



Aberdeen *Group*

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Automating Leads to Sales

Prioritize Leads Stop Tracking Dead Leads

March 2007

Executive Summary

Marketing departments are constantly squeezed to drive a higher quantity and quality of leads with finite resources. Aberdeen research identified that over **two-thirds of companies currently using an automated lead management solution have seen a 10%+ improvement** in lead to sales conversion rates. Fifty three (53%) percent of companies are currently using marketing automation solutions for lead management and this number is expected to jump to 83% in the next 24 months. Thirty-six (36%) percent of organizations surveyed are currently evaluating solutions to aid them in turning leads to sales.

Key Business Value Findings

- Fifty Five (55) percent of respondents will use a lead management solution to track leads through the system, assign responsibility and identify next steps.
- Forty-four (44) percent of companies using a lead management solution are increasing their marketing automation budget over 10% for the following year.
- Fifty-nine (59) percent of respondents indicated that developing a well defined lead lifecycle is their number one priority allowing them to quantify success of their lead generation campaigns.

Implications & Analysis

- Fifty-five (55) percent of laggards do not have a process in place for tracking the performance of their automated lead management solution
- Seventy (70) percent of average companies are focused on improving the leads-to-sales conversion rate
- Ninety-five (95) percent of Best-in-Class companies integrate their e-mail marketing campaigns into their marketing automation solution for lead management

"The average cost per qualified lead has come down as a result of our marketing automation solution"

Clark Hausmann
VP Marketing
Astadia Consulting, LLC

Recommendations for Action

In order for companies to derive the maximum benefit from automated lead management solutions – or to adopt them in order to remain competitive in the market – the data reveals a few key steps to take going forward:

- Define and track key performance metrics such as lead-to-sales conversion rate, cost-per-lead and lead-to-sales revenue to determine ROI on campaigns
- Practice lead scoring and lead prioritization in order to drive high quality leads through the pipeline to the sales organization
- Ensure bi-directional integration between the marketing automation and CRM systems to ensure uniform data availability across the organization

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Chapter One: Issue at Hand

Key Takeaways

- 53% of companies are currently using marketing automation solutions for lead management; this number is expected to jump to 83% in the next 24 months.
- To deploy a lead management solution, 54% of survey respondents indicated the need to demonstrate a return on marketing investment (ROMI) to justify implementation.
- 62% of best-in-class companies are focused on lead scoring and lead prioritization as strategic actions to focus sales efforts and reduce the sales cycle.

Aberdeen research shows that 53% of companies surveyed currently utilize Marketing Automation Solutions for lead management. This number is expected to increase to 83% within the next 24 months. Increasingly, sales and marketing professionals are held accountable for every dollar and hour invested in growing revenues and satisfying customers. Leveraging rules-based workflows to automate interactions with prospects based on propensity to purchase is often the difference between success and failure in converting leads to sales.

Marketing automation solutions for lead management provide marketers with the means to quantify a return-on-investment of marketing campaigns. Sixty-eight percent of survey respondents implemented a lead management solution to improve the lead-to-sales conversion rate, followed by 54% of survey respondents who indicated that they needed to demonstrate an improvement in return-on-marketing-investment (ROMI). Marketing automation solutions help alleviate this pressure by providing key data points to enable the ROI analysis of various marketing campaigns.

Thirty-three percent of end users surveyed indicated that, in addition to lead management, they plan to use marketing automation solutions to provide workflow automation. This demonstrates that marketers are still carrying out several tasks manually, without much visibility into the real results on those campaigns. Fifty-four percent of survey respondents indicated that currently they only measure lead management solutions on an ad-hoc basis, at best. One of the major issues marketers face is, while under the constant pressure to demonstrate the return on investment for each campaign and justify the cost of implementing new campaigns, they do not have any real tools to provide them with the analytics needed to track and measure the performance and effectiveness of each campaign.

