



Improve Performance and Revenue with
Marketing Automation
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Both business-to-business and business-to-consumer organizations invest in marketing automation platforms as a way to make their marketing organizations more efficient. These platforms often include systems for managing digital assets, allocating resources and tracking marketing expenditures, automating campaigns (online and offline), marketing activity and demand generation measurement, and web content and lead management.

As the CEO, marketing automation is an important tool for helping you improve and measure how your organization interacts with your prospects and customers. Why? Because while your marketing and sales teams are probably proficient at connecting at the beginning and end of the conversation, the real challenge is managing the middle of the conversation. The middle conversation is when prospects and customers are in the “in-between”. By “in-between, we mean in-between initial contact and interest and the short-list and final selection. Good marketing automation system enables you to manage the middle.

The initial reason to invest in marketing automation is because you want your sales and marketing organizations to cost-effectively sustain a dialogue with qualified opportunities until they are ready to buy and, at the same time, be able to monitor the interaction between these opportunities and your organization. But these platforms have far more leverage. They enable you to tailor your content and interactions to enhance how you engage with prospects and customers. As a result, you can positively affect the conversion rate and sales cycle. And in these tough times, who wouldn't want to see higher and faster conversions?

These benefits in and of themselves present a good business case for marketing automation. There are actually several behind the scenes benefits. To properly implement and deploy marketing, automation requires and enables stronger alignment between your sales and marketing arms. Making the investment payoff requires agreement between sales and marketing about how the customer buys, the buying stages, and what constitutes a qualified opportunity both in terms of fit (segment, budget, size, etc) and buying behaviors. Fit and behavior serve as key criteria for creating a lead scoring schema. So, the decision to implement marketing automation is actually a decision to align your sales and marketing processes, definitions, and metrics.

What Marketing Automation Isn't

Marketing automation isn't a silver bullet in terms of addressing these gaps but, if it becomes a part of the organization's culture and DNA, it will certainly serve your organization well. Research suggests that when marketing and sales processes, skills, and systems are aligned, the organization can see a five-fold improvement in revenue. Now there's a business case!

Marketing automation isn't magic. Success depends upon taking a methodical and disciplined approach to segmentation, defining the customer buying process and establishing agreed upon definitions of stages, creating personas, establishing common metrics, and a commitment to faithfully use the system.

If You Build It They will Come

The premise behind marketing automation is that it will help your marketers increase the number of business opportunities for your company, deliver sales-worthy and ready leads to your sales team, improve your visibility into the pipeline, and enable your marketing organization to focus on those efforts that will drive the highest conversion rate and the lowest cost. The value proposition is that marketing automation will shorten your sales cycle and help improve your forecast accuracy. Sounds too good to be true? Marketing automation is only as good as the effort you make in using it. To use it properly and realize these kinds of results will most likely require process changes and skills improvements. If you are willing to make these investments, you can realize the benefits of implementing a marketing automation platform.

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