

When we start the process of working on a new Lead Generation project, the single biggest issue to gain agreement over is qualification. What represents a lead? Is the contact senior enough to have budget? Does the company have a real need?

When I speak about this to clients and our own team, I often liken the process of arranging a first meeting to that of asking a girl (or boy) out on a date.

Now in my dating days in the UK (1980's) we just used to get slightly tipsy and then pluck up the courage to declare undying love ask if we could kiss a girl we'd been smiling blithely at all evening, but I believe that this is now a far more sophisticated process.

In simple terms we are very careful that the people we talk to about our clients services are at the very least contacts that our client wants to do business with - which includes qualification such as Vertical Market, Size of company, Number of staff, Job Title / Function of the person required etc... this tells us enough to know that our client will 'fancy' the prospect (to continue the analogy).

More complex is how we qualify the prospect and make sure they want to meet - without ever having seen our client. Again, to use the dating analogy we are in effect asking a girl out when she has never met us, doesn't really know what our client looks like, but we've give her enough confidence about our background, status and personality for her to agree to a 'blind date'.

Often we are asked to qualify prospects on their likelihood to purchase... do they have budget? Are they ready to buy? To continue the dating theme to the end, this is equivalent of asking what the likely outcome is a first date? A polite kiss, a second date, heavy petting or something altogether more carnal?

Anyway, the point is that there are some things that are not worth qualifying on before you meet. As soon as you ask whether or not a client is going to buy something from you before you've even met - the expectations from all parties are skewed. The prospect is bound to lie and say 'Not me - I'm a good girl and I don't put out on a first date'... (the client if might expect another result and will go off to the chemist for protection), and in the end neither are satisfied.

For our part we work for clients who have confidence in their own appeal, can woo a prospect in a meeting, and don't assume anything when they walk in the room. We think that is for the best...