Competitive Framework Key

The Aberdeen Competitive Framework defines enterprises as falling into one of the three following levels of practices and performance:

Best-in-Class (20%) —practices that are the best currently being employed and significantly superior to the industry norm

Industry norm (50%) —practices that represent the average or norm

Laggards (30%) —practices that are significantly behind the average of the industry



Performance Excellence Defines Best-in-Class

Aberdeen questioned companies about their performance measurement in three critical areas of their businesses to determine which metrics capture lead to sales conversion excellence. Each of these categories includes Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) specific to automated lead management that differentiates successful online companies from those that are lagging the industry. Aberdeen identified these metrics as follows:

- Lead-to-Sales Conversion Rate
- Lead-to-Sales Revenue
- Cost per Lead

“Some of our key performance metrics include lead-to-sales conversion rate; cost-per-conversion and campaign ROI”

Laura Cross,
Marketing Program Manager, Kofax

Companies that exhibit Best-in-Class characteristics are outperforming their peers in these categories. Year over year improvement across the KPI's listed above demonstrate the variances between Best-in-Class, Industry Average and Laggards.

Table 1: Best-in-Class PACE Hypothesis

Pressures	Actions	Capabilities	Enablers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to improve the lead to sales conversion rate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead Scoring and Lead Prioritization • Well defined Sales Stages and actions at each stage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metrics to measure the lead to sales lifecycle • Targeted Marketing and stronger content • Purposeful data analysis and closed loop marketing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing Automation systems • CRM technology • Web-enabled activity tracking • Campaign Management

Source: AberdeenGroup, March 2007

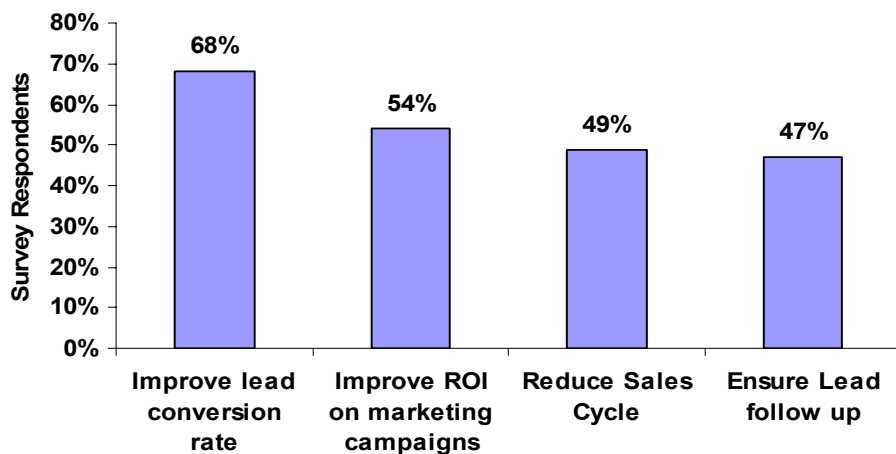
External Pressures

Eighty-one percent of Best-in-Class companies cite reducing the sales cycle as their top pressure for implementing an automated lead management solution (see figure 1). Automated lead management solution improves leads-to-sales conversion rates (the #1 goal of all respondents), impacting the sales cycle, which in turn helps improve the ROI on marketing investments. By ensuring that quality leads flow through the pipeline to the sales teams (i.e. leads that have the highest propensity to purchase) companies are reducing the sales cycles and overhead costs.

“We implemented a marketing automation solution so that we could nurture our leads more effectively, thereby accelerating the sales cycle”

Stephanie Worthington
Dir. of Marketing, Guidewire Software

Figure 1: Top Pressures to Implement a Lead Management Solution



Source: AberdeenGroup, March 2007

Strategy in Action

The dominant strategy taken by 56% of survey respondents is to clearly define the sales stages and the actions required at each stage. However, Best-in-Class companies are more focused on lead scoring and lead prioritization as indicated by 62% of leading companies that state this as one of their top three strategies.

Some of the other key strategic initiatives that end users are planning to implement as part of their lead management solution are (figure 2):

- Lead tracking and monitoring – determine which leads have been contacted, and the next steps.
- Lead Scoring / Lead prioritization – derive the highest ROI per lead and focus sales efforts.
- Managing Lead Touches – constantly check lead temperature to avoid lead fatigue and over marketing.

