

MARKETING
AUTOMATION
BEST PRACTICES
GUIDE

Written by Matt Heinz and Brian Hansford

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Managing those qualified but not-ready-to-buy leads in advance of an active sales process is quickly becoming one of the most important roles for B2B marketing organizations. The justification and math is clear—the more actively you can nurture leads and build long-term relationships based on trust and credibility, well before the prospect is ready to buy, the more likely you are to win the business and increase your conversion rates over time.

And what's more, effective lead nurturing strategies and implementations can significantly decrease required marketing budget for new leads over time while increasing marketing-sourced opportunities in your sales pipeline.

The following pages provide several strategic and tactical best practices for introducing, launching and executing a lead nurturing or marketing automation effort for your organization.

CONTENTS

- 2 | Strategy And Justification
- 11 | Setup And Vendor Selection
- 19 | Execution And Optimization
- 26 | Best Practices And Lead Management

STRATEGY AND JUSTIFICATION

Marketing Automation Past, Present And Future: Q&A With Steve Woods
Your Most Important Marketing Automation Investment Is People
Nine Ways To Make The Case For Marketing Automation Software
Marketing Ops Specialists—Essential Skillsets

MARKETING AUTOMATION PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE: Q&A WITH STEVE WOODS

It's difficult to have a conversation about B2B marketing, especially for complex products and transactions, without also talking about marketing automation or lead nurturing. And while the category and its adoption has been accelerating recently, a select few stand out as both pioneers and thought leaders in the space.

Steve Woods is co-founder and chief technology officer for Eloqua, one of the leading providers of marketing automation technology to B2B and B2C organizations worldwide. As part of the launch of a new partnership between Heinz Marketing and Eloqua, Steve sat down with us to talk about where marketing automation began, why it's so important now, and where it's going.

As an Eloqua co-founder and author of Digital Body Language, you've seen the marketing automation promise and opportunity for several years. What drew you to this in the first place? What started it all for you?

We saw the general idea back in the first dot-com bubble at the end of 1999. There was

a lot of excitement around e-commerce, and what the web was doing to the transaction that a buyer makes with a seller, but we saw an equal, if not greater opportunity to help with the information side of buying—especially in businesses where a bit more information needed to change hands before a buyer was ready to buy.

From there, the products we built helped organizations understand their buyers' interests and intents—the concept of Digital Body Language—and then guide marketing or sales conversations based on that.

As we worked with the marketers who were early innovators in the space, they helped us form and shape the product to become what today is known as marketing automation; nurturing buyers based on their interests until they are ready to buy, and then passing the most qualified leads over to sales.

You have a 20-second elevator ride to explain marketing automation, and why it's important, to

a CMO that isn't there yet. Go.

Today's buyers have changed. They don't come to your sales team to get educated on what your space is about, and what your products do, they get that information online. If you are not providing rich, meaningful content to those buyers, and then understanding which buyers are most interested and catering your conversation with them accordingly (including getting sales involved), you will lose those buyers to a competitor.

If you're trying to guide the conversation's content and timing, with each individual buyer, based on that buyer's needs and interests, you can't do that manually. You need a marketing automation platform like Eloqua to help you understand each buyer, and guide that unique conversation accordingly.

What do you see as the biggest barriers to adoption and successful implementation of marketing automation for most companies?

Shifting from a campaign-centered view of marketing, to a buyer-centered view is hard. It's relatively simple to say "we'll run campaigns on January 1, March 1, and June 1", and then manage the creative and budgets to have that happen. It's harder to say "these are the meaningful events in a buyer's world, and how I will react to each buyer accordingly". The

marketer skill set is rapidly evolving to think in these terms, but it takes some time.

Most companies are used to making technology decisions through their IT department. Why is it so important that the CMO becomes a technology buyer today?

With Software as a Service (SaaS), the aspects of a technology purchase that used to require IT—like servers, networks, data centers, etc.—are now not required. What is required, however, is thinking through the business changes that a new platform like marketing automation will require. New processes, new skills, new metrics are all possible. A CMO needs to own how their organization engages buyers, and in today's world, that requires technology.

Much of the marketing automation conversation has centered around the sales process, but there's at least an equal opportunity to optimize revenue and lifetime value after the purchase. Do you agree?

Absolutely. Purchasing one product is a highly meaningful event in the lifecycle of a customer. There are great opportunities to have them onboarded, brought to success, and potentially sold more products. We've seen a lot of successful organizations do exactly that to great success. Similarly, managing the renewal cycle for any customer engagement where there

is an annual renewal or similar, is a large area of opportunity that many marketers are exploring successfully.

I've seen multiple statistics indicating that a high percentage of marketing automation users aren't yet making use of the full lead nurturing features. How do you recommend they invest in the baby steps to get started and start seeing value quickly?

First, think of the world through the eyes of your buyers. How do they educate themselves, how do they find information, how do they discover new perspectives? For each of those, will you be discovered by them when they look? That will lead to great conversations around both content that is needed and the lifecycle of a buyer that can be managed.

Start simple, with the most obvious customer lifecycle event you can see in your business and build a communication path from that. From there, you can identify a few more customer lifecycle events and begin to evolve and experiment.

How will this technology evolve over the next few years?

Marketers can now understand who a buyer is, and what that buyer is interested in, based on their Digital Body Language. Now, however, we

need to also understand who they trust.

Understanding who a buyer is connected to, who they trust, and where they get their information from is critical to understanding their interest in making a purchase.

The connectivity between solutions is also very much of interest. In today's world of modern SaaS software, it's much easier to connect systems together than it ever has been. Today's marketers must look for platforms that allow them to add in simple "Apps" to integrate webinar data, event data, social data, video data, etc. Without that, the marketers will be blind to a broader view of buyer behavior than they need to succeed.

YOUR MOST IMPORTANT MARKETING AUTOMATION INVESTMENT IS PEOPLE

People are the most important resources for any organization in any high value function. The right people are also critical for the success of a marketing automation initiative.

Find the Right People

When thinking about people for your marketing automation initiative, you might first wonder “Where can I find an Eloqua or Marketo expert that can come in and kick start or take over a lead generation or email marketing program”. That question is like asking for a nuclear scientist to coach a college football program while also serving as a gourmet chef at the local four-star restaurant. There are lots of variables and requirements. Simply asking for an “expert” on a platform limits the focus.

Here are examples of some recommendations and questions I ask in return to clarify their hiring requirements:

Don’t focus solely on finding someone with a marketing automation background or email marketing experience.

Consider someone with experience or passion around Web content publishing or Web site administration. Marketing automation platforms are very similar to Content Management Systems and the skills and knowledge are readily transferable from one to another.

If your organization is a small to mid-sized

organization, consider recruiting someone from a larger organization. People from larger organizations move to smaller teams because they will have broader responsibility and their impact can be much easier to perceive.

The definition of an expert is relative. Do you really need an expert on the platform? Or an expert on business process? An expert on lead management and lead scoring? An expert on content marketing? An expert on business and systems analysis?

Grow Effectiveness and Encourage Positive Results

Your team is in place either using existing team members or new recruits.

Next Steps to consider:

1. Training, Training, Training

Most leading marketing automation platform vendors provide decent levels of product training and the best practices for implementing and growing a successful initiative. Third party organizations such as the Marketing Automation Institute also provide valuable training.

Unfortunately many companies do not take advantage of the training, even at the most rudimentary levels. The commonly accepted statistic is that over 70 percent of all marketing automation customers are mainly using their platforms as an overpowered email tool.

There are several short-sighted reasons for this such as:

- We can't afford to take the time away from batch and send emails.
- Lead flow will suffer if we stop or stagger operations for training.
- We can figure it out on our own.
- Our people read a lot of blogs and they get it.
- I went to the Sirius conference this year and I can train my people how to set up our system.
- Training? We don't need no stinking training! (believe it or not I hear this a lot)
- Training helps build the knowledge and confidence of a team to get the most value from a marketing automation solution. Don't be the CxO, VP, or Director that undermines the importance of training!

2. Best Practices Consumption And Generation

Encourage the creation, sharing and consumption of information around marketing automation, marketing, demand generation, revenue marketing, content marketing, sales, technology, social media and more. The more ideas consumed, the better chances your team will innovate ideas that are best for your business. Don't isolate your team and regulate access to information and best practices ideas. Use vendors, blogs, social media, webinars, trade publications—all are great sources of best practices at little to no cost.

