

## FUNNEL LEAD MARKETING

Lead generation does not need another supplier. What it does need is a good dose of quality and marketing sense. That is what Funnel Lead Marketing plans to provide, as **Peter Bell and Steve Cox** explain.

# Moving quality data into the marketing funnel

The REaD Group is continuing its evolution from a provider of negative targeting data, in the form of suppression, to offering positive targeting as well with the launch of a new subsidiary, Funnel Lead Marketing. It follows hard on the heels of Scientia Data, led by Dawn Orr, and sees two more former Acxiom staff join the group.

Funnel's directors Peter Bell and Steve Cox used to run lead generation at the American giant, experience that The REaD Group's chief executive Mark Roy says proved irresistible. "Lead generation is where its at and our raison d'être is to do it right. We couldn't ignore a very exciting marketplace," he says.

So when Bell and Cox approached him with their start-up idea, he didn't take too much persuasion, despite backing five new launches within the group in the last 18 months. Central to the appeal of Funnel's proposition was its highly focused model in which the company will develop data capture programmes to order, rather than just delivering leads that have already been harvested.

"In the marketplace, the big volume players have taken off in the last year. But the more they chase volume, the more they break their own model and rules, so clients can't tell the difference between leads they have generated and what has been brokered," argues Bell.

Funnel will only deal directly with web publishers so it retains full visibility of the

source of leads and can track performance back to origins. It is this direct marketing discipline which the founders believe differentiate their new agency from its rivals.

"Our platform can tell valid leads from invalid ones so clients get quality and volume," says Bell.

One thing Funnel will be pressing clients for is access to information on conversion and even lifetime value from the leads it provides. According to Cox, "it is in their interests to share that information. Web marketing is based on performance-driven deals. So if a client gives us their targets, we can plan and buy based on those."

Bringing this planning approach to bear is one reason for the use of the word "marketing" in the division's name, rather than "generation". Another is the level of contact and relationship which the agency is building with the publishers who will do the online lead generation.

"We are working with 130 publishers who will provide data on a cost per lead basis. We believe that is the right model for publishers and us to share the risk," argues Bell. Detailed examination of the online platforms offered by each publisher is still in progress – Funnel has signed agreements with ten so far and is negotiating with the remainder. Only by having this quality assurance will the agency be able to deliver against client



**Cox (left) and Bell:** New model works for clients and publishers

requirements with confidence.

Cost per lead also avoids the dilution of quality which typically comes from volume-based deals. "If you bought one million emails on a cost per thousand basis, it wouldn't work for you. If you adopt cost per lead, you can publish surveys on a more targeted basis and only get the data you want," says Cox. That should avoid common lead generation problems, such as serving banners or surveys about female products on male-oriented sites, for example.

The experience Cox and Bell have in the lead generation market dates back virtually to the birth of the discipline. Bell launched a dot.com credit bureau, before working in lead generation at Consodata, ultimately heading sales for that channel after Acxiom acquired it. He launched Acxiom Online Network, the first for that business. Cox started out at SiteL, before developing affiliates and channels for a toy manufacturer and following Bell through Consodata and Acxiom.

That gives them a lot of credibility when talking to publishers about joining their network and among clients when talking about their particular business model. "They have personal equity," states Roy. "I follow people and back what they think stacks up"

