Building the Machine

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The sequence of steps

Building the machine involves the following steps:

1. Identify your buyers
2. Diagram their buying processes
3. Add to this diagram the steps you will take to address their buying process
4. Diagram the Actions you will take to move prospects through the process
5. Examine the linkages between Actions to make sure the next steps are obvious
6. Define the qualification criteria
7. Examine the customer motivations for each Action
8. Define the organizational resources responsible for each step
9. Define the technology/software that you will use to automate the process

Optimize the **linkages** to ensure smooth flow to the next Action

Identify the individuals involved in the purchasing process

Define the **Qualification Criteria**

Diagram their **buying processes**

Examine the **Customer Motivation** to ensure they will want to do each Action

Add the steps that you will use to **address their needs and concerns**

Building the Machine

Define the **Organizational resources** responsible for each Action

Diagram the **Actions** that you will take to move them through the process

Automation: Define the **technology** needed to automate the process

1. Identify your buyers

Start with an intense study of the Customer

If you are like most of the people that I talk to, you already have a sales process, and can show a diagram of the different steps. However most of the time when I work with people to diagnose what is not working as well as they hoped, the problems arise because they have not found a good way to motivate their customer to move forward through a particular step. This happens because they have designed their sales process from their point of view, and not created a **customer-centric process**. A good way to make sure you are building a sales process that will work for your customers, is to diagram out their **buying process**. This will help make sure you have appropriate steps in your sales process to address the issues and questions they need answered before they will purchase from you.

I recommend starting by identifying the different job functions that are involved in purchasing your product or service. Often your champion may be a business buyer that is interested in your product for how it can improve a particular business function. But they may have to get approval from the IT department before they can make a purchase. And if the size of the purchase is large enough, you may find that you have to deal with the CFO who only cares about the return on investment.
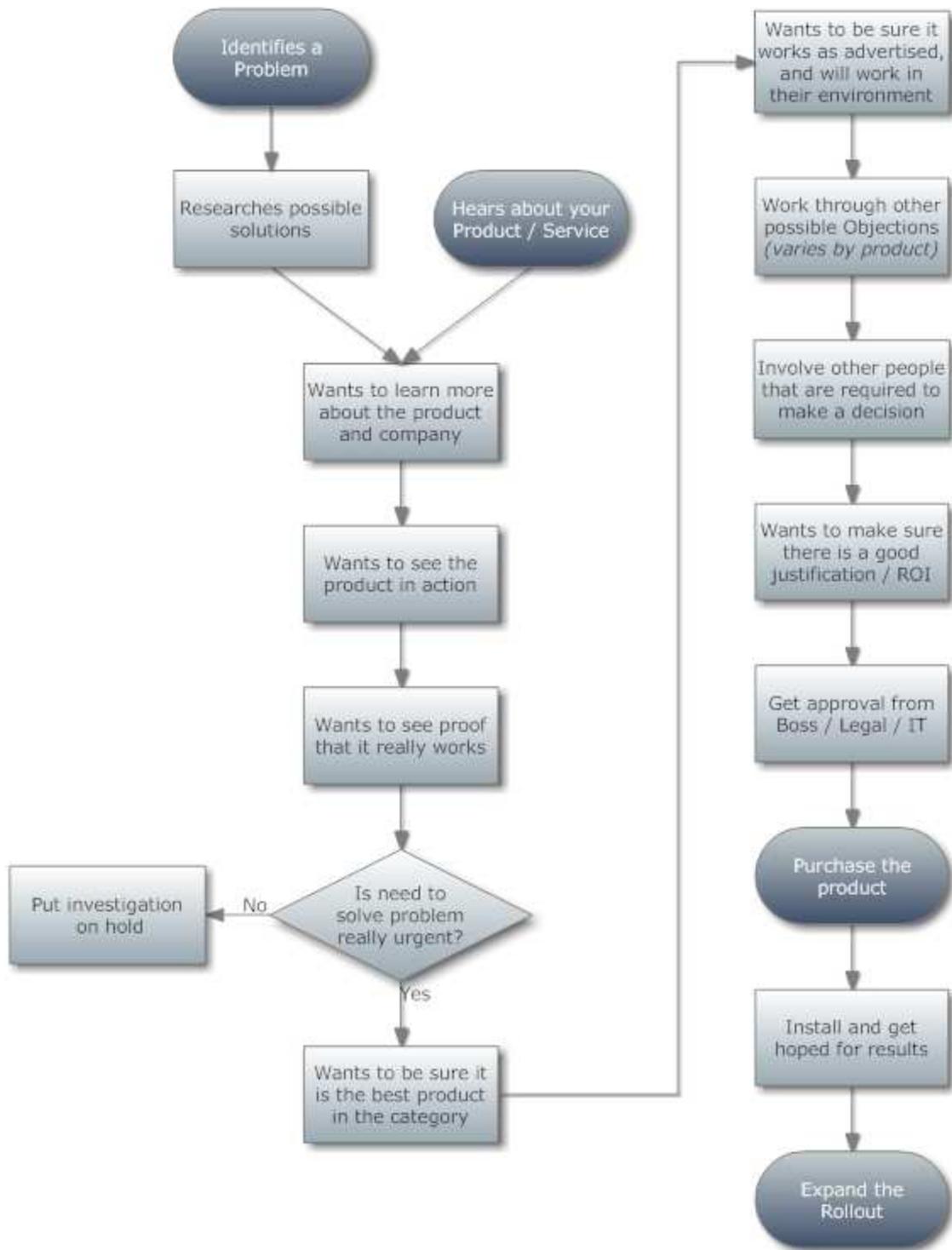
Also if you work through channels, such as VARs or System Integrators, you will want to develop a completely separate sales and marketing process for how you will locate and qualify them, sign them up, and make the productive.

