

# MARKETING AUTOMATION FOR SMALLER B2B COMPANIES: PART 2 OF 2



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## Capitalizing on B2B Marketing Automation

Smaller B2B businesses (under \$75M) can cost-effectively expand their marketing reach and drive real engagement with brand new leads. Marketing Automation need not be as expensive as older marketing tactics; yet, this new methodology works far better than traditional email campaigning and a misguided social media presence. It's just smarter farming.

# Marketing Automation for Smaller B2B Companies: Part 2 of 2

## CAPITALIZING ON B2B MARKETING AUTOMATION

### ARTICLE OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this article is to help smaller B2B companies better understand marketing automation, its value and possible workflows, depending on the tactical mix most appropriate for target audiences. If you didn't read Part 1 of this two-part series, I would highly recommend the reader to do so.

### WHAT IS MARKETING AUTOMATION AND WHAT IS ITS VALUE?

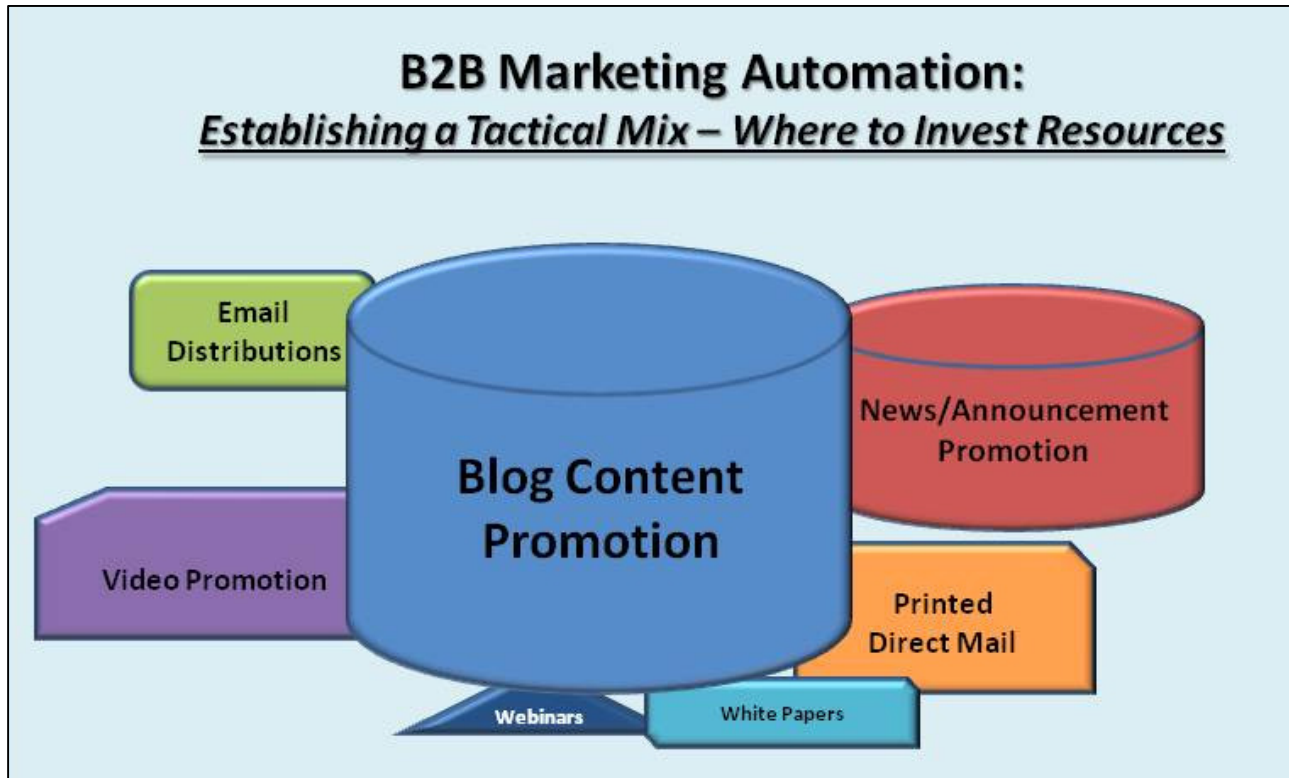
Marketing automation is the compilation of several technologies and best practice methods to proactively find solid leads when and where they are interested. It's very essence is to drive engagement and give sales personnel real-time information that helps discern the level of interest, the scope of their interest(s) and to do so efficiently and without cumbersome layers of communication. Marketing automation is designed to shorten sales cycles and maximize sales volume potential. Marketing automation drives transparency into what tactics are effective and which ones stink – sooner than later. Marketing automation permits your sales and marketing teams to do more, with less. Marketing automation helps refine incorrect marketing strategies and tactics, thereby saving your company money. Marketing automation helps to maximize the efficiencies of each sales person and your marketing staff. Marketing automation creates for you the flexibility to use contract resources for certain workflow categories, further driving down your operational expenses. Companies without an in-house marketing team have the most to gain from marketing automation – impressive reach, without exorbitant costs.

