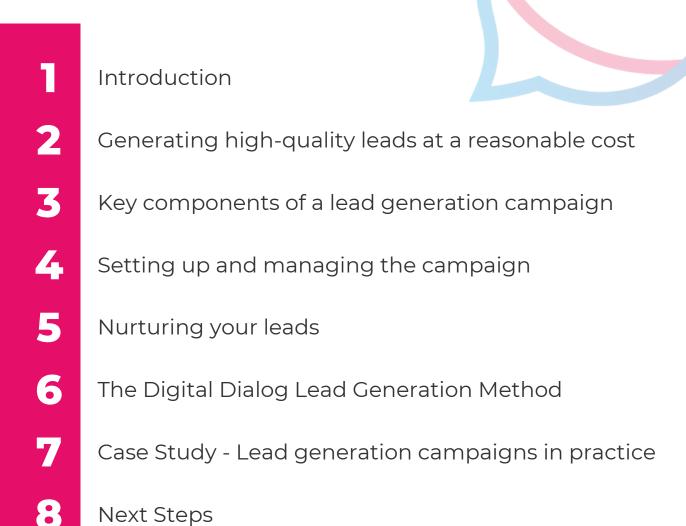# DIGITAL DIALOG

THE MARKETER'S GUIDE TO LEAD GENERATION

FOR THE tourism, travel & hospitality sectors

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Digital Dialog's guide to lead generation in 2022. We've drawn on more than a decade of experience, and the wealth of data and insights we've gained along the way, to create this resource specifically for the tourism, travel and hospitality industry.

Generating and maintaining leads is a crucial part of a well-rounded marketing strategy in almost all B2C and B2B industries, but it can be a challenge. Fake leads, expensive leads and leads that will simply never convert are all obstacles faced by marketers.

Yet we've seen first-hand over the years what a boost leads can give to travel-oriented businesses. For a destination, leads are an invaluable way to generate interest over time, and a lead generation campaign can grow exposure in certain markets. For hotels or airlines, lead generation campaigns can lead to an increase in a certain type of booking, for example longer stays, more weekday trips or a focus on business or leisure travel. For travel agents, certain types of leads will be likely to convert to sales.

But first things first…

What are leads?

A lead is a potential customer who has expressed some interest in your business by providing you with contact information and giving permission for you to get in touch. In today's world, that's most likely to be an email address and name, maybe also a phone number.

Leads can mean different things to different types of businesses. It's possible to categorise them in all sorts of ways, but let's keep it simple. Broadly speaking there are two kinds of leads:

SALES LEADS
Those who may be searching for specific tours, experiences, holidays, accommodation or destinations and are likely ready to make a purchase. We could also describe them as 'intent leads'.

MARKETING LEADS
Those with an interest related to a destination, attraction, tour, hotel or experience who want to be inspired through newsletters, social media and other promotional activities. While these leads may not be actively looking to make a purchase or consider your proposition just yet, they are good top-of-the-funnel leads that can be nurtured into the consideration phase. Let's call these 'interest leads'.

For a youth-oriented tour operator they could include students about to take a gap year; for airlines it could be expats who make trips home along the same route regularly; for destinations it could be holidaymakers who've been making daydream-fuelled online searches for them for months.

What do you gain from lead generation?

As discussed above, leads are a way to increase sales for travel businesses that directly sell services, like tour operators, hotels and travel agents. For destinations whose main goal is to get people thinking about travel, leads in the form of opted-in subscribers are an excellent way to keep front of mind.

But good leads can also:

Improve e-newsletter performance. Improving your lead list will mean higher open rates, click rates and reduced unsubscribes. Refreshing the lead list is also crucial – repeatedly targeting unresponsive leads deteriorates performance.

Save money. Organic advertising on social media usually has low reach, but targeted social media advertising is expensive, and that's not mentioning the high cost of other forms of digital and offline advertising. Once compiled, you can send promotional material to your lead database at much lower cost.

Plant seeds of inspiration. Sure, so can all advertising, but as we discussed above, a good lead list has a much greater chance of converting into a desired outcome because it has opted-in.

