

The State Of Marketing Automation

BUYER EMPOWERMENT WILL BE TOP
PRIORITY FOR B2B MARKETERS IN 2018



Introduction.....	3
Michelle Huff, Act-On Software.....	4
Mike Ballard, Lenovo	5
Ryan Bonnici, G2 Crowd	6
Kate Cedric-Federhar, CenturyLink.....	7
Michelle Cirocco, Televerde	8
Laura Cross, SiriusDecisions	9
Jon Dick, HubSpot.....	10
Sarah Kennedy, Marketo.....	11
David Lewis, DemandGen International	12
Andy Mahler, The Mx Group.....	13
Sam Melnick, Allocadia.....	14
Jim Meyer, Etrigue	15
Troy O'Bryan, Bonfire Marketing Company	16
Jeff Pedowitz, Pedowitz Group	17
Jennifer Renaud, Oracle	18
Howard Sewell, Spear Marketing	19
Darian Shirazi, Radius	20
Carl Tsukahara, Optimizely	21
Ana Villegas, Dell	22
About Act-On.....	23
About Demand Gen Report.....	23



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**"THE CONTINUED
INTEGRATION OF
SALES AND MARKETING
TECHNOLOGIES IN THE
NEW YEAR WILL HAVE
A POSITIVE IMPACT ON
PROVIDING BUYERS THE
CONSISTENT CUSTOMER
EXPERIENCE THEY HAVE
COME TO EXPECT."**

INTRODUCTION

As B2B buyers grow more empowered, marketing and sales teams will look to provide seamless customer experiences in 2018 through the help of individualized personalization, AI technologies and a renewed focus on data.

Those who piloted account-based marketing programs in 2017 saw success, and many practitioners predict that those programs will expand in the New Year to meet revenue goals. The continued integration of sales and marketing technologies in the New Year will also have a positive impact on providing buyers the consistent customer experience they have come to expect.

These are just some of the trends highlighted in our annual *State of Marketing Automation Outlook Guide*. This guide features interviews with thought leaders from companies such as Act-On Software, SiriusDecisions, Dell EMC and Forrester Research.

Read on to see what our panel of industry experts and practitioners predicted for 2018.



Michelle Huff



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CAN YOU PROVIDE A FUN FACT ABOUT YOURSELF PEOPLE MAY BE INTERESTED TO KNOW?

I was in a comedy class in high school learning improv and stand-up. We performed in front of the school a few times a year. Considering it was during high school (which is often a major point in life for shaping one's identity), I would definitely call the experience "character-building."

BIGGEST CHALLENGES FOR B2B MARKETERS IN 2017?

Over the last year, marketers have had to contend not just with an evolving customer journey — disrupted by digital, reshaped in places by automation — but also a more evolved and empowered customer. Buyers now have access to more content than ever, and more means to dictate the terms of their purchasing process. These customers are dedicated and self-sufficient, willing to do their own research on their own time (investigating vendors' websites, scouring press and third-party reviews, soliciting input via LinkedIn, and so on and so forth) and using this information while in conversation with sales — or at times, waiting to engage sales at the last possible moment, once they've reached a final decision. Which has meant, in 2017, that marketers have had to nurture buyers for longer, steward more of the customer experience, and look long and hard at the technologies they leverage to manage these interactions.

BIGGEST TRENDS IN MARKETING AUTOMATION IN 2018?

Individualization as the new personalization. As machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) continue to figure into marketing automation solutions, I suspect we'll see marketers start to drive plans for more individualized marketing experiences — personalization taken to a whole new level, with messages, timing, and delivery channels adapted to individual buyers and their journeys, and marketing automation directly enabling these one-to-one interactions (tracking buyers' patterns and habits in order to identify optimal windows for engagement, trigger communications accordingly).

Renewed focus on data, process and compliance. Next May's General Data Protection Regulation (or GDPR) promises to deliver one of the biggest marketing shake-ups in a decade — rewriting rules of engagement in the European Union, and impacting any business that markets to individuals in that region. We'll see marketing best practices evolve to better manage customer data and their individual preferences. We'll also see marketing automation continue to evolve to support these best practices and offer new features as companies interpret the rules — for example, offering methods to ensure customer data is stored locally and emails can be sent locally from the EU.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEMAND GEN AND ENGAGEMENT IN 2018?

The biggest opportunity for marketers, I think, lies once again in the shift from personalization to individualization — building customer experiences that treat every buyer as an individual and leverage the data marketers have already gathered (via marketing automation and CRM systems) to enable more intelligent, more tailored interactions. Conversations that reflect up-to-the-minute insights on a buyer's frame of mind, versus, say, a message personalized according to an imagined persona or segment. We're not short on data these days, thanks to the sophisticated marketing technologies currently at our disposal, and as AI and machine learning continue to bring those technologies forward (often by leaps and bounds), 2018 offers an amazing opportunity for marketers to leverage the data to its fullest potential; really turn our customers' "digital footprints" into thumbprints.



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IF YOU WERE TO DESCRIBE YOUR MARKETING PERSONALITY USING A FICTIONAL CHARACTER, WHO WOULD IT BE?

Gandalf. He has that dry sense of humor and isn't serious all the time. But when it's time to get stuff done, he shows up out of nowhere and takes care of business!

CAN YOU OFFER A PREDICTION ON A MAJOR EVENT THAT WILL TAKE PLACE IN 2018?