PACE Key — For a more detailed description see Appendix A

Aberdeen applies a methodology to benchmark research that evaluates the business pressures, actions, capabilities, and enablers (PACE) that indicate corporate behavior in specific business processes. These terms are defined as follows:

Pressures — external forces that impact an organization's market position, competitiveness, or business operations

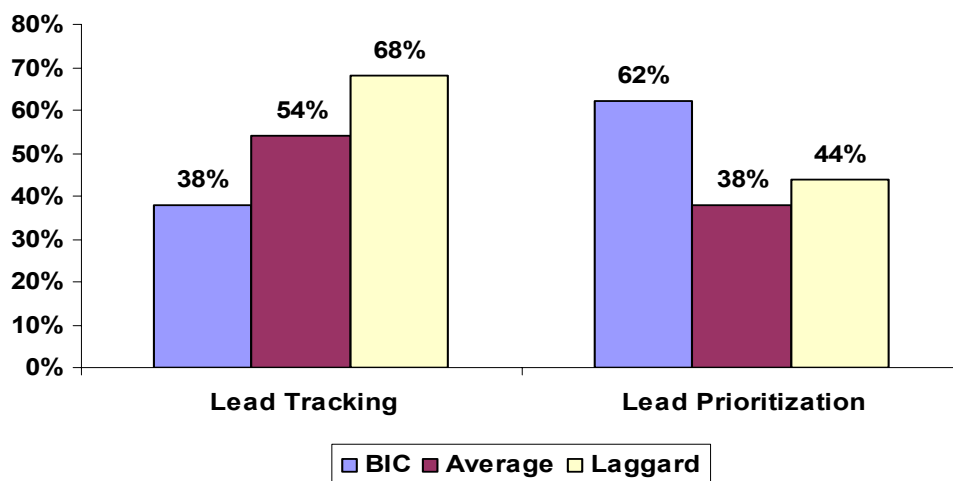
Actions — the strategic approaches that an organization takes in response to industry pressures

Capabilities — the business process competencies required to execute corporate strategy

Enablers — the key functionality of technology solutions required to support the organization's enabling business practices



Figure 2: Strategic Actions to Implement a Lead Management Solution



Source: AberdeenGroup, March 2007

Table 2: Companies With Top Performance Earn “Best-in-Class” Status:

Definition of Maturity Class	Mean Class Performance
<p>Best in Class: Top 20% of aggregate performance scorers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure lead-to-sales conversion real time or daily basis • 48% report improvement in lead to sales conversion rate • 62% report increasing budget for marketing automation • 95% integrate e-mail marketing campaigns with solution
<p>Industry Average: Middle 50% of aggregate performance scorers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure lead-to-sales conversion monthly or quarterly • 16% report improvement in lead to sales conversion rate • 51% report increasing budget for marketing automation • 80% integrate e-mail marketing campaigns with solution
<p>Laggard: Bottom 30% of aggregate performance scorers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure lead-to-sales conversion annually or not at all • None report improvement in lead to sales conversion rate • 38% report increasing budget for marketing automation • 43% integrate e-mail marketing campaigns with solution

Source: AberdeenGroup, March 2007



Chapter Two: Competitive Maturity Assessment

Key Takeaways

- 48% of Best-in-Class companies that measure performance metrics on a real time or weekly basis have seen more than 25% improvement in lead-to-sales conversion rates
- 62% of Best-in-Class companies are growing their budget for marketing automation solutions year-over-year
- 55% of laggards have no automation in place to track and measure lead management performance

There is a direct relationship between the measurement of a lead management program and the success of such programs. Forty-eight percent of Best-in-Class companies that measure their lead conversion rate in real time or on a weekly basis, have experienced a 25% or more improvement in the lead-to-sales conversion rate over last year. Conversion rates were identified as the number one Key Performance Indicator (KPI) across all survey respondents illustrating that process management capabilities affect performance. In comparison, only 28% of average companies measure lead conversion performance either on a monthly or on a quarterly basis. Only 16% of industry average companies have seen a greater than 25% annual improvement in this KPI. The weakest performance is reported by 43% of laggards, who never measure lead conversion performance; none of these companies recorded conversion rate improvements. To improve lead to sales conversions, companies must implement measurement tools and follow management processes (figure 3).