Keep potential customers engaged. People have high levels of engagement with a business when they are considering and planning a trip, but tend to lose interest once the trip is done – but the booking process is also when they will likely join a lead list.

Re-targeting them with relevant content is a way to maintain that engagement, or at least relevant, in the months and even years to come to encourage repeat business.

> **I already run targeted ad campaigns to reach the people I want to. Why should I do lead generation?**

We hear you, but when you run advertising campaigns – from full-page magazine spreads to highly-targeted social media posts – you will reach both people who have an interest in what you are selling and those who don't. Some may have never even heard of you.

That will still be the case during a lead generation campaign, but the point is to create and curate lists of people that have already heard of your brand and have expressed at least an initial interest or awareness in what you have to offer. What you want to send or show this group may be very different to what you would share in a general ad campaign, and the end results certainly will be too.

2 GENERATING HIGH-QUALITY LEADS AT A REASONABLE COST

We've divided the kinds of lead you can generate into two main categories – **intent and interest** – but we can also divide lead generation campaigns into two main categories.

THE ORGANIC WAY

'ALWAYS ON' LEAD GENERATION

A key part of lead generation is having an 'always on' strategy through the year so that you receive new leads frequently and regularly. Your website should be one of the primary sources of new leads, providing a steady trickle of leads via sign-ups to newsletters, blogs or other engaging content. A surprising number of businesses still don't maximise the potential of this easy win. Trade shows, referrals, social media accounts, affiliate programs and search engine marketing are also methods that can help generate a regular source of leads.

THE PAID WAY

BESPOKE LEAD GENERATION CAMPAIGNS

Bespoke campaigns can be used to generate a higher number of leads in a shorter space of time and for specific objectives. Often, brands think they can generate far more leads via the 'always on' method than is possible, but big numbers can usually only be achieved through bespoke lead generation campaigns. These have specific targets in a dedicated time frame, make specific customer offers, and are promoted via paid media such as social, search, email and display channels.

In the next section, we will focus mainly on bespoke lead generation campaigns. We'll look at key components of these campaigns and importantly, how to nurture and convert your leads to desired outcomes.

How much does lead generation cost?

Before we begin, we need to acknowledge that budget will be one of the biggest factors in running a targeted lead generation campaign.Your targeted cost per lead (CPL) is important to consider from the beginning and assess as you go through; adjusting of expectations may be required along the way.

If you haven't already established a target CPL, you can determine one after running an initial campaign across a mix of channels and audiences (we'll look at how to start setting up a campaign in the next section, if you're new to this part). Trialling different channels such as Google, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, email, native, search and programmatic display will be a good test bed for establishing where you are getting the best leads from and at what cost. From there, it's a matter of focusing budget and resources on the channels and audiences that are delivering the best leads within or as close to your target CPL.

Some channels can be significantly more expensive than others and some have multiple formats and options to choose from to generate leads. For example, on Facebook you can either run traffic to your own lead generation page or you can opt for Facebook's own lead generation objective based campaigns. Twitter and LinkedIn also offer similar options, however these can be more expensive depending on your campaign's configuration. It is not necessary to run campaigns on all platforms but an initial test on some of the possible winners might be a good start.

Strategies to avoid

A conversation about cost would be incomplete without highlighting the easiest and cheapest way of getting leads; buying them from an affiliate programme or some other big-promising website. **Our advice: don't waste your money. Leads you buy, rather than leads that actively give you their details, are unlikely to be effective and could even land you in legal trouble.**

That means it's going to be up to you, or a company you collaborate with, to set up your own lead generation engines. Getting the right aims and strategy in place will be key to ensuring time and money are not wasted.

KEY COMPONENTS OF A BESPOKE LEAD GENERATION CAMPAIGN

Define your lead

A good place to begin is creating a set of **audience profiles/personas**. These should be detailed and can span age, location, interests, spending habits and so on. You may want to go hyper-specific – for example Matteo: a 22-year-old man living in Zurich who is a keen snowboarder, posts regularly on Instagram and goes on holiday two to three times a year. Or you could go for a broader group, such as 25-30 year old social enthusiasts who enjoy culture, adventures and nightclubbing. For MICE businesses, are there new sectors you want to target as companies re-adjust their needs and strategies in a post-pandemic world?