2. Diagram: customer's buying processes

Once you have each player identified, I recommend diagramming the buying process for each individual. Only when you are armed with this information, can you properly design your own sales and marketing process.

The flow chart below was produced using an excellent flow charting program called SmartDraw that I highly recommend for this purpose. I found SmartDraw after a lot of research and trials of various other products, and it was by far the easiest and fastest. All other tools that I worked with got in the way of thinking through the process, and required me to pencil out the process before trying to use them to document it.

Example: Tech Champion Buying Process

```
Identifies a
Problem
   │
   ▼
Researches possible        Hears about your
solutions                  Product / Service
        │                     │
        └──────────┬──────────┘
                   ▼
          Wants to learn more
          about the product
          and company
                   │
                   ▼
          Wants to see the
          product in action
                   │
                   ▼
          Wants to see proof
          that it really works
                   │
                   ▼
Put investigation   No    Is need to
on hold        ◄──────   solve problem
                         really urgent?
                              │
                             Yes
                              ▼
                     Wants to be sure it
                     is the best product
                     in the category
```

```
Wants to be sure it
works as advertised,
and will work in
their environment
         │
         ▼
Work through other
possible Objections
(varies by product)
         │
         ▼
Involve other people
that are required to
make a decision
         │
         ▼
Wants to make sure
there is a good
justification / ROI
         │
         ▼
Get approval from
Boss / Legal / IT
         │
         ▼
Purchase the
product
         │
         ▼
Install and get
hoped for results
         │
         ▼
Expand the
Rollout
```
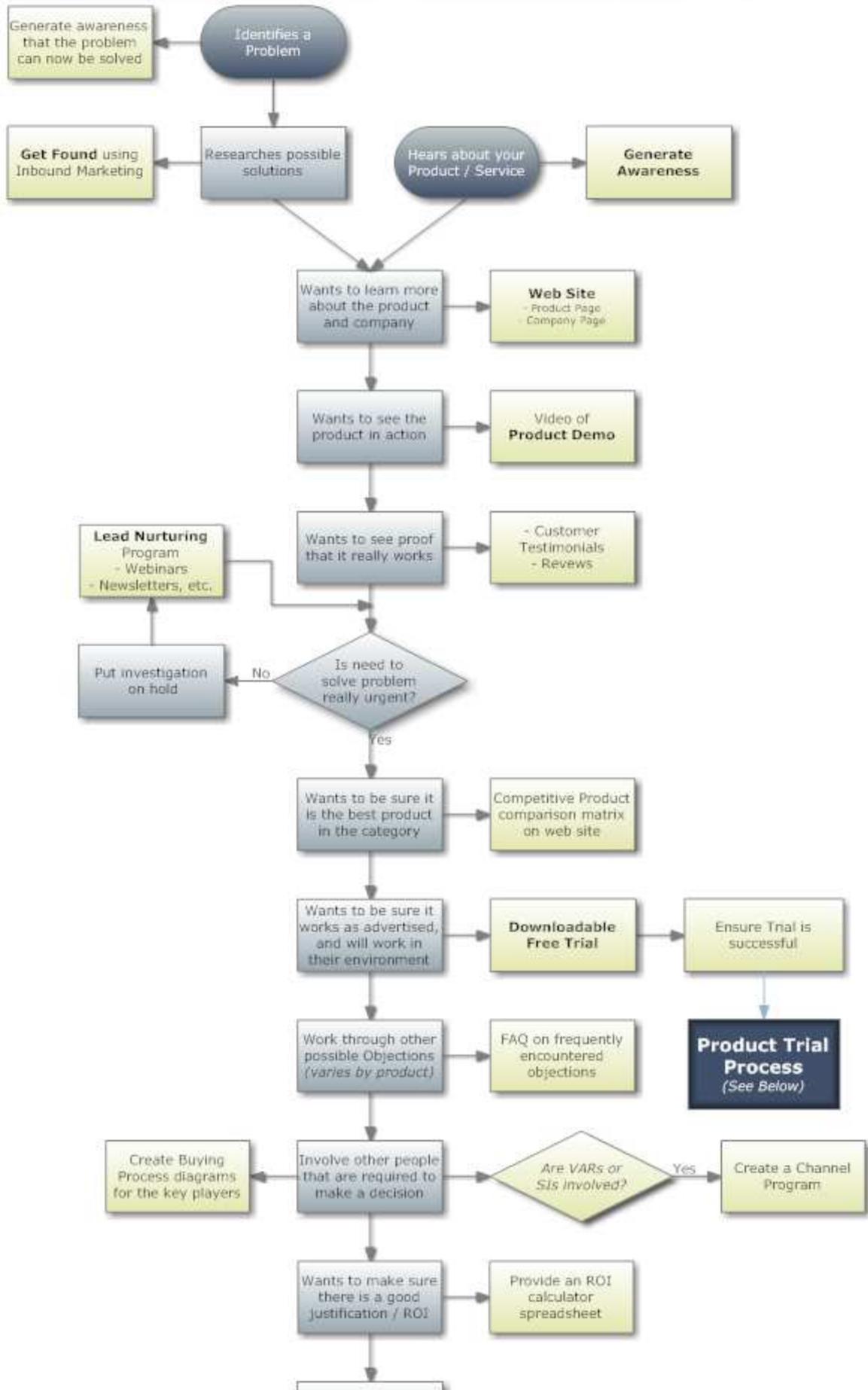
Note that while the above diagram only looks at the main player in the sales cycle, the tech champion, it is important to repeat this step for all other players that are involved in the sales cycle. For example if there is also a business buyer who is the actual decision maker,

