing with now. So change that. Change your messaging, your offers, and your campaigns. Make sure you're truly helping with what's on their mind.

It's not a small amount of work by any means, but you'll win in the end.



Mariana Cogan

CMO, People.ai

Align your demand gen tactics with a shorter-term view

Enterprise account-based selling is about helping engage the right people in the right accounts ahead of your competitors. With this in mind, my best advice is to continue understanding your customers and your GTM — from brand and bookings all the way to renewal and advocacy. In this economic downturn, alignment between marketing and sales is even more important.

Review your demand generation tactics to align with a shorter-term

view than you normally plan for. Segment your TAM by stage and concentrate on late-stage pipeline acceleration, which means more events or other experiences that are of higher quality and produce sales engagement. Now is not the time to cast a wider net that will take longer to travel through your funnel.

Create content that lets you become a reliable thought leader and facilitates engagement at the opportunity level. For example, product releases should be 25% thought leadership, 25% customer testimonial, 25% external validation, and 25% product demo. Recorded experiences should also be snackable — quick, bite-sized content. This can convert a solid 30% of registration into booked discovery calls. And for low-hanging fruit, work in the intersection of high intent and low sales engagement — I have found millions of dollars worth of pipeline in the bucket.



Kyle Lacy

CMO, Jellyfish

Invest in the customer during a recession

My advice for marketing during a downturn hits a bit differently than most marketing strategies. Marketers are born and bred to focus on top-of-the-funnel. They are asked to drive net-new revenue, and they fail to focus on the customer. Unfortunately, this doesn't change even during a recession. My advice to marketers (even outside of a recession) is to focus on the entire lifecycle of a customer.

Our team at Lessonly did just that at the onset of the pandemic in 2020. Our customers were experiencing significant layoffs, and many of those layoffs were champions of our platform. We decided to shift some of our demand-gen spending to support our customers first.

We shifted our budget to hire career coaches for our customers and

host virtual events to help ex-customers find new jobs. We also designed downloadable coloring books and word searches for parents stuck at home with their kids. The feedback was incredible, meaningful, and most of all, human.

What happened after? Our NPS was stronger than ever. Our employees continued believing deeply in our mission of helping people do their best work. And best of all? Our customers came back to buy Lessonly after they secured new jobs.



Mark Stouse

Chairman and CEO, Proof

Leverage the Four Ps: Price, Promotion, Place & Product

Been thinking on this and reviewing the analytics.

In a downturn, the #1 risk to the buy decision is associated with *risk* itself. And when a company lacks strong brand reputation (awareness, confidence, trust), people get very chary about moving forward. This is why we commonly see and expect major attrition during downturns among smaller startups and comparable companies.

The four P's really stand out during this time. Price is key because it's so closely connected with overall risk mitigation. Promotion has to focus on dampening risk while not losing sight of reward. Place means campaigns that go where customers are, not dragging them to you. Product is also directly related to risk ("we can't afford for this to suck.")

So, against this backdrop, the best marketing tactics are those that build Awareness, Confidence, and Trust among customers quickly and durably. Low prices for top-quality products with advantageous contract terms for the customer are a must. Customer success —

public and private — is huge. You've got to have people with experience with you saying good things. Not just within their community but publicly. So the impact of great PR gets very strong during downturns. There's a very strong relationship between "confidence and trust," and more deals are concluded faster. Classic top-of-the-funnel stuff loses traction in downturns unless its message magnifies confidence and trust, proof points.

Lastly, use this time to really refine your ICP. It's probably still too big. It's not TAM but a lot of marketers are conditioned to hate small numbers. But you want your ICP to be small and homogeneous.

Quality trumps quantity in a downturn.

Economies of Learning are more important than Economies of Scale in a recession. And most of the MarTech stack is truly headless. Not just technologically but in reality. It's all about operational power and scalability, but most stacks have no way to aid human decision-making in ways that matter. Many marketers think they are that head, but the complexity makes it impossible for that to be true.



Tara Pawlak

Head of Marketing, GetAccept

Be memorable

Tip 1 ~ Be memorable and creative in all your campaigns. Whether that's an in-person dinner, paid social media campaign, or email nurtures. You will not create a long-lasting impact if you do "what everyone else" is doing. Humans need to be intrigued and curious about your brand first and foremost.

