



Nailing Speed to Lead



CloudKettle



Speed to Lead is the time it takes for a human at your organization to contact a lead after some sort of “moment”. That moment may be an ebook download, a Contact Us form, or a response to an online ad - it represents an action that has some kind of relevance to your organization.

Speed to Lead is a critical Key Performance Indicator (KPI) in Sales and Marketing because the faster a lead is contacted, the more likely they are to convert into a paying customer. To put it differently, consider that it is easier than ever for today's buyer to shop around; they are typically doing a significant amount of research and looking into other options, and if you don't strike while the iron is hot... your competitors will.

There are common challenges that businesses face when trying to optimize their Speed to Lead. Primarily it can be difficult to balance the streamlining of automation to deliver the lead faster, while still fulfilling key business process requirements. Although this can be frustrating, by implementing best practices and focusing on iterative improvements, businesses can increase their sales performance and ultimately revenue.

In this guide, we will review 5 key areas to consider when fine tuning your organization's Speed to Lead:

- Lead Telemetry (Salesforce & Marketing Automation)
- Lead Scoring Method
- Record Routing & Matching
- Sales & Marketing alignment
- Lead Follow Up



Lead Telemetry

Telemetry (the measurement of things) is hard and you need to get it right early. But what gets measured, gets done, and the first step to improving your Speed to Lead is being able to measure it. Being able to measure every stage of the lead process from the moment of first touch (for example: form submission) and each incremental step along the way will allow for deep analysis across hundreds and thousands of records. This enables you to identify pinch points and also demonstrate to the business when improvements are made and their impact.

A key part of this is the careful use of timestamps wherever possible and ensuring that data is queryable. There should be a timestamp not only for Lead creation in the Marketing Automation platform, but also for enrichment, the moment a record is scored and MQL'd, each sync, each change in ownership, first touch by a human etc. Unfortunately this cannot be done out of the box; careful creation of custom fields, workflows to update timestamps, and use of field history tracking, both in Marketing Automation and Sales Cloud, are required. This data lives in multiple objects across at least two platforms and therefore usually has to be exported as CSVs for analysis or more ideally, is just available for use in a platform like Tableau.

By focusing on early, accurate, and consistent measurement across the Lead lifecycle, the organization is set up for greater success when it comes to converting Leads into happy customers.

Telemetry in Salesforce

Where Opportunity Stages have some out-of-the-box functionality to time-stamp and analyze stage changes (through the Stage History object and the corresponding Salesforce report), the Lead's Status field does not. While one can use Field History tracking on the Lead's status field, it does not give information for duration or time between statuses. Multiple options exist to manage Lead telemetry in Salesforce, including:

1. Creating fields on the Lead to track status change time stamps
2. Creating a custom object to mimic the 'Stage History' object and corresponding Salesforce report



Fields for Telemetry

One option is to create a custom Date/Time field for each Lead Status field; then use automation (such as a flow) to update the appropriate custom field with the time the Lead entered that specific status. One can then create additional formula fields (field type, Number) to calculate the duration that a Lead stays in a specific status or other metrics. Alternatively, one can create the formulas in a Salesforce report directly.

For example:

Status	Definition	Custom Field for Time Stamp (Date/Time)
New	The lead is created within Salesforce, but not necessarily ready for a human-touch.	CreatedDate
Marketing Qualified	Based on user behavior or demographics (lead score/grade), the Lead is Marketing Qualified and should be assigned to a person.	MQL_Time_Stamp__c
Working	When a person takes action on a Lead (email, calls, adds to sales cadence, etc.), the Lead should move to 'Working'. In a more mature Salesforce org, there would be automation preventing users manually making this change in Status.	Working_Time_Stamp__c
Converted	When the Lead is Sales Qualified and ready to be an Account/Contact/ Opportunity, the Lead can be moved to 'Converted'	Converted_Time_Stamp__c



Metric	Definition	Example Calculation
Speed-to-Lead	How quickly a human interacts with a Lead once it has been MQL'd	$\text{Working_Time_Stamp_c} - \text{MQL_Time_Stamp_c}$
Speed-to-Opportunity	Time between Lead created and Lead converted to Account/Contact/ Opportunity	$\text{Converted_Time_Stamp_c} - \text{CreatedDate}$
Speed-to-MQL	How long it takes from Lead to be created until it is an MQL. Note, based on a company's criteria, certain Leads that come into Salesforce may already be MQL'd.	$\text{MQL_Time_Stamp_c} - \text{CreatedDate}$

The benefits of this approach are:

- Easy to implement
- Simple to report on with standard Lead report types

Drawbacks include:

- Creating additional custom fields (can be a lot depending on number of Lead statuses)
- If Leads can enter a status multiple times, then data will get overwritten (or calculation becomes negative time) and it becomes hard to report on
- Requires re-work if Lead statuses change
- Combining telemetry with Opportunities and Contacts can become complex
- There is a backfill required

Custom Object

For organizations looking for a more scalable telemetry solution that includes additional objects and/or orgs where records can enter a status multiple times, leveraging a custom object, in addition to flows may be a better option.