My prediction ... Microsoft buys Marketo. There ... I said it.

Also bunch of marketing people will converge in Scottsdale in February. It will be epic.

BIGGEST CHALLENGES FOR B2B MARKETERS IN 2017?

I found that my ability to keep up with new marketing technologies has become difficult. This is a direct effect of the massive explosion in the marketing technology space.

On the one hand, it's great to have so many choices and so many definitive solutions. On the other hand, once you think you've settled on a solution, a new one pops up with even greater promise.

BIGGEST TRENDS IN MARKETING AUTOMATION IN 2018?

With this explosion of technologies also comes an explosion of data. And not just access to contact names, but access to traits, intent, buying patterns, etc. If we can harness what's available to us and focus strategies that align all this great information, there is great opportunity for everyone ... including the customer! No more ads that don't pertain to your interests or desires at that time!

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEMAND GEN AND ENGAGEMENT IN 2018?

A consolidation of the industry will soon be upon us. I don't know who's going to buy who, but someone will strive to have the best all-around marketing technology offering. Salesforce and Oracle have had a pretty strong stance on the B2B space for some time now.

However, Microsoft has been making a strong showing. Their purchase of LinkedIn really changed that game a bit. Dynamics continues to get stronger and stronger. Marketo seems to be a lone wolf out there.



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CAN YOU OFFER A PREDICTION ON A MAJOR EVENT THAT WILL TAKE PLACE IN 2018?

The cryptocurrency craze is going to continue to grow. Companies and institutions are going to begin learning how they can create their own cryptocurrency and leverage it with their customers. In turn, we will find more people engaging with digital currency and world governments struggling to regulate it.

CAN YOU PROVIDE A FUN FACT ABOUT YOURSELF PEOPLE MAY BE INTERESTED TO KNOW?

I learned about and applied for my first technology marketing position based on a conversation with a Microsoft marketing executive while I was working as an international flight attendant with Qantas Airlines.

BIGGEST CHALLENGES FOR B2B MARKETERS IN 2017?

The B2B market is evolving based on successful B2C market functions. Just as we learned to only buy products on Amazon or eat at restaurants via Yelp that have a 4+ stars (or greater) average rating — buyers are now doing the same with B2B products and services. We see over one million B2B buyers on our site every month, reading and making decisions based on the more than 300,000 real user reviews we've received over the years.

Experienced sales and marketing executives understand this is not just a fad, but a new shift in how business products and services are purchased. These leaders are quickly adding "customer reviews" as a new pillar in their content marketing strategies. Instead of just focusing on content at the top of the funnel to attract buyers, smart B2B executives are leveraging customer content at the bottom of their funnel too.

Working with the user reviews of your products is a new concept called "naked marketing." This concept says that by transparently sharing your customer reviews, buyers will be better educated to make the right decision the first time. Better purchasing decisions will lead to better deals and less churn for your company.

BIGGEST TRENDS IN MARKETING AUTOMATION IN 2018?

The [marketing automation](#) landscape continues to grow at an incredible speed. Three of the biggest trends in my experience will be:

1. **All-in-one:** The [MarTech landscape map](#) continues to add technology. In turn, B2B marketers are connecting more pieces together and more data is lost between those platforms. In 2018, marketers will move to all-in-one platforms.
2. **Personalization:** As marketers move to more all-in-one platforms, they will find it much easier to personalize their marketing to individual buyer personas.
3. **Voice-of-the-Customer (VOC):** VOC is trending to become 'the' marketing strategy for 2018. Not only does it drive qualified buyer traffic from review sites to your business, it also functions as an important tactic for accelerating sales opportunities in the buying process.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEMAND GEN AND ENGAGEMENT IN 2018?

'Voice of Customer' content is still an incredibly under-rated strategy for driving demand gen engagement in 2018. If you're a marketing leader and you don't have a customer marketing team, then you should begin building one. And if you already have a customer marketing team, but they sit apart from demand generation — then you might rethink how these two teams can work together to drive more marketing-sourced revenue for your sales teams.

VOC content also poses as a new opportunity for product and engineering teams. Who better to teach you about your product's strengths and weaknesses than your customer reviews!?



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IF YOU WERE TO DESCRIBE YOUR MARKETING PERSONALITY USING A FICTIONAL CHARACTER, WHO WOULD IT BE?

Jules Verne. There are so many things that we are trying for the first time, things that are new and we have to figure it all out.

CAN YOU OFFER A PREDICTION ON A MAJOR EVENT THAT WILL TAKE PLACE IN 2018?

Cubs win the World Series. It took 108 years for the first one. Let's get the second out of the way!

BIGGEST CHALLENGES FOR B2B MARKETERS IN 2017?

I feel like the holy grail of marketing ops and demand gen in 2017 (and will continue into 2018) is complete end-to-end reporting. We all have a lot of tools at our disposal, and a lot of different systems that do not always talk to each other.

The challenge is to get every system speaking the same language and talking to each other to finally make sure you can attribute ROI to everything that you have done.

BIGGEST TRENDS IN MARKETING AUTOMATION IN 2018?

The AI trend is not going away in 2018. I think this is the hot buzz word, and you have got to get in the game in order to stay current.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEMAND GEN AND ENGAGEMENT IN 2018?

New opportunities are going to come with technology, in my opinion. Things like AI are hot right now, but who knows where we will be in 12 months.

