

The Marketing Lifecycle Explained



Building your business around the stereotypical sales funnel is a thing of the past. Instead, it's time to replace it with a more genuine strategy that appeals to today's customers, and their unique buying journeys.

Why? Well, the sales funnel we've become accustomed to has become outdated. Plus, it often encouraged brands to view customers as merely bank accounts. Moving potential customers through the traditional sales funnel prioritized speed to encourage them to purchase. The focus is to increase profits.

But, often, this strategy leaves your audience feeling unheard or like you don't care about them. It can even feel cold and impersonal, as well as sleazy. Ultimately, most prospects find this to be a huge turn-off.

Instead, your brand should highlight how you can help your audience through valuable content. Prioritize nurturing client relationships to encourage people to stay in your circle to become loyal brand advocates. What's the best way to do this? Think about implementing a Marketing Lifecycle instead.

As you read, you'll learn why it's time to kiss that outdated sales funnel goodbye. Plus, you'll discover how to welcome in a whole new world with a Marketing Lifecycle that will revive your brand strategy instead. Let's dive in.

Let's Replace "Sales Funnel" With "Marketing Lifecycle"

Before we go any further, it's important to note that the term "marketing lifecycle" isn't new.

In fact, Ardath Albee, an industry leader in content marketing, has previously discussed a lifecycle of sorts [on the Marketo blog](#). In the post, titled "B2B Tech Marketers Make the Shift From Funnels to Lifecycles," she says:

"...Marketers [must] shift their focus from buying journey funnels to full-on customer lifecycle management."

Now, we can't explain the Marketing Lifecycle we've designed without first making sure you understand the traditional sales funnel. Over the years, there have been several different versions of the sales funnel.

One of the most typical sales funnel concepts is the [AIDA model](#) developed in 1898. Elias St. Elmos Lewis coined this term to show the map of a customer's journey. This model takes the customer through four stages: Awareness, Interest, Desire, and Action.

The first stage is when someone discovers your brand for the first time. Then, they develop an interest in what you have to offer, express a desire to buy, and ultimately take action. It's a straightforward method that brands have been following for years.

A little over twenty-five years after Lewis introduced this model, William W. Townsend took it a step further in a book called *Bond Salesmanship*. In 1924, he pioneered the first usage of this "sales funnel" as associated today with the AIDA model:

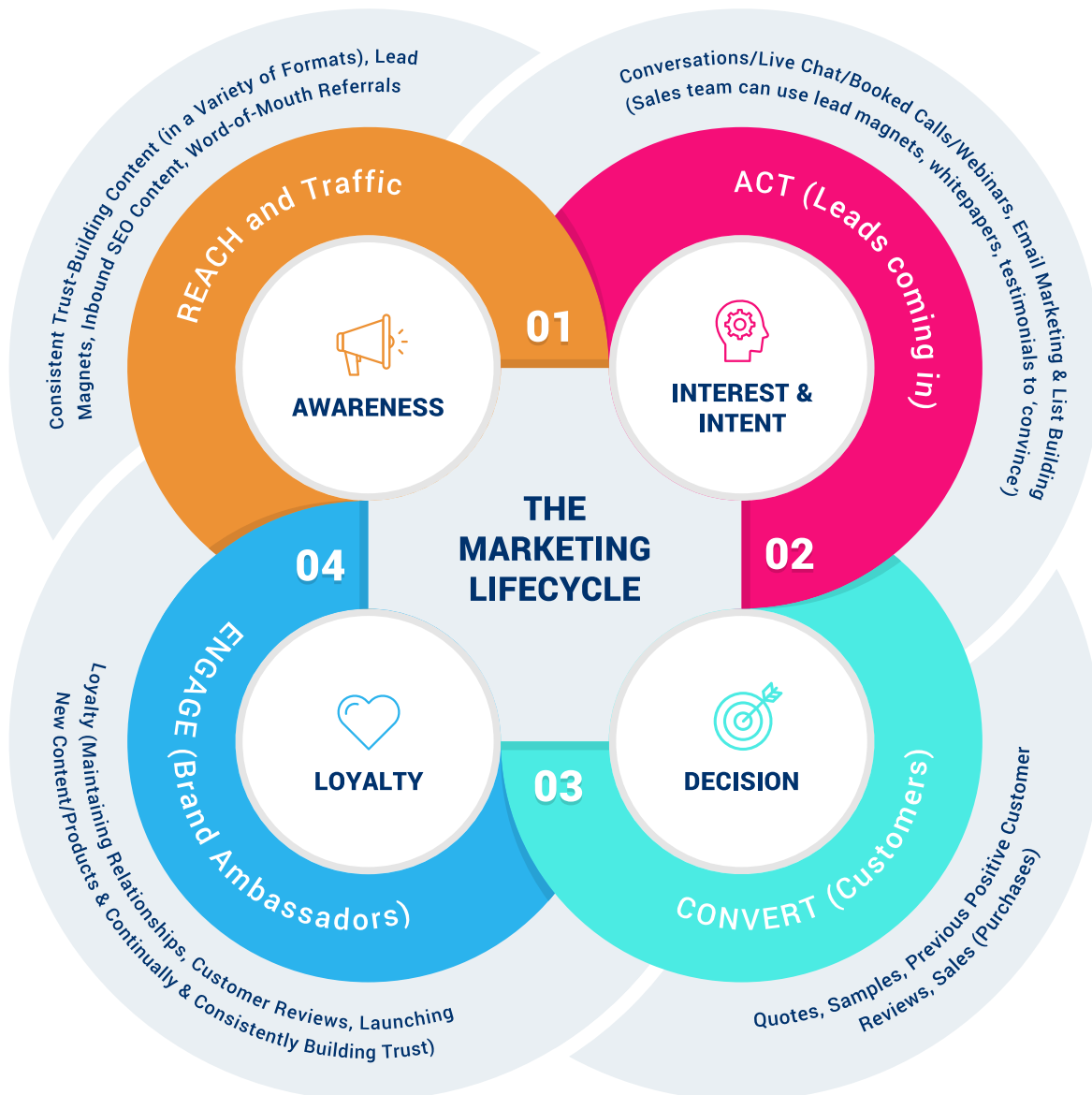
"The salesman should visualize his whole problem of developing the sales steps as the forcing by compression of a broad and general concept of facts through a funnel which produces the specific and favorable consideration of one fact. The process is continually from the general to the specific, and the visualizing of the funnel has helped many salesmen to lead a customer from Attention to Interest, and beyond."



