

Case Study

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WHY CAN'T MARKETING AUTOMATION BE SIMPLE?



OVERVIEW

What is this continued buzz about marketing automation? You keep hearing about it, your peers are talking about it, but what does it really mean? Our expert business development team is often called upon to answer this important question. Understanding what marketing automation is and what it can do for an organization's business can make the difference between successful marketing strategies and having a return on investment.

The Big Picture

Marketing automation consists of software platforms and/or technologies created for marketing departments and organizations to more effectively communicate to multiple channels online, automate repetitive tasks, and provide analytics and insights into their buyer's behaviors. Before, in the offline world, marketing focused on efforts to increase awareness of products and services, which was often labor intensive. The shift to online changed everything. Because of the sheer load of data to filter through, changes in search patterns and search engine algorithms, marketers found it necessary to embrace technology to manage the challenge they are faced with in real-time and technology became key.

Think of it as an advanced technology developed on behalf of marketing professionals with built-in tactics and strategies. It allows companies to operate somewhat like an e-commerce site. To buy and sell, as well as nurture prospects with personalized, relevant content that helps convert prospects into customers and customers into a captivated audience with a lifetime value. Marketing automation typically generates significant new revenue for companies and provides an excellent return on the marketing investment.

Marketing automation is not the easiest marketing initiative to execute on, however it is certainly not impossible. Let us try explaining it in a way you might understand it better. Imagine you are trying to grow a garden to provide food for your personal needs. First, you need to find the right spot to plant your crops. A place with the right soil so their healthy and plenty of sunlight to grow them. You will need water, fertilizer and to allocate time and attention to cultivate the garden into a productive source of food for you. As we said, it's not surefire, but it's also not impossible. What we are trying to illustrate, is nurturing a garden essentially acts like what effective marketing automation does. We nurtured our leads



(our garden) well enough to produce actual paying customers (an ample, productive garden). And if we did it correctly we created a foundation to continue the process over and over again.

The Truth

You've heard it. The big buzz-word "marketing automation". It's the holy grail of emerging marketing terms and everyone needs to be doing some form or another of it or you just don't have any marketing mojo. Today's marketers are under the impression

they should seek an automation software that provides all the necessary digital tools for a new lead generation, program management, growth and to eliminate repetitive tasks. Yep, all rolled up under one umbrella. The marketing utopia we all seek but may have yet to discover. So why is it so misunderstood leaving many marketers with great advanced technology tools to automate the middle of the sales funnel, but no solution to generating new leads to nurture in the first place?

Marketing automation may not perform to the level of expectation due to one reason, in the early days of marketing automation email delivery was the primary reason for employing automation into marketing program strategies. Many of those same marketers could still be embracing earlier technology strategies and executing their campaigns with antiquated thought processes even if they upgraded their technologies along the way. Another is the person executing the strategies who could be buying lists of email addresses as a short term fix for performance measures. They are not nurturing good inbound leads because they don't know any better or because they are lazy. Either way, when there is not a long-term solution you are not going to have a productive, longer, more established relationship with your future customers. In our garden analogy, it's sort of like using GMOs to make your garden grow bigger and faster. It seemed like a good, quick fix when you started out, but you quickly realize it doesn't result in long-term,

sustainable plants. Gardens (people) change, and we have to change with them. Granted it's the quick fix, just not acceptable use of marketing dollars and stakeholders time.

Focusing on the middle of the funnel with email and other outbound marketing directives and not generating good new inbound leads in the front of your marketing automation investment can lead it to fail; at least that's what research is saying. Implementing a complex automation program without a reliable source of new organically generated leads is not prudent to initiate. Especially if you are leaning to a quick fix of automated delivery of unsolicited emails. Your program will fail. The consequence will result in little consumer engagement, and being labeled as spam. To complicate it even more, you will find your marketing investment has little impact on revenue.



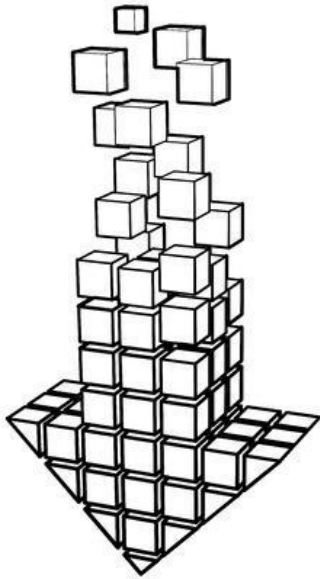
So how do you maneuver in all the hype and understand how to better leverage marketing automation? The information provided below will help you -- it will lead you to understand what is right for you and what good marketing automation looks like, and how to implement it successfully.

