From 'Brick-and-Mortar' to 'Click-and-Mortar'

Helping Small Businesses Adapt & Grow With Marketing Automation

Rafael Zabala

Chief Strategy Officer, Interactive Marketing

About the Author

Rafael is the Chief Strategy Officer at Interactive Marketing, and he specializes in revenue generation strategies for clients in hospitality, healthcare and B2B industries. He has more than 15 years of experience in working with clients of all sizes.

Back in the Day...

Until recently, only big companies could afford marketing automation. My first experience with it was through a very expensive and complicated tool used by one of my larger clients for $3k+/ month. Once I saw how it worked, however, I knew marketing automation would change the game forever.

Our agency works with clients of different sizes in both the B2B and B2C spaces. Many are small local businesses, including restaurants, lenders, salons, hotels, spas, and other services. These businesses rely heavily on having strong contact lists and multiple positive online reviews for their products or services.

Over the years, many of our small business clients struggled with building their contact lists and garnering reviews and referrals. And while I knew marketing automation would be an easy solution to these challenges, I also knew it was cost-prohibitive.

"Nearly 9 in 10 consumers have read online reviews to determine the quality of a local business, and 39% do so on a regular basis."
- SearchEngineLand

Marketing Automation for All

Today, things are looking very different, as affordable platforms have made marketing automation accessible to smaller businesses. SharpSpring goes even further with a robust agency model that allows agencies like mine to offer their clients marketing automation along with any other related services they choose to bundle in – all at a reasonable price.

Starting With Lead Generation...

One of the most valuable things that I found I could help my clients with was the process of generating leads and building strong contact lists.

This is one of the biggest challenges for local businesses that depend on walk-in traffic. We're all familiar with the old "join our list and get a coupon" tactic, but this typically doesn't generate great results. I used similar tactics for years and found that users tend to avoid "newsletter" sign-ups or coupon offers if it means they have to give you their email addresses. You need to offer something much more indispensable if you expect people to be willing to share their personal information.

The answer is **social wifi marketing** – turning your free wifi offering into a lead-gen machine.
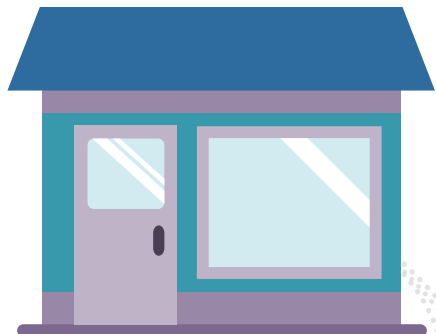
Here's how it works:

1. A customer walks into your establishment and is offered free wifi. (Most businesses already do this, so the first step is easy.)
2. Here is the twist – To log into your wifi, the customer has to provide her name and email.
3. You get to sit back and watch how quickly your contact list grows.

There's a variety of social wifi marketing platforms available, and I encourage you to research them all to see which one is the best fit for your business. We ultimately decided to go with a company called [Zenreach](#), because its support team was super responsive, helped us sell our clients on the tool, and got them all set up and ready to go.

Next, I used Zapier to connect Zenreach to SharpSpring. For a marketing automation platform to be truly effective, you need to feed it with fresh, new leads as often as possible. And a solid social wifi marketing strategy enables you to do that every day. Once you've got a steady flow of contacts streaming daily into your database, the opportunities are essentially limitless.

SharpSpring and Zenreach worked in sync to provide us with real-time analytics on customer behavior. Once a customer had used the wifi before, he would automatically be logged back in each time he came back. By tracking these return rates, we were able to begin to identify who the best

Step 1: A customer walks into your establishment and is offered free wifi.

Step 2: To log into your wifi, the customer has to provide her name and email.

Step 3: You get to sit back and watch how quickly your contact list grows.

customers were. You can even take it a step further by ranking customers based on their "average value per visit," to see who you could be focusing more attention on.

The Power of Email Automation

The next step was to help our clients engage all of the new leads they were generating from their social wifi marketing efforts, and marketing automation played a major role here.

First, it allowed us to easily segment our clients' contacts into different lists based on their activities. Next, we were able to build out engaging email campaigns and send each lead relevant content.

