

# Leveraging AI to Boost Lead Generation and Conversion Efforts

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Artificial intelligence is on the minds of marketers now more than ever. Why? Marketers responsible for demand generation know better than anyone else that it's crucial to stay ahead of the curve with new lead generation tactics, and AI is where it's at.

For lead generation, qualification, and conversion, AI fits seamlessly into the MarTech stack and solutions are only getting better, as the AI market is predicted to grow to \$70 billion by 2020, according to a Bank of America Merrill Lynch report.<sup>1</sup> The best AI solutions use marketing data to deliver powerful information about prospects and customers, as well as dig through data to find new prospects or suggest existing leads worth pursuing.

The great news is that AI has advanced to a stage where off-the-shelf solutions are able to automate and optimize important workflows for lead generation and conversion for organizations of all sizes and all budgets. The power of AI comes in the form of a robust, personalized user experience that ensures you are targeting the right individuals at the right companies and determining which leads to pass on to sales.



80% of marketing executives believe that AI in B2B marketing will revolutionize the field completely in the next five years<sup>2</sup>



Additionally, AI allows data across multiple sources to meet with business intelligence in one place in order to deliver measurable insights and actionable results. According to research by the Aberdeen Group, a market intelligence company, 61 percent of respondents reported lead scoring as the major driving force behind investing in AI.<sup>3</sup> With AI, you can understand leads better, find new quality leads, and convert those leads into sales.

In this e-book, you will learn how to:

- **Assess organizational readiness for AI implementation**
- **Understand how to use AI to solve the most challenging sales and marketing issues**
- **Get started with AI**

Now is the time to assess lead generation activities, conversion workflows, and follow-up processes to see where—not if—AI solutions make the most sense.

# Checklist: Getting Started with AI

Now that off-the-shelf AI solutions are accessible to organizations of all sizes in every industry, there are a few things you need to know when getting started with implementing an AI solution for lead generation and conversion activities. According to *The Economist* Intelligence Unit, 75 percent of executives report that AI will be “actively implemented” within the next three years, so businesses on board with AI are in good company.



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Here is a checklist to ensure you pick the right AI solution for your MarTech stack.

**Make a Diagnosis:**

Where in the lead gen and conversion process can AI have the most impact? Use the worksheet on page 8 to assess whether the focus should be on generating more leads, converting leads into MQLs, converting MQLs into sales-accepted meetings, converting anonymous visitors into leads, better targeting companies to sell to, or better optimizing ad spend.

**Know the Data:**

Once high-impact areas have been prioritized, assess how much data there is in each area and the quality of that data. For example, businesses just getting started won't have enough data in the CRM system to predict the best future prospects. This type of quantity/quality data assessment can be overlaid onto priority impact areas so you can easily highlight the best area in which to start.

**Get Buy-in From Stakeholders:**

It's important for all stakeholders to agree upon a specific area to target first for improvement. For example, if the biggest issue is converting more website visitors and the solution is to make sure visitors are seeing the right content at the right time, ensure there is buy-in from the content team to produce the necessary range of content items so AI can successfully test all permutations. Or, if the biggest issue is that the sales team needs to follow up with more of the leads generated by marketing, then the sales team has to agree that improving this will impact the sales team's goals, too.

### **Pick the Right Tech:**

After identifying the high-impact focus area and getting buy-in from stakeholders, it's time to evaluate the best off-the-shelf technology to address the improvement. Be sure to review case studies that correspond to organizational needs and make sure that the AI solution will get the job done. Also, to ensure the solution is perfect for you, ask the company for examples of customers that are equivalent in industry, size, growth rate, marketing and sales team size, and so on. Lastly, for complex enterprise organizations, ensure the AI solution is flexible and able to work across departments and geographies. For companies that are small with high growth, seek out a low-cost solution that can be implemented quickly and efficiently with a smaller team.

### **Go For It:**

AI-powered solutions for marketing—especially lead gen and conversion—are here. They're proven, they work, and there is no need to wait to implement. Jump on a high-impact area now and see results in 60-90 days.

The benefits of saving time—not to mention generating the right leads—make AI a worthy addition to your MarTech stack.

