

# Guide to generating a stream of online leads

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Generating and closing leads are essential for your firm to survive and grow. While networking in person and mining your current clients for referrals are good places to start, what are you doing online to generate leads? Online leads are a real goldmine if you approach them properly. In this white paper, Sandi Leyva, founder of Accountant's Accelerator, gives you four steps to generate a steady inflow of online leads that can help you grow your business.

- 1 How to create a lead magnet
- 2 How to build a landing page
- 3 How to drive traffic to your landing page through your lead magnet
- 4 How to nurture and pitch to leads to turn your followers into paying clients

# How to create a lead magnet

The centerpiece of a successful online lead generation program is not your website, your newsletter or social media. Those are important, but there is one thing that ties them all together to attract the type of client you want in your business: your lead magnet. This is where you need to start developing your digital marketing strategy.

## What is a lead magnet?

A lead magnet is a digest of information that describes a problem your ideal client is having and educates about the solution. The lead magnet is typically free or very low cost, and low risk for the prospect to reach out and get it.

## Why do you need a lead magnet?

The purpose of the lead magnet is to introduce prospects to your ideas about a problem a prospect has and how you would solve it. The best lead magnet attracts attention, initiates a dialog, educates your prospect and provides a next step for the prospect to get to know you better.

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*The reason a lead magnet is so effective is that, digitally speaking, it's a perfect low-risk method to build trust with the prospect on an issue, and make them aware of your expertise and value. The other fabulous thing about lead magnets is that you can create them once, automate and forget about them, while they are continuing to work hard for you, sometimes for years.*

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## Examples of lead magnets

The lead magnet can come in the form of a 5- to 10-page report, white paper, article, video of any length, ebook, podcast, audio file, slideshow, webinar, speech or even an event, such as an open house or training class. Here are some examples for accounting prospects:

- **Report:** "5 Things Newly Married Couples Need to Know About Their Wedding Year Tax Return"
- **Podcast:** "10 Accounting Issues to Be Aware of When Starting a Home-Based Business"
- **Video:** "How to Select a Bookkeeper for Your Small Business"
- **Slideshow:** "3 Ways Construction Companies Can Improve Their Cash Flow"
- **Speech:** "6 IRS Red Flags to Know Before Filing Your Tax Return"
- **Article:** "Are You Sure You Don't Owe Sales Tax?"
- **Class:** "How to Compute Your Profit Margin in Your Law Firm"

Lead magnets should attract attention, be benefits-focused and educational. You want it to add value and show your expertise. At the end of every lead magnet, include your contact information and the next step your prospect should take. For example, should they call you for a free consult? Should they send in last year's tax return for a free review?

## How to distribute your lead magnet

You can send your lead magnet out any way you want. The traditional way to use it is to "gate" it online with an opt-in form that asks for your name, email and phone number. The emails can be collected and added to a list management system, such as Constant Contact. You can then nurture those email leads through emails or a newsletter. If you have a sales team and have collected phone numbers, you can make follow-up calls.

You can also distribute your lead magnet in other ways:

- Simply email your lead magnet to individual prospects.
- Add it to your prospect kit.
- Print it out and bring it to networking meetings.
- Use it as a handout for a presentation.
- Send it via direct mail.
- Post it to your website without an opt-in and hope people call.

## Create your own lead magnet

Now that you have some examples, begin creating your lead magnet. First, think about what service you want to market the most. For me, right now, it's our websites, so I wrote "**The 10 Biggest Mistakes to Avoid on Your Website,**" just so you can see what a real lead magnet looks like and how the whole process works.

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*Think about whether you want to sell more monthly bookkeeping services, tax services or QuickBooks® consulting. Then, think about what your clients typically come to you to solve. After that, build your lead magnet around those ideas.*

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Once you have your topic, decide on the medium, such as a report/article, video or audio. Collect your tools, plan your content and then just create! If you need to hire someone to spruce up the graphics or writing, look to sites, such as fiverr.com, to get the help you need. Make sure your lead magnet reflects the professionalism you want your firm to display.



**...think about what your clients typically come to you to solve.**

# How to build a landing page

Now, it's time to integrate your lead magnet into your landing page, which is different than your website because it only exists to perform a single function; in this case, it's a way to initiate interest from your prospect. Every company or firm should have a landing page, but how you build it will determine just how effective it will be.

