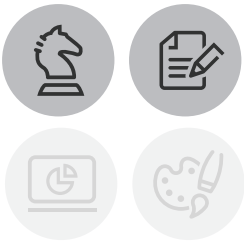




MARKETING AUTOMATION: WHY USE AN IMPLEMENTATION PARTNER?

Have you heard this one before? ... *The salesman says, "This computer will cut your workload by 50%," and the office manager replies, "That's great! I'll take two of them."* Ah, if only it were that simple. Technology has certainly changed our lives, and though some would argue that the changes haven't all been positive, most would say it has simplified many of our daily tasks and allowed us to accomplish things that were once unattainable. In the realm of marketing, a prime example is our ability to identify and communicate directly with potential customers. Thanks to a variety of marketing automation tools, it's now possible to know more about your customers than your extended family! However, as the joke implies, technology doesn't work alone—it requires strategy and skills to be effective.





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The Case for Automation

There is no denying that marketing technology, which encompasses email and social media marketing systems, marketing analytics, CRM/sales automation, data management, and more, is growing faster than weeds in the spring. In fact, there are nearly 11 times more B2B organizations using marketing automation today than there were in early 2011.¹ According to a 2014 study by the Aberdeen Group, nearly 70% of the businesses in the study were using a marketing automation platform (MAP) or currently implementing one.² While marketing automation continues to prove its overall value in both acquiring and retaining customers, marketers who have been using these tools over several years have identified these primary benefits:

- **Taking repetitive tasks out of marketers' hands, allowing focus on other projects (36%)**
- **Better targeting of customers and prospects (30%)**
- **Improving the customer experience (10%)**
- **Better email marketing (9%)**
- **Reduction of human error in campaigns (8%)**
- **Lead management (4%) and multichannel marketing (3%)³**

In other reports, the majority of marketers surveyed indicated that time savings, increased customer engagement, better communication with customers, and more opportunity for upselling were the biggest advantages of marketing automation technology. Perhaps that's why 63% of companies successful in marketing automation (MA) plan to increase their MA budget in the coming year. Of course, the key word there is "successful."



On average, 49% of companies are currently using marketing automation, with more than half of B2B companies (55%) adopting the strategy.

Source: Emailmonday, "The Ultimate Marketing Automation Stats" (2016)

The most significant barriers to marketing automation success are:

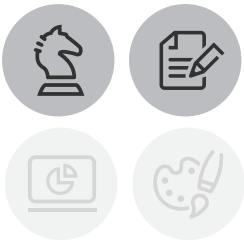
- 52%** *Lack of an effective strategy*
- 42%** *Complexity of the system*
- 38%** *Inadequate contact data quality*
- 32%** *Lack of employee skills*
- 31%** *Lack of relevant content*
- 30%** *Marketing and sales alignment*
- 27%** *Budget constraints*

Source: Ascend2 "Marketing Automation Trends Survey" (2016)

Results May Vary

Simply implementing a marketing automation tool doesn't guarantee success. Marketing automation has the *ability* to identify and nurture quality leads, engage customers at the right time in the buying cycle, accelerate the sales process, access data and analytics to design more effective future campaigns, and ultimately increase revenue. Similar to one of those "miracle" weight loss aids, it sounds too good to be true! Just buy the software, connect it your website, and *voila*, you're reaping the rewards, right? Not so fast—much like real weight loss requires eating right and exercising (bummer), marketing automation requires planning and effort. Too many companies make the investment in marketing automation without ever achieving the results they want.

As Spry Idea's Director of Sales and Marketing, Jeremy Sterling, explains, "It's very easy to get swayed by the statistics into thinking that this tool will solve all of your marketing problems. In reality, marketing automation isn't a silver bullet, but it can help to make great content infinitely more effective. For businesses new to the technology, it's crucial to set realistic goals and expectations and to make sure that you have solid content strategy driving your program. Often this involves revisiting some of the foundational components of your strategy."



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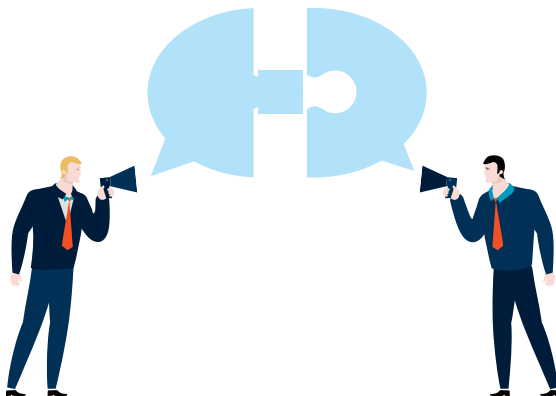
There are a number of reasons that marketing automation fails to produce results for companies, including:



#1 Lack of strategy—Before shopping around for a marketing automation tool, you should have a clearly outlined plan. What specific goals do you want to accomplish? Who will analyze the data and how will it be shared between sales and marketing? Do you understand your buyers' journey and have a strategy for each step in that process? Where in the marketing process are you currently struggling the most? A good automation supplier will ask these questions and more. They will dive in and take the time to learn about your business, your goals and challenges, and then provide a tool that fits your strategy.