Think about how you will attract them

Two staple methods of lead generation are **competitions** and **offers**. These can bring in a wide range of leads but, assuming the prize is linked to your business, you can guarantee a level of interest. You could also consider a limited-time discount, a brochure, a content series (such as a guest-written article from a notable figure), or an online event which requires a sign-up. The options are endless but should be designed with your lead profiles in mind.

You can also choose to attract leads without offering incentives; however, research and our own experience of hundreds of campaigns shows that the volume of leads are significantly higher and costs are lower when offering an incentive such as a free holiday, flights or a voucher.

Deciding on which channels to target them

Now that you've worked out who you want to target and how you're going to attract them, it's time to look at the right channels to reach them. Reaching your target audience is usually going to require some sort of paid advertising, so you will then want to map out your potential channels. Social is one category, and targeting (via demographics, search history, etc) will be key to finding the most receptive audience.You've also got native advertising and display banner ads on websites, which give great exposure but can have weaker click-through and conversion rates. Then there's search (getting your site to rank highly in Google and other engines), which is extremely effective but expensive.

From here, you need to make sure you've matched up your lead generation method (eg a competition) with the platform you're using (e.g. website banners), and your user profiles. Our Swiss friend Matteo is a natural fit to be targeted via an Instagram ad, and may want to sign up to view a Q&A with a popular sportsperson; his 17-year-old brother Noah, who's planning a gap year, may spend more time on TikTok and be enticed by a youth-oriented discount package. Having this set of profiles and keeping their wants and tastes in mind throughout will help make your lead generation really compelling from start to finish.

The specifics of creating profiles, choosing ad channels and so on will be different for every business, and require research and potentially a bit of trial and error. Factors like cost, time, in-house expertise and annual aims will all come into play.

The landing page

This is the webpage where your leads will arrive to provide you with their details. The landing page is a key part of a lead generation strategy, and again will require some research and strategy to make sure it's serving your needs. Some things to consider are:

Do you host the page on your website or a separate domain?

The latter means the focus is entirely on the lead sign-up with little to no navigation options. It may also offer more custom design options, and better tracking and optimisation. But it won't give the rest of your website as much exposure. Hosting the landing page on your own site means more web traffic (which is good if that's a key metric for you) and could be more trustworthy depending on the quality of externally-hosted sites.

Mobile optimisation

At this point, no business should be unaware of how vital it is to have web pages that load quickly and display perfectly on all different types of mobile and tablet screens; but many still don't follow through with it. It's even more important with a landing page, where people will be reading terms and conditions and filling in different boxes. Losing them to a slow loading time or awkward display could affect lead sign-up.

User experience and design

It may 'just' be a landing page but that doesn't mean it should be any less user-friendly and beautifully designed as the rest of your site. If you're hosting on a separate domain, getting consistent branding is also important.

Writing style

Landing pages don't need to be boring. If you have a tone of voice guide, it should be applied here. Have a bit of fun – but make sure you've said things clearly.

The sign-up form

This is such a key part of the landing page that it merits a sub topic of its own. Whether someone is handing over their personal details via a landing page or any other method, you need to consider:

Data collection – how much is too much?

There's a real balance to be struck here. Obviously it's of benefit to a business to know as much as possible about this potential customer, but many people will understandably be hesitant to provide too much personal information. It's a good idea to keep data collection minimal on someone's first interaction with your business (even just a name, email address and rough location) and ask for more details along the line. Again, this may vary depending on how they've come to be providing their details and the kind of business you have.

Legal considerations

T&Cs, GDPR… they're not just the product of someone leaning on a keyboard with their elbow. It's absolutely vital you're compliant with the rules in your base country and any that your customers will be signing up in. Some countries have strict laws on competitions and advertising, so check! As a general rule, for a sign-up page, you'll need to make sure you have a clear opt-in process, that people know what they are agreeing to, that you have a data protection policy in place (not selling on their details, for example), and that you've displayed or linked to any relevant terms.

Data storage

Following on from the above, check whether the places you are collecting leads from require certain standards for data storage or require consumer data to be held in a certain jurisdiction.

