Chief Marketer Marketing Technology Special Report

Building Relationships With Intelligence

Leveraging marketing automation helps marketers segment and prospect more efficiently

The number of marketing automation technology solutions grows every day, and more and more marketers either using or planning to leverage automation in their campaigns. Automation can help easily manage digital and email campaigns by quickly segmenting audiences and databases and can help marketers sort through prospect and customer lists more quickly and efficiently than ever before, whether it's targeting qualified leads and prospects or sending messages to existing customers.

"Marketers are using automation to build relationships with prospects based on intelligence. This gives them credibility and allows them differentiate themselves from the flood of emails [to prospects and customers] that all say the same thing and tell you nothing. It's an incredibly exciting time to be in this business, but to some degree it's gotten tougher because there is such a growing number of vendors to choose from it can be difficult to make sense of it all and pull it all together in a fashion that works," says Mark Godly, chief revenue officer of HG Data.

AUTOMATION TECH REVOLUTION

In Q4 2014 and Q1 2015, Gleanster Research (in collaboration with Act-On Software) conducted an online survey to ascertain the state of customer life-cycle engagement and CRM in midsize B2B firms in the U.S. The results show that marketers are ready and in prime position to take ownership of customer life-cycle engagement with the help of marketing tech solutions including automation technology.

"We hear it more and more—CIOs need to get friendly with marketing departments because there is going to be a lot of money spent in this area in the future—it's revolutionizing the front office in many ways. We have seen that forward-thinking marketers are getting on the automation bandwagon, figuring out that online marketing is important and that the buyer's journey has changed. Then there are others

who are further along, figuring out what they are going to do how to push the envelope and change the field," says Atri Chatterjee, CMO, Act-On Software.

A total of 750 mid-sized B2B companies and marketing professionals were polled for the Act-On's study, which aimed to gauge how marketers are thinking about the customer lifecycle, the challenges they are facing when dealing with it, and the differences there are between the approaches marketing teams are taking when dealing with it.

Chatterjee says that marketers have all the solutions at their fingertips to take over the driver's seat when it comes to the customer lifecycle, and that includes marketing automation tech.

"The technology is there. If you have your know-how and you have your planning figured out, you have automation technology that you can use today to more effectively market during the entire customer life cycle. Marketers need to think about the entire customer journey and they can engage customers throughout that journey," Chatterjee says.

The study showed that all responding marketers agreed that there is a customer life cycle and that marketers should have some role throughout that customer life cycle. Eight out of 10 marketers, however, feel they only feel they have a peripheral role

THE AUTOMATION LANDSCAPE
INDUSTRY SHIFTS TO OPEN PLATFORMS THAT SUPPORT OTHER TECHNOLOGIES

Consolidation and innovation around the major marketing clouds has been a constant in the marketing automation space, and it will only continue across the board.

"If you look at Adobe, Oracle, Salesforce, Marketo—all of those companies in the past year have made a lot of investment in developing ISV ecosystems and altering their value proposition to not just be one suite that does it all, but a foundational system that is also an open platform to support other plug-in technologies, says Scott Brinker, co-founder and CTO of ion interactive and the creator of the Chief Marketing Technologist Blog. "That's a pretty big shift from where this industry was a year ago," Brinker says.

Another thing that's notable is the growth of middleware categories, such as customer data platforms and tag management systems. Brinker says that the reason why they're thriving is because whether it's through data or cloud API management, they're making it easier for marketers to connect all of these different pieces of information and pull out shared data insights.

When it come to selecting the right automation platform, Brinker suggests that marketing teams narrow down what they want and what capabilities they want to have in your marketing and customer experience. After that, there's a set of criteria that should fairly quickly narrow the field.

"You still might have a couple of dozen vendors that you may want to seriously look at, which is admittedly a lot, but it's not like you have to look at all 2,000 in a serious way. A lot of these solutions are very different, and solutions people are using to manage display ad campaigns are different than tools for content management or website production. There is a larger net in which you want to slowly connect the data you get to the same common place, but many are different tools for different needs," Brinker says.

Most of the major marketing tech solution players have taken to become open platforms that have ISV ecosystems, as opposed just all-in-one solutions. This dramatically reduces the amount of software integration that a marketer has to do, Brinker says.