3. Organizational Exposure

Effective managers support the resources on

their team and protect them without isolating them. Let the people on your team engage with teams across the organization, including (and especially) sales. The more exposure your team has internally the better the understanding of how the business operates. This helps build alignment between departments.

4. Industry Exposure

Encourage your team to attend local user groups and national trade show events. These events are great venues to learn new ideas, network, and find inspiration for building successful elements to a marketing automation initiative. Don't box your team into a cube. Great opportunities include user groups, annual vendor conferences, analyst summits and other industry events.

5. Talk To Customers!

Everyone in marketing should talk with and listen to customers and prospects. Join sales calls. Conduct focus groups. Cultivate references and other forms of customer evidence. When Marketing has these conversations and listens, patterns can emerge on how to support and engage prospective customers in their buying process.

Without the right people and the right support and resources, a marketing automation initiative will fail. Find the right people. Support them with resources and expose them to all facets of the business, including customers!

NINE WAYS TO MAKE THE CASE FOR MARKETING AUTOMATION SOFTWARE

Let's face it, nobody likes to buy software. It's a means to an end, and often the path from cost to revenue impact isn't always clear. Even with marketing automation software, whose inherent intention is to make your marketing efforts both more streamlined (lower cost) and more effective (higher sales pipeline output), it can be difficult to carve out the dollars necessary to get rolling.

If others in your group or organization need convincing to give marketing automation software a go, here are nine proven ways to get the thumbs-up.

1. Do The Math

Demonstrate quantifiably what a lift in some of your key response and sales pipeline metrics could do to sales and revenue growth. Don't just talk about automating marketing. Doing more with less is interesting, but not nearly as interesting as increased response, higher volumes of engaged sales prospects for your sales team, larger qualified sales pipelines to work with, and more monthly/quarterly closed business. Build a simple model that demonstrates the impact of improvement at a handful of key funnel points your organization already has a focus on.

2. Show The Math From Others

Use the marketing automation vendors you're

talking with to gather examples and case studies of how other companies have already done what you're modeling. Especially look for companies that look close to you—online businesses, B2B businesses, SaaS businesses, etc.

3. Think About Customer Retention In Addition To Acquisition

There's no reason you need to justify marketing automation purely based on new customer acquisition. Most software suites can manage the entire customer lifecycle, including early-customer onboarding, behavior and usage-based communication scenarios and more. The result is higher engagement, lifetime value and referral potential—all of which can also be modeled into your before-and-after ROI.

4. Show Samples Of Metrics/Reports Possible

Get your team excited about the specific metrics they could use on a regular basis to help manage the business. Marketo, for example, has developed a set of metrics and reports in their automation system that looks beyond traditional marketing metrics (clicks, opens, etc.) and instead looks at a set of revenue performance and prediction measures. These speak directly to current and future revenue potential within your wider prospect pipeline. I'm guessing your boss and executive team would love this kind of future sales and revenue visibility.

5. Outline Domain And Black List Risk

If you continue to do “batch and send” email marketing, vs. the more intelligent multi-track marketing that automation software systems enable, you’re putting your entire company’s reputation at risk with ISPs and email delivery watchlists. The risk of getting black-listed is real and getting more likely for companies that aren’t managing prospect relationships carefully. Make sure the organization understands this risk (not only to ongoing email marketing, but to the domain itself, corporate email deliverability, customer marketing, etc.)

6. More Email (Not Less)

The most common objection I hear to investing in marketing automation software is that the company’s existing, batch-and-send strategies just need to get smarter. But usually, that just means harder and harder decisions about which messages and emails should go out to a prospect list that already gets way too much email. The more you send in bulk like this, the more your prospects will tune out... or unsubscribe. With more intelligent, multi-track automated marketing systems, you can actually increase your regular email volume while ensuring the right message gets to the right prospect at the right time. Higher volume plus higher response rates equals happiness for your sales team and executive team.

7. Long-term Headcount Reduction

Some organizations have been able to model long-term headcount reductions in marketing as well as sales with successful marketing automation implementations. This doesn’t mean eliminating roles in the organization immediately, but does mean that fewer marketing heads may be needed as the company continues to grow, but more of the marketing execution is automated. Those eliminated future heads are meaningful to your CFO.

8. Impact On Inside Sales Performance

Your VP of Sales should be your strongest ally in pitching a marketing automation investment, as he or she should understand quantifiably what the likely impact will be on the team. Inside reps should be more qualified leads, leads that are ready to convert into and through the pipeline at a higher rate. Over time, fewer sales reps may be needed with higher individual productivity rates to achieve the same or higher sales outputs. Work with your sales counterpart to build this model and business case.

9. Don’t Talk About Software

Nobody likes to buy software. And although that’s what this is, it’s not about that. Build your case based first on what it does, not what it is. Paint a picture of the success and outcomes you’re trying to achieve, then once you have the entire team head-nodding in agreement, outline the solution.

MARKETING OPERATIONS SPECIALISTS AND EXPERTS—ESSENTIAL SKILLSETS

The days of a “marketing communications” team focused on and measuring success on activity-based efforts are long gone. Fair warning to the marketing managers and directors who build empires with people—your days are numbered!

The organizations that will throttle the competition are leaner, smarter and know how to use technology to engage customers to drive revenue. Marketing teams that focus their demand generation merely by producing brochureware, random email campaigns, and tradeshow activity will lose.

Marketing departments are expected to do more with less. Most importantly, these Revenue Marketing Teams are measured more on impact to revenue than anytime ever before. (Or at least they are expected to measure impact to revenue.) The best people to staff these teams will possess unique skills and attributes that combine creativity and hard-nosed business sense. Think of these unique teams and experts like Marketing SEALs or Marketing Special Forces. Smart, tough, tightly knit small groups, focused on well orchestrated steps to accomplish a mission. Empire builders who measure their success and egos by hiring tons of people won’t survive in the era of Revenue Marketing.

Here are some critical skills and attributes we recommend for recruiting the best marketing

operations expert for your revenue marketing team.

Ability To Envision A Business Process

Marketing automation platforms enable the business process of demand generation and revenue marketing. A marketing operations specialist must be able to design a process with the vision of end to end results. Additionally, a marketing operations specialist must coordinate a process outside of the department with Sales and Support teams. A marketing operations specialist must envision the steps a potential buyer will follow.

Implementation of a business process with marketing automation

Envisioning a business process is one thing. Implementing the business process with a marketing automation platform is a special skillset that requires business savvy and technical acumen. Sophisticated workflows require a powerful engine to support the steps, especially when lead nurturing and scoring programs are involved. All are enabled and supported when properly implemented with a marketing automation platform.

Strategic Data Management, Analysis And Interpretation

One of the most critical roles a marketing operations specialist has is managing customer

data in a marketing automation platform and in some cases, the CRM platform. (Politics aside, owning the customer data makes perfect sense. Sales can still “own” the relationship.) Data management is critical from the types of information captured, how much is captured, when in the buying process, where, and how. This information helps build profiles and shapes the ultimate success of customer marketing efforts. A marketing operations specialist can help build and shape this overall strategy.

Organizational Communications

Effective communication skills help set proper expectations on strategic initiatives and tactical execution. Additionally strong communications help report results and ensure executive-level support.

Hands-on Marketing Automation Platform And CRM Experience

Eventually CRM and Marketing Automation platforms will be available in a single platform. Before this market convergence occurs a marketing operations specialist must understand the intricacies on how data and information flow between the marketing automation and CRM platforms. Basic levels of technical acumen are a must-have skillset.

Think Strategically And Execute Brilliantly

Strategy without execution is hallucination. Marketing folks are great at talking strategy with

great ideas and grand visions. The ones who succeed will put the strategy into action with brilliant tactical execution. A marketing operations specialist must see the big picture and use technology, content, and process to make a revenue marketing process work. Avoid the people who merely want to attend high-visibility meetings and merely “own” the usage of a marketing automation platform. Find the expert who has strategic brainpower and makes great things happen!

Content Curation

Without content, marketing automation platforms lack the fuel to drive campaign efforts. A marketing operations pro may not be THE overall curator for content. But they can work to mobilize an entire organization to support content creation for customer marketing efforts.