## What is a landing page?

Let's dive into what a landing page represents and how to build one to generate online leads. A landing page is a website page that will showcase the benefits of your lead magnet and allow prospects to opt in, leaving their name, email and possible phone number with you, in exchange for receiving your lead magnet.

## What is the purpose of a landing page?

A landing page has a single purpose, and that's to get prospects to sign up for your lead magnet. In that way, you can capture their email and add them to your list management software. The components of a landing page include:

- A short description of the audience intended for the report. This can be placed at the top as a title.
- A great headline, very carefully worded, that will attract attention.
- What the prospect gets after opting in, which is your lead magnet. Your landing page should contain enticing copy that describes the benefits of receiving your lead magnet.

- Possibly a description, photo or short bio of the author of the lead magnet. You can also include credibility items, including press logos, certifications, awards and testimonials.
- Your opt-in form with a large "Subscribe" or "Register Now" button. This form should ask for at least the name and email address.
- A link to your privacy policy is best practice.



**The opt-in forms on a landing page are a way to ask a prospect to stay in touch with you...**

### **Landing page apps and plug-ins**

There is software that can help you build an awesome landing page; however, I feel you don't really need this. Just build it like you would any web page or hire your webmaster to set it up.

In case you want to check out these apps, here are a few:

- **Leadpages.net** (we have used this before)
- **Instapage**
- **Unbounce**

WordPress has a plug-in for landing pages:

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/landing-pages/>

### **End game**

Have you ever visited a website, liked what you saw, but weren't ready to call them or buy? If so, that's what this is all about. The opt-in forms on a landing page are a way to ask a prospect to stay in touch with you, without being too intrusive on either of you. Providing a free report to go with it is often the incentive a prospect needs to stay in touch.

As prospects read the materials you send them over time, they build trust in you, without you having to do much, except continue to send them newsletters. They warm up slowly and become buyers in time.

# How to drive traffic to your landing page through your lead magnet

With a lead magnet and a landing page under your belt, the next step is to show you how to drive traffic to your landing page by enticing prospects with your lead magnet.

Now that you have something valuable to share with (hopefully) future clients, it's time to get the word out. Your valuable content is your lead magnet – a free report, video, how-to, article and more.

## How to drive traffic to your landing page

First, you'll need to put together a short description, with a call-to-action focus about what they'll get when they sign up for the lead magnet. If your lead magnet's title is enticing, you can start by promoting it by title. An example is "Grab your free copy of '5 Steps to Accounting Nirvana.'"

Next, decide where you should place your message by determining the sources you will use to get the word out and generate traffic. Here are a few to consider:

- Increasing traffic to your landing page by doing organic SEO work and by placing ads.
- Sending traffic via social media posts and social media group notifications, as well as encouraging social media sharing.

- Speaking to groups.
- Being newsworthy by submitting articles to news sites, blogs, magazines and more.
- Being mentioned by name in an article, and posting a press release.
- Partnering with others who can send traffic to you by building partnerships and affiliates.

## Examples to drive traffic

Let's expand a bit on each one:

- **Organic SEO work.** Your landing page should be optimized so that when people enter certain words in a search engine, your site will be more likely to appear in search results. This is called SEO (search engine optimization), and the organic part of it means it's done without paying for ads. One option to get this done is to have your SEO-savvy webmaster optimize your page.
- **Paid Ads.** You can bring in traffic by placing an ad, either in Google, Facebook or another online ad company. Make sure you have an enticing headline and description and that you use your landing page, and not your home page, as your destination URL. With Facebook Ads, a great graphic can make all the difference.
- **Social media posts.** Share your landing page link with your social media connections by posting about your free offer. Social posts also boost search engine rankings, so it's a double win. Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, Instagram, Pinterest and YouTube are some of the best social media apps on which to have a presence.



- **Social media group notifications.** Do you belong to any groups in social media? If so, you may be able to post your free offer in the groups. Be careful, though; some groups ban advertisements, so check with the guidelines before you post.
- **Social media sharing.** When your followers share or retweet your posts, it's like pouring gasoline on the fire. Encourage sharing by simply including, "Please share this with others you feel will benefit," in your posts.
- **Speaking to groups.** This method combines offline and online marketing. If you give presentations to prospects, be sure to invite them to sign up for your free offer from the stage.
- **Submitting articles to news sites, blogs, magazines and more.** If you write articles, submit them to local or national news sites, or sites that have the same audience of people that you are trying to attract as clients. Make sure you get a byline, and at the end, make sure your bio blurb includes "Get your free copy of ... at [www.yourdomain.com](http://www.yourdomain.com)."
- **Being mentioned by name in an article.** Be available for reporters who are writing about your area of expertise, so that they will quote you and mention your business in the article. You don't have much control in this case, but the exposure can be worth it.
- **Posting a press release.** If you have business news or tips, you can write a formal press release about your free offer and post it to your website. You may also want to pay to have it distributed on a wire service, such as [prweb.com](http://prweb.com) or [prnewswire.com](http://prnewswire.com).
- **Building partnerships and affiliates.** Do you have peers with a different expertise from you and that have a large list of clients? If so, you may be able to partner with them for mutual benefit.

