

connect

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by MAIL PRINT

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Shaking Hands

The Holy Grail of business is making yourself invaluable to your customers. By becoming invaluable and a trusted advisor, you won't have to worry about tying your customers to you with high switching costs. We believe in creating relationships, not barriers and know that marketing, customer service, and being nice is critical to do this.

We've been immersed so deeply in such a product-oriented world that the next gizmo quickly becomes the last gizmo. Having wonderful products or great technology simply won't be enough to create indispensable value in the new landscape.

Our most-trusted relationships are with the people closest to us. In turn, many of us lean on these relationships for advice and guidance. If you or your brand exists outside of these circles of influence, you most likely won't receive any attention. But if you or your brand is a trusted entity, you not only will be listened to, but also sought out.

Henry Ford once said, "If I had asked customers what they wanted, they would have said a faster horse." Perhaps nobody understood that better than Steve Jobs. His trick wasn't that he listened to the market; it was that he became a trusted part of people's lives. He told them what they wanted to hear even though they didn't even know that is what they wanted. His ability to create that relationship with his brand was as intimate as shaking hands.

That relationship is the cornerstone to building a valuable customer relationship. In our feature, "Upping the Ante," we share insights on creating perceived value and becoming indispensable to your clients from some of the world's most renowned brands and thought leaders. Their perspectives

Our most-trusted relationships are with the people closest to us. In turn, many of us lean on these relationships for advice and guidance.

remind us of the crucial role marketing will play going forward.

In addition, the article "The Nature of Nurturing" provides an in depth look at some of the tools that will not only open up the door to new prospects, but also nurture those relationships into building trust.

The next frontier is Marketing Automation and creating strategic campaigns that nurture your current and future customers at the touch of a button. Instead of making cold calls, these automated marketing campaigns are designed to entice your leads to call you, instead of the opposite way around. How much time and cost can you save by automating your sales cycle?

We are very proud to continue providing digestible, relevant content. We believe in going deeper and defining our organization by the markets we serve. The climate has changed. Relationships cannot be faked. Trust has come back into vogue. In turn, one of our goals is to continue to build that trust and return to the days when a handshake meant something.

Warmest regards and Best of Success,

Gina M. Danner

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That's what he said ...

“To sweat the small stuff means to be uncompromising about anything that affects the quality of a product or experience for customers ... If you don't seem paranoid about perfection, you're probably not aiming high enough.”

– Box CEO and co-founder Aaron Levie on the importance of sweating the small stuff to create something exceptional for your customers

Click on this

The wonderful world of emails continues to mature, as open rates increased by 7.8 percent in the third quarter of 2011, compared to the previous year, according to a recent report from marketing company Epsilon and the Direct Marketing Association. In addition, the average volume increased from the previous year by 14.9 percent. The report, “Q3 2011 Email Trends and Benchmarks,” also showed that click rates of 5.5 percent have remained steady over the past two years. The results are based on 5.7 billion emails sent by Epsilon clients in July, August and September 2011.



To social network or not to social network ...

Just how integrated are social networks into the overall marketing mix? You may be surprised by the answer. According to a recent study by the Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) Council, while 52 percent of marketers say their brands have enjoyed greater influence as a result of participation in social networks, only 17 percent say social media is fully meshed, aligned and integrated into the whole game. The study – “Variance with the Social Media Brand Experience” – also reported that marketers find value in social media, because they believe it helps them become more relevant to customers (57 percent); build better relationships (54 percent); and promote awareness and demand for products (49 percent). The CMO study, done in partnership with Lithium, was based on an online survey of more than 1,300 consumers and 132 senior marketers conducted during the fourth quarter.

72

The percentage of consumers who said they have seen a QR code, according to an online study conducted by strategic marketing firm Russell Herder.

Sing it up

Thanks to 180 Amsterdam, Western Union has dusted off the rust of its singing telegram service. This time around, live performances are out and a new microsite is in. The microsite enables consumers to choose songs and pair them with musical artists in rendering a ditty, karaoke-style, with message forwarded via email to the recipient. Western Union will start charging for the new service this year.

Mastering the art of social proofing

Social proof defines how people are wired to learn from the actions of others. So how do you perfect it? You must build and highlight your social proof, which helps new users learn about you. Sharing your product and generating social proof through social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, etc., can increase the level of their influences. Aileen Lee, a partner at venture firm Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers, recently provided a snapshot of how some savvy companies measure the impact of the various forms of social proof for the website Tech Crunch (www.techcrunch.com). Here are some of her insights.

