

TRIP, NOT DRIP:

# 10 WAYS TO NURTURE THE BUYER'S JOURNEY



# Introduction

*A B2B prospect's journey through the sales cycle has always been painfully slow, typically lasting from three months to a year. Now the cycle lasts even longer, with much more time spent upfront for consideration and raising awareness. According to Forrester Research, prospects wait until they are 65 percent to 90 percent of the way through their journey before even approaching a vendor.*

Why the change? B2B buyers are comparison shopping prices and offers in their work functions the same way they do in their personal lives. Instead of waiting for an invitation from marketers, they're beginning the buying journey on their own, gathering information long before they are ready to buy. The B2B buyer is assuming the autonomy the B2C buyer has always exercised.

This profound change in buying behavior is transforming B2B marketing from an outbound to an inbound process. Increasingly, buyers are in charge, not marketers. Prospects don't want to be squeezed to fit a marketer's mold. They have climbed into the driver's seat, and they're taking your competitors for a nice long spin before committing to your business.

So how does a marketer guide this new revved-up, take-charge prospect to the point of purchase? Hop aboard! Marketers need to now [address the entire buyer's journey](#) - from branding, to demand generation, to customer expansion in order to fully address the needs of the modern buyer. Chances are, you'll enjoy this journey as much as your prospect will. And don't worry. No matter how long the trip takes, it'll be worth it:

- Nurtured leads produce, on average, a **20% increase in sales opportunities** versus non-nurtured leads. (*DemandGen Report, 2014*)
- **53% of marketers** say continued communication and nurturing of their existing customers results in moderate to significant revenue impact. (*DemandGen, Customer Marketing: Improving Customer Satisfaction & Revenue Impact, Oct 2014*)

THE BUYER



Use the following **10 tactics** as your own road map to a successful lead nurturing campaign in today's inbound, multichannel, custom-tailored B2B marketing world.

AWARENESS

INTEREST

CONSIDERATION

PURCHASE

RETENTION

# TACTIC 1: Make Everything Personal

Despite the irresistible trend toward inbound leads, email is still a mainstay of digital marketing, and lead nurturing in particular. But the old mass emails – one impersonal sales message, mailed to your entire database – are literally a blast from the past. Using your prospect's name is the smart game in email strategy today. According to the [Aberdeen Group](#), personalized emails improve clickthrough rates by 14 percent, and conversion rates by 10 percent.

Of course, personalization means more than slapping a name on an email salutation. Buyers want relevance. They want communications customized to their preferences, needs, occupation, or location.

You can do this by segmenting your email list according to certain criteria, such as industry, job title, location, size of business, and source of lead.

Here's where you need marketing automation's capability to segment lists and personalize messages. If your data and marketing automation platform can't make that easy, it might be time to evaluate if you're using the right tools.

In the same way that personally targeted emails raise response rates, "relevant website content means more website traffic, longer website sessions, and more frequent website visits," reports Gleanster Research.

Use buyer information from landing pages — such as name, email address, occupation, size of business and so forth — to create the most meaningful, relevant web experience.

## Twice as Nice

The Expert Institute's email campaign featured double personalization: messages were addressed to an individual and signed by the CEO. Resulting increases were double and even triple-digit.

200%



Conversion Rate

60%



Open Rate

20%



Clickthrough Rate

(Marketing Sherpa, 2014)

# TACTIC 2: Build Custom Buyer Personas

## What if you don't have that information for personalization?

How can you customize your emails and websites if the buyers you want to target remain largely anonymous?

One solution is to take a DIY approach to [building your own buyer personas](#). A buyer persona is an example of the real person who buys, or might buy, products like the ones you market. Using information from focus groups and interviews with current customers, one company created personas to match key buying segments. They learned about preferences, needs, behaviors, and job demands of each group, and then they transformed relevant website pages accordingly.

For instance, because salespeople professed a short attention span, the company created quick, actionable chunks of content for sales pages. Data managers wanted more technical information, and so on. Across the board, the company shifted its focus from "we," the company, to "you," the customer.

As you can see, the results were spectacular.

## What's a Persona?

A persona is a character who models the common attributes of your best customers, such as industry, responsibility, and problems to be solved. These personas represent segmented groups who are large enough to be worth marketing to and distinct enough from each other so that campaigns to each can be quite different. "Mary the Marketer," "Sally the HR Executive," and "Bob the Builder" are all examples of personas who have different buying needs and reasons. You might sell the same thing to each of them, but your approach, images, messaging, and language to each would be personalized very differently.



