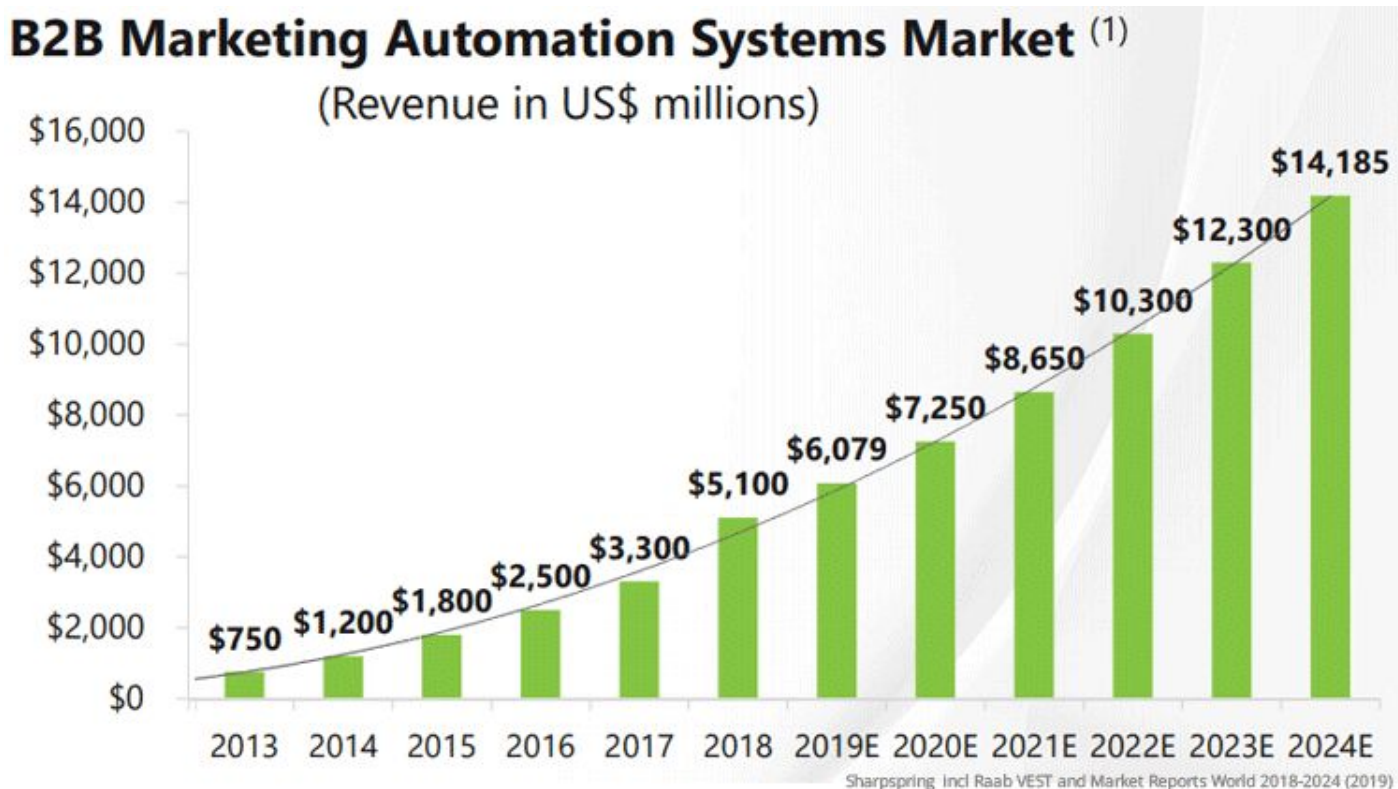# The Definitive Guide to Marketing Automation

What is Marketing Automation?

Marketing Automation has been around and evolving for over 2 decades. Simply put, marketing automation as the name suggests is the practice of utilizing software to automate repetitive marketing tasks. It has grown from its beginnings as a tool for mass emailing to levels of sophistication that is enabling organized omni channel digital engagement and experiences. Now we are entering an era where marketing automation is powered by the Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning.