At the end of the day, it is all about figuring out how to talk to people in the best way possible, and that is an ever-changing landscape.



Michelle Cirocco



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IF YOU WERE TO DESCRIBE YOUR MARKETING PERSONALITY USING A FICTIONAL CHARACTER, WHO WOULD IT BE?

Willy Wonka. Willy Wonka is a champion of chocolate lovers and Oompa Loompas. He's outgoing, disorganized, spontaneous, irresponsible and energetic. He promotes the slightly outrageous, but only because he sees what is possible. And once he believes in someone, he's 100% in.

BIGGEST CHALLENGES FOR B2B MARKETERS IN 2017?

There are so many technologies within the marketing space today. The biggest challenge for marketers in 2017 was to not get lured by the technology siren.

This past year, marketers have had to work to stay focused on doing (and using) what was most impactful to their organization so they could efficiently and effectively reach their target audience.

BIGGEST TRENDS IN MARKETING AUTOMATION IN 2018?

I'm interested in watching what happens with 'digital transformation.' The term has been on everyone's lips but I think, as we move into the new year, it will be important to do more than talk about it.

We are focused on defining what it is, what it means to a specific business, and how do marketers use it to communicate with and reach our target audience.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEMAND GEN AND ENGAGEMENT IN 2018?

My background is in customer success — engaging with the customer in a way that ensures their programs are successful. I'm excited to bring this experience to the Televerde marketing team because I think that it's critical for demand generation and engagement in the coming year for marketing teams to truly focus on and support the customer growth and retention.

I think that keeping your programs centered on the success of your customer is going to give us some of the answers to how we bring digital transformation into the marketing mix in a meaningful way.



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"SUCCESSFUL B2B DEMAND CREATION LEADERS ARE QUADRUPLE THREATS. THEY KNOW WHAT IT TAKES TO SUCCESSFULLY DEFINE AND MANAGE DEMAND, CAN PLAN AND EXECUTE DEMAND PROGRAMS THAT HIT THEIR OBJECTIVES, KNOW HOW TO LEVERAGE DIGITAL AND NON-DIGITAL TACTICS AND UNDERSTAND HOW TO ASSESS THE DEMAND FUNCTION'S RESOURCES AND EFFECTIVENESS."

BIGGEST CHALLENGES FOR B2B MARKETERS IN 2017?

Demand creators still struggle with technology limitations around enabling and operationalizing the entire buyer's journey. In most B2B buying situations, there is more than one individual involved in the purchase decision. Because teams of individuals (i.e. a buying group) collect and share information, and because individuals come in and out of the buying process at various points in the buyer's journey, simply tracking the behaviors of any given individual is unlikely to provide a useful picture of the true buyer's journey. Instead, marketers must measure and analyze behaviors at the individual, buying group and account levels in order to get a complete picture of buyers' journeys to inform ongoing program design.

BIGGEST TRENDS IN MARKETING AUTOMATION IN 2018?

In our *2016 State of Marketing Automation Study*, we found that a majority of organizations were considering migrating from one MAP to another over the next 12 months. We are seeing this come to life in 2017 and expect it to continue in 2018.

We are hearing a few different cases for migration. The first two have to do with the capability set of the platform. Some organizations' current MAP solutions are too much for their needs. While other organizations have outgrown the feature set of their current platform and they need to move to a platform that will support their additional needs, different business models, go-to-market strategy, etc. The third and possibly most interesting trend for the industry has to do with the organization's strategy of moving towards an integrated sales and marketing cloud versus a point solution. Demand marketers are constantly balancing people, process and technology with limited resources, and when an organization needs to renew its sales cloud (which also happens to have a MAP) the demand marketers are being asked, would you consider migrating? In 2016 and early 2017, the answer was no. We are beginning to see the answer to this question, even at the enterprise level, is "perhaps" and "yes."

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEMAND GEN AND ENGAGEMENT IN 2018?

Permission. Although GDPR compliance is a legal mandate, embracing compliance and building a permission-based list can bring substantial benefits, with the ability to personalize content and engage with those individuals that want to communicate and interact with your brand. With GDPR, we will see an increasing number of organizations really paying attention to program requirements and see how permission affects the demand creation program planning and implementation process.

Demand creation team maturity. Successful B2B demand creation leaders are quadruple threats. They know what it takes to successfully define and manage demand, can plan and execute demand programs that hit their objectives, know how to leverage digital and non-digital tactics, and understand how to assess the demand function's resources and effectiveness. To continue achieving demand growth objectives, demand marketers can never be satisfied with the status quo. They need to keep innovating and developing new capabilities personally and across the demand creation function.



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CAN YOU PROVIDE A FUN FACT ABOUT YOURSELF PEOPLE MAY BE INTERESTED TO KNOW?

I grew up on a lake and was on a water ski trick team. I climbed water ski pyramids!

BIGGEST CHALLENGES FOR B2B MARKETERS IN 2017?

One of the biggest changes we've seen in marketing this year is the declining efficacy of email as a distribution channel. Between 2015 and 2016, we saw our own email click-through rate go down by a whopping 30%. This year, we committed to sending less email, better — 50% less email, in fact. It worked incredibly well. We've got great open rates and click-through rates, and are providing more value to our users.

