

Full-Service Digital Agency offering Brand Identity Establishment/Rebranding, Responsive Website Design, SEO, Social Media, Pay-Per-Click and Email Marketing



Sean Bolton
CEO & Co-Founder
Lead To Conversion

CEOCFO: *Mr. Bolton, what is the idea behind Lead to Conversion?*

Mr. Bolton: Lead to Conversion is kind of an interesting story. We got our start back in 2006 simply because the company I worked for prior to starting Lead to Conversion essentially was an enterprise-level, SEO and social media marketing agency. It was very well-respected, and only catered to enterprise clientele serving the worlds biggest brands. As the VP of sales there, I was in charge of sales for about 11 years, and I had to consistently turn away a solid majority of leads because they just could not afford their boutique style and boutique pricing. A few years in to my tenure there, the co-founders came to me and said they liked and trusted me and said they wanted to partner with me if I had any ideas for a new business. I said I had been thinking about it and it was a no-brainer. Let us essentially take this enterprise-level skill set that we have effectively honed in at the global brand level and execute it for small and medium sized businesses at a fraction of the cost without sacrificing the high-touch customer service and bottom line results. It was on that day that Lead to Conversion was born.

CEOCFO: *Would you tell us about the range of services you provide today?*

Mr. Bolton: When we first got our start, it was purely focused on digital marketing – primarily search engine optimization, pay per click marketing and social media marketing. We have grown exponentially since. Our focus in both the short- and long-term is to be a full-service digital agency that offers a full spectrum of services including brand identity establishment/rebranding, responsive website design, search engine optimization, social media marketing, pay-per-click marketing, email marketing as well as off-line (and online) collateral ideation and development.

CEOCFO: *What do you understand on a very basic level about the whole industry?*

Mr. Bolton: There are a lot of pretenders in our industry, and our industry spans a full spectrum of services – SEO, pay per click marketing, social media marketing, website design, conversion rate optimization, email marketing, etc. Essentially, there are a lot of companies and individuals who are self-proclaimed gurus in the digital marketing space. I think one of the challenges with a lot of companies looking to find the right fit for them in terms of a selecting a digital marketing partner is they are hearing a lot of the same things from multiple agencies and individual consultants. I think what it really comes down to is bottom line results. What I try to do in terms of differentiating ourselves is to say you are going to be hearing a lot of the same things coming from me that you are probably hearing from other vendors, but here are some of the things that you are perhaps not hearing. I am going to put together a customized strategy based on your goals and what you are looking to achieve for your business in both the short- and long-term. Don't just take it from me, talk to our clients who have been with us year after year, and let me supply you with some case studies that are going to very clearly paint a picture with broad strokes in terms of what we did, how we did it, and ultimately the bottom line results. This is what we would like to do for you as well.

CEOCFO: *How do you help a company focus on what they really want, not what they think they want?*

Mr. Bolton: It all comes down to goals. What are goals, both in the short- and long-term? What do you think you need? It really comes down to just being an expert at listening. I think that is a challenge for a lot of companies and a lot of sales people in general. I think they talk too much to potential partners and potential clients. Philosophically from my perspective and from people who are in sales that work underneath me, you need to be an expert at listening and not "selling" per se, especially on an initial call/discussion. Let them talk about their issues, where they are suffering and where they think they might need improvement. Once we have a better understanding of the individual client's issues and needs, it's at that

point we can speak to how we help them mitigate current issues and assist in taking their site and business to the next level in terms of performance and quantifiable ROI based on their goals and actual needs in a strategy. Again, I think being an expert at listening is very critical, but unfortunately in our industry and many others, it is a missing piece of the puzzle.

CEOCFO: *Do many of your clients take a full range of your services? How do you encourage that?*

Mr. Bolton: The one thing you have to be conscientious of is that not all potential clients are created equal in terms of scope of work and monthly budget. I think the monthly budget is really what can prevent them from maximizing a full suite of services. We do offer our services to a full spectrum of individuals and companies – small to medium-sized businesses and of course large, multi-national conglomerate enterprises, but only a few of them utilize all of our services due to the plethora of services Lead to Conversion has to offer. The point here is that by listening to their needs and understanding how we might be able to assist them and understanding their pain threshold in terms of budget constraints, it affords us the opportunity as a potential strategic partner to put together a customized strategy that is not only best-suited to match their specific needs and requirements as we see it, but also fits within a budget that they actually have earmarked and allocated for a particular initiative or set of initiatives.