“Our marketing automation solution provides us with visibility into metrics we could not see earlier”

Clark Hausmann
VP Marketing, Astadia

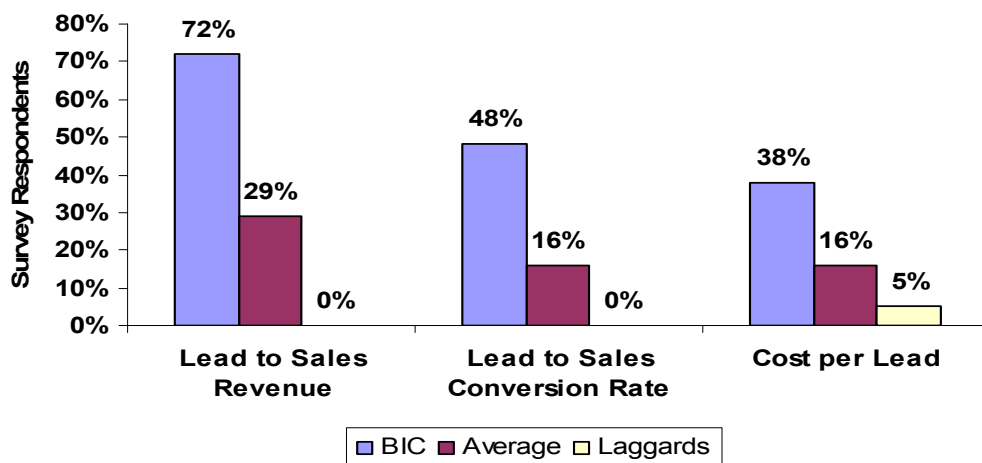
Seventy-two percent of Best-in-Class companies reported greater than 25% improvement in lead-to-sales-revenue year over year. This is significantly greater than the 29% of average companies who saw a similar improvement in lead-to-sales-revenue. None of the laggards saw an improvement in leads-to-sales-revenue. Ninety-five percent of best-in-class integrate their e-mail marketing campaigns into the marketing automation solution, versus only 43% of laggards who do the same. Laggards on the other hand use marketing automation solutions as marketing collateral repositories. Best-in-class companies enjoy superior performance in converting leads to revenue, as they are taking full advantage of the functionality associated with marketing automation solutions.

Cost-per-lead is the third most important KPI, with 51% of survey respondents identifying this as a key metric. This metric matters more to laggard companies with 57% identifying it as a key metric versus only 48% of Best-in-Class companies who focus on cost per lead. The fundamental difference is that cost-per-lead is a metric that can't be affected by process. It is a planning metric that should be considered up-front prior to launching a campaign, yet lead-to-sales revenue and conversion rates are items that can



be influenced by lead management tools. Leading companies succeed in both planning as demonstrated by 33% of Best-in-Class companies that recognized up to 10% decline in the actual cost per lead, whereas 22% of average companies saw an increase in cost-per-lead. Over 90 % of laggard companies do not know how their cost-per-lead has changed year-over-year. These metrics show that planning up front is not enough to ensure the success of marketing campaigns and that a closed loop process of planning, measurement and management will lead to profitable results (figure 3).

Figure 3: Respondents Reporting Improvement in Key Performance Metrics



What makes Best-in-Class Stand Out

Source: AberdeenGroup, March 2007

The maturity of marketing automation solutions has a significant impact on the gap between Best-in-Class, average and laggards. Thirty-three percent of Best-in-Class companies have used marketing automation solutions for lead management for the past 3 – 4 years, whereas 34% of average companies have been using similar solutions for 1 – 2 years. Comparatively, 50% of laggards have used lead management solutions for less than 1 year. Not only have Best-in-Class companies implemented marketing automation solutions for lead management for a longer period of time, but also continue to invest more than their counterparts going forward. Sixty-two percent indicated that the budget for marketing automation solutions will continue to grow into next year. In contrast 58% of the laggard companies are not investing more money into marketing automation solutions. Automated lead management solutions have demonstrated their continual positive impact on key performance indicators. If laggards do not continue to invest and measure in these solutions, they risk falling further behind on the curve.

A key differentiator between Best-in-Class, average and laggards are the key strategic actions these companies take for success. Seventy-four percent of laggards are focused on lead tracking and monitoring the actions taken on each lead, versus just 38% of Best-in-Class who indicate this is a success strategy. On the other hand 62% of Best-in-Class are focused on lead scoring and lead prioritization to drive quality leads through the pipeline, versus only 34% of average companies who deem this a key strategic action.

Alignment between marketing and sales continues to be a major pain point amongst laggard companies with 62% indicating that they still struggle with this issue. Average and Best-in-Class companies (56% and 48% respectively), also struggle with alignment, indicating that collaboration remains a key challenge for all. In order to deal with this challenge,

58% of overall survey respondents indicated that they plan to clearly define sales stages and actions associated with each stage. This will help reduce some of the friction between marketing and sales, as well as streamline lead operations.

