NHH

IMPLEMENTATION OF MARKETING AUTOMATION

The impact in B2B companies

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Abstract

B2B companies invest in new technologies without being able to capture the value entirely for different reasons. This can result in a waste of investment that instead of providing a solution to the opportunities of the company, it ends up affecting operations as well. Marketing automation is a technology that automates repetitive marketing tasks and provides a solution for lead generation, customer engagement, visualisation of results, among other. It is a relatively new concept that has created noise in the Business-to-Business (B2B) sector due to its capabilities in marketing and sales. With growing challenges to measure the attribution of digital marketing efforts in sales revenue, as well as to prove the value of investment, this technology stands out. By using a qualitative method, this project aims to address "how the implementation of marketing automation impacts B2B companies". Three main objectives were established: 1. To evaluate the key factors of adoption of an enterprise software for marketing automation, 2. To define the best practices to implement marketing automation, and lastly, 3. To identify the impact of marketing automation. This study describes the concepts around B2B marketing and sales, as well as marketing automation. Data was collected from the roll-out case study of GE Healthcare and their achieved results using marketing automation and the interview with an expert in the field of digital marketing. This provides a better understanding of the adoption and execution of marketing automation.

The findings of this project point to a direct relation between the implementation plan of marketing automation, and an increment in sales and shorter sales cycles, performance of marketing and sales team, and improved customer engagement. This project also suggests how by using best practices for implementing this technology, B2B companies can increase their success in this context. This dissertation reinforces literature knowledge by explaining, from a general standpoint, a concept that has not been largely explored by researchers in marketing. It is meant to encourage B2B companies to establish a model and effectively implement a marketing automation solution, as well as to increase the awareness of the opportunities for vendors. The project provides ground for further research in the marketing field, as there are opportunities to explore in more depth about the attribution to marketing automation in sales, performance of operations, and brand management using automation.

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This is by far one of the biggest challenges I have ever had. It was an interesting ride, but it allowed me to explore a subject that I am very curious about. I could not be happier with the lessons learned throughout this dissertation and the master's program at NHH.

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I dedicate this to four special people: Pilar, Ramiro, Cristina and Miguel.

Mil gracias mamá por todo tu apoyo y tu cariño. Me enseñaste a empezar cosas, a dar lo mejor de mí, y a terminarlas. Sigo tu ejemplo todos los días y gracias a ti estoy donde me encuentro. Te quiero mucho y te extraño. Extraño tu comida también.

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Dedico esto a mi papá, que un día me dijo que tenía que llegar más lejos que él. No sé a qué se refería, yo me vine a Noruega.

Contents

6

Abbreviations

B2B   Business to Business

B2C   Business to Consumer

AI   Artificial Intelligence

MQL   Marketing Qualified Leads

SAL   Sales Accepted Leads

BANT   Budget, Authority, Necessity, Timing

SEO   Search Engine Optimisation

CRM   Customer Relationship Management

KPI   Key Performance Indicators

1. Introduction

Technology is a fast-moving sector that has transformed the way businesses innovate and operate. With increasing competition due to a growth in digitalisation and globalisation in the last decades, companies are in the need of setting more effective strategies, paired with technology, to remain competitive and relevant. According to Paul Sallomi, Global Technology Sector Leader at Deloitte, companies need to take even greater advantage of cloud platforms that make powerful artificial intelligence (AI) tools and services available to broad ranges of users. These tools are helping accelerate experimentation, "democratise" innovation, boost agility, and power organisations' digital transformation journeys. (Deloitte, 2019).

Companies in all industries have re-evaluated their business models and their strategies to win market share and increase sales. The Business to Business (B2B) sector is not the exception. And in order to remain sustainable in a complex panorama where competition comes from any part of the world, the adoption of new technologies is inevitable. This, however, provides new opportunities for the fast adopters of innovations to find a differentiation against competition, regardless of their size.

The marketing automation technology is relatively new in the game of marketing and sales. Yet, it has proven to be a very powerful tool that integrates different elements of digital marketing and automates processes. At this moment, there are few literatures found that provide a clear understanding of the implementation of marketing automation and its impact in B2B. Although, studies have been made regarding the implementation of different technologies for commercial purposes in B2B, there is an opportunity to explore marketing automation as a trending subject.

Even though a greater part of the literature is focused on Business to Consumer (B2C), today there is a need to understand how emerging technologies like marketing automation can have an impact on B2B companies. It will be explored throughout this project the elements of marketing and sales operations and marketing automation.

A quote attributed to Bill Gates, co-Founder of Microsoft, explains "The first rule of any technology used in a business is that automation applied to an efficient operation will magnify the efficiency. The second is that automation applied to an inefficient operation will

magnify the inefficiency". With this study, it is intended to provide evidence that, based on a success story, the impacts can be attributed to the implementation design that led to the efficiency magnification.

With these considerations, the central research question is:

How does the implementation of marketing automation impact B2B companies?

The following objectives are established to provide support to the research question:

1. To evaluate the key factors of adoption of an enterprise software for marketing automation

2. To define the best practices to implement marketing automation

3. To identify the impact of marketing automation

These objectives provide a clear overview of the success obtained by a large B2B company, that can be replicated in other B2B organisations based on the methodologies and theories presented.

2. Literature review

In this chapter it is intended to present a general overview of B2B to understand the importance and the challenges of the sector. It goes further with the explanation of how marketing and sales departments typically collaborate in the B2B sector. A model called the Marketing and Sales funnel will be detailed and used in further sections as one of the main elements of the research and analysis. The next part of the literature introduces the concept of marketing automation. The intention of this section is to explain what the technology is, how it works, and what the advantages it has for B2B marketers.

The literature used for the purpose of this project come from different sources including research papers, journals, recorded speaking sessions with experts in the field of marketing automation, news, among other.

2.1 Overview of Business to Business

B2B is a sector of the economy in which companies sell products or services to other companies before getting to the final consumer of a final offering. It is a very wide and complex area because businesses normally rely on supplies and partnerships to operate and be competitive. (Ford, 2003) adds, B2B organisations […] require relationship development, frequently long term, between the selling and the buying organisations.

According to Kotler, P. & Keller, K (2012), the B2B sector face different circumstances and conditions compared to B2C. These include a fewer buyers with bigger size, stronger relationships with suppliers and customers, professional purchasing agents, multiple purchasing influences, multiple sales calls, different types of demand, buyers concentrated geographically, and direct purchasing.

In order to provide a clear difference between B2B and B2C, in the following chart it is compared the main characteristics of both sectors. Based on target sector, sales scale, needs to resolve, level of relationships, decision making process, number of clients, purchasing volume, and decision basis.