Why Does Marketing Automation Breakdown?

Automation efforts breakdown because there are no efforts to generate leads at the front end of the marketing funnel, and the focus is more likely on the middle of the funnel. Think about it. If there's nothing at the top of the funnel to grow the middle - how can it not? Investing in marketing automation without a defined campaign strategy for advanced lead nurturing objectives can spell disaster. If a marketer needs marketing automation, first, they need a steady flow of organic leads to nurture, forming a pipeline in the funnel. They are missing the ingredients necessary for effective marketing automation. Marketers without inbound lead generation strategies spend too much time counting on how to take a small universe of leads they already have in their database and extract more out of them. That's good news for the competition. Their strategy is to engage the remaining large audience across all channels.

Be honest with yourself. Do you really have enough leads to hit your revenue goals and get your fair share of the market to sustain revenues where you are or want to grow?

Don't Be Ineffective In Your Efforts. Your analysis of your needs for automation will be ineffective if



you're not factoring a database decay rate of about 23% per year and then applying it to your existing conversion rate of prospect to the customer. You will quickly realize the acute need for a pipeline of more quality leads to sustain your desired revenue growth. How long term and effective do you think your marketing can be without adding any new quality leads into the mix? Even if you had enough quality leads to nurture, just think how much more successful your marketing efforts could be if you had the right marketing solution in place to manage and nurture your funnel. There is no workaround; a good marketing automation strategy includes a financial investment, a considerable amount of effort to determine your needs, and allocation of time to implement and maintain it for revenue growth year after year. You too can join the ranks of the

other companies using marketing automation that are seeing higher than 53% conversion rates than companies that are not using automation. To master the art of an “e-commerce style” like marketing automation, as mentioned above, time and energy is necessary to developing it. Without generating enough leads to work towards your revenue objectives, you will end up unhappy with your ROI regardless of your marketing automation investment.

Not working with the right marketing automation software opens the door for pointless, spammy, automated messages. It's unfortunate that a large database of leads is required for marketing automation to have a measurable effect on the bottom line. To combat this many marketers buy lists of contacts to nurture with marketing automation. The repercussions of embracing a list-buying strategy vary. It produces incredibly low ROI, and the marketer joins the ranks of a spammer. Unsolicited emails sent to prospects not interested in an offer only hurts a marketer IP address reputation and lowers overall email

deliverability rates. TIP: Don't be swayed by the low costs of buying these lists, in the long run, it is a waste of time and money.

Target the Messaging to the Prospect's Journey. How do you decide what the messages should be, when to send it, and to whom? If you target messaging based on ranking and the score of your prospects, that will help determine your success. Lead scoring and ranking prospects will segment prospects/leads, target messaging and based on the attributes of your typical buyer and where they are in the buying funnel to determine your marketing success. A high lead score indicates to you that it's time close the sale, and a lower lead score means the prospect is still in the discovery stage and needs more information or time to make a decision. A good marketing automation software is going to guide you through the process of setting up a decision tree to set those score levels.



If you want to understand the real power of marketing automation, your messaging should be targeted to where the prospect is in your buying funnel. As an example, a search for BBQ Grills, results in the prospect landing on your website. That's great news if you sell BBQ Grills. It is an indication that a potential buyer may be ready to buy. The correct response at this stage is to present a competitive analysis on the channel that is most appropriate based on their behavior.

Determining where your buyer is in your marketing funnel increases your organization's performance and ability. Ranking prospects is an important aspect of a sales and marketing automation strategy. If you want to improve engagement, shorten sales cycles, and increase revenues don't waste money buying lists and marketing over and over to the same leads, develop a good lead scoring framework.

Multi-Channel Marketing

We are not saying having a strong email strategy as a marketing channel is a waste of time. All we are pointing out is that when you limit the automation to one marketing channel - say email, you have limited

A constant invasion of marketing emails to a lead prospect's inbox could block out many of your important communications, either through the sub-consciousness disregard for irrelevant messages or through inbox filters. What buyers are doing now is utilizing Google searches and connecting through the Internet and



inadvertently ignored a numerous behavioral data points as they're giving you information about their needs, wants and desires. By engaging them in online, they will locate you during these searches, and in turn browse your website to see if your products or services are a fit for their needs.

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Difference between “Good” or Bad” Marketing Automation

Let's explore what it looks like when marketing automation campaigns run the gamut in terms of functionality and effectiveness. How does a marketing automation function when it is ineffective, and how do you choose approaches that produce the highest ROI for your marketing automation efforts?

Narrow-minded marketing. In the early stages of marketing automation, a strategy included generating emails based on actions like and email opens or time delays. Do you think interpreting success based on an email click alone is enough data to move forward to conduct a practical nurturing strategy with your leads? Did you appeal to their needs as a consumer?

