

# Bringing Lead Nurturing to the Masses

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Why it's SharpSpring over HubSpot for most of our clients



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## About the Author

**Chuck Bankoff** is the Senior Strategist and Director of Web Services for **Kreative Webworks**, a full-service digital agency in Southern California. He directs a team of creative and technical professionals to develop lead generation strategies that integrate aspects of “site, search and social.” He is a speaker, author and trainer of other Internet consultants on four continents.



I’m tired. I’m tired of competing on price instead of value. I’m tired of the feeling that I’m just one Google algorithmic change away from going out of business. SEO, PPC and website development used to be unique skillsets that would sustain a digital agency.

For most of my professional career in digital marketing, the focus has been on driving traffic to a website. That was the end game. We designed a great-looking, well-planned website, drove traffic to it, and crossed our fingers. We did our job; the rest was up to the client.

That was then, this is now. As the digital market grew more competitive, so did our clients. We could no longer point to keyword rankings and increased traffic and call it a day. Clients wanted higher and higher conversion rates, and they were relying on us to make it happen.

At first, it seemed like the only way to double results was to double traffic. The problem is that creating more traffic has its limits, it’s expensive, and it just isn’t the most efficient way to increase the bottom line.

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## A Concept So Simple, Even a CEO Could Understand It

While it seems logical that driving more traffic to your site would result in more sales, statistically it's not as effective as converting your *existing* traffic.

Think about it this way: If you focus on nurturing your current prospects, you can pretty easily increase your conversion rates by a couple of percentage points – which has a *huge* impact on your bottom line. However, if your focus is on driving more traffic, you'll probably need tens of thousands of new visitors to achieve that same increase in conversion rates.

If you can convince your clients of this, you'll effectively turn the conversation into one about sales and conversions, not SEO and PPC. Congratulations, you've just separated yourself from your competition. Here is where you bring in marketing automation.

## Making the Case to the Average Client

When it came to marketing automation services, larger companies could afford the ticket price that came with a HubSpot or a Marketo. They could afford our services *and* the platform fees.

The problem was with our smaller clients – our bread and butter. These clients universally enjoyed early results with our web services, but they



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were getting disenchanted with plateauing at a certain point. Eventually, even the best landing page will max out in terms of conversion rates.

Big brands with big budgets can afford to invest in expensive marketing automation platforms, but I had an ominous feeling that we were losing a lot of sales because the cost of entry at the HubSpot level priced us out of contention.

Out of every 10 prospects that should be employing lead nurturing and marketing automation techniques, maybe *one* could afford the combined burden of HubSpot's platform costs and our management fees. This meant that either I had to subsidize the HubSpot fees by lowering our own, or I had to abandon the lead nurturing strategy entirely.

Simply put, HubSpot is out of reach for the vast majority of my clients. It has many robust reporting features integrated into one tight platform, but that doesn't do me any good for my clients who can't afford it.

This is where SharpSpring comes in.

## The Psychology of Pricing

When the platform fee is its own line item, it comes under scrutiny. And when that fee alone represents a significant portion of the client's overall budget, it may devalue their perception of your services.

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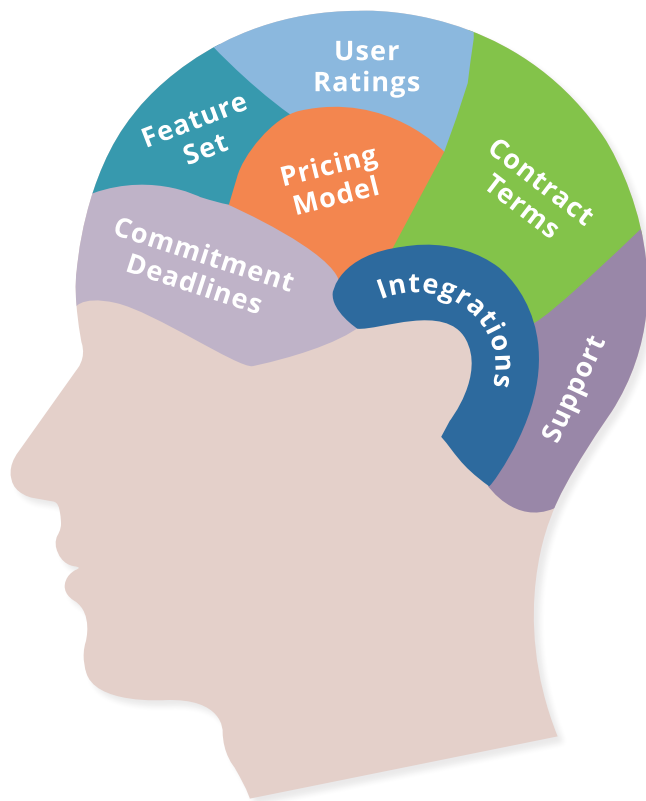
For example, would you feel better about paying for a \$20 shirt plus \$10 shipping, or paying for a \$30 shirt with free shipping? You're paying \$30 in either case, but it's probably more comforting to feel that you just bought a \$30 shirt – not a \$20 shirt that cost you \$30.