Tip 2 ~ We know multiple touchpoints are key today with many

stakeholders for funnel acceleration to have prospects take a true action with interest. 95% of your ICP isn't looking now but they will at some point. How are you working to weave these together?

Discussing the many approaches especially nontraditional like communities, peer groups, podcasts, one-to-one conversations, and partner channels, all should be weaved into a demand gen strategy for your ICP. Don't go at it alone.



Jay McBain

Chief Analyst, Canalys

Recognize the partner point of value

For over 40 years, channel programs and the underlying technology have been designed to drive the sales motion. Enabling resellers, MSPs, distributors, retailers, dealers, and agents to more frictionlessly market and sell products at scale was the goal of every channel leader. This led to a bell-curve scenario where you could be underpaying partners who fully invested in the marketing, selling, and engineering assistance to land a deal to overpaying partners who showed up late and collected the order.

Recognizing the partner point of value takes a new set of skills, organizational structure, processes, programs, and underlying technology to accomplish.

For example, the average customer prospect will move through many moments before making a vendor selection for a considered purchase. In a post-cookie world, vendors will need to identify and attribute (and hopefully share real-time data with) a partner that has driven that moment. Whether it be a well-placed ebook, an event, a social media engagement, some expert consulting, design, or

architecture work, it doesn't matter. Partnerships will be needed to replace elements of MarTech and AdTech that were used for this purpose in the past.



Allan Adler

Managing Partner, Digital Bridge Partners

Reimagine customer success

All GoToEcosystem

- Build GoToEco Revenue Engines by creating demand through ABM campaigns with better-together, joint solutions already created with integrated tech partners by your partner team. These campaigns generate 70% higher conversion, with 1/3 larger deals that close twice as fast. Add in ABM benefits, and the ROI on these demand gen programs outperforms traditional cold GTM outreach by 20-50x.
- Leverage the GoToEco Referral Flywheel to reimagine Customer Success. First, drive integrations into joint customers shared with tech partners and pass along referrals to partners where you have a customer that your partner wants. Partners then reciprocate with referrals back to you that share the same characteristics as GoToEco Revenue Engine deals plus you reduce churn by 50% or more and drive unparalleled NRR outcomes.



Tyler Lessard

VP Marketing and Chief Video Strategist, Vidyard

Offer something of value without asking for anything in return

During an economic downturn, businesses are still looking for ways to be more effective and efficient. In fact, they may have an even greater need for this despite having flat or reduced budgets.

Meet them where they are and offer something of true value without expecting anything in return. This could be a free version of your product, or an extended free trial. It could be complimentary services to help evaluate an aspect of their business and provide feedback or recommendations. It could even be a recommendation for a free productivity tool that may help them boost efficiency in the coming months.

That's great for your prospect, but what's in it for you? When budgets do come back, the law of reciprocity says they're very likely to pay it back in some way. Perhaps they'll entertain that demo call you've been pushing. Maybe they'll refer someone else who might need your solution. Or maybe, just maybe, they'll become a new customer without the need to go through a long sales cycle.

At Vidyard, this has worked wonders for us. We actively encourage our prospects to use the free version of our video messaging and video selling tools to boost effectiveness and efficiency - even if they can't even consider evaluating the paid offerings. When the economy turns and they're ready to make new investments, they've already seen the value making them to best leads you could imagine.



Julia Nimchinski

Co-Founder, HYPCCCYCL

Adapt to your ICP's shifting problems

If you only read the books everyone else is reading, you can only think what everyone else is thinking.

— HARUKI MURAKAMI

Remember when COVID hit, and every analyst report, webinar, and blog post focused on “Thrive while the world is falling apart”?

We're hitting precisely the same inflection point, but the keyword changed to “downturn.” While all of the global insanity affects business, there has never been a better time to adopt a growth mindset and improve your “solution” vs. “product” by 1% every day, cross-functionally.

They say, downturns are not the time for innovation but rather adaptation. I perceive every crisis as a chance to adapt to your ICP's shifting problems. This helped me launch two immediately high-profitable products with excellent traction from our ICP.

The biggest challenge for marketing is to be unexpected while simultaneously remaining relevant = solving the fundamental problem of your customers unconventionally.

Exhibit A: While working in an early-stage company evangelizing “Guided Selling” (now ‘Revenue Intelligence’) at the time when people were finally ready to adopt sequencers/ Sales Engagement. We had a lead generation problem. So I interviewed our ICPs (VPs of Sales, CEOs) about all things *sales*.