## Personas Get Results

One MarketingSherpa case study found that using personas had a dramatic impact on marketing success.

### OUTCOME

INCREASE

Length of visit

900%

Marketing-generated revenue

171%

Email open rate

111%

Number of pages visited

100%



# TACTIC 3: Communicate With the Person, Not Just the Job Title

**The trend toward personalization and relevancy is part of a shift in B2B focus that was dubbed “human-to-human” (H2H) by PureMatter CEO Bryan Kramer.** It means business marketers are using simple language, empathy, friendliness, warmth, and humor to reach the person behind the job function. Marketers’ perception is that customers want to feel a “we’re-all-in-this together” camaraderie, instead of a remote relationship defined by traditional buyer and seller roles.

The trend is well-timed, coming just as society demands more transparency in business. Customers want names and faces, and to know there are actual people behind corporate logos — people who care about them.

Social media agency Oktopost says this makes an ideal environment in which to take an extra step. For instance, if you have a phone number for your lead, call to thank them for downloading content or signing up for a trial. Search names of new leads on LinkedIn and ask to be part of the person’s network. Follow up with a personal note. Unless you overdo it, reaching out as a person will build your credibility and earn trust.

## Nurturing the Anonymous Website Visitor

Most of the people who visit your website are anonymous. With a [website visitor tracking](#) system, your marketing automation system captures and stores behavior activity attached to an IP address. When a visitor decides to fill out a form on your site, the system will be able to attach all previous browsing activity to the visitor’s name, so you can enter this prospect into the correct nurturing campaign — automatically.

# TACTIC 4: Get Social With Prospects and Customers

In just a few years, social media has attained a level of high importance as a business marketing channel. It is now an important part of a B2B marketer's strategy, even in the C-suite. According to [Forrester Research](#), fully 100 percent of business decision-makers use social media for work purposes.

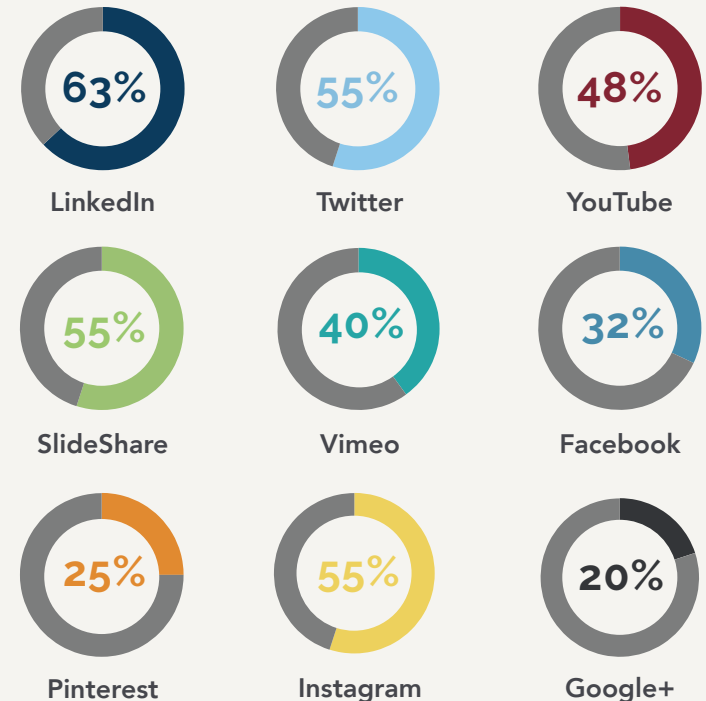
This is all part of transparency, and something more: People are eager to express their opinions, and they want an audience. Social networks give them a way to make a dialogue happen, and they give marketers new opportunities, too.

