**Situation Analysis**

2017 was the year of lead nurturing for Constellation, a leading national competitive energy company. Already actively delivering year-round qualified leads to its salesforce, the Constellation marketing team (now in their second year, and in continued collaboration with their agency, Weber Shandwick) added a **powerful lead nurturing component** to the **ROI-generating** Centralized Marketing Campaigns.

The 2017 Centralized Marketing Campaigns targeted prospective commercial energy decision makers—those responsible for the procurement and purchase of power and natural gas solutions for their business. The goal was to drive awareness of Constellation to businesses not currently in the marketing and sales funnels and deepen awareness and engagement with those that are already in those funnels. All activities were developed to deliver leads with material pipeline opportunity to salespeople and Business Development Managers (BDMs) in target markets across the country—and contribute to driving probability for the enterprise.

Leveraging their award-winning, best-practice-based—and always evolving—B2B marketing platform built in 2016, the team expanded the functionality of its marketing program infrastructure to optimize demand and lead generation activities, adapt to increased program scale, and improve marketing/sales alignment and operational efficiency.

Unlike the 2016 program—which targeted leads and activities at the top (awareness) and middle (conversion) of the funnel—the 2017 program aimed to deepen engagement between Constellation and its prospects at the bottom of the funnel via nurturing strategies aligned with where each prospect was in their unique customer journey.

**Research and insights**

Since launching the campaign in 2016, Constellation has learned much about its prospective customers and their purchase habits. Buyer-behavior and sales opportunity insights included spend/budgets allocated for commercial energy expenses, competitive (current) energy supplier, and other meaningful information related to the prospects’ energy contracts. Marketing data insights derived included optimal marketing channels to drive desired results, best days and times to execute campaign tactics (and set performance expectations), and the right mix and frequency of contact attempts for highest lead conversion. The data collected on customer interactions and movement from being a marketing qualified lead (MQL) to a sales qualified lead (SQL) continues to inform future optimizations.

**Strategy**

Constellation wanted to engage with customers in a way that was mutually beneficial. Reflecting Constellation’s culture of delivering useful and relevant marketing intelligence, via a carefully crafted deployment schedule, each tactic and touch-point not only (re)introduced Constellation to prospective energy buyers but also provided them with resources about energy buying, market trends and analysis. In exchange, Constellation was able to learn more about prospective customers: their buying readiness, motivations, and where possible, their energy budgets.

Platform flexibility was a top operational priority. The strategy was to build an end-to-end multi-channel, multi-touch B2B marketing platform that would scale with technology advancement and new campaign launches.

To ensure alignment with existing marketing and sales infrastructures and processes, the platform needed to integrate with Constellation’s data protocols, customer relationship management (CRM) database, email/marketing automation platform, and call center. Additionally, the platform required coordination with printing, mailing, and fulfillment services providers.

This nurture stream serves as a thought leadership content engagement strategy designed to provide monthly touch-points with “hand raiser” prospects between the time of their initial interest and leading up to the point at which they may be ready to convert to a sale. In the Centralized Marketing Campaigns, the sales conversion period occurs at the expiration of a prospect’s current energy contract.

The 2017 campaign launched in January 2017 following the two-month release cadence fashioned in 2016, and introduced a full nurture stream.

The nurture program includes three portions:

* Lead nurture
* Sales enablement
* Sales only

The length of each individual’s nurture program is customized to each prospect’s unique energy procurement needs, therefore the amount and kind of monthly content the decision maker receives is unique to each recipient. During the lead nurture period, prospects receive industry and market related informative and thought leadership content, solutions-oriented content—all crafted to have the right tone and message to build trust between Constellation and the prospect and to keep Constellation top-of-mind during the lead nurturing time frame. This timeframe could last anywhere from 1-24 months, depending on where the prospect is in their buying cycle and decision-making process. As a prospect moves through the funnel and gets closer to making a purchase decision, they enter a sales enablement workflow—content evolves from thought leadership to product-specific marketing collateral. During the final months of a prospect’s buyer journey, the marketing relationship transitions to a sales relationship.

**Execution and Tactics**

Wave 1 of the 2017 Centralized Marketing Campaigns launched in January 2017. Established on visually engaging creative buoyed by messaging that reinforced Constellation’s position as a go-to provider of energy choice, the multi-touch campaign was delivered via email, direct mail, online and person-to-person channels.

To track impact of the tactical executions and attributing appropriate marketing contribution as a prospect moves through the funnel, the following mechanisms and processes were implemented to combine disparate technological and operational infrastructures and provide a holistic view of campaign performance.

* Data templates to normalize all data inputs and outputs
* Nomenclature and taxonomy framework
* Rigorous online and offline mechanisms to verify accuracy of data
* Integration with marketing automation system for email communications and data collection
* Implementation of scripts activities and logging process with call center to maximize call verification and lead generation initiatives
* Development of lead nurture program to improve conversion rates along the buyer’s journey
* Responsive web and email design and development
* Process between call center and marketing automation system to capture information about prospects’ current energy spends, contract expiration dates and specific timeframes for follow-up

**Effectiveness and Results**

The Centralized Marketing Campaigns marked the first of their kind for Constellation. Not only did they deliver a more complete and accurate contact data set, more visibility into prospects and their buying readiness, and an extensible platform able to be leveraged with efficiency and scale, but they also offered year-round leads to the sales team, filling the sales pipeline with net-new prospect opportunities, and delivering proof-positive impact to Constellation's bottom line.

Specific results—aligned with campaign and business objectives—included:

1. Wave 1 launched in March 2016, and as according to plan, Wave 2, Wave 3, and Wave 4 launched every two months thereafter. Wave 1 in 2017 launched in January with subsequent waves launching every two months thereafter. To date, the Centralized Marketing Campaigns **activated over 60 unique streams reaching almost 80,000 contacts.**
2. The campaign ingested contact records from multiple lists and varying sources with varying levels of data completeness (full contact records), accuracy (correct contact information) and appropriate contact listings (energy buying decision makers). Because data accuracy is key to building a solid list from which all campaigns initiate, **data cleansing and hygiene was a key campaign performance measure and one of the first measures of success** for the campaign.
3. Bolstered by Constellation's strong brand and by building trust along the prospect journey, Constellation was able to **uncover new prospect contacts, align and optimize campaign releases with data-driven insights, and better understand prospect engagement preferences and buying motivations.**
4. By gathering important opportunity and qualification data about prospects, Constellation's marketing team delivered better and more highly qualified leads to sales reinforcing confidence and alignment between the two teams. **The campaign offered year-round leads to the sales team, filling the sales pipeline with net-new prospect opportunities.**
5. To date, the Centralized Marketing Campaigns **contributed to driving nearly 1000% return on marketing investment**, and we anticipate the return will continue to grow as prospects get closer to becoming customers in their buyer journey.