



Why Marketing Automation Is Not a Silver Bullet

The Rise of the Digital Sales Professional

About the Author

David English is the President of TSL Marketing and oversees all aspects of TSL's operations in North America. David co-founded TSL in 1999. He has 20 years of marketing and channel marketing expertise. Currently, he leads marketing and lead generation workshops that train channel marketing partners on how to best combine the powers of inbound and outbound marketing.



The Digital Marketing Triumph?

The age of marketing automation is here, and digital marketing stands tall, gloves raised. Triumphant. Digital marketing can automate communication, attract eyeballs, and enrich customer engagement. No wonder digital marketing stands tall. It can help buyers on their journey from interest to close. Digital marketing automation can fight without tiring. You can turn it on and let it run, cycling prospects through the sales journey.

But what happens when this magical digital journey from interest through close doesn't happen?

When the top of the funnel stops filling and your customers stall out in the middle of the buyer's journey, who do you call on? Organizations are starting to discover that using digital marketing to fuel and filter their sales funnel is an imperfect science. They are quickly realizing that digital marketing alone isn't a sliver bullet for their sales and marketing needs. They are starting to reevaluate the need for human connection in the sales process.



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Don't Call It a Comeback

The salesperson is the unsung hero of the digital marketing age. Perhaps placed in the backseat while many companies warmed up their marketing automation machines, the salesperson is making the comeback that never happened. It never happened because the salesperson has never left.

Human engagement has been at the heart of our marketing efforts since we were founded as Technology Sales Leads in 1999. Whenever marketers make declarations about the comeback of human interaction in the sales process, one can't help but think of LL Cool J. "LL Cool J and the sales process?" you ask. "Don't call it a comeback, we've been here for years," we say.

Human follow-up on digital interactions is a key part of a successful integrated marketing plan. Marisa Kopec, VP and Group Director of Go-to-Market at SiriusDecisions, wrote, "The new way to think

about b-to-b buying is that human interactions still occur and matter, and the rise of digital marketing does not mean that personal interactions have gone away. Even though providers are interacting in digital ways, it doesn't mean that sales representatives are no longer required to instigate or facilitate a buying process.¹" Even though Kopec describes "human interactions" as a "new way" to handle marketing, this approach has never really gone away.

For B2B organizations, pipeline conversion is a complex process that is much more than the sum of its parts. Yes, website visits, search traffic, social media, inbound content, and marketing workflows are part of the equation, but what brings these parts together is the live pulse of a real person. Please, don't call it a comeback. Human interaction has always been a part of marketing.

Digital Marketing Needs Humanization

Digital marketing can start to humanize your organization but not in the way humans can. Digital marketing plays a major role in branding your organization to the world. It can help point people to the right path, but it can't interact and act as a consultant, a guide, a live liaison during the buyer's journey.

Digital marketing can start to humanize your organization, but nothing like how humans can but nothing like humans can. As a marketing strategy, digital is an affordable way to give organizations instant access to a worldwide audience. Digital makes it possible to develop and execute a marketing plan quickly, as well as gain measurable, real-time results. There's a void here though. This void is why digital marketing and marketing automation will never be the complete answer to your sales and marketing challenges.

Digital marketing is impersonal. Digital marketing can't interpret, intuit, emote, or empathize. A great piece of digital content can delight, but it can't receive that excitement and respond in-kind. Everyone has experienced a failure of digital marketing without human interaction. You get excited and interact with a brand's content, fill out a form, sign up for a consultation, and then no one follows up with you for weeks—if at all.

Your Neglected Responders and MQLs

B2B CRMs are filled with responders and MQLs who have never talked to a salesperson. Their relationship with the brand is entirely digital. A name is banked in a database. Maybe a few times a year, a salesperson, desperate to hit a quota, churns out 20 or 30 phone calls—not enough to get much of a response—and declares the data worthless.

Organizations have tried to solve this problem through marketing automation and lead scoring. A marketing automation system can score a lead, but lead scoring is imperfect. Companies will hold back on reaching out to an early-stage responder until that lead has scored enough to qualify. This treats the lead slightly better than 1's and 0's, but not like a real person: a real, potential paying customer.

Telemarketing follow-up shows that your business is willing to devote individual attention to the prospect. Rather than letting the response fall into a void, the follow-up call presents an opportunity to build a relationship with the prospect by finding out more about their environment and their needs.

Telemarketing also provides immediate results with the ability to talk with the person and determine they're a lead and where they are in the sales cycle. If they're not an SQL right now, then a good telemarketer can help progress prospects through their sales journey at a faster pace.

The When, What, Why, and How of Follow-Up

According to a study by MIT, the odds of reaching a lead if they are called within 5 minutes are 100 times higher than one called in 30 minutes, and the odds of qualifying a lead are 21 times higher.² Some marketing experts even recommend you set your email up so it triggers a response as soon as someone clicks on your message.³ But while an automated response might be efficient, it doesn't move the interaction forward into a conversation.