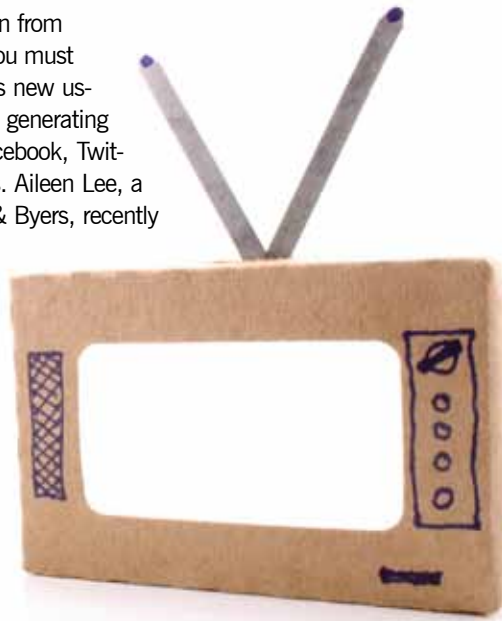
1. THE EXPERT – Approval from a credible expert such as a magazine or blogger can have immense digital influence. For example, visitors referred by a fashion magazine or blogger to the designer fashion rentals online site Rent the Runway drove a 200 percent higher conversion rate than visitors driven by a paid search.

2. THE CELEBRITY – While some 25 percent of U.S. TV commercials use celebrities to great effect, only a handful of web startups have to date. Take William Shatner and Priceline. Today, Priceline has a \$23 billion market cap. Shatner's shares are estimated to be worth \$600 million.

3. THE USER – The NHL has focused their user experience by offering exclusive content and access to players via social networks significantly increasing their fan base.

4. WISDOM OF THE CROWDS – Ray Kroc's form of social proofing started in 1955 when he hung an "Over 1 Million Served" sign at the first McDonald's. This would be known as the "a million people can't be wrong" approach.

5. WISDOM OF YOUR FRIENDS – Learning from your friends via the social web is likely the best app of social proof in terms of 1:1 impact. And then there's that whole viral growth thing. Take Zynga. Friends inviting friends to play games such as Words with Friends through Facebook and other social networks helped it grow from 3 million to 41 million average daily users from 2008 to 2009.



That's what he said ...

"We needed to make an impact. We understood and saw that our fans were active in [social media], and we felt we needed to be part of that conversation and kind of be aggressive in that area ... It is kind of a trial system where we find people who have executed well and delivered well in their content – people we have been able to graduate to getting credentials and actually getting clubhouse access."

– Curtis Danburg, senior director of communications for the Cleveland Indians on how the team transformed online influencers into brand ambassadors

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The percent of senior marketing executives who said they purchased ads in social networks to assist in lead generation, according to digital marketing agency lonelybrand. Among agencies that advertise, 23 percent said their companies spend more than \$10,000 a month on ads. On the other side, 32 percent spend less than \$1,000.

Apps and the next frontier

App, app, everywhere an app. According to research firm IDC, the number of annual mobile downloads is projected to grow to 182.7 billion by 2015. There might even be an app for that. Perhaps the biggest story behind the numbers is an impending shift away from the current reliance on mobile app download purchases as the primary focus of app monetization. Instead, developers are expected to focus increasingly on in-app purchasing and advertising to fund business models, a shift IDC found most evident in the free-app category.



Upping the Ante

How to become that silent instrumental partner in your clients business.

By Lorrie Bryan



Do you consider yourself loyal? Do you stick with certain brands and repeatedly do business with the same vendors day in and day out? If a new coffee shop opened right across the street from your favorite coffee outlet and offered the exact same cup of coffee for 25 percent less money, would you become a new customer? What if that cup of coffee sold for half of what you currently are paying? At what price point would you switch to the new coffee shop? Or is price even a consideration?

Maybe you choose to continue patronizing your favorite shop because you can get your cup of caffeine in a fraction of the time it takes the new barista to create your favorite coffee concoction. Or, all else being equal, maybe you just feel more comfortable at your regular coffeehouse – they know your name; they know what your “usual” is; and, well, you just like them better.

While it would not cost you financially (and would actually save you money) to switch to a new coffee shop, you don't. It might cost you a little time if you switch to the new coffee shop, but the real cost of switching likely is psychological. You're loyal to your regular coffee shop, because it's a positive experience you don't want to give up. The emotional switching cost is too high.