# Worksheet: Assessing High-Impact Areas Prime for AI Improvements

Now it's time to sit down with the sales and marketing teams to have a candid conversation about lead generation and conversion. It's important to ask open-ended questions in order to solicit honest, thorough feedback. Ultimately, the goal is to help sales and marketing reach consensus on issues, improvements, and responsibilities.





Here is a worksheet to start and guide the conversation:

ASK	ANSWER	TAKEAWAY
<p>How is marketing perceived by sales? How is sales perceived by marketing?</p>		<p>Based on the answers, rank the top areas for improvement.</p>
<p>How can the process of leads being passed from marketing to sales be improved?</p>		<p>Based on the answers, rank the top areas for improvement.</p>
<p>Who will take responsibility for improving these top areas for improvement—sales, marketing, or both?</p>		<p>Pick one high-impact area that can be improved now.</p>
<p>What metrics will be measured and what does success look like?</p>		<p>Based on the answers, create a system for assessing and declaring success.</p>
<p>How should this initiative be prioritized relative to other projects? Are there projects that can be re-prioritized in order to make improvements on this one high-impact area?</p>		<p>Make the conversation about working smarter, not harder. The goal is to establish trade-offs, not to create more work for everyone.</p>
<p>What happens if the improvement fails? What will the consequences and outcomes look like?</p>		<p>Document these outcomes as a reminder to help the team stay on track.</p>

Of course everyone involved wants to be successful, but whenever experimenting with something new, make sure all stakeholders understand that it may not go as planned. If everyone has the same expectations from the get-go, no one will be thrown under the bus and, in the event of failure, the entire team will already be on the same page.



# Choosing the Right AI Solution

Now that the MarTech stack is ready for AI to leverage marketing data to boost lead generation, qualification, and conversion, it's critical to understand the different types of AI—predictive lead scoring and conversational AI among them—that can respond to your organization's needs.

## Predictive Lead Scoring

Hopefully, there are more leads than the sales team can properly engage and convert—but how should leads be prioritized to determine which should be sent to sales? Traditional lead scoring required manually assessing several factors to determine whether a lead was qualified.<sup>4</sup> The process was time-consuming, and leads dropped off because they weren't nurtured in a timely—or efficient—fashion.

With predictive lead scoring, AI drives the process by automatically assessing first-party data (e.g., demographics, firmographics, behaviors) along with third-party data (e.g., technographics and intent) to create a model to determine which leads have the highest likelihood of becoming customers. Predictive lead scoring allows the sales team to focus on selling to the right people at the right time, while other leads continue being nurtured until the time is right.



Predictive lead scoring allows the sales team to focus on selling to the right people at the right time.

## Pro Tip

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For some, programmatic advertising is considered one of the most valuable forms of AI that can be leveraged to generate leads and secure customers. Unfortunately, most brands can't be sure where their online ads are running, and it's not always obvious whether the ad is being shown based on relevant data (e.g., previous browsing history, interests, demographics) or because of brand/content affiliation. This has led to ad fraud, domain spoofing, ads being run next to controversial content, and brand fraud, which has caused programmatic advertising to fall out of favor recently.<sup>5</sup>

However, even the highest-scored leads aren't always ready to speak with sales. In fact, until you ask, you can't really know which leads are ready and which aren't—no matter how good your predictions. What if you have low-scoring leads that are ready to engage with sales? You don't want to miss those. What if you have high-scoring leads that aren't ready to talk to sales? You don't want to waste sales time on those. There is a better way than predicting or guessing, and that's to just ask. Unfortunately, it's not practical to ask every lead without overwhelming your sales team and killing productivity. Or is there? This is where conversational AI comes in.

## Conversational AI

Showing up everywhere from your phone (“Hey Siri, show me the weather!”) to your kitchen countertop (“Alexa, show me a recipe for ...”), conversational AI is probably the most well-known type of AI used today for sales, customer service, and more. With lead generation and conversion, conversational AI assistants are uniquely positioned to engage leads through natural, conversational forms of communication (e.g., chat, email) and nurture them until they become customers.