Earlier marketing automation was thought to be something for the Enterprise level companies but now no company big or small can think of running a successful business without a certain level of marketing automation. Presence of a business across digital channels and ability to engage at the will of the customer is key to it's growth. Simply put, you need marketing automation to enable the required orchestration.

Marketing automation creates a locus point to connect multiple marketing platforms, including social media, email marketing, and content marketing. It helps in streamlining omni channel lead generation, while automating communication and helps measure marketing performance. It also enables companies to concentrate on goals even after lead generation and conversions.

Here is how the B2B Marketing Automation Software industry has grown and expected to grow over the years:

B2B Marketing Automation Systems Market (1)
(Revenue in US$ millions)

Year	Revenue
2013	$750
2014	$1,200
2015	$1,800
2016	$2,500
2017	$3,300
2018	$5,100
2019E	$6,079
2020E	$7,250
2021E	$8,650
2022E	$10,300
2023E	$12,300
2024E	$14,185

Sharpspring incl Raab VEST and Market Reports World 2018-2024 (2019)

Here are some stats that validate the credibility of marketing automation:

- Marketers using Marketing automation admits; they experience a 451% increase in collecting qualified leads. - [Moosend](#)
- Marketing automation adds on a 14.5% increase in sales productivity and a noticeable reduction of 12.2% in marketing overhead. - [Invesp](#)
- Marketers who use marketing automation tools say they experienced multiple benefits of automation including time saved (74%), improved customer engagement (68%), and more effective communications (58%), – [Adestra's Marketer vs. Machine Report](#)
- 91% of marketers stamped on marketing automation benefits as according to them it contributed in their "overall online marketing efforts" – [DemandGen Report](#)

How Marketing Automation Impacts Business?

Enough about what Marketing Automation is! Let's talk about what it impacts and why it is important for your business to invest in Marketing Automation.

1. **Increase Sales and Marketing Funnel Volume and Velocity:** Using marketing automation tools bring scale to your overall sales and marketing process. Starting from lead generation to customer engagement post-sales, it covers all that contributes to achieving sales and marketing goals. The velocity at which leads move from one stage to the other are greatly influenced by Marketing Automation. Software also helps in nurturing these leads throughout the sales cycle making them convert through the stages of their buying cycle.

2. **Improve Marketing Productivity and ROI**: Marketing automation software is meant to reduce manual effort and elimination of repetitive tasks that sets marketers free. Plus because of automated qualification workflows that can be deployed manual follow up efforts become more productive by focusing only on qualified leads. The marketing team can focus their energy on more creative and value addition activities. It significantly improves their efficiency and productivity, increasing the return on marketing investment.

3. **Automate Marketing Processes & Reduce Room for Errors:** The repetitive marketing tasks, when performed manually; have higher chances of human errors, whereas the chances of such mistakes shrink when you automate them. Marketing automation software/tools are meant to templatize a lot of the repetitive needs of your marketing team. Plus the ability to organize and automate processes like documentation, campaign execution, data management and reporting, etc contribute to an error free execution.

4. **Marketing and Sales Alignment:** There needs to be alignment in your sales and marketing team as the ultimate goal of both is to generate and increase sales; marketing automation helps you to align these two. The automation software syncs the marketing channels, scores the leads and orchestrates the handoff of leads from marketing to sales. With closed loop reporting available it gives a complete picture and further helps build [alignment between sales and marketing](#). The ABM (account-based marketing) option available in some marketing automation tools enable sales teams to target and build more personalized interaction with the desired audience in the targeted accounts. One of the

biggest impacts one can achieve through marketing automation is having a synchronized sales and marketing process.

5. **Improve Customer Lifetime Value and Resulting Profitability:** When your prospects experienced personalized one to one interaction; they feel more association with your brand. Seeding the right message at the right time can do wonders for your business. Marketing automation tools focus on goals beyond conversions. Running campaigns to address your customers' needs, preferences, and concerns add to increasing the customers' lifetime value. Improved Customer Lifetime Value has a huge positive impact on the profitability of any company. In fact it's 5-25X more expensive to acquire a new customer than it is to retain an existing one.

What Marketing Automation Enables?