Another big shift has happened as consumers continue to become more savvy buyers. Today's B2B consumer expects to be able to try before they buy, and come to the conversation (if they ever do get in touch with a rep, which is rare) with plenty of research under their belt. Touchless selling is key in this scenario.

Lastly, I think it's more difficult than ever to differentiate. Every company says they do everything. We've spent a lot of time this year embracing the concept of "showing" what we do instead of telling. It's worked really well for us.

BIGGEST TRENDS IN MARKETING AUTOMATION IN 2018?

Without a doubt, messaging and chat (on- and off-site) will have a huge impact on marketing automation in the coming year. This growing channel will give marketers the opportunity to better connect with their audiences in a more helpful, human, on-demand way. It's how people like to communicate today. The key with messaging will be understanding how users expect to engage with you on it, and delivering a blend of automation and human support to deliver on that expectation.

Personalized content is nothing new, but the tools to create it are getting better. I'd expect to see more personalized video at scale as part of the marketing mix next year.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEMAND GEN AND ENGAGEMENT IN 2018?

SEO will continue to evolve in the new year. We've already seen the impact of trends like conversational search, and expect to see even more change in 2018.

Off-site lead gen is a big opportunity right now. One example is Facebook Messenger, where you can get far lower CPLs and deliver a unique off-site experience. Another is Facebook Lead Gen ads, which cut several steps out of a traditional lead gen funnel.

In that same vein, omni-channel messaging presents another growth opportunity for 2018, as marketers find new ways to reach their audiences across web chat, SMS, Facebook Messenger, and more. I'd expect some real innovation here this year.



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IF YOU WERE TO DESCRIBE YOUR MARKETING PERSONALITY USING A FICTIONAL CHARACTER, WHO WOULD IT BE?

Nancy Drew — if there's something I think I don't know enough about, I turn into a marketing detective and dig deep.

BIGGEST CHALLENGES FOR B2B MARKETERS IN 2017?

Customer demands are increasing, and marketers are hurrying to keep up. In 2017, we conducted a body of research called "The State of Engagement" that showed that marketers are falling short of customer demands and that the number one reason customers do not engage with a brand is due to irrelevant content.

Marketers have had to reconsider if their marketing is really serving the needs of their most important audience — their customers.

BIGGEST TRENDS IN MARKETING AUTOMATION IN 2018?

For marketing automation, 2018 needs to be about customer context and leveraging the right technologies to provide that context. These technologies should natively contain AI, to make marketers' lives easier, and should seamlessly integrate to ensure the data all lives in one place.

Without choosing marketing automation tools that fit both of these descriptions, marketers will lack a deep understanding of customer context and miss what's most powerful about authentic engagement in the first place.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEMAND GEN AND ENGAGEMENT IN 2018?

In 2018, even if the marketer isn't the one interacting with a customer at a particular moment, there should be no drop-in engagement. It's about an unified engagement experience across the organization that puts everyone on the same page.

Demand generation campaigns must take into account a customer's every interaction with the business at any point in their journey. This will lend itself to a seamless experience that ultimately exceeds customer expectations and drives demand.



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IF YOU WERE TO DESCRIBE YOUR MARKETING PERSONALITY USING A FICTIONAL CHARACTER, WHO WOULD IT BE?

Ironman. Innovative, powerful, charismatic, witty (but no facial hair).

CAN YOU PROVIDE A FUN FACT ABOUT YOURSELF PEOPLE MAY BE INTERESTED TO KNOW?

I build and race drones and dream of competing in the Drone Nationals and winning.

BIGGEST CHALLENGES FOR B2B MARKETERS IN 2017?

2017 once again brought expanded capabilities of B2B marketing technology forcing digital marketing teams to become better full-stack marketers. These expanded responsibilities are causing marketing teams to expand and adjust roles and responsibilities. Marketing leadership has been slow to restructure and invest more heavily in martech administration (including outside agencies) to support their martech investments. Teams that are not investing in both their stack and the resources are getting marginal value from the tools resulting in lack of ROI from their martech investments.

BIGGEST TRENDS IN MARKETING AUTOMATION IN 2018?

The leading marketing automation systems are getting UI facelifts and expanded capabilities in 2018 that will require updated training for the marketing automation administrators and users. In addition, marketing automation systems are becoming orchestration hubs because of their integrations with other martech tools in the stack. Marketing operations leaders will be challenging their teams to become full stack marketers.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEMAND GEN AND ENGAGEMENT IN 2018?

Installed-base marketing and customer engagement will be a bigger focus for B2B marketers because of the opportunity to grow revenue among customers. B2C marketers are far more focused and skilled in this area, and B2B needs to catch up because of the revenue potential.



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CAN YOU PROVIDE A FUN FACT ABOUT YOURSELF PEOPLE MAY BE INTERESTED TO KNOW?

I was born in New York City and when I was young, we used to go into Manhattan every year at Christmas time to see the windows, go to Rockefeller Center, see a show, etc. It was magical.

Fast forward to now, and even though we live in Chicago, this will be our 11th year taking the kids to New York for that same magical experience ... there is nothing like Christmas in New York.

BIGGEST CHALLENGES FOR B2B MARKETERS IN 2017?

We continue to see a disconnect between the ever-increasing amounts of theory, data and tech, and the ability of marketing teams to actually operationalize it all. We see this issue across the board, from strategy, to customer insights, to content development, to technology skills, to Sales and Marketing alignment and much more. In truth, the tech piece is small compared to the knowledge, people and processes needed to run it.