understanding how they think is going to be important. Or if your sales process involves using resellers or systems integrators, you will want to do a similar diagram for the VAR/SI, thinking about the owner, the reseller sales person who will sell your product, and the technical resource who will demonstrate and install your product.

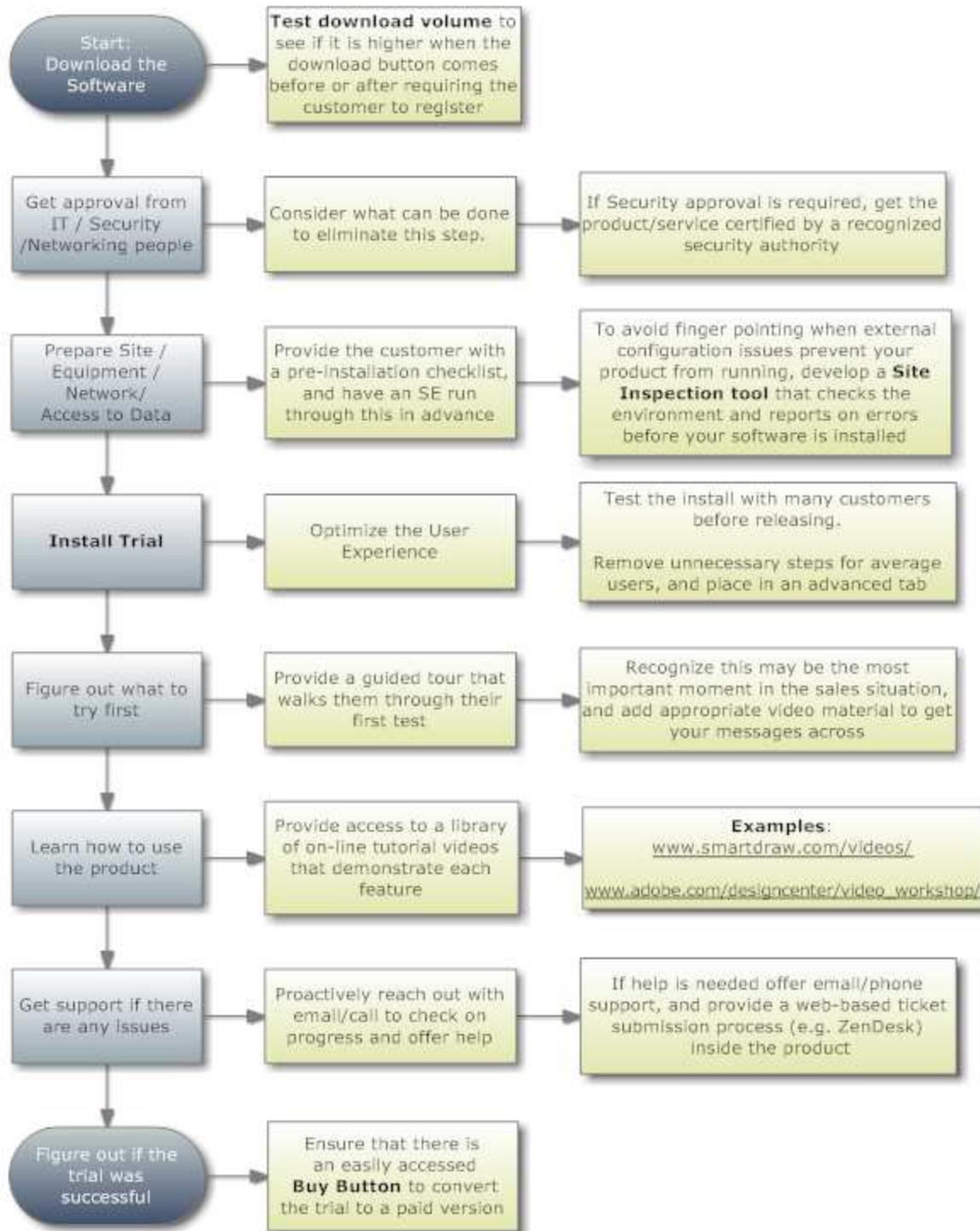## 3. Diagram: add the steps to address the buying process

This next stage involves adding the steps that you can take to address the concerns and needs of the prospect that you identified in the prior stage diagram. Those steps are shown here in the beige color.

Example: Tech Champion Buying Process with Company steps

Identifies a Problem → Generate awareness that the problem can now be solved

Researches possible solutions → **Get Found** using Inbound Marketing

Hears about your Product / Service → **Generate Awareness**

Wants to learn more about the product and company → **Web Site**
- Product Page
- Company Page

Wants to see the product in action → Video of **Product Demo**

Wants to see proof that it really works → - Customer Testimonials - Revews

Lead Nurturing Program - Webinars - Newsletters, etc.

Put investigation on hold

Is need to solve problem really urgent?
- No → Put investigation on hold
- Yes

Wants to be sure it is the best product in the category → Competitive Product comparison matrix on web site

Wants to be sure it works as advertised, and will work in their environment → **Downloadable Free Trial** → Ensure Tnal is successful

Product Trial Process *(See Below)*

Work through other possible Objections *(varies by product)* → FAQ on frequently encountered objections

Involve other people that are required to make a decision → **Are VARs or SIs involved?** — Yes → Create a Channel Program

Create Buying Process diagrams for the key players

Wants to make sure there is a good Justification / ROI → Provide an ROI calculator spreadsheet

