

TAP INTO THE POWER OF EMAIL AUTOMATION

> When working with businesses inside and outside of the floral industry, I always start by asking them to identify their biggest marketing challenge. Almost universally, the response is a lack of time and resources. It is understandable. Those of us in the floral industry are often too busy managing supply chain issues, addressing substitutions, and hiring, training (and trying to retain) workers, that we just don't have time to be strategic and intentional about marketing plans.

That's in stark contrast to the efficient operations happening on the back end of many businesses. Think of all the machines running bouquet operations, increasing efficiency at the farm level. Companies have implemented lean techniques in their warehouses and invested hundreds of thousands if not millions of dollars into software that provides load and routing optimization. The opportunity for more automation does not lie in the back-end operational processes but rather on the front end in our sales in marketing processes. You may be asking, "Why should my company tackle marketing automation with everything else we have going on?" The answer is that you can no longer afford to *not* invest in marketing automation. Why?

Nearly 80 percent of marketers acknowledge marketing automation as the No. 1 contributor to their success, according to Lenskold Marketing Group.

Businesses that use marketing automation are 20 percent more productive, according to Nucleus Research.

Businesses that deploy marketing automation were also able to cut down marketing overhead by more than 12 percent, according to Invespro, which specializes in conversion rate optimization.

While these statistics are not floral industry specific, they are very powerful and reinforce that your business cannot afford to ignore the power of marketing automation.

One of the most common marketing automation applications — and the channel in which marketers are seeing the biggest return on investment — is email marketing. Contrary to popular belief, email marketing is not dead, and for every \$1 spent, on average, marketers can expect to earn \$36 in return, according to research done by Litmus, an email marketing company.

Here are the top five "must-have" automated email campaigns:

Welcome Email

A strong, automated welcome email series should not only welcome new subscribers to your list and thank them for joining,

but it should also introduce them to your brand and give them an idea of what they can expect as a subscriber.

Here is an example of what to include in a three-part welcome emails series: In the first email, include a double opt-in to ensure that the subscriber wants to receive emails from you. Follow up in one day with a second email while your brand is still fresh in their mind. Make sure to establish expectations — such as how often you will communicate



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and what perks you offer to subscribers. Don't forget to invite them to follow your social channels.

If they have not made a purchase in 24 hours after receiving the first two emails, you may want to send a third email offering a special incentive.

Cart Abandonment Series

According to research from the Baymard Institute, as many as 81.4 percent of online shopping carts are abandoned. Business Insider estimates online retailers will lose as much as \$4 trillion to cart abandonment. The good news is that savvy marketers can recover more than 60 percent of that lost revenue with an effective cart abandonment series.

To maximize effectiveness, take this automated email campaign further than a single reminder email. Use a sequence of emails that you can set up to try and recover the sale. While best practice suggests sending a cart abandonment email 24 hours after the cart has been abandoned, flower purchases are time sensitive, so it is better to send the first email as soon as 30 minutes after the cart has been abandoned.

In this first email, remind the customer what they left in their cart. After three hours, send another reminder, and this time think about how to overcome objections. For example, say, "We know picking the right arrangement can be tough and a timely delivery can be worrisome. We guarantee on-time delivery, and we are rated 4.5 stars on Google with a high returning customer satisfaction rate."

Consumers have been trained that if they abandon their cart, they might get a discount emailed to them if they wait long enough. Wait to send a promotional offer until the third email. Over time, look at your data to determine if you should adjust the timing or number of emails.

Customer Win-Back

To protect your email reputation, make sure your list isn't full of uninterested subscribers. According to Campaign Monitor, existing customers — even if they've been inactive — are often easier to sell to than new prospects. New prospects have a profitability range between 5 and 20 percent — far lower than existing customers.

Personalization is the key to winning back previous customers. If they have purchased before, offer an item similar to their last purchase. The first email should be a deep discount or promotion. Send this email to those who haven't opened or clicked on your emails in more than 60 days. In subsequent emails ask them to confirm that they still want to receive emails from you.

Customer Reviews

For flower shops selling online, Google ratings matter *a lot*, especially when prospective customers are searching in your area. Generate more reviews by automatically sending an email to encourage a review after an order arrives. Make it personal; remind them what they purchased, and don't be shy about offering them links on flower care.

Birthday Email or Anniversary Email

One of the biggest benefits of marketing automation is being able to add a personal touch to customer communication. Take your relationship with your customers a step further and set up birthday emails that provide a special offer at the beginning of the recipient's birthday month. How do you collect this information? Ask at the point of opt-in (in your sign-up form or landing page) and associate the information right then and there. Or you can ask in an email and have them click a link as part of your new automated welcome email series. Another idea is celebrating the anniversary of when your subscriber signed up for your list. Developing a loyal customer that makes it a year with you is important — celebrate your relationship!

Many email service providers offer automated email campaigns. Explore the out-of-the-box solutions your email service provider has available. Just remember, when developing these campaigns, personalization and authenticity are key. Even though these are pre-made automation campaigns, make sure to keep the campaigns true to your brand, and test the campaigns to determine what works best for your audience. 🌿

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