We also see disconnects on the integration of data across systems, resulting in operational inefficiencies and reduced effectiveness. Some of this relates to data quality and data hygiene, but the problems run deeper than that as you incorporate more channels and include both online and offline initiatives.

BIGGEST TRENDS IN MARKETING AUTOMATION IN 2018?

The biggest move we are seeing is away from quantities of emails and content and more toward quality ... making the customer journey truly 1-to-1 with more relevant content types and timing.

Another is the more rational and tech-enabled handling of ABM campaigns. Marketers are finally moving away from the hype and understanding how ABM can work in their organization, building out the data sets, and establishing the communications flow and connectivity needed to bring it to life ... for them.

Finally, predictive/AI continues to offer real promise, and we expect to see it having a more dramatic impact in the B2B space as time progresses.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEMAND GEN AND ENGAGEMENT IN 2018?

We are seeing significant results incorporating offline engagement devices like direct mail and telemarketing into the customer journey stream. Conversion and data acquisition rates are dramatically higher on many of the initiatives we have seen, and frequently the time to sale is compressed as well. This has been particularly true in very high ticket or high lifetime value applications.

Separately, we are seeing more "modern marketing" techniques being used by a diverse range of small and mid-sized B2B companies, instead of just enterprise marketers and the tech industry.



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CAN YOU OFFER A PREDICTION ON A MAJOR EVENT THAT WILL TAKE PLACE IN 2018?

What we're seeing from customers (like Microsoft, Red Hat, GE Digital, and many more) is a renewed focus on better stewards of their marketing dollars so they optimize the impact of every dollar spent.

2018 will see a closer relationship between marketing and finance as budgets decrease overall (according to Gartner). [Allocadia research](#) found that marketers that expect larger budgets are 3X more likely to align the CMO and CFO — those that haven't figured out this critical relationship will need to do so in 2018, or will likely be shown the door.

BIGGEST CHALLENGES FOR B2B MARKETERS IN 2017?

Marketers are being held to a higher standard, and while AI, predictive analytics and other buzzwords (blockchain!?) get much of our attention, the reality is, most marketing organizations are simply not ready for these advanced technologies.

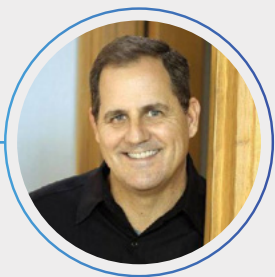
Instead, those that were able to keep — and grow — their marketing budgets for 2018, have realized they need to take an honest look at their martech stack and get back to the foundational elements of data, technology and process.

BIGGEST TRENDS IN MARKETING AUTOMATION IN 2018?

Marketing automation platforms (MAP) is moving from a wave of early adopters to late majority. What that means today is that marketers must marry MAP as a foundation technology in their martech stacks with behind-the-scenes technologies like [Marketing Performance Management](#) and CRM to fulfill the CMO's agenda. I predict, in 2018, we will continue to see more marketing leaders who have reduced their spend on martech vendors to focus on their core stack — CRM, MAP and MPM.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEMAND GEN AND ENGAGEMENT IN 2018?

Within B2B, partnering with your customer success organization is going to be a key to demand. With more noise and more "me too" demand strategies in marketing, leveraging a strong customer base for authentic referrals and customer-focused content will help marketers grow demand and support sales. (Hint: it also helps to have a kickass success leader!)



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CAN YOU OFFER A PREDICTION ON A MAJOR EVENT THAT WILL TAKE PLACE IN 2018?

There will be two major consolidation events among the large, over-capitalized companies in the marketing automation space.

CAN YOU PROVIDE A FUN FACT ABOUT YOURSELF PEOPLE MAY BE INTERESTED TO KNOW?

I can ride a unicycle and eat nachos at the same time ... Really! My next adventure is going to be riding an adventure bike from Montana back to Oregon and fly fishing along the way.

BIGGEST CHALLENGES FOR B2B MARKETERS IN 2017?

Earning and keeping the attention and trust of working professionals — especially more recent generations raised online — is tougher and takes different skills. Organizations must provide much more value than just marketing a set of product capabilities, and also have to provide assistance and support on usage and best practices as well.

BIGGEST TRENDS IN MARKETING AUTOMATION IN 2018?

Simplicity of operation. Organizations by and large have not gained enough benefit from investment in centralized, bloated and impossible-to-run systems. They are looking to find better ways to quickly, efficiently and directly engage with their audiences.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEMAND GEN AND ENGAGEMENT IN 2018?

The reemergence of third-party content providers. This is a trend that is increasing as it becomes more difficult to reach audiences directly. Third-parties are ranking higher up in search results and becoming sources of information that might have previously belonged to brands. Leveraging their reach as part of marketing programs is imperative.



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CAN YOU OFFER A PREDICTION ON A MAJOR EVENT THAT WILL TAKE PLACE IN 2018?

My prediction for 2018 is that we will all have a conversation with a friend or family member about Bitcoin. Is marketing driving demand or is cryptocurrency the future of currency? That's sure to be a good conversation.

BIGGEST CHALLENGES FOR B2B MARKETERS IN 2017?