It's essential to draw attention to one key aspect of this statement. Townsend specifically mentions "forcing" your prospects with this version of the sales funnel. Does that define the sales concept that we should use in our marketing today? Do you think your potential buyers want to be met with pushy sales tactics when encountering your brand? It seems unlikely in a world where different media channels abound, and trust is central to creating long-term customers.

You should always keep in mind that a human is buying your products and services. Having a warmer, more genuine approach to sales is therefore key. Our customers expect it because, at the end of the day, it makes a difference when we feel a connection with the brands we choose to buy from. It could be what prompts someone to pick your offering over a competitor's.

So, always put yourself in their shoes. Imagine what it would feel like for someone to discover your content for the first time. What kind of impression would it give them? How would it make them feel? That's a huge element in developing a more effective customer journey.



Explaining the Four Stages of the Marketing Lifecycle

Here at Express Writers, we believe there are four key stages to developing an authentic, customer-centric Marketing Lifecycle journey. Those four stages are broken down in the pages that follow so you can clearly understand how people move from Awareness, Interest & Intent, Decision, and finally to Loyalty.

Stage One: Awareness

The first stage of the Marketing Lifecycle is Awareness. You should not ignore this crucial step in getting exposure for your brand. After all, you can't expect someone to become part of your community or make a purchase if they don't know who you are.

In the awareness stage, your prospect is just discovering you. For now, your primary goal is to establish authority within your industry. Then get your brand in front of its target audience. Doing so will increase your chances of business success. But of course, it won't happen overnight. You have to be persistent.

The best way to accomplish your primary goal is through content creation. That's how you get your name out there. And everything you publish should be focused on value. Avoid getting too promotional during this stage, as it can turn potential leads off. Instead, use your content to address any needs or pain points your target audience may have.

Now, the question is – what kind of content should you be creating during this stage? What kind of moves should you make with your marketing efforts to generate awareness?

Here are some ideas to implement:

- **Blog Posts:** Writing high-quality, comprehensive, optimized blogs will help attract inbound website traffic while introducing people to your brand with high-value content. Over 77% of bloggers have reported results from blogging, that's pretty good evidence that this content format works.
- **Videos and Podcasts:** While we stand by the fact that written content is fantastic (especially for Google), you may want to branch out into other formats. Videos and podcasts are great options. 37% of Americans listened to at least one podcast in 2020. That's more than 2019, at 32%.
- **Website Copy:** Don't overlook the copy on your website! Your home page and any landing pages should have captivating copy that creates familiarity with your audience by communicating that you understand their needs.
- **Original Research:** Whenever possible, publishing original research is a solid idea because it provides tremendous value while allowing you to become a linkable, go-to resource.