These are some of the most critical skills and attributes we see with the most successful marketing operations specialists and marketing automation experts. Don't be misled by the tag of “automation”. There is a ton of heavy lifting involved with these special people who help drive revenue for an organization!

SETUP AND VENDOR SELECTION

Choosing The Ideal Marketing Automation Platform

Five Steps To Take Before Buying A Marketing Automation Solution

Evaluating Marketing Automation Vendors—Looking Past Functionality

Set Proper Expectations

CHOOSING THE IDEAL MARKETING AUTOMATION PLATFORM

Identifying the right platform vendor that suits the needs of your organization is very important. Here are general ideas for any CMO, CFO, and CEO to consider:

The Right Capabilities

Marketing automation solutions are available in a wide range of manageability, capabilities and costs. Here is a good list to work from when evaluating the capabilities of marketing automation solutions.

- Supporting unique business processes based on best practices.
- System administration doesn't create a burden the organization can't support
- Bi-directional synchronization with the CRM platform
- Flexibility to have hosted forms on corporate domains and the vendor's own platform
- Full nurturing support from early awareness, consideration through post-sale customer loyalty
- Data management and integrity capabilities
- Engaging customers across multiple platforms

including mobile, social, web, and events

- Global and regional capabilities
- Troubleshooting, technical support, uptime—how will the platform support your organization when things go wrong?
- Analytics—consider the platform that offers reporting capabilities needed to measure marketing effectiveness

The Right Training And Support Resources

Building capability requires the vendors to provide resources that support enablement. Instructor-led and self-paced online training, online knowledge base resources, well-written and current product documentation, and customer communities are examples of important enablement resources and services.

Marketing automation vendors should support customers with excellent product support when things go wrong. Some subscription contracts may include product support and educational training services. Vendors may have different guarantees on trouble response times and operational uptime. Understand your

requirements and ensure the vendor and platform meet those requirements. A well-trained and supported customer is a successful customer.

The Right Size

Executives should feel very comfortable going with a solution with the right level of capabilities and the right cost. That means finding the platform with the right level of power that can be implemented as quickly as possible. Sometimes a lower cost solution is the best fit that has the focused capability needed where an enterprise solution may be overpowered. Going too small, too big, too cheap or too expensive without aligning to the objectives and requirements are clear paths to failure.

The Right Service Partners

Many marketing automation vendors have a network of trained expert partners that can work with you in your region. These service providers are critical in helping users succeed because they often have extensive industry experience and knowledge of best practices. Additionally local service providers and agencies can provide outsourced capability for platform administration, campaign development and implementation, and content marketing. Find the right local partner that will support your efforts in a successful marketing automation initiative.

One size does not fit every organization looking for a marketing automation solution. To help you succeed, make sure the vendor has the right product capabilities, resources for enablement, product support, and services partners.

FIVE STEPS TO TAKE BEFORE BUYING A MARKETING AUTOMATION SOLUTION

Marketing automation follows the trends similar to the early stages of other business automation technologies including customer relationship management to supply chain management to the pre-Web 1.0 era of client-server development projects before that. All those technologies were promised to solve problems, make jobs easier, and generate revenue.

But even today, the successful utilization of CRM solutions is low, regardless of current SaaS services and technologies. Michael Kringsman, CEO of Asuret, Inc., reports 47 percent of CRM implementations in 2009 are judged as failures. The good news is marketing executives can learn from the mistakes and best practices of predecessor systems in business automation. Marketing is generally the last department in an organization to automate business processes and faces many of the same challenges other departments and functions faced.

However, DemandGen Report quotes Jonathan Block, Sirius Decisions, estimating that the success rate for companies adopting marketing automation is approximately 18 percent. When used primarily as an email engine, adoption is “probably more than 50 percent (DemandGen Report, October 5, 2010). There are many reasons for partial utilization or outright failure and system abandonment. Most of the issues come from people—simple as that.

Don’t let this be your company!

When executed well, marketing automation platforms enable a well planned demand generation and lead management process and help organizations connect with customers at the right point in buying process. Higher quality leads are sent to sales with sales cycles that are accelerated which drive more revenue. However, implementing workflow and business process tools are difficult. Proper strategic planning and organizational mobilization can greatly enhance the value and revenue driven by a marketing automation platform. Don’t make the mistake of using a marketing automation platform purely as an expensive e-mail marketing system. Here are 5 steps to follow before buying a marketing automation solution.

1. Secure Executive Sponsorship

Any successful business strategy requires executive sponsorship, support, and even enforcement and marketing automation initiatives are no exception. Marketing automation impacts an entire enterprise and these champions are critical because they help mobilize the hearts and minds of people across the organization. To get the CEO and CFO on board, you will need to explain the “why”—the business case for a marketing automation initiative. This is the time for executives and marketing managers to focus strategically on

how to directly grow revenue through sophisticated and measurable demand generation. Build the business case that shows how marketing automation drives revenue.

2. Develop A Demand Generation Strategy And Lead Management Process

Before even beginning to evaluate marketing automation solutions, the marketing and sales managers must develop an initial demand generation strategy and lead management workflow. Every organization will do things differently and the better defined the demand generation strategy with supporting lead management process, the greater the chance of success using the right marketing automation system.

A marketing team won't flip a switch and magically have a funnel of highly qualified leads instantly flowing into the sales department. The workflow should identify where inquiries come from and how they move through a buying cycle and different treatments. A well planned marketing automation implementation can cultivate or nurture these leads to a point and then hand off to sales for direct follow up. The process should map how campaigns will support the required flow of qualified lead flow which ultimately leads to revenue generation. The strategy provides the direction and vision which will be supported by the right tools and people.

3. Establish A Collaboration Channel And Service Level Agreement With Sales

Before a marketing team even engages in an automation solution evaluation, the sales management team should be involved along with the support of the executive sponsor. Marketing automation enables new levels of revenue generation by helping develop high-quality leads more efficiently, while preventing funnel leakage. Marketing has the fantastic opportunity to hold themselves and sales accountable for revenue generation. Collaboration and buy-in from sales management is a critical success factor. This step should also include coming to agreement, as much as possible, on what a "marketing qualified lead" is and the expectations, or service level agreement, by which sales will contact those leads and track opportunities or pass back to marketing for nurturing.

4. Test And Evaluate The CRM Integration

Generating high quality leads without a systematic way to hand them off to sales is pointless. Cloud-based CRM systems like Salesforce.com and Microsoft Dynamics CRM are prolific and many marketing automation systems provide efficient technology integrations with most of the major CRM players. This is where organizations derive massive value from the advanced heavy lifting of developing a lead management process. To be clear, this step is not as easy as mapping fields. The process must be

in place at least 80 percent of the way for this to work. Sales management and the sales representatives must buy into the process. Sales must follow up on the marketing qualified leads and provide data back to help measure whether the right leads are flowing, or not. Marketing automation integrated with CRM supports the full cycle of developing and managing leads and measuring effectiveness. Marketing executives can directly measure their performance on revenue generation. Both marketing and sales are held accountable with this integration, and that is good! This critical information must be captured within a CRM system.

5. Comprehensive Content Marketing Strategy

Content is often the most overlooked and underestimated ingredient for a successful marketing automation strategy. A well run marketing organization must have an annual campaign strategy and calendar, regardless of whether or not a marketing automation system is employed. Without a strategy and calendar, lead flow will be inconsistent and the content requirements will be unknown. Without content, the campaigns won't get off the ground and the investment in marketing automation will be wasted. Consider the content required to run campaigns for leads at various stages in the buying cycle. And from there additional content will be required to support nurturing campaigns that help prevent leakage in the marketing funnel. Depending on which industry in B2B

marketing, there will be different individuals at a target company that will require content suited to their roles and influence. Develop the right content for the right audience to be delivered at the right time using a marketing automation platform.

Marketing automation platforms and solutions provide a powerful resource for organizations to drive revenue and strengthen customer relationships. The unstructured methods of activity-based marketing behavior are extinct— at least for those marketing executives who want to continue their careers and help organizations grow revenues. Marketing executives and chief marketing officers must show how they will use their people, process, budget and technology to impact revenue cycles. Marketing automation solutions provide the foundation to accomplish this mission. Strong planning, preparation, process development, and creativity will greatly enhance the magnitude of success using marketing automation. The five steps here are a great steps before buying the marketing automation solution.

