PITON Global

EXECUTIVE WHITE PAPER · WP-19

SALES & LEAD GENERATION OUTSOURCING · PHILIPPINES

Pipeline, not activity: the executive economics of sales and lead generation outsourcing to the Philippines.

An analysis of why activity metrics flatter while sales-accepted pipeline tells the truth, how pipeline-per-seat — never dials, emails, or MQLs — decides the real return, and the vendor-selection discipline that builds pipeline a sales team will actually work.

AUTHORS

John Maczynski — Chief Executive Officer
Ralf Ellspermann — Chief Strategy Officer

AUGUST 2026
MANILA · ESTABLISHED 2001

Contents

–	About the authors	03
01	Executive summary	04
02	The activity mirage: leads generated versus pipeline accepted, and where the funnel leaks	05
03	The pipeline contract: the ICP gate, multi-touch nurture, and sales acceptance	06
04	Cost and performance: cost-per-accepted-lead economics and benchmarks	07
05	Sourcing discipline: the 7-Step Vendor Vetting Framework, applied to lead-gen engines	08
06	Case study: a 30-seat lead-gen engine re-based on accepted pipeline, reconstructed	09
07	The executive playbook: governance for the first 180 days	10
–	Methodology & notes	11

ABOUT THIS SERIES — VOLUME 19

Every lead-generation report leads with an activity number — dials placed, emails sent, MQLs delivered — because activity is easy to produce and easy to bill. This volume is about the number sales actually lives on: the pipeline it accepts and works. The gap between the two is where most lead-gen budgets quietly disappear, and where this paper spends its attention. The full series lives at piton-global.com.

THE PITON-GLOBAL LEADERSHIP TEAM

About the authors

John Maczynski

Chief Executive Officer

John has bought demand-generation and lead-gen capacity from the client chair for three decades, and watched more than one vendor hit its MQL number while the sales team's pipeline sat flat. His standing question ignores the activity dashboard entirely: of the leads you generated last quarter, how many did sales accept, and how much pipeline did they become? Applied at PITON-Global, that question is what clients get on every lead-gen sourcing decision — personally, with no account layer in between.

j.maczynski@piton-global.com
+1 402-598-8740

Ralf Ellspermann

Chief Strategy Officer

Ralf has spent twenty-five years running Philippine lead-generation and sales-development floors, and he judges an engine by the acceptance rate, not the lead count: how much of what the desk sends does the client's sales team pick up and work? The pipeline contract in Section 3 codifies what he learned rebuilding engines that delivered volume and starved the funnel. He now reads lead-gen providers the way he once ran them — from sales acceptance backward.

r.ellspermann@piton-global.com
Manila, Philippines

PITON | Global

ABOUT PITON-GLOBAL

PITON-Global is a buyer-side advisory practice, Manila-based since 2001, that has never operated a delivery floor or taken a placement commission. Its stock-in-trade is knowing the Philippine provider market at the operating level — 1,000+ mapped operations, re-verified continuously, including each lead-gen engine's real sales-acceptance and pipeline performance rather than its activity headline — and converting that knowledge into a shortlist of six to ten genuinely qualified partners per engagement. Buyers from Tripadvisor, Garmin, TSYS, HealthPartners, Yetipay, Workrise, and Norman Disney & Young have run their searches through the practice.

SECTION 01

Executive summary

-59% Fully-loaded cost per sales-accepted lead vs. US onshore	**50%** MQL-to-sales-accepted rate on vetted engines — leads sales actually works	**2.4×** Sourced pipeline per seat vs. a volume-billed engine	**6.1×** First-year ROI, reconstructed case (Section 6)

A lead-generation engine is bought on the activity it produces and paid for on the pipeline it does not. The vendor reports two thousand MQLs; sales accepts four hundred, works two hundred, and sources a pipeline that barely moves the forecast. The engine hit its number — leads generated — and the funnel stayed dry, because the number it hit measures effort, not outcome. The gap between leads generated and leads sales accepts is the acceptance gap, and it is the most expensive line item no lead-gen invoice shows: paid once in the fee for leads nobody works, and again in the sales capacity spent sorting the junk from the real.

The Philippines is where lead-gen engines are built with the most funnel discipline, because a deep, articulate, research-capable talent pool can run the ICP qualification and multi-touch nurture that turn a raw lead into pipeline sales will accept. Five findings:

1. **Leads generated is the industry's most gamed number.** Any engine can generate a lead nobody asked to become. Vetted engines measure sales-accepted leads — picked up and worked by the client's sellers — and run 46–54% acceptance. Weak engines quote MQL volume that sales rejects at the door. Section 2 shows the leak.