The insight seemed crazy – they all loved to cold call despite varying seniority. Remember, back then, there was no such thing as “mister right now.” Too early. So I invited the #1 expert in cold calling (Justin Michael) to be the face of a new product within that company. We did the first live cold calling battles in B2B, featuring Aaron Ross and top SDRs from Gong. We got thousands of highly engaged users overnight.

To bridge the gap between Guided Selling and cold calling, the next nurturing step of the product was a “Method Hunt.” We documented the traditional and custom cold-calling methods and built something like Product Hunt. It featured an upvote mechanism, reviews, and a repository of sales methodologies with an actionable, distilled way of implementing each strategy. The rest is history, but it drove a love of high-quality conversations for sales.

Exhibit B: Ironically, HYPCCCYCL. Another surprising insight I revealed after interviewing hundreds of sellers and marketers was that they all secretly wanted to switch lives, intrigued by the opposite function.

It was still COVID, and webinars went thud. Every community/ vendor featured the best of the best B2B leaders, the most enticing and clickbaity topics, etc. But the critical flaw I revealed by casually talking with other marketing and sales professionals was that everyone preferred watching soccer to yet another static webinar, “MAKE YOUR REVENUE DREAMS COME TRUE WITH AI.”

So we built the first event series where learning happens by doing, where marketers and sellers cross-train each other, challenged by the best coaches in the industry and VCs. Rather than listen to sponsors blatantly pitch you, they either create a simulation around the value prop of their product or simply show how they solve the problems of their ICPs in a product demo after the event.

We called this new category “Customer-Centric Events.” It’s a riff on

the good old “participatory marketing” concept. Where your customers vs. the vendor/ the coach/ MC are in the event's spotlight.

The best part – it’s actionable and challenging and helps our community members up their game on how they go to market and get jobs.

To sum it all up, it’s bonkers to me that to this day, the generally accepted way to find out PMF is to send the Sean Ellis Test survey, “Can you live without our product?”

I can’t emphasize this enough: get to know your customers better by (as crazy as it sounds) *talking* to them. It’s something that we marketers struggle with, but it pays off with high-quality leads, traction, and product adoption, fast. When it comes to positioning, messaging, and every marketing campaign, try to break out of your silo and cold call.

Instead of coming up with something random or copying another slogan from your competitors on G2, record how your customers voice their problems. Word for word. And then a/b test it.

If you’re early-stage, amplify your campaigns with the help of SDRs vs. running ads. You’ll save hundreds of thousands, and the ROI will pay off. Elon Musk has the best quote: “Make sure your org’s Dilbert ratio is low.” Especially in a recession.

P.S. For more tactical insights, go to reinventingvirtualevents.com



Aaron Janmohamed

VP of Marketing, Boostup.ai

Turn your brand into a media resource

Demand is dependent on the strength and credibility of your narrative — how you frame old and new tactics, the ideal criteria for success, the obstacles that can get in the way of that success, etc. It's really the quality and reach of your message that's going to drive successful demand creation. Whether or not you're in a downturn, if you can effectively position and frame up what your ICP should be oriented around, how their "old" tactics are inadequate at helping them make progress towards that new orientation, then you can present a "new" un-ignorable approach more convincingly.

I think supporting that by offering data/research-backed insights that help them do their jobs more effectively is key. Turn your brand into a media resource they can turn to in order to advance their careers, resolve issues, and be a hub for content and conversation. Then make the connections to how your solution delivers value crystal clear.

That's all part of the payload.

The vehicles to deliver the payload should be varied and must connect with your ICP where they're at in all stages of their buying journey. This is the thing most brands forget: buyers close deals, not sellers or marketers or anyone on the vendor side. Your job is only to coach and guide and make the experience solid enough that they reach group consensus fast. Enable buyers at all stages in the buying journey, not just top of funnel, so your champions especially are better equipped to close deals for you.



Jennifer Smith

Marketing and Creative Services, Something Blue Marketing

Now's the time to go all-in

The conventional wisdom is to cut marketing budget in a recession. But, to borrow from Warren Buffett, now is the time to invest in good marketing at a reasonable price. During a recession, your dollar can go a lot further. For example, advertising prices are driven by competition. You'll have less competition so... you get the idea.