EVALUATING MARKETING AUTOMATION VENDORS— LOOKING PAST FUNCTIONALITY

Marketers who consider a Marketing Automation vendor are often tempted by the shiniest object with the sexiest advertising or the cheapest solution for email marketing and some basic lead scoring capability. As evaluations start out, the vendor solution demos look great. The vendor sales reps tell a great story and “give great demo” and throw out customer logos and white papers.

Make sure the marketing automation vendor you select will be around to support you long term!

Depending on the customer requirements, a cornucopia of various vendors can enter the fray. I have witnessed evaluations where enterprise organizations initially review a strange group of email vendors like Constant Contact all the way up to enterprise Marketing Automation vendors like Manticore, Eloqua, and Marketo. (To me that is like shopping for vehicles including everything between a SMART Car and a Freightliner truck and it shows the swirl and confusion in the Marketing Automation market.)

Vendor Viability

Beyond the matrix of whistles and bells and the latest functionality, prospective customers MUST also look into the business viability of Marketing Automation vendors and the support they will receive to help ensure ramp up and long term

success. Marketing execs don’t want to be left holding the bag with a vendor who lost funding and has no road map for updates. Avoid the career limiting move!

Ask Tough And Fair Questions

I believe in asking hard questions. Many times vendors in any space won’t or can’t answer some of the questions due to confidentiality. But, the way a vendor answers the questions can be very revealing. Do not be reluctant to ask hard questions!

Ask prospective marketing automation vendors the tough questions!

Here are the business viability questions you should ask when evaluating marketing automation platform players.

- How long have you been in business?
- Do you have any customers? (especially important with all of the new vendors)
- What can you share about your product/ solution roadmap?
- What companies do you actively partner with? (CRM, O/S, B.I. etc.)
- How extensive is your solution provider network?
- What customer training is provided?
- Do you have a Customer Success Manager program?

- Have you laid off staff recently? If so, why?
- What is your service level agreement for technical support? (Tier 1, 2, 3 troubleshooting procedures)
- Do you have references we can talk to?

Look past the solution and understand the business viability of the vendor you are considering. Ultimately, the winning vendor will be a business partner for your organization. Of course there are many other related questions to ask. Just remember a well-planned marketing automation implementation is strategic to an organization because of the potential impact in helping generate revenue. Asking hard business questions is justified! As a marketing executive, the last thing you want is a vendor who can't deliver they promised.

SET PROPER EXPECTATIONS

It is very easy to get emotionally caught up in the excitement of implementing a marketing automation solution. Executives outside of marketing can place unrealistic expectations on it with a maligned attitude that “marketing will finally pull their weight around here.” Sales teams can especially foster pressures and unrealistic expectations that marketing automation will guarantee sales quotas will be blown away. Marketing managers can feed the frenzy by stating the lead flow will increase and sales cycles will shorten.

But those same marketing managers get a false start because they underestimate the complexity of marketing automation and the content required to fuel campaigns. As with

any system deployment and implementation where complex business workflow is automated, change and results often take time to develop.

Part of the problem is buying into the excitement and promise sold by marketing automation vendors. Unfortunately the excitement can lead to buyer’s remorse when the reality sets in it takes time to fully utilize a marketing automation platform. In fact, it’s better to set expectations that deliver deliberate results over several quarters.

A well developed and supported strategy will help set proper expectations. Crawling leads to walking which in turn leads to running!

EXECUTION AND OPTIMIZATION

Eleven Sources Of Marketing Automation Content You've Already Written

Analyze The Data That Impacts Revenue

How Marketing Automation Enhances Google AdWords Campaigns

ELEVEN SOURCES OF MARKETING AUTOMATION CONTENT YOU'VE ALREADY WRITTEN

No matter how you're approaching marketing automation strategies, the single-biggest hurdle for most organizations isn't the software or the process or the sorting of prospects. It's the content.

Effective marketing automation requires a constant stream of relevant, engaging and new content to work. That content needs to speak to current and prospective customer needs, well beyond what you're directly selling.

For most organizations, this hurdle keeps them from implementing marketing automation programs and reaping the benefits. But I'd argue that those same organizations have already written most of the content they need to get started.

Below are 11 sources of content you already have. I'm guessing there are far more in your unique organization, but these should get you started.

1. Speeches And Presentations

You probably have a ton of these. Some may be primarily a set of slides, but there are (or were) talking points behind those. Check the "notes" section of your PowerPoint decks for pre-written copy. Avoid product-centric presentations and look instead of for places where you've shared a vision, or shared best practices and market expertise.

2. Customer Service Calls

Every day, you're helping your customers become more successful. Every day, your front-line reps are hearing not just specific requests but context—where the problem came from, what it's solving, what else is affecting the customer's day and decisions. Much of this is ripe for translating into customer-centric marketing automation content. If your customer service team is regularly logging customer service calls in a CRM system, that's a gold mine for content.

3. Discussion Forum Topics And Contributors

There's no rule that says your content needs to

be completely self-generated. If you regularly read or participate in customer discussion forums, find those who like to write the most and have the most to say. Take snippets of their content and ask permission to use it in your marketing. If positioned right, they'll likely be excited you've chosen them and will help promote the republished content for you to other prospective customers.

4. Your Vendors And Suppliers

They're addressing the same target audience and market, and many of them will have content as well. Tell them you want to help promote their brand and services via your marketing channels, and all you need is some of their pre-written content.

5. Customer Blogs And Newsletters

Why not feature other customers directly? Or even prospects? Helping prospective customers get access to the insights and expertise of their peers is a great way to fill your marketing channels with quality content, most of which is pre-written and ready to go. This is also a great way to build deeper relationships with those current customers, and potentially get access to their blogs, newsletters and channels to reach additional prospects down the road.

6. Trade Press

I don't know about you, but I rarely have enough time to keep up with all of the trade publications

I want to read. If someone could do the reading for me, and feature the best, most relevant articles for me, I'd be grateful. That's your opportunity as well by publishing a regular "In The News" section as part of your marketing content. Third-party news is also a great way to feature more relevant content in Twitter and other social channel feeds.

7. Written Responses To Customer Questions

Do you have a database of pre-written responses to customer questions? Is your customer service team writing custom responses to customers on a daily basis? Many of these are going to be tactical and not relevant to a wider audience, but you don't need more than a couple good pieces a day to have a steady flow of great, already-written content that needs just some copyediting before it can be republished elsewhere.

8. Training Materials

How to use the product isn't your best bet, but how often are you teaching your customers about broader themes and topics? If you're selling marketing automation software, for example, your training probably includes basic overviews of how marketing automation works. Best practices from other clients. How marketing automation fits into a broader sales pipeline strategy. These topics and more are likely already written and packaged elsewhere in your organization. Find them.

9. White Papers, Buying Guides And Other Lead Generation Assets

If you've been marketing your product or service for a while, you probably have lead generation offer assets that aren't active anymore. White papers, presentations, buying guides—tools you perhaps don't perform optimally from a response-rate standpoint but might be perfect to fill marketing automation content channels.

10. Sales Scripts

Your sales team has a ton of these. Different customer types, different industries, different approaches. These will likely need a bit more editing to be appropriate for a marketing channel, but the hard work of originating content will have already been done.

11. Case Studies

If your case-studies are written from a customer point of view, with your product or service as the enabler of a broader set of success achieved, these can be great. They're proof of concept for what you're doing in the field.

ANALYZE THE DATA THAT IMPACTS REVENUE

Marketing automation platforms help marketing professionals identify revenue opportunities based on interactions and behaviors with a prospective company. Using the right metrics in demand generation will show how a marketing automation strategy drives revenue and connects with customers.

Find The Right Data On The Dials To Measure Marketing Performance

With companies adopting Web 1.0 technologies in the 1990s and the internet reaching the masses, marketers struggled to learn how to measure their impact to the business. Email marketing reached a fever pitch with the promise of promoting e-commerce Web sites to consumers and businesses in the New Economy. Marketing teams still measure bullet point items like click-thrus, impressions, open rates, number of site visitors, and more. Even senior-level marketing executives could not connect the path between these activity metrics and impact to revenue. Even today marketing managers and executives just look for higher activity numbers—more site visitors, more webinar attendees, more tradeshow leads and on. This type of analytical behavior places higher values on quantity over quality.

