

## Forget the Funnel: A New Look at the Stealth Buyer

*You've felt it. Something major has changed. The old methods of generating leads just don't seem to be working any more. Some of the trade pubs you relied on closed or went digital. Fewer people are going to trade shows. No one seems to be responding to direct mail or email.*

What's up? The news is that we, as marketers, have lost control. The proliferation of online tools and the emergence of social media (Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, Twitter, review sites, communities, etc.) have put our

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prospects in control of the marketing process.

They're finding us; they are not waiting for us to find them.

And they're doing it under the cover of anonymity.

Scary? Maybe. It means throwing out most of

what you thought about identifying and nurturing

prospects. Exciting? Definitely, because new approaches will mean greater efficiency, stronger engagement and dramatically improved results.

So how do we deal with the stealth buyer? How do we get them to identify themselves so that we can nurture them and eventually close a sale?

"It's about the conversation."

OK... before you log off thinking, “I need action, not discussion,” let me assure you that we’re talking about new ways to excite, engage and convert our best prospects quickly and efficiently.

The old days of pushing out advertising messages to prospects is over. This generation of B2B buyers can smell a phony a mile away. They’re looking for messages that are authentic and comfortable. Think of today’s marketing mantra as, “Tell, don’t sell.”

The key to successful lead generation in this market is engagement. If we can get our best prospects to converse with us, chances are we’ll be able to get them to “identify” themselves and move them to close.

## Step 1: Determine Who’s a Good Prospect

Not all prospects are created equal, and that’s been the primary disconnect between sales and marketing for years. As budgets tighten, it’s especially important to determine which prospects have the greatest potential for your organization and focus your resources on them. A careful analysis of your current customer base can provide invaluable information on what “good” prospects look like and where you might be able to find them.

## Step 2: Find Something to Talk About

In the not-so-distant old days, discovering a compelling message often meant months of research and testing. With new social media listening techniques, you can quickly learn what people are already saying about your company, your products and your services.

One of the great advantages of social media is the ability to “seed” messages and gauge reactions to them. Focus your messages toward the kinds of prospects you want to attract – the ones who offer real value to your organization.

## Step 3: Talk About It Where Your Prospects Are

We don’t mean to imply that traditional approaches are dead. Used correctly, they can often be the starting point for the conversation by gaining attention, exciting prospects, enhancing credibility and building brand awareness. But conversation-centric, integrated marketing today means much more than that. It means finding out where your prospects gather online. For example, some trade groups are developing their own social networks.

A great example of this is ITtoolbox for IT professionals. Or, if you're talking to a big enough universe, you can begin to create your own community. At the very least, you'll need to find those pages, blogs (even your own) and Twitter threads where your best prospects are engaging with others around relevant topics... and you need to become a part of that conversation.

## Step 4: Influence the Influencers

You know the best way to connect with a prospect is to get a referral from someone they respect – an industry expert or an informed colleague. By establishing your company or one of your employees as a thought leader in specialized topics, you'll increase the likelihood that these influential people will create positive “buzz,” recommend your products and reinforce the decision to buy. Social media outlets (such as Twitter and Facebook) allow you to converse with targeted influencers and establish thought leadership in an efficient and highly effective way.

## Step 5: Establish the “Quid Pro Quo”

The key to engagement is, quite obviously, to get your best prospects to identify themselves. Since anonymity is a treasure among many of your prospects, every point of contact – from your website to more traditional marketing to social media – must offer something of value to “trade” for information about the prospect. Maybe it's white paper on a particularly timely issue... or a webinar... or a podcast. Whatever you offer, make sure it has REAL value. Give more than you take. Don't ask for a lot at any one time. But make sure you are able to aggregate what you get into a complete description of your prospect's activities. People that come back a few times or suddenly increase their contacts across your social space are hot. So are the ones who “fit” your best customer profile.

## Step 6: Nurture, Nurture, Nurture

Once your prospects identify themselves, it's up to you to use their information wisely and appropriately. Continue the conversation, not a sales monologue, both directly and through social media. Offer value along the way to keep your prospects engaged and on the road to a sale and, ultimately, a long-term relationship.

## Step 7: Track and Refine

Don't forget that marketing is never a "once and done." Today we have the tools to monitor prospect, customer and influencer data and behavior to direct and refine our outreach and nurturing efforts, making sure that we are constantly optimizing our approaches and our increasingly scarce dollars.

The stealth buyer is changing the face of marketing. Conversation-centric marketing means giving our prospects the right information at the right time – on THEIR schedule. It means creating a positive environment for your conversations by locating and talking to influencers. And it means "giving and getting" to get stealth buyers to reveal themselves early in the process.

## Case Study: Fortitech

### Building on Success

After helping Fortitech enter new markets in North America, South America, Europe and Asia and greatly boost sales to become one of the world's leading suppliers of nutrient premixes, Media Logic worked to focus Fortitech's marketing resources toward the goal of establishing the company not as a "mere" ingredient supplier, but as a full strategic partner.

### Applying the Media Logic Model

First, Media Logic focused the Fortitech brand, redefined the company's key benefits and summed up those benefits in the theme, "Nutrition drives sales. Fortitech drives nutrition," and in the tagline, "Strategic Nutrition."

Second, we defined topics of thought leadership and cause leadership that Fortitech could credibly claim and comfortably promote.

Third, we analyzed Fortitech's media "universe" – the sum of its owned, earned and paid media opportunities – and developed a coordinated strategic and creative approach designed to both amplify the conversation and capture and nurture more highly qualified leads.

With our strong encouragement, Fortitech entered early into the world of social media, and the benefits have been extraordinary.



## Key Initiatives

Media Logic helped Fortitech create an integrated communications platform designed to drive the conversation and convert high-value prospects.

Key initiatives included:



- Overhaul of Fortitech's main website, including the conceptualization, development and prioritization of powerful product research and development tools.
- Complete review and revision of Fortitech's brand and service promotion efforts – its trade advertising, trade show design, events and public relations – focusing all efforts on driving traffic and driving the conversation.
- Creation of key intellectual assets – whitepapers, podcasts and webinars designed to advance Fortitech's claims and to trade for key prospect information.
- Development of measurable lead generation programs that Fortitech is now able to populate and run with minimal outside support.
- Research and conceptual development leading to the establishment of the "World Initiative for Nutrition," a Fortitech-led cause that works with NGOs and the governments of developing nations to reduce nutrient deficiencies in impoverished populations.

## Results

Today Fortitech leads the nutrient premix conversation. Worldwide. It has established itself as a "thought leader" and a major "cause" leader. More importantly, Fortitech, has seen double-digit growth through its first nine years (and counting) working with Media Logic.

## Let's get started.

How can Media Logic help you achieve your goals? How can we help you leverage innovative media to maximize your initiatives? As competition becomes fiercer, how can your business forge true connections with the most sought-after prospects?

Let's talk. Just contact Suzanne Gunther at 866.353.3011 or [sgunther@mlinc.com](mailto:sgunther@mlinc.com).

## About Media Logic

Media Logic is an innovative “conversation-centric” marketing firm with revolutionary products designed to integrate and leverage traditional and social media. Founded in 1984, Media Logic is headquartered in Albany, N.Y., with a West Coast office in Oakland, Calif. The agency provides marketing services across industries. Its clients include Visa, Barclays, Healthways, Carnegie Mellon University, MVP Health Care and Fortitech.

Media Logic is ranked by *Advertising Age* as one of the nation’s top 250 advertising agencies and a top 100 agency by *PROMO* magazine. Visit [www.mlinc.com](http://www.mlinc.com) for more information.

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