Design/copy

Just like with the broader landing page, the sign-up form should display nicely, be well-designed and have engaging, simple, clear copy. Any typos, awkward phrasing or dodgy design could jeopardise trust in your brand, which is vital if people are giving their personal information. Go for one column instead of two (except for on smaller input boxes like first name and last name). Don't repeat yourself directly but make very transparent what is on offer and what people are agreeing to.

Tracking

Capturing the source of lead traffic is essential on a signup form so you can see which channels actually converted to leads, and then to sales. The tracking elements are always hidden from the rest of the display fields and can be tracked through tools like Google Analytics or similar.

7 SETTING UP AND MANAGING THE CAMPAIGN

Like other digital ad campaigns, but perhaps moreso, lead generation campaigns require rigorous and frequent optimisations to achieve desired leads at the lowest cost. Here are some of the things you should be bearing in mind.

Audience targeting

Since you will be marketing to your leads consistently once they sign up, you want to make sure you **reach only the most relevant audience**.

Mapping out your personas to audiences within ad platforms is time consuming and a bit of a fine art but highly worth the effort. Make sure to set up multiple audiences, each with a few different characteristics and A/B test them to find which audiences are delivering the most leads at the best cost. Avoid creating audiences that overlap too much as it tends to make the algorithm compete with each other thereby resulting in a higher CPM, CPC or CPL.

Start small and test rigorously

In the first few weeks, start with smaller budgets and do lots of A/B testing across variables such as audiences, creatives, placements or delivery. Make bigger decisions once all tests are complete and results available. It is normal for CPC, CPM and CPL to all be very high during the test phase, but once you have chosen the winning options from your tests, you should see costs coming down gradually.

When setting up campaigns, many ad platforms allow you to choose between objectives such as 'Traffic', 'Conversion', 'Engagement' or 'Lead generation'. You can generate leads with any of these options but the resulting cost per lead and conversion rate will differ between options. Ultimately, it depends on which objective delivers the most leads with the lowest cost per lead, and this is where A/B testing comes in handy.

Ads and tracking

Ensure you create enough ads and they are relevant and compelling to your target audience. A/B testing ads can help you narrow down on the ones which have the best CTR. You should use only a few of the best performing ads initially and rotate them often to maintain the desired CTR. Always use tracking to ensure you know the source of traffic and details of the ad or keyword that generated the lead.

Check the quality of leads regularly

Once your campaign is set up and you start getting leads, it is important to check the quality of leads right from the beginning and thereafter a period check every now and then.

This will ensure:

- You are getting leads that match the audience profile you are targeting. If not, you will need to adjust your targeting.
- That you are not receiving bogus leads or leads that look spammy.
- That your lead form is working correctly and capturing the data you need, including relevant tracking parameters.

Optimise to improve opt-in rate

With so many variables requiring optimisations during a campaign, it can be easy to forget to optimise against crucial indicators such as opt-in rate. In a GDPR-compliant scenario, your leads can choose to sign up with or without giving their consent for future marketing. Make sure you continuously optimise assets like landing page design/copy, ad copy and or making the opt-in text not only clear and legal but also give them plenty of reasons why they would benefit from opting in. Try different variations and see what works best.

5 NURTURING YOUR LEADS

You've gathered a list of contact details following a campaign. What now?
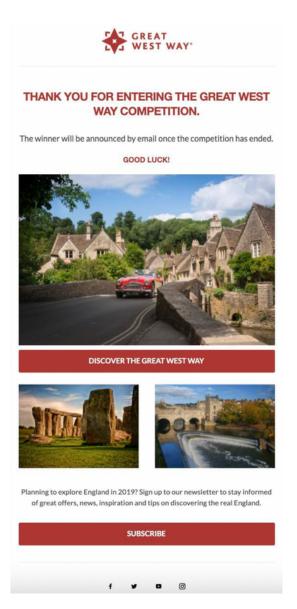Your next steps and considerations should be:

Welcoming your leads

According to a 2020 GetResponse study, 8 out of 10 people open a welcome email and they get 10 times as many clicks as other emails. So while these provide a good starting point to see if your new leads will click on your links, they will require a quick follow-up so you can really start measuring the success of your lead generation campaign.