With this method, one first sets up a custom object (Status Tracker for example) to mimic the Opportunity Stage History object. Next, create the following custom fields:



Field Name	Description
Lead	Lookup to Lead
Contact	Lookup to Contact
Opportunity	Lookup to Opportunity
Stage/Status Moved To	The new status or stage of the related record
Stage/Status Moved From	The previous status or stage of the related record
Duration in Stage/Status	The previous status or stage of the related record The amount of time a record has stayed in a specific status or stage, including multiple entries into that status or stage

One would then create a record-triggered flow on each object that requires telemetry, such as Lead, Contact or Opportunity, so that each time a status is changed, the Status Tracker object is updated appropriately. Additionally, upon Lead conversion, the 'Contact' and 'Opportunity' fields on the 'Status Tracker' object can be automatically updated with the newly created Contact and Opportunity records.

The benefits of this approach are:

- Gives a single object to house all information needed to track velocity across Leads and Opportunities
- Easy to report on across objects
- Clear visibility on the path a person/company took from Lead-to-Close
- Much more scalable, as changes in statuses/stages do not require updates to metadata
- Allows accurate reporting for statuses and stages in orgs where records can enter the same status or stage multiple times

Some drawbacks include:

- More complex approach than using custom fields
- Will increase data volume, as there could be many entries created in the Status Tracker for a single Lead, Contact or Opportunity
- More complicated backfill process, especially as it relates to Times Moved In/ Times Moved Out



Telemetry in Marketing Automation

Telemetry in marketing automation refers to the collection and analysis of real-time data and insights about potential leads or prospects. The goal is to rapidly identify and respond to new Leads as soon as they express interest in a product or service.

This can be done by the following best practices:

1

Data Collection: Telemetry involves gathering data from various sources, such as website visits, form submissions, email interactions, social media engagement, and more. This data can include information like the person's name, contact details, browsing history, and different behaviors on digital platforms. Using date stamps to capture when a person enters and exits a lifecycle stage, will help measure how long a person is in each stage and how long it takes to journey through the complete lifecycle. Using an enrichment tool will further enable Marketers to collect information on prospects that can be used in personalization and lead processing.

2

Real-Time Monitoring: Marketing automation systems continuously monitor incoming data in real-time. When a potential Lead takes a specific action, such as filling out a contact form or clicking on a product link, the system immediately detects it. Depending on how the marketing automation system has been customized, the record can be synced over to Salesforce's Sales Cloud:

- upon lead creation, or
- wait until the person has reached a certain scoring threshold, or
- when a specific behavior has taken place, like requesting a demo.

3

Person Scoring: Telemetry often incorporates lead scoring algorithms. These algorithms assign scores to leads based on their actions and behaviors, as well as on firmographic and demographic information. For example, a lead who spends a long time on a pricing page might receive a higher score than someone who briefly glanced at the homepage. A VP filling out a contact us form has more weight than an assistant admin filling out that same form. Scoring is primarily used to identify a marketing qualified lead, or to segment records for nurturing purposes.



4

Alerts and Notifications: Once a lead reaches a certain threshold score or exhibits a behavior indicating strong interest, the marketing automation system can trigger alerts, notifications or create tasks for follow up in Salesforce. These alerts are typically sent to sales or customer service teams, encouraging them to follow up with the lead promptly. We often think about them occurring via email, because that is our historic mental model of marketing automation, but when it comes to rapid response, a Slack notification is often a better solution.

5

Personalized Responses: The Speed to Lead concept emphasizes the importance of a rapid response. When a lead is identified, the marketing automation system can trigger personalized responses to engage the lead while their interest is still high. Source and attribution data can be used to further personalize and ensure that content is relevant to the lead at each stage in their journey. In short, leveraging the almost immediate automated response of the system, to buy time before the human reach out occurs.