With adoption of ABM being the major change for B2B marketers in 2017, scaling these efforts became a challenge. As pilot ABM initiatives proved to be successful, executive and sales teams wanted more. The conversation shifted from "these are my accounts, go find others" to "here are more accounts, can you help me get a meeting?" Thus, marketers adjusted their focus to include more ABM initiatives and did not have the resources to scale content creation efforts. There is a plethora of tools available for identifying accounts, key contacts and purchase intent, but very few options when it comes to creating personalized content.

BIGGEST TRENDS IN MARKETING AUTOMATION IN 2018?

Two trends that will emerge in 2018 are less reliant on email within the automation platform to deliver communications and the incorporation of artificial intelligence (AI). With the rise of automated sales outreach platforms, in addition to marketing automation, we're inundating prospective buyers with email and interaction rates are suffering. To adapt, integrations and acquisitions are occurring among the automation platform vendors to deliver buyer's journey-relevant display ads, direct mail, phone calls and social posts. Yes, this does mean that "direct mail is back," at least, for high value accounts.

Second, AI will move from a prediction engine to a communication delivery engine. This will start with a broader adoption of personalizing the delivery schedule of communications based on an individual's likeliness to engage. Next will be an AI-influenced communication sequence or workflow. And, hopefully, before the year ends, we'll get opportunity to experience human-like AI-produced content from a B2B automation platform.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEMAND GEN AND ENGAGEMENT IN 2018?

With the rise of ABM, and the expectation from our buyers that only personalized content is worth engaging, more marketers will explore content AI in 2018. As consumers, we are getting more accustomed to receiving sports reports, stock updates and news feeds generated by AI. This familiarity will lead to experimentation with creating more complex B2B content. A personalized experience is what we all want to receive and deliver. AI will be what allows us to scale personalized content creation.



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IF YOU WERE TO DESCRIBE YOUR MARKETING PERSONALITY USING A FICTIONAL CHARACTER, WHO WOULD IT BE?

Bugs Bunny — For being clever and capable of outsmarting my foes.

CAN YOU OFFER A PREDICTION ON A MAJOR EVENT THAT WILL TAKE PLACE IN 2018?

I think we will see some more consolidation and also a new breakout vendor as marketing technology enters into a new phase of growth.

CAN YOU PROVIDE A FUN FACT ABOUT YOURSELF PEOPLE MAY BE INTERESTED TO KNOW?

I've seen "The Godfather" over 50x.
"Never go against the family."

BIGGEST CHALLENGES FOR B2B MARKETERS IN 2017?

One big challenge was successfully adopting the technology marketers purchased. Marketing has become overwhelmed with the amount of technology they have bought and have not kept up with the skills and process development needed to support it. This is one of the major reasons why most marketing executives are scaling back their technology spend in 2018.

Another was talent management. Marketing continues to grow in complexity and sophistication. Resources and skills are needed in analytics, data, finance and technology — in addition to traditional marketing skills. Finding the right resource at the right price is a major challenge.

Finally, performance. While more marketing executives are now comfortable with measuring their team's performance ROI and contribution, they still struggle with meeting and exceeding C-Level expectations.

BIGGEST TRENDS IN MARKETING AUTOMATION IN 2018?

Two big trends will be AI and customer data platforms (CDP). Marketing needs to work smarter. Most vendors are embedding "AI Light" in their applications, but that's not really AI. CDPs organize the data around the customer and make it easier for marketing to do its job of segmenting and managing campaigns.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEMAND GEN AND ENGAGEMENT IN 2018?

A new opportunity I see revolves around successfully taking a full customer lifecycle approach and using demand gen principles for customer expansion, not just acquisition. ABM will continue to be a growth area, but instead of rushing to buy more software, first, work on the foundational elements — lead management, content operations and data management. Most ABM can be successfully managed in CRM and marketing automation. Once you start experiencing success and are ready to scale, look at some of the ABM vendors — but not before.



Jennifer Renaud

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"IN 2018, WE WILL SEE A MORE CHARACTERIZED USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN MARKETING AUTOMATION WITH THE ABILITY TO HIT THE CUSTOMER WITH THE RIGHT INFORMATION AT THE RIGHT TIME TO CREATE A TRULY OPTIMIZED ENGAGEMENT."

BIGGEST CHALLENGES FOR B2B MARKETERS IN 2017?

Marketers have been overwhelmed by the dramatic amount of technology available and necessary to run robust digital marketing programs today. This has and probably will continue to be a challenge for marketers. Marketers have had to adapt their teams and processes to these technologies while continually driving ROI.

B2B organizations are obsessed with delivering that personalized experience, which is key to earning and keeping customers. So many connected technologies bringing all of that data together in a digestible, usable way is paramount and has proven painful for marketers in 2017. Quality data is the foundation for everything marketers do.

BIGGEST TRENDS IN MARKETING AUTOMATION IN 2018?

In 2018, we will see a more characterized use of artificial intelligence in marketing automation with the ability to hit the customer with the right information at the right time to create a truly optimized engagement. Coupling AI with analytics will boost content personalization and efficiency. This will free up more time for marketers to focus on the strategy of connecting with their audience and content creation.

Data governance will be a big topic for 2018. Marketers will be even more wary of their data and how it is used and preserved in accordance with new regulations like GDPR. Effectively managing and maintaining data will create more fluidity with marketers, as well as a positive customer emotion of security and reliability.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEMAND GEN AND ENGAGEMENT IN 2018?