Dimension	B2B	B2C
Target sector	Companies	Individuals
Sales scale	Large scale sales	Personal consumption
Needs to resolve	Specific necessities	Basic necessities
Level of relationships	Long-term relationships	Short-term relationships
Decision making process	Complex	Simple based on emotions
Number of clients	Few	Many
Purchasing volume	Large	Small
Decision basis	Logic and characteristics	Desires and benefits

Table 1 - Comparison between B2B and B2C dimensions

It is visible this way how B2B companies are focused more on enterprise sales with more complex buying processes and based on relationships with specific needs. As for B2C, consumers search for a more personal motivations based on emotions and individual desires. The approach in both sectors is then different and it follows a sales process accordingly to achieve the sales expected.

B2B is a sector that has a potential to impact large levels of sales from fewer customers, yet, it represents a challenge for marketing specialists. According to Reed, G., Story, V. & Saker, J. (2004) it is apparent that the B2B sector views mainstream marketing as being too consumer oriented. Many practitioners in the Marketing field have stated that there is a need to address the B2B sector in terms of market intelligence gathering and network development among other areas.

2.2 The link between Sales and Marketing in B2B

In this context, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of how the link of marketing and sales can play a vital role on the B2B companies' sales. The final goal of both marketing and sales is to generate sales while keeping customers happy and loyal. Both departments focus on generating enough interest from target audiences and make effective use of the often-limited resources to close the best deals in a period of time. The long-term aim is to generate a continuous flow of sales with conditions aligned to the strategic vision of the company.

Some experts have observed an important challenge in the collaboration between marketing and sales teams. Rothman, D. (2014) explains that marketing and sales have been historically two different departments that work individually and sometimes collaborate with a limited understanding of each other. It has been discussed the value of a more integrated collaboration. According to Willis, S. (2015), we are currently seeing a massive shift in how organisations view sales and marketing. In the past they have been considered separate departments who, on occasion, work together. Well, now we are seeing an entirely new department emerge: the "revenue department." Willis, S. (2015) also explains that the revenue department is essentially the combination of sales and marketing into one cohesive unit. They are still two distinct entities, but function more as two halves of a whole rather than two completely independent parties.

The sales departments in B2B has different challenges and focus than in a B2C company. Its role is differentiated with the nature of the business, the characteristics and drivers of customers. It is necessary to explain how the processes of selling are in B2B.

Arndt, A. & Harkins, J., (2013) make a distinction between possible determinants of sales activities: "[…] the characteristics of each sales activity dimension will vary not only by industry but also by sales strategy, purchasing situation, and selling conditions.". Åge, L. (2011) explains that the process of selling is an inherently complex phenomenon because it is ultimately dependent on solving problems in the context of personal human interactions.

Sales in B2B involve different points of view to integrate the solution to the different needs across departments. According to Webster Jr., F. & Wind, Y., (1972), organisational (i.e., industrial and institutional) buying usually involves many people in the decision process with complex interactions among people and among individual and organizational goals.

Marketing activities and sales departments work together to achieve the main objective: sales revenue.

2.2.1 The Marketing and Sales funnel

The Marketing and Sales funnel shows how prospects follow a linear process from being unknown personas until becoming customers. This model is presented due to its common application in B2B companies. However, it is also presented as a general model that can vary within organisations.
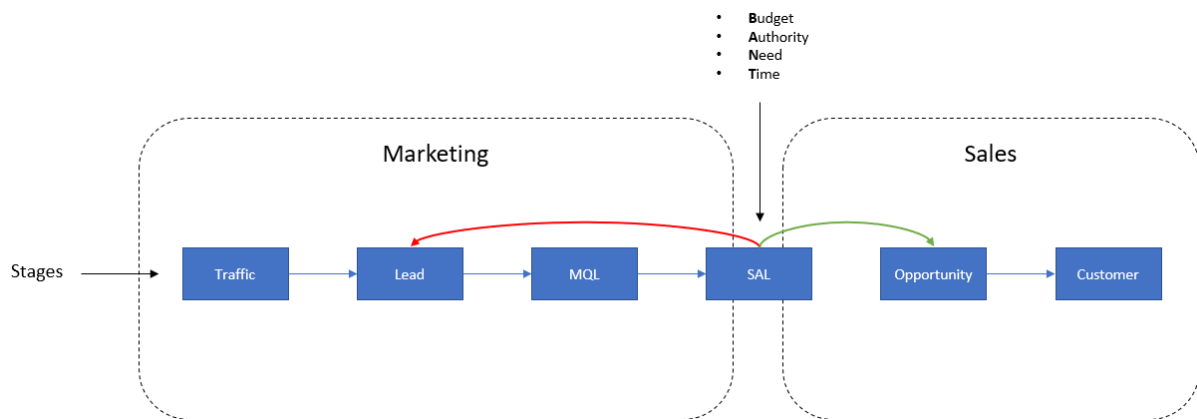
Figure 1 - The Marketing and Sales funnel

Traffic

The concept 'traffic' refers to the results of the digital efforts to attract the target audience to the website from different places including search engines and social media. One goal of the marketing team is to facilitate the attraction of personas into the funnel and nurture them until they are ready to buy. There are several applications for measuring Traffic that allow marketers to know how many people visit the website, from which location, and where did they click.

Leads

A lead is a potential prospect that has shown any interest in the companies' offerings. Leads are generated when personas enter the website or other channels and request information or download content by leaving their personal information. There are other ways to obtain leads including purchasing lists of contacts or personal meetings. These leads also have different

levels of interest and knowledge about the company and its offerings. For the leads gathered through digital efforts, the marketing and sales team define what information they should request in the website forms.

Marketing Qualified Leads (MQL)

MQLs are leads qualified based on their engagement with marketing content and their behaviour in the website or other channels of the company. These leads are not yet prospects, but they more likely to become customers than other leads. In order for leads to be qualified, they should react to specific 'call-to-actions' like filling out a form or attending an event. However, it is difficult to keep track on the engagements online with the traditional approach.

Sales Accepted Leads (SAL)

Marketing and sales teams have previously agreed on the profile of the potential customers based on different attributes. Once a lead becomes an MQL, it is certain that there is a level of interest. Nevertheless, this does not mean that this person is ready or even willing to buy. For sales representatives to recognise these potential prospects, companies usually have a process for qualification.

A BANT model is a popular process for prospect qualification; its abbreviation stands for Budget, Authority, Necessity and Timing. Sales representatives, usually inside sales representatives, contact the leads to verify if they comply with these qualifications. Although there are several other methods for prospect qualification, the BANT model is simplistic in the elements to evaluate and it is also applicable to any company regardless of the industry.

