

Driving increased revenue through *Hot Leads.*



Marketing Automation Breaks Down the Wall Between Sales and Marketing

Turn leads that are “not quite ready” into “ready right now” with cost-effective nurturing campaigns

In a tough economy, no one can afford to underperform.

Excellent sales performance relies on campaigns that build brand and deliver prospects to the sales pipeline. Unfortunately, while designed to work together, sales and marketing organizations in too many companies have effectively become disconnected. Despite their common goal to grow revenues, they compete for resources and fail to share information efficiently.

At best, this disconnect adds time and cost to the sales process. At worst, each side mistrusts and blames the other for sluggish sales results. If your salespeople say marketing gives them “lousy leads,” while marketing says your sales force “can’t close a thing,” it’s a good bet that disconnect is happening in your company.

Part of the problem comes from a business-to-business buying process that has changed dramatically. B2B leads used to arrive in waves, driven by sellers whose arsenal included direct campaigns, telemarketing, sales incentives, cold calls, and other traditional promotional activities.

In the last decade, the B2B sales process has moved online and has become customer-driven. Your next big customers are probably online right now doing research on you, expecting to contact you when they’re ready, and on their own schedule, not yours. They much prefer this buyer-driven process, but in exchange for happier prospects, you’ve ceded a great deal of control. The old technique of “batch and blast” email communications simply does not reach the new, discerning buyer.

Perhaps you have a different problem: Your campaigns are robust and your sales are increasing, but you can’t find the data to explain why. Most organizations have limited access to the real-time metrics that help management solve the resource planning puzzle, connect the dots between a closed sale and its point of origination, or discover what channels and campaigns work best. Marketing, sales and financial reporting platforms can be cobbled together, but they fail to present a rolled-up, elegant view at the campaign level.

Limited visibility into ROI as budgets are tighter and executives are more revenue conscious than ever before? That’s a career-limiting move ... for you.

Marketing automation works in a way that's both more efficient and more customer-focused.

The opportunities it presents will change the game in ways we haven't yet seen.

How Can You Do More With Your Sales Leads And Budget?

A study by the Aberdeen Group found that an astonishing 60-70 percent of leads are never followed up.ⁱ

In a typical bucket of leads, 12.5 percent are qualified and ready to buy now; 17.5 percent are unqualified. This leaves 70 percent as “longer term opportunities” that need more information and relationship-building before they’re ready to buy.

Unfortunately, today’s compensation-driven, “close it now” culture leaves sales reps little time for follow-up and no time for nurturing. To make their numbers, your sales team discards those OK-but-not-great leads and focuses on their hottest opportunities – the 12.5 percent that are qualified and ready. They close the deals and move on.

That means more advertising spend, more travel and trade shows, more time and expense to create another bucket of prospects ... only to toss aside that same 70 percent because they’re “not ready to buy now.”

What happens to those not-quite-ready customers? Most companies don’t really keep track. We have to assume that down the line, they become someone else’s hot leads and happy customers. You saw them first – but someone else gets the sale.

The emerging trend in opportunity management and customer engagement is to deploy an integrated marketing and sales automation solution – leveraging platforms and processes that can help your marketing and sales engine turn that lost 70 percent into sales. Marketing automation works in a way that’s both more efficient and more customer-focused. The opportunities it presents will change the game in ways we haven’t yet seen.

How Does Marketing Automation Turn Your Longer-Term Leads Into Gold?

Marketing automation nurtures those longer-term opportunities, keeps your brand in front of them, and delivers leads to your sales team when they’re ready to buy.

Aberdeen analyst Ian Michiels predicts that marketing automation “will be critical for every company to embrace in order to maintain a competitive foothold in the market.” By automating repetitive tasks and tracking performance and customer behavior through the sales funnel, “marketing automation technology has a direct impact on bottom line cost reduction and top line growth,” Michiels said.ⁱⁱ

With this approach, you uncover what each prospect wants to know about your products, then guide and nurture the customer through the learning process. A technology-enabled process called *progressive profiling* allows you to learn more about a prospect and adapt the campaign to deliver segment-specific messages that address buying stage questions. It meets the prospect exactly where he or she is.



With such an automated nurturing program, your organization could:

- Capture data about prospects as they work through your company's marketing campaign, collecting information about the prospect's role, company, industry and revenues.
- Turn the sales process into a conversation, based on observed behavior.
 - What search term landed the prospect on our site?
 - What pages did they look at after they watched a video?
 - What white papers or fact sheets did they download or ignore?
- Use lead scoring models to watch for signs of readiness in the prospect's behavior and pass the lead to sales at the right moment.
- Deliver appropriate product messaging to prospects at a 1:1 level, designed to accelerate the consideration and sales process as they move through the purchase funnel.
- Automate follow-up so that nobody falls through the cracks.
- Recycle leads – because sales and marketing platforms are integrated in your CRM database, the system will drop a “not ready” lead from the sales platform back into the marketing database.



To generate the following results:

- Marketing and sales teams have a complete view of the process and detailed analytics at every stage, from buying cycle conversion rates to sales force effectiveness.
- Collaboration between sales and marketing is improved, as hot leads are handed off with rich information, “not ready” leads continue to be nurtured, and closed deals are reported back to marketing.
- Cross-selling opportunities to existing customers become more visible and easy to nurture, delivering revenue from a frequently neglected source.
- Time-consuming and repetitive contact, tracking and reporting tasks are eliminated for your salespeople. With powerful information about each prospect funneled into your CRM solution, your team can focus on what they do best: converting a hot lead into a satisfied customer.

These versatile tools can be integrated across all marketing activities, including trade shows and sales events, webinar programs, advertising, marketing communications and media relations. The richness of the shared data empowers your marketing team to support salespeople for mutually beneficial results.

Marketing Automation Turbo-Charges Your Current Sales Strategies

If your company employs lead generation strategies, uses email marketing, or manages leads through a CRM system, you should consider one of the web-based marketing automation platforms. An automated solution will enhance all of its component programs and smooth the communication path between sales and marketing.

Correctly implemented, a marketing automation platform produces more viable leads and guides a higher rate of conversion to purchase. Marketing and sales groups both benefit from a clear view into the buying cycle of prospect segments and impact of those prospects on company revenue. This visibility leads to tighter customer segmentation and more meaningful ROI reporting for the sales and marketing management.

About Impact Street

Impact Street's experts in marketing automation can help your organization improve the quality of sales leads and develop relationships with current and prospective customers – relationships that will endure long after the initial sale is closed. To learn more about Impact Street's methodology and services, call 303.539.6555 or visit www.impactstreet.com.

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¹ Quoted in "Lead Nurturing: The Secret to Successful Lead Generation," Ian Michiels, Aberdeen Group, Inc., November 2008. Download at research.aberdeen.com.

ⁱⁱ Ian Michiels, "Marketing Automation: A Strategic Guide for Optimizing End-To-End Marketing Activities." Aberdeen Group, Inc., April 2009. Download at research.aberdeen.com.