Now it's more important to have higher quality leads that are ready for sales to engage versus a bucket of thousands of contact names with

no identified or qualified interest. Marketing automation can help marketers identify the campaigns that produce the highest quality leads that generate the most revenue with the lowest cost. This information is powerful and empowering.

Here are some general examples of data to analyze and build the complete picture of how a marketing automation strategy impacts revenue.

1. **Inquiry Conversions**—Measure conversion performance from initial contact through nurturing, opportunity, win/loss.
2. **Marketing Qualified Leads (MQL)**—Leads that meet agreed on qualification criteria that move to sales for further qualification and prospecting
3. **Sales Qualified Leads**—Track the percentage of MQLs that develop into Sales Qualified Leads. Also track the percentage of leads that sales disqualifies.
4. **Sales Follow Up**—Track the percentage of MQLs that are contacted by sales
5. **Fallout**—Track the percentage of leads that drop out of each stage of the marketing funnel and sales cycle. Identify opportunities to minimize dropoff

6. Conversion To Revenue—What is the overall picture of revenue generation from demand generation. Revenue per month, quarter, year.

7. Revenue Per Campaign—Analysis that combines qualitative and quantitative analysis. Too often the old school method of direct marketing permeates marketing that more is better. Revenue per campaign may show the most effective campaigns produce the fewest number of leads. But, those leads may produce the highest revenue.

8. Cost Per Campaign—The lowest cost campaign may produce the highest revenue or highest volume of qualified leads.

HOW MARKETING AUTOMATION ENHANCES GOOGLE ADWORDS CAMPAIGNS

Directors of marketing and demand generation can greatly enhance Google AdWords campaigns using marketing automation. Quite often the missing piece for paid search campaigns are structured ways to capture and track conversion activity. Paid search campaigns aren't right for every organization. But where AdWords is a valid and integral component of an overall demand generation strategy, marketing automation can provide the boost needed to enhance performance!

Without marketing automation, marketing is challenged or severely limited in their ability to track responses and map activity to existing contacts in the nurturing queue as well as those that are brand new.

Let's look at two scenarios. One AdWords campaign without marketing automation, and one with. *Remember, map the campaign workflow first.*

Scenario 1—Meat And Potatoes AdWords Campaign

- Ad Hoc workflow
- Keywords Identified
- Landing page designed for ads. Single version only, no A/B.
- Offer is a download of a white paper/demo/webinar
- Simple landing page form with basic form field

requirements

- No confirmation email
- Simplified form fields where email notice is sent to marketing coordinator once a download is completed
- Landing page must be hosted on company web site which requires IT involvement
- Content offers identified and linked to from landing page
- Call to action is a download of a demo/white paper/ brochure
- Marketing coordinator manually enters valid contact information into CRM system and a marketing database and subjectively disregards bogus contacts (i.e. Mickey Mouse, etc.)
- Scenario Weaknesses: Ad hoc and incomplete workflow. No method to track activity against previous conversions. No Google Analytics on landing page. Human data entry requirement. Risk of duplicate entries for individual contacts in the CRM system and marketing database.

Scenario 2—AdWords Campaign With Marketing Automation

- Campaign workflow developed for full lead lifecycle through Sales
- Campaign workflow mapped into marketing automation system with business rules
- Download form business rules include minimum required number of characters per field, email address formation, and minimum

- numbers for phone
- Marketing automation business rules to identify and track activity of existing leads in nurturing programs or sales prospecting
- Keywords identified for ad series
- Single version of landing page developed (no A/B) and scripted into the marketing automation system
- Each landing page has content that aligns with the keywords of each ad
- Marketing automation system tracking scripts developed for landing page and form
- Google Analytics scripts added to landing page and confirmation pages
- Confirmation email developed to validate email after download. Marketing automation script to provide forwarding to a friend option to gather viral contacts.
- Testing program using the marketing automation system before launch to review email deliverability, email and landing page rendering, data capture, content downloads, etc.
- Test data cleared from the marketing automation system to ensure integrity of production data
- LAUNCH!

In the second scenario, which is simplified (don't be intimidated by the list of steps in scenario 2) it is important to show how a marketing automation system can capture data for each contact which is then scored/tracked

against a qualification threshold before passing to sales. Additionally, the risk of human error is practically eliminated since data entry is no longer required. Google Analytics codes will assist with analysis. Aligning keyword content for each ad and the landing pages will help position the ads higher on the page.

BEST PRACTICES AND LEAD MANAGEMENT

- Nine Questions That Deliver More Effective Lead Management Strategy**
- Eight Habits Of World-Class B2B Lead Management Programs**
- The Five Stages Of Lead Qualification**
- Three Quick Examples That Prove Nurture Marketing Works**
- Disqualified Doesn't Mean Dead—Nurturing Leads Back To Life**
- Email Contact Governance With Marketing Automation**
- Contact Cadence With Marketing Automation**
- Develop A Data Management Process**
- Build A Comprehensive Content Marketing Strategy**
- Ensure Comprehensive Systems And Process Training**
- Implement Your Marketing Automation System with CRM Integration**
- Establish Communication Channels And Processes**

NINE QUESTIONS THAT DELIVER MORE EFFECTIVE LEAD MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Marketing automation initiatives are not easy. Sorry, but that's the truth. In fact, 'marketing automation' in and of itself is a terrible descriptor. But if done properly, marketing automation initiatives offer incredible promise.

A successful implementation requires thorough planning, vision, and leadership.

Process, People, Platforms and Content

The first place to start is building a process for lead management and demand generation. Marketing automation technology enables workflow and processes. The value is in using technology to best engage buyers at the right time in their buying cycle. Marketing automation

solutions will do what they are told to do. This means that a poorly designed and inefficient process will be enabled. Think it through!

How To Start?

Get On A White Board And Agree On Definitions!

Successful marketing automation initiatives map workflows that support a buyer through their journey. The so-called Buyer's Journey is a process in itself that begins with research and awareness and moves all the way through the point of purchase, and post-sale with ongoing relationship marketing. Marketing automation enables small and large processes. These processes can include any of the following such as segmentation, lead scoring, nurturing, content

delivery, and alignment with sales. Ultimately they ALL roll-up to supporting the Buyer's Journey.

We recommend starting in a phased approach that evolves into more sophisticated utilization as knowledge and skills grow. I have seen even the largest B2B technology organizations fail because process and workflow were poorly designed.

A good starting point is securing agreement on critical definitions with Sales, including the definition of a qualified lead. In a lead management workflow there are two stages of a qualified lead. The first stage is a Marketing Qualified Lead (or MQL). Secondly, what are the extra steps Sales takes to make the MQL a Sales Qualified Lead (SQL)? When agreeing on definitions, a big step is taken towards developing the initial stages of a lead management process.

Ask Questions And Find Answers

Here are nine great questions to ask and answer when designing a process:

1. Where do leads come from?
2. What contact information should be collected and how?
3. How do we segment and triage leads?
4. What is a 'qualified' lead?
5. Who do we send marketing qualified leads to for follow up?
6. What content should we send to leads, when, and how often?
7. How will our marketing automation platform integrate with our CRM system?
8. If leads are disqualified, how will they be managed?
9. What are the KPIs we need to measure to determine effectiveness and efficiency?

Once you ask these questions your team may ask even more questions on building the lead management process that supports your business. And the more questions answered before going into production, the better the odds for succeeding with a marketing automation initiative.

EIGHT HABITS OF WORLD-CLASS B2B LEAD MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

World-class marketing organizations—at companies big and small—can be intimidating to watch. Read their case studies and listen to their leaders on stage and you might assume there’s an impossible gap between where you are now, and what they’ve been able to achieve.

But if you look more closely and analyze what world-class marketing organizations consistently do well and focus on, you’ll find there’s a much smaller set of accessible best practices that almost any organization can focus on to quickly accelerate performance and sales output. Recently, Trip Kucera from Aberdeen Group published a research brief titled *Marketing Lead Management: From the Top of the Funnel to the Top Line*. In it, and by surveying more than 160 marketing organizations across North America, Kucera identified a number of specific, actionable best practices and recommendations for “the rest of us.”