In a competitive climate where consumers will abandon favorites at the drop of a coupon, where existing brands are becoming commodities, and new products and services continue to fail at an appalling rate, it's increasingly the psychological switching costs that are at the core of building brand loyalty and, ultimately, success.

“I don't believe in penalizing customers for leaving. Shame on us if they left us because of something we did wrong – it just means we need to work that much harder to win them back.”

– Matt Corey,
Chief Marketing Officer, Golfsmith

Jennie Silbert, partner and co-founder of Innovation Partners International (IPI), frequently stresses to clients that creating loyalty is not about continually selling your product or services. “It's about getting people to like and respect you, and want to purchase your product or service. It's deceptively simple – being liked.” IPI is a consulting firm that specializes in solving business challenges utilizing strength-based, high-engagement approaches. “If you like someone, you are more apt to want to be loyal to them. I think that is often the missing piece of the puzzle in sales. People spend a lot of time trying to convince someone to like their product or service, but actually they have to like you before they like the service or product you are trying to sell them,” Silbert says.

Exit Fees vs. Rewards

What about companies that strategically set the monetary cost of switching to their competitor high enough to deter consumers from making that choice? In 2003, the FCC eliminated one of the biggest barriers to changing cell phone carriers by ruling that customers could retain their



“We love our customers, and we want them to feel that in the way we do business... If you create a wonderful experience for your customers, then they shouldn't want to leave you.”

– Rob Siefker, director,
Zappos Customer Loyalty Team

phone numbers. But the monetary costs to switch carriers (two-year contracts and early-termination fees) strategically are set high enough to give even ardent complainers pause before switching to a competitor.

That is one way to overtly manipulate switching costs, but it's not the best long-term solution. “I really believe in positive affect,”

Silbert says. “And there's a lot of research in neuro science to support this. If you punish someone for leaving and switching to your competitor, you are creating more anger or resentment, and that just validates their choice to switch. Conversely, you reward customers and clients for staying, or give them incentives that will then validate their smart choice. It's not just psychological – it's biological. It's how we're programmed as human beings. It's how our brain works.”

As evidenced by the proliferation of loyalty cards, VIP rewards cards, etc., many respected and successful companies agree that rewarding loyalty is an effective way to create close connections to customers. In less than 12 years since its Internet debut, Zappos.com is the world's largest footwear retailer and a model of exceptional customer service. “Who wants to be in a personal or business relationship where you're afraid to leave because of the penalties associated with going somewhere else?” asks Rob Siefker, director of the customer loyalty team for Zappos, which also offers apparel and accessories. “We love our customers, and we want them to feel that in the way we do business. There are no monetary switching costs, so customers are free to shop for apparel/footwear/etc., wherever they want. If you create a wonderful experience for your customers then they shouldn't want to leave you.”

In fact, Zappos logs a lot of repeat orders, an important sign of loyalty for the retailer. “We have a VIP customer program that offers them a few added benefits,” Siefker says. “For example, VIP customers get free overnight shipping on all of their orders, and they really enjoy knowing that they'll get their orders so quickly. Who doesn't love getting an online purchase the next day without paying for a shipping upgrade?”

Matt Corey, chief marketing officer of Golfsmith, stresses the importance of a positive customer experience as well. “As the leading specialty golf retailer in the U.S., our experience and passion in serving golfers is our biggest asset. I don't believe in penalizing customers for leaving. Shame on us if they left us because of something we did wrong – it just means we need to work that much harder to win them back. Rewards come in many forms – personalized benefits, special services, knowing your customers, etc. Yes, we should all reward our most loyal customers. They are the lifeblood of our business.”

Raising the Emotional Switching Costs

In today's competitive business environment, loyalty reward programs are table stakes – like routine free shipping on Cyber Monday – the minimum a retail business can do to get in the game. As the average lifecycle of a business is becoming shorter, creating sustainability and loyalty is becoming an even greater challenge. So what's the best way to play your hand? Here are three key elements that are essential for raising the emotional switching costs and staying in the game.

1. Commitment to the Customer

Whether you're a large Internet retailer or a business-to-business service provider, creating a positive customer experience is an essential element of building loyalty.

“At Zappos, we think of ourselves as a service company, so everyone knows that our goal is to provide the best possible customer experience,” Siefker says. “That helps keep us focused. From there, we have a great selection, customer-friendly shipping and return policies, fast fulfillment, and a 24/7 contact center. We run all of these portions of our business with the customer in mind.”

