

Find Your Niche With Marketing Automation

Strategies And Tactics to Own the Vertical



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About the Author

Greg started his career in direct mail and learned the importance of targeting and reporting. This is the foundation for his success with marketing automation for both his agency and its clients.

Core Integrated has been a SharpSpring agency partner for more than 2 years and currently has 80 clients on the platform.

You've heard of a "Jack of All Trades." The truth is, Jack is overrated. He gets tons of credit for being skilled in so many areas, but no one ever questions the *depth* of his specialization in anything.

The thing is, it's nearly impossible to be everything for everyone, and though many businesses try to, most end up performing less efficiently as a result. While it's great to always be looking for opportunities to expand your skill set to offer more services, doing this often limits your ability to perform optimally in any one area. If you try to be the best at everything, you will spend all your time and resources acquiring new skills and no time optimizing any of them. You will also spread yourself too thinly, which makes it easy to get beat out by competitors that have spent all of their time specializing in a particular area.

That is the essence of niche marketing.

According to Entrepreneur.com, it's about targeting "a portion of a market that you've identified as having some special characteristic and that's worth marketing to."

So while your share of the entire market will drop, your share of that niche market will most likely increase as your focus becomes more narrow and your content becomes more relevant to your audience. In fact, small and crowded niche markets are often just as competitive – and sometimes more so – than their larger counterparts. So it's critical to do everything you can to not only be an expert in your field, but to understand exactly how your offering meets the needs of your target market better than any of your competitors can.



As you spend more time improving your offering based on a narrower set of needs and requirements, your overall productivity and performance will increase. Furthermore, your reputation will grow more quickly when you're operating within a smaller, closer-knit community of users, and you will get referrals at a higher rate and close more (and stickier) deals.

What makes for a good niche?

There's a wide variety of ways in which you can go about defining and developing your niche. No matter your business type, however, there are some tried-and-true guidelines that can help you assess whether you're headed in the right direction. The following are some of the most prominent indicators of a strong niche:

- ✓ It works with your long-term vision to get you and your business where you want to be.
- ✓ It's centered around something that people want/need, to ensure you'll always have a solid customer base.
- ✓ It's the "only game in town," meaning that you own the vertical, because you're the best at what you do and people trust you.
- ✓ It has a strong foundation but with room to evolve, so you can develop additional revenue streams as you see fit, while always retaining your core business approach.



*Balancing **stability** with **potential for growth** is the **key to long-term success**.*

The Missing Link: Marketing Automation

All of this sounds fine and dandy, but how do you actually go about doing any of it? The answer lies in marketing automation, which provides you with the tools to see who you're working with, what their needs are, what's working and what's not. You can track the success of various campaigns to see which ones have worked for which types of businesses, and that way you can begin to define your niche.

58% of top-performing companies, where marketing contributes more than half of the sales pipeline, have adopted marketing automation.

– Forrester

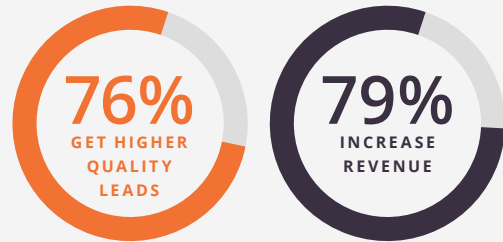
Marketing automation helps you achieve the two most important steps to niche marketing success – finding your niche *and* owning it.

Using Marketing Automation to Find Your Niche

Through detailed behavioral tracking, marketing automation gives you valuable insights into how your current leads are engaging with your brand and content. This allows you to confidently predict which types of leads are the best fit for your business, so you can shape your offering around their specific needs.

Next, campaign analytics give you end-to-end visibility of what has worked and what hasn't, so you can zero in on the strategies and audiences that will bring you the highest ROI.

Another important step in finding your niche is getting direct feedback from your customers and leads about their experiences with your product or service. Marketing automation helps particularly if you have a large user base, since reaching out to people individually might be difficult or impossible. With marketing automation, you can set up automated email campaigns nudging people to give you feedback or fill out satisfaction surveys. This gets the ball rolling, and you can then decide who to follow up with personally based on the feedback you get.



CMOs at top-performing companies say that the most important reasons for implementing marketing automation are to **increase revenue (79%)** and get **higher quality leads (76%)**. – Gleanster

Using Marketing Automation to Own Your Niche

Once you've begun to establish yourself as an authority in your niche, marketing automation continues to support your everyday processes, helping you find and track new leads that fit the right profile, helping you build trust with them through nurturing programs and other automated campaigns, and providing you with extensive analytics so you can further focus your efforts on what works.



Successful lead nurturing breeds educated, gratified customers who channel their satisfaction into their purchase sizes, making **47% larger purchases** than non-nurtured leads. – Kapost

Asking your customers for feedback is important not only for building your niche initially but also for keeping up with the needs of your audience over time. Staying on top of their concerns and any changes in their needs is critical for staying competitive, even if you already own the vertical. Social media is an unbeatable way to get immediate feedback on your offering and on how happy you're keeping your customers. Marketing automation makes social outreach easier and more scalable and allows you to track every detail of your campaigns so you can ensure you're getting the most out of them.