In 2018, we will see customer experience (CX) play a key role in driving demand gen, as well as marketing being a heavy contributor for customer experience. CX will shape true differentiation and create a continual competitive advantage for B2B marketers. Demand gen will start to own a bigger slice of the sales pipeline as communications become more personalized and specific to customer needs.

Wrapping it all in, the total customer experience will now extend from the very first touch point to continuing the relationship post-sale and on the service side. This is only going to become a bigger conversation, which is why CX is so important and will continue to be.



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CAN YOU PROVIDE A FUN FACT ABOUT YOURSELF PEOPLE MAY BE INTERESTED TO KNOW?

I'm a passionate cyclist who bikes to work every day and this year rode more than 3,000 miles total. My daily commute isn't long, but I find biking is a great way to clear my head at the end of a work day. I'm from the UK originally, and my dream is to do the London to Edinburgh ride: 900 miles in 5 days.

BIGGEST CHALLENGES FOR B2B MARKETERS IN 2017?

One of the biggest challenges for B2B marketers right now is simply keeping pace with the changes in marketing technology. Whether it's predictive analytics, ABM, AI, or chatbots, the modern marketer needs to navigate an increasingly technical discipline.

Unfortunately, the trend for many firms when it comes to marketing technology seems to be: "buy now, and figure it out later." We saw the same issue when marketing automation first emerged — companies were besotted by the promise of MA, but many failed to achieve that promise because they didn't have the vision, the strategy, or the content in place.

BIGGEST TRENDS IN MARKETING AUTOMATION IN 2018?

I'm really excited about the possibilities for leveraging predictive analytics and big data in marketing automation. If we can display Web content to an online visitor based on that visitor's profile, Web behavior, and predictive intent, why can't we do the same with email?

I'd like to be able to schedule an email broadcast or a nurture stream and have each individual recipient receive a different subject line, at a different time of day, based on what predictive data tells us that recipient is most likely to engage with. There's talk already about this capability being on the short-term horizon, and it could be a game-changer.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEMAND GEN AND ENGAGEMENT IN 2018?

Marketing is becoming more and more personalized. There are fewer hard and fast rules that apply to all audiences. Some might say: "video is the best content for demand generation," for example, but the reality (as it's always been) is that different people respond to different messages, and content, and even lead generation channels, in different ways.

I see the real opportunity for B2B marketers in 2018 is to find ways of personalizing the way we deliver content, in a manner that makes it most relevant, timely, and engaging to individual recipients.



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CAN YOU OFFER A PREDICTION ON A MAJOR EVENT THAT WILL TAKE PLACE IN 2018?

Cloud computing companies like Amazon, Google, and Microsoft make it dirt cheap for companies to store their information in the cloud. In 2018, I predict Google will go all in on enterprise cloud. They will partner with every application provider, likely acquire a company — although I can't say which — and will become extremely competitive in the space.

Amazon will also move further and further up the stack to serve more business users and will go head-to-head with Google and Microsoft, who are the key players and will effectively become the only players in the space.

BIGGEST CHALLENGES FOR B2B MARKETERS IN 2017?

Running campaigns directly targeted to buyers was the biggest challenge for B2B marketers in 2017. Customers in B2B, just like B2C, want to buy online, find helpful information online, and have customer experiences online. So, if I'm a VP at a company, I don't want to go through a sales representative for information, I want to explore online. Just as in the B2C world, it will become increasingly vital for B2B companies to advertise directly to their customers.

This is why we partnered with LiveRamp this year to develop Radius Advertiser, which gives B2B marketers access to precision and reach that had previously only been available in the B2C arena.

At Radius, we focus on solving the data quality crisis for B2B marketers, enabling them to fill in the gaps and fix critical problems with CRM and marketing data. This focus has allowed many enterprises to run more intelligent campaigns across a myriad of channels, reaching their key customers where they are. We're going to see more B2B marketers leverage data and intelligence in 2018 to create unique buying experiences for top prospects.

BIGGEST TRENDS IN MARKETING AUTOMATION IN 2018?

Commoditizing the space will prove to be the biggest trend in marketing automation. Solutions all seem the same, so, to stand out, more and more features will be commoditized throughout the year.

We're already seeing people looking for better data integrity to get more from their data, but no one is spending time on this. Ultimately, it will be Radius partnering with these companies or providing this service that makes this possible.

The convergence of data and intelligence in 2018 will revolutionize how marketers, especially in the B2B space, execute campaigns to target buyers. We're seeing that big data has evolved into use-case specific applications powered by data and intelligence. Most thought leaders refer to this shift in the market as "Artificial Intelligence," but it's more that we now have the tools and technologies necessary to process large quantities of data and apply intelligence to drive growth for specific functions within an organization.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEMAND GEN AND ENGAGEMENT IN 2018?

Directly targeting their audience to convert them into buyers will be a growing opportunity in the new year. Whether you're selling HR software, security software, or memberships, directly targeting campaigns to those who are interested and organizing experiences for buyers will be a key area with opportunity to grow.

With Radius, marketers can feel confident about purchasing ads on traditionally B2C platforms with the confidence that they are contacting their target key customers with a Facebook ad tailored to them followed by a video ad on a website as they move up the funnel.



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CAN YOU OFFER A PREDICTION ON A MAJOR EVENT THAT WILL TAKE PLACE IN 2018?

