



Taking Your Agency and Your Clients to the Next Level with Marketing Automation

Strategies for both the B2B and B2C spaces

This white paper covers:

- > *The Current State of Digital Marketing*
- > *Marketing to B2B vs. B2C*
- > *The Role of Marketing Automation*
- > *The Agency Objective*
- > *Implementation Challenges and Solutions*

The Current State of Digital Marketing

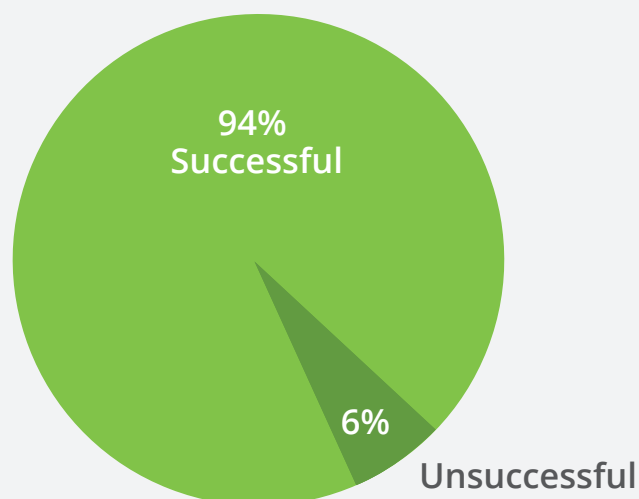
Digital marketing has come a long way since the days of generic websites, hitting people's inboxes with tons of email offers every week, and begging for social media followers. Today's consumers have learned how to quickly identify what they want to read in their inboxes, on their social media feeds and while browsing, and they have grown to expect to only see information that meets their individual needs.

Marketing automation provides this and more, and it has effectively changed the game. For those new to the concept, marketing automation refers to software platforms and technologies designed for marketing departments and organizations to drive relevant leads, automate repetitive tasks, and track the end-to-end ROI of their efforts.

Marketing agencies have a dual challenge in that they must learn to use marketing automation to grow their own businesses, and at the same time, they're expected to be expert users when it comes to helping their clients.

This whitepaper examines how marketing automation can be effective for agencies serving different business models, and how agencies view the challenges to successfully implementing a marketing automation platform.

How successful is marketing automation in achieving important goals?



Marketing agencies get clear and compelling data when they use marketing automation, so it is easy for them to report on how successful it is for them.

A full 94% indicated success when using a platform. These successes are delivering results for their own organizations as well as for their clients.

Marketing Automation – best for B2B or B2C?


The answer is **both**.

Marketing automation is designed to help you form lasting, personal relationships with your clients. So although the characteristics, objectives and strategies of B2Bs and B2Cs may vary, marketing automation offers a multitude of benefits for any type of business that's looking to improve its customer relations and instill brand loyalty with their audience.

Agencies are categorized as B2Bs, which means they sell their services to other businesses and typically operate on longer buying cycles with fewer, more invested clients (as opposed to B2C companies that often deal with thousands of individual consumers at a time). However, agencies are also unique in that while they themselves are categorized as B2Bs, the clients they serve can include both B2Bs and B2Cs.

Since marketing automation is perfectly suited for both B2B and B2C targets (and includes tools to identify and track both types of leads when they interact with you), it's an especially valuable tool for agencies to use both for their themselves and for their clients' businesses.

Let's go over some of the key differences between B2B and B2C targets and take a look at how marketing automation can address the challenges involved with both.



"As an online marketing agency, we utilize marketing automation from SharpSpring to capture leads, nurture them, convert them into customers and then build the value of that customer over time."

Manny Torres
Creative Director
Rock My Image

The B2C Target

With B2C marketing, you're usually dealing with one person. This person may or may not be familiar with your product or service and is often driven by emotions and specific needs. Here are some defining characteristics of B2C targets and some tips on how to effectively communicate with them.



The B2C target is usually...

- > Driven by emotions
- > Not an expert on your market
- > An individual person
- > Not interested in a long buying cycle
- > Satisfying an immediate need/want, no interest in a relationship
- > Looking at specific product attributes such as cost, ease of use, etc.
- > Less willing to disclose personal information



Driven by emotions

Think of what would emotionally drive a person to buy a product. Is it hunger? Status? Cost? Then structure your offering around the qualities and strengths of your product that are most relevant to the particular customer's behaviors and motives.

Try to use an informal tone and even humor in your communications, and never use pushy or intimidating sales tactics. Your marketing automation platform can send personalized emails with dynamic content, including imagery that appeals to the lead.



Not an expert

When you're dealing directly with an end user, it's not likely that you're dealing with a person who has read every book on your product.