“For me, it’s all about the people. Without the people, there is no Lead to Conversion.” - Sean Bolton

CEOCFO: *Who is coming to you for services? What types of companies?*

Mr. Bolton: There are not too many companies that would come to us for our services that we haven’t had some level of exposure to in terms of vertical markets. Everybody needs a website; everybody needs SEO; some level of social, etc. People need digital marketing, and the days of traditional marketing is going the way of the dinosaurs for the most part and have very little attribution in terms of quantifiable returns, which is why digital marketing is so appealing to a lot of business owners. We do a lot of work with specific verticals like manufacturing and health care, and the health care industry in particular has been heating up for years now. We have a lot of expertise and knowledge as it relates to health care and manufacturing, but in terms of overall types of clients we work with, we really run the gamut as far as different client profiles are concerned whether they’re a mom and pop shop that is selling bulk candy both at a local store and via ecommerce or a multi-national Enterprise selling engineered products.

CEOCFO: *You mentioned it is a crowded field. How do you break through so people find you and at least talk with you?*

Mr. Bolton: We have a lot of credibility out there in the marketplace and we have a really strong reputation, so we get a lot of leads and interest in our organization through some of the top sites out there that rate companies on specific service lines like SEO, social, pay per click marketing, website design, et cetera. Additionally, we get a lot of exposure and interest in our firm from word of mouth referrals and through sites linking back to us as an authoritative reference for any number of our service lines.

CEOCFO: *How do you put together trends, your own preferences, and your clients’ interests?*

Mr. Bolton: With the campaign directors we have managing our client campaigns, if they notice that there is a trend, like any new social hubs just now hitting the scene that are really taking the Internet by storm, in that scenario what our social media marketers or social media manager will do is bring it to the attention of our client(s). We tell them we notice there is a trend or an up and comer and discuss the pros and cons of potentially pursuing the new platform(s). In the case of Instagram as an example, just in the past few years it has gained a ton of traction, and we were ahead of it. We saw it coming and we started advocating it as a social hub to a lot of our clients before it was en vogue. Regardless of the service line, it only makes sense for us make our clients aware of new trends and to potentially advocate pursuit of new channels based on weighing the pros and cons of each and whether or not any particular client would benefit from pursuing them.

CEOCFO: *What surprised you as Lead to Conversion has grown and evolved?*

Mr. Bolton: Talent acquisition. I think that is one of my biggest sources of pride as an owner and as a co-founder here. It is the talent that we have found who continue to do what is right for our firm and for of clients. We are in a market that is in high demand, and we only hire people here locally as opposed to outsourcing everything abroad or to some other states through sub-contractors. Finding really good quality talent here in the Cleveland, Ohio area is extremely difficult because there is a talent drain and Cleveland isn’t really known as a digital marketing hub. Unlike some digital marketing markets such as LA, Dallas, NYC, etc., there isn’t a ton of good talent available for hire here in Northeast Ohio. Lead to Conversion has been very fortunate in not only sourcing the best local talent, but also seeing them grow to be the best

and the brightest in their respective areas of expertise and it makes me our clients extremely happy. That is my biggest source of pride as Lead to Conversion has grown and evolved. I could talk about how we have grown several hundred percent just in the past few years and things like that, but that is that. For me, it's all about the people. Without the people, there is no Lead to Conversion.

CEOCFO: *What might be different a year from now?*

Mr. Bolton: The types of clients and services being offered and pursued. I think the types of clients we are going to start seeing a lot more of are going to be enterprise-level campaigns, and a lot more agency of record equivalents in terms of digital marketing. We started out, like I mentioned, doing SEO, PPC and social, but now I set the stage for the organization to be a full-service digital marketing agency. If it has to do with digital marketing, more often than not we do it. With that, we are getting into brand development and collateral development – things that historically we have never really pushed out as service offerings. We have the talent, but we never proactively promoted those types of services. We are going to see a lot more bigger accounts and more moving parts in terms of services that are being procured and pursued by individual clientele.

CEOCFO: *Given a choice, what types of projects do you like to work on?*

Mr. Bolton: I am a small business owner, and I always have a soft spot for small businesses. My team likes working the full spectrum – they like working with small businesses, especially the ones that are really aggressive. We make recommendations and they are immediately implemented. Mid-level organizations are very similar for the most part. Larger organizations, however, can sometimes have a lengthy approval process for approving and implementing our recommendations which can make showcasing results in a timely manner difficult, but that comes with the territory. For me, I love the enterprise, but there is only a finite amount of them and I enjoy working with them because that is my background dating back to 1998. I will always have a thing for the enterprise, but will never ignore the roots of Lead to Conversion and why we started this company to begin with – catering customized digital marketing strategies to small and medium sized businesses.

CEOCFO: *Put it all together for our readers. Why choose Lead to Conversion?*

Mr. Bolton: In general, I think one of the key differentiating qualities that we have, and it goes back to a statement that I made earlier. People who work here and the reason this company was co-founded is to take an enterprise-level skill set, distill it, and make it executable for small and medium-sized businesses and enterprises alike at a fraction of the cost of a typical enterprise campaign. I think frankly that is a strong differentiating quality in terms of us versus a good majority of our competitive landscape. I could add a lot more, and I could probably talk for 15 minutes about why you should choose us, but I think that is one of the strongest reasons.

Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEOCFO Magazine



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