The first step of the BANT qualification model is to determine whether the prospect has the budget or the resources available to acquire the offered product or service. Prospects that are not able to reach the Minimum Order Quantities or afford the costs, usually will not be in the position to purchase. On the other hand, sales representatives can have an actual opportunity to provide prospects with this characteristic. The authority or role in the company provides knowledge of what opportunity there is for this lead to be the decision maker or an influencer. As mentioned previously, B2B companies usually deal with different people before closing a sale. Webster Jr., F. & Wind, Y (1972), and Kotler, P. & Keller, K (2012), define 7 key decision makers in a B2B organisation: Initiators, Users, Influencers, Deciders, Buyers, Approvers, and Gatekeepers. Each of them has a specific role and impact in the

purchasing decision process. Sales representatives in B2B will typically spend more time on building a relationship with decision makers. The necessity is a clear statement from the individual about the intentions to buy. A necessity should also cover the 'pains' or challenges that the potential customer sees in the company's offerings. Sales representatives can offer a solution accordingly, but if the prospect has a different idea of the objective, it can unlikely that the company will be able to provide. The last element, timing, gives the sales representative an idea of when would the products or services be purchased. Sales representatives identify the timeframe to close a sale, and in B2B, usually sales cycles are long so the focus should be to target prospects with a feasible schedule.

In order to fully qualify a lead, all four of these characteristics must be true, if not, they should be kept for future contacts. After the lead has been evaluated with the BANT model and they are qualified to be potential customers, they become prospects. At this point sales professionals are certain that the prospect can be followed up by the most experienced sales managers.

Opportunity

After a sales representative sees a progress in the relationship with the prospect previously qualified, they are now called opportunities and the success rate of closing a sale is higher at this stage. With all the work done from the company's side and a better value offer, the closing of the sale becomes the last stage of this funnel.

Customer

A customer is the buyer of the companies' products and services. In B2B the customer or account is another company.

The marketing and sales funnel is explained in a simple manner; nevertheless there is a lot of work from both teams behind the closing of a sale. Also, managing these prospects can be a very complex task, as there are several contacts going through this funnel every day and without the use of technology this process is slow and ineffective.

2.2.2 Main challenges of marketing and sales in B2B

The purpose of this section is to summarise the main challenges of the B2B sector and the marketing and sales departments in B2B, based on the theory presented.

- B2B has a different degree of complexity for customer management than in B2C companies. B2B providers rely on building long-term customer relationships to operate and be competitive.

- In B2B there are many influencers and decision makers in the purchasing process. Buyers have different necessities and selection criteria that involve different departments of the companies.

- Marketing, as a field of study, is perceived by some business graduates as being too consumer oriented. This becomes a challenge for marketers when entering in the labour market in B2B. It also becomes a challenge for companies to attract the talent with the experience need for the sector.

- Marketing departments are, arguably, still seen by many B2B companies as a support activity for sales departments. Although it is, experts argue that a cohesive strategy that gives more relevance to the marketing activities can have an impact on revenue.

- The sales process of B2B is complex and has a long sales cycle. There are several considerations at each stage of the Marketing and Sales funnel before a sale is closed.

- Technology can support the B2B operations, however, there is not a clear path to achieve the desired effectiveness due to the different individual solutions existing in the market.

2.3 The Marketing Automation technology

2.3.1 The concept of marketing automation

The marketing automation is an innovation that integrates different marketing elements and gives support to sales and marketing teams to automate repetitive processes. It has a brief history with early antecedents of marketing automation companies established in 2001. Since then, marketing automation has increased possibilities to automate digital marketing activities and to improve the flow of leads in the marketing and sales funnel. According to Rothman, D (2014), marketing automation is the technology that allows companies to streamline, automate, and measure marketing tasks and create workflows so they can increase operational efficiency and increase sales.

As Wagner, T. (2019) explains, marketing automation is software and tactics that allow companies to buy and sell like Amazon — that is, to nurture prospects with highly personalised, useful content that helps convert prospects to customers and turn customers into delighted customers. This type of marketing automation typically generates significant new revenue for companies and provides an excellent return on the investment required.

According to Rothman, D (2014), there is a huge upside to making a technology investment. Even though spending money upfront, companies save money in the long run due to fewer human resource needs, enabling them to do more in-house. Technology also helps measure and optimise investments, so marketers know exactly what is working and what it is not. And finally, investing in technology helps grow lead generation practice faster, which in turn helps the company grow faster.

Marketing automation ads up to the effective collaboration between marketing and sales. With capabilities to obtain and interpret data online, B2B companies make better decisions based on this data. The result is to introduce effective sales strategies to influence the buyer before the first personal contact. Moreover, this solution was designed to provide an overview of the Marketing and Sales funnel as the base for customer development.

2.3.2 The largest player in the industry

Marketo is the most influential vendor of marketing automation for the B2B sector. Marketo offers integrated solutions in its clout-based platform to perform in the digital marketing field and help businesses generate sales. As mentioned in Marketo's website, some of the features include email marketing, lead management, consumer marketing, customer base marketing, among others. It has a license-based business model and, besides access to the platform, it offers consulting, training, and other services. Another key part of Marketo's success is the ease of integration with other software used in different areas of a company.

The American company was founded in 2006 and was later acquired by Adobe in 2018. According to Cameron, N. (2018), the purchase price of US$4.75 billion is a hefty price tag on Marketo, which reported revenue of US$321 million last year, and makes this acquisition one of the largest to occur across the marketing technology landscape. John Miller, co-founder of Marketo explained, "I think this highlights the fundamental fact that B2C marketing and B2B marketing are very different beasts that need different technology approaches," Cameron, N. (2018).

The large investments on this company and the statement by its co-founder about the difference between marketing in B2B and B2C provide a strong argument on the value of marketing automation and Marketo for the B2B sector. Although there are other players in the industry, Marketo is positioned as the leading player in B2B. "Marketo helps organizations transform the digital marketing strategy with constant product innovation, a vibrant community of marketers and a robust partner ecosystem". Interviewee A (2019)

2.3.3 Characteristics of marketing automation: product

The marketing automation product is based on five core characteristics. These capabilities are integrated in the software to provide a holistic solution based on the needs of marketing and sales departments. The following characteristics are described based on the Marketo solution.

- Demand generation: the first characteristic is the capability to help generate demand through digital channels. Marketo and other marketing automation solutions offer a Search Engine Solution (SEO) solution that ranks the effectivity of pages in the website and provides suggestions on how to improve the quality of the content presented. Marketo in particular, automates the visualisation of content based on the specific audience and their search key words. By doing this, visitors can have a first look on the singular interests they look for. It is also possible to push ad campaigns in other websites to pull traffic back to the company's site, based on what they were researching online. It generated demand because it helps attract the right audience to the website, and by providing the content automatically tailored, it increases the rate of filling out forms.

- Engagement capability: the most relevant feature for customer engagement is the email solution. Marketing automation software allows creating email campaigns that can be sent automatically based on any action from the leads in the website. When leads download an asset, 'thank you' emails are sent; it is also possible to automate follow up emails to keep the leads engaged with similar communications to what they downloaded. Marketing automation software allows to create lists of leads with similar criteria, as clusters of target audience. These campaigns can be cloned to save time, by targeting clusters, the engagement has a greater probability of success.

