

**Using marketing automation to
improve the success of your B2B
lead generation programs**



B2B Lead Generation Programs that Work!
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Selling a life raft to a drowning man in the ocean doesn't require a lot of expertise. Knowing where to find that man before it's too late, and having a raft available to sell is much more complicated. In today's business-to-business (B2B) environment, this is the challenge you face everyday — finding the customers with the specific need for your solution.

Compounding this challenge is the exponential growth in technology over the past 20 years that has dramatically changed the entire B2B landscape. Gone are the days when you could own a regional market and make your living within a single territory. Loyalty and relationships are harder to build and even harder to keep. The ease with which people communicate, travel and acquire information has opened the door to competition.

That competition is leveraging the Internet, cell phones and the willingness of companies to do business with people they have never met to quickly and aggressively enter a market and target your customers. The only sure way to insulate yourself from these competitive pressures while still expanding into other markets is to provide the exceptional level of personalized service that was the hallmark of the local business relationship.

That service was built upon knowing what customers needed before they did and having a solution immediately ready when they need it. Unfortunately, very few companies can afford to invest the amount of time and energy necessary to build these types of relationships with their customers, and even fewer can do this for prospects.

Fortunately, marketing technologies have risen to the challenge and now enable B2B lead generation experts to automate the implementation of traditional marketing programs designed to build meaningful relationships with prospects. These marketing automation solutions maximize five key processes to customize communications and grow the customer/prospect relationship. These processes include:

- 1) Intensive collection and management data
- 2) Inbound, multi-channel communication planning
- 3) Timely, efficient and meaningful follow-up
- 4) Personalization of Automation
- 5) Measure, evaluate and revise

Intensive collection and management of data

Marketing automation works best when there is a foundation of meaningful and continuously updated data available. Fortunately, the type and amount of available data has grown dramatically with the evolution of the Internet. Helping capture and organize this data are numerous Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems that are easily integrated with

marketing systems such as websites, mailing lists, trade shows and virtually any other customer or prospect touch point.

Using these tools to actively collect information from your inbound and outbound lead development programs can allow you to build a real-time picture of your prospects and better understand where opportunity exists. It will also allow you to better design future lead generation programs to target the specific needs of your prospects. This information is critical for identifying the characteristics of your “ideal customer,” which is the most profitable customer to your business.

Communication planning

The second critical element of marketing automation is upfront communication planning. This is a holistic view of all communications with prospects from first contact to the closing sale. This simple concept can quickly become a multilayered web of misdirection that is more likely to lose a customer than close a sale if done incorrectly. The challenges are multifaceted and include:

- Understanding the numerous avenues of communications
- Anticipating your prospects potential needs
- Coordinate the necessary response to each
- Evolving to the changing needs of your customer over time
- Incorporating numerous communication channels

For first time marketing automation users, the process of communication planning for use in marketing automation can seem daunting. Developing a strategy that focuses on a single channel such as online orders or telemarketing can significantly simplify this process and provide a roadmap to follow. Once the individual channel strategies are developed, integrating these into a single system or process can be streamlined to create a seamless user experience that crosses multiple types of communication.

Timely, efficient and meaningful follow-up

The third aspect of marketing automation is the most critical. Linking the appropriate communication to a prospect’s action, and delivering that message in a timely, efficient and meaningful way is the true benchmark of marketing automation. Once again, the Internet has reshaped your prospects appetite for information and the timing is almost as critical as the message. Consumers are searching for instant gratification and will often recognize this responsiveness and pay a premium to maintain that level of service and communication for the long-term.

Marketing automation has taken this process to an entirely new level by incorporating services such as email, web site traffic analysis, print-on-

demand, and email tracking to rapidly disseminate information immediately upon request and often simply based on user behavior.

This provides companies the ability to quickly and affordably fulfill a realized need for information such as a web request for information, as well as unrealized needs. These unrealized needs stem from information collected about user behavior and are often more valuable than information requests.

An example of an unrealized need is when a user receives an email promotion and responds by clicking through to your website. Normal solutions tell you only that they clicked, but if you have integrated tracking software within your site, you would know exactly how long that person stayed and what they looked at even though they never completed a form or requested additional information. Identifying the person, their action and following-up with targeted information can not only accelerate the possibility of the sale, but also give you the chance to shape the deal as the first vendor in the door. Incorporating other services such as direct mail and telemarketing can further enhance the results of these programs by reinforcing information obtained online with actionable items provided in print or over the phone.

Personalization of Automation

People like to deal with other people who have similar experiences, backgrounds and interests. When given a choice, they will choose to work with people (and companies) who listen to their needs and respond accordingly. When all things are equal, making a personal connection with a prospect can be the only difference between winning a deal and losing to a competitor. To capitalize on this principle and remain cost effective, marketing automation solutions are able to automate the personalization of information with proper planning and coordination.

This personalization can take many forms and works best when combined with multiple communication channels. It can also grow significantly over time as the relationship evolves which serves to reinforce the relationship with your desired prospect.

Managing this evolution is a critical step in the planning process. Sharing a deep level of knowledge with a new prospect immediately can be viewed as intrusive and disconcerting. Slowly building this relationship over time by sharing with prospects small details about your organization, as you simultaneously collect and customize your offer to their particular characteristics has clearly shown better results.

Marketing automation can make this process easier by using templates and triggering responses based on user action and reactions. Integrating

customized variables and personalized data into communications such as direct mail, emails and web sites can significantly improve response rates as well as win credibility for your solution. It can also show your prospects and customer that you are paying attention to their needs and the needs of the market.

Measure, evaluate and revise

The final element of the marketing automation equation is measurement, evaluation and revision. Marketing automation is a process and to be successful this process needs to adapt over time. Even the most well thought out program can benefit from minor adjustments to make it more appealing to your target audience.

This is particularly true for programs that are intended to run for a longer period of time and have many touch points. Simply updating communications to reference new trends or developments can give new life to communications and have a remarkably strong impact on the programs results.

Likewise, understanding which programs are working can allow you to redirect more funding to these programs or revamp other programs to take advantage of a proven winning formula.

After all the goal of marketing automation is to free up resources by automating activities and allow you the time to produce better programs. This in turn will enable you to reach more prospects and ultimately close more sales.

Getting started with marketing automation

At ResponsePoint, we specialize in business to business (b2B) lead generation programs that deliver immediate results and long-term success. Our winning formula combines proven database marketing strategies, innovative creative, and exceptional project management services to build integrated marketing campaigns that result in meaningful relationships with your customers. Relationships that produce consistently higher response rates, better quality leads and faster ROI.

These relationships are possible through the combined effort of people who understand the B2B lead generation process and the technologies that make it possible to build sustainable marketing programs. This includes numerous types of marketing automation technologies.

For more information on how ResponsePoint can help you leverage the abilities of marketing automation to expand your B2B lead generation activities, give us a call at 800-990-0725.