This means you should keep your messaging relatable, entertaining and easy to read – doing your best to stay away from industry lingo and complex statistics. Keep this in mind when determining content sends. You can leverage dynamic web content via marketing automation here where the headline, content, call to action, etc. on your webpage changes based on visitor characteristics. For example, a first time visitor sees basic, high-level information while a repeat visitor may see a white paper download option.



They're single

No, this doesn't mean you should send a Valentine's promotion with your photo. Your target is likely not part of a team or committee that steers the decision to buy your product or not, which makes the sales process more straightforward for you.

It also means you can personalize your content to a higher degree than with B2B targets. Marketing automation allows you to use dynamic email content (in addition to dynamic web content mentioned above) that can adapt your emails to each individual lead's interests, profile, engagement and more, making personalization a breeze. But keep in mind that you'll still want to be able to appeal to a wide variety of people, so be sure not to limit your content by making it too specific.



Operate on a short buying cycle

B2C buyers are the primary decision makers in their own purchase process, so they'll generally purchase a product the minute they decide it could be beneficial to them.

With this in mind, make it easy for your lead to quickly get to the page where they can make a purchase. Use marketing automation to create clear calls to action, shopping cart abandonment email alerts, and follow-up campaigns with suggestions for similar products.



Looking to satisfy a need/want, not for a long-term business relationship

When dealing with B2C consumers, marketers should use targeted email campaigns that focus on the product itself more than after-sale services and support.

B2C prospects are looking to satisfy an immediate need, and they move on as soon as they've got what they wanted. As a result, specific product attributes such as cost, ease of use and quality are extremely important to the B2C consumer.



Withhold more information than B2B

Personal information on an individual is highly sensitive and private, so it's generally harder to acquire details about your B2C leads. While they might freely give certain details such as email address or name, as soon as you start asking about address, occupation and more, you can expect a drop-off in engagement.

With marketing automation, you can quickly build custom landing pages for each campaign and swap out content on the fly to adapt to the specific types of consumers you're targeting.

Sign up now for a live demo:

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The B2B Target

While B2C marketing requires you to cater to individuals, B2B marketing is all about appealing to groups of people.



The B2B target is usually...

- > Driven by business relationships
- > Knowledgeable (to varying degrees) about your product or service
- > An entire team, but niched
- > Willing to engage in a longer buying cycle
- > Looking for a reliable business partner
- > Focused on the business vs. the product
- > More willing to disclose important information



Driven by business relationships

Businesses are usually repeat buyers, and chances are, if they've used your product before, they'll need it again in the future.

Winning over your B2B leads is all about establishing trust. They're looking to engage with someone who shows signs of being reliable in the long run, so it's important to highlight your post-conversion services and support before you make the sale. Once they've made an initial purchase, you can use drip email campaigns to follow up with them regularly and keep them engaged with relevant content.



Knowledgeable about your offering

In B2B marketing, you're dealing with professionals who are paid to be critical and objective. You can assume they've done their research and looked at all of your main competitors.

Here, you have to give them hard facts and let them know of the competitive advantage you have over the other options. Your emails should offer tangible product information and competitor differentiation. Then you can create landing pages to house gated content, such as whitepapers, and use marketing automation to score leads based on their interactions with your content.



An entire team, but niched

B2B consumers typically consist of teams of professionals who make the final decision, or if it's an individual, he or she likely has to report to someone higher up. The chances of emotionally engaging an entire group of people with the same exact messaging are next to none.

To counter this, keep it factual. Start with general facts that cover your market (e.g., 49% of businesses use marketing automation platforms), and end with hard statistics that make your business look like a good option (e.g., our email delivery rate is 94% - the highest in the industry).

This way, whether you're communicating with an entire team or just one representative from that team, your message is more likely to be taken seriously by decision makers.



Extended buying cycle

B2B emails are not a one-off communication. Your campaigns should be designed to help you engage with and nurture leads over an indefinite period.

Remember that B2B sales are typically more profitable than B2C sales, so you can justify the extra resources spent in taking care of a B2B lead with the ultimately higher revenue you'll gain from the transaction.

Using marketing automation to create an educational nurturing campaign is a great fit here. Be patient, persistent and positive.

The Agency Objective

As with any company, an agency's main objectives are to serve its customers and generate profit. However, agencies have an additional layer of responsibility, as they're accountable not only for serving their own clients but also their clients' customers and leads. Agencies are increasingly turning to marketing automation platforms for help. As shown in the beginning of this white paper, 94% of surveyed agencies indicated that marketing automation is successful at helping them achieving goals for themselves and for their clients.



Top uses for marketing automation

Agencies report that they are most often using marketing automation for increasing lead generation (65%) and improving lead nurturing (59%), with the next most important goal being to increase sales revenue (42%).

