Marketing Automation User; 2010 marketing review notes and 2011 plans

Each December we ask our marketing customers if they would like to participate in a short, informal yearend review. The scope of the review is 2 fold:

- What key programs would you highlight as successful?
- What key programs are you planning for next year?

Since our focus here at Meitasoft is marketing automation consultancy and platform sales we tend to guide the discussion into this area. What follows are my notes from those reviews. Hope you enjoy!

Common 2010 Initiatives and Challenges

Listed below (in no particular order) are 2010 initiatives and challenges mentioned most often:

1. Do more with less, small marketing budgets are the new normal. Lead gen, lead gen, lead gen.
2. Improved ROI & Reporting
3. Integration of Social Media, Inbound Marketing and Marketing Automation
4. Creation of buyer-centric content
5. The need for new analytical skills
6. Renewed focus on data quality
7. Sales & marketing alignment

Lead generation was the main focus for the customers we met with. No surprise here. More campaigns with fewer resources. It was a struggle to keep the funnel full. (2) We're at a point where we have lot of data about marketing performance, but it's a big challenge to turn it into actionable information (3) we're actively tweeting, blogging and using LinkedIn, but how can that be effectively managed, and how can it be measured? (4) It's all about the buyer now, so why are we still writing about "my company this, my company that"? (5) Marketing is getting to be more of a science: we need to acquire new skills and more people with an analytical backgrounds and process modeling skills (6) Data quality is somewhat boring, but it is a prerequisite for effective marketing automation and (7) sales and marketing need act as one team to give buyers the best possible buying experience.

Additional Unique Customer Programs

In addition to the common 2010 initiatives and challenges captured above we've shared some unique customer programs below.

Optical instrument Supplier

The vast majority of leads generated on our website never have a meaningful conversation with a sales rep. The rep may try to contact the prospect several times but will give up after a certain point. We felt we needed a mechanism to pass the lead back to the marketing team (in an automated or semi-automated fashion), or the lead is gone forever. We wanted to re-marketing to inactive leads to drive more value from our lead database. We changed our CRM system to kick the records back into our marketing platform's lead nurturing program and alert the assigned sales rep if the leads become active. Dropping inactive leads into a special automated nurturing program has worked out well for us. We plan to do the same for our inactive customers and also automated our new warranty extension program.

Accounting Software Supplier

We' spent a lot of money and time this year trying to make a big splash into social networks like Facebook, Twitter and Linkedin. We continue to struggle with the new Social Media reality and coming up with smart ways to influence the market's conversation about our brand.

We've focused on cleaning our own DB and quadrupled our opt-in touch points this year and focused on membership management and real, editorialized, well written monthly newsletters.

Medical Device Company

We've been trying to go it alone but in 2010 we decided to focus more on our strengths; strategy and content and so we outsourced online campaign execution to a marketing consultancy. We also realize that we can't do everything and that finding a good online technical marketing operations person is hard to find. The results have been good we're running more higher quality campaigns.

Data Storage Company

Our goal this year (and the prior year) was to create business processes to measure and manage the marketing funnel. Our CMO said enough to one off campaigns with often conflicting messages, she said we need to use or marketing platform to engage the entire funnel in an automated fashion. In our industry only 2-5% of companies are utilizing marketing automation/lead management automation. We launched (and continue to tune) our lead management program in September. We continue to build out our touch points to capture more prospect and customer data to drive more relevant and personalized messaging. This coming year we'll tie web analytics with our email and direct mail campaigns to get a

better understanding of where each of our prospects and leads are in the buying process. But the automated lead management system was a big win in 2010. Having 'conversations' with these prospects as they become more sales-ready keeps our company top of mind when they are ready to buy.

Software Vendor

Our major project this year was tightly integrating our Marketing automation with our CRM system in order to close the gap between marketing and sales. Our CMO and Sale VP wanted to remove the virtual 'wall' in which marketing throws their leads over to salespeople allowing for a collaborative effort of defining and refining qualified leads. We've still got a way to go to put better reporting and analytics in place but we are now re-nurturing cold leads that come back from Sales. These were just falling through the cracks in the old system.