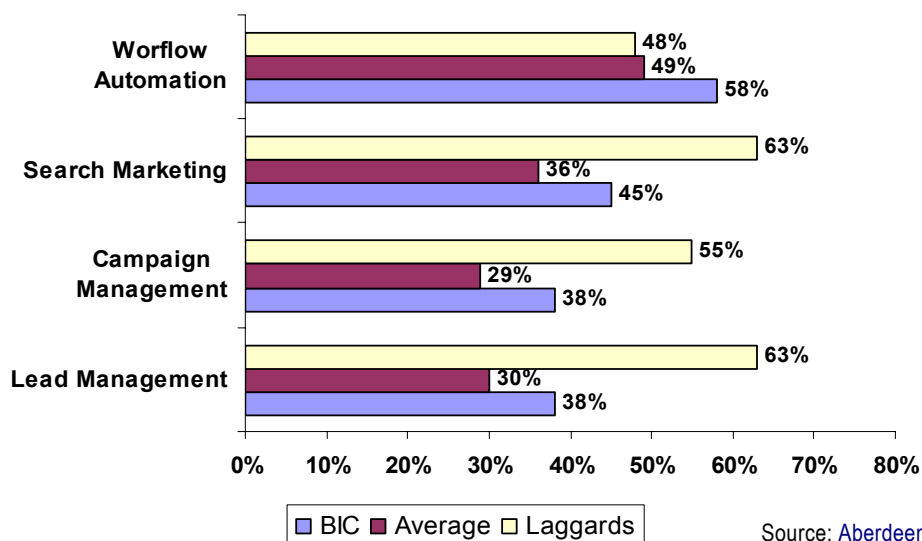
“Lead scoring helps marketing focus the sales organization on those leads with the highest propensity to purchase”

*Stephanie Worthington
Dir. of Marketing, Guidewire Software*

Over one-third of laggards are investigating whether to develop an in-house solution or purchase a third party solution. This is an area where laggards must make a quick decision and move forward with one choice.

Using marketing automation solutions to their full potential is also a key differentiator between competitive maturities amongst companies. Best-in-Class companies are realizing the value of operational efficiency through automation. Currently 95% of Best-in-Class are using a marketing automation solution to run e-mail marketing campaigns. In comparison, 50% of laggards are using similar solutions as marketing collateral storage systems. This is not the best use of an investment in a marketing automation system. It is imperative for laggard companies who wish to close the performance gap to integrate and track their marketing campaigns through a marketing automation tool. Doing so will allow companies to reduce overhead costs and expand their market reach and provide prospects with more targeted sales campaigns, to increase their purchasing probability.

Figure 4: Planned Uses for Marketing Automation Solutions



Source: AberdeenGroup, March 2007



Competitive Framework

As shown in Table 1, survey respondents fell into one of three categories – Laggard, Industry Average, or Best-in-Class — based on their characteristics in four key categories: (1) process (level of automation, depth of tracking metrics); (2) organization (key pressures and resulting strategic actions); (3) knowledge (metrics used to track lead-to-sales conversion rates); and (4) technology (scope of automation, reporting capabilities).

In each of these categories, survey results show that the firms exhibiting Best-in-Class characteristics also enjoy above average financial performance (Table 1).

Table 3: Automated Lead Management Competitive Framework

	Laggards	Industry Average	Best in Class
Process	55% do not have a process in place for tracking or automation	50% have an ad-hoc approach with limited automation	52% have a systematic approach with automated workflow
Organization	71% are focused on improving ROI on marketing campaigns	70% are focused on improving the lead-to-sales conversion rate	81% of best-in-class are focused on reducing the sales cycle
Knowledge	95% do not use metrics to track lead-to-sales conversion performance	94% use metrics to measure lead-to-sales conversion metrics on an ad-hoc basis	100% use metrics to measure lead-to-sales conversion rate performance in a systematic way
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 43% use e-mail marketing • 50% use marketing collateral repository • 26% use contact management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80% use e-mail marketing • 71% use marketing collateral repository • 78% use contact management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 95% use e-mail marketing • 90% use marketing collateral repository • 85% use contact management

Source: AberdeenGroup, March 2007



Chapter Three: Recommendations for Action

Key Takeaways

- 95% of laggards do not measure their lead-to-sales conversion rate. They must implement metrics to measure performance and drive accurate reporting and analysis
- One-third of average companies focus on lead scoring and lead prioritization. This group must focus on driving quality leads into the pipeline
- Best-in-Class companies must integrate their marketing automation and CRM systems to drive organizational consistency and efficiency throughout both systems