6

Nurturing: Beyond immediate responses, telemetry can also facilitate ongoing Lead nurturing. Lead nurturing is the process of building and maintaining relationships with potential customers at various stages of the buyer's journey. Based on the data collected, the system can automate the delivery of relevant content and messages to guide the lead through the sales funnel.

7

Routing: Routing a qualified lead or record can take place in the marketing automation system, but more and more this occurs with a third party tool like LeanData that is deployed inside Salesforce. Ensuring that prospects are routing to the right sales rep, quickly, will have an outsized impact on Speed to Lead. Ensuring that LeanData or a similar tool is configured to route immediately, but also take into account time zones (what reps are currently working), languages (what reps can correspond in this language), volume (don't send leads to someone who already has some that have not been dispositioned) and vacations (don't send leads to someone who won't see them for a week).

Assigning leads based, not just on territory, but on these criteria will increase the likelihood of conversion. If a person on the West Coast fills out a Contact Us form late in the afternoon, and their assigned rep is in New York, it might not be until the following day when they are able to reach out. Ensure that the assigned rep is able to respond in a timely manner when prospects indicate strong interest.



Analytics and Optimization: Telemetry involves analyzing the data to gain insights into lead behavior and campaign performance. This data-driven approach allows marketers to refine their strategies and improve their speed-to-lead response times.

Telemetry in marketing automation for Speed to Lead is all about leveraging real-time data and automation to quickly identify, engage, and convert potential leads into customers. It is a crucial strategy for businesses looking to capitalize on the window of opportunity when a lead shows interest.



Enrichment

There are multiple points at which a Lead should be enriched. In a perfect world, all Leads should be enriched at least once and qualified directly within the Marketing Automation platform, before they even get to Salesforce. Depending on the sophistication of your Marketing Ops/Sales Ops environment enrichment could take place:

- Pre-form fill (pre-enrichment)
- Form submission (company size, etc.)
- When record is created in Salesforce
- A weekly/monthly re-enrichment automated process to catch changing data (for example, if a person is no longer with a company)

The pre-enrichment and enrichment within the Marketing Automation tool will have a direct impact on Speed to Lead, while the record creation and re-enrichment processes will also ensure that the Sales team has the most up-to-date and accurate information to inform their Sales calls.

The reason leads should be enriched in the Marketing automation platform first, is so that they are scored and MQL'd **BEFORE** they passed to Salesforce. If enrichment only happens in the CRM, then the lead gets passed to Salesforce, but has to wait to be routed until enrichment occurs and may even be delayed again as that enriched data makes its way back to the Marketing Automation platform in a second sync to be scored. In short, enriching upon form submission and then immediately scoring the record means it is routed when it hits the CRM, not after several more syncs.



Lead Scoring Method

A critical part of passing Leads quickly (and properly) is ensuring that your organization has an effective lead scoring model in place. Many organizations aren't doing lead scoring well (or even doing it at all) and every single lead gets routed to a Salesperson. When this happens, there's little incentive for Sales people to actually follow up with leads because the majority of leads are not serious, viable prospects.

There are different approaches to Lead Scoring, ranging from very permissive (*if you are a Lead with an email address, you get passed to the Sales Team*) to very stringent (*Leads must satisfy a series of criteria and reach a high bar before it's determined that they're worth sending along to the Sales Team*).

In the case of Progressive Lead scoring - Leads accumulate points for different qualities and actions which have different weights. For example, attending a Webinar is worth more points than viewing a webpage, and being a large corporation is worth more than being a SMB. The Lead score continues to climb until the Lead has reached a threshold and becomes a MQL (Marketing Qualified Lead).

Progressive Lead Scoring takes into account 2 main things: **Grade** and **Score**.

Grade, also known as Fit or Demographic score, looks at the Ideal Customer Profile (ICP) in terms of Industry, Company size, Geographic location, etc. If a Lead matches the ICP, then they get a higher score based on this. Companies may have target account lists within Salesforce, so when Lead data is enriched it is compared against target account lists, which could have the potential to increase the Grade and overall value of the Lead.

Score, also known as Activity score, looks at the actions that a Lead is taking. The more engaged with the content a Lead is, the higher their Score will be. In this same vein, it's possible to use Negative scoring to reduce the scores of Leads who have taken undesirable activities (for example, unsubscribing from your company's email, or visiting the Careers page of your site), which will contribute to a more accurate overall score.

As an example, a Sales Operations Manager at a Fortune 500 company may have a very high Grade, but not be very active on your site, resulting in a low score. On the flip



side, a college student researching your industry may have a very high score based on their activity, but a low grade as they don't match your ICP.