The lower price of the SharpSpring agency model allows me to absorb the platform cost into my retainer-based fees, so I can concentrate on selling services, not software. The cost of the software is no longer an obstacle.

## The Reality of Pricing

With SharpSpring, since I'm not paying a premium price for features most of my clients don't need, I can afford to offer lead nurturing and marketing automation to a broader array of clients. Why is this significant? While other agencies are competing on price for the basics (SEO, web design, PPC, Facebook, etc.), I can offer a full 360-degree package based on conversions, not just traffic. Sure, I'm going to charge more, but it's because I'm offering so much more for their money. That's money that's going into services, not software.

I estimate that the affordable pricing of the SharpSpring agency model allows me to offer our lead nurturing services to an additional three out of every 10 prospects that otherwise wouldn't be able to afford it.



*Understanding how  
your prospects think is  
the key to successfully  
pitching your services.*

## The Monthly Advantage (more psychology stuff)

When a client knows they can terminate a contract on short notice, they're less likely to terminate abruptly. SharpSpring's monthly model allows me to pass that on to my clients. Knowing that they can get out of a contract after a reasonable amount of time serves as a psychological safety net, which is a selling point during the early stages of our relationship.

Conversely, when a client is locked into an annual contract, our fates become intertwined. At the end of a renewal period, I have to resell our agency services *and* the expensive software platform as separate line items.

I prefer not to put annual commitment deadlines in front of a client and force them into a yes/no decision. I'd rather leave the monthly option open to them without a deadline, because if they aren't pressured into making a decision, they usually won't (i.e., they'll stick around). And each month that goes by gives me more opportunity to add value and make my services even harder to live without.

## Notes From the Field

**If you want to make something seem like a great deal, put it next to something that isn't.**

I make sure that I present both HubSpot and SharpSpring to my prospects, and then draw fair comparisons between the two. Then, I make a legitimate





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recommendation based on the client’s needs. In most cases (not all – sometimes money is not a factor), SharpSpring is the better choice.

In a recent deal I closed, the client (a large virtual charter school) was starting out with 57,000 contacts. The client was using MailChimp but wanted to upgrade to full marketing automation. Since HubSpot’s starting fees are much more expensive, and it bills an additional \$50/month for each increment of 1000 contacts, that would have been a deal breaker had HubSpot been my only choice.

As it turned out, using SharpSpring actually saved the client money. We were able to import all 57,000 clients into the platform, and they were able to drop their MailChimp account as a result. No-brainer...

### Sell It With a Story

Don’t assume that a prospect, no matter how sophisticated they may seem, can relate the concept of lead nurturing to how it applies to their particular business. Just like you might practice your “elevator pitch” for networking events, I practice a lead nurturing story.

Before the conversation with the prospect, I make sure that I understand their target market, so I can walk them through an actual strategy – from the lead magnet to the call to action. I even come up with potential titles for the lead magnet, such as: “10 Reasons a Nurse Will Need a Doctor”

*Putting your pitch into a context the prospect is already familiar with will help them conceptualize the psychology of lead nurturing and the scalability of marketing automation.*

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or “10 Signs Your Child Is Being Bullied at School.” It needs to be something they can relate to, which will help move the conversation forward.