For each marketing activity; you decide to invest time and money in, you should have a clear idea about how to do it in the best possible way. Spending time on marketing activities that can be automated is like wasting your time and money. Marketing automation tools help in refining results from each stage of the marketing funnel. Here are some prominent marketing activities that you can automate and scale your marketing campaigns:

1. Email Marketing: According to an email survey report, more than 68% of businesses take more than a week to produce just one email. The more emails you plan, the more time it will consume. Automating the email sending process can save tons of time and effort. It is the best way to engage your existing customers while targeting to bag the new ones. A perfect Email marketing campaign should include:

- Designing compelling email templates
- Creating relevant email content
- Balancing email elements
- Optimizing email response rate
- Tracking campaign performance

Email-marketing is the top channel to deliver the information to your customers. Some other marketing tasks that you can automate could be personalized welcome messages/emails, scheduling your customer's b' days and anniversaries, messages for discounts and deals, push notifications to your blogs through RSS, and automated emails to notify your readers about any new published blog/article.

2. Inbound Marketing: Your customer's buying behavior is affected by the pain points or sweet spots; relevant to your product/services. People love the idea of learning valid reasons to make a purchase instead of being targeted for selling.

The trick of knowing your ideal customer profile and working on content driven marketing that is relevant to their pain points or sweet spots will make people engage with your brand. Continuous engagement over a while will eventually lead to sales. Here are a few suggestions that can help you create an impactful inbound marketing strategy:

- Persona and buying stage based content development

- Optimal SEO for attracting the relevant traffic
- Lead nurture program for engaged prospects
- Detailed analysis of prospect behaviour and scoring/grading of leads

Luckily you can get all these elements covered with your marketing automation tool.

3. Lead Management: Marketing automation software is designed to create a practical framework for lead management. It allows you to automate the lead nurturing process so that irrelevant and bad leads can be weeded out over time. Marketing automation helps in guiding and moving qualified leads through the sales funnel. Considering the generation of qualified leads as the final stage of your marketing goals would be the biggest mistake you could make. Managing leads through the lifecycle and nurturing is equally important.

4. Lead Scoring and Grading: Lead scoring defines the process of giving a score to the lead, considering how deeply your prospects are engaged with your brand. It is based on a combination of explicit and implicit data. Explicit data is provided by or about the prospect, for example - company size, industry segment, job title or geographic location.[2] Implicit scores are derived from monitoring prospect behavior; examples of these include Web-site visits, whitepaper downloads or email opens and clicks. Marketing automation tools can categorize leads on the basis of the score they earn. It further polishes the lead scoring with the lead grading to ensure that your team won't waste any time on low-grade leads.

5. Revenue Cycle Modeling: The detailed showcase of your sales funnel along with revenue generation performance collectively describes the "Revenue Cycle Model." The marketing automation software features all required criteria to track, perform, and generate such revenue cycle reports. The entire focus of marketing automation is how can you better impact revenue. And to know where you stand at the end of the day, your automation tool must have the ability to track and analyze the effectiveness of the complete revenue cycle. To have an overview of any revenue cycle; here is what it should include:

- Customization of revenue model
- Setup Success path analyzer
- Enabling custom groups (Example: abandoned cart for eCommerce)
- Approving & assigning leads (in B2B marketing)
- Tracking conversions at every stage of the buying cycle

Using such an automated model, you can prepare detailed revenue reports having an insight into conversion percentages instead of just the number of qualified leads.

6. Marketing Analytics: Just like "proof is in the pudding" the exciting thing about using a marketing automation tool is that you can do fairly detailed analysis of results from your marketing efforts. The smarter marketing insights & analysis can help you to make smarter business decisions.
Using automation tools eliminates the assumptions and provides you real-time data for a better understanding of your campaign effectiveness and the success against your KPIs.

Popular Marketing Automation Platforms

Almost all businesses are either using or are inclined to adopting marketing automation in a way or another. In fact, studies claim that more than 51% of companies have already channelized a mix of various automation tools. And the percentage is expected to grow manifold in the coming years.

Despite the established need for marketing automation software, it's a complicated decision, especially when you have a number of options to choose from and where everyone claims to be the best.

Here, we've collected a list of some top-rated marketing automation tools that we have experience with. Going through highlighted features of these can help you to put your finger on the best fit for your business needs.