Since the Free Trial has become such an important part of the sales process for many products, I have included a separate sub-process diagram for this here:
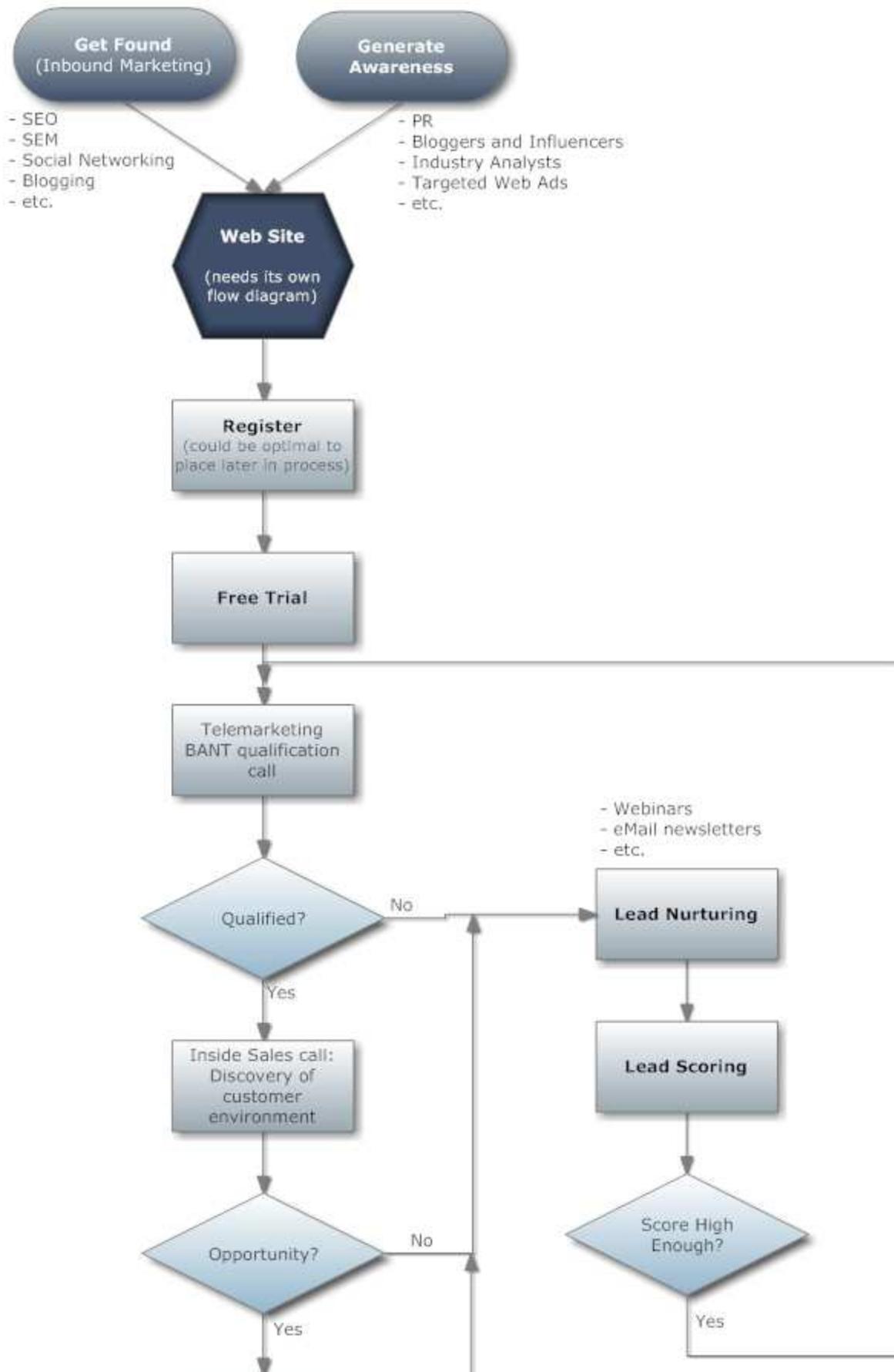
Example of "Free Trial" process

Start: Download the Software

Test download volume to see if it is higher when the download button comes before or after requiring the customer to register

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Get approval from IT / Security /Networking people

Consider what can be done to eliminate this step.

If Security approval is required, get the product/service certified by a recognized security authority

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Prepare Site / Equipment / Network/ Access to Data

Provide the customer with a pre-installation checklist, and have an SE run through this in advance

To avoid finger pointing when external configuration issues prevent your product from running, develop a **Site Inspection tool** that checks the environment and reports on errors before your software is installed

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Install Trial

Optimize the User Experience

Test the install with many customers before releasing.

Remove unnecessary steps for average users, and place in an advanced tab

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Figure out what to try first

Provide a guided tour that walks them through their first test

Recognize this may be the most important moment in the sales situation, and add appropriate video material to get your messages across

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Learn how to use the product

Provide access to a library of on-line tutorial videos that demonstrate each feature

Examples:
www.smartdraw.com/videos/

www.adobe.com/designcenter/video_workshop/

Get support if there are any issues

Proactively reach out with email/call to check on progress and offer help

If help is needed offer email/phone support, and provide a web-based ticket submission process (e.g. ZenDesk) inside the product

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Figure out if the trial was successful

Ensure that there is an easily accessed **Buy Button** to convert the trial to a paid version

4. Diagram Actions to move prospects through the funnel

This step involves creating a diagram showing how you plan to move prospects through your sales process, and is the company-centric view. (The diagrams above are all customer-centric.) Having done the work above, this step should be fairly simple.