Here are some highlights:

1. World-Class Marketers Require Fewer Marketing Responses To Generate A Deal

In fact, 56 percent of best-in-class organizations develop end-to-end lead management processes that span marketing and sales, which improves story consistency with prospects and accelerates overall conversion rates. The difference in number of marketing responses required to

generate one customer between classes of marketing organizations was significant. On average, overall survey respondents required 143 marketing leads to get one customer. Best-in-class organizations required just 68, less than half the industry average.

2. World-Class Marketers Worry Less About Data Quality For Inbound Leads

Thirty-two percent of respondents put a focus on improving marketing and customer data quality, while only 15 percent of best-in-class marketers make data quality a priority. This speaks to their confidence in the overall lead management process, capturing leads early in their buying journey and nurturing those prospects (while appending information and buying signals over time) to let the overall process determine sales readiness, instead of up-front data appending or longer registration forms that constrain response.

3. World-Class Marketers Constantly Refine Lead Qualification Criteria Over Time

Few organizations set lead scoring models and set common definitions of qualified leads between sales and marketing. But of those that do, only half (50 percent, according to the survey) regularly evaluate and update lead qualification criteria. But among best-in-class marketers, 70 percent have a process for regularly improving lead qualification criteria,

and they do so via a collaborative process that involves both sales and marketing representatives.

4. World-Class Marketers Know Good Leads Aren't Always Born That Way

Best-in-class companies are more likely than others to use lead scoring and nurturing to overcome concerns about initial lead quality. Sixty-five percent of best-in-class companies define and execute multi-step lead nurturing processes, and 59 percent of these same organizations (vs. an industry average of 25 percent) utilize lead scoring to progress leads over time. Without these priorities in place, marketers are left to focus primarily on initial lead quality, which fails to allow for leads to either mature or “heat up” at a later date when their own buying conditions are more ripe.

5. World-Class Marketers Dedicate Resources To Marketing Operations

Best-in-class companies realize that a dedicated marketing operations resource (or team) can be the most important component of effective marketing execution and ongoing optimization. Sixty-nine percent of best-in-class organizations have dedicated resources responsible for optimizing lead management, vs. 33 percent of “average” organizations. A further 69 percent of best-in-class organizations have a resource responsible for implementation and management of marketing systems. Strategies

are great, but unless you have the initial and ongoing resources to implement them, you’re losing significant opportunity to not only increase overall marketing investment yield, but decrease costs as a percentage of sales and revenue over time.

6. World-Class Marketers Use Outbound Telemarketing

This was a highlight of the updated Demand Waterfall from SiriusDecisions, unveiled at their Summit this spring. In fact, 63 percent of best-in-class companies use outbound telemarketing, compared with 38 percent of all other firms. Further research from Aberdeen showed that organizations with a telemarketing focus generate 48 percent higher marketing-qualified and sales-qualified lead conversion rates. Do the math on that difference for your organization and average selling price, and telemarketing can pencil out as a clear advantage very quickly.

7. World-Class Marketers Know Exactly Which Campaigns Are Most Effective At Driving Profit (Not Just Response)

Most marketers have tracking systems in place, but few have the level of tracking and ROI precision they need to determine – at a campaign, program and micro-channel level – what’s working and what’s not. Even fewer can establish ROI not just based on lead response, but based on closed business and revenue generation. Of best-in-class organizations, 81

percent have the ability to identify the most and least profitable campaigns. That's almost twice the industry average. Further, 68 percent of best-in-class companies have the ability to determine attribution for marketing-generated leads (more than twice the industry average).

8. World-Class Marketers Make Full Use Of Their Marketing Automation Systems

I've seen statistics that estimate 70 percent of marketing automation installs are used primarily for batch-and-send emails and landing pages. Aberdeen's research breaks that down, highlighting the significant gaps between best-in-class companies vs. the industry average by marketing automation feature leverage, including reporting & analytics (95 percent for best-in-class vs. 69 percent for all others), lead scoring (75 percent vs. 55 percent) and cookie-based web tracking (63 percent vs. 44 percent). Or as Kucera put it, for most companies, "it's a bit like using a supercar to drive Miss Daisy around town."

THE FIVE STAGES OF LEAD QUALIFICATION

Everybody wants qualified leads. The right person, at the right company, ready to buy with money to spend. Those may be the leads you want, and the leads that close, but you'll go crazy (and possibly broke) trying to generate exclusively leads that look like this. A better way, that not only yields the most sales-ready leads now but also a growing pipeline of opportunities down the road, is to keep the funnel wide, wide open at the very top and narrow/filter through a series of qualification stages before the right leads get to a sales rep.

Below are five basic stages of lead qualification. Some companies get far more sophisticated, but for most readers this framework could very quickly segment and operationalize your existing and new leads into the right buckets, make the best use of your sales team's time, and significantly subsidize lead generation budgets in the months ahead.

Stage 1: Names

This is the most basic level, with virtually no filter. This might not even require lead capture through a registration form. It can include names captured via a trade show drawing, newsletter sign-ups, those who registered for a white paper with little more than a name and email address (even if it's a personal address like Gmail or Hotmail).

It can also be a qualified list you purchase or aggregate, but for the purpose of this framework let's assume each of these names have done

something to proactively give you their contact information (no matter how sparse).

There's no direct action with this list until another, simple layer of qualification.

Stage 2: In-Profile Leads

These individuals still haven't expressed any interest in your product or service. But you can start to narrow your list based on basic criteria to determine which of your compiled names even have a chance of becoming a customer.

This step assumes you already have defined what a qualified prospect looks like. On the surface, that means the right company and the right individual, based on title or role. This step can also include filtering by particularly important company characteristics that can be identified externally – things like whether the company has a particular public initiative (going carbon-neutral, for example) or whether they have customer login capabilities (if you're selling online transaction or security capabilities, for example).

The vast majority of good leads at this stage are qualified but not ready to buy. That means they're in-profile, the right company and/or individual, but they haven't exhibited any specific interest or buying signals. Yet. Hence the next stage:

Stage 3: Marketing Qualified Leads (MQLs)*

Now we start to get into the jargon and

acronyms you may hear in a variety of lead scoring and marketing automation circles. At this stage, the right-profiled prospect has exhibited some level of interest or early buying behavior. It can be site traffic patterns you're watching via a service such as Optify or Hubspot. It can be a demo request following a couple months of webinar registrations. Tools from Optify and Marketo, for example, can also help you score leads based on site visit frequency, type of content they check out, duration of visits, and a variety of other weighted activities.

The more advanced marketing automation systems can automatically pass to sales the leads that pass a certain lead score threshold. But you can also do this manually.

Many companies pass these leads directly on to the sales team, but the leads haven't necessarily indicated they're ready to buy. They've only exhibited certain activities that tell us they could be close. Hence, some companies have instituted phone-based lead qualifiers to take MQLs and further qualify them for potential sales activity.

Stage 4: Sales-Accepted Leads (SALs)*

Leads that pass the above stage with a high-enough lead score go to the phone-based lead qualifiers. Their job is to get the prospect on the phone and ask the questions that prospect behavior and tracking can't easily capture. This includes company and/or individual priorities and pain points, specific prioritization and/or

timing to solve the problem, and interest (based on those answers) in learning more about a possible solution.

Some of these leads will now be qualified and ready to buy. Some will be qualified and have a need, but the timing isn't right (for a variety of reasons). Some may have been incorrectly scored and need to go back to marketing (i.e. back to stage 3).

Stage 5: Sales Qualified Leads (SQLs)*

These prospects are qualified and ready to buy. They have a timeline, they have identified or have access to budget. They are the decision maker and/or have the decision-maker actively engaged and on the same page re: prioritization and timing. They also likely have a "compelling event" in the company or industry that's driving urgency.

For many organizations, these leads are immediate opportunities. They're active deals in the pipeline with an expected or estimated close date.

If you're an organization that currently pushes all leads directly to sales, moving from a two-step process to a five-step process may be a bit intimidating. If so, start slow. Add just one additional stage first (only send sales the in-profile leads, for example). Then add another when you feel ready.

THREE QUICK EXAMPLES THAT PROVE NURTURE MARKETING WORKS

The idea that most of your prospects aren't ready to buy, and that you can increase your sales conversion yield with that list by staying in touch with value over time, sounds good. But unless you've seen or experienced the effect of that theory, it's often too easy to just push to close as many prospects, right now, as possible.