"It's helping to make this highly varied landscape more manageable for marketers. When marketers are looking at whatever foundational system is going to be the backbone of their marketing technology infrastructure, they really do want to make a choice that's committed to that kind of open architecture and ISV ecosystem because it gives you all of the flexibility to pick new innovations as they become available," Brinker says.

Middleware tech solutions that can, for example, allow marketing automation technology to integrate and work with other existing platforms, continue to evolve.

"The number of vendors in that space has grown significantly in the past year, but also I think their popularity has grown dramatically. If you look at things like tag management systems, when they were first created they had a relatively simple task—to help manage placing different scripts on a website in a more structured way. Now they've advanced way beyond that, because all of those tags placed on web touch points actually become conduits of data, so they've gotten really good at being able to collect and manage that data layer on top of those tags. It boils down to letting marketers take very different kinds of products and collect that data into a common repository and get more of a unified view of it," Brinker says.

in this lifecycle from prospect to loyal customer.

"Marketing is the part of the company that is visible to customers before they become customers, through the process of becoming an opportunity, becoming a customer, and then becoming a loyal customer. The marketer has a purview into all of this, the question is whether they doing anything about it or not? Most marketers want to do something about it, but most feel that they're not able to or don't have that authority," Chatterjee says.

AUTOMATION BEST PRACTICES

Automation allows marketers to better manage the customer relationship and lifecycle from beginning to end, and marketing automation tech helps marketing teams take customers from lead to revenue, qualify leads, score leads and segment communications between different types of prospects based on demographics, behavior and propensity to purchase.

"A good marketer who's using marketing automation is doing these things. But think about a good marketer applying these things to their existing customer base, and many are not doing this. Selling something to an existing customer is six times easier than going out and finding a new customer. Automation can help identify what types of customers you already have, different segments of customers and how they are segmented: by industry, behavioral and propensity," Chatterjee says.

But how can a marketer take all of this information and use it to interact with existing customers?

When marketers leverage automation techniques around audience segmentation, profiling and personalization, it allows them to interact and engage customers in a different way because of things they know about them. Through marketing automation tech, marketers have the capability to do it effectively right now.

TRENDS

Today, marketers are looking at automation from a solution standpoint, but also from a much broader perspective. Top performers polled in the Gleanster study (those from successful companies with high customer satisfaction ratings) made up two percent of responders.

"If you look at the top performing customers, some interesting things stand out. One is how they plan. Top performers were likely to have objectives tied to the entire customer life cycle that can be easily managed through automation, such as retention, customer satisfaction, as opposed to focusing only on finding new leads and closing new business," Chatterjee says.

Top performers are spending more than 50% of their budget on retention and expansion technology versus non-top performers, according to Gleanster's research.

Top performers in the survey also used personalization techniques in their campaigns 75% more often than lower performers.

"They were looking at profiles and personalizing messages based on what customers were doing and their specific profile information. They were using things like segmentation much more than the average folks. So in addition to the technology, it really starts with planning and know how and using the technology to achieve that," Chatterjee says.

Top performing marketing departments are also using metrics more often. Almost two-thirds of the marketing decisions that top performers are making are based on metrics, not based on non-metric criteria, according to Gleanster.

NEW TECH SOLUTIONS

Marketing automation has been helping marketers target customers based on personal

NOW HEAR THIS

AUTOMATION AND VOICE-BASED TECHNOLOGY

Automation tech isn't just for marketers in the digital space—there are also voice call routing, attribution and management solutions built specifically for marketing professionals. Voice automation technology allows marketers to track phone calls back to the advertising media where they originated from, to route those calls to the right person to act on that request, to manage and measure those voice engagements and to communicate to people via their mobile devices through voice or text.

"It's not enough to just track calls anymore, marketers want to dynamically route calls based on information they've collected, based on whether they're already a customer, based on location. If you get that caller to the right salesperson faster, you dramatically increase the likelihood of closing a sale," Irv Shapiro, CEO of DialogTech (formerly Ifbyphone).

The next level is finding out which calls close with a higher frequency, and tracking the customer journey across the web and phone lines leading to a sale.

THE ROLE OF VOICE

Over the last 15 to 20 years, the technologists of the world—many of them involved in ecommerce and marketing automation—have focused on driving online transactions.

"The problem is that human beings don't always work that way. Maybe half of our economy will one day go ecommerce, but there are fundamental things that will never fit in an online shopping cart," Shapiro says.

