MARKETING AUTOMATION
TRENDS

What you need to know to make better marketing automation investments in 2014

BY PATRICK GORMAN

Marketing automation technology is allowing marketers to better target leads and prospects, and understand who their audiences are and why they respond. These tech solutions are helping marketing and sales teams communicate better, and creating more opportunities for marketers to deliver the right message to the right audience at the right time.

Here's a look at marketing automation trends and what some of the latest solutions have to offer:

BRINGING CHANNELS TOGETHER

The ability to tie multiple online channels together is a key attribute of marketing automation. Marketers who want to turn their website into a lead machine leverage automation technology to find out who's coming to their site, where they're coming from, how many are visiting, who they have or haven't contacted before and what companies they represent.

A marketing automation solution like Act-On Software allows marketers to reverse-search all of the IP addresses that click on a site to give marketers a sense of who's coming from where.

"You can then go further into the forensics and see if you know someone from the company, or are connected via LinkedIn, so that you can reach out to them. By seeing which people who have already come to your site in the past and when they come back you, you can have a much better sense of their behavior profile, which builds up over time," says Atri Chatterjee CMO, Act-On Software.

Some solutions are focused on bringing the pluses of email marketing automation to social and display advertising. Traditionally, marketing automation has been very focused on email campaigns. Bizo's Multi-Channel Nurturing solution is bringing those same capabilities to social and display advertising across the web.

"At the bottom of the funnel, marketing automation is a very successful tool for helping to nurture known contacts and turn them into customers, but that really only represents a fraction of the overall prospect pool. It's a small part of what you're actually trying to do as a marketer, and you can only email them so often. The question is: 'How do we reach those people more often, and how do we expand the pool that you can nurture as a marketer?'" says Bizo co-founder/CEO Russell Glass.

Multi-Channel Nurturing takes the other 30 to 40 percent of the prospect pool that's actually coming to your website and allows you to segment those users, create nurture flows for anonymous users, and orchestrate messages depending on who they are and the digital body language they're displaying on the site (i.e. what pages they're consuming and what
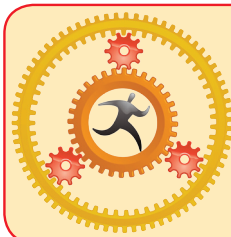
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—Atri Chatterjee, Act-On Software

they're downloading).

"All of the same capability you see in a marketing automation system, we're bringing to display and social ads," Glass says.

Bizo introduced its first release of Multi-Channel Nurturing in October 2013, which specifically allowed joint Bizo and Eloqua users to layer display and social advertising into their existing email nurture programs in Eloqua. The latest release allows any B2B marketer, whether or not they are currently using a marketing automation platform, to methodically nurture audiences with targeted display and social ads through the Bizo Marketing Platform.

"It helps synchronize email messages with all the messages from display and social, to really bring multi-channel to Eloqua. This newest release significantly broadens the customer base beyond those with Eloqua, so now we can address the needs of all those marketers, but you get some additional advantages if you do have Eloqua in place, like automation and synchronizing between email so you can use the same nurture flow for email and other forms of advertising without having to recreate it," Glass says.

Expanding automation beyond the world of email is getting results in the real world right now.

"We're able to extend the power of marketing automation nurturing beyond the inbox to the huge pool of unknown visitors coming to our website every day," says Meagen Eisenberg, vice president of demand generation at DocuSign. "Bizo's precise business demographic data combined with customized nurture paths allows us to serve sequenced display and social ads to only our most high-value, anonymous prospect segments – all of which helps us increase lead volume and optimize lead quality from the moment a person first becomes interested in our brand," she says.

The goal for marketers is to expand their customer base, drive prospects down the funnel faster and ultimately increase revenue. This type of automation is helping to make marketers' lives easier by segmenting formerly anonymous visitors to websites into the right categories of people and personas, helping to ensure you're nurturing the right ones and not wasting time on the wrong ones.

"There's not a single B2B marketer out there who hasn't seen the value of email nurturing when it comes to nudging prospects toward a buying decision," says Christina Lyle, demand generation and marketing operations manager, Sauce Labs.

OPTIMIZING RESULTS

Customer behavior has evolved quite a bit over the past five years, and consumers do a lot of investigation and searching for themselves before making purchasing decisions. They really don't engage vendors or suppliers until they are far along with their buying cycle. Making sure that your marketing message is optimized for search and can be easily found by consumers has become critical.

"By the time they get in touch with a supplier, a consumer can be 70% along the way to making a purchase. We have a component called Act-On Inbound that enables you to get out and get known," Chatterjee says.

Act-On also features native integration with Google, so if you're doing pay-per-click advertising, you can manage your Google ad words dashboard, and get all the information Google doesn't tell you.