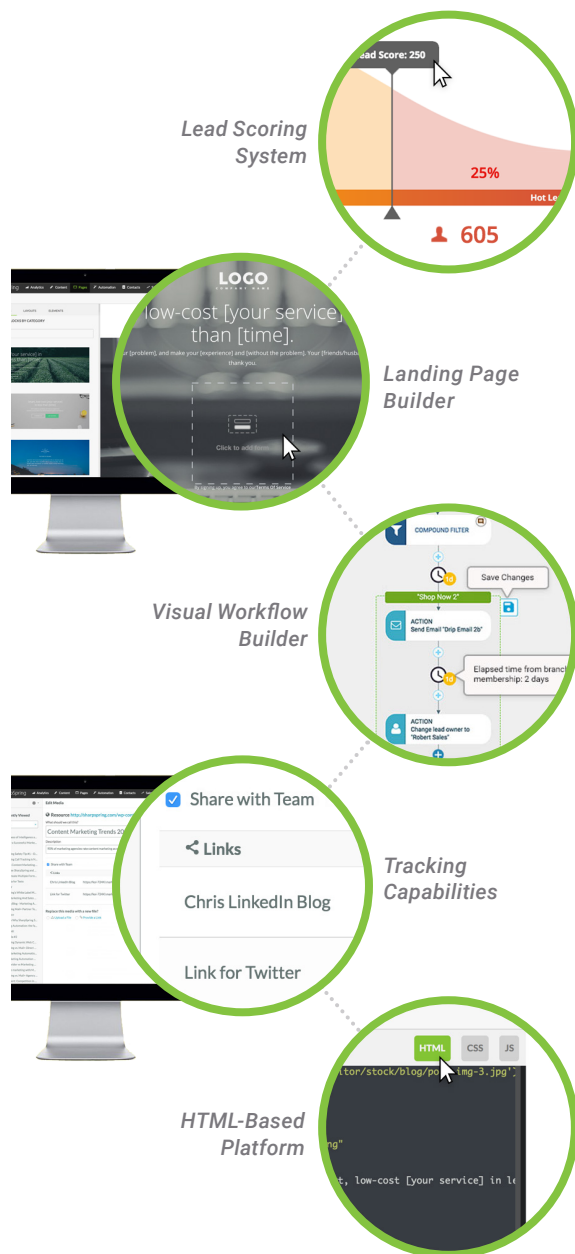
The more specific your pitch, the better. And don’t worry, they won’t be able to pull it off without you. The implication is that if you could come up with those concepts off the top of your head, imagine what you could do if they were your actual clients! More importantly, putting your pitch into a context the prospect is already familiar with will help them conceptualize the psychology of lead nurturing and the scalability of marketing automation.

## Notes From My Staff

My staff and I were both introduced to the finer points of marketing automation through HubSpot. They have some great self-service tutorials. I’m actually a big fan, but their prices are untenable in many cases. They have a terrific all-in-one solution, but there are few things they offer (aside from the convenience of integration) that can’t be made up with specialized third-party software like [SEMrush](#).

For my part, I’m less concerned with the nuts n’ bolts of SharpSpring vs. HubSpot than I am with strategy and my ability to sell our services. My staff, however, uses both platforms on a regular basis, so I polled them as to what they think about the differences between HubSpot and SharpSpring. It turns out they prefer working with SharpSpring than with HubSpot.





## Here's what my staff says about the differences between SharpSpring and HubSpot:

- Lead Scoring System:** Really user-friendly and gives you limitless options to place value on the leads you want. It's easier to visualize and score all the different actions a lead goes through on their buyer's journey. It gives you a total snapshot of everything, whereas HubSpot's system seems a bit fragmented.
- Landing Page Builder:** Again, easy to use, *and* it also offers more options than HubSpot. The dynamic content feature is also great for personalizing landing pages based on personas.
- Visual Workflow Builder:** SharpSpring offers a clean format and lets you see the entire workflow without having to scroll or search for individual components of the workflow.
- Tracking:** SharpSpring gives you a unique tracking code for each piece of media you use. Makes it easier to lead score based on media views, but also tells which media is performing the best.
- HTML-Based:** With SharpSpring, you don't have to learn another coding language. With HubSpot, you must learn their proprietary coding language called HubL (pronounced "Hubble") to make customizations.

Want to read more on topics like this?

Check out our other [Agency Perspectives](#) articles.

## A Great Platform at a Great Price

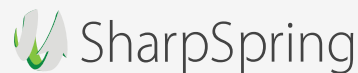
Here's the deal, if you embrace the concepts of lead nurturing and marketing automation, don't let the software get in your way.

SharpSpring is not an inferior product because it's a fraction of the cost of the expensive platforms. Rather, it's a focused product that is priced accordingly to bring lead nurturing and marketing automation to the masses.



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 1,200 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](http://www.sharpspring.com) for more information.



*Founded in 1999, Kreative Webworks is a full-service digital marketing agency based in Capistrano Beach, California, currently specializing in the education sector. The agency provides integrated strategies and manages their execution, including website development, SEO, content marketing, paid advertising and lead nurturing.*

Visit [www.kreativewebworks.com](http://www.kreativewebworks.com) for more information.