Things like calling a plumber in an emergency or buying a life insurance policy usually require human interactions, and those interactions are usually phone-based.

"Almost every considered purchase, substantial B2B purchase, every services purchase the first time around involve a dialog, and that dialog is predominantly focused on voice. We think the big trend in automation is recognizing that if you want to succeed as a business you have to be willing to talk to your customers," Shapiro says.

VOICE AND LEAD GEN

New automated solutions such as DialogTech's Lead-Flow platform enable lead sellers and lead gen agencies, affiliate marketers and pay-per-call advertisers to create their own two-sided voice-based markets where callers from any marketing channel are connected in live conversation with the right lead buyers right away.

"Lead sellers today run marketing programs across online, offline and mobile channels to generate phone leads for a wide variety of lead buyers. Ensuring inbound callers are connected in live conversation with the right buyer is a complex challenge, as buyers often have unique cost-per-call agreements, call thresholds and lead criteria, as well as routing requirements that can change based on caller location, or the day and time of the call," Shapiro says.

DialogTech's LeadFlow addresses the complex call routing challenges lead sellers face when running marketing campaigns for multiple lead buyers. Additionally, this technology provides clear attribution for every phone lead generated as well as unique visibility into the duration and outcome of every call, to appropriately compensate sellers for every valid phone lead.

"Consumers are going to differentiate businesses no longer on whether they have a fancy app or an ecommerce site—because everyone has that—but rather on whether they'll actually talk to you. Tracking calls from various media sources, routing those calls to the best salespeople to take the call, by measuring everything about a call just like a marketing automation platform would do for a contact form and by using outbound communications that choose to engage on mobile devices via text or voice, as opposed to just email," Shapiro says.

and demographic information for some time, but now it's allowing them to target based on technological data.

HG Data is now focusing on a new type of automation focused on targeting by installed technologies, or knowing what hardware and software technologies are being used by companies before reaching out to them for marketing or demand generation purposes. This kind of solution is a new automation

benefit for B2B tech companies looking to find potential customers.

"By taking a big data-style algorithmic approach to building these data sets, it has allowed bigger more detailed data sets to be created and allows customers to target their outreach knowing what the incumbent technologies are in place," says Godly.

While this kind of data is interesting for marketers to know, it needs to be actionable and consumable

in order for teams to take advantage of it.

"Building automation solutions in this space that can fit into marketers' tool kits is the key. The 'spray and pray' approach to marketing has been replaced by marketing automation. We're seeing a little bit of a backlash, if you will. People bought marketing automation platforms and turned them into spam cannons and though it was a panacea and that people would be beating a path to their door. Now we're seeing a V2 or V3 with marketing automation, where instead of just buying lists to target with hundreds of thousands of people on them and hitting the send button, marketers are now a lot more intelligent with their outreach," Godly says.

This external content (or external data) doesn't displace any of the existing technologies marketers have in place, it allows them to adjust messages to resonate more effectively with the targeted audience through automation.

"The pendulum is swinging back to a more targeted approach using third party content to direct that targeting," Godly says.

The average CMO or person managing a marketing automation platform usually doesn't have the domain expertise or the time to be making sense of huge amounts of raw data elements, he says.

"That's what we're spending an enormous amount of time on—making it digestible, to point out the alerts and changes in the dataset and what is the most actionable, usable information at a particular point in time. So instead of presenting marketers with a 2.5GB dataset via an FTP and saying good luck with it, we're distilling it down to what a person needs within their system of record and marrying it to that system. It's about us fitting into the workflow and systems and demand gen processes of our clients as opposed to expecting them to change to add us to the mix," Godly says.

THE FUTURE

Leveraging marketing automation tech to target customers and prospects across the consumer lifecycle and based on a wide variety of targeting information is already happening, and as these tech solutions evolve the process will only become more efficient for marketing teams.

"The customer lifecycle needs a leader and marketers want to do it. Today, we have access to so much engagement data at all different points of the customer journey, and taking advantage of that engagement data is key. Marketers need to use segmentation, profiling, demographics, behavioral data, industry and propensity to better engage with customers and make them more profitable and better customers. There are so many new things we can be doing, and it's changed a lot in the past 10 years," Chatterjeee says. !

Patrick Gorman
Senior Editor, Chief Marketer
pgorman@accessintel.com
Twitter: @CMPatGorman

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