

# Real-Time Lead Decisions:

## How They Work and Why It Matters

---

Rejecting leads in real time saves both money and hassle, while helping you build better vendor relationships.

# Real-Time Decision-Making

Real-time lead rejection means that when a lead, or information about a lead, hits your system, it is immediately rejected if it does not meet certain criteria. From a technical perspective, real-time decisions are achieved via an HTTP request and a response that happens almost instantaneously.

This is quite different from returning leads to the vendor hours or even days later, after they have made their way through your system. **Rejecting leads in real time means that they never hit your CRM system at all!** And, depending on where you buy leads, this can mean the end of buying leads you can't use, dealing with returns at the end of the month, or absorbing the cost of buying bad leads.



# Doesn't my CRM already reject leads that don't meet my criteria?

*Nope, probably not.*

CRM solutions like Salesforce.com do a great job of handling leads that you want your sales team to work on. Leads can be scored, routed, tracked, and much more -- after all, that's what CRM systems are for. However, they're not as good at making sure that leads you never want are blocked before they enter your system.

So, why does this matter? Well, for a few reasons:

## Save money in real time

If you buy leads on a cost-per-lead basis, rejecting leads you don't want before they hit your system can save you money. Our customers report saving as much as 20% of their monthly lead buying budget - money that can, in turn, be used to purchase more of the leads most likely to convert to customers. As a bonus, this money is available to you right away - not at the end of the month when you are negotiating returns.

Rejecting bad leads in real time means **saving money** in real time.

## Understand why leads fail

Beyond simply accepting or rejecting leads based on the criteria you set, it's important to understand why leads are failing. Are they duplicates of prospects or customers you already have in your system? Fraudulent? Uncontactable? Or perhaps they don't meet your lead scoring criteria. It's important not only to reject these leads promptly, but also to understand **why** they are being rejected, so you can explore new lead acquisition sources and methods.

## Be first in line... to say NO

Lead age can be an important criterion for accepting or rejecting leads. Time is of the essence with many types of sale, but if you are purchasing shared leads (as opposed to exclusive leads), then the older the lead is -- and the more likely it is that the lead has already been purchased and worked by your competitors. Being able to rapidly route the leads more likely to become customers is critical, but being able to reject leads that are too old, uncontactable, or a bad fit for your business is just as important.

If you **aren't rejecting leads in real time** and your competitors are, then you're probably **buying their leftovers**.

## Keep your database clean

Preventing unusable leads from entering your CRM is good data hygiene. Rather than creating lead records for duplicate, uncontactable or fraudulent leads, and having to consolidate or delete those records later, real-time lead rejection keeps your CRM system clean and accurate - all the time.

# Know your contracts and optimize your vendor relationships

Having the right process and technology in place is only half the battle when it comes to making the right real-time lead decisions. Your vendor contracts and relationships are also key. Some things to think about include:



**Media spend allocation.** Are you purchasing views, traffic, or leads? If you're buying leads on a cost-per-lead basis, rejecting leads in real time is especially important for you. And if you've been avoiding this model because of concern about purchasing poor-quality leads, then real-time decision-making can give you new confidence.



**Lead-buying model.** Do you purchase exclusive or shared leads? Most vendors who sell shared leads on a cost-per-lead basis will not charge you for a lead if you can tell them in real time that you don't want it. Why? Well, they would rather sell that lead while it's still only seconds old at full value to another buyer who wants it. This can also be accomplished through real-time bidding (aka ping post buying). By not bidding for a particular lead because it doesn't meet your criteria, you are effectively rejecting it.



**Contract language.** Make sure your contract is written to allow you to reject leads in real time. While not all vendors like the idea of rejected leads, it's much better than the alternative - lead returns. Knowing immediately if you aren't going to pay for a lead is much better for them than getting a nasty surprise at the end of the month. In addition, vendors selling shared leads have the opportunity to match your unwanted leads with other buyers if they know it's rejected in real-time.





**Vendor relationship.** If you have a vendor who isn't fully on board with real-time lead rejection, try a test for a month or two, and be sure to set clear criteria for which leads can be rejected. Perhaps fraudulent leads are an acceptable reason for your vendor, whereas lead score is not.



**Incentivize excellence.** Some lead sellers might suggest that instead of allowing real-time rejection, they will give you a discount - say 20%, to allow for 20% of the leads they send you to be unusable at no cost. At first glance, this seems like a great deal - you just negotiated a sweet discount! The problem? You have just incentivized mediocrity. **If your vendor has already gotten you to agree to accept poor quality leads, they have no incentive to make the leads they send you any better.** In fact, they can send you worse and worse leads, knowing that they have already given you a discount! Instead, it's wiser to offer to pay more for quality leads and zero for bad leads which incentivizes your partner to send you better and better leads going forward. As a result, they'll give you first choice on the best leads they generate, because they can count on top dollar from you - and you'll have the first pick of the best leads available!



The bottom line is that converting leads to sales is a tough business, and you only want the leads that give you the best possible odds of conversion. Make leads decisions in real time, and you'll never again pay for leads you don't want.