“Golf retail is about building relationships with our customers and helping their game, not just today, but for many years to come,” Corey says. “We have created an environment at Golfsmith where we do whatever it takes to help our customers play better. We really listen, learn about their game, and deliver personalized solutions for them – in both products and services.”

“If you like someone, you are more apt to want to be loyal to them. I think that is often the missing piece of the puzzle in sales.”

– Jennie Silbert, partner & co-founder, Innovation Partners International (IPI)

Silbert agrees: “The key to our continued sustainability at IPI is our commitment to client relationships. It’s important to connect with clients in a way that isn’t just about a product or service, but about knowing what they want and need to be successful and being committed to helping them get that. If you demonstrate a genuine interest in them, and in their interests, their success, they will be loyal to you.”

2. Integrity and Authenticity

“There’s something to be said for integrity – helping your customer get what they need, even if that means that you are not the one giving it to them,” Silbert says.

This is a standard practice at Zappos. “We’ll lead a customer to another retailer if we don’t carry the product they’re looking to buy,” Siefker says. “We focus on building emotional connections, and customers feel excited about being able to shop with us. They know we’ll fulfill their order quickly, and we’ll go above and beyond in those rare instances when we might make a mistake. They can trust us, so this relationship is what keeps them coming back.”

Siefker stresses that outstanding customer service starts with an employee culture authentically focused on customer service. The quirky, happy culture that Zappos has become known for helped put them at No. 6 on Fortune’s list of “The 100 Best Companies to Work For.” Employees

Q-W-E-R-T-Y...?

About 75 years ago, August Dvorak, a professor at the University of Washington, received a patent for his unique keyboard layout. The Dvorak layout was designed to address the many problems he associated with the commonly used QWERTY layout, and to spread

out typing functions more evenly to both hands. Although his keyboard layout was undoubtedly more efficient, few of us have Dvorak keyboards. The collective switching costs were too high in the 1930s and are significantly higher today. Imagine the toll it would take on everyone’s time, money and psyche if we all had to switch to a new keyboard layout at this juncture.



enjoy free lunches, no-charge vending machines and access to a full-time life coach. “Create fun and a little weirdness” is one of the company’s guiding tenets.

“We want the experience of shopping with us to create an emotional connection. As an example, we really focus on having fun, personal interactions with our customers when they contact us by phone, live chat or email. This helps build trust and loyalty,” Siefker explains.

3. Positivity

Zappos doesn’t always have the lowest prices, but when you call Zappos’ customer service line you have the option of pressing “5” for the “joke of the day.” (How do you get a peanut to laugh? You crack it up.) Evidently, lower prices don’t raise

switching costs nearly as effectively as a positive customer experience.

Silbert tells her clients and employees that it’s important to always focus on the positive. “Focus on what is possible. In this doom and-gloom economy, it’s important to shed light on what can be and will be. Rather than dwelling on the negative, think and speak in the affirmative. Plants grow toward the light, and humans are no different.”

So, you really want to be instrumental in your clients business? Be nice. Be honest. Tell a joke, share a smile...be the light...give the customer more than what they ask for and create a unique experience. Your customer loyalty will shoot through the roof and will guarantee a return on your investment.



The Nature of Nurturing

Why marketing automation works and how you can create a harmonious sales and marketing environment.

By Michael J. Pallerino

The questions were fast and furious. But Liz McClellan knew what to expect. She had been down this road already. She had taken her company, Sage Business Solutions, on the journey into the world of marketing automation. She had lived through – survived, really – the constant questions about what to expect as far as ROI, quantity of leads, quality of leads, Web analytics, lead scoring, content management, etc. She had been where few still dare to go, including some who had poured into a recent Business Marketing Association (BMA) meeting in Atlanta to dissect her company’s exploits.

Too dramatic? Depends on your situation. The truth is that in today’s business environment – one where more companies are holding every arm of the machine accountable for their actions – you not only have to generate ways to increase revenue streams, but also you’d better make sure they work. And that means your- marketing.

Marketing automation. In today’s marketing environment, the phrase means different things to different people. To some, it may mean anything from simple spreadsheet analysis, to software suites with a full array of tools that measure leads and content management. To others, it may play a key role in helping to create harmony in that never-ending battle between sales and marketing (enter your story here).