#2 Not enough content—Many of our clients are genuinely shocked by how much content is needed to support an automated marketing system. They install the software and then realize they have next to nothing to send out! Content is the foundation of inbound marketing, so it's critical to create consistent, relevant content to keep your audience interested. You might think of marketing automation systems as pipes to and from your customers; without something to put in the pipes, you're not likely to get much back.



#3 Poor alignment between sales and marketing—It's no secret that though the sales and marketing teams should be working together, they often focus on different priorities. In some cases, there is simply poor communication between the two departments. In order for an automated system to work effectively, both teams must be onboard. It's essential for sales and marketing folks to learn how the tool works, what the data mean, and how it fits into the overall strategy. Keep in mind, a study by Marketo revealed that companies where sales and marketing were closely aligned were 67% better at closing deals and generated 209% more revenue from marketing.



#4 Lack of support—Marketing automation systems can be complicated, and although most suppliers offer installation and training, most don't offer the additional support services that are required to help clients fully utilize and maximize the technology. After all, their primary goal is to sell the tool, and while they want you to be successful, it's not financially viable for these companies to provide strategic services, content development, design, and more once you're up and running. For that, they often refer their clients to partner agencies who are skilled at providing those services.



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Making the Most of Your Investment

If you've done any research on marketing automation, or have already implemented a system, you know there are many options, which can be confusing. Let us offer a few words of wisdom:

#1 You probably don't need every tool in the toolshed to accomplish your goals, so be selective. Choose the best fit for your marketing strategy. For instance, some marketing automation suppliers are focused on the unique needs of B2B organizations, such as long sales cycles. They provide systems with better drip program functionality, which gives you more opportunities to nurture customers. As Spry evaluated platforms for our own marketing automation, we selected Salesforce.com's Pardot due to its enhanced capabilities for nurturing B2B sales opportunities.

#2 Partner with a specialist for implementation and long-term management. Once your system is installed and your employees are trained, you'll undoubtedly discover that there is much more to do. We find that many companies purchase a "high-performance vehicle," only to putter around the neighborhood or, worse, leave it in the garage! To make the most of your investment, consider the help of an agency who can not only assist you with the full implementation of your system, but help you develop and manage content, keep sales and marketing working together, analyze data, and strategize future campaigns.

#3 Be patient. Only 8% of companies see increased revenues within six months of adopting marketing automation. That number increases to 32% after one year and 40% after two years or more. With time, 17% of companies say marketing automation has been very beneficial for their company, and another 57% say MA has been quite beneficial.⁴ And, for those who see limited or no benefits, it's highly likely that they are not making the most of their investment. In fact, 59% of companies do not fully use the technology they have available.⁵

75% of very successful users outsource all or part of their marketing automation strategy planning to benefit from specialized expertise.

Source: Marketo & Ascend2 "Marketing Automation Strategies for Sustaining Success" (2015)

Although the implementation can be tricky at points, Jeremy Sterling encourages Spry's clients with the promise of the measurable benefits they will see. "Once you're successfully deploying your content with marketing automation, then the real fun starts—digging into the analytics! We love to help clients evaluate the effectiveness of their efforts with the enhanced reporting capabilities that are available through

this technology. With thoughtful review and optimization, we're able to provide helpful, relevant content to customers precisely when and where they're searching for it. This gives us unprecedented opportunity to bridge the gap between marketing and sales and to prove that what we're doing works. It really is a marketer's dream."

Now, back to those companies who are planning on upping their investment in marketing automation next year; instead of buying more bells and whistles, why not use some of that budget to make sure you're taking full advantage of the system you already have.

Marketing automation may never take over 100% of a marketer's workload, but with an effective strategy, the proper integration of people and systems, and a good support team, you can realize the full potential of these powerful tools and achieve the results for which you're looking.

Sources

¹ SiriusDecisions "B-to-B Marketing Automation Study (2014)

² Aberdeen Group "State of Marketing Automation 2014: Processed that Produce" (2014)

³ Redeye and TFM\$A Insights "The Marketing Automation Report 2014" (2014)

⁴ B2Bmarketing.net and Circle Research "Benchmarking Report Marketing Automation" (2015)

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Imagine Business Development, "Four Reasons Marketing Automation Fails," by David Fletcher (September 16, 2015)