Marketing automation is the critical “phase one” necessary to transcend from B2B mentality to an H2H – Human to Human – way of communicating with your target audiences.

**Marketing automation is designed to shorten sales cycles and maximize sales volume.**

### LET'S CONSIDER AN IDEAL B2B TACTICAL MIX

Although even highly educated MBAs often make the mistake of focusing first on tactics – BEFORE they consider intended strategies – I'm quite realistic about how people learn. For most small-to-medium sized business owners, having a visual for what their tactics will be and how they will work is as important as discussing cost structure. So, let's get real about tactics. Truth is, the tactics that worked well 7-10 years ago don't have the impact they once had.



## Blogs & Blog Content

Your audience wants to learn. There are likely several pieces of information that they would like to learn and all they're looking for is a "little of the secret sauce." They would like to better understand "best practices" in how they do their job. Blogs are not as nerdy as they sound. And, the best part about blogs for the reader is that they are often a quick read – best practice is to keep them under six paragraphs. That also works great for the author; however, they need to be very focused in the blog purpose and use each word carefully.

Blogs are read every day across LinkedIn. Much fewer are read by means of a Google search and finding a blog at a website. The LinkedIn feed for any user will display pictures, titles and one can easily scroll through their feed, finding nuggets of interest. Then, they read them. Your audience reads blogs over the lunch hour, while waiting for someone to meet them for a beer and whenever they have five minutes to spare.

Blogs are hundreds of times more effective at driving engagement than are emails. Emailing cannot go away entirely, but it should be a much smaller element of your tactical mix.

Marketing automation helps to identify the IP address of the reader – but ONLY if that blog is placed at your website. From the full IP address, marketing automation will let you see the company name and usually the city, state and country. But, you don't see the actual name of the visitor until you have helped marketing automation tools associate the IP address with the email address of the visitor.

Blogs drive interest and repeat visitors. Blogs build trust in your company and in your subject matter experts. Once they have reviewed a few blogs and have a new level of trust, a blog can include a "call to action" offering that causes the visitor to surrender their contact information. From that point forward – and even

going back to the first day you launched marketing automation – you have transparency into what they read and what subjects held their interest. Think of how valuable that is to sales.

Blogs that offer “gold nuggets” of information – without insisting they talk to a rep – are the most valuable. Did you know that in today’s B2B marketplace, the buying and decision cycle is greater than 80% complete before they even want to talk to a sales rep (source: Gartner). The buyer wants to learn as much as possible before committing. It’s just the truth and the unfortunate nature of things. Give them blogs and they will get what they want. Get them to read your blog(s) and you can begin to track their interests and where they are at in the sales cycle.

As I mentioned in Part 1 of this article, I’ve personally witnessed 80% of engagement coming from blogs and less than 19% of engagement coming from old school email campaigns.

Blogs are not difficult to create when you have a team of subject matter experts on staff and you have a real content manager. In my opinion, blogs should make up 65-70% of your B2B marketing efforts. News/announcement articles should be second. Even the value of videos has more impact to engagement than emails.

## News and/or Announcements

As your prospects are quietly and passively getting to know your service/products, they often want to know what you’re proud of. What has happened lately to change your business trajectory. Give them news – that helps them to better understand your brand and your offering.

Make sure that your thinking about news does not include sharing this information via email. You’d be wasting good content.

## Video Promotions

Even videos produce greater engagement than email campaigns. Rather than thinking of these as very difficult, very expensive and high-end productions, focus first on the strategy. Can you offer them “explainer videos?” Can you provide any awareness or education that will be of value? Can you embed an entertaining call to action in video?

Again, marketing automation is going to carry you away from email promotion of a video and into the social realm as a valid alternative.