Here are four steps to get social:

1. Join the conversation, engaging with people on the platforms they choose
2. Listen more than you talk; focus on others and don't sell overtly
3. Add social sharing buttons to all of your content, from emails and landing pages to retargeting display ads, e-newsletters, and more
4. Make it easy for leads to connect with your sales department and to sing your company's praises on their networks

## Social Media Platforms Rated by B2B Effectiveness

Percentage of marketers rating effective/very effective



Source: B2B Content Marketing: 2015 Benchmarks, Budgets and Trends – North America

# TACTIC 5: Retarget Prospects, But Don't Stalk

**Retargeting means following leads who visited your website, but left without converting.** Retargeting can be used wherever they go online, usually using display (banner) ads. How can you follow anonymous visitors? Follow their cookies, which are invisible footprints dropped into their web browsers by tiny bits of code on the pages they visited.

Retargeting is a highly effective technique to boost search conversions and lead visitors back to your website. This can be especially effective in a synchronized, multichannel campaign where display ads show the same creative, messaging, and calls to action in emails and on social media. Targeted display ads used as part of a multichannel nurturing campaign have been reported to raise ROI more than 80 percent.

Retargeting works, but how much is too much? [ReTargeter](#) recommends a maximum of 17 to 20 ads per user, per month. Others advise pulling the plug after seven days of no response. However, no matter the number, consider implementing a frequency cap to limit the number of times the ads appear. You want to be top of your prospects' minds, but not too much in their faces. Remember that the goal here is to nurture these leads to move further through the customer lifecycle. You don't want to make them feel like they're being stalked. Or they might just be sick of seeing your name — and that's not the kind of brand awareness you want.

## The 3 Steps of Retargeting

### Step 1

*Prospect visits your website and leaves without taking action*



### Step 2

*Prospect visits another website and sees your display ad with enticing offer*



### Step 3

*Prospect returns to your site*



# TACTIC 6: Help Customers Back Into the Buyer's Journey

**What happens when a lead converts and becomes a customer?** Too often, nothing. But buying something should not mean the end of the line. In fact, it's just the beginning. Customers are your easiest and most predictable source of new revenue. Every customer can – and should – start a new life as a lead in a different campaign.

## Turn Customers Into New Leads With Re-Targeting

Retarget converted customers with display ads offering different products and services, upsells or cross-sells. It's very important to first remove them from the old ad sequence with a conversion pixel — aka a "burn pixel" — which is a piece of code that untags purchasers. You'll save money, because the customer isn't going to make the same purchase again. You also will avoid turning off your customer — or worse, looking like you don't know who they are.

Your customers shouldn't only hear from you when it comes time to resign their contract. Triggered or timed communications with current customers — whether they're through email, social media, or the good old-fashioned telephone, can make sure they stay loyal, while also providing valuable upsell and cross-sell opportunities for you.

Once your prospect has become a customer, be sure to provide helpful information on a regular basis. A purchase could trigger a "thank you" email, followed by an ongoing series of messages. This can be a benefit to them — and to you:

- Deliver a series of instructional videos designed to help them get the most out of their recent purchases
- Ask the customer to provide a review of your product or service on social sites
- Give customers the first opportunity at current or upcoming promotions

Use every channel available to you, including customer service, support, and even accounts payable to get targeted messages to your audience.

### Burn Pixel:

A piece of code used in retargeting that identifies a visitor who has already converted (i.e., made the purchase) and should no longer be served retargeted ads for that item/ service. The pixel may indicate not to retarget that person again, or may call for a different set of ads to be served instead.





# TACTIC 7: Deliver Value to Prospects With Customized Content

According to a recent study by the [Content Marketing Institute and MarketingProfs](#), 70 percent of companies are producing more content this year than last. It makes sense: Content has proven value.

However, not all content is created equal. Like emails, websites, and landing pages, the content that resonates most with buyers is relevant to their needs, preferences, and job titles. In a nurturing campaign, content has to be relevant to where a lead is in the sales journey — from brand awareness to education to conversion and beyond.

Whatever content works for you, be sure to mix it up so leads don't get bored and bail.