- **Social Media:** Being consistent on the social media platforms your target audience is actively using is a sure-fire way to gain exposure. Just be sure to publish high-quality content specific to the needs and interests of your audience.
- **Lead Magnets:** Not only are lead magnets a powerful way to deliver amazing content, but they help build your email list as well. Then, you can nurture that list over time to establish relationships.
- **Ad Campaigns:** While organic traffic is great, sometimes you want to grow your audience faster. That's when you can run paid ad campaigns to get your brand in front of more people quickly.

The types of content you choose to create are totally up to you. You want to consider your strengths and which channels will help you effectively reach your target audience.

Another important tip for the Awareness stage is that consistency is crucial. You can't publish one piece of content and expect that you'll have built a large audience right away.

That's why you need to create a content strategy where you've mapped out how often you'll post new content and which platforms you'll use. Then, you can follow this plan to ensure your brand regularly crafts fresh content to put into the world. The more content you publish, the most opportunities you create to generate awareness.

Stage Two: Interest & Intent

Next, we have stage two, which is all about Interest and Intent. At this stage, a lead has already been introduced to your brand and what it offers. They're now showing interest in you and have the potential intent to buy.

In the traditional sales funnel, you split this into two stages: Interest and Desire.

But in the updated Marketing Lifecycle, Interest and Intent are combined because people take different lengths of time to make a purchase. Some will buy immediately, while others will take a bit more warming up. Both lifecycles are valid. But how do you help move someone from showing interest in your offer to deciding to buy?

Express Writers firmly believes that having a real, live human conversation is key. Whenever a potential client reaches out to purchase content from our team, we guide them to talk to us first. We let them choose if they want to chat over email, video call, or phone, ensuring they choose what works best for them. Having a team member committed to these conversations also keeps things consistent.

It's that personal experience and being able to get assistance in real-time that makes all the difference. Instead of having to purchase on their own, our team can help potential clients figure out what they're looking for and even create a virtual shopping cart for them when they're ready to check out.

We also offer a live chat option on our website for clients who need their questions answered quickly and easily. These different channels mean we're accessible to our audience. You don't want to leave any of these considerations out as you put together the flow that works best for your business.

It's entirely possible that your product or service doesn't need someone who can walk your prospects through the purchasing process, but you still want your site and language to reflect human interaction and conversation in everything. That way, your prospects still know they have the option to chat whenever they need it.

Here are some ideas:

- **Conversational Marketing:** Give people the opportunity to schedule appointments with your team to discuss your offers, whether over the phone or on a video call.
- **Chat Apps:** Adding a pop-up chat box to your website encourages people to ask questions whenever they come up. Plus, if someone is readily available during business hours, they won't have to wait long for a response from you.
- **CTAs:** Include a call to action (CTA) at the end of your content to encourage people to get in touch with you if they'd like to learn more about your offerings. Then, link to your contact form.
- **Ad Campaigns:** You can also implement retargeting by running ads that will re-engage with those who have already expressed interest in your brand.

To ensure this stage goes smoothly, it's smart to put your best sales team members on the job. You want someone who understands your brand, target audience, and your offerings. This person should approach your prospects prepared to help them solve a problem, rather than to make a sale. That's because these conversations need to be genuine and helpful. Anyone in this role is there to make decisions easier for your lead, not to overwhelm them or put pressure on them.

Stage Three: Decision

Now, we've moved into the third stage: Decision. At this point, your lead is equipped to buy your product or service. It's an exciting time because they're about to take action, which is what you've been working toward. And if the previous stages have gone smoothly, they see you as a trusted resource who can address any obstacles, they should finally make that purchase.

However, even when someone gets to this stage, they still might fail to commit. It's understandable because making investments (especially expensive ones) can be scary, and they want to be sure they make the right decision.

To ensure a final decision and purchase, here are some actions your team can take:

- **Conversational Marketing:** Make yourself readily available to answer any last-minute questions to address hesitations. It's also smart to follow up after the purchase to see if there are any issues or concerns. It shows you care and lets them know you're happy to help.
- **React Fast:** If a purchase depends on a sales quote, you don't want to keep a potential buyer waiting. Otherwise, you risk them turning to a competitor. You need to make sure your team will act quickly. It's recommended to respond between 0 minutes and four hours.
- **Provide Samples:** Whenever applicable, you want to have samples ready to present to potential buyers interested in whatever you offer. Those samples can help seal the deal.
- **Testimonials:** Testimonials are a fantastic way to get someone to take action when they're on the fence. When a potential customer sees reviews from past happy customers, they feel more confident in investing with you.

Whatever you can do to take the pressure off someone considering buying your offerings, do it. Saying yes to your brand should be an easy decision. So, if you can address their concerns and present them with samples and testimonials, you're more likely to secure the sale.