## Printed Direct Mail

There would be a large portion of the marketing community that believed printing to be an art that was just about dead. Although your home’s mailbox might be filled with B2C promotions, think about how very few printing promotions you receive at your B2B business. It’s done so rarely, we are again looking at these materials. Hey, keep this a secret! Direct mail marketing should be a part of your tactical mix – not the largest part, but a part. It is being proven to be more effective than email communications. And, it doesn’t need to be as expensive as you may recall. The simpler the printed direct mail the better it is received.

## Email Campaigns

Although I don’t really want to write about outbound email promotions because they are not incredibly effective, they should remain part of your tactical mix. Notice in my previous graphic that I make the cylinder

for blogs very large, and the box for emails much smaller. I used these visual variances in size to help you understand what is most important to compare to the less effective tactical options available.

Marketing automation also tracks behavior with emails. Who opened, who clicked on embedded links and what links they clicked on. It's still of value even though the open rate has slid to a dismal 8-10%. Besides, you've built a CRM and now will be adding a marketing automation element. Why not track and monitor all your tactical opportunities?

## WORKFLOWS IN MARKETING AUTOMATION

### What does a Blog Development Workflow Look Like?



Whether it's a blog, a news announcement or even a video, the workflow is very similar. There needs to be an overall program director (usually the marketing leader or company president) that is 100% cognizant of audience needs, but also the strategies of the company. This person leads each kick-off, making sure that the content manager understands the underlying strategy, the timeline to launch and will own the follow-up that needs to be done by sales staff.

In very rare cases, the content manager will be able to develop content independently, but they instead will rely on executives or any available on-staff expertise. The content guru will be responsible for negotiating buy-in from the SME and getting final approvals. In some cases, content should or could be reviewed with sales management.

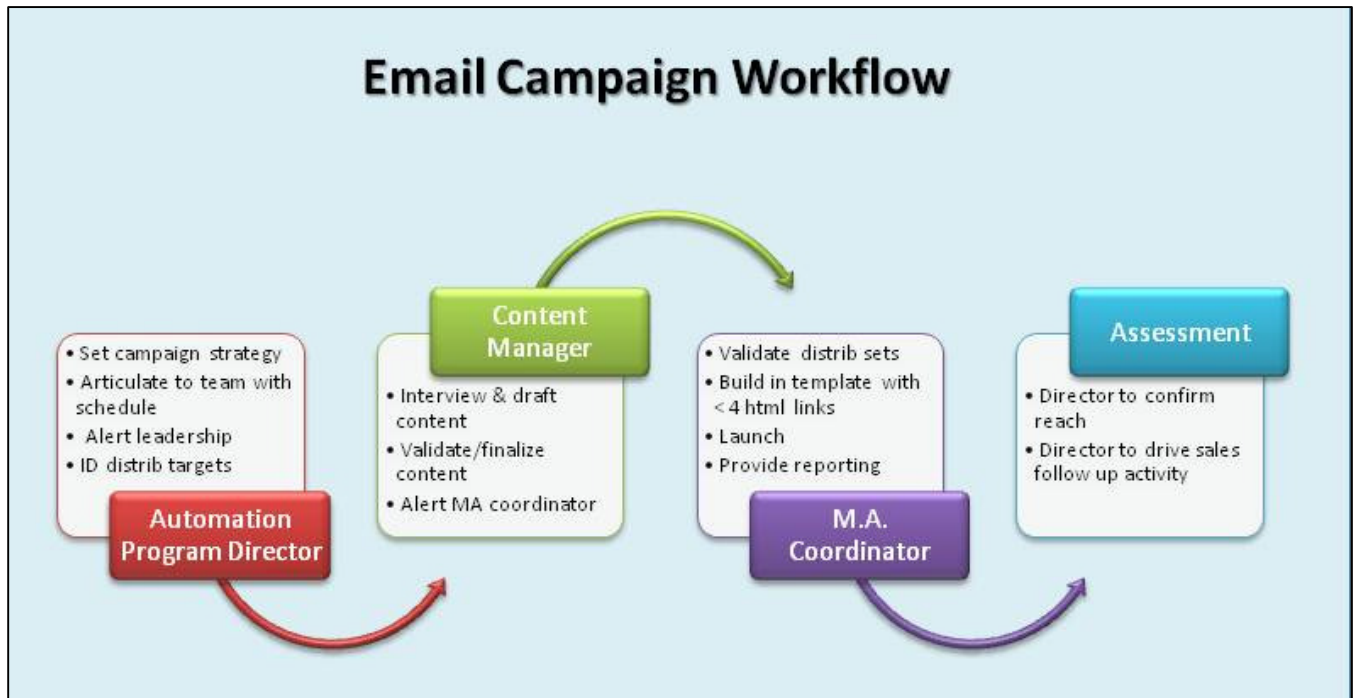
Just remember this: Democracy will always slow things down. But, democracy also keeps the masses happy. The content manager must be a strong enough personality to find that balance between analysis and getting good content in front of the audience – and doing so often.



