



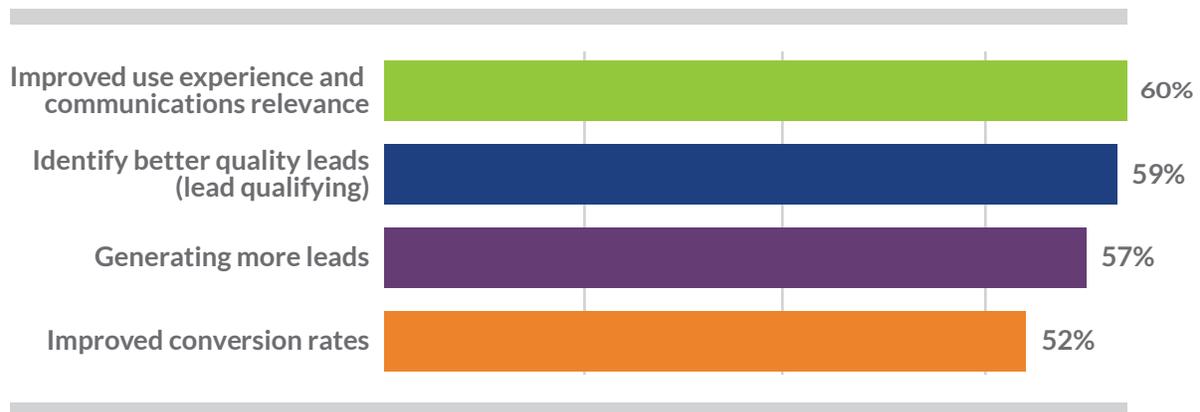
Get Your Content Marketing Program Off the Ground

Overview

Chances are, you've already considered the benefits of incorporating content marketing strategies into your B2B promotion plans. You might have even started down the path by creating some inbound marketing strategies or investing in a marketing automation platform. That said, something has held you back from moving forward with content and inbound efforts, even though you know they're a proven way to deliver qualified leads to your company. Investing in these strategies also pays dividends for years to come. Consider this 2019 study of the most important benefits of marketing automation, one key pillar of content marketing, for B2B organizations:



The Most important benefits of Marketing Automation in B2B



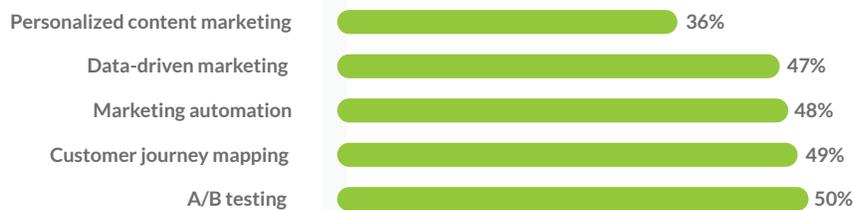
Source: SmartInsights and Communigator Managing B2B Marketing Automation (2019)

Given these outcomes, it's time to seriously consider getting your content marketing program off the ground and working to support your company goals.

Taking the First Steps Towards a Strong Content Marketing Program



Which of the activities or tools below does your marketing department use to create personalized customer experiences?



Source: House of Marketing Yearly Marketing Survey 2019

Not every person who makes a connection with your company is ready to buy, but the earlier and more dynamically you engage with them on their purchase journey maximizes opportunities for success. Leveraging the full spectrum of content marketing options - inbound strategy, marketing automation tools, nurture and drip strategies, and strong data analytics - is the best way to heighten both your lead generation and customer loyalty efforts. Starting a content marketing program should include these initial steps:

- Identify business opportunities on you which you want to capitalize for both prospects and your current customers. Do you want to target new leads or increase revenue from existing accounts? How do your company's offerings align to the solutions for which your target audiences are searching both today and in the future?
- Identify what will constitute success and, therefore, what metrics you need to measure for your content marketing efforts. Goal setting and measurement should be one of the first steps vs. only put into place after the program has launched. Choose the most important 2-3 goals, align the program to reaching those, and put metrics into place to capture lead and lag measures.
- Document what you know about your targets, where they get their B2B solution information, and how much contact information you both have and need for successful outreach.
- Determine the story you can tell and align that story to the different phases of the B2B buying process. Again, your prospects are all at different stages of their journey -- some might only know the problem they need to solve, some might understand possible solutions but need more details, and others might just need the final piece of understanding to make their decision. Determining a marketing automation journey for each of these is critical.