- Support in sales: the third characteristic is the transfer of contact information to sales agents. Marketing automation software is integrated with another solution called Customer Relationship Management (CRM); this technology allows sales representatives to visualise quality leads' information, marketing campaigns, and other fields necessary to follow up and register progression on each prospect or customer. By having an integration with a CRM provider, the marketing automation solution facilitates the effective and automated flow of data generated that supports sales activities.

- Measure: the fourth characteristic is the capability to measure results of marketing campaigns. This is done by providing real-time analytics and reports for each campaign. This capability allows marketers to have an insight of which activities have been successful and which ones have not.

- Prove the value of marketing: the fifth characteristic is the capability to prove the value marketing of marketing activities on the business. This gives marketing departments the overview of sales closing and the individuals' interactions on each marketing campaign. Marketing automation allows this way to give attribution of the marketing strategy to actual revenue.

2.3.4 Characteristics of marketing automation: enterprise solution

At a higher level, marketing automation is also an enterprise solution that undertakes the complexity, in this case of B2B companies. Marketing automation should also have the following main characteristics:

- Scalable: to fit the growth needs of the companies. The more companies adapt their processes and ads data into the system, the more complex it gets. For this reason, it is important that a cloud-based solution can support the heavy data and allow companies to have an efficient operation. The solution also increases the capabilities according to the customers' needs by updating regularly the solution.

- Adaptable: to be adaptable and sufficiently customisable to match the specific needs of each company. The system provides the access in a regulated way to users across departments, subsidiaries, regions, partners, and other.

- Easy: According to Miller, J. (2013) a marketing automation platform should not only be easy to buy, easy to own, easy to use, but also powerful enough to solve the customer's problems. This means that a 'real solution' is the one that collaborators can use regardless of the differences in skills and technological knowledge. It also provides the companies a clear overview of what the capabilities are through documentation and training.

- Integrated: Marketing automation integrated the different activities for the marketing operation. However, companies typically use different solutions for each task, and different vendors with different points of contacts. This becomes a challenge for organisations when investing in several options and not all of them are used. Marketing automation develops a system in collaboration with other vendors to provide the access to different features that allow marketers and sales representatives to work efficiently with the tools they already use.

3. Theoretical framework

The theory presented in the previous chapter opens a discussion about the challenges and opportunities for B2B companies to improve sales results with technology. This chapter presents the existing research from which the research question is answered.

The case study of GE Healthcare with marketing automation is a compilation of interview references from management positions in the company including Stephanie Meyer, Head of Marketing Operations and Glenn Thomas, Chief Marketing Officer of GE Healthcare, a presentation on Marketing Automation Roll-out & project framework by Sal Abramo, Global Marketing Automation Director at GE Healthcare, and competitive analysis documentation. The purpose of these sources is to integrate the case study elements necessary to serve as the basis for the analysis.

An interview conducted on May 20th of 2019, Interviewee A, Digital Partner Marketing Manager LatAm at a B2B company leading in technology (disclosed), provides from first-hand experience with marketing automation and implementation. The statements provided support the analysis of the case study.

Another conceptual theory that will provide support to the research question is the PRINCE2 methodology. PRINCE2 is a methodology for project management developed by the government of the United Kingdom as a standard for information systems. Using the PRINCE2 methodology, it is possible to create an implementation plan that considers the elements identified in the success for GE Healthcare and the opportunities explained by the interviewee. The PRINCE2 project methodology has seven main principles:

1. *Continued business justification*: the project team have a justifiable reason for starting the project and be consistent along its duration.

2. *Defined roles and responsibilities*: the project team should have a structure based on roles and responsibilities to know who oversees what.

3. *Learn from experience*: the project team should document wrongs and rights to learn from them and apply.

4. *Manage by stages*: the project team should be able to plan and monitor the processes by stages.

5. *Manage by exception*: the project team members should have clear objectives and limitations in the project.

6. *Focus on product definition*: the project team should understand what the product is and does to be able to set clear and measurable goals.

7. *Tailor to suit the project environment*: the project team should understand the characteristics of the business and the sales and marketing departments.

4. GE Healthcare case study: implementation of marketing automation software

4.1 Overview of the company and project

GE Healthcare is a subsidiary of General Electric, leader in providing of medical supplies, biomanufacturing, cell and gene therapy technologies, among other products and services for the healthcare industry. The company has over 100 years of experience in the healthcare industry. Globally, GE Healthcare has a team of 1,000 marketers and 10,000 sales representatives from all levels.

GE Healthcare identified the need to implement marketing automation to support its marketing and sales activities. This decision was consequence of several challenges found and the benchmark analysis of other B2B companies that had already implemented marketing automation. In 2015, management implemented Marketo, following a roll-out plan that aligned effectively the marketing and sales departments.

4.2 Challenges for marketing and sales in GE Healthcare

According to the marketing automation roll-out plan presented by Abramo, S. (2015), GE Healthcare realised several areas of opportunity in their marketing and sales process that were increasing the acquisition costs of prospects. The company found out to be wasting marketing resources on lead generation; this problem is common in B2B when investing in tradeshows, lists of contacts, and other sources of leads that are not properly followed up.

Another challenge was that with the previous process, the databases kept old information about leads that was not updated, even with potential opportunities not being followed-up. Sales and marketing did not have a method for qualifying prospects and added to old data this was a complicated task. GE Healthcare did not have an integrated process for nurturing leads either, instead, several solutions were utilised, and time was wasted in transferring information manually.
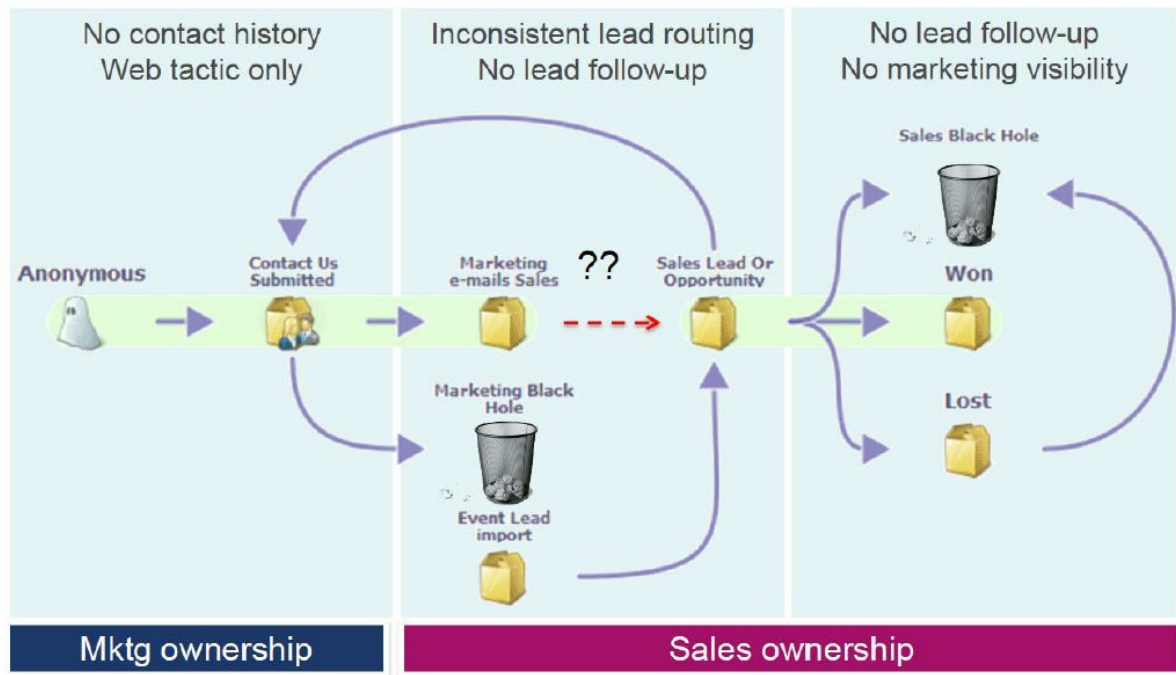
Figure 2 - Map of current lead process (Abramo, S., 2015)

