

A group of business professionals are gathered around a table in a meeting room. They are looking at a laptop screen, which displays a presentation or data. The room has a whiteboard in the background and a brick wall. The lighting is warm and focused on the meeting area.

Why Automation Should Drive Your Marketing Engagement, Starting Now

“Do we need a marketing automation system?”

If you're planning on marketing in 2016 and beyond, the answer is “Yes.”

The truth of the matter is, marketing automation is a necessity for companies in the digital age. This is because marketing automation platforms can help create a consistent brand experience with prospects and brand community members without needing to scale up your workforce.

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Regardless of company size, if you have a list of prospects that you can't realistically engage with personally, it's time to embrace automation to maximize your company's outreach. And it definitely makes a difference: Marketers using automation software generate 2x the number of leads and are 2x as effective at communicating. (For those trying to do Common Core multiplication, let's save you some time—that's DOUBLE the results on both counts.)

If you're still on the fence about whether or not marketing automation is something you need, use these questions as a guideline:

1

Is your company growing?

Fast growth is awesome, but the influx of new information about customers, operations, prospects, and everything else can present a logistical nightmare for sales and marketing teams. If you have data in multiple databases that cannot be consolidated, you're undoubtedly missing important connections and opportunities to generate and act on leads. Automation will help you determine where the lost opportunities exist in your current system so you can more easily scale your efforts and continue growing in the right direction.

2

What capabilities are most important to your business?

Do your sales reps need real-time access to marketing data? Then native CRM integration is a must have. Combined, these tools allow you to gather an extensive database, score your most qualified leads, then better automate lead assignment.

Plus, CRM integration lets you create a closed-loop reporting system that connects specific campaigns to revenue, so you know exactly what worked, and what needs a little more seasoning.

3

Do you have a sophisticated social media presence?

These tools need to be there, as well. With automated social media tools, you can schedule posts to best serve your audience, identify and curate trending content, crowdsource key pain points and hot topics, and ultimately use this data to better target your social media messaging.

But remember, don't jump into a new platform without first establishing WHY you're doing this in the first place. Do you want to improve the quality of leads? Or increase revenue by increasing conversion? Or do you simply want to know about your customers to improve engagement? By knowing what you need, you'll be in a better position to control the selection process and choose the platform(s) that will most benefit the organization.



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What's in it for you

Implementing even the most basic marketing automation will bring you some serious boosts in the following areas. (And who doesn't love a good boost now and then?)

- **Marketing in less time, with more results.**

Automating time-consuming, manual tasks around content creation, management and personalization, campaign scheduling and execution, data hygiene (i.e. duplicate or inconsistent data residing in various silos), communication with sales, and lead nurturing, saves time and improves productivity—that means more revenue.

- **More (and better qualified) leads.**

Marketing automation combines multiple criteria, including demographic and behavioral data (pages visited, downloads, filled out forms), with a lead scoring system, to generate and identify sales-qualified leads. This means your sales and marketing teams can focus their efforts on the prospects most likely to convert, instead of blindly chasing leads.

- **A REAL view of how your customers behave.**

Today's marketing automation platforms are integrating multiple channels to create more comprehensive prospect profiles and more holistic views of prospect behavior. No longer will your customer profiles be tied simply to sales totals. Now, you'll have insight into time of purchase, ads and messaging that drove the purchase, and even the other products considered before making a purchase.

You'll be more in touch with the emotional and environmental drivers behind a sale, and better armed to appeal to these sensibilities again for your future campaigns. Automated marketing as a means to make more personal connections? Ironic, but true.

Automated doesn't mean "inhuman"

As odd as it sounds, automated efforts are designed to actually improve the quality of interactions with prospects and customers. We know what you're thinking—it sounds like a contradiction. But in reality, your marketing teams simply can't handle the sheer amount of engagement touch points required to keep a buyer firmly in the funnel, and away from prying competitor eyes.

Today's marketing is driven by the self-educated buyer—the person who shops in-person while reading

reviews on a phone, scouring forums for testimonials, and watching videos while narrowly avoiding a collision in aisle 3.

These are the people you must engage to achieve a relevant, targeted, and value-based customer experience. Marketers are increasingly enhancing their understanding of how data can fuel the delivery of meaningful interactions. You can't realistically access such vast amounts of information manually. Automation will not only help you cull through

the data pile, but will also organize it in a way that allows you to execute and achieve more refined marketing. Marketers are leveraging the power of marketing automation to refine, target, and optimize program initiatives, including customizing content and automating communications.

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With the ability to manage, report, and react to the moving parts of a campaign through marketing automation technology, organizations are aligning marketing to sales, powering revenue performance, and fueling overall business growth.

This is accomplished through automated:

1 Targeting.

Your database is the lifeblood of your campaign. Without the proper data management and hygiene in place, your marketing operations will suffer because it's nearly impossible to meaningfully segment and refine your prospects.

2 Engagement.

To engage with prospects and customers in a meaningful way, you must develop tactics to address and align messaging across all digital channels.

3 Conversion.

Automated campaigns have higher conversation rates and are much more resilient for maintenance. By automating your campaigns, you can improve the buyer's experience, develop loyal relationships, and track conversion data more effectively.