"Google tells you about who clicked on it, but after the clicks everything becomes fuzzier and fuzzier. Act-On reveals who clicked on an ad, but also how many of those clicks actu-

ally converted and became a lead, how many leads became opportunities and how many opportunities actually closed because the solution integrates with a variety of CRM systems," Chatterjee says.

LEAD SCORING AND A/B TESTING

Marketing automation also allows for customizable lead scoring and A/B testing of different messaging.

Marketing automation is about taking leads from the top of the funnel, nurturing those leads and turning them into customers, so the ability to score and nurture leads based on profiles, demographics and behavior is key.

"Leads can be prioritized depending on the lead's importance. For example, if a person visits a pricing page on a website, they receive higher scores. If someone hasn't visited in a while, their score can be decreased. There are a lot of nuances to lead scoring and nurturing," Chatterjee says.

And, all digital marketing should involve some sort of testing because it's so easy to test multiple pieces of creative, messages or approaches with the help of automation solutions.

"You should be doing it as a marketer, because you just never know what's actually going to perform the best. It's really easy for marketers to send a percentage of different messages to different segments to see what's getting the best response. Over time you get better and better, and the system gets smarter on what works and what doesn't," Glass says.

TIPS

For marketers who are new to the world of marketing automation solutions, having conversations with industry colleagues, suppliers and their customer to learn about what's out there is a great place to start. Ask supplier about clients they've helped and talk to them about how the solutions work and best practices.

"That's how you really learn as a marketer—by looking at a
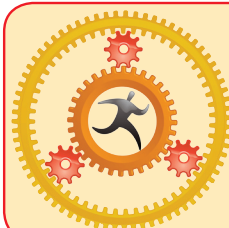
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—Russell Glass, Bizo

cohort that's been successful doing things that you do and targeting audiences you're looking to talk to also. Use your peer group to help move yourself along," Glass says.

Also, remember that trying to optimize your ad campaigns by looking only at the clickthrough rate can be a major pitfall. Clickthrough rate is often not correlated with conversions.

Focusing on the specific persona that you're trying to target early on can also help when leveraging marketing automation in campaigns. Dig deep on what type of person you're targeting, what industry they're in, how large the company they work for is and what their specialties are before rolling out a campaign.

"The more granular you can get create a persona to target, the better you're going to be at creating the right messages that will resonate with that client," Glass says.

Having a designated staffer whose focus is on managing marketing automation can also help.

"There are a lot of solutions that are given to staff as a side job, where you tell them to run a marketing automation system in addition to doing three other jobs. That, unfortunately, is a recipe for mediocre performance, because you need to have a focused effort. It sounds straightforward, but resources can be scarce. It's easy to think of it as a side project, but you won't see success," Chatterjee says.

WHAT'S NEXT

The next generation of marketing automation will likely be more predictive than it is today.

"I see things going beyond a lead-to-revenue model, to specialized campaigns, specialized metrics and workflows, loyalty programs, advocacy of customers and then expansion of customers. Also, marketing automation has not really penetrated outside of enterprise clients, so the increased usage among smaller businesses will provide new experiences. We're just scratching the surface—it's almost like what CRM was 15 years ago. There's a lot more to be done," Chatterjee says.

Glass notes that marketing automation today is completely centered on the known contact universe, but future solutions will begin to focus more on predictive analytics.

"Using predictive analytics and modeling to discover who the best people are in your customer base and use that data to
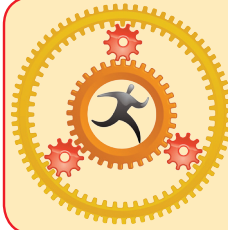
> *"There's not a single B2B marketer out there who hasn't seen the value of email nurturing when it comes to nudging prospects toward a buying decision."*
>
> *—Christina Lyle, Sauce Labs*

more effectively target people out across the web—that's where I think the whole industry will have to go to create a world-class marketing platform in five years," Glass says.

AUTOMATION GIVES THOMSON REUTERS INSIGHT

New lead scoring and nurturing processes have helped the marketing team at Thomson Reuters' Intellectual Property & Science business improve their email targeting.

Thomson Reuters worked with Eloqua to centralize their leads and begin a better targeting process with marketing automation, as opposed to sending blanket messages out to all their prospects. The marketing team has seen a 23% increase in the number of leads it passes along to sales, a 72% reduction in lead-conversion time and a whopping 175% increase in revenue attributed to marketing.

"The new, shared insight into our lead management funnel provides a clearer picture of the quality and quantity of leads needed to achieve revenue targets, enabling marketing to develop lead generation and nurturing strategies to engage the right prospects, in the right way at the right time," says Mike Thompson, vice president, global marketing services, Intellectual Property & Science, Thomson Reuters.

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