From the communications perspective, GE Healthcare was also facing the challenge to target the right audience. Stephanie Meyer, Head of Marketing Operations explained that one of the challenges the company was facing before having Marketo was to deliver the right message to the right person and in the right context. Marketo. (2015).

These problems, in return, represented a low productivity of sales representatives and, thus, lower sales than expected. The marketing department was also struggling to achieve their key performance indicators (KPI) when not being able to link attribution to sales.

4.3 Vision of the roll-out project

The implementation of marketing automation began for GE Healthcare in 2015 with a focus on three key priorities. The first one was to engage prospects early in the buying cycle; this was due to the observation of prospects contacting the company that were already committed to buy a solution. The second priority was to increase the quality of the leads generated and nurtured; this meant that the company would spend time on fewer but higher-quality leads. The third one was to leverage on technology to automate processes; this in return would help GE Healthcare managers make better data-driven decisions.

The reasons to develop this project were separated into four dimensions: Growth, Organisation, Technology, and Market. GE Health care wanted to increase growth by integrating marketing and sales activities that have an impact on their customers and prospects. At an organisational level, GE Healthcare was targeting to a better collaboration between their marketing and sales departments, as well as more standardised processes for selling. From the technology side, the company needed to leverage on marketing automation for developing new offers faster. The last dimension discussed the market due to industry consolidation and slow growth in some of their markets. GE Healthcare also wanted a better focus on improving metrics that allowed them to be more competitive.

GE Healthcare had a vision for the marketing and sales teams to enabling agile prospect and customer engagement. Also, the company wanted the teams to improve the performance of marketing campaigns as well as having a better overview of the prospects through the buying cycle. For the project team, GE Healthcare had the expectation to perform a global roll-out with full engagement and adoption.

4.4 Adoption of marketing automation

The project was implemented in three phases. The structure of the implementation project was divided into four sections and eight key work streams. The first section describes the operative process considering sales and marketing alignment, lead and opportunity management, and data quality and management. The second section involves marketing and the automation process. The third section describes the role of IT and marketing, with work streams in content and digital assets, building and configuration, training & development, launching, and focus on improvement. The fourth and last section includes the skills, training and metrics. The implementation process was detailed as

follows:

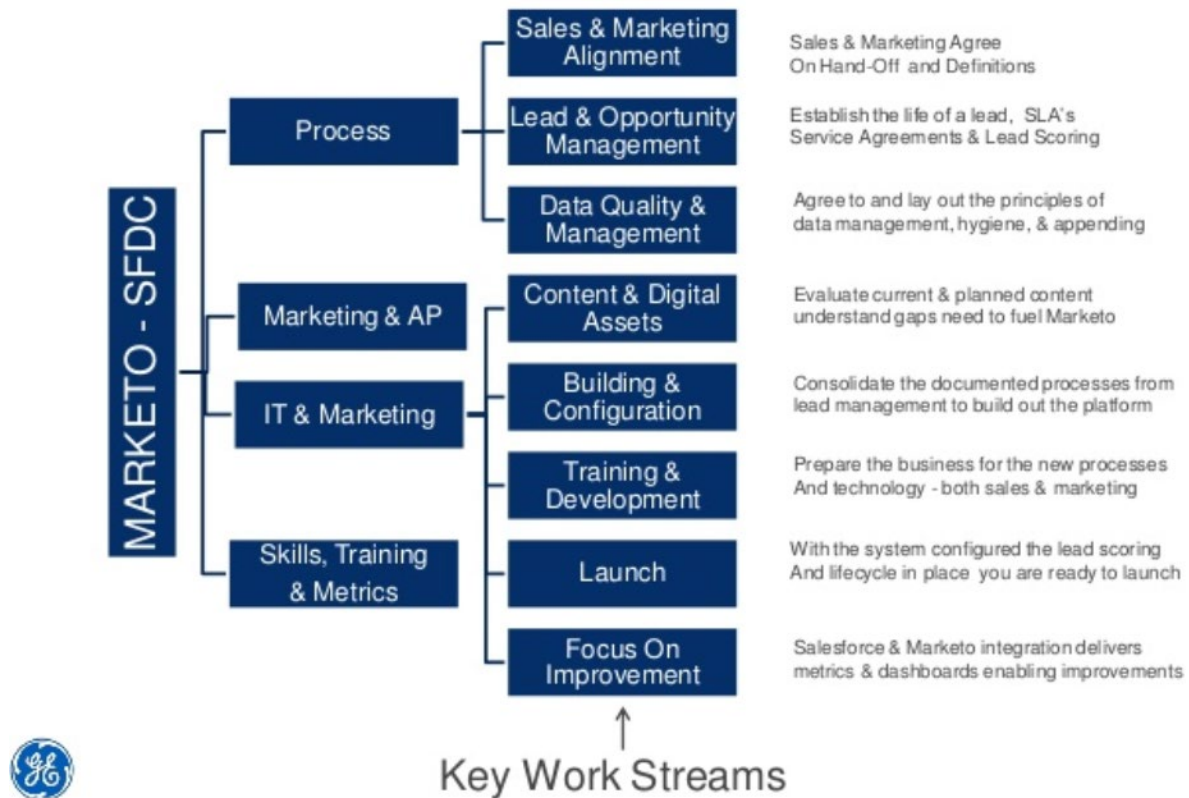*Figure 3 - Implementation process of marketing automation GE Healthcare (Abramo, S., 2015)*