4 Analytics.

Data and analytics provide helpful resources to define and measure a campaign's effectiveness at every point in the buying cycle. By implementing systems for reporting and intelligence, organizations can better understand the impact that sales, marketing, and other efforts are having on overall business performance.



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The shift to online sales has hindered the ability to see and learn from physical behavior when addressing prospects. Today's salespeople are engaging primarily—in many cases, exclusively—online and are closely aligning their efforts with the key attributes found in online behavior.

As a certified Eloqua partner, we call this [Digital Body Language](#). By analyzing and understanding online behavior—email responses, pageviews, social engagement, and other core attributes—marketers have a wealth of insights to effectively guide prospects through the funnel.

Making the connection

Every marketer knows the importance of providing the right message at the right time. According to a [survey](#) by marketing research firm Chadwick Martin Bailey, the #2 reason people unsubscribe to email is irrelevance. Though it seems as if automated email might serve to increase the likelihood of mistargeted messaging, proper automation triggers can improve engagement.

You see, trigger-based marketing enables critical response to behavioral attributes and actions, such as an email clickthrough, or interest in a particular asset or offering. The key to executing trigger-based marketing is timing and relevance. By aligning the

content and timing of email messages with behavior, marketers can optimize their points of engagement and encourage feedback via calls to action. Trigger-based email programs enable marketers to transform existing customer data into measurable rules to help determine relevant messaging.

For instance, when an email recipient clicks on a link or call to action to learn more, predefined rules can be set to ensure that this particular prospect, who expressed topical interest, should receive a specific asset, or information based on their behavior.

Crunching the numbers

There was a time, not so long ago, when the mere idea of scouring endless dot matrix data printouts was a boring endeavor. Well, guess what? It still is.

But thankfully, automation systems do most (if not all) of the heavy lifting, to ensure you're receiving the right metrics, and targeting your campaigns to the right customers. And this heavy lifting starts with a foundation of organized, targeted data accrual.

Automation systems leave most of the guesswork and assumption to the side,

and instead filter through your chosen KPIs and parameters to provide information that enables relevant, real-time messaging, at appropriate points in the buy cycle.

The data element is the single most important area for companies to understand. Yet at the executive level, it is often the least understood. Without clean data, marketers waste precious money and time. When data is accurate, open rates increase, conversion rates improve, and revenue increases.

Companies that use email software generate 14x more leads than those who don't.

It's okay to label people (but only for these purposes)

Here's another healthy stat to digest: Companies that use email software generate 14x more leads than those who don't.

Fourteen. Times.

Automated marketing campaigns can segment customers across a number of variables, including demographics, activities, length of engagement, and interests, among others—and they also can segment the message types. You can build a target audience based on information including title, geography, job function, visit frequency, or topic of interest.

Targeting and segmentation are crucial for marketers looking to avoid time-worn (and largely ineffective) batch and blast outreach methods. Without automation, it is difficult to segment leads within

a database, and even more challenging to deliver the most appropriate messaging.

When equipped with customer data, marketers can build market segmentation strategies, understand where to focus marketing resources, and rank opportunities against their true potential.

Detailed buyer data is also useful for developing content marketing, as they provide marketers with a better understanding of the types of content to send to potential buyers: information that is reflective of their phase in the buying processes.

Targeted and segmented prospect data is critical to ensure that any company's marketing messaging is relevant, appropriate, and aligned with expectations at every possible touch point.



Nurturing can help establish brand loyalty long before a prospect is in the purchase phase.

Keep in touch

The upfront challenge of data collection is that there's just so much of it, making it difficult to maintain a consistent handle on the process. With a thoughtful, automated lead management system in place, you can optimize the effectiveness of buyer activities that ultimately decide the most appropriate course of action for each lead, or group of leads.

Marketing automation helps automatically route marketing-qualified leads based on a score or rank, so sales can focus time and energy on leads that are ready to advance in the funnel.

Nurture programs offer a unique opportunity to engage with prospects over time, on their terms and in a way

that is manageable, understandable, and meaningful—helping your brand to develop relationships based on value and ongoing communication, whether or not the prospect is ready to buy.

You'll also gain a better understanding of the behavioral and consumption patterns of your target buyers. All of this knowledge can then be utilized to refine and optimize your ongoing nurturing processes.

Nurturing can help establish brand loyalty long before a prospect is in the purchase phase, but by cultivating latent demand, companies can also increase the conversion of unqualified leads to opportunities and drive more revenue.

Conclusion

Marketing automation provides us with the ability to treat each prospect as if they were our only prospect. We can listen closely to their responses and discover their needs through intelligent web forms and tagging. We can customize product suggestions based on what we already know about their frustrations. And, when used properly, it makes the difference between your customers clicking “X” or clicking through.

Make no mistake, the only way to stay in touch with prospects is through multiple channels of communication. It’s near impossible to create meaningful messaging through manual means anymore, yet it’s never been more important to personalize messaging.

Marketing automation
isn't just a better way to stay
connected with your audiences,
it's pretty much the only way.