Managing your leads

Where you store your leads (on an in-house, custom-built database or on a third-party tool) will depend on your budget, expertise and needs. It will need to be secure, of course, and should also allow you to customise the list into categories or segments for targeting with different messaging and campaigns. For example you could segment your leads based on the product or service they may have shown an interest in and/or how much or how little they engage with your messages. Doing so will help you develop a content strategy to move them closer to your desired conversion action.

Following your first email outreach, you also need to ensure proper housekeeping of your leads by managing unsubscribes, opt-in preferences and any marketing preferences they may have set.

Following up with your leads

How often do you want to message your leads? And how often do they want to hear from you? The answers may be different, and finding a happy medium will probably take trial and error, as well as careful data analysis of open rates, click rates and unsubscribes. Having a plan in place for following up with your leads before a generation campaign will allow you to serve better content more quickly.

Think about personalisation (even if that's just using the lead's name in an email), not emailing every day despite the temptation, addressing pain points/providing value, and making it easy for leads to contact you or subscribe. If you have sophisticated tracking tools enabled on your site and or your CRM, you should tailor content based on their web and email activity and tailor the messaging based on what they're interested in. It could be a holiday they browsed, a destination, a flight deal or an accommodation, whatever they browsed or showed an interest in, can be used to personalise the communication with them and move them deeper into the conversion funnel.

6 THE DIGITAL DIALOG LEAD GENERATION METHOD

Setting up an effective lead generation campaign has several moving parts, each of which requires careful consideration, planning and execution to ensure quality leads are generated within budget and at required volume.

With **several hundred** lead generation campaigns under its belt, Digital Dialog's methods of generating leads have continuously evolved over time to reflect not just the changes around data collection and data privacy but also around the channels, audiences, tools & technologies and integrations available today. From dynamic landing pages, to A/B tested ads, tracking and integrations to complementary systems and platforms, Digital Dialog has honed its lead generation processes to become a **best-in-class** provider of bespoke lead generation campaigns for both leisure and travel trade.

With Digital Dialog's lead generation, brands benefit from all of the following:

- **100% organically generated leads that engage and convert.** No dodgy co-reg or co-sponsored tactics. Just genuine leads gained naturally for your brand.

- **Targeted only at travellers** with intent and interest in your brand. Brands get to leverage the power, data and insights of an agency whose only focus is inspiring travellers.

- **On-brand, on budget and at scale.** From a few hundred leads to a few thousands, Digital Dialog's fully branded lead generation campaigns inspire trust, encourage sign-ups, and always stay within budget.

- **B2C and B2B lead generation** built upon powerful, creative campaigns across social, native, email, search, and carefully selected web properties and influencer networks. B2B campaigns are aimed at travel trade and the MICE market.

- **Attractive, low fixed cost per lead (CPL).** With hundreds of lead generation campaigns under its belt, Digital Dialog is experienced enough to predict accurate costs and volume of leads. Guaranteed to beat your current CPL. Ask us for a quote!

- **100% GDPR Compliant.** From sign-up to delivery into your CRM, Digital Dialog lead generation campaigns follow processes that are secure and GDPR compliant all the way.

- **Lift email performance.** Guaranteed to improve open rate, click rate and conversions by at least 2x.

- **Delivered directly to your CRM** or via alternative secure and compliant methods. Digital Dialog offers several methods of sending captured leads into your systems

- **'Done for you package'** – Brands can avoid the complexities and huge efforts involved in setting up and managing lead generation campaigns with our convenient 'done for you' package at an affordable CPL.
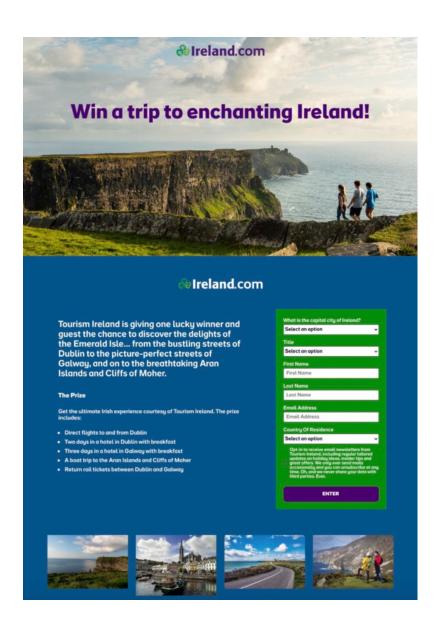
7 CASE STUDY - LEAD GENERATION CAMPAIGNS IN PRACTICE