Another part of the adoption included the pilot tests, from which GE Healthcare evaluated the core areas of discovery within automation, leads and campaigns, and governance, training, systems and data. The purpose of the following figure is to uncover and validate punctual requirements that GE Healthcare expected:

Core Areas Of Discovery		Uncover & Validate	
Automation, Lead & Campaign	• Demand Type & Targeting • Customers and Prospects • Waterfall & The Buyers Journey	• Addressable Universe & Scope of Targeting • Segmentation, Insights & Personas • ID Gaps, Misalignment & Better Ways to Engage	
	• Lead Management, Scoring & Routing • SF Lead Model and Data Flow • Lead & Campaign Reporting	• Scoring Model, Sources, Hand-Offs, Steps & Work-Flow • How Leads Are Created In SF • Reports, Dashboards & Metrics	
	• Content Readiness	• Audit Content To Support MA	
	• Campaign Tracking	• Tracking Campaign Success	
	• Campaign Development	• Testing, Single-Touch, Multi-Touch, Nurture	
Governance, Training, Systems & Data	• Areas Requiring Governance • User Training Needs • Best Practice, & Global Workflows • Regional & Remote Users	• QA, Resources, Compliancy, Needed Processes • Skills and Gaps • Templates, Cloneable Reference Library • ID Gaps, Misalignment & Better Ways to Work	
	• Data Flow, System Limitations • Data Quality • Data Sources	• Data Models, Data Structure & Normalization • Hygiene, Duplication, Data Fields, Consistent Terms • Campaigns, List Purchase, Events, Uploads	
	• eMail Domain Authentication	• Baseline & Validate Domain Sender Scores	
	• Web Forms & Campaign Landing Pages	• Standardized Form Fields & SF/Marketo Data Model	
	• Tracking Scripts, Multi-Variant Testing	• Optimize campaign Results A/B Testing	

Figure 4 - Anticipated learning from pilots (Abramo, S., 2015)

The setup of the Marketing and Sales funnel, integrated with marketing automation, shows the future state of how marketing and sales departments were involved to have cleaner data at the first stage, a more effective flow of the leads throughout the funnel, and the best practices to use the current sales solution. The updated lead process is represented as follows:
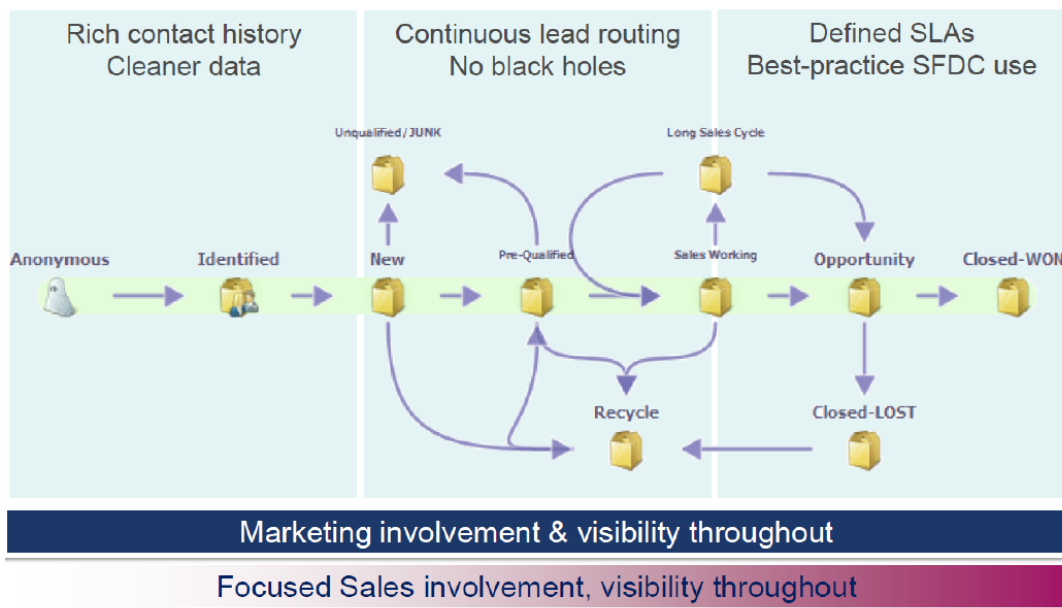

Figure 5 - Lead process - future state (Abramo, S., 2015)

5. Methodology

In the following chapters it is intended to explain the methodology used. The purpose of this section is to provide the basis to support the analysis. In the sections below it will be presented the research design, research method, the research strategy, and data collection and analysis. Furthermore, the challenges and ethical implications of this data is also described.

5.1 Research design

A research design is the logic that links the data to be collected and the conclusions to be drawn to the initial questions of a study; it ensures coherence. Another way of viewing a research design is to see it as an action plan for getting from the questions to conclusions. Rowley, J. (2002).

An explanatory research is conducted, taking the example of marketing automation roll-out plan of GE Healthcare and the sources mentioned in the theoretical framework. Based on the context of B2B, the challenges of marketing and sales operations, and this approach to marketing automation, it is intended to unveil the best practices for a successful implementation of this technology.

In order to answer the research question which is "*how does the implementation of marketing automation impact B2B companies*?" the following objectives were set:

1. To evaluate the key factors of adoption of an enterprise software for marketing automation

2. To define the best practices to implement marketing automation

3. To identify the impact of marketing automation

5.2 Research method and strategy

This project intents to use a deductive approach to answer the research question. The research is based on secondary data collected from the case study of a B2B company, GE Healthcare, and its experience with marketing automation. As explained by Rowley, J. (2002), case studies as a research method or strategy have traditionally been viewed as lacking rigour and objectivity when compared with other social research methods […] On the other hand, despite this scepticism about case studies, they are widely used because they may offer insights that might not be achieved with other approaches.

A pattern matching is deployed to analyse the data found in the case, in support with the theory presented and the input of the interview. According to Saunders, M. L., et al., (2009, pg. 500), using this approach, one will need to develop a conceptual or analytical framework, utilising existing theory, and subsequently test the adequacy of the framework as a means to explain findings.

Moreover, a case study provides explanatory data that helps understand with narrative a situation that happened in the past. According to Yin (2003), (as cited in Saunders, M. L., et al., 2009, pg. 500), another pattern matching procedure, which refers to as a special type, involves an attempt to build an explanation while collecting data and analysing them, rather than testing a predicted explanation […] explanation building is designed to test a theoretical proposition, albeit in an iterative manner, rather than to generate theory inductively […] Yin states that his hypothesis-testing approach is related to explanatory case studies.

A definition of case study by Stake (1995), (cited by Simons, H., 2009, pg. 19) explains that a case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances. Simons, H., (2009) explains that what defines a case study is its singularity – of the phenomenon being studied.

In this research, the case study involves a singularity in detail from which the implementation of marketing automation took place. It considers specific elements that were relevant for the company to cover and that are more specific to B2B marketing and sales. The singularity of this case, however, presents concepts that are applicable to other B2B companies.