2. **The ICP gate is the product.** Pipeline quality is set the moment a lead is qualified against the ideal-customer profile — or waved through to hit a volume target. Engines that gate on a shared, enforced ICP send leads sales accepts; engines that gate on nothing send a backlog sales learns to ignore.

3. **Nurture is what converts a name into pipeline.** The difference between a cold list and accepted pipeline is six to eight disciplined touches — research, relevance, timing — before the handoff. Engines that nurture build pipeline; engines that spray-and-pray generate unsubscribes and call it demand.

4. **The rejected lead, not the desk fee, is where budgets are lost.** Every lead sales rejects cost real money to generate and real time to triage. Engines that hold acceptance cut the reject-and-recycle rate from half

the volume to under a sixth — and that reclaimed sales capacity and salvaged spend, not the offshore rate alone, is where the case study's return is built.

5 **Pay per accepted lead or sourced pipeline, not per MQL.** The contracting failure of lead generation is paying for activity. Vetted deals price per sales-accepted lead or per dollar of sourced pipeline, with acceptance floors and reject credits, making the funnel's outcome the engine's problem, which is where it belongs.

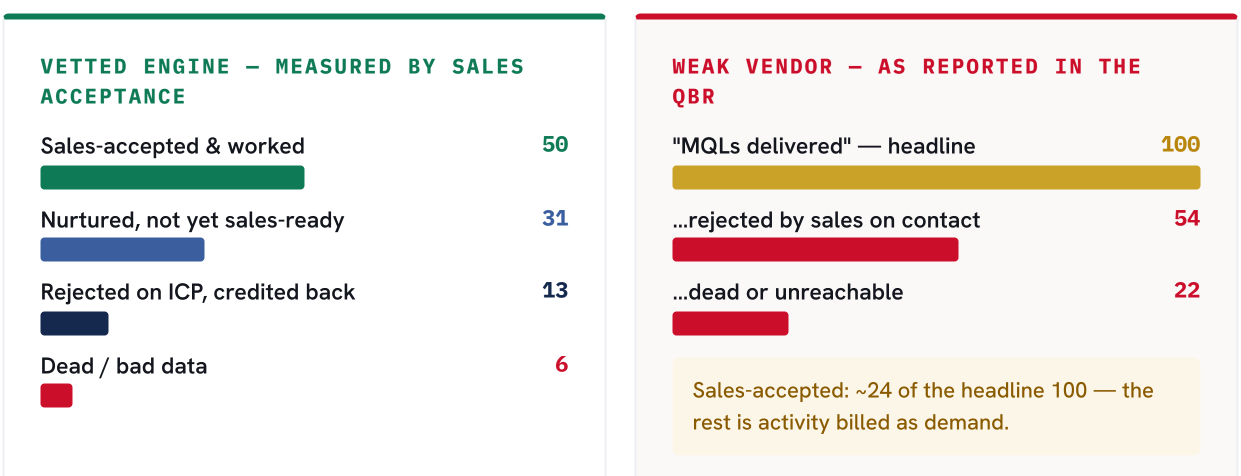
The intended reader runs marketing, demand generation, or revenue at a company buying leads by the thousand and watching the forecast stay flat. Sections 2–4 separate the engines that build pipeline from the engines that build activity reports; Sections 5–7, the method and the proof.

SECTION 02

The activity mirage: leads generated versus pipeline accepted, and where the funnel leaks

Figure 1 follows 100 MQLs through a vetted engine — and, in the right column, through the same volume as a weak vendor reports it. The difference between the two columns is the difference between pipeline a sales team builds a quarter on and a lead list it deletes.

FIG. 1 — 100 MQLs: SALES-ACCEPTED PIPELINE VS. REPORTED VOLUME



Left: PITON-Global engagement instrumentation, 2025–26, CRM-reconciled. Right: composite of pre-engagement vendor reporting reviewed in diligence.

The economics follow the left column. Fifty accepted leads become pipeline a sales team builds a forecast on; the thirty-one nurtured continue toward readiness instead of being burned on first contact; the thirteen ICP-rejected are credited rather than billed. The right column produces the opposite: a headline that flatters the engine, a funnel that exhausts the sales team, and a cost-per-real-lead more than triple what the invoice implies. The acceptance reconciliation — matching delivered leads to the CRM's sales-accepted and rejected dispositions — is the cheapest due-diligence instrument in this paper.