First, let's talk about the data (aka some stats to share with the CFO)...

- In the recessions of 1981-82 and 1974-75, companies that continued to invest in advertising saw more growth than their competitors that shrunk or eliminated their budgets – and in 1981-82, that growth was a whopping 256%. ([source](#))
- In 1927, Harvard Business Review uncovered that companies that maintained their investment in branding and marketing through the Great Depression came out 20% ahead of how they went into the recession.
- Buchen Advertising uncovered that companies that cut advertising during the 1949, 1954, 1958, and 1961 recessions all lagged in sales and profits behind those that did not.
- McGraw Hill Research studied 600 B2B companies in the 1980s and found that those that doubled down on building their brand and advertising grew 275% more than those that did not.
- Cahners Publishing Company found that advertising during a recession leads to, on average, a 1.5x increase in market share. But more interestingly, during economic boom periods, they saw that 80% of businesses invested in advertising, but saw little to no movement in market share.

- A MarketSense study found that investing in both long-term brand-building and short-term performance programs saw the best results during a recession.

Source: Forbes

In other words, at Harvard Business Review put it, “Although it’s wise to contain costs, failing to support brands or examine core customers’ changing needs can jeopardize performance over the long term. Companies that put customer needs under the microscope, take a scalpel rather than a cleaver to the marketing budget, and nimbly adjust strategies, tactics, and product offerings in response to shifting demand are more likely than others to flourish both during and after a recession.”

If you think about the data, it makes sense. People are more likely to feel something about a brand if you’re with them during good times and bad (just ask Chewy). By showing up during hard times, while others aren’t, you’re positioning your brand as a trusted partner.

But how? We can’t continue to do marketing as usual. Marketing during a recession is about the long term – weathering the storm and coming out the other end stronger than ever. Those that continue to produce mediocre eBooks, churn content quantity over quality, and go for lead volume over brand building will see their efforts wasted.

- **Add brand building to your activation efforts.** With less clutter and more attention, a recession is the time to show up with exceptional content, great creative, moments that matter, and strong stories. People may not be buying as much right now, but they will in the future. Make sure you’re building awareness, trust, and an exceptional experience (or as I like to call it, the Know, Trust, Love model).
- **Talk to your customers.** It will be more important than ever for marketing to have a strong sense of what customers are going

through in order to position their organization as a company that is riding out the turbulence with them.

- **Add long-term measurement to marketing goals.** Your MQL's and SAL's are likely going to drop. But that doesn't mean that you aren't doing your job. Dust off those leading indicator awareness stats like targeted customer engagement, increase in target companies interacting with your content, and brand perception surveys.
- **Be able to turn on a dime.** If things do get as rocky as they're predicting, it's going to be important for marketers to understand trends in their target industries and react to them quickly.



Viveka von Rosen

Co-Founder & Chief Evangelist, Vengreso

Create BUYER-CENTRIC profiles

When it comes to demand gen tactics, I feel there is no better tool than LinkedIn. It's essential in the B2B space, to build brand awareness, use that awareness to attract more leads thereby creating more quality conversations with those leads, converting them into qualified prospects and finally, clients.

The first thing you must do is make sure that you, and your team, have BUYER-CENTRIC profiles. No one wants to read that you are a quota crushing sales guy who's been in the President's Club for the past 5 years. They want read about how you can help them. From your header image to headline, to your About section and beyond, your profile needs to be focused on your buyer, their challenges and how your product or service is going to solve those challenges.

You also want to make sure your profile becomes a resource for them

by adding media they will find useful in your Featured section, and by sharing helpful content every day via LinkedIn posts. These small changes will make a huge difference in how you, and your sales team, are perceived and will generate more demand (and more conversations) from your audience.



Ryan O'Hara

Founder & CEO, Request for Meeting

Run your lead gen team like a media company

First things first, during a recession, I don't care how complicated your inbound process is or how many people work there... the most important thing is reducing process and friction to work a lead.

Focus on conversions that drive conversations if you are a sales-first organization. If you are a product lead organization, get people into the product and to that *aha* moment in as few steps as possible. Your calls to action need to be easy. At the end of the day, your offer can be your product, an event, or a meeting with an "expert in sales."