But, perhaps more than anything else, marketing automation technology means that you may need to change from a right-brain way of thinking to a left-brain one to comprehend its measurement capabilities. Marketers embarking on the journey of marketing automation will generate leads in a more scientific and analytical way. That’s what McClellan, a 20- year veteran of the marketing game, found when Sage, whose brands include Sage Peachtree, Sage ACT!, Sage Abra, Sage SalesLogix, Sage MAS 90 and Sage X3, undertook the endeavor.

“I think marketing automation is a smart tool to invest in, but you need to set the right expectations,” says McClellan, Sage’s Vice President of primary marketing and retail sales. “As we began our own journey to review marketing automation platforms, I wish I’d had someone take me aside and tell me the brutal truth. I could have handled it. But nobody

wanted to bring me down from my optimism. I thought for sure we had cracked the code on how to boost our new customer-acquisition efforts. We were going to have fewer, but more meaningful, touch points with prospects, and send only highly qualified leads to sales. It sounded great. I was ready.” (See sidebar, So you want to try marketing automation?)

McClellan compares the journey to becoming a parent, in which everybody talks about the good stuff, congratulates you, and wishes you the best. “But there’s more,” she says. “Way more. What someone should have told me is that the first year of implementing a new platform is rough, and that the first year is just a sampling of the hard work involved for years to come. There will be many rewards and insights along the way, but it takes a lot of work.”

The art of marketing automation

New channels. New apps. Social media. The world of marketing continues to evolve. And with these changes comes a new responsibility for today’s marketer – revenue growth. That means accountability becomes one of the new buzzwords for a marketing team. Today, the big office in the corner is not interested in clickthrough and open rates; it wants to know how marketing is contributing to the bottom line.

The tighter economy has called for even tighter budgets, which means marketers must continually show they’re responsible for revenue. Yet, in times like this, marketing departments are usually the first line-item to be cut because of the costs involved. Thus making it harder for marketing to do its job. So what’s the solution?

“I think marketing automation is a smart tool to invest in...there will be many rewards and insights along the way, but it takes a lot of work.”

- Liz McClellan, Sage



Marketing automation helps bring marketing more in line with the sales team, a relationship that has had its share of competition over the years. “There is the ‘what-have-you-done-for-me-lately’ sentiment that defines this relationship,” Blitzer says. “And as these processes are put into place, that sentiment can really take hold. With marketing automation, it’s all about getting that first win in place.”

Running a successful marketing campaign means delivering more qualified leads to the sales team, improving conversion rates to sale, increasing revenue per lead, providing automated lead scoring for prospects, increasing prospect engagement through lead-nurturing emails, maximizing sales productivity, and delivering visibility to prospect activity on the website and engagement with email communications.

The tracking available with marketing automation allows you as the marketer to read a customer’s digital body language. Before a sales rep calls a prospect, they can review the path your prospect took on the website and base their

interest off of their clicks. What blog articles did the prospect read? Did he/she watch any videos? How about what they didn’t click? Viewing this before you have a sales conversation can shorten the sales cycle immediately.

For example, marketing will provide the sales team with information such as the duration of a prospect’s visit, pages viewed (with the URL) and time spent viewing that page, the first and last page viewed, the originating lead source, a rating and/or score of each prospect and the types of a drill down on actual email content and click-through activity.

Think of it like this: Imagine going on a blind date and knowing everything you need to know about the person you’re meeting. Before the ‘date’ you have already started developing a relationship with this person. You can find out what the lead needs or what he/she is interested in before even saying a word to one another. Marketing automation is blurring the lines between marketing and sales. (See 5 Things Marketing Automation Can Help You Do Now, page 12.)

5 THINGS MARKETING AUTOMATION CAN HELP YOU DO NOW

If you’re a marketer well versed in the Tao of sales and marketing, you know that aligning yourself with your sales team is key. Getting that buy-in on marketing processes and initiatives helps move prospects through the pipeline more efficiently, delivers more qualified leads and, ultimately, drives more revenue. But what happens when your sales team is uninterested in the marketing automation platform? Can you still reap the benefits without their cooperation? Yes. While sales’ participation in marketing processes is important for maximizing marketing automation’s potential, a lot still can be done, even if sales is indifferent. Following are five ways marketing automation can help without sales.