There's not going to be a proverbial silver bullet; there will not be a single technology or combination of technologies that will have the biggest impact in 2018. Instead, there will be a shift in mentality to becoming data-first and collaborating with other teams within the business. Marketers and digital product leaders are building on the tools and skills necessary to capture and act on the promise of big data, and in the year ahead we'll finally see a shift to data-first programs. The product leaders and marketers who win next year will be the ones who approach these initiatives with a holistic, outcome-driven view across the business.

BIGGEST TRENDS IN MARKETING AUTOMATION IN 2018?

Gartner predicts the rise of mixed reality over the next five years, where users interact with real-world and digital products in tandem to create an immersive experience. I see this as an evolution of the concept of omnichannel commerce, which first came about in 2003, when consumers had two distinct options: to buy in-store or online.

Today, the customer experience exceeds far beyond those two channels. Touchpoints that didn't exist even a couple of years ago — mobile everywhere, Alexa/Google Voice, virtual reality, connected cars, OTT programming — are adding to this complexity. Marketers and developers must work together to create personalized, connected experiences. The UX of digital touchpoints and the associated product "features" can no longer be considered separate, both within and across channels, as one influences the other for every consumer, every day.

In 2018, organizations will successfully scale this kind of constant innovation and continuous development through automated digital experimentation: deploying solutions that allow them to test every touchpoint and feature, and apply outcome data to drive digital product and UX decisions based on statistical rigor.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEMAND GEN AND ENGAGEMENT IN 2018?

Customer experience is at a tipping point, and retailers who provide a seamless customer-centric experience will not only stand out from the rest, but encourage loyalty. Case in point — luxury retailer Barneys found a way to use their customer data online and offline to better personalize the shopping experience. The company launched an iBeacon platform with its mobile app that alerts users when new content is uploaded. When a user is in the store, it helps customers navigate their experience depending on what's in their mobile shopping bag or wishlists, and shares recommendations based off previously viewed content.

Marketers who look at unified data and combine the best of physical and digital will succeed. Rewards will go beyond improving customer experience and building long-term relationships, to significantly impacting the bottom line.



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CAN YOU OFFER A PREDICTION ON A MAJOR EVENT THAT WILL TAKE PLACE IN 2018?

[We will] start to see marketing technology consolidation, and an increased need to find marketers that are able to understand data/models.

CAN YOU PROVIDE A FUN FACT ABOUT YOURSELF PEOPLE MAY BE INTERESTED TO KNOW?

I am an artist. Several of my pieces are displayed at the Dell Round Rock building.

BIGGEST CHALLENGES FOR B2B MARKETERS IN 2017?

One of the biggest challenges we are encountering across B2B marketing is the rapid growth of data (first-, second- and third-party), which is driving increase investment in analytics resources, technology and data management consolidation. Marketing is becoming a key stakeholder in the IT evaluations, and marketers as a result need to learn more about the implications and needs to drive a best-in-class marketing experience with our customers, how to anticipate what will be needed from their IT teams in the short-, medium- and long-term, and how to build their data infrastructure for the future vs solving for today.

It is going to be critical to understand all the data sources, how the marketing platforms talk to each other, and how to align engagements across offline and online interactions. This also means evolving our marketing team skills to understand and work through this new world of infinite data, and build the capabilities to prepare for a future that is already here.

BIGGEST TRENDS IN MARKETING AUTOMATION IN 2018?

The biggest trend in marketing automation for 2018 will be an increased shift into omnichannel marketing, evolving the marketing strategy from a primarily digital focus into an integrated customer journey where we build connections across digital, offline (events, door openers, direct mail, etc.) and face-to-face (sales) interactions. If we look at the last five years, marketers have been solving for the digital piece of the puzzle: building social media content; defining their programmatic ad stacks with data management platforms, demand-side platforms and ad servers; developing retargeting programs that allow brands to re-engage customers with additional content; identifying best digital vendors with strong inventories across video/rich media/traditional banners; and consolidating their online activities into one digital media strategy.

But that journey for marketers does not end there. Customers are engaging across platforms beyond digital, most of B2B products with long purchase cycles require more than online touches, and the marketing-sales alignment is fundamental for a seamless customer experience.

Omnichannel marketing enables this shift.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEMAND GEN AND ENGAGEMENT IN 2018?

Demand generation and engagement will continue to align/merge as we transition into an omnichannel marketing approach (offline/online integration). The Pandora boxes where leads are generated without visibility to all the previous engagements will begin to open, providing more end-to-end customer journey visibility and improving the customer experience. It also shifts the players in market. Traditionally, we had to look to well-established demand generation companies to generate leads for B2B, but as we shift the way we partner and build programs, and invest in a better experience for our customers and engagements through time, the window opens, and you can start looking at other vendors, who traditionally have been considered awareness/consideration vendors, as well as demand generation partners.



Act-On Software is a marketing automation company delivering innovation that empowers marketers to do the best work of their careers. Act-On is the only integrated workspace to address the needs of the customer experience, from brand awareness and demand generation, to retention and loyalty. With Act-On, marketers can drive better business outcomes and see higher customer lifetime value. The Act-On platform provides marketers with power they can actually use, without the need for a dedicated IT resource.

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Demand Gen Report is a targeted online publication that uncovers the strategies and solutions that help companies better align their sales and marketing organizations, and ultimately, drive growth. A key component of the publication's editorial coverage focuses on the sales and marketing automation tools that enable companies to better measure and manage their multi-channel demand generation efforts.

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