Now onto lead gen activities: Everyone is going to be making content about X topic in your category, but the ones that win and stand out focus on the talent you are bringing to your activity. You need to run your lead gen team like a media company.

Acclaimed screenwriter William Goldman wrote in his book, "Adventures in Screenwriting" that the best movies get picked up and made based on the stars. In the 1970s and 80s studios would look at Q Score on movie stars to detect how likable a movie star was. If you had a great story, and right movie star, your screenplay would get made, and most likely be a hit.

Once in a while, you'll discover someone that is untapped, but more often than not, you need someone bankable.

It's the same damn thing with marketing. Got a cool webinar? Write the webinar with a guest in mind with a good Q Score. Who's beloved in your industry? How are you going to get them to your webinar or piece of content as a guest?

Part of it is good prospecting, but other part is lead sharing. Agree to swap leads and build materials for promotion that both parties can easily use to drive sign-ups. Make those promotions entertaining and informative, and with a clear call to action.

Webinar promotion doesn't need to be time-based. When you finish content or a campaign, keep it going forever. It's free content, and you can easily drive people to it.

Looking for a bankable star for your lead gen activity? Go ask on social what accounts and people you should follow for a particular topic. Ask all your employees to share it, then eyeball the comments. You just filled your content calendar.

Good luck. Don't be boring. Time is precious.



Dennis Yu

CTO, BlitzMetrics

#1 tip is to do live audits

I've done hundreds of webinars doing live audits of SEO to drive SEO leads, social media audits to drive social media leads, etc...

In a group format, audits are powerful, since everyone is eager to

follow your technique and automatically trusts your methodology.

There is no better way to generate high-quality leads at scale than live audits. Especially if you do them with industry partners. We did live SEO audits for personal injury attorneys last month and drove 40 quality leads for our services.

Consider how you can share your expertise openly via live audits, as opposed to the old ways of trying to get people on a call.



Lucy Heskins

Startup Marketing Advisor, Director, Oh Blimey

Create a free wedge of your product

We've all been there, markets change or there's a sudden decline in sales coming through. Then, all of a sudden, the executive team looks to marketing and says, "go, on then; turn on the magical lead tap!"

In these moments, I recommend optimising what you're working with at the moment first.

How customers derive value from your product changes over time. Markets change, circumstances change.

So, my first recommendation would be to check-in with the "jobs to be done" (JTBD) of your core customer segment.

Interview/survey a proportion of your customers to understand if their struggling moment, their motivation, and what they were hoping to achieve changed at all.

Use these interviews to learn how you can make progress easier,

perhaps it's pausing subscriptions or adding extra seats, or extending their contract length. Use the findings also to understand what other solutions they're comparing you to, and create middle-of-the-funnel product comparison pages.

Then, with this new sense of what their desired outcome is and how their circumstances have changed, reflect the findings in your messaging and proposition, as well as key landing pages and your homepage.

Next up, create a free wedge of your product to open up a new segment or secondary JTBD.

A free wedge is a really effective way to open up the top of your funnel and get your product in front of a new audience. A free wedge doesn't need to be as complex as, say, the likes of the free CRM offered by HubSpot, for example. It could be an invite to a template library. As long as it helps to solve your prospects' beginner problem and you've considered how to nudge users towards a paid-for plan. It's a win-win.

And lastly, consider who/what other suppliers exist within your customers' workflow. Bob Moesta says, "your product isn't the burger; it's the mustard." Your product doesn't operate in isolation; it's not your customers' ONLY solution. So, consider which other brands your customer uses as part of their workflow. Map them out and review if there's a cross-marketing opportunity at play here that you can tap into.



Marcus Cauchi

Chief Inquisitor, Laughs Last

Surround key accounts through partners

Identify your hero prospects that you want to become customers over the next 2-3 years. Systematically target each one with a view to creating multiple relationships now whilst they are in passive looking and learning how they might solve their problems.

Build intimacy and surround the account through their partners. By the time they are actively looking and moving to decision you want the evaluation committee and the decision making committee to trust you and the team around you.

When you are at that stage with a dozen or more advocates, an understanding of their strategy, the factions, personalities and politics, your competitors probably speak to 1-2 people and form a shallow transactional connection.

I know who I'd bet on to reach a quality outcome.