The power of this type of AI is that it removes the manual follow-up required with nurturing leads and ensures that leads are being properly nurtured in real time. Even better, conversational AI is able to learn from dialogues with leads to become smarter, faster, and more efficient at moving leads through the sales cycle. At a time when the average sales rep only spends 37 percent of his or her time selling, conversational AI actually allows the sales team to do what it does best while conversational AI nurtures leads automatically.<sup>6</sup>

## Conversational AI: A Success Story

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Enterprise software provider ScaleArc is pioneering a new category in a crowded tech market, which means prospects need a lot of touches to move through the sales cycle. They found cooler leads slipping through the cracks because they didn’t have the bandwidth to scale their nurturing. To solve this, ScaleArc implemented Conversica's virtual sales assistant. With this AI assistant, ScaleArc saw more than 2,500 leads successfully nurtured and the organization was also able to re-engage dormant prospects. Overall, ScaleArc was able to more efficiently manage leads at scale and reap the benefits, too.

# Boost Efficiency and Efficacy with Conversica

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AI is constantly learning and making connections between data—faster than humans can. AI can suss out which leads are the right leads and how to reach them at the right time and in the right way. The flagship Conversica® AI Sales Assistant helps companies win more customers by automatically contacting, engaging, and following up with leads via natural, two-way conversations over email and SMS text in multiple languages. Conversica stands out from other conversational AI solutions because our assistants are built on a proven AI platform that integrates natural-language processing (NLP), natural-language generation (NLG), and machine-learning (ML) capabilities.

Implementing an AI solution doesn't mean hiring more employees or AI experts because AI makes the marketing and sales teams already on staff more efficient and effective. To learn more about the fastest, easiest way to engage and qualify leads through AI, contact us today.



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## About Conversica

Used by more than 1,200 companies worldwide, Conversica is the leader in conversational AI for business and is the only provider of AI-driven lead engagement software for marketing and sales organizations. To learn more about Conversica or to set up a product demonstration, call +1 (888) 778 1004, email [sales@conversica.com](mailto:sales@conversica.com), or visit [www.conversica.com](http://www.conversica.com).

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<sup>1</sup> Faggella, Daniel. "Valuing the Artificial Intelligence Market, Graphs and Predictions." TechEmergence, 6 June 2018, [www.techemergence.com/valuing-the-artificial-intelligence-market-graphs-and-predictions/](http://www.techemergence.com/valuing-the-artificial-intelligence-market-graphs-and-predictions/).

<sup>2</sup> Makadia, Mitul. "How Integrating Artificial Intelligence in B2B Marketing Can Scale Your Business." MarTechSeries, 6 Apr. 2018, [martechseries.com/mts-insights/guest-authors/how-integrating-artificial-intelligence-in-b2b-marketing-can-scale-your-business/](http://martechseries.com/mts-insights/guest-authors/how-integrating-artificial-intelligence-in-b2b-marketing-can-scale-your-business/).

<sup>3</sup> Agrawal, A.J. "12 Ways Technology Is Going To Revolutionize Lead Generation." Forbes, Forbes Magazine, 30 Aug. 2017, [www.forbes.com/sites/ajagrawal/2017/08/30/12-ways-technology-is-going-to-revolutionize-lead-generation/](http://www.forbes.com/sites/ajagrawal/2017/08/30/12-ways-technology-is-going-to-revolutionize-lead-generation/).

<sup>4</sup> Leist, Rachel. "Traditional vs. Predictive Lead Scoring: What's the Difference?" HubSpot Blog, 14 Sept. 2015, [blog.hubspot.com/marketing/traditional-predictive-lead-scoring](http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/traditional-predictive-lead-scoring).

<sup>5</sup> Huberman, Erik. "Programmatic Advertising Failed to Meet Expectations." Adweek, Adweek, 9 Mar. 2018, [www.adweek.com/brand-marketing/programmatic-advertising-failed-to-meet-expectations/](http://www.adweek.com/brand-marketing/programmatic-advertising-failed-to-meet-expectations/).

<sup>6</sup> Chen, Helena. "What Is Conversational AI and How Can It Help Your Business?" Conversica, 19 June 2018, [www.conversica.com/blog/what-is-conversational-ai](http://www.conversica.com/blog/what-is-conversational-ai).