SECTION 03

The pipeline contract: the ICP gate, multi-touch nurture, and sales acceptance

Figure 2 lays out the three clauses of a working pipeline contract — the machinery a floor read verifies before any lead-volume number is believed.

FIG. 2 — THE PIPELINE CONTRACT, AS OPERATED ON VETTED ENGINES

GATE ON THE ICP

A lead is qualified against an agreed ideal-customer profile — firmographic, technographic, and intent criteria — before it counts. The ICP is tuned monthly against what sales accepts and rejects, so the definition of a good lead stays shared rather than drifting toward whatever hits volume.

NURTURE TO READY

Leads run a six-to-eight-touch nurture — researched, relevant, timed — that moves a name toward sales-readiness rather than burning it on a cold pitch. Not-yet-ready leads are held and re-engaged, not discarded, so the top of the funnel compounds instead of churning.

CLOSE THE ACCEPTANCE LOOP

Every lead handed to sales carries an accept-or-reject disposition back into the engine within days, with the reason. The loop tunes the ICP and nurture continuously, so acceptance rises quarter over quarter instead of the sales team quietly building a private do-not-call list of the engine's leads.

↓ yields ↓

THE COMPOUNDING ENGINE

50% SALES-ACCEPTED | <15% REJECT-AND-RECYCLE | 2.4× PIPELINE PER SEAT

The funnel fills with leads sales accepts; the nurtured base compounds instead of churning; and acceptance climbs as the loop tunes the ICP. The engine gets cheaper per accepted lead and better at the same time, which is the entire promise of outsourcing the top of the funnel to people who measure the bottom of it.

Operating parameters from PITON-Global lead-gen engagements, 2025–26.

In diligence, the contract is tested from the sales team's side: pull a month of the engine's leads for a current client and reconcile them against sales acceptance and rejection reasons; read the nurture sequences; confirm the acceptance loop actually closes within days. Perhaps one engine in ten survives it cleanly. Steps 3 and 5 of the framework exist to find that one before the contract does — because everything in Table 3 of Section 6 depends on the acceptance rate, not the lead count.

SECTION 04

Cost and performance: cost-per-accepted-

lead economics and benchmarks

TABLE 1 — COST PER SALES-ACCEPTED LEAD: THREE OPERATING MODELS (US$, 2026)

OPERATING MODEL	COST / ACCEPTED LEAD	VS. US BASELINE
US onshore in-house SDR / demand-gen team	$890	baseline
Low-cost offshore MQL mill (per-lead billed)	$520	−42%
Vetted Manila engine — ICP-gated, nurtured, per-accepted-lead	**$365**	**−59%**

Basis: PITON-Global engagement pricing 2025–26; accepted lead = MQL accepted by the client's sales team; the MQL mill looks cheap per lead but costs more per accepted lead once rejects and dead data are netted out; US comparator fully-loaded in-house cost.

TABLE 2 — LEAD-GEN ENGINE BENCHMARKS, VETTED VS. BASELINE (2025–26)

METRIC	VETTED TOP TIER	BASELINE	EXECUTIVE READING
MQL-to-sales-accepted rate	**46–54%**	18–28%	The only lead number worth paying for
Sales-rejected + recycled rate	**<15%**	40–60%	Every point is generation spend and sales time burned
Nurture touches before handoff	**6–8**	1–2	"Nurture to ready" — run or skipped
Lead-to-opportunity conversion	**22–28%**	8–14%	Accepted pipeline, or a recycled list
Sourced pipeline per seat / quarter	**$1.4–1.9M**	$0.5–0.8M	What a seat is actually worth

Source: PITON-Global lead-gen engagement data 2025–26; baseline = typical pre-engagement engines billed on lead volume.

The strategic read: the MQL mill's −42% per lead is a mirage — once rejects and dead data are netted out, its cost per accepted lead lands above the vetted engine's, and it drains sales capacity besides. The vetted Manila engine's −59% is real because it is measured where the value is: the lead sales accepts and works. Buy on lead price and you buy the right column of Figure 1; buy on cost-per-accepted-lead and you buy pipeline — the same discipline every volume in this series keeps arriving at from a different door.

SECTION 05

Sourcing discipline: the 7-Step Vendor Vetting Framework, applied to lead-gen engines

Lead-gen diligence adds one hard requirement to every step: a lead number is real only when it survives a sales-acceptance reconciliation. The funnel below is representative of a 20–50-seat lead-gen search.

