



**WHY GATED CONTENT IS AN INTEGRAL
PART OF A GOOD DEMAND GENERATION
STRATEGY, WHAT YOU SHOULD GATE,
AND BEST PRACTICES FOR DOING IT RIGHT**

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GATED CONTENT IS INTEGRAL TO LEAD GENERATION

However, we see many companies that don't create premium content for gating — or aren't following best practices for lead generation forms. This information will help you understand why gated content is important, what to gate, and how to do it right.

WHAT IS GATED CONTENT?

Gated content is anything behind a form. It is essentially an asset that lives on a landing page with a lead generation form on it — and it cannot be accessed until the visitor enters some qualifying information (often a name and email). By filling out this form, the user is usually opting-in to receive future marketing emails.

WHY DO WE NEED GATED CONTENT?

Gated content is integral to a good lead generation strategy. It's one of the best and easiest ways to gather contact information for prospective customers and funnel potential leads into your funnel.

WHAT SHOULD WE GATE?

Technically, anything can be gated. Best practice, however, suggests that only “premium” content should be gated — lest your visitors become frustrated with their inability to access basic resources. Visitor backlash is very common with unnecessarily gated content. In addition, asking someone for their contact information and then providing them with content that isn’t perceived as valuable can forever ruin your relationship with that prospective customer. So, ask yourself a couple of questions:

+ Are our competitors gating this kind of content?

If your competitors are providing similar content without gating it, you should probably do the same.

+ Can this content usually be found ungated elsewhere?

For example, Google can be used as a free conversion tool — thus a conversion tool should not be gated.

+ Is this content a sales piece?

It is generally bad practice to gate anything that is considered a sales piece (such as a sales brochure), as this can dissuade prospective customers from finding out more about your company when they’re already into the Consideration phase. The value of someone getting details about your product and making the decision to buy is much higher than the value of getting someone’s contact information.

+ Is it substantial/valuable/premium?

We usually do not recommend gating infographics, blog posts, and similarly insubstantial items. Videos can sometimes be gated, assuming they’re not from a third party, promotional, or very short. So a longer instructional video or a recorded webinar can potentially be gated. In addition, white papers, analyst reports, ebooks, and trend reports are almost always gated. So if you have a 5-page PDF about a consumer trend or a Forrester white paper — go ahead and put it behind a form.

WHAT INFORMATION SHOULD WE ASK FOR IN OUR LEAD GEN FORM?

The more required fields you have, the fewer conversions you will have. A HubSpot study, for example, showed an increase in conversion rates from 15% to 25% by cutting the number of form fields from 6 to 3. There are plenty of similar studies with the same type of results. The ideal number of form fields is usually 3 (with a 25% optimum conversion rate), although 3-5 fields are generally acceptable (with a 20% optimum conversion rate).

Typical fields for a lead gen form are name, company, and email. Asking for a phone number (and implying the user will be called) can cause as much as a 5% dip in conversion rates. In one study, Expedia made the phone field optional and doubled conversion rates from 42.6% to 80%.

CONVERSION RATE BY NUMBER OF FORM FIELDS



WHAT DO WE WITH THE CONTACT INFO WE COLLECT?

For those of you who have experienced it, you know how incredibly annoying it is to have downloaded one white paper from a website, and then started receiving sales emails and calls immediately afterwards. It's happened to us many times when we've been doing research for our clients — and what it tells us about those companies is that they're not doing lead scoring or lead nurturing correctly.

Ideally, you want to funnel the contact information you receive from lead forms into an automated marketing platform such as Eloqua or Marketo. And then you should set up campaigns around that, where you continue to send similar information and resources to those contacts. The more personalized, the better. For example, you want to be able to say, “Hey John, we noticed you downloaded a white paper about mobile technology trends, so here is an analyst report on the same topic.” If your contacts interact with your emails and continue to view additional content, raise their lead score. Then send them sales-related content (what we usually consider to be part of the Consideration or Intent stages) — and eventually move them to sales qualified leads.