There are Pros and Cons associated with both types of scoring, but most mature organizations will consider both. When it comes to Demographic scoring, it takes time to actually plan out the scoring model. It requires work and alignment on the definition of the ICP and target list. This also needs to be continually refined, revisited every 3-6 months and analyzed to determine what the numbers are showing.

To create a Lead Scoring framework that actually moves the needle in terms of qualifying leads, take the following steps into consideration:

- Look at more than just activity - look at the fit
- Use an enrichment platform to populate that data
- Revisit programs every 3-6 months to review and revise. This is not a set and forget
- Have constant communication with the Sales team so that you are measuring the quality and ensure your model is working and Sales team isn't drowning or starving



Record Routing and Matching Solutions

For organizations with extremely long Speed to Lead times, the culprit is often an inefficiency in lead distribution. In the worst case scenarios, it is actually done by hand. But in others, it is simply a process that is slow or partially manual. For example, the leads are routed to an SDR, but a large number have to then be routed to an AE because the SDR was not the right recipient.

Generally, the root cause is that the organization does not have an enterprise record routing and matching solution like LeanData in place. Often organizations believe that “our process is too complicated, it has to be done by hand”. Our usual response is that it cannot possibly be more complex than that of our clients with multiple product lines across multiple countries with team members who speak a variety of languages.

A solution like LeanData can handle any of that complexity thrown at it, and handle it quickly. Alternatively, it is sometimes the case that orgs have a “requirement” that a human is involved. However, a deeper dive can reveal that this frequently boils down to a lack of willingness by key stakeholders to burn down an old, outdated process and start from scratch in a way that is more equitable and efficient.

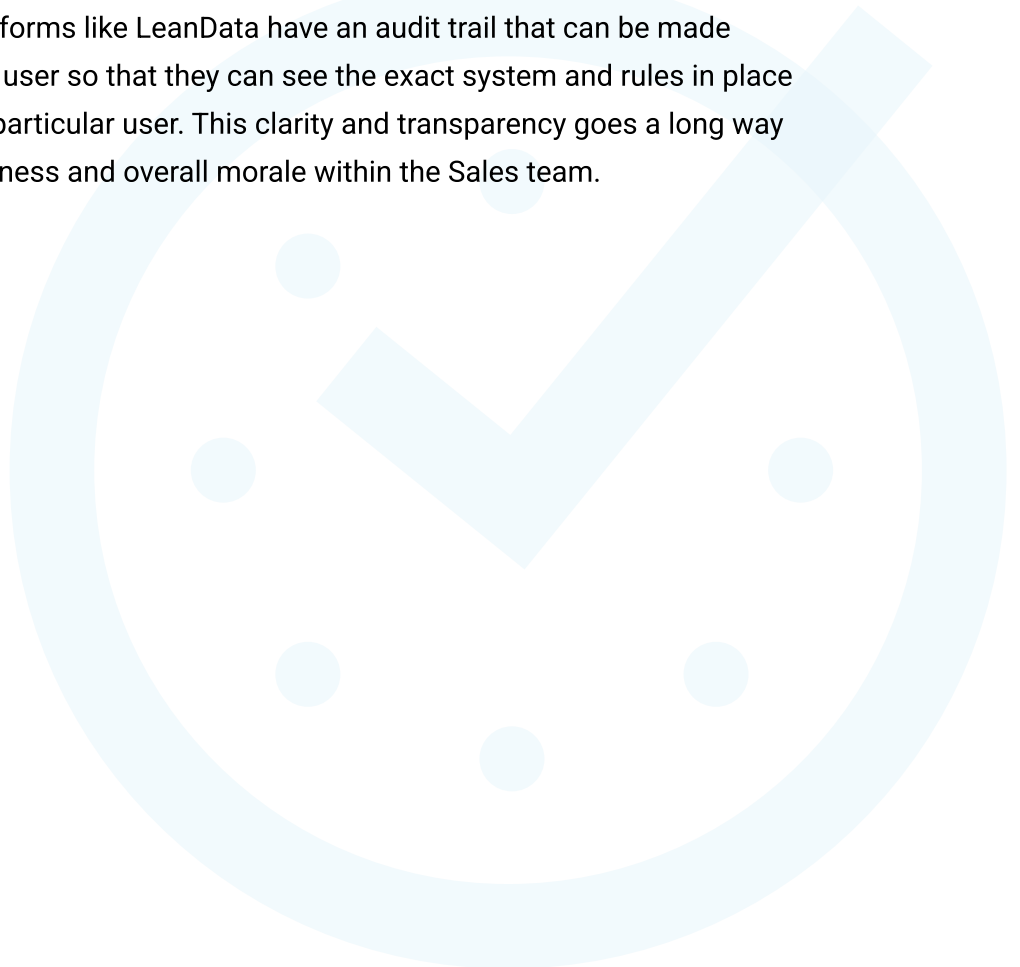
We are often asked if it is possible to build record routing and matching solutions yourself within your CRM? Sure. It’s possible. But **should** you do this? Mmmm... probably not. If your Record routing scenario is at all complex, it would need to be handled by custom code within Salesforce, which is cumbersome and hard to manage. So, while technically possible to DIY within the CRM, when it comes to Record routing, we strongly advise the use of an Automated Lead Distribution system. [For a deep dive on this, read more here.](#)