5.3 Data collection

The case study of GE Healthcare is instrumental to obtain the qualitative data for the analysis. According to Simons, H., (2009), instrumental (a case study) is where a case is chosen to explore an issue or research question determined on some other ground, that is, the case is chosen to gain insight or understanding into something else. According to Woodside, A. G. (2010), […] to insure that the data have a high degree of nomological validity (i.e., empirical pattern of findings fits theoretical pattern), the research might incorporate alternative questions that favor each theory (e.g., several different scenarios illustrating alternative theories could be evaluated by the respondent to see which best matches his/her "reality").

In this case study, the roll-out plan provides an understanding of the considerations by the project management team for structuring the implementation strategy. This data is of great value to understand how a large and well-known company used to evaluate their challenges, and what changed after the implementation. The specific case to GE Healthcare was also selected due to the availability of the information on the implementation plan, relevant to support the context of marketing automation and B2B.

Although different tactics of collecting data were evaluated, including surveys, there is a major challenge when researching B2B companies. Finding the right audience for the surveys or interviews is complex due to the different roles, understanding and actual experience with the subject of study. Also, according to Simkin, L. (2000), B2B surveys are notoriously difficult to conduct owing to secretaries gatekeeping, busy managers not wanting to "waste time" attending discussion groups or completing questionnaires, incentives not being as attractive to recipients as in much consumer research, and confidentiality concerns being a major drawback. Yet, it was possible to obtain references from the interview conducted with the expert in the field of digital marketing and technology.

The data collected from the interview provides qualitative data based on experience with the implementation and execution of marketing automation applications and the coordination with sales and marketing departments. The relevance of the data collected is subject to the application in B2B using Marketo, the same solution explained in the case of GE Healthcare. The questionnaire made was also based on the initial observations of the case study and to fit

into the objectives of the research. This way it is intended to use compatible data and have a perspective in the same level.

5.4 Data analysis

The analysis of the data gathered is oriented to a subjective approach. As the base of the data collected comes from different sources of content and statements by experts, in a field that has been scarcely studied, its analysis requires standardising concepts and interpretations. Also, processes are different in different companies, but best practices that prove an overall success can be explained in a general way.

This study intents to analyse the implementation of marketing automation on two dimensions: the technical and the operational aspects of the implementation. For this purpose,

5.5 Challenges in data collection

There was a challenge to find data that could explain in more detail the process followed to obtain the results in terms of sales. This data was not found specifically in the notes within the account statements of GE Healthcare, nor there were further explanations in the different sources found. In addition, large B2B companies like the one presented often have strict policies for sharing information.

As a relatively new approach to marketing and sales, there are few case studies to compare. There is an overall lack of understanding about this technology, and only few companies have been able to structure an implementation plan that considers all the factors. The approach mentioned in the strategy was to make use of the information available and use suppositions in support with the other framework presented.

Another challenge in data collection is the often-strict policies of companies in sharing information about their processes. This is due to their position against competition, in which an established process represents a competitive advantage. The more the companies implement this solution and share their success stories, the better it will be for researchers to gather the necessary data for their studies.

5.6 Ethical considerations

The data gathered to analyse the case study was public and available. Moreover, consent was given by the author of the roll-out plan to use and reference the information presented. As for the interview conducted, there is a policy that does not allow collaborators to talk about the internal processes of the company, nor it is able to publish content that points directly to the company. For this reason, the name of the company and collaborator are subject to disclosure. It is also important to define that the only purpose of the data gathered from these sources is merely for its relevance in the study and are not to be used in any other way.

6. Analysis of results

In this section it is intended to analyse the objectives that lead to answer the research question: *how does the implementation of marketing automation impact B2B companies?* To do this, it can be said that each objective is aligned to provide the validity of the impact considering the key factors and the best practices in the implementation of marketing automation in the B2B context. Talking about the impacts as the only matter will mean ignoring the answer to "how does it happen?". This way, the analysis takes in consideration the elements of a successful implementation project that can be replicated in other B2B organisations.
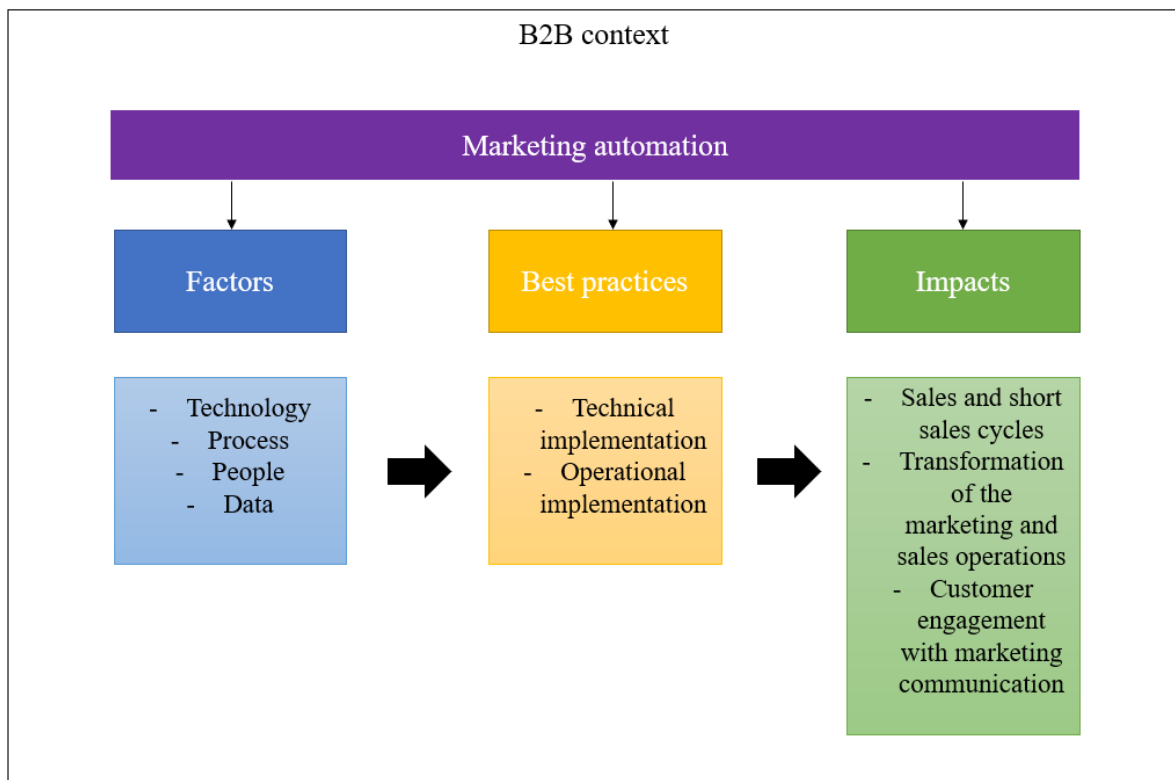

Figure 6 - Structure of the results

6.1 Key factors of adoption of an enterprise software for marketing automation

Four key factors can be identified from the implementation of marketing automation of GE Healthcare and the references: technology, processes, data, and people. These factors were common denominators of the reasons for implementing and were evident throughout the

roll-out plan. It is necessary to describe how each factor plays an important role in the implementation and the impacts for GE Healthcare.