Stage Four: Loyalty

The fourth and final stage of the Marketing Lifecycle is Loyalty. At this point, your lead is pleased with your brand and willing to refer you to others. That's because they've been consuming your content and have even made a purchase. They know what your brand is all about and want to shout it from the rooftops by recommending you to friends, family, and other folks in business.

In this stage, it's your job to deliver a great product or service. From there, follow up with customers to ensure they're satisfied. If they are, fantastic! If not, this will be your opportunity to improve the situation and their experience.

The more you can delight your customers, the more likely they are to become advocates for your brand. This is an essential strategy for long-term success because word-of-mouth marketing from happy customers boosts brand awareness and profitability.

To encourage loyalty, consider doing these things:

- **Occasional Check-Ins:** Nothing says you care like checking in on past customers. It lets them know you're interested in how they're doing and gives you the chance to learn more about how your product or service may have been life-changing for them.
- **Send Gifts:** Sending a thank you card and a gift can keep you top-of-mind for a long time, so they'll want to keep coming back to you. Plus, they might be inclined to share your gift on social media, positioning you in an extremely favorable light.

Why the Marketing Lifecycle Fits the Current Customer Journey

For much of the time the AIDA model has existed, the world had fewer media channels. Namely, the internet didn't exist. And, that funnel doesn't necessarily account for how people make purchasing decisions in the 21st Century. Marketing and advertising are much different now. So, when we adapt our tactics, we can ensure more genuine and effective efforts from the start to completion of the marketing lifecycle.

There are three things we have noticed about the traditional sales funnel that don't match up with today's sales journey. Here's what you should know:

1. We cannot accurately predict where a lead is at. It's difficult to know if a lead is poised and ready to buy right now or if they're months away from making a purchase. That's why it's better to have patience and allow them to make the decision when they're ready.

If you've ever looked at a traditional sales funnel, you might have noticed there are walls between and around each of the individual sections. It implies there's only one way through the funnel. But this isn't the only way to attract and convert a lead.

With the Marketing Lifecycle, a lead can walk right into the Decision stage if they want. Although there is a clear path to follow, they aren't forced to move that way. Because the buying journey can be unpredictable, when your funnel is flexible you can accommodate decision-making and online shopping better.

This is why it's our job to follow up with leads, but never in a pushy way. You want to be there for them should they ever need anything without ever putting pressure on them to make a purchase. Your leads are likely just as busy as you are, so short and sweet check-ins that get right to the point are often the best way to go. Let them know you're there for them without making it nerve-wracking to decide.

2. The loyalty stage is excluded from traditional sales funnels. It's safe to say that every brand wants to establish loyalty with their customers these days, which is something sales funnels ignore. However, loyalty can be a crucial element when creating long-term success for your business.

Loyalty encourages happy customers to keep coming back for more and to spread the word by recommending you to those they work and talk to. Those referrals can make a huge difference when it comes to profits.

Now more than ever, prioritize building loyalty after someone has purchased so you can turn them into the best brand advocates ever. You can even see an 85% increase in the **customer lifetime value (CLV)** by increasing brand loyalty by just 7%. It might be extra work, but the payoff comes when those word-of-mouth customers begin rolling in.

3. You'll have a better understanding of which metrics and KPIs to track. You don't want to only focus on generating conversions because if your numbers are low, it'll be harder to identify where you go wrong. For instance, with our team, if we don't have calls and email conversations with the leads that come in, we know to revise our inbound strategy.

In the awareness stage, you want to track how much traffic you generate. If it's on the lower side, you'll know something needs to change. For example, you can better optimize your content or try different content creation channels to see if that builds more interest.

Then, during the Interest and Intent stage, monitor how many conversations you're having with leads. Tracking this data will help you strengthen the Marketing Lifecycle over time.

PUTTING THE MARKETING LIFECYCLE INTO PRACTICE

The world of marketing is constantly changing. These days, it's more important than ever to center your customer as they become familiar with your brand. Focus on content that creates conversations and offers value through information. Then you can prove to your customer that your product or service will help them solve a particular pain point.

This understanding of solution-based marketing will boost brand loyalty and allow you to focus on building a client base that comes to you repeatedly for proven results.

The goal at Express Writers is to create content that our clients can rely on for years to come. That's why we incorporate client feedback into everything we do. This willingness to foster conversations has allowed us to cultivate long-term partnerships with a variety of businesses.

If you want to understand how content creation can help you, [get in touch](#) with our team of client experts today. We'll bring awareness to your brand through authoritative content so you can kick-start your marketing lifecycle.