Email campaigns for brick-and-mortar businesses can serve a variety of purposes. Here are just a few:

- **Fill slow periods:** Whether it's a slow time or day, week or year, set up a campaign to automatically send offers for those times.
- **Promote secondary revenue streams:** If your client is a restaurant that offers catering or a salon that does parties, communicate that with email campaigns.
- **Promote seasonal events:** Set up campaigns that launch to coincide with special events or seasons to stay top-of-mind during the holidays or other peak times.

Fill slow periods

Promote secondary revenue streams

Promote seasonal events

"85% of consumers say they read up to 10 reviews before they feel they can trust a business."
*- SearchEngineLand*

Using Email Campaigns to Garner Reviews

Yet another great way to use email campaigns is for generating more online reviews. Reviews can make or break a small local business, and many rely heavily on reviews in order to stand out from the competition.

For many years, my clients asked me to help them improve their review generation processes, but just like them, I simply didn't have the time or resources to do it effectively. And while many businesses opt to pay for fake reviews, I always advised my clients against this, since it's risky and expensive.

It turns out that marketing automation was the missing link here as well. By enabling you to nurture your relationships with leads over time, marketing automation helps you garner more loyalty with your customers, increasing the likelihood that they'll be willing to write you a review.

Furthermore, marketing automation integrates well with other platforms, which makes it easier to connect with multiple review engines. Reviews happen in a number of places besides Google, including Facebook, Twitter and Yelp. Some business types, like restaurants, even have their own review platforms, such as OpenTable, Spoons, Trip Advisors and more.
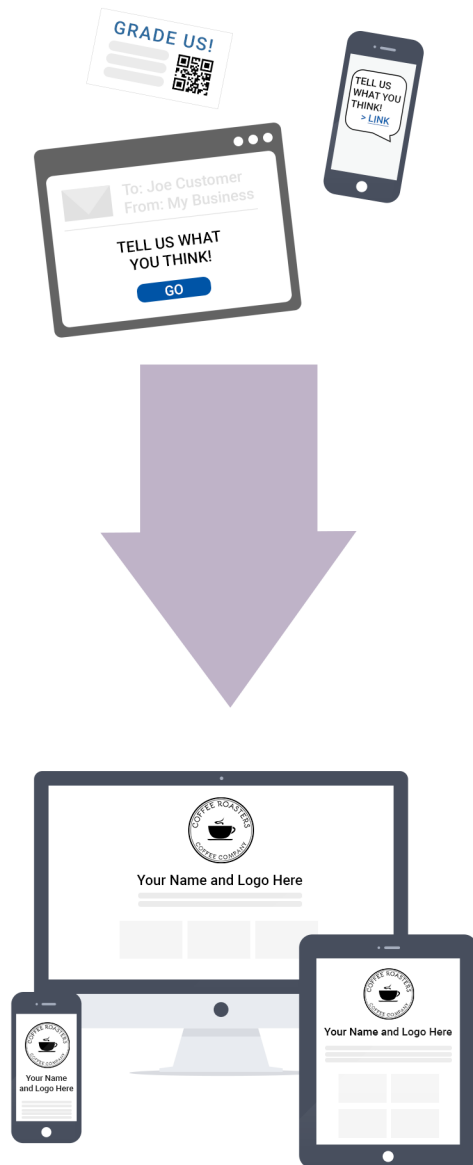
We used SharpSpring to integrate our email campaigns with a review management software system.

I chose to work with a review management software system called [Grade.us](), which was super easy to use and offered a partner program and excellent support. The platform also included integrations with all of the relevant review boards that my clients should be on, including major sites and industry-specific niche sites.

After setting up our desired integrations through Grade.us, we used SharpSpring to automate the whole process:

1. We set up an automated email campaign inviting customers to write reviews and driving them directly to the site.
2. Based on whether a lead wrote a review, he could be automatically added/moved to a specific list.
3. As soon as someone wrote a review, a customer appreciation email campaign could be automatically triggered.

Using a review management platform not only made it easier to drive people to review us, but it also allowed us to segment those reviews. Positive ones were shared and posted in directories, whereas negative ones could be captured before becoming public and sent to management for further assessment.