*Source: Marketing Automation Insider

Act On

An uncomplicated marketing automation platform. It's a basic but adequate solution for SMEs looking to streamline their marketing initiatives in the best possible way.

Highlights: This automation tool is best for segmenting contacts, organizing SEO tactics, and installing contact forms on your site to collect data for valuable leads. It's the best budget friendly marketing automation solution in our comparison list. It may not be attractive visually, but is capable of fulfilling your automation needs.

Eloqua

Eloqua is the best MAS option for medium to large enterprises, who aim to upscale their marketing activity and to scrutinize the funnel leads.Explicitly favored as a revenue-driving marketing automation suite having deep offering in terms of its automation functionalities.

Highlights: Not as easy to use as some other options, Eloqua is best known for lead **s**coring and nurturing, adding forms and landing pages.Integration with CRMs including Salesforce, and integration with various enterprise garde analytics tools. Eloqua doesn't fall in the inexpensive category when it comes to pricing. But there is hardly anything that it can't do to streamline your marketing efforts.

HubSpot

It focuses profoundly on the buyer's journey driven sales, and touts itself as the ultimate inbound marketing tool. It comes with a bag full of features and functionalities that integrate well with various digital channels. HubSpot is a perfect pick for any marketer who is on a voyage of encompassing an inbound approach for lead generation. It also provides great options for driving post sales customer engagement.

Highlights: It features various online marketing solutions and aids in blogging, SEO & SMO management, CRM and CMS integration, reporting, and analytics. HubSpot is ideal for driving leads hovering at the top of the funnel. It is not an expensive tool to begin with but over time as you grow it can become expensive.

Marketo

Geared with advanced features to target B2B customers, it is not so fit for small businesses. Marketo mainly focuses on the buyer sales cycle. It is one of the most complex platforms available in the marketing automation tools industry. Just like some of the other top contenders it does require significant technical skills to make it work well.

Highlights: It is best used with Salesforce integration. You can activate various automation features, including lead management, email marketing, customer marketing, mobile marketing, revenue attribution, account-based marketing. Marketo is an expensive tool but worth the price, especially if you are using multi channel marketing and want sophisticated options.

Pardot

Stacked with tons of powerful automation functionalities, this tool fits well with any CRM you are currently using. It focuses on streamlining and simplifying the marketing processes and bringing sales and marketing teams on the same page.

Highlights: The platform primarily focuses on creating results-oriented email marketing campaigns. The other prominent functionalist consists of contact segmentation, lead scoring & nurturing. From the costing part, Pardot sits in the middle of this comparison list and fits almost all business sizes.

The list doesn't end here we have just given our take on the tools we have had the experience of working with. There are many more options available in the market that you can explore and choose as per your business goals.

How To Implement Marketing Automation With Perfection?

Implementing a marketing automation system is still a colossal struggle for many. Expecting everything simplified and promised results from marketing automation solution had developed overconfidence in the marketer's mind that most of the time leads to feeling of not achieving the original vision. The confusion might have been seeded in marketers' minds because of the over use of the word "Automated."

If you are planning to implement one, here are some vital steps/milestones that you need to work on while implementing Marketing Automation System in your organization.

Know your Business Needs & Set Goals
Defining and understanding your business goals and knowing what exactly is the required outcome for your business is key. Marketing automation is not just about email marketing campaigns; it has a broader scope and impact on your business. Many studies have proved that more than 60% of businesses are not using their marketing automation tools properly. In fact, they are underutilizing the available functionalities. Well defined goals and marketing processes will help you to choose the best mix of marketing automation functionalities to enable.

Invest in the Right Marketing Automation Suite
Once you have a clear understanding of your business goals and expectations from marketing it is time to choose the right option for enabling your Marketing Automation. Investing in a marketing automation tool is a major decision with both long and short term impact. Consider the following before making a purchase decision including:
  ● Marketing Automation features required to meet your goals
  ● Your team & their technical expertise against the required set of skills
  ● Budget required keeping in mind the total cost of ownership
  ● CRM and other technology stack integrations you need

Preparing a checklist before putting your finger on any marketing automation tool can help guide you to pick up the right one.

