The Seven Most Common Marketing Automation Myths

by Jamie Turner

Jamie Turner is the author of several books on marketing, is a regular guest on CNN on the topic of marketing and branding, and is the CEO of SIXTY, a marketing optimization firm that helps clients get more from their marketing budget.
If you could use software that increased the number of leads you generate by over 400%, would you use it?

Of course you would.

After all, no matter what industry you’re in, one of your key responsibilities is to generate new leads for your business. So any software that can do that for you would be welcomed by you and your team.

Good news. There is software that can have that kind of impact on your business. As you probably know, it’s called marketing automation software and, according to a recent study by the Annuitas Group, it has the potential to increase qualified leads 451% for the companies that use it. That’s the good news.

The not-so-good news is that there are a lot of myths around how to use marketing automation to generate good leads.

We’ve taken a look at the most common myths and figured out how to clear up some of the misconceptions. Hopefully, with our analysis of the marketing automation landscape and tips on how to improve your results, you’ll see that this powerful technology is everything it’s cracked up to be.

Ready to get started? Great, let’s get going.
Myth One

Marketing Automation Is Just Too Impersonal.
Marketing Automation is only impersonal when it’s used incorrectly. The truth is that when you segment your database, you can send the right message to the right prospect at the right time.

When many people hear the word “automation,” they think that any messages delivered via these platforms would be cold and impersonal. But that’s not necessarily the case. Marketing automation enables you to track lead behavior and determine which messages are the most relevant to the recipient.

Marketing automation is not about scheduling the same email at the same time for all of your leads. Instead, it’s about scheduling the right email at the right time for a sub-segment of your leads.

Marketing automation also lets you get very granular when it comes to tracking leads. And when you use all the data gathered to create powerful messages, you ensure that you’ll nurture and engage your leads properly.

When done badly, marketing automation can come across as impersonal. However, if you’re constantly tracking and segmenting your audience and creating content and messages based on their specific needs, location and interests, your campaigns will resonate and have more impact on your bottom line.

Fun Fact

According to Retention Science, personalized emails that include the recipient’s first name in the subject line have significantly higher open rates than those without.
A “Set It and Forget It” Approach Works When It Comes to Marketing Automation.
Launching a marketing automation program has never been easier, but that doesn’t mean you can simply set it and forget it. In fact, the most effective campaigns are the ones that are tracked and managed by members of the marketing and sales department.

Even though marketing automation tools are simple to use, they need regular monitoring and follow-up action in order to succeed. While the work you do to launch a campaign becomes easier and more efficient over time, expecting the platform to do 100% of the work for you would be setting yourself up for failure.

It’s best to think of marketing automation tools as facilitators or guides that allow you to make better decisions about sending messages to your customers and prospects.

Each campaign provides feedback, which you use to develop insights about your prospects and customers. When you monitor and manage your campaigns regularly, you can make course corrections that ensure even better results moving forward.

Determining what resonates with your recipients is both an art and a science. While the science aspect is taken care of by the platform, you still need to determine what the best next message is based on an overall lead nurturing strategy, the story you tell your recipients, and the history of your relationship with them thus far.

In the end, studies show that marketing automation campaigns that are in a constant state of evolution out-perform marketing automation campaigns that fall into the “set it and forget it” camp.

Fun Fact

According to Gleanstar, 63% of survey respondents indicate that the ability to set measurable objectives for each of their campaigns is the biggest value driver of marketing automation.
Marketing Automation Can Only Be Used for Email.
While email is a key component of any marketing automation campaign, the same marketing automation techniques can also be applied to social media, landing pages, forms, and surveys.

Most people associate marketing automation with email, but the tool has applications for channels beyond email such as landing pages, sign-up forms, surveys and even social media.

Most marketing automation platforms, even those designed for small businesses, have landing page and form builders. This means it’s simpler than ever to capture customer information and to use that information in future campaigns.

But marketing automation doesn’t stop at email marketing and landing pages. You can also embed lead generation forms into social media platforms such as Facebook. Or you can create pop-ups that entice visitors to your website to download a free e-book. You can even use some marketing automation platforms to launch and run webinars designed to capture new leads and nurture existing leads further down the sales funnel.

Best of all, marketing automation tools let you see where leads are coming in from, making it easy to track and nurture leads that arrive through Facebook, LinkedIn or other channels.