But if you can effectively separate out the qualified and ready-to-buy prospects to close now, while simultaneously building value and preference with the much-larger list of everyone else, you'll close considerable business over time with minimal incremental work.

Here are three very quick anecdotes that prove it works.

1. "These Leads Are Dead" Becomes A 2X Sales Result Six Months Later

We started working with a company a few years ago, and to start they handed us a database of 60,000 leads "of dubious origin" (their words). The sales team hated this list, was tired of calling it, and said these leads were either unqualified or just plain dead.

Without a lot of fanfare or marketing automation tools, we started creating and delivering value-added content to this list—newsletters, webinars, white paper offers, lots of content that focused on addressing and answering questions

the audience had, well beyond what we were selling.

Long story short, six months later, 45 percent of the company's sales had come from that "dead" list. The list continued to deliver sales in subsequent months as well.

2. Right Time, Right Place Becomes Biggest Deal Of The Year

That same program and list generated the largest single deal of the year for the company. A prospect on the 60,000 "dead" lead list received an invitation to an upcoming webinar. He didn't attend the webinar, nor did he register. He simply replied to the email invitation, telling the sales rep that he just got out of a meeting and "finally" got the green light to move forward with the project he'd been pitching for more than a year.

The prospect was qualified, educated and wasn't shopping around. That deal, the biggest of the year for the sales organization, closed in less than half the typical sales cycle length.

3. Easiest Deal I've Ever Closed Took More Than Two Years Of Hard Work

Recently, I got a call from the CEO of a fast-growing technology company on the East Coast. We had met at a conference two years ago. At the time, I did what I usually do with people I

meet at events—followed up immediately after, invited her to join my newsletter list, put her into my nurture marketing systems, and pretty much moved on.

To hear from her two years later was great. Her business is exploding, and she wanted help organizing and accelerating her marketing efforts. Less than a week later, she was a recurring-revenue client for our business.

On one hand, that's one of the fastest deals we've closed and the least amount of work I've put into a pitch. On the other hand, I worked that deal hard for two years. The CEO had been reading my newsletter, following my blog, and knew I could help her with exactly what she needed done.

DISQUALIFIED DOESN'T MEAN DEAD—NURTURING LEADS BACK TO LIFE

Many corporate marketing teams that distribute leads to a sales or channel organization, never to determine the final disposition. It's like they go into a black hole and the opportunities lost are scary to imagine. Many times a "Marketing Qualified Lead" (MQL) may be disqualified by sales for various reasons—some legitimate or not so legitimate. Disqualified leads present fantastic nurturing opportunities that can develop into future revenue.

Disqualified doesn't mean 'dead!'

It's Alive!

A well developed and executed lead management process ensures leads disqualified by sales will move into a nurturing program or process. This begins with a well defined matrix of a qualified lead. There are several models for this that revolve around budgets, timeframe, decision making authority, deal size, and need. (Critical point! Sales and marketing must agree on the qualification definition that fits customer personas and goals of the company.)

Check The Pulse Of A Disqualified Lead.

Managing the the lead process with marketing automation and CRM systems, leads can be distributed to sales based on pre-defined qualification criteria. In general these marketing qualified leads demonstrated a level of engagement by requesting information,

visiting sites, completing web forms, downloading content, etc. while providing more information that builds their profile. With this profile, once an MQL threshold is reached, that lead is passed to sales.

Don't Bury The Lead

When sales directly engages with an MQL they may learn more specific details that actually disqualify the lead. Maybe the budget for the fiscal year is already spent. Maybe a new decision maker is taking over the project. Possibly the business pain has lost some priority for a limited period of time. All of these are legitimate reasons to temporarily disqualify a lead in the short term. That doesn't mean the lead is dead!

These leads should enter into a nurturing program where scheduled contact is administered with a marketing automation system. The contact and touch points should include high value content. The key objectives for nurturing are demonstrating credibility and validating the lead contact's decision to evaluate and ultimately make a purchase.

In the "old days" of 1.2 percent response direct mail marketing and simplified sales contact management, these disqualified leads may have simply been tossed or neglected.

Do The Math—A Scenario

Lead nurturing can exponentially increase marketing effectiveness!

To demonstrate, let's run a simplified process for a fictional company. On average each month 500 Marketing Qualified Leads are distributed to sales, 50, or 10 percent are disqualified. Those 50 disqualified leads are then classified to enter into the nurturing program. Over the course of 12 months, that's 600 leads nurtured and kept warm! In this scenario just 10 percent are RE-qualified and passed back to sales in a 12 month period, that gives sales 60 leads to work with! Just imagine the impact to revenue when you estimate average deal size and closure rates. Another consideration: If you don't nurture your leads, your competitor will.

Bottom line, every lead is precious! And disqualified does not mean dead!

EMAIL CONTACT GOVERNANCE WITH MARKETING AUTOMATION

The benefits of contact cadence ensure a database of customers will receive the right information at the right time without being exhausted by excessive and uncoordinated communications.

Complementary to cadence is Email Contact Governance. This is the series of people and policies that determine who, how, what and when customers and prospects can be contacted using marketing automation systems. *(Please note: Governance is not intended to restrict sales contact! Sales managers and reps may initially interpret this means they can't make calls or appointments. Not so!!)*

Email Contact Governance is especially critical for companies that have multiple business units that run independent campaigns. In the era of confederated business units and executives who desire to “cross-sell” and “up-sell” to other business unit customers, companies head into the dangerous territory of uncoordinated spamming and damaged customer relationships. *(In some countries and U.S. states this may even be illegal email contact which is another topic in itself.)* An effective Email Contact Governance Policy and Team can actually help strengthen customer relationships and support contact cadence with a campaign strategy.

Who—The Team

- Corporate Executive Sponsor

- Corporate Governance Lead—the one throat to choke!
- Assigned Marketing Automation Pros (in the necessary business units)
- Business Unit Lead/Manager
- Sales Operations Lead
- Legal • Channel Partner Leads
- THE CUSTOMER—provide a symbolic seat at the table to keep the focus on how to best communicate with the customer!!

When—The Coordination Plan

- Corporate Communications Calendar coordinated with Business Unit Marketing Automation Pros
- Campaign Calendar Coordination
- Authorized Communications—who can send information and how often
- Team Communication—The team lead should keep everyone on the same plan and regularly review changes

What—The Content

- Opt-In or Opt-Out Profiles: Give your leads and customers the information they want
- Don't send emails to contacts who specifically opt-out of the options provided
- Send consistently planned and remarkably executed email to those that Opt-In

Worst-Case Scenario: Mojito Manufacturer, Inc. conducts a strategically important annual

customer event. The corporate communications team promotes each event up to a year in advance beginning at the current event. Communication frequency via email increases as the date approaches. Business units also run their own event communications independent of corporate often duplicating or triplicating the emails sent to customer contacts. This is where the worlds collide! Combine this activity with planned email campaigns and throw in 3rd party channel and chaos ensues! Sales managers scream at marketing managers that customers are complaining of too many emails. Believe it or not this is quite common!

Ideas To Consider:

- Corporate teams should provide content for business units to include in their planned communications and vice versa.
- Authorizations—limit who can send campaign or corporate email using authorizations in marketing automation systems. (This should NOT limit direct 1:1 email from sales reps, support, etc.)
- Send the right corporate/campaign information to the right contacts at the right time based on profiles and opt-in information.
- Don't rely on email alone for customer communications
- Use multiple channels, including social media
- Customer Perspective: Think about how you would want to be contacted!

CONTACT CADENCE WITH MARKETING AUTOMATION

Marketing automation with systems like Eloqua, Manticore Technology, Marketo, Pardot and others are like driving an amazing Ferrari, or even a powerful tractor trailer rig. They offer fantastic capabilities to develop new and profitable customer relationships and tools to measure marketing ROI. With all of these capabilities comes great enthusiasm and one that must be tempered with discipline and planning.

Cadence: “A Recurrent Rhythmical Series”

Most parents wouldn’t let an inexperienced teenage driver at the wheel or a beautiful Italian sports car without some solid ground rules, policies, and training. The same can be said for how organizations use marketing automation systems. Contact Cadence is critical to make sure all of the power is used effectively and customer relationships and reputations are kept strong

Contact cadence is very important to measure and manage marketing campaigns throughout the course of a year. Cadence starts with a strategic plan on implementing and using a marketing automation system. A core component of this overall strategy is developing and managing a campaign calendar that plans contacts over the course of a year. Who you are contacting with the right content and how often. This helps build the proper cadence and keeps your database and relationships healthy.