Jennifer Hoitsma

Vice President, Marketing, BookNook

Think of your marketing like a scientist surgeon

- Focus relentlessly on your ICP — but don't be afraid to see patterns when other titles in the mix start reaching out. We're seeing this to some degree in EdTech — roles and responsibilities are fluid (especially in these changing times), so don't be so focused that

you miss out on key influencers (who might be shifting into more of a buying role).

I think this is especially true if you're bringing something new (-ish) to market and you have some good assumptions about who buyers are/should be — but companies might not have figured out who should be responsible for owning the decision, etc.

So yes — multi-thread (!), but my point is more around noticing patterns + experimenting with how you treat those inbound leads that might not be your typical “wins.”

- Double down on email marketing “budget just got cut? Don't get mad; get creative”

You've already got the infrastructure in place — use it! This is a great place to experiment with ALL THINGS before you spend money on paid ads. I mean, this is assuming you have the infrastructure in place — if you don't, get it right (and think about all the unsexy elements like domain health, sender score, etc.)

Learn how to *really* test and build a culture of experimentation (recall my final game where we talked about this) so that you're testing, learning, and documenting results ———> and this is then shared with the sales team (!!!), so they can also experiment, but they should be able to learn from marketing's work (since their experiments are done at a larger scale).

Think like a scientist/approach marketing from a more surgical perspective. Create a culture of diligent experimentation.

It's not the time to complain and ask for more budget. It's an opportunity to be more rigorous as a leader — why did your budget get cut???? — and use these micro experiments to figure out where to focus and be able to prove your team needs more investment (in time).

(I said that for those whose budget has recently been cut. Go out and prove why you need it — because if it's been cut, you probably aren't showing why you need it/why the investment is the right one.)

We almost always need more budget, but collectively marketing leaders need to do a better job of showing why.



Blake Williams

Founder, CEO, Ampfactor

Make your demand gen stories infinite

Generate leads in a down economy. If your current pipeline is suffering...

Have your team go to every single customer and ask them for three introductions.

Have your team go to your partner's customer success team and ask them for 1 account with an immediate need. Ask 100% of your partnerships to account map using a tool like [reveal.co](https://www.reveal.co) or [crossbeam.com](https://www.crossbeam.com)

Identify the accounts that have the most partners already selling into those accounts. (Say there's 3-5)

Tell the better-together story with all 3-5 solutions positioned in the story as changing the customer's entire day, making progress, and getting further aligned with the total functionality of each software as a joint solution.

Do this in a live video, animated video, or a collection of iPhone videos from customers saying how they use each solution together. (The

point here is to be different, and say it differently)

You have many choices for joint solutions. Be creative. Get yourself in your customer's shoes and develop tests around which bundle of solutions might cause a paradigm shift for them, or solve their problem an order of magnitude better than they are today.

Create free LinkedIn live / webinar blocks of instruction where you show your prospects and customers how to make progress in solving their problem. Do this weekly...if there's a ton of pressure...do it daily.

You need to present from the customer's point of view, they use multiple solutions to enable the outputs from the workflows they manage, take them through a story where they can stop working their asses off and do better than they've ever done because of the joint solution. If your joint solution doesn't sing that song, you're not done adding to the solution.

Have every single one in that webinar with you. (This is not a demo. Recreate the customer's experience on the joint solution, have all the partners distribute the sessions out to their networks.)

Invite 100% of your "closed/lost" customers to these webinars, anyone who is in an account that's a mapped overlap account, and net new prospects.

Join paid and free communities where your customers are. Assign people to be in those communities' channels and look for opportunities to provide a resource, bring in an expert in the company to answer, and give intense levels of value.

Ask 100% of your partners if there's a key page that gets a ton of traffic to feature the better-together story in exchange for anything you have that they'd want.

Everyone in the company earns a bonus for posting on social channels where our customers are: 1 but if advice. You get paid 1.2xbonus if you don't sell our product and you try to help the customer make progress.

The point of this instruction is that you need to create demand in order for lead gen to be effective and this can happen in an accelerated time frame if you can orchestrate maximum effort, align with the right incentives, GTM with partners, so your demand gen stories are infinite. Your customer can actually be the hero of the story, and your solutions are just landscapes on that journey. Tell as many stories as you can.

If you do the above consistently, your best practice outbound structures will work for you on multiple channels.



Catarina Hoch

VP Global Marketing, Operatix

Leverage review websites and outbound SDR teams

My top demand gen tactics in a downturn are leveraging review websites & Outbound SDR teams.