As important as the content manager, the social media coach is critical to make sure that there is on-staff participation in the promotion and that the blog is promoted in ALL the right venues. Any social media manager that does not continually push for staff participation does not understand social presence.

Just last week, I produced a blog that would have been emailed to 4-5,000 recipients. Instead, through coaching and participation, we put that blog into the feeds of 291,000 audience appropriate readers. It was the client's first time doing so, and it took 30 minutes. Next time, we'll get it done in under 15 minutes. Your social coach should be able to lead this level of reach – even for the smallest businesses with a very narrow audience.

### What does Email Campaign Development Workflow Look Like?



It is very similar to the blog development workflow, but there needs to be greater involvement from the marketing automation coordinator as the email will be distributed via the marketing automation tool and NOT the CRM (as you've become accustomed).

If I were your consultant, unless you have a very unusual industry niche, I likely would not advise you to email your audience more than quarterly. Part of the decision would be rooted in the frequency with which your audience buys. But, it would be very rare that I'd advise you to email more than once per month.

As your email rate increases, so does the annoyance for your brand. Email communications are fine once the relationship is established; however, they should be used sparingly during the introductory stage.

### KEY BENEFITS OF MARKETING AUTOMATION REITERATED

1. It forces your company to seek new ways to drive engagement, but also collects insights into each engagement that helps the sales staff get to-the-point and close business sooner.
2. Its existence behaves as a team of virtual salespeople – that are not threatening.

3. Marketing Automation tracks data that gives your company transparency into marketing impact and permits you to measure marketing ROI like never before.
4. Marketing Automation helps push you to produce content of value, rather than content that feels good.
5. Although there are six roles to be played to run marketing automation effectively, there need not be six different employees. Nor, does marketing automation have to slow down the creation and deployment of marketing content.

With all my heart, brain and soul, I honestly believe in marketing automation for small B2B companies. I truly want your business to be successful and your introductions to be more effective than ever before.

## MANAGED MARKETING AUTOMATION

For several industries made up of small companies, marketing automation might sound incredibly daunting. There actually exists companies that can and will wear one or all six of these hats for you – at a reasonable monthly fee. For example, if you wish to pay a bit more, you can have all six hats managed for you. All you need to provide is strategic guidance and subject matter expertise to help in the development of content.

Or, perhaps you only need a marketing automation tool coordinator and a REAL social media coach. These managed marketing automation firms can do that for you. The really good firms have built out a scalable service that meets the needs of your company, the tactical mix you choose and your budget.

At the very minimum, I would strongly suggest that you'll learn much more about marketing automation from staff at these firms than you will from a company that sells marketing automation software. It also wouldn't hurt to start following the LinkedIn company profiles of companies like Hubspot and Act-On. Both have good blog writers that will help further your education about marketing automation. These authors may not agree with everything I've taught in these two articles, but you'll continue to grow in perspectives of what your firm needs to better reach its audience.

As I mentioned in the previous article, if you wish to contact me to help find a managed marketing automation provider, I am happy to help. At the time of this writing, I would estimate there are several dozen in each state. Yet, please know that not all of them have built a service model that directly addresses the specific needs of companies whose revenues range from \$1M to \$75M. Also, they may not have content staff that are agile enough to work across a variety of B2B industries.

Feel free to inquire about such services by emailing me at [brentjanderson65@gmail.com](mailto:brentjanderson65@gmail.com)

## About the Author

### **Brent J. Anderson**

Innovative and dynamic B2B marketing leader with a 29-year career (high-tech/healthcare – 16 years; creative agency sales/strategy – eight years; B2B sales – three years; CPG marketing – two years). Best known for refining strategies to better meet corporate objectives and dramatically improving awareness for unknown brands/products/services. Also, highly respected for building web and social presence to drive inbound engagement, bridging sales objectives with audience preferences, measuring awareness/satisfaction, strategic participation with senior leadership, building new markets and ensuring brand-appropriate internal cultures. Have been a strategic and technical leader in the launch of more than 100 new brands and over 200 websites.