Automated lead-to-sales conversion is generally about three things: driving quality leads, improving return on marketing investment and reducing the sales cycle. Marketing automation applications can aid retailers in each of these endeavors, Aberdeen research shows that the greatest impact of lead management tools is realized in lead-to-sales conversion rate. This, in turn, benefits marketing's goals of growing revenue and streamlining marketing operations. The following recommendations apply to companies looking to improve their lead-to-sales conversion rates and progress from Laggard to Industry Average, or from Average to Best-in-Class or if already there, to maintain a competitive advantage.

Laggard Steps to Success

1. *Implement measurement systems to track metrics on a consistent basis, drive accurate reporting and analysis to improve the leads-to-sales conversion rate*

Measurement is the first step to improvement. It is essential for laggards, of which 95% do not know how their lead-to-sales conversion rate changed year-over-year, to put metrics in place and measure at least on a monthly basis to move close the gap between themselves and the best-in-class companies.

2. *Use marketing automation solutions to their full potential and not just as a marketing collateral database. Integrate reporting and analysis to campaigns.*

It is imperative that laggards derive a higher return on investment in their marketing automation solution and integrate their marketing campaigns into these systems. Merely using these systems as marketing collateral repositories or document management systems will not benefit the company and not utilize the full capabilities of a marketing automation solution.

3. *Speed up analysis time on determining whether to go with an in-house solution or third party solution when implementing a marketing automation solution*

Thirty-three (33) percent of laggard companies are struggling with a build Vs buy decision. BIC companies have overwhelmingly chosen to buy their Marketing Automation solutions. In order to catch up, Laggards should pick a solution and go with it.



Industry Norm Steps to Success

1. *Bring about alignment between marketing and sales with clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and actions to be taken at each stage of the lead lifecycle*

Eliminating this source of friction between marketing and sales departments will allow average companies to focus on more critical issues. Having clearly defined roles, responsibilities and actions at each stage will reduce redundancy, streamline the lead lifecycle and improve the lead-to-sales conversion rate.

2. *Continue to invest in marketing automation solutions and drive the usage of these solutions throughout the marketing organization*

As best-in-class companies continue to grow and invest in their marketing automation solutions average companies should not get left behind. In addition to improving automation within their existing systems, they must continue to grow and expand systems throughout their marketing organizations.

3. *Focus on driving quality leads instead of worrying about monitoring / tracking leads through the lead lifecycle*

Average companies are more focused on driving large quantities of leads and then constantly tracking each lead through the pipeline. This is not the most efficient use of marketing automation systems. The focus should be on driving the highest quality leads and ensuring these leads receive effective target marketing.

Best in Class Next Steps

1. *Continue to track basic metrics such as lead leakage rate and ROI on marketing campaigns to continue to ensure a solid footing in marketing automation*

As companies in this category forge ahead with the automation of various marketing process and campaigns, it is imperative that they continue to measure some of the basic metrics and ensure that they are consistently driving a high ROI from their marketing campaigns.

2. *Bring about clean integration with CRM systems to drive maximum efficiency and continue to reduce the sales cycle*

Marketing automation solutions are used to filter quality, ready for action leads into the CRM system and nurture those leads that are still not ready. In order for best-in-class companies to attain maximum efficiency from their lead management solution they must continue to drive bi-directional integration between their marketing automation solution and CRM system, to have consistent data on each lead across the organization.

3. *Drive measurement to a near real-time level with ability to track at a granular level and provide detailed reporting and analytics*

In order to maintain a competitive advantage over others, all best-in-class companies should be able to track return-per-lead and ROI per marketing campaign on a real-time basis. Currently less than one-third of these companies have the capability to measure at this frequency and granularity.



Conclusion

Marketing automation solutions have a positive impact on the lead-to-sales conversion rate. The ability to measure and track lead behavior allows companies to deliver targeted sales and marketing at the level of an individual lead. Furthermore, the ability to classify leads based on their level of interest and propensity to purchase, enable marketers to drive high quality leads through the pipeline. Integrating marketing campaigns into the marketing automation system gives marketing departments a quantifiable representation of the return-on-investment of specific marketing campaigns. Marketing departments that are looking to improve productivity, expand reach and measure ROI on marketing activities, should implement a marketing automation solution.