Hire the Experts for Implementing MAS
Despite being technical, your current marketing team may fail in understanding and operating the marketing automation suite you have bought. The best option is to hire an expert or 3rd party agency for implementing the MAS. These experts can work hand-in-hand with the rest of the marketing team and can even provide them the required training. It is vital to get the expert team on the board to properly implement the MAS and make sure the available features are used in the best possible way.

Drive a Clear Content Strategy
Marketing automation systems demand content fuel to thrive and drive results. Most of the MAS failed to meet business goals because the marketers underestimated and content requirements. Using a digital asset management (DAM) system to analyze, centralize, and collect your marketing content is a great idea. After the content is collected, you need to scrutinize the data and perform an audit to categorize the content required for various streams.

The initial audit will even give you an idea about which available content is contributing well. Further, it will also provide a clear picture of gaps in your content against the needs to enable well functioning marketing campaigns.

Setup Functional Lead Scoring Criteria
The idea of getting more conversion from the highly scored leads is a prime attraction of marketers towards using marketing automation solutions. You need to set up practical lead scoring criteria that focus on a score for
- Fitness (demographics)
- Engagement (behaviors)

The top of the funnel leads that are not ideal for your sales team could be placed into a lead nurturing stream. These leads will be nurtured automatically with the required content until they will be practically sales-ready.

Don't Ignore to Review-Refine-Reset
Marketers feel relaxed when it comes to marketing automation implementation, as one may get into the notion "set it and forget it.
Change rules the universe, and marketing needs, trends, and practices are no different. Then how can; as a marketer, you set something and sit relaxed and expect it will give your results forever?

Schedule a periodic [health audit of your automation tool](#). Review the criteria you have set up for various processes you've set up, refine, and reset rules wherever required. Any change in the business model, including CRM, people, business growth, and competition, need to be aligned with your marketing automation suite.

Some Additional Tips on Implementing Marketing Automation System- MAS Perfectly

- Be wise while deciding on the right technology mix for your business. Make sure you keep in mind the total cost of ownership required to make it successful and budget accordingly.
- Have proper project management with well-defined processes and responsibilities.
- Develop a clear data flow from and to the MA system - Invest adequate time to understand how your online and offline data will flow in and out of your marketing automation system.
- Make sure you hire expert technical resources to get your MAS implemented and executed correctly. Keep in mind you are implementing a cutting edge technology.
- Never underestimate content requirements; instead, develop a healthy content marketing plan. The most significant impact MA has is on your content marketing.
- Have data governance and cleansing in mind from day one. Avoid all Garbage In Garbage Out at any cost.
- Have a well thought out two-year plan with the eventual goal of 360 degree single views of the customer journey.
- Pick the top 5 automation tracks you want to implement to demonstrate a quick win and keep critiques at bay
- Review, revive, and change the rules after you do a [periodic audit of your MAS](#).

ANALYST RATING	G2 CROWD	FORRESTER	Gartner	Gleanster	trustradius
BEST	HubSpot salesforce pardot act-on Marketo eloqua	act-on salesfusion	eloqua Marketo	HubSpot act-on Marketo IBM	act-on HubSpot Infusionsoft Marketo salesforce pardot eloqua
BETTER	salesfusion OUTMARKET ONTRAPORT Net-Results	IBM salesforce pardot Marketo	salesforce pardot IBM Adobe	salesforce pardot SILVERPOP ONTRAPORT	
GOOD	leadsquared hatchbuck Genoo	Adobe CallidusCloud eloqua	Microsoft CallidusCloud HubSpot act-on	Infusionsoft Net-Results salesfusion eloqua	

5 Ways to Optimize Marketing Automation

Automation is important and beneficial for any business/organization, here are some advanced strategies to help you optimize the results you can drive from Marketing Automation:

1. Align Your Marketing Automation to Campaigns Objectives
Before embarking on any marketing campaign, we need to identify what we want to get out of it. Otherwise, the endeavor is rudderless and unlikely to yield the required tangible benefit. Whether you want to attract more visitors to the website, generate new leads, boost sales, or increase market share, automation can help best when it is aligned to the objectives of your marketing campaigns.