A Success Story: Using Marketing Automation for a Local Restaurant Chain

Results:

- Mailing list grew by more than 50% in two months
- Online reviews increased by 200%
- Email campaigns helped grow other revenue streams

Situation:

One of our clients – a chain of restaurants in the Atlanta area – was seeking to grow its contact list, increase reviews and get more business. We proposed using marketing automation to create email campaigns to promote online reviews, increase top-of-mind awareness, and promote special events and offers.

Implementation:

We knew that automated email campaigns would be the key, but that meant we needed to have a solid list to work with. In more than 10 years in business, this restaurant chain had only managed to collect about 4,000 emails.

We implemented social wifi marketing through Zenreach, and the mailing list grew by 2,499 email addresses in just two months.

We knew that automated email campaigns would be the key, but that meant we needed to have a solid list to work with.
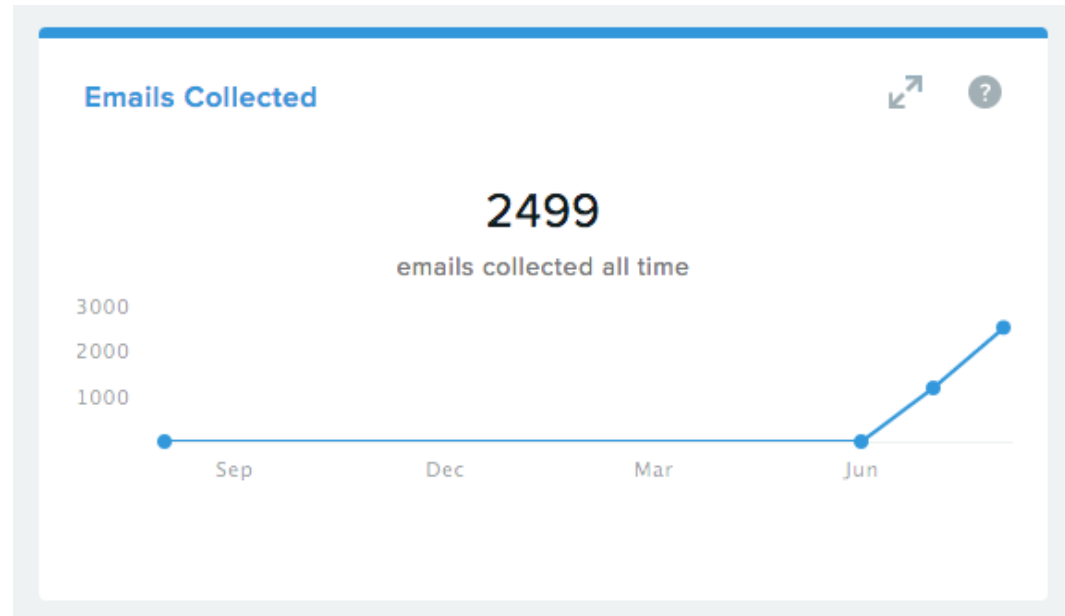
As we grew the contact list, we leveraged Grade.us to initiate an email nurture campaign asking people to write reviews. Once this plan was implemented, reviews jumped from about 10 per month to 30 per month.

We also did email campaigns to promote special events and catering and to offer discounts to people who had written online reviews, all of which helped boost engagement and business.

Leads, Reviews & Revenues

Local businesses often seem to be working against all odds and can have a particularly hard time remaining competitive. Now that marketing

automation is affordable for businesses of almost any size, however, things are becoming much easier. With the help of a few tools, tips and tricks, brick-and-mortar businesses can easily improve their lead generation results, nurture and engage their customers like never before, and generate mountains of positive reviews, all of which contribute to a steadier revenue stream.

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

SharpSpring is the marketing automation platform of choice for more than 1,200 digital marketing agencies and their 6,000+ 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.

(IM)

Interactive Marketing is a digital marketing agency based in Atlanta that offers design services, including full re-branding. The agency also provides services such as site optimization, content marketing and SEO services to help companies improve their sales effectiveness.

Visit us at www.interactivemarketing.net