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Marketing Automation 101:

What It Is, Why You Need It, and How It Works

Why Marketing Automation?

Marketing automation helps marketing teams excel. Even if they are a smaller team and possess fewer resources, with marketing automation, they can do more with less and pass more qualified leads on for sales to more easily close.

According to Ledgeview Partners, nine out of ten marketers use more than one form of marketing automation software on a regular basis. Nucleus found that marketing automation improved business productivity by 20%. Invespcro noted that 80% of companies saw an increase in leads due to marketing automation.

Marketers cannot afford to fall behind their competition. Marketing automation is a necessity. Therefore, we created this guide to walk marketers through the basics of marketing automation to gain a stronger understanding of the basics and how it can benefit your campaigns.

What's Inside

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+ How Marketing Automation Works

+ What Is a Marketing Automation Workflow?

+ Best Practices

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of companies saw an increase in leads due to marketing automation.[*]

[*] https://www.invespcro.com/blog/marketing-automation

What Is Marketing Automation?

Marketing automation is technology that automates marketing processes to help teams plan, coordinate, manage, and measure the results of campaigns across multiple channels, including email, web, display, search, and social. A marketing automation platform:

+ Simplifies and streamlines many arduous and time-consuming marketing processes
+ Automates repetitive tasks to free up marketers' time to concentrate more on planning, decision-making, and creative matters

+ Reduces human error
+ Saves on time, money, and effort
+ Maximizes efficiency and revenue

With this type of technology, marketers can scale marketing activities up and widen and broaden the scope of their campaigns. Teams that utilize marketing automation to its fullest potential see increases in:

+ Marketing and sales opportunities
+ Marketing-qualified (MQLs) and sales-qualified leads (SQLs)

+ Customer retention and loyalty
+ Chances for upselling and cross-selling
+ Conversions and sales

A marketing automation platform can act as a central hub for a team's marketing activities and garner stronger results due to:

+ Better lead management and nurturing
+ Stronger alignment between sales and marketing
+ More efficient and organized campaign management

+ Stronger coordination between multiple channels, such as email, the web, display, social, etc.
+ Using data to properly segment, target, connect, and engage with prospects, leads, and customers

How Marketing Automation Works

1. Marketers build awareness of their brand and its solutions through thought leadership, their blog, website, customer success stories, social, and other digital marketing efforts to interest and intrigue prospects. In the same vein, they must also keep the attention of people who are already leads and customers.

2. Marketers compile customer data through various interactions prospects, leads, and customers have with their brand across multiple channels, such as: emails, newsletter sign-ups, content downloads, social media, website visits, and so on.

3. Their marketing automation platform then takes that data and uses it to streamline their segmentation and targeting.

4. Based upon the data, marketers can personalize each marketing message and make it more relevant to its intended audience.

5. The marketing message is sent out on the appropriate and preferred channel of the recipient at a convenient time for them (according to the data).

6. The marketing team reviews the analytics to see how their campaign performed.

7. Then the team tweaks, revises, and optimizes their campaign accordingly.

How to Make Marketing Automation More Effective

Maximize your investment in marketing automating by understanding these three integral keys to the process:

+ A/B AND MULTIVARIATE TESTING – The right data makes it easier for you to experiment and try different types of content, emails, subject lines, offers, themes, designs, landing pages, demos, contests, and so on. Testing helps to further optimize a team's marketing efforts by seeing what best the audience responds to, which will indicate what the marketing team needs to tweak, revise, or drop all together.

+ LISTS AND SEGMENTATION – Proper marketing automation requires lists of the prospects, leads, and already existing customers that make up a marketing team's target audience. These lists are then segmented according to multiple forms of criteria, such as demographics, geography, buyer persona, what channels they seem to prefer, the business they are in, industry, job title, and other relevant information. The more marketers can narrow the segmentation down, the more they can properly target and personalize to their target audience.

+ LEAD NURTURING AND SCORING – Marketers have to know how to manage the leads they are getting. If they send their audience the wrong communication on the wrong channel at the wrong time, they risk losing them. Therefore, marketers assign a score to their leads based off their level of interest and nurture them accordingly until they are ready to be handed off to sales to close the deal.

How does marketing automation nurture and prime leads to make them ready to be handed over to sales? How does it build interest and intrigue? It does so with a marketing automation workflow.

> The more marketers can narrow the segmentation down, the more they can properly target and personalize to their target audience.

What Is a Marketing Automation Workflow?

A workflow consists of triggers and actions.

+ **Triggers** are behaviors and things that leads, prospects, and customers do to interact and show interest in your brand.

+ **Actions** are the automated responses to what they do.

If someone downloads an ebook off a website, the marketing team sends them an email to notify them when the next ebook in that series is available. If someone signs up for a webinar, later on, the team sends them a related white paper. If someone subscribes to a newsletter, the team sends them an email invite to an event that your newsletter promotes.