Biotechnology Company

Our goal in 2010 was to escape from being reactionary to being more proactive. It is a huge shift for us, but a very important one to use our marketing automation technology correctly. We wanted to be better able to compete on a campaign-by-campaign level, better satisfy sales team needs and ultimately being able to drive more pipeline opportunities. A funny thing happens when you start planning out communication—it actually happens, it addresses buying cycle gaps and it becomes more effective because it's cohesive. One of the biggest benefits out of this process this year was to put sales and marketing on the same page. For example we agreed on what a lead really is and then use it in our system to qualify, nurture and pass along those leads. Sounds basic but it took us years to get to this point.

Non-Profit Company

As a non-profit company accountability, measurement and marketing ROI is very important to us. We invested in developing some closed-loop reports and KPI dashboards this year. This coming year these tools will play an increasingly important role in helping me meet our CEO's and board expectations as well as get insight into how best to allocate our budget. We now know which tactics are generating the strongest results to be able to adapt and focus.

Automotive Parts Supplier

In the past we have run very basic campaigns to match basic sales processes. Our lead generation and nurturing programs focused only on email and web channels. This year we focused on managing all our customer data consistently, consolidated into one database in order to nurture the right kind of leads in a consistent and coordinated way across communications channels. With this behind now us out next step is to improve our customer intelligence data. By tightly integrating our campaigns with our

improved marketing database we now have more confidence about the relevancy and quality our marketing programs and their effectiveness.

Lab Equipment Manufacturer

This year we focused on streamlining our distributed marketing departments activities for both to productivity and brand consistency. We have a complex distributed marketing organization spanning the US and Europe including multiple languages. We defined a set of key marketing processes and developed a central library of common campaign types to allow our remote teams to be more collaborative and productive. We had people in every location developing the same campaign types from scratch, over and over. We identified leaders and challenged them to identify common repeatable processes and campaign types and publish them to our library with documentation. No productivity improvement results yet but the time savings should be huge allowing us to run even more campaigns.

Electrical Engineering Company

Our integrated online marketing system developed in 2009 provided better visibility into both buyer behavior and program results. However, most of our reporting focused on telling what happened, and not on telling us the best path forward. We started our analytics project this year and it will continue this coming year. It's for us to be able to define what works, what doesn't and what actions need to be taken as a result. Testing, predicting and adjusting are words my marketing team will appreciate this coming year.

Plans and Wish List for 2011

Below is a list (in no specific order) of some of challenges and wish list items we noted for 2011

2011 will be the year of revenue and small budgets. Need to use multi-touch campaigns and more precise segmentation for both existing customers and new prospects.

1. Need to better understand how to leverage and monetize social media, achieve closed loop reporting, and improving campaign effectiveness.
2. The recession reminded all the companies that we sampled of the value of continuing to market to their installed base, and to their in house lists. Many companies said data hygiene is a major concern. The challenge is to have complete, accurate, current, and deep data on your prospects and customers so you can market to them effectively, and have the processes in place to slow the decay of the database.
3. Need to focus on the design for the delivery of appropriate messages, emails, website personalization – to drive a "right-time" interaction with sales.

4. Need to measure further down the funnel. Conversion metrics all the way through to revenue will become the standard way to measure marketing.
5. Re-cast our marketing strategies and tactics to a buyer-centric context. We can use our automation platform more than we are as a central "engine" for responding to and delivering buyer-centric one-to-one marketing engagements that more adaptive to the user's behavior with personalized, appropriate life stage messaging.
6. Better align sales and marketing to empower sales to close faster.
7. Document the value of marketing for the executive leadership team.
8. Measure lead source efficiency and reallocate the limited lead gen budget dollars to the most efficient sources.

Let's hear from you

We enjoy sharing this information with you and hope you found some interesting nuggets from your marketing counterparts at other companies. Meitasoft is in the marketing automation consulting and platform sales business so the questions we asked and the responses we received focus on marketing automation, yet what was remarkable about this year's review was how similar each company's needs and plans were. We'd enjoy hearing from you if you'd like to share your thoughts. Drop us an email at fcusick@meitasoft.com