A solution like LeanData can understand scenarios on multiple objects simultaneously. In some instances you may be routing a lead based on these other objects (like the Opportunity attached to an account with the same email domain as the Lead) and need to query multiple objects at once (lead, opportunity, account and user). Although it’s possible to leave these situations to human oversight, this is slow and introduces the possibility for human error. Alternatively, a Record routing platform like LeanData is always on and always working for you - regardless of the complexity of the routing scenario. It will also reduce duplicate and mismatched records.



A Record routing solution can take into account the fact that different teams may be spread across time zones and will be available at different hours. If you have SDRs/AEs that operate in multiple languages, a Record routing solution can consider the preferred language of lead/form submitter (look at default language in browser) - which may sometimes mean it is preferable to override and ignore other things. As an example, if a prospect in Switzerland submits a form in Italian, we may want that to go to the Italian SDR, not the Swiss one who unfortunately only speaks French. Finally, it can also factor in that people go on breaks, take vacations, or may be otherwise unavailable for periods of time and there should be dependencies in place so that this does not create a situation where a Lead is assigned and then sits idle for days (or weeks).

Another major benefit of record routing solutions is not only do they increase the fairness of Lead distribution, they also increase the perception of fairness. With a fully automated system, significant human intervention is removed and there is a decrease in the likelihood of bias. Sales people understand that the Leads are assigned based on predetermined criteria, not based on any personal relationships or preferences. As an additional bonus, platforms like LeanData have an audit trail that can be made visible to any Salesforce user so that they can see the exact system and rules in place routing any Lead to any particular user. This clarity and transparency goes a long way in the perceptions of fairness and overall morale within the Sales team.





Sales and Marketing Alignment

As with many elements of a successful business, communication is key. The onus is on Marketing Operations to handle training and change management around how lead scoring works and what constitutes an MQL. Sales people need to understand the process and why they should work MQLs. Similarly, Sales people need to take action on Leads, or let the Marketing team know if and when there are issues or trends they're seeing with the quality of the Leads. This is not a one-and-done situation, but an ongoing effort to continuously build trust. Having open lines of communication gives Sales a chance to share feedback and ask questions if they need clarification, and ultimately improves the overall success of the organization.

As mentioned in the previous section, proper Lead Scoring relies heavily on open communication and alignment between Sales and Marketing teams. There must be alignment on what constitutes a lead that is Marketing Qualified, and thus worthy of having a Salesperson follow up. In terms of duties of each team, consider the following:

The Marketing team should:

- Nurture Leads to a certain stage before handing them off
- Continue to nurture and increase basket size of Leads that are not ready to be handed off
- Work towards decreasing the time it takes to make the sale, increasing the size of each sale and increasing the likelihood of a sale. More sales, for more dollars, faster.
- Keep an eye on MQLs and flagging when MQLs are not being followed up on. This may indicate poor lead quality, or potentially, a Sales team who is not engaging appropriately with leads.

Once passed over to Sales, the Sales team should:

- Vet leads and determine if they're worth moving forward (Sales Qualified Leads)
- Follow up with MQLs in a timely manner
- Communicate openly with Marketing team and advise if any Leads are problematic or of low quality so that qualification criteria can be adjusted if necessary



Even with a clear division of labor, there are common misalignments between Sales and Marketing to be on the lookout for. Disagreements often stem from decisions made at an Executive level that are not agreed upon at a Sales level. It's important that the entire team be aware of the scoring model (and have it continually reinforced) so that these disagreements can be minimized.