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Appendix A: Research Methodology

Between February and March 2007, Aberdeen Group examined the marketing automation and lead generation efforts of 210 firms.

Responding executives completed an online survey that included questions designed to determine the following:

- Revenue related performance factors pre/post implementation of automated marketing programs.
- Effect of automated marketing on sales cycle, work-flow, lead tracking.
- Leading practices for automated marketing implementation.

The study sought to identify best practices for automated marketing strategies and provide a framework by which readers could benchmark their own marketing plans.

Responding enterprises included the following:

- **Job title/function:** The research sample included respondents with the following job titles: Business Process Management (6%), Finance (2%), IT (7%), Logistics/ Supply Chain (2%), Marketing (42%) and Sales (24%).
- **Industry:** The research sample included respondents predominantly from the high technology industries (44%). An additional 17% came from Finance related industries, Computer Equipment and Peripherals (9%), Telecommunications Services (11%). Other sectors included Aerospace, Automotive, Consumer Packaged Goods, Consumer Electronics, Education, Industrial Equipment Manufacturing, Insurance/ Real Estate/ Legal Services, Public Sector, Publishing/ Media, Telecommunications Equipment and Transportation/ Logistics.
- **Geography:** Sixty percent of all study respondents were from North America, 19% from Europe and 14% from Asia/ Pacific.
- **Company size:** Fifteen percent of respondents were from large enterprises (annual revenues above US\$1 billion); 24% were from midsize enterprises (annual revenues between \$50 million and \$1 billion); and 62% of respondents were from small businesses (annual revenues of \$50 million or less).

Solution providers recognized as sponsors of this report were solicited after the fact and had no substantive influence on the direction of the report.

Table 4: PACE Framework

PACE Key
<p>Aberdeen applies a methodology to benchmark research that evaluates the business pressures, actions, capabilities, and enablers (PACE) that indicate corporate behavior in specific business processes. These terms are defined as follows:</p> <p><i>Pressures</i> — external forces that impact an organization’s market position, competitiveness, or business operations (e.g., economic, political and regulatory, technology, changing customer preferences, competitive)</p> <p><i>Actions</i> — the strategic approaches that an organization takes in response to industry pressures (e.g., align the corporate business model to leverage industry opportunities, such as product/service strategy, target markets, financial strategy, go-to-market, and sales strategy)</p> <p><i>Capabilities</i> — the business process competencies required to execute corporate strategy (e.g., skilled people, brand, market positioning, viable products/services, ecosystem partners, financing)</p> <p><i>Enablers</i> — the key functionality of technology solutions required to support the organization’s enabling business practices (e.g., development platform, applications, network connectivity, user interface, training and support, partner interfaces, data cleansing, and management)</p>

Source: Aberdeen Group, March 2007



Table 5: Relationship between PACE and Competitive Framework

PACE and Competitive Framework How They Interact

Aberdeen research indicates that companies that identify the most impactful pressures and take the most transformational and effective actions are most likely to achieve superior performance. The level of competitive performance that a company achieves is strongly determined by the PACE choices that they make and how well they execute.

Source: Aberdeen Group, March 2007

Table 6: Competitive Framework

Competitive Framework Key

The Aberdeen Competitive Framework defines enterprises as falling into one of the three following levels of marketing automation practices and performance:

Laggards (30%) — Marketing Automation practices that are significantly behind the average of the industry, and result in below average performance

Industry norm (50%) — Marketing Automation practices that represent the average or norm, and result in average industry performance.

Best in class (20%) — Marketing Automation practices that are the best currently being employed and significantly superior to the industry norm, and result in the top industry performance.

Source: Aberdeen Group, March 2007

Appendix B: **Related Aberdeen Research & Tools**

Related Aberdeen research that forms a companion or reference to this report includes:

- [Automating Leads to Sales: Improve Return on Marketing Investment](#) Research Brief (February 2007)
- [The Precision Marketing Benchmark Report: How Top Performers Turbo-charge Investments](#). Benchmark Report (September 2006)
- [SAS Acquires Veridigm: Adds Marketing Performance Management Tools to CI Suite](#) Market Alert, (March 2006)
- [The CMO's Strategic Agenda: Building the "Marketing-Ready" Enterprise](#). Benchmark Report (January 2006)

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