Generating and Nurturing B2B and B2C Leads

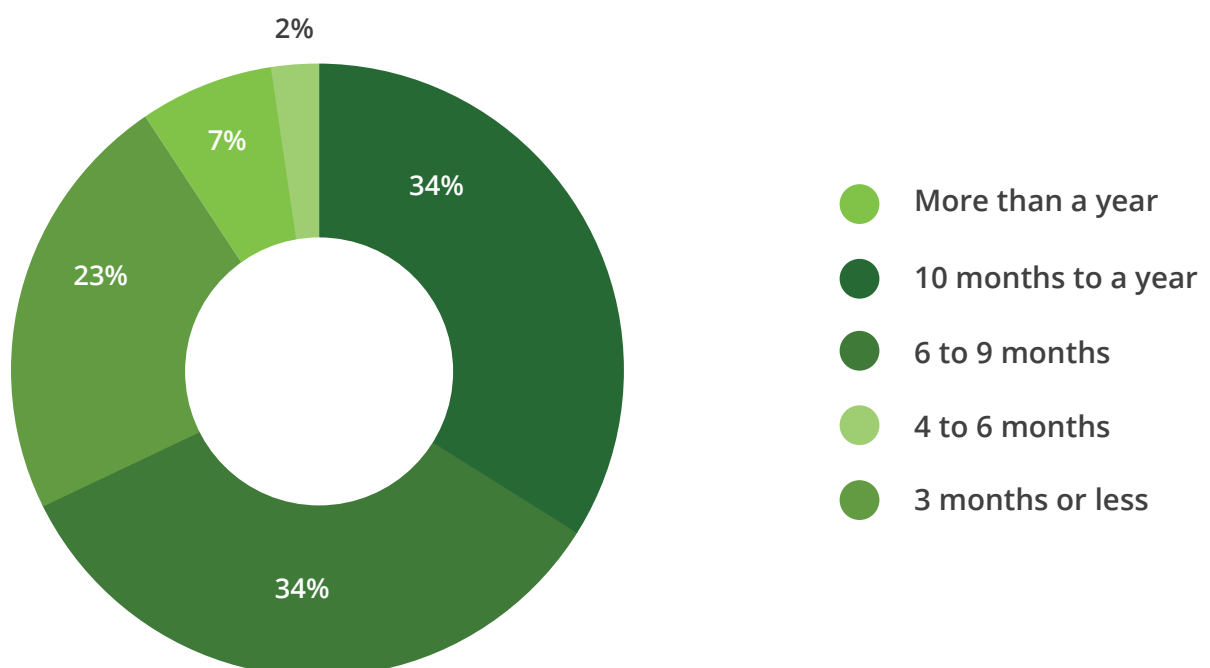
When applied to any market, whether B2B or B2C, marketing automation is ideal for generating and nurturing leads. By allowing you to extract important personal information on your leads and then use that information to send leads relevant and engaging content, marketing automation serves as the perfect tool for building your relationships with customers as well as finding those relationships in the first place.

The ability to extract relevant information and cater to leads' individual interests is particularly important when it comes to dealing with B2C customers, who are typically reluctant to disclose personal details and tend to buy based on emotion and impulse. With marketing automation, your website can collect detailed information about each lead, what product he's interested in, which pages he's spending the most time on, and any particular pain points he may be experiencing where you can jump in and help out.

When it comes to B2B marketing, you're generally dealing with longer sales cycles and campaigns with several touch points. With marketing automation, all it takes is one customer relationship manager or salesperson to easily create 'personal' relationships with multiple leads and nurture them with relevant content until they're ready to convert.

The majority of agencies using marketing automation have experienced a great deal of success, and two-thirds of those surveyed predicted most clients will realize the benefits of marketing automation within seven to nine months of implementation.

Timeline for expected ROI from marketing automation



Three Common Challenges to Implementing Marketing Automation

If your simple email marketing, basic social posting and a static website are still offering your business a positive ROI, you may be wondering why you should take the next step to marketing automation.

Agencies around the world are asking this same question, and despite all the benefits that marketing automation can offer, some are hesitant to begin using it due to a number of perceived challenges.

Most of these challenges, however, are easily resolved with the right platform, partner, and/or strategy. Here are responses to a few:

"We lack relevant content." (45%)

Nearly half of agencies not using marketing automation said they lacked the relevant content needed to use the platform to its full potential.

In fact, marketing automation actually reduces the amount of content you need to create on a regular basis to keep your prospects interested. It gives you the ability to track the behaviors and interests of your leads, so you can work with your existing content – tailoring it to fit the exact needs of your prospects and then targeting them at the right points in the buyer's journey.

Without marketing automation, agencies may be creating a huge amount of content that only delivers minimal results. With the insights and visibility that marketing automation offers, it's easy to what doesn't work and invest more in what does.