Review websites are typically built to impact MOFU & BOFU but have also shown very effective for TOFU. Customer confidence will typically drop in times of a downturn, so helping build confidence in the buyer before they even reach out to you is fundamental to increase lead volumes & conversions.

Outbound SDR teams also become even more fundamental in a downturn scenario, as they can be super targeted and personalized on their approach, generating demand when inbound lead volumes

often decrease. Leveraging Outbound SDRs brings more predictability to your funnel as they can be laser-focused in engaging strategic accounts in industries that still thrive in a recession.



Nadia Milani

VP of Marketing, Proposify

Dig deep into your customer's current experience

The first thing most GTM teams are tempted to do in a downturn is slash marketing budgets. I get it, teams need to save money. But this can be a costly mistake. Downturns are cyclical, meaning they don't last forever. The brands that continue to invest and create demand during a recession, typically finish first at the end of the cycle. I chatted more about this recently on the B2B Revenue Acceleration Podcast: <https://www.operatix.net/resources/podcast/>

A downturn creates an excellent opportunity to reassess your marketing strategy and activities. Start asking yourself: what's working, not working, what can we try as a marketing team? Everything starts with your customer. This is a great time to interview your customers and dig deep on what they are currently experiencing. What content can your team build to address new pain points, concerns and needs? How can you continue to bring value during this time? Being helpful gets you in the door. Being valuable keeps you in the room. You need to stay top-of-mind, so when your prospects are ready to buy you're the brand they remember. We're taking this approach at Proposify and have started testing new content formats like The Closing Show Live (weekly stream and podcast) and are prioritizing community-led initiatives.



Taylor Young

Principal, ABM Strategy, Terminus

Shift to account-based marketing

In an uncertain economy, when companies rein in budgets, GTM teams are expected to do more with less. With tighter resources, marketers feel pressured to use budgets more effectively and still drive meaningful engagement. But there's no need to panic or default to the 'spray-and-pray' approaches of the past. GTM functions cannot afford to waste time or resources on leads that don't actually convert to sales. Stay committed to achieving long-term strategic goals.

If there ever was a time to shift to account-based marketing, it's now. GTM teams should evaluate if the companies they sold to in the past are still the best fit accounts today by analyzing their ideal customer profiles. Examine the industries, verticals, company sizes, and buyer personas continuing to invest during a downturn. Pivot your messaging to acknowledge current market conditions, highlighting how your product or service addresses the prospect's specific pain points.

Once a target account becomes a qualified opportunity, GTM teams should engage the entire buying committee across the customer lifecycle. Leverage deeper data insights — like firmographic, intent or behavioral data — to launch persona-centric display or LinkedIn ad campaigns and activate personalized content to convert those opportunities into closed-won deals.

GTM teams should embrace the mandate of operational efficiency, committing to an account-centric approach that generates opportunities and drives sustainable revenue growth.



Caitlin Clark-Zigmond

Director, Global Demand Center, Intuit

Leverage software to find overlapping partnership opportunities

Leaning into digital and staying on offense are keys to successfully weathering a recession, yet to do this organizations need to pare down priorities and focus on which products, buyer journeys, and personas are delivering the best revenue and margin **in the fastest time frame!**

A few things I like to do are look for ways to automate campaigns with AI and supermodels as much as possible, and leverage 2nd-party data with partners. Sharing data with key partners through anonymizing tools/software to find overlap and opportunity for your org and a partner can be quick, easy and often gives marketing & sales immediate opportunities to follow up on. To do this however I'd suggest starting with a great partner; getting very focused on a few key use cases with clear objectives; limit the initial data you share to keep it simple; leverage an easy/existing sales comp mechanism; start small and test your way into growing and expanding.

Lastly, understanding what is working well and where you have opportunity in your GTM motion is another good place to look for efficiency and opportunity. In the book *MOVE* by Sangram Vajree and Bryan Brown, there are 15 reasons GTM is failing or lagging and a significant reason is lack of understanding of the end-to-end (E2E) journey of lead to sale to customer delight. Knowing what stage your organization is in and how to improve based on where your organization is, is key.

The items above are good practice regardless of the macroeconomics around us, but are extra helpful in these tougher times to know you are developing a constant flow of **high-quality** leads that will bring in the revenue you want.

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