Lead Follow-Up

The main piece of advice when it comes to follow-up is simply this: Follow up early and follow up often. Be pleasantly persistent. But as simple as that sounds, there are common errors that we see Salespeople make, and strategies for improving follow-up time.

Speed of Follow Up

One of the biggest mistakes businesses make when it comes to lead follow-up is not following up quickly enough. Studies have shown that the odds of qualifying a lead decrease by over 10 times when the lead is contacted more than an hour after the initial inquiry. This means that if you wait too long to follow up, you could be missing out on potential business. There is nothing more frustrating than spending months shaving minutes off of how long it takes for a lead to make its way to a Sales person, only to then find out that they take hours to reach out afterwards.

To avoid this mistake, it's important to have a system in place for quickly and efficiently following up with leads. This includes training, templates and of course, where possible, automation with tools like Salesforce's High Velocity Sales, Outreach or Salesloft. It is also important that this speed is measured and reported on. Reports should be not only for the eyes of Sales Operations, but also made visible to Sales Leadership on an individual by individual basis so they understand which team members excel at responding and which are laggards.

Personalization & Value

Another common mistake businesses make with lead follow-up is not personalizing their communication with leads. Generic, mass emails or phone calls can come across as impersonal and may not resonate with the lead.

To avoid this mistake, Salespeople should be equipped with resources to help them personalize follow-ups as much as possible. Categorizing Leads by interest area can help determine which Sales support materials may be most beneficial - whether those are Case Studies or company blogs that contain content relevant to their interests (as determined by the actions they've taken on your website).



Framework

Having a framework for follow-up is important for Salespeople, because it provides structure and consistency to communication with potential customers.

Details may include:

- Frequency of follow-up
- Method of communication (phone, email, etc.)
- The specific content of the message
- Expected outcome or next steps

A framework helps to ensure that important information is conveyed, questions are answered, and opportunities for further engagement are identified. The timing and messaging should be clear and specific, and appropriate to the customer's level of engagement and interest. Much of this can be managed within your CRM by creating automated reminders to help your team stay organized and focused in their approach, increasing likelihood of conversion.



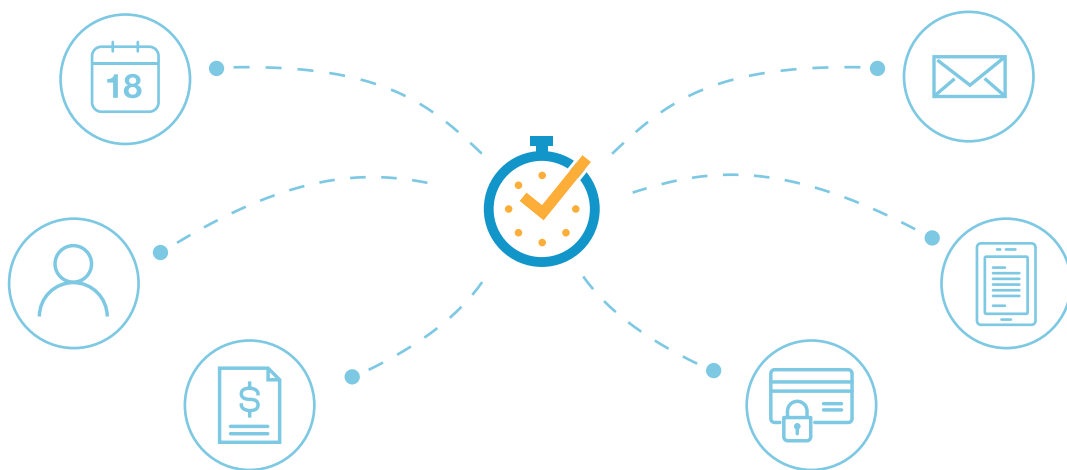


Conclusion

There are no silver bullets; it is a battle won, inch by inch and yard by yard. Best-in-class organizations are responding to leads in minutes and measure incremental performance improvements in seconds. Most are not so fortunate, but going from “we usually respond same day” to “we respond in under 10 minutes” isn’t something that happens overnight. It comes from identifying each step in the process and then shaving down as many seconds and minutes of it as possible. Those incremental improvements can seem unimpressive, but they add up to big wins over time. As an example, if an organization receives 1,000 new leads per week, and responds to those leads within the same day (approx 5 hours on average), then reducing that response time by one hour would mean a reduction in time time leads are waiting to hear back from someone by about 50,000 hours in the run of a year.

Are you interested in learning how CloudKettle can help you improve your Speed to Lead and enhance your business?

Talk to us today!



CloudKettle.com

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