The follow-up call is an ideal time to qualify the lead and begin to move towards a close. Dan Tyre, Sales Director at HubSpot, divides the qualifying process into three stages⁴:

- **Awareness and Education:** This stage helps the prospect understand that they have a problem and educates them about the best way to solve it.
- **Consideration and Evaluation:** The prospect has a better understanding of their pain, so you can ask qualifying questions about budget, timeline, the proposal, and execution process.
- **Decision and Purchase:** In this stage, you move the prospect towards a close.

All human-to-human interactions are not created equal. An intern or community college student isn't going to know how to make the most of the conversation.

Follow-up is best left to a seasoned sales professional who knows the message well enough to know what questions to ask. Message knowledge and persistence are certainly important, but professional telemarketers have honed their skills. A seasoned professional can:

- Efficiently navigate phone trees
- More quickly identify the right people to speak with
- Get past gatekeepers
- Properly negotiate the pace and volume of a conversation
- Close with the most appropriate next steps
- Introduce your organization in a positive light
- Know when to help and when to sell

Don't wait for digital marketing to deliver SQLs right into the hands of your closers. Evaluate your processes and determine where you can employ human engagement, even in the early stages of the process. This stage is overlooked because so many sales teams don't want to deal with the filtering of MQLs. Many opportunities are lost here as customers continue down various research paths—many leading right to the conversion paths of your competition.

The Art of Telemarketing

Great telemarketing is an art. It's a kind of art that is much more choose-your-own-adventure than paint-by-numbers. When lead generation and lead progression projects are properly customized, the calling can be targeted to title, industry, or even tailored according to the inbound content that the prospect has interacted with. A great telemarketer has to be ready to pivot and change their approach. One minute they could be talking to an entry-level employee and the next minute they could be talking to the owner.

A call to a CEO is going to be different than a call to a Finance Manager or IT Director. Contact with a prospect comes across as less of a cold call when the caller prepares a message that is geared towards the prospect's industry or position. When done properly, a caller's line of questioning should proceed along a different track based on the contact's needs. Most importantly, the caller has to be able to explain why the prospect should listen to them. Many times these decisions on the direction of the conversation have to be made in seconds.

Don't leave this job up to a part-time marketing person or one of your product experts. Professional telemarketers interact with prospects in a unique way. They have the

patience, time, and incentive to make thousands of phone calls every week. They know how to deal with the repetition and rejection that are a part of telemarketing. This requires the people skills and phone experience that some of your internal staff—especially the more technical ones—might not have.

Digital inbound marketing should include telemarketing. Telemarketing fills the humanization void. People need to be introduced at early stages of the sales cycle to help guide prospects through the sales process. Unlike a website, the telemarketer can uncover challenges and needs that may not immediately come to the prospect's mind. The telemarketer can steer the prospect towards the close at any point in the buyer's journey.

Good telemarketers combine the roles of concierge, customer-service, and sales. They know how and when to take a certain approach over another. Great telemarketers know how to engage, educate, and evaluate. They help turn noes into maybes and maybes into yeses. Your great content marketing campaigns deserve great telemarketing follow-up.

Rightsourcing Your Follow-Up

The first call to a prospect doesn't have to be made by the person who will eventually close the deal. Inside sales teams can qualify leads and defer to a subject matter expert for deeper technical questions or to finalize the sale. Once the person doing the initial business development knows about the prospect's needs, budget, and timeline, they can schedule a follow-up call with another resource who can determine next steps.

This approach prevents your senior sales reps from making thousands of cold calls to tire-kickers and uninterested contacts. Telemarketing campaigns can be set up so that companies choose the conditions under which a lead will be passed over to sales. This qualifying can help save the time of senior resources so they can focus on closing deals rather than uncovering new leads.

When these processes are outsourced, they can be built so that telemarketers with different skills and expertise are engaged at various points in the buyer's journey. A highly motivated, high-dialing, inside sales professional is great for handling top-of-the-funnel responses and cold calls. You will want a more methodical senior resource with lead progression expertise to follow up on prospects in the middle of the funnel. For leads that are further along that your sales team isn't ready to engage with, you should choose an expert who understands your sales goals and knows sales pipeline management.

Human Engagement Is Vital for B2B Sales and Marketing

Great salespeople can accelerate the pace of marketing automation, which helps your organization close leads faster. Human beings are problem solvers and relationship builders. They can overcome objections, build trust, and put a human face on your brand. Humans close deals in B2B, not content and software.

Human engagement during every step of the sales process is essential because B2B Marketing is a complex business. The technology advances of the last decade have changed the way people market to other people, but this hasn't diminished the need for experienced sales professionals. We believe that it's made the sales professional even more important in the B2B world.

Marketing automation tools like HubSpot, Pardot, Marketo, and Silverpop are able to help you move prospects through the sales process. But at the bottom of that funnel, most B2B companies need a salesperson to convert the leads into wins. Don't call this a comeback. The salesperson has always been vital for lead follow-up, lead nurturing, and sales pipeline management. Human engagement is and will always be a vital part of B2B sales and marketing.



TSL Marketing has never lost sight of the role human interaction has in marketing. Discover how we can help your business develop and execute a comprehensive marketing plan that combines the power of inbound marketing with the skills of seasoned outbound sales professionals.

Achieve Remarkable Results



TSL Marketing
plan • develop • manage

Sources

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