Essentially, marketers provide relevant content and information to follow up on the interest that someone has shown. They entice their leads with valuable knowledge to engage them more and more with the brand and lead them down the marketing funnel to make them more and more interested in making a purchase.

A workflow can help convert a prospect into a lead, a lead into a customer, and customer into a repeat customer.

How Does Someone Become a Prospect?

This doesn't fit into the "trigger/action" sequence, but it remains important. A prospect is someone who has shown interest in your brand. They have business problems they think your content and thought leadership can help with.

How Can a Prospect Become a Lead?

A prospect becomes a lead by showing even more interest in your brand by continuing to engage with it.

POSSIBLE TRIGGERS	POSSIBLE ACTIONS A MARKETING TEAM THEN MAKES
New subscriber signs up	Sends them how-to emails to get them onboarded and started
Someone downloads a gated asset	Show them related content and how to access it
Someone signs up for a webinar	Follow up with a thank you note and make them aware of related upcoming events and content

How Can a Lead Become a Customer?

POSSIBLE TRIGGERS	POSSIBLE ACTIONS A MARKETING TEAM THEN MAKES
Someone continually downloads your content, opens your emails, attends your events, or in some way engages with your brand	Notify sales to contact them

How Can a Customer Become a Repeat Customer?

POSSIBLE TRIGGERS	POSSIBLE ACTIONS A MARKETING TEAM THEN MAKES
Someone has already made a purchase and continues to engage with your brand	Send them more personalized content, special offers, and make aware of product updates, new features, and upcoming events
Someone has been your customer for some time	Send them an email celebrating your relationship with them and let them know of any product renewals and updates coming up
A customer is experiencing difficulties with your products or services	Send content that offers potential solutions and tell them they are welcome to contact customer service

How Do You Reengage with a Lead or Customer Who Has Dropped Off?

POSSIBLE TRIGGERS	POSSIBLE ACTIONS A MARKETING TEAM THEN MAKES
A lead or customer hasn't stopped opening your emails or downloading your content within a certain timeframe (say, four to six months)	Send a personalized email to catch their attention and say you miss them and tell them about a special offer or event

Essentially, marketers provide relevant content and information to follow up on the interest that someone has shown.

Best Practices

How can a marketer make the most of their marketing automation efforts? These eight practices give a framework teams can use when planning out their campaigns in order to ensure that they use automation to their best effect:

1) Set goals

Look at how marketing automation can improve the number of:

+   Quality leads you attract

+   Leads deemed ready to pass onto sales

+   Conversions you help contribute to, and at what points in the customer's journey these conversions happen

2) Develop buyer personas

Create buyer personas by looking at your audience's backgrounds, demographics, interests, preferences, location, jobs, industries, the challenges they meet, and more to understand where they are coming from and what their pain points are. By knowing that, marketers can understand how they can help their audience, offer solutions to their problems, and thus better market to them.

3) Build workflows based upon the buyer's journey

Map out workflows for the personas you create to engage them and address their concerns at each point of the buyer's journey. Teams should have a workflow based upon each stage of the buyer's journey:

+   AWARENESS – A prospect has identified a problem and is seeking a solution.

+   CONSIDERATION – They are weighing their options and considering which solution to use.

+   DECISION – They decide upon a solution and make a purchase.

+   POST-PURCHASE – They might have questions about the solution or need add-ons or other products and services in the future.

Knowing what persona you are targeting at what stage will help marketers send the right message at the right time.

4) Create engaging content

Marketers must ask themselves who their personas are and what stage of the buyer's journey they are in. This will help dictates the type of content that will produce the best results. However, the content must be relevant, compelling, and present something of value, such as information, a pro tip, an invitation to an event, or even an offer.

The possibilities for content are endless. However, all the content must be relevant. It has to capture the audience's attention, keep it, and present something of value, such as information, a pro tip, an invitation to an event, or even an offer.

5) Personalization

Use customer data to personalize content (and marketing in general) as much as possible to better win prospects and customers over.

6) Multi-channel approach

Customers now expect a seamless, multi-channel experience. Hence, marketers have to engage them with consistent content and marketing across on the channels they prefer and be ready to jump from one to the other.

7) Lead scoring and qualification

Once they see leads start coming in, marketers have to develop a model by which to score them. Then they can see which leads need more nurturing and which are qualified to be handed off to sales.

8) Measure your performance

How many leads did a campaign attract? How many were handed off to sales? How many conversions did the marketing team help make? Review your goals and see where leads might have dropped off and how you can tweak, revise, and improve your process.

> Knowing what persona you are targeting at what stage will help marketers send the right message at the right time.

Explore more of what marketing automation can do to optimize your campaigns and increase your success with Oracle CX Marketing.

About Oracle Marketing Cloud

B2B and B2C marketers use Oracle Marketing Cloud, an integrated portfolio of best-in-class applications, to drive sales, brand, and customer loyalty. Oracle Marketing Cloud offers the industry's richest data sets and most adaptive intelligence so marketers can deliver irresistible, consistent, and connected experiences to customers wherever they are and however they choose to engage.

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