A Case Study: Niche Marketing in the Fitness Industry

**Author's note: The following example is based on real data from one of our clients. I changed certain details about the business so that I could share more specific data and results without compromising the client's privacy.*



SITUATION

After minimal success in trying to sell our marketing services to a general audience of Chicago businesses, we narrowed our market down to fitness centers in Chicago. Although this gave us a smaller pool of prospects to work with, we found it was much easier to target decision-makers and other key leads, which helped shorten the sales cycle so we could convert leads more quickly.



The sales cycle associated with generalized marketing campaigns is long, **taking an average of 7-13 touchpoints** to turn a cold lead into a customer. – Online Marketing Institute



IMPLEMENTATION

We implemented a particularly successful marketing campaign for one client – Little Gym, a center that offers fitness and activities for kids. Using marketing automation, we were able to integrate all of Little Gym's lead sources, segment leads into relevant lists, and design targeted email nurture campaigns based on where leads were coming from. As the campaigns became more targeted, leads naturally became more engaged, and email open and click-through rates increased dramatically. Furthermore, real-time sales notifications allowed the sales team to contact leads immediately once they were ready to make a purchase.



IN TOTAL, LITTLE GYM SAW ITS LEAD CONVERSION RATES GO UP BY 50%.

As the program continued, we used marketing automation to increase awareness of company events and promotions, utilizing time-based triggers to send out email notifications for birthday parties and school events. And the more data Little Gym was able to gather on its customers, the more targeted its campaigns became.

The next step for us was to use our success with this client to build our reputation and provide similar services to more businesses within that niche.

Little Gym was part of a franchise group made up of like-minded business owners who got together to help each other with different business initiatives. Since our client was so happy with the results we provided for the Chicago center, he referred us to the franchise group so we could pitch our services to others. We were able to easily replicate the same marketing program to fit the needs of each franchisee's location, and this process gave us further insight into the marketing needs of businesses in our niche.

One area for improvement noted by the franchise group was the lack of a clear process for following up with leads received from the corporate website. Previously, Little Gym's national advertising campaigns were responsible for

driving local leads to each franchisee's website and then into their lead databases. The employees at each location often didn't know if they should go ahead and call the lead or if it was another representative's responsibility.

We were referred to the Vice President of Franchise Services at the corporate office to show the corporate team how effective our marketing systems were in lead distribution, sales accountability and how lead nurturing helped franchisees convert more leads. Having around 1,000 locations across the country, corporate felt that each one might be able to benefit from our services. This was the perfect opportunity for us to begin to really own our niche, but there was one challenge – each location was a franchise and therefore could not be forced to do anything.

Throughout the year, however, these franchises hosted trade shows and national conventions, which gave us the perfect platform to demonstrate the power of our solution to hundreds of new leads. Since we had a proven system in place, it was easy to pitch to new prospects, and it was much easier to scale new clients as they signed on.



AS A RESULT OF PARTICIPATING IN THESE EVENTS, WE HAVE INCREASED OUR BUSINESS FROM JUST ONE CLIENT TWO YEARS AGO TO 83 CLIENTS NOW, AND WE PROJECT THAT FIGURE WILL DOUBLE IN THE UPCOMING YEAR.

After other companies in the fitness industry heard that Little Gym was seeing huge results from our services, many wanted a similar marketing program so they could compete. This has provided us with a continuous stream of new business opportunities and boosted our reputation, enabling us to further develop our niche and take ownership of it. We project that with the addition of these new opportunities, we'll be able to increase our client base by 35%-50% each year.



Go Out There and Find Your Niche

Niche marketing is all about getting more mileage out of your existing capabilities and opportunities. Don't spread yourself too thin, and don't waste all of your time trying to learn new things that you won't have the time to actually master. Study your market, look at things from the perspective of your customers to understand their true needs, and then focus your offering and messaging around those needs. Ultimately, it's about finding where you fit best and where you can provide the most value. Marketing automation lets you do this by helping you identify what works and what doesn't. If you do this better than anyone else, you'll eventually gain authority within your niche and own the vertical.



See how adding marketing automation to your agency's services can drive revenue from existing clients and help you add new ones. Schedule a demo with a partnerships specialist to chat about your specific needs.

Get a Demo



SharpSpring is the marketing automation platform of choice for more than 1,000 digital marketing agencies and their 5,000+ clients. Since 2014, SharpSpring has provided its powerful marketing automation solution to businesses around the globe. In the short time since its inception, the company has gained significant market share from industry leaders with its competitive pricing, agency-focused business model, and robust platform.

Visit www.sharpspring.com for more information.



Core Integrated is a full-service direct marketing agency based in the Chicagoland Area. Utilizing direct mail, targeted digital marketing and personalized email lead nurture, the agency provides a turnkey, multi-touch solution to help its clients reach and surpass their goals.

Visit www.multitouchleads.com for more information.