1. KNOW WHERE YOUR LEADS COME FROM –

A lot of pressure is put on today’s marketers to demonstrate their value and impact on the bottom line by offering a clear view into the results of their efforts – from lead acquisition, to account close, and beyond. With marketing automation, you can set up a system that captures both lead source and offer, giving you more insight into how the prospect came to know about your brand (source) and the reason they decided to fill out your form and give you

their information (offer). Equally as important, you can capture “influence” – what you did during the nurture process that actually convinced someone to buy.

2. AUTOMATE CONTENT DELIVERY –

Sending triggered messages based on prospect actions is a surefire way to increase message relevance and boost engagement. Marketing automation makes it easy. For example, a prospect signing up for a Webinar automatically might trigger a message sent to that individual with an

offer to download a white paper on a similar topic. Or, a certain number of visits to a page on your site might trigger a message offering a free service trial.

3. NURTURE LEADS –

With marketing automation technology, you can set up programs that gradually help you collect data, build relationships and be responsive to prospect interests and behaviors. Using a visual campaign builder, it’s easy to establish nurture campaigns that gather prospect information

gradually through progressive profiling and route prospects down numerous different paths. This is based on whether they opened your email, downloaded your content and/or shared it with their social networks.

4. SCORE LEADS –

Ideally, you’d develop a lead-scoring system in concert with sales with definitions for “contacts,” “leads,” “qualified opportunities,” etc., that both sides had agreed upon. But even without this participation, you can establish a ranking system to identify hotter

prospects, based on a wide range of behaviors, which you can use to more effectively nurture your prospects through the pipeline.

5. INCREASE VISIBILITY INTO LEADS –

Regardless of whether your salespeople are hip to marketing automation, they’ll appreciate being able to approach a prospect call equipped with information about that person’s interactions with your company. Marketing automation technology helps provide information on each lead.

“I thought for sure we’d cracked the code on how to boost our new customer-acquisition efforts. We were going to have fewer, but more meaningful touch points with prospects, and send only highly qualified leads to sales. It sounded great. I was ready.”

– Liz McClellan, Sage Business Solutions

Get to know me

When Air New Zealand was looking for another way to engage its customers, it turned to marketing automation to help revitalize its email campaigns. The airline set out to focus on customer relationships and brand building, solicit timely customer feedback, and take a more personal touch to its unique customer service approach.

The customer campaign, known as “Personality Allowed,” sends personalized pre-flight and post-arrival emails to passengers. The preflight email greets passengers with a welcoming subject line that includes imagery tailored to their upcoming destination. The photos include shots of local cultural events or popular delicacies, a weather update, and flight details. With their share-to-social capability, passengers also have the option to share their information with friends via Facebook and Twitter.

Another aspect of the communications includes a photo and information about a member of the flight crew. In addition, a post-arrival email provides a link to the company’s MyVoice program, which serves as a comprehensive preference center, collecting and housing information about each passenger.

Results of the campaign show the pre-flight emails having an average unique open rate of 69 percent and an average unique click rate of 38 percent, well above industry averages. The post-arrival emails have an average unique open rate of 62 percent and an average unique click rate of 40 percent. One passenger even commented on Facebook that it was the first piece of e-marketing he had ever received that he opened, read and printed out.

Programs such as Air New Zealand are among a growing number of success stories that are making marketing automation something a company must consider. That said, only 5 percent – depending on which study you read – of today’s

SO YOU WANT TO TRY MARKETING AUTOMATION?

The marketing and sales teams are on board. You’re ready to set out on the journey that is marketing automation. Right? Liz McClellan, Vice President of primary marketing and retail sales for Sage Business Solutions, sheds some light on what to expect along the way.

- 1. BE REALISTIC** – Whatever time frame you’ve given yourself to see results – add six months to it. Set a realistic timeframe with sales and executive management, and finance for when you should see positive results. McClellan thought it would take nine to 12 months after implementing a marketing automation platform to see notable differences to its close rates. Eighteen to 24 months was more realistic.
- 2. DEFINE YOUR REPORTING NEEDS** – Before committing to a marketing automation system, know what information you need, and, if your system cannot support it, see if there is an easy work around. Larger organizations may have a harder time implementing a reporting request and layering that information on top of what its system provides. Don’t deal with this later. Work out the details ahead of time. Get input from the sales and executive team so that when they start discussing conversion rates and ROI, you have it ready. Some systems are easy to implement and manage, but don’t offer robust reporting.
- 3. MASTER THE ART OF ASSET CREATION** – It is one thing to implement a new marketing automation platform, and it’s another to have all the assets to effectively support your lead-nurturing efforts. Having the right assets is key and a lot of work. Immediately define and work on what you need to effectively support your efforts. If you have to, outsource asset creation. Good assets are key to using this tool effectively. Pick one or two key audiences to start and create solid content. Go light on the sales stuff and give your customers meaningful tips, articles and thought leadership. Build a solid foundation to support those audiences.
- 4. TEST, REFINE, TEST** – Enough said.

businesses are using the platform.