## Content B2B Marketers Use Most

*Note: Highlighted items are most effective*

1. Social media content (other than blogs)
2. e-Newsletters
3. Articles on company website
4. Blogs
5. Case studies
6. Videos
7. Illustrations/photos
8. White papers
9. Online presentations
10. Infographics
11. Webinars/Webcasts
12. Research reports
13. Microsites

*(Content Marketing Institute and Marketing Profs)*

# TACTIC 8: Build a Smart Content Library on the Cheap

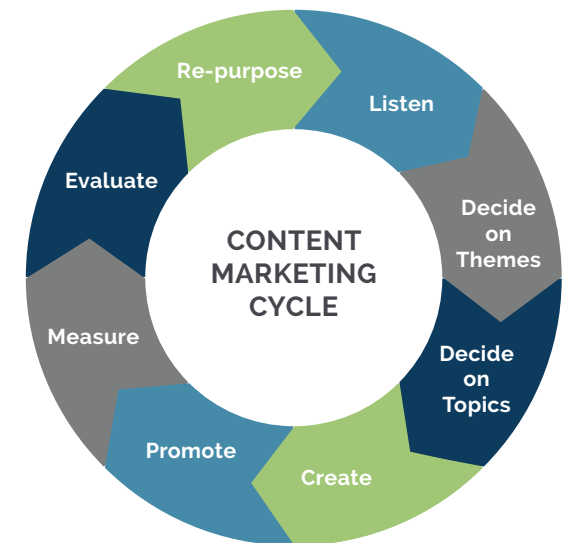
You need content to get the jump on the competition, but the need to constantly create content doesn't have to keep you hopping.

- **Think small:** You don't need a huge arsenal of content to begin a nurturing campaign. Target a few key buying segments and create a handful of relevant pieces. Build from there.
- **Repurpose:** Collect relevant blog posts together into targeted eBooks or an e-newsletter. Add a relevant, fresh introduction, plus links to third-party articles.
- **Open the gate:** The content you offer doesn't have to be gated. It doesn't even have to be yours! For instance, you can offer links to journal articles, product reviews and industry reports, gaining useful information about which topics get the most clicks — all the while establishing your company as a thought leader.

You should have content that addresses the needs of your prospects throughout every stage of their journey — as you build your brand, drive demand generation, and expand your customer relationships. Get a better understanding of the kinds of content that move prospects from one stage to the next, and make sure you've got every phase covered:

- Content that gets prospects interested in your company, such as blog posts, eBooks, and thought leadership webinars that solve a problem they have.
- Proof of your solution's contribution to similar companies, such as case studies and testimonial videos, will help move the prospect toward conversion.
- Tools that demonstrate the real value of your solutions, such as product comparisons or ROI calculators, are a good way to close the deal.

Whatever your content strategy is, write it down! According to the Content Marketing Institute, businesses that document their strategies have the most content marketing success.



# TACTIC 9: Add Video and Watch Profits Go Viral

According to [Forrester Research](#), one minute of video is worth 1.8 million words. No wonder videos have become such a top content marketing tactic.

According to [Mist Media](#), the average user spends **88% more time** on a website with video. Additionally, they report that video in e-mail marketing can **increase click-through rates** by more than 90%.

Plus, adding a video to your website is easier — and cheaper — than you may think. Just post a video on YouTube and add the link to your site. While you may not want to embed videos in your emails (they might not play for many of your recipients), you can incorporate a playback screen with a video merge tag.

Animated GIFs can be an effective tactic to make your reader look twice. They can be a good way to demonstrate a product feature or to add life and depth to a photo.

## Take 5

EXECUTIVES ANSWER,  
“How long do you prefer  
work-related videos to be?”

3%

Under a minute



36%

1-3 minutes



42%

3-5 minutes

9%

Longer than 5 minutes



5%

Don't know

Source: *Forbes Insights: Video in the C-Suite*

# TACTIC 10: Automate with Care

It may seem like a contradiction, but the only way to manage the personal, customer-centric campaigns today is through automation. Manual systems can't handle the complexity of multisegmented, multichannel, multi-touch marketing.

Enter marketing automation software, the fastest-growing CRM-related segment in the last five years. According to Focus Research, the industry is expected to reach \$1.9 billion by 2020. Marketing automation helps you identify and nurture your prospects from brand awareness to demand generation, to retention and growth. It helps you trigger personalized, targeted communications based on your prospects' individual needs and wants. Additionally, marketing automation collects information you can use to build a progressive profile and analyze campaign effectiveness.