2. Personalize Your Content
Generic emails aren't going to cut it. Customers want to feel appreciated by the brands they buy from. Ensure content can be personalized by automation software and is created with the illusion of being completely bespoke.

3. Make Use of A/B Testing
The company or any organization may already be undertaking A/B testing as part of the evaluation of marketing campaigns, but automating the process is hugely beneficial. As well as time savings, automated

A/B testing delivers real-time data about the impact of your marketing content – allowing you to make quick adjustments where needed.

4: Get Your Team on Board
Training and open communication are vital to the successful implementation of automated processes. The organization might feel threatened by the 'a-word', synonymous as it is with robots replacing humans – an unfair assumption in the marketing world! Instead of something to be feared, frame automation as a process to embrace, with tools that allow the organization to focus less on the mundane repetitive tasks, and more on the talents you hired them for.

5: Focus on Customer Experience
Ultimately, the success of automation depends on how customers react to it. Gather meaningful data throughout the process, using customer experience mapping, to establish feedback at major touchpoints. This allows organizations to make tweaks to your approach and integrate new automation where they will be helpful. It's important to note that automation is only beneficial so long as you're seeing results with the end consumer and your bottom line.

What Are The Marketing Automation Trends Of 2020 And Beyond?

Every year, marketing automation technology becomes more enhanced and sophisticated. It is more cutting-edge than ever and not only keeps your processes automated, but also delivers higher ROI. Here are the top 4 [marketing automation trends](#) that are hot and expected to grow in 2020 and beyond:

1. **Using Artificial Intelligence in Marketing Automation Systems:** Another trending marketing automation practice is the enhanced usage of AI for different streams of marketing. AI has unlocked a number of new opportunities for marketers. AI was used to empowering chatbots and automating email campaigns, now, it has made its foray in content creation, [influencer marketing](#), and even in paid advertising. Based on customer behavior AI can also help in providing personalized website visit experience to each visitor.
   The idea of incorporating AI with your marketing automation suite helps you with:
     - Detailed persona definition
     - Personalized content creation
     - Predictive lead generation
     - Improved customer interaction & retention.

   So better start exploring the doorways to get AI powering your marketing automation system.

2. **Robotic Process Automation**
   Industries across the spectrum are witnessing massive adoption of RPA- Robotic Process Automation across the industry. RPA is changing the face of business process automation by using software-based robots powered by artificial intelligence (AI). Ina nutshell RPA helps in automating repetitive tasks. One may think that RPA is not meant for marketing automation because the

marketing operations department typically does not have large teams that are performing repetitive manual tasks. There is a strong case for use of RPA in certain aspects of marketing automation because of the productivity and agility it brings into the fold, especially when it comes to data management and building marketing reports. Time will tell what repertive marketing tasks can we let bots handle but this could be a huge opportunity to save people cost involved in marketing.

3. **Internet of things and Customer Marketing**
   The **Internet of Things** defines the connectivity of physical **objects** (**Internet**-enabled devices and systems) with the internet through unique identifiers. Gartner expects that there will be around 26 billion IoT-connected devices. These devices can communicate with other systems over the internet. As adoption of IOT enabled products grows so will using the collected data to power your marketing automation. Because it is powered by real use information from your end customer the marketing could lead to great customer experiences and even better ROI for marketers.

4. **Mobile First and Not Just Mobile Friendly**
   Not too long ago you could be satisfied by having a Mobile Friendly website. Now you have to be Mobile First when you are thinking about your digital strategy. Consider this:
   1. Over 55% of the internet traffic is coming from Mobile devices
   2. By 2021 almost 70% of the eCommerce sales will be done over mobile device

Your marketing automation strategy has to be built with the expectation that, majority of your target audience will prefer engaging with you on a mobile device. Online advertisement plans will have to be built with mobile users in mind and mobile applications will have to be a pivotal part of customer engagement for many businesses.

Marketing Automation has evolved with time and continues to surprise us with the impact it has on business. No more viewed as a tool for enterprise and mid size companies it is having a huge impact on businesses of all sizes. Having a sound marketing automation strategy and execution is a must have for every business. If you are thinking of implementing marketing automation or enhancing the capabilities of your current system give us shout at info@growthnatives.com and we would love to be partners with you on your marketing automation journey.