Cadence benefits: A well planned annual campaign calendar with the proper target audience lead to increased conversion/response rates, better qualified opportunities with shorter

sales cycles and strong credible relationships. If you execute a well planned campaign schedule with high value content in measured sequences, not only will your campaigns increase in effectiveness, you may find your database contacts actually look forward to your contact.

Risks With Poor Cadence: With random, excessive and unplanned marketing campaign contact, an organization risks dramatically lowered campaign conversion rates and damaged perception. Customer may perceive that you are simply “spamming” and not really providing high value content at the right time in their buying cycle. If you exceed cadence with customers, they will disengage. Very simple.

Ideas For Developing Proper Cadence With Marketing Automation

- Develop an annual campaign calendar and share with your entire organization and partner channel.
- Segment your audience based on their needs and place in their buying cycle. Provide the right content to the right audience at the right time.
- Provide a balance of “free” content downloads and high value content where contacts fill out simple forms.
- A well-planned marketing schedule allows your database “rest” to build anticipation and increase conversion rates with your next contact.

Contact cadence using a marketing automation system enables an organization to manage customer contacts and increase overall effectiveness and conversions.

DEVELOP A DATA MANAGEMENT PROCESS

A data management strategy is one of the more critical steps outlined in this paper. If you have a strong data management process, it will help shorten sales cycles by ensuring highly qualified leads are sent to sales

Direct marketing experience has stated for years the “garbage in, garbage out” principle. Marketing automation platforms still require active and ongoing data management. Lead nurturing and management programs require quality data to succeed. Without quality data, lead flow will suffer which ultimately impacts revenue generation.

This is especially critical with CRM integration. There are many technologies and services that help cleanse and maintain existing systems. Make sure the lead management strategy includes managing data quality.

Consider how leads will be drawn and captured by your organization. Once initial contact is established and awareness is established, leads can be nurtured further into their buying cycle. A marketing automation platform provides a predictable method for managing leads through this process. Depending on the type of activity and the role of a contact, a lead may achieve a threshold score that calls for a handoff to sales for prospecting follow up.

Solid definitions of leads in their different stages of qualification, or disqualification, are also critical. From here the scoring, treatment, content, escalation, disqualification, and nurturing are all determined.

BUILD A COMPREHENSIVE CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY

Content is often the most overlooked and underestimated ingredient for a successful marketing automation strategy.

A well run marketing organization must have an annual campaign strategy and calendar, regardless of whether or not a marketing automation system is employed. Without a strategy and calendar, lead flow will be inconsistent and the content requirements will be unknown. Without content, the campaigns won't get off the ground and the investment in marketing automation will be wasted.

Consider the content required to run campaigns for leads at various stages in the buying cycle. And from there additional content will be required to support nurturing campaigns that help prevent leakage in the marketing funnel. Depending on which industry in B2B marketing, there will be different individuals at a target company that will require content suited to their roles and influence. Develop the right content for the right audience to be delivered at the right time using a marketing automation platform.

Educational Content—Information designed to help prospective customers better understand the segment and solution. Well-developed content that educates also establishes credibility. Industry reports, webinars, keynote event presentations, blogs, social media user groups, and white papers are excellent formats for educational content.

Awareness Content—As prospective customers become more educated on the segment and

solutions they will evaluate how vendors address their needs. In addition to the formats used with educational content, customer evidence through case studies is fantastic in this area. Also, content that focuses on “how-to” or “best-practices” is a perfect fit in this area.

Affirmation Content—As leads are nurtured into opportunities for sales follow up, they need information that helps lead them to a confident purchase decision. This is the area where vendors can define the terms of an evaluation that competitors must follow. Develop an RFP model or template. Provide more case studies and best practices. ROI models are also valuable and help develop a business case. The goal here is to build confidence that YOU are the right one to work with.

Loyalty Content—The sale has been won but now is not the time for complacency. Develop the content and delivery channels that help your hard-earned customers squeeze every drop of value from your solution. The more value you provide with strong communications and content, the stronger the relationship and the less chance of a defection.

Not all content is created equally. Make sure the right content is provided to your customers and leads at the right time in their buying process. When done properly using marketing automation, you will build credibility, awareness, and set the standard your competition must react to in order to keep up. That's a position of strength!

ENSURE COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEMS AND PROCESS TRAINING

When a company adopts a marketing automation solution, there is too much at stake with both revenue and politics for a weak start due to poor training.

Too many marketing automation providers sell their product as a silver bullet marketing solution. But the simple fact is that demand generation and customer acquisition workflow is complex. Vendors and users alike have common interests in pursuing and encouraging a successful solution deployment.

Not only should the campaigns and lead flow processes be well developed by the company,

the users of the marketing automation tool must be very well trained in how to implement them. Some vendors are incredibly conservative and guarded with who and how they provide training for fear of letting too much information into the market. This is self defeating which ultimately negatively affects system usage.

The internal champions and power users for the chosen marketing automation platform should have comprehensive training. Without training, a marketing automation platform inevitably will be used merely as an email engine, limiting its value to less than 5 percent. Companies should not go into production without comprehensive training.

IMPLEMENT YOUR MARKETING AUTOMATION SYSTEM WITH CRM INTEGRATION

Generating high quality leads without a systematic way to hand them off to sales is pointless.

Cloud-based CRM systems like Salesforce.com and Microsoft Dynamics CRM are prolific and many marketing automation systems provide efficient technology integrations with most of the major CRM players. This is where organizations derive massive value from the advanced heavy lifting of developing a lead management process.

To be clear, this step is not as easy as mapping fields. The process must be in place at least 80 percent of the way for this to work. Sales management and the sales representatives must buy into the process. Sales must follow up on the marketing qualified leads and provide data back to help measure whether the right leads are flowing, or not.

Marketing automation integrated with CRM supports the full cycle of developing and managing leads and measuring effectiveness. Marketing executives can directly measure their performance on revenue generation. Both marketing and sales are held accountable with this integration, and that is good! This critical information must be captured within a CRM system.

Marketing automation systems that have the best integration with CRM systems allow for bi-directional information synchronization. A sales rep can add qualification or prospecting attributes to a lead in the CRM system and pass the lead back to marketing for further lead nurturing. Additionally, sales can add their own contacts into sales-led nurturing campaigns using a defined library of high value content that will help them progress the lead closer to a sale. Tight integration with bi-directional synchronization ensures these efforts are well coordinated.

A sales organization that has the training and methodology implemented with their teams to effectively utilize CRM has a competitive advantage. Without showing the interaction and behavior prior to sales engagement, a representative is essentially selling cold.

ESTABLISH COMMUNICATION CHANNELS AND PROCESSES

Without communication any strategic initiative will fail.

Marketing automation initiatives impact groups across an entire organization from sales to operations to service and even finance. The marketing executive and sponsor must rally inter- and intra-departmental support for a marketing automation initiative.

The operational team for the marketing automation platform must communicate the

overall campaign strategy for a given period of time to ensure sales and partners are aware.

Communication ensures long term requirements for content are understood and delivery is on time. Without the content, campaigns strategies will run out of gas.

Most importantly, strong organizational communication involves more of the organization in the marketing automation strategy which provides direct impact to revenue generation.

MORE ABOUT US

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ABOUT MATT HEINZ

Matt Heinz is the Founder and President of Heinz Marketing, Inc. Matt brings more than 15 years of marketing, business development and sales experience from a variety of organizations, vertical industries and company sizes. His career has focused on delivering measurable results for his employers and clients in the way of greater sales, revenue growth, product success and customer loyalty.

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Brian Hansford is an account director at Heinz Marketing and 20 year B2B sales and marketing veteran. Brian leads the Marketing Automation Practice for Heinz and is an expert working with a wide variety of platforms including Eloqua, Marketo, Pardot, and Salesforce. He has developed and managed complex campaigns for a range of companies and clients and frequently writes about best practices based on those experiences.

ABOUT HEINZ MARKETING

Heinz Marketing is a Seattle marketing agency focused on sales acceleration. Heinz Marketing helps clients achieve sustained sales success by growing revenue from existing customers and cost effectively identifying and winning new customers.

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