	FIG. 3 — THE 7-STEP FRAMEWORK AS A LEAD-GEN FUNNEL		
	STEP	WHAT IT ELIMINATES IN A LEAD-GEN SEARCH	FIELD REMAINING
1	**Requirements definition**	Volume-first scoping: fixes the ICP, the sales-accepted-lead target, the nurture standard, and the CRM disposition fields that make acceptance auditable from day one	1,000+
2	**Market mapping**	MQL mills: engines that bill per lead and optimize for volume, and generalist floors with no B2B demand-generation muscle	~44
3	**Capability screening**	Engines without the machinery: acceptance-reconciled history, a documented ICP gate, a multi-touch nurture in production, and a closed acceptance loop into the client CRM	~12
4	**Compliance & security audit**	Weak outreach governance: consent and CAN-SPAM/GDPR handling, prospect-data protection, list provenance, CRM access controls, SOC 2 scope covering the outreach stack	~9
5	**Operational diligence**	The audited read: reconcile a month of leads against sales acceptance and reject reasons; read live nurture sequences; interview reps on how they qualify to ICP and handle a not-yet-ready lead	4–7
6	**Competitive RFP & negotiation**	Per-lead pricing: finalists bid per sales-accepted lead or sourced-pipeline dollar with acceptance floors and reject credits — all carrying penalties for a funnel sales will not work	2–3
7	**Transition & launch governance**	Volume-cutover launch: the engine ramps against sales-accepted leads, not delivery count, with the ICP gate and nurture certified before scale, PITON-Global embedded buyer-side to steady state	1

Field-remaining counts represent a 20–50-seat lead-gen search, PITON-Global engagements 2024–26.

The standing guarantees hold: **vendor neutrality** — PITON-Global operates no engines, generates no leads, and takes no placement economics, so the shortlist reflects audited acceptance, not inventory; **right-sizing** — engines for whom your program is a flagship account. Six to ten genuinely qualified providers, delivered within 48–72 hours, free to the buyer, competing through a fully transparent, fair, comprehensive, and highly competitive RFP.

SECTION 06 · ANONYMIZED CASE STUDY

Re-basing the engine on accepted pipeline: a 30-seat lead-gen rebuild, reconstructed

Engagement LG-029 is a US B2B technology-services company — roughly $500 million in revenue, selling into mid-market and enterprise IT — that had been buying leads from a per-MQL vendor. The dashboard showed 1,900 MQLs a quarter; the sales team accepted 22% of them, and the CRO could not connect a single closed deal to the spend with confidence. The board wanted the pipeline the lead count implied and refused to keep paying for activity. Identifying details are anonymized under NDA.

SELECTION (WEEKS 0–8, ACCEPTANCE-AUDITED READS)

Requirements fixed the ICP with sales and marketing jointly and set a 48% sales-accepted target with a six-touch nurture standard. Mapping produced 41 claimants; the machinery screen — acceptance-reconciled history, a real ICP gate, nurture in production — left 12; the outreach-compliance audit left 9. Acceptance reconciliation on each finalist's reference client, plus live nurture-sequence review, shortlisted 5. A Manila engine won at a $11.60 blended rate priced per sales-accepted lead, with acceptance reconciliation written into the reporting spec.

TRANSITION (MONTHS 2–8, RAMPED ON ACCEPTANCE)

The engine ramped against sales-accepted leads rather than delivery volume; the ICP gate and nurture were certified in month 2 before scale. The acceptance loop into the client CRM went live from day one, and the ICP was tuned monthly against sales' reject reasons. By month 8 acceptance held at 51%, reject-and-recycle had fallen from 58% to 13%, and lead-to-opportunity conversion had risen from 11% to 26%. PITON-Global chaired the acceptance review board to steady state.

TABLE 3 — LG-029 FIRST-YEAR VALUE BUILD-UP (US$)		
VALUE COMPONENT	YEAR 1	BASIS
Labor arbitrage on the 30-seat engine	$1.13M	56.3k productive hrs × ($31.60 – $11.60)
Incremental pipeline from higher acceptance (22% → 51%)	$0.71M	Added accepted leads × conversion × ACV × gross margin, conservative basis
Reclaimed sales-rep time (less junk-lead triage)	$0.34M	Recovered selling hours at fully-loaded rep cost
Generation spend salvaged on rejected leads	$0.16M	Reduced wasted cost-per-lead vs. incumbent-era reject rate
Gross value created	**$2.34M**	
Less: engagement & transition costs	($0.38M)	Ramp, ICP calibration, CRM integration, nurture build; advisory fee $0 (provider-paid model)
Net value ÷ cost = first-year ROI	6.1×	$2.34M ÷ $0.38M

Figures rounded; acceptance, conversion, and rep-time effects audit-verified. Method in Methodology & notes.