A marketer should instead ask themselves: who is this person who clicked on my offer, where are they in my sales funnel, what are their interests? Without asking yourself these few simple questions, you've limited what your marketing automation can do. It will fail to supply you with important information you need to know to market to your leads and result in poor user experience because you are only looking at email actions.



The prospect – at the core of effective marketing automation. The right way to engage in marketing automation is to focus on generating inbound leads that incorporate attributes about what we know about the person. You would then be able to understand their wants and needs. Delivering them the information when they need it in order to make a purchase in the place they're looking for it.

Effective marketing automation takes into account expanding behaviors and interactions and needs of your leads. Not just email. In order to understand what you need to know about marketing automation, you must fully understand how to guide a lead down the sales funnel. You need to take into account the lead's behavioral attributes from multiple marketing channels during your review. Attributes such as social clicks, viewing a pricing page or consuming a particular piece of content need to be taken into account. To understand the full picture of your lead's challenge on these channels requires purposeful intent. Good marketing automation collects data from multiple marketing channels, as well as

incorporating those various channels to send their marketing messages as well. Running a successful campaign will require your dependency on email to lessen, and requires message delivery by means of many of the various channels that can influence a buyer's decision.



Relationship Building is Long Term

Research has shown that marketing automation can influence buyers before they make a decision to purchase. In most cases, buyers have made up their mind about what they want to purchase before they have even reached out to sales. How does this affect you? It means they are researching and seeking information before you even have a chance to speak with them about your products. Marketing automation is used to nurture prospects through the pipeline funnel. You can communicate useful information about product, comparisons, and testimonials all while building a long term relationship based on trust regarding your brand. You've got to build a relationship first, and that starts with a good strategy supported by automation.

When is the Right Time to Invest in Automation?

Investing in marketing automation requires considerable thought. If your marketing is producing a steady flow of new, organic leads as a result of your production of effective inbound marketing content, you may be ready to scale your efforts to the next level. The time has come to target efforts on a strategy that will nurture those quality leads into paying customers.



Determining if marketing automation is the right move for your business requires answering a few good questions. Below are basic questions to consider when deciding to pull the trigger on marketing automation.

- Do you have a lead strategy that is working that you want to scale?
- Are you tracking lead attributes across multiple marketing channels and touch points?
- Are you creating content to lead buyer's behaviors through the sales funnel?
- Are key stakeholders in marketing and sales in agreement on what customer conversation happen within respective departments?
- Is sales being overwhelmed by the steady flow of new and qualified leads you are passing on to them?

The key to understanding that effective marketing automation does not do your marketing for you, but it is the tool with which to scale your successful efforts. If you answered yes to the questions above, it is a good indication that marketing automation done correctly could work for your business.

Top Keys to Establish a Successful Automation Strategy

Though there are many pieces of the automation puzzle, there are two fundamental assumptions to consider.

1. It is your responsibility to generate leads, not marketing automation's. It can help scale your efforts, but it is up to you to generate relevant, optimized content that reaches out and bridges the gap to your audience's needs and challenges. It is the foundation to your marketing funnel.
2. Center your efforts on the prospect. Leverage as many marketing tools, channels, and behavioral attributes possible to put together a complete picture of your model prospect. You need the whole picture, not fragments of them across different channels. Nurture them based on their unique challenges and interests, not on the emails they click on.

Any changes you are contemplating could impact the long-term value of your customer and attention to the top key drivers of automation strategy is important.

Choosing the Best Partner

You need to choose a partner that best fits the needs of your business and your specific marketing objectives. Focusing on the individual features and not the overall business objective is a mistake you do



not want to make. Determine if your existing CRM is dynamic and can handle a scalable data load and if it can easily integrate with top automation Apps or SDKs. If not, a completely new CRM may be necessary. Lead scoring and ranking prospective buyers has to be considered. There are techniques to scoring leads, and a good partner can turn an otherwise difficult process into a snap. Select your automation partner knowing there will be a considerable amount of time and effort to set up your programs, pick a company that is a good long term fit for your company and

stakeholders needs. And don't forget, choose a company that is leading the development and thought process of marketing automation in their space.

About the author: Contributed by Ms. Kathryn Felke, a successful direct marketer for over 25 years. Ms. Felke is the President and CEO of All Digital Rewards and an Executive Board Member of Impact International Marketing and iMDirect Marketing. She is a regular contributor for All Digital Rewards and an influencer in branding and business development strategies with a focus on loyalty, promotions, and the technology used to nurture, manage, deliver and analyze lead generation, customer acquisition, and retention programs.



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