At Digital Dialog, we've worked on a host of effective, engaging lead generation campaigns that have outperformed targets. Examples of how to tailor the above components come from two of our tourist board case studies, one of which was focussed on lead generation for its hotel partners:

TOURISM IRELAND

Over the years, Digital Dialog has done several lead generation campaigns for Tourism Ireland across its various European markets including Denmark, Norway, Finland, Sweden and Germany. These campaigns were designed around a competition to win a holiday in Ireland, with an itinerary showing off gems across the country. Landing pages were crafted for various markets in different languages on different domains, so optimisations could be made efficiently and promptly where necessary.

The channels chosen to drive traffic to the lead generation landing pages were social, email, native and display. Digital Dialog also designed emails replicating the Tourism Ireland email template thanking competition entrants for their participation and also promoting various parts of the Tourism Ireland website.

The campaigns were not only successful in generating high quality leads from each market but also raising awareness of the destination and generating plenty of positive feedback on social media. The resulting cost per lead in each market was also at least **50% lower** than what Tourism Ireland achieved before these campaigns.
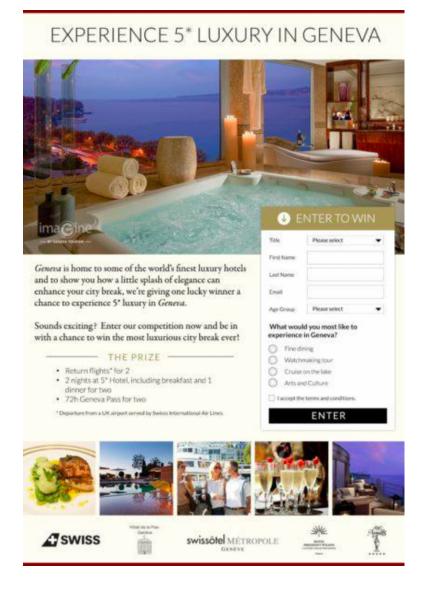
GENEVA TOURISM

A good example of a lead generation campaign with a specific purpose, Geneva Tourism wanted to boost occupancy rates of 5 star hotels in Geneva at weekends, specifically by increasing bookings through its own website. They also wanted to capture as many leads as possible for future marketing of offers.

Digital Dialog targeted travellers who usually stay in 4*hotels on short breaks. The goal was to attract them with dedicated offers that could make the price of a 5 star hotel comparable to a 4 star over the weekends, tempting them to upgrade their stay. Digital Dialog targeted audiences based on interest, activities, luxury purchases, travel patterns and demographics, such as 40+.

Digital Dialog then designed a competition to win a two-night stay for two in a 5 star hotel with breakfast and flights. A bespoke landing page was designed to reflect the luxury experience synonymous with Geneva. The page even encouraged competition entrants by asking them to pick their most preferred day trip activity in Geneva.

Campaigns were run via a variety of channels that included Facebook, Twitter and email, driving people to the landing page.

The campaign reached more than a million people and generated over **10,000 high quality leads.**

8 NEXT STEPS

Lead generation is a topic that starts simple and can get complicated pretty quickly, when you're balancing decisions around budget, ad priorities/spending, platforms, list management, content creation… and you may find it necessary to enlist outside help on one or more of the steps.

Why not get in touch with us and see how we can help?

Book a free consultation today to start generating high quality leads within your budget.

BOOK YOUR CONSULTATION

CONTACT US

hello@digitaldialog.co.uk
020 3137 9884
digitaldialog.co.uk

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Manish Kastia is the founder and director of Digital Dialog. He has been helping tourism, travel and hospitality brands leverage digital channels effectively since 2011. He has frequently written about the effect of the pandemic on travel. Together, he and his team continue to inspire travellers with effective campaigns for a range of travel businesses of all sizes.

Connect with Manish on LinkedIn.