The concept behind this part of the process is that we are breaking down a complex sales cycle into a smaller set of **Actions** that should result in movement of the prospect through the sales cycle. Later on when we instrument the machine, we will want to track how many people went through a particular Action, and how many of them were we able to successfully move to the next step (**conversion rate**).

Get Found
(Inbound Marketing)

Generate Awareness

- SEO
- SEM
- Social Networking
- Blogging
- etc.

- PR
- Bloggers and Influencers
- Industry Analysts
- Targeted Web Ads
- etc.

Web Site

(needs its own flow diagram)

Register
(could be optimal to place later in process)

Free Trial

Telemarketing BANT qualification call

Qualified? — No

- Webinars
- eMail newsletters
- etc.

Lead Nurturing

Yes

Inside Sales call: Discovery of customer environment

Lead Scoring

Opportunity? — No

Score High Enough?

Yes

Yes

5. Examine Linkages between Actions

The next step is check that there are clearly defined linkages between every action on the diagram, and the following step. One of the most common problems I see is marketing activities that have no clear call-to-action; or no clear step to process the leads after the action is completed.

For example, a company will visit a trade show and collect leads. However when they return, no one has thought of how they need to be processed, and as a result they will sit there for many days without being called or emailed.

Another common problem is marketing activities that have no connection to this process. For example, they may sponsor some event, hoping to build brand. But that activity does not result in leads. **In my view, not startup can afford to do any kind of marketing activities that doesn't directly contribute to the process of moving a prospect through to a closed deal.**

6. Defining Qualification criteria

Another common problem is no integration between sales and marketing. **Sales complains that marketing doesn't provide them with enough leads, and marketing complains because they gave sales a ton of leads, and sales won't call them.** This happens because there wasn't a discussion between sales and marketing where they mutually agreed on a clear definition of what represents a Qualified Lead that is acceptable to sales. Getting the lead to that level of qualification (often referred to as a Marketing Qualified Lead or MQL) is the responsibility of the marketing department.

To help with qualification, a set of questions are defined. In many cases these are the standard BANT questions (Budget, Authority, Need and Timing). It may also be valuable to ask additional questions that are important to your particular company to make sure they are in your target market. For example: are they a mid-sized company; are they B2B or B2C; are they in a particular vertical; etc. A lead can become an MQL when certain number of these are answered positively.

7. Examine the customer motivations for each Action

This step represents one of the most important and powerful aspects of this methodology. If you started off by looking carefully at your customer's buying process, you are already beginning to think the right way. But this step takes things further. To this well, you will need to get inside your customers head, and learn to think the way they do.

For each Action that you want your customer to do in your sales process, ask the following questions:

1. What concerns are they likely to have that will make them not want to take this action?
2. What motivations might they have that will make them want to take this action?

The most common reason that a sales process isn't working well is because your customer is not adequately motivated to do a particular thing that you want them to do. For example, your customers may not be going through with your Free Trial because they have to register on your web site beforehand. Or your customers may not be completing your free trial, because it requires them to open a port in their firewall (or similar).

To fix this problem, you will need to get inside your customers head and understand their concerns and motivations, and brainstorm a way to provide additional incentive to motivate them to complete the step. For example, offer them something meaningful if they complete your registration. Or find a way to eliminate the need to open the firewall port, and allow them to do the trial in the cloud on your own systems.

There is a lot more discussion on this important topic under the section entitled "Solving Blockage Points" that comes later.

However, I have found that the most important part in the art of designing a successful sales process lies in this step.

8. Define the organizational resources responsible for each step

This step is simple: for each action you have in your sales process, make sure that there is a clear organizational resource that is focused on that step, and make sure they are measured and incented based on the number of leads they process, and their conversion rates.

9. Define the underlying technology and software

Since we want our sales process to be scalable, we need to automate the way that information flows from one step to the other. This requires software or software provided as a service (SaaS). CRM software is a well understood category with Salesforce.com as the dominant vendor that we see in startups. However the are of software for marketing automation is an emerging and rapidly changing area. As of today, there is no one vendor that provides all the tools you are likely to want to use, so you will need to combine several products/services.