Forty-eight percent arbitrage, fifty-two percent from acceptance, conversion, and reclaimed time — an unusually high value-side share for the series, earned because the engine was re-based on the lead sales accepts rather than the lead it delivers. Every line traces to a diligence step: the ICP gate to Step 1, the per-accepted-lead pricing to Step 6, the acceptance loop to Step 3's contract. The CMO's line at the year-one review: "We stopped reporting how many leads we made and started reporting how much pipeline sales took. The vendor's number and ours are finally the same number."

SECTION 07

The executive playbook: governance for the first 180 days

A lead-gen transition succeeds when the engine is measured and paid on the lead sales accepts — client in command throughout.

DAYS 0–30
Fix the ICP, contract per accepted lead

Write the ICP with sales and marketing jointly and set a sales-accepted-lead target and a nurture standard before launch. Contract per accepted lead or sourced-pipeline dollar — never per MQL — with acceptance floors and reject credits. Stand up the acceptance reconciliation, matching delivered leads to CRM dispositions, as the program's arbiter of truth.

DAYS 30–90
Certify the gate, ramp on acceptance

Certify the ICP gate and nurture before scaling volume; switch on the acceptance loop into the CRM from day one. Tune the ICP weekly against sales' reject reasons. Publish the weekly dashboard: MQL-to-accepted rate, reject-and-recycle rate, nurture completion, lead-to-opportunity conversion, sourced pipeline per seat.

DAYS 90–180
Scale volume, certify steady state

Grow lead volume only while acceptance holds above the floor. Review the acceptance board monthly with reconciliation data on the table. Certify steady state on two clean months including one campaign peak; hand over on documented criteria; keep the quarterly acceptance-reconciliation read standing.

> **THE FIVE FAILURE MODES WE ARE HIRED TO PREVENT**
>
> Paying for MQLs instead of sales-accepted leads · generating without an enforced ICP gate · skipping the nurture · an acceptance loop that never closes · scaling volume before acceptance is proven. All five are settled at selection and contract.

The lead-generation argument, in one sentence: activity is what an engine produces and pipeline is what a sales team accepts, and a vetted Philippine engine delivers −59% cost per sales-accepted lead with half of its leads accepted and worked — for buyers who audit acceptance instead of celebrating lead counts and compete the finalists through a fully transparent, fair, comprehensive, and highly competitive RFP. Anyone can generate a lead. We make sure you buy the engine that builds pipeline.

METHODOLOGY & NOTES

How the numbers were built

Acceptance and conversion figures (Fig. 1, Table 2) derive from CRM-reconciled instrumentation in PITON-Global lead-gen engagements, 2025–26. A sales-accepted lead is one the client's sales team accepts and works, verified against CRM disposition; rejected and dead leads are never counted as accepted. The weak-vendor column is a composite of pre-engagement vendor reporting reviewed in diligence, shown for contrast.

Cost-per-accepted-lead figures (Table 1) are fully loaded — wages, benefits and statutory charges, facilities, technology and data tooling, management and QA overhead, attrition-driven recruiting — net of shrinkage and divided by sales-accepted leads, not delivered leads; US comparators reflect fully-loaded in-house demand-gen cost on the same basis. The MQL-mill comparator is priced per lead and converted to cost-per-accepted-lead at its observed acceptance rate.

The case study (LG-029) is anonymized under NDA; volumes and dates are generalized, figures rounded. Acceptance, conversion, and rep-time effects are audit-verified; pipeline and conversion value are conservative margin-based estimates, not booked revenue. ROI = net first-year value ÷ all engagement-related client costs. PITON-Global's advisory fee is provider-paid and appears at $0 in the client cost base; neutrality safeguards are documented at piton-global.com.

Market context draws on IBPAP reporting and PITON-Global's proprietary provider mapping (1,000+ operations; lead-gen acceptance performance re-verified June 2026). Estimates and projections are PITON-Global analysis and should be cited as such. The full series is available at piton-global.com.

Would your engine's lead count survive an acceptance audit?

Thirty minutes with John will tell you. Free to buyers, strictly vendor-neutral — an acceptance-verified shortlist within two to three business days.

j.maczynski@piton-global.com
+1 402-598-8740