Marketing Automation: Email Marketing Grows Up

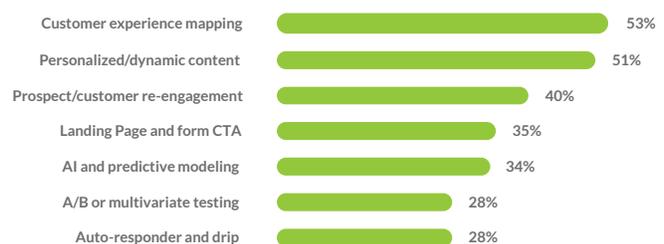
Having an email marketing strategy is certainly nothing new and perhaps you've even considered amping yours up as a way to connect with more prospects and customers. Before enacting the "same old" email campaign, consider how marketing automation might elevate your communications, engagement and outcomes vs. traditional email marketing. While many email marketing systems are solid tools to send out messaging to large audiences, they fall down in a few critical ways. Most notably, email marketing isn't able to manage long-term automated outreach that's based on your audience's actions or interests. Further, it doesn't include strong measurement capabilities to determine audience interaction with not only emails but also your website and social media outlets. And although email marketing systems have traditionally been very low in cost compared to those in the marketing automation space, that dynamic is changing as marketing ROI calculations have become more sophisticated.

Although automation has been a buzz word for almost a decade, most B2B marketers aren't clear on what it is and even less know how to deploy successful automation campaigns within a content marketing program. That reality is unfortunate, because it's the B2B sector that typically has the most to gain from enacting a marketing automation program. Because of the longer sales cycle inherent in the B2B marketplace, automation allows communication throughout the cycle and optimizes engagement with the most likely prospects.

Often when you hear "marketing automation" what people are really talking about are the powerful tools that power automation such as Hubspot, Pardot, Marketo, and SharpSpring, to name a few. Marketing managers sign onto these systems with the promise of, well, automated outreach quickly to find out that simply having a system doesn't at all ensure success. Understanding not only how to deploy a marketing automation system, but also how to strategically develop and execute upon a comprehensive marketing automation program are both necessary elements.



What are the most EFFECTIVE TACTICS used to optimise marketing automation?



Source: Optimizing Marketing Automation survey Ascend2 June 2018

Effective marketing automation requires expertise in:

- Programming of automation software workflows
- Copywriting, designing, and programming of emails, social media posts, webpages, landing pages, and other communication elements
- Developing inbound content that addresses different audience pain points at different stages throughout the buying journey
- Collecting, transforming, and analyzing the data to learn and optimize performance



Tackling Both Lead Gen & Customer ReEngagement

All elements of content marketing are ideal for both lead generation and engaging current customers for long-term retention. Not having a content or marketing automation strategy for both of these important audiences will result in significant missed opportunities. Specifically for your current customer base, marketing automation provides an almost immediate return on investment since you already have their contact information, past purchases, and likely a wealth of other information on their needs and interests. You're also uniquely positioned, as a trusted partner, to understand how they'll likely be moving forward on their business in the coming months. Leveraging strong content and a smart marketing automation plan will help drive deeper engagement and potentially increase their lifetime value to your organization.

The world of in-person marketing and sales, specifically at trade shows and industry conferences, will likely be different for months if not years to come. Instead of waiting to see when one of your cancelled shows will be rescheduled, harness your attendance lists and other prospect information with whom to engage immediately. If you were planning to unveil a new product or service,

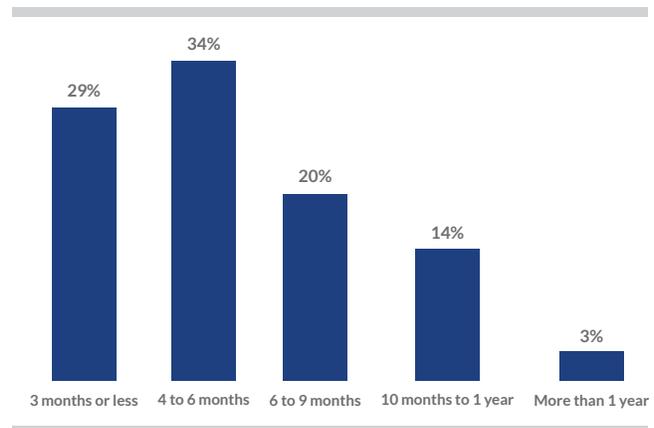
develop content that supports the need for it in the marketplace and offer personalized demos for prospects that engage with that content. Or go one step further and reconsider shows you weren't planning to attend this year; you're now on equal footing with competitors that might have been there so using marketing automation to get a strong early message to prospects will maximize opportunity to more deeply engage with companies interested in your B2B offering.

The Bottom Line

For B2B marketers, the end goal is leads and, ultimately increased sales. Engaging prospects and nurturing leads takes strong strategic thinking and a solid execution plan. Content marketing provides a wealth of strategic options to increase prospect revenue, build upon customer loyalty, and position your company for the future. Investment in a strong content, inbound, and marketing automation program now can pay dividends for years to come. Take this opportunity to do what you probably have been planning to, but just haven't had the right resources or partner to make happen.



What is a reasonable timeframe from SYSTEM IMPLEMENTATION to BENEFITS RELIZATION?



Source: Marketing Automation Trends Survey, Ascend2 and Resarch Partners, February 2018

At Mason Digital, we have a strong history of success with every element of inbound marketing. If you'd like to learn more about how we can help you develop your inbound strategy and measure your work's impact on sales, [Contact us!](#)