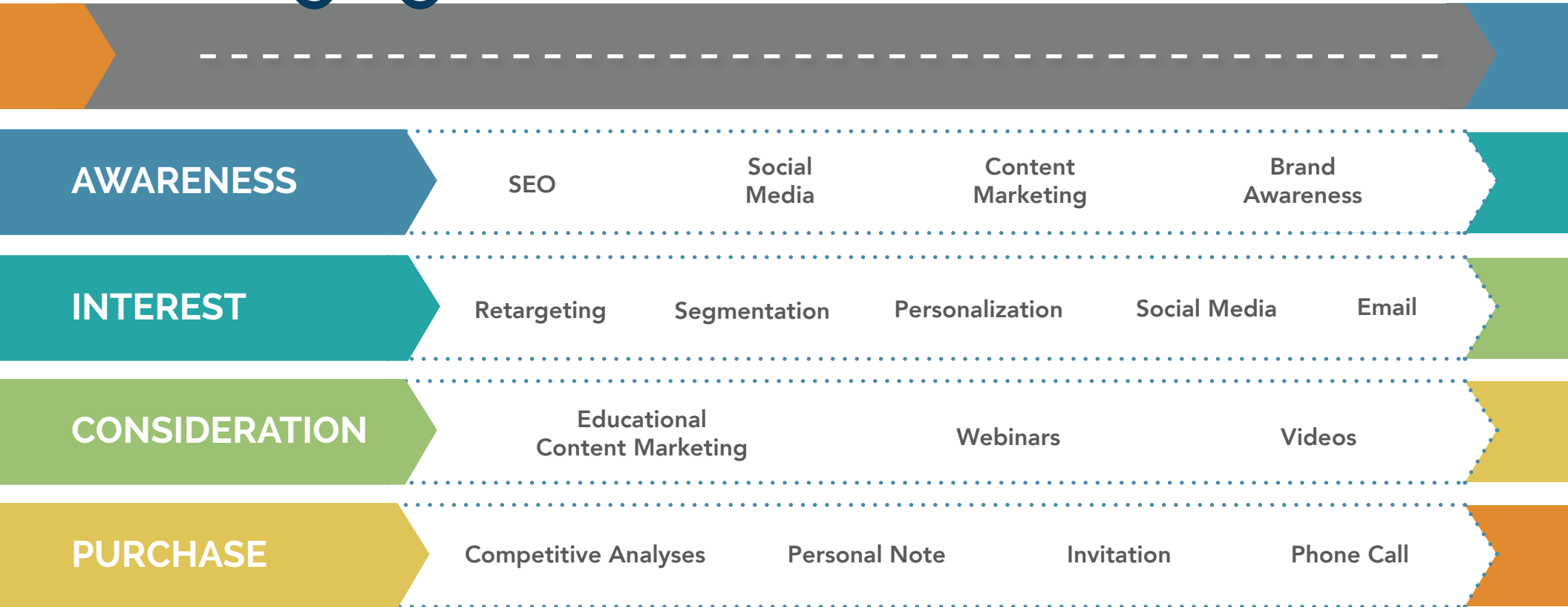
You need marketing automation to keep up with your competitors and deliver the quantifiable results your management needs to take to the bank. But guess what? Marketing automation needs you, too. Real humans need to revisit triggers and tactics constantly, so they can adjust for new priorities and pull stale content off the shelf.

If you're new to marketing automation, industry experts recommend phasing it in with a small campaign. But once you see the results of automating targeted, relevant campaigns, you'll want to scale it across channels quickly. Your B2B prospects are ready to get started on their journeys. It's up to you to help them get where they need to go.

**Marketing automation responds to predetermined triggers to deliver a customized, systematic series of relevant communications and keep track of the results. It collects information you can use to build a progressive profile and analyze campaign effectiveness.**



# THE BUYER

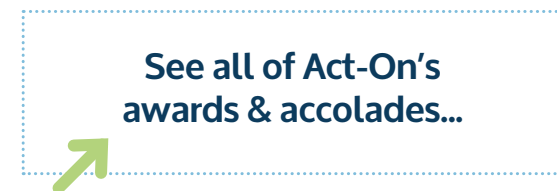
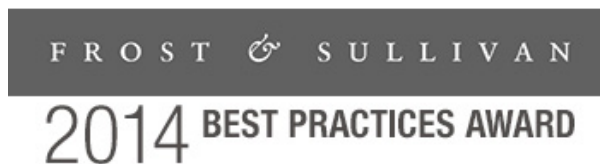


Learn more about *mapping your customer's journey* in this interactive infographic!





# Acclaim for Act-On



## About Act-On Software

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.

Connect with us to learn more