Fun Fact

According to DemandGen Report, nurtured leads produce, on average, a 20% increase in sales opportunities versus non-nurtured leads.
Marketing Automation Is Only Useful for People in the Marketing Department.
Marketing automation impacts each aspect of your business, and will help you gain efficiencies across multiple departments.

Most people associate marketing automation primarily with marketing (which is understandable given its name), but it has applications that extend beyond the scope of your marketing team.

Marketing automation also helps businesses gain efficiencies when it comes to sales. While the sales function is better handled with the help of a CRM, marketing automation helps you identify which leads to follow up and what the customer’s previous interactions have been.

This has major implications for sales people. Now they don’t have to waste time pursuing unqualified leads, and they have an idea of each lead’s needs and preferences. Furthermore, with a defined process in place to qualify leads and then hand them over to sales, it’s easy to spot bottlenecks and the areas that are performing above or below expectations.

Fun Fact

According to MarketingSherpa, 61% of B2B marketers send all leads directly to sales; however only 27% of those leads will be qualified.
Marketing Automation Is Too Expensive for a Company My Size.
According to DemandGen, B2B marketers see an average 20% increase in sales opportunities from nurtured leads vs. non-nurtured leads.

Fun Fact

There are many marketing automation platforms to choose from based on your needs and budget size.

While this myth may have been a fact for small businesses a few years back, today there are a number of marketing automation tools available that are designed specifically for small businesses. The best part about these tools is that they are intuitive, easy to use, and robust, which means they offer many of the same capabilities as expensive counterparts.

The most important consideration is whether or not the tool accomplishes what you need it to without adding a lot of expensive bells and whistles. You’d be surprised what you can accomplish with a moderately-priced marketing automation platform.
Marketing Automation Requires a Great Deal of Technical Expertise.
According to Marketing Automation Insider, only 3.9% of the top 10,000 websites surveyed used marketing automation. The low adoption rate may be the result of confusion over how simple marketing automation is to use.

It’s understandable that many people think that you have to be a technical guru in order to learn how to use marketing automation software. After all, the behind-the-scenes technical wizardry is quite complex. But just because the back-end software is complex doesn’t mean the front-end dashboard is complex. In fact, in some cases, just the opposite is true.

Up until a few years ago, marketing automation tools were clunky, lacked user-friendly interfaces and took months upon months of onboarding time. However, today’s marketing tools are user-friendly, intuitive and do not require months of training before you can start sending and monitoring campaigns.

There’s no need to hire new staff or pull in employees with advanced technical skills in order to implement campaigns successfully. In fact, team members with very minimal technical skills can easily be trained to set-up and monitor campaigns.

Most marketing automation tools today are fairly intuitive and have interfaces that are simple to navigate. Furthermore, even though older tools did require knowledge of HTML to set-up email campaigns, today’s marketing automation platforms have easy drag-and-drop features that allow users to set-up emails with little or no knowledge of HTML.

Today’s marketing automation tools also provide you with all the key data you need to create targeted audience segments and analyze their behavior. No major number crunching or data analysis is required on your part. Just drag, drop, and deploy!
Marketing Automation and CRM Are Basically the Same Thing.
While the two have some similarities, they’re each suited for different purposes.

If we look at the customer sales funnel (which illustrates a customer’s journey from being a prospect to being a customer), marketing automation is most useful during the first half of the customer journey. CRM software, as the name suggests, is more appropriate once leads are qualified and become customers.

Marketing automation is most useful for qualifying and nurturing leads. Once leads have begun speaking to your sales team, they can be moved over to your CRM, which is better equipped to handle that relationship.

Marketing automation is best used to target segmented prospects and to nurture them into the top and middle of the sales funnel. CRM, on the other hand, lets sales team converse with leads and customers one-on-one. So, while the two often store similar information, their functions within your organization are very different.

Fun Fact

According to DemandGen Report, 95% of buyers chose a solution provider that provided them with ample content to help navigate through each stage of the buying process.
The Bottom Line

Marketing automation is more than a passing fad and can deliver real value for businesses when done right. In fact, the popularity of marketing automation is one of the reasons there are so many options for businesses of all sizes available in the market today.

However, as you know by now, with the rise of marketing automation came a number of myths, many of which have kept people from trying out marketing automation for their business needs.

Whether you’ve just started exploring marketing automation or already have a platform you’re working with, keep the above facts in mind and you’ll be set-up for success.