However, it is expected for this program to become the new normal for marketing teams. As with anything that is new, there will be a resistance to the change. The sales team will complain that they are not receiving enough leads. They will have to work with their marketing teams to realize they might receive fewer leads than before, but the new leads are far more qualified and beneficial to their sales book.

Clip Art Escapades

Sometimes the hardest part of managing your brand comes from inside your own team.



By Kelly Laughlin

The truth is that you can have a brilliant marketing department and a world-class sales team, but if the two aren't working together, there's nothing but discord. As marketing professionals, we must do our part to make sure this relationship makes the organization better – not weaker.

I sit at my desk with mounds of papers, stacks of reports and other paraphernalia all over it. I am the VP of marketing. And true to the personality of my position, I have my own sense of organization. I know where everything is on my desk. I know the status of each project. And I can freely admit that if it weren't for my iPhone, I'd probably have a hard time staying on top of everything.

My to-do list is stacked: requests for collateral pieces, webinars, email campaigns, social media plans, website development, ad creation, copywriting, and the list goes on.

And I love it. It's all a part of what we do as marketing professionals. We develop and manage the company brand. We continually seek the latest and greatest tools to generate sales leads. We look for the best vehicles to showcase our companies and grab our target audiences' attention.

We are good at what we do. We work with focus and intent to make sure the look and feel of our company is professional and consistent with the brand. It's funny when people within our organization think they understand what we do.

"Oh, your department gets to have all of the fun." or "So you're the ones who make things pretty."

Well, it's a bit more than that. Today, there is more science involved in the art of marketing than most people give credit to.

You understand that. But managing the company's brand and message may not be the most difficult part of our job. Sometimes, the hardest part is trying to work together with our SALES TEAM. That's right, the very group we try so hard to help.

I can't tell you how many times I've seen a "flyer" with tacky clip art, too many logos and typos, or a collateral piece the sales team created and declared the "perfect" marketing tool.

So, how long does it take you to figure out that the piece was created by a sales assistant on an old version of Microsoft Word? And how many times do you have to tell the sales team they don't need 15 exclamation points to get their point across?

Don't get me wrong – the sales team is great. They are bold, relentless and good at what they do. They are motivated to sell. That's why we continually shake our heads when they don't come to us for help.

The truth is that you can have a brilliant marketing department and a world-class sales team, but if the two aren't working together, there's nothing but discord. As marketing professionals, we must do our part to make sure this relationship makes the organization better – not weaker.

To help you better align your marketing and sales departments, the following are several tips you can try.

WALK IN THEIR SHOES

Go out on calls with them. The biggest complaint salespeople have is that their marketing colleagues don't understand how to sell or how their clients respond to their messages.

LISTEN

Take in their ideas and deliver an end product that's on target.

ASK FOR SAMPLES

See what they like, take the idea and make it better.

GO THAT EXTRA MILE

Think of the sales team as a client. Try to impress them by under-promising and over-delivering.

ASK FOR HELP

Everyone wants to be valued. Sales folks have knowledge that could help you. Take their advice.

FORGIVE

As much as you disdain clip art, they love it. So forgive them. Take the piece, remove the clip art, fix the typos and turn their ideas into something excellent.

Kelly Laughlin is a strategist, marketing executive, consultant, trainer, public speaker and entrepreneur. She has spent the last 17 years leading companies in the area of marketing/communications/employee engagement. Her passion for creating an internal brand that sells externally has led to the growth of many national companies. She also is founder and president of the Highmont Group. www.highmontgroup.com

Don't Be a Drip, Nurture Your Leads

By Gina Danner

Marketers want to talk to prospects and salespeople want to talk to buyers. The courting process of moving a person from the prospect to buyer stage is called lead nurturing. Unfortunately most B2B marketers aren't very good at it. In fact, among marketing automation adopters, only about 1 in 3 believe they have an effective lead nurturing process, according to research from Bulldog Solutions/Frost & Sullivan.

Like in a courtship, nurturing involves two-way communication. To have an effective dialogue with your customers you must watch their digital body language and listen to where they are in the purchasing process.