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*That gives you 10 ways to send traffic to your free lead magnet. Your list of subscribers will grow, and the next step is to begin nurturing that list for future sales.*

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# How to nurture and pitch to leads to turn your followers into paying clients

You've worked hard on the first three steps, and now it's time for the sweet reward. The final step will help you learn how to nurture and pitch to your leads so that (at least some of) your followers will become paying clients.

## Nurture your leads with a newsletter

Hopefully, your list of followers is growing. Now, we need to nurture the people on your list who received your lead magnet. Staying in touch with them on a regular basis will help them stay engaged with you. The best way to do that is to send a newsletter through email.

The newsletter does not have to be complicated; it only needs to add value for your audience. The format I use is to write a couple of greeting paragraphs, mainly introducing today's article. Then, I write an article that is 300-500 words. After the article, I have an announcement area, sharing any upcoming courses or deadlines. And, last, I have a brief bio, no more than two paragraphs, in case your followers forward the email to a friend.

The format of the newsletter should be one column. Don't spend too much time selecting a template – find the simplest template you can and use it. You can include a banner header graphic if you wish. Use someone at [fiverr.com](https://www.fiverr.com) to create one and model it after your website design. It can then be inserted at the top of your email.



**Consistency is the key to nurturing your list.**

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*Consistency is the key to nurturing your list. Your newsletter articles should contain business or accounting tips. Sending the newsletter via email twice a month is ideal. I prefer every two weeks because you can send it on the same day of the week. Right now, Wednesday and Thursday are good days to send an email.*

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This is less work than you might think, so stop panicking! Set up an editorial calendar with the dates your newsletter will be delivered, and write in topics next to each date. Then, carve out a day or two and write six or seven articles at the same time. Once you're done, you have a quarter's worth of articles, and you only need to sit down four times a year to write. Use the scheduling feature in your list management software to post your articles.

If you can't stand the thought of writing, you can purchase articles and newsletter content from various vendors that specialize in accounting newsletters. You can also hire a writer to create fresh, original content for you, which is preferable.

### **After nurturing, pitch to your leads**

Once you have your newsletter done, you're ready for the payoff. Because you've delivered so much value to your followers, you've earned the right to ask for their business. Maintain a ratio of three to one, or four to one: For every three to four value pieces (the newsletter articles), send one pitch piece. In one year, if you send 26 articles, you can pitch six to eight times

A pitch piece is an email that asks for business. There is no article in this email; the email is dedicated to pitching only. This is important because it's far more effective this way. The content of your pitch should include what you're selling, the benefits, who will benefit from the service and, possibly, why you offer the service.

For example, let's pretend it's just before year-end and you want more payroll clients. You can send out a pitch, asking your followers if they are unhappy with their payroll service. Let them know what you offer, why it's better and what the very next step is if they want to talk with you.

### **Create a pitch calendar**

Create a pitch calendar and decide on the dates you'll pitch, as well as the services you want to promote. Then, write your pitch emails and schedule them in your list management system. A pitch can replace an article, or it can be sent on a different day.

Accountants who are sending newsletters often forget to pitch. Don't miss this step! This is the payoff for all the other work you did. Even if you don't get an immediate response from your list, you've planted the seed and educated your followers about what services you offer.

### **Now, go get those leads!**

As you take in all of this information and begin your journey to generating and closing online leads, it's important to know that if you do these steps out of order, you won't reap the long-term benefits of this process.

But, once you've put these four steps into action, in orderly fashion, you've mastered how to generate a stream of online leads. Your list is a precious business asset that will continue to generate clients for you for years to come.

## About the author

Sandi Leyva, CPA, CMA, MBA, is founder of Accountant's Accelerator, author of 30 books and recipient of seven accounting industry thought leader awards. Check out her [free resources](#) for accountants and bookkeepers.