53% of agencies cite lacking an effective implementation strategy as their reason for not adopting a marketing automation platform. This objection is no surprise considering 67% of agencies feel marketing automation is overly complex and that they lack the necessary skills to use it properly.

"The application is too complex." (37%)

While it's true that many platforms may appear complex at first glance, effective training and onboarding can help agencies overcome this challenge quickly. Also, most marketing automation solutions are relatively user-friendly, giving users the power to get exactly what they want out of the platform without having to type a single line of code.

When it comes to finding the right marketing automation provider, there are some important features and services to seek out. Ideally, a provider should offer free training for users, a free onboarding period, an ongoing relationship manager, and a dedicated support team. The application itself should offer contextual in-app help wherever you click, as well as a full library of tutorial videos to help you get up and running quickly. In addition, the application's interface should be streamlined and intuitive to offer the simplest possible user experience.

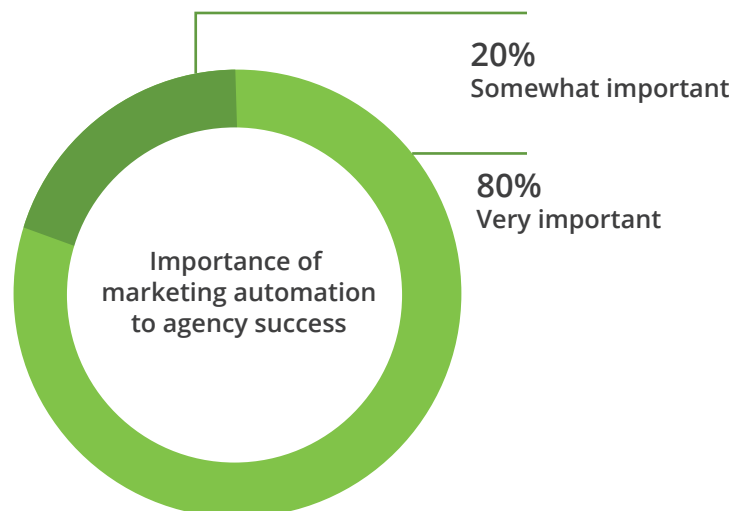
***"We can't afford it."
(27%)***

Some agencies point out that they simply don't have the budget to implement marketing automation, and considering the pricing of some of today's most popular offerings, that comes as no surprise. However, many platforms are becoming more affordable.

SharpSpring is 1/10th the cost of competing solutions, and it offers a pricing model centered around agencies and their growth.

Furthermore, marketing automation itself can actually increase your revenue in the longer term. [According to a study by VB Insight](#), 80% of businesses saw their number of leads increase after adopting marketing automation, and 77% saw their conversions rates increase. By optimizing marketing efforts, marketing automation gives you the power to reach more leads in less time with relevant content at the right time to get them to convert. And by automating repetitive tasks, it allows you to spend your time and resources on important tasks that can't be automated.

Most experts note that the days of operating an agency without a marketing automation platform are over. It used to be a 'nice to have' add-on, but today it is vital to the success of an agency and 80% of agencies saying it is "very important" to the overall performance for their clients' marketing programs.



It's Time to Act

An effective marketing automation platform can help any agency grow its own business and its clients' businesses. So for agencies looking to remain competitive and relevant, marketing automation is a must.

SharpSpring's feature set and pricing model were created specifically for digital marketing agencies. If you're interested in learning more, [sign up for a personalized demo](#), or [visit our website](#) for more information on how you can ensure your agency has the tools it needs to compete.

About the Research

Ascend2 benchmarks the performance of popular digital marketing strategies and practices using a standardized questionnaire, research methodology and 3-Minute Survey format. Findings are examined in a quantitative context by experienced analysts and reported objectively.

This survey was conducted online from a panel of more than 50,000 US and international marketing, sales and business professionals. The following is a breakout of the demographics represented in this report:

Role in the Agency		Number of Employees	
Owner / Partner / C-Level	56%	More than 500	15%
Vice President / Director / Manager	35%	50 to 500	20%
Non-Management Professional	9%	Fewer than 50	65%



Simple Marketing Automation for Agencies

SharpSpring provides powerful, affordable marketing solutions to businesses around the globe - helping them automate workflows, drive more leads, and convert those leads to sales. The company rivals industry leaders with its competitive pricing, agency-focused business model, and robust platform.

Learn more at www.SharpSpring.com



Research-Based Demand Generation for Marketing Solution Providers

Marketing software firms and marketing agencies partner with Ascend2 to reliably generate new business opportunities. Its integrated research, content creation and demand generation programs are transparent – putting the spotlight on your brand and the interests of your audience.

Learn more at www.Ascend2.com