Too often marketers make nurturing synonymous with email drip campaigns. While this tactical effort is easy to put in place, it's not effective in converting leads because it overly simplifies communications by making it one-way and one-size-fits-all.

"Simply delivering the same message to a broad audience (mass marketing), doesn't allow for the 1-to-1 engagement that yields the best results," says Carlos Hidalgo with Annuitas Group.

The graph below from Left Brain Marketing shows how good marketing communications involves listening to the prospect, then sending a message, and then waiting for a customer response before tailoring the next message.

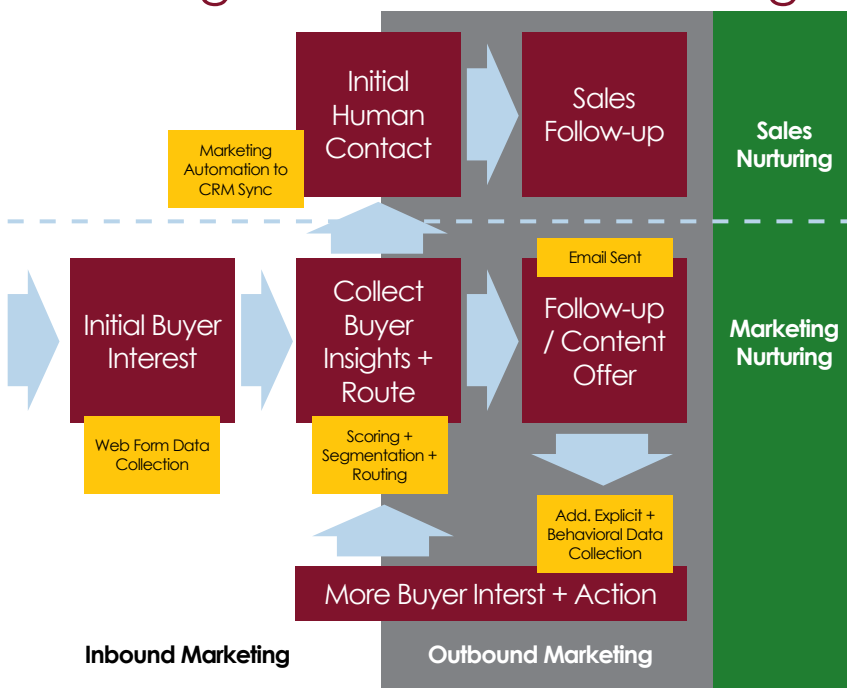
Dialogue = architecture of nurturing



Does a lead-nurturing program seem too methodical, time consuming, or too customized to implement or manage? The increased customer appeal and response of proper nurturing brings financial gains that make the process all worthwhile. A recent study by the Aberdeen Group showed that companies who implemented a nurture-marketing program had:

- 46% increase in annual revenue
- 26% increase in lead conversions to sales
- 25% decrease in cost per lead

Dialogue = Non-linear nurturing



IBM lead nurtures its customers by dividing them into one of three categories depending on where they are in the buying cycle. Leads are categorized as 'Learn' (potential client at the initial stages of a project), 'Scope' (interested in case studies white papers, conducting research) or 'Select' (interested in comparing and engaging with vendor).

Your dialogue with your customers sets the tone for the relationship. Customers know that how you sell them is how you will serve them in the future. So set the tone by nurturing their needs and nurturing their trust.

If you provide valuable education and information to prospects up front and as they need it, you'll become their trusted advisor. Then you'll be first in line for their business when they move from the data collection phase into the purchasing mode.

With patience, ongoing dialogue, and a good lead-nurturing program, you can ensure you're not leaving 8 out of 10 prospects on the table for your competitors.

IBM maintains a dialogue with those in the Learn and Scope stages as they progress through the sales cycle, using targeted collateral and promoting IBM's solutions. Once prospects reach the Select stage, they are handed over to the IBM sales team for direct engagement.

The graph on the left shows how marketing and sales can work in tangent nurturing prospects during the inbound and outbound marketing process.

Needles, Adam. "A Layered Approach to Lead Nurturing in B2B Demand Generation." Web log post. Demand Gen (r)Evolution. Leftbrain DGA, 19 Oct. 2010. Web. 29 Nov. 2011. <http://mprnt.co/yws82G>

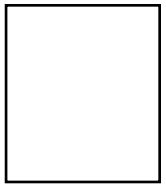
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