According to (Ortega, D., 2017) these elements are integrated and conform the essence of marketing automation. People are the heart and mind of your business. Processes form the backbone of your operations. Data is the lifeblood that feeds everything you do. For your business to operate at peak performance and deliver the results you seek, people, processes and data must be healthy individually, as well as work in harmony.

Technology

Marketing automation as a technology is seen from different standpoints. Functionality, integrations, ease of use, customisation, are examples of the characteristics considered in the decision making of investing. It is necessary to fully understand what the opportunities and challenges are for the company, and from there, the solution should be able to match those expectations with the value they provide.

According to the marketing automation roll-out plan in GE Healthcare, the reach of the project was aiming to include a technology for automation that could support the alignment of marketing and sales departments across the global organisation. Selecting the right solution had to be evaluated according to the company's needs. It also aimed to give support to the Marketing and Sales funnel model that was established previously. With automation, GE Healthcare could evaluate a more effective way to integrate marketing and sales activities, and the automation solution.

About the decision to implement an automation technology, Interviewee A (2019), adds that it is important to look for a marketing cloud solution that helps the demand generation teams to listen, learn, and engage with prospects and customers, providing them the right content at the right time to acquire, grow, and build brand advocates. Moreover, their decision to implement Marketo in specific was driven by the recognition of being the leaders in the industry. It helps transform the digital marketing strategy with constant product innovation, a vibrant community of marketers and a robust partner ecosystem.

With this factor, it can be said that the decision to implement a marketing automation technology must be aligned with the situation of the company, based on a clear understanding of the product and its value proposition. B2B companies should also search for a marketing automation vendor that is reliable and has experience in effective

implementation. Therefore, evaluating different vendors and use references is of high importance.

Processes

There are different processes involved in the implementation of marketing automation to be evaluated. First, there is a workflow of marketing and sales. Second, there is a process for using the technology. And third, there is a process to integrate both workflows into a complete strategy.

For the first process, it is observed that GE Healthcare identified opportunities in their current workflow of marketing and sales. Their model of Marketing and Sales funnel represented their operations with several inefficiencies and a clear division between the responsibilities of the marketing and sales department. This represents the operation without an integrated solution, in which the objectives are not clear. Interviewee A (2019), explains that in own experience, before the implementation of a marketing software the company had different processes and used different software in the marketing departments across different regions. This represents another challenge for companies to homologise the workflows.

Understanding the current situation is a priority before implementing any technology. As it is visible in the case and the reference from the interview, both companies presented different challenges that is necessary to identify.

The second process involves the technical use of marketing automation. In this phase, the buyer of the technology is exposed to the solution for the first time and runs pilot test. GE Healthcare, in their roll-out plan, shows that their pilot had different validations to be tested. This process is followed by top administrators to define the areas of success and the matters that should be customised.

B2B organisations can see during the technical process, how the technology is structured and get a better idea of how it can be applicable to its operations. By doing this, the implementation at full scale in the organisation is clearer and more standardised. It is important to provide feedback and communicate the challenges for the organisation with technical aspects.

The third process involves the integration of the workflows. This can be a challenge without the help of the vendor; for this reason, it is necessary for the customer to discuss with the vendor all the operations in order to magnify the outcomes with automation. In this process it is also defined how the operations of marketing and sales departments will be after the automation.

GE Healthcare managed to integrate their marketing and sales processes with technology to develop a strategy that resulted in closing 30% of the sales in the funnel generated. This could not be possible without improving collaboration of marketing and sales teams, to define the strategy in defining the target prospects and have a flow of the leads in the funnel until closing. Interviewee A (2019), also explains that having the automated processes in marketing makes it easier for the sales to have a profiling of the prospects to make the decisions. It reduces their operating time so they could think more about strategy. This implies that by implementing automation it is possible to make the cycles more effective and use resources for other activities of value.

A key part of the processes is to define the KPIs according to the objectives of the project. Not only with the number of leads and MQLs as it is observed in the Marketing and Sales funnel of GE Healthcare, but there are other such as Opens, Holds, Database Growth, Engagement Rates, Impressions, CTRs, CTOs, Conversion Rates. As Interviewee A (2019) mentions, with these it is possible to check on the performance of marketing and sales reps.

Another important consideration is to keep documentation throughout the implementation of the integrations, of the training sessions, and with manuals of use. This applies for the three workflows presented, and it allows to revise through the implementation process, the agreements done by all the stakeholders, and modify according to the performance of the use.

Data

Importing data to the new system is a complex task. It is not just about set-up the solution and the processes, but as (Grossberg, K., 2015) states, the more data we have the messier becomes the picture. With this statement it can be said that companies usually manage large amounts of information about accounts, prospects, and historical data that has been

generated throughout the existence of the company. A marketing automation solution should be also scalable enough to support the large amount of data, that constantly grows.

GE Health care created a pipeline based on opportunities with contact information from all over the world; this data generated comes with great responsibility. Companies like GE Healthcare must have a defined and regulated process to obtain, process and share personal information.

There are several regulations such as GDPR in Europe which recently have become stricter in auditing the privacy and protection of third-party data. GDPR is a legislation designed to ensure that precautions are made to protect personal data, and that if an organisation falls victim to an attack or breach where personal data is accessed, they report it to their customers and the authorities within 72 hours of being made aware of the incident. (Palmer, D., 2019). Because data is the fuel of the marketing and sales operations, it is of high importance to give relevance to its appropriate management and the understanding of regulations.

People

People is the element that describes the different stakeholders in relation to the implementation. On the vendors side, the sales representatives provide support in terms of the transaction and further operative support, the technical support provides the training necessary for the company to understand the solution. Other stakeholders on the side of the vendor can also participate. In the case of GE Healthcare, there are several stakeholders from the implementation team, the investors, and the users in marketing and sales departments. Other people from a third perspective are the prospects and customers, as the importance of B2B is based on relationships, effective communication with marketing automation is possible.

The users of the marketing automation solution in the marketing and sales departments are also subject to training in different levels and with different methods. A hands-on training session involves the first use of the platform. It is important for the trainees to provide feedback for further customisation based on their needs. It is observed in the roll-out plan of GE Healthcare that there is a high importance of preparing the users for the new processes and technology. Other companies use learning platforms to keep a documented information source for training purposes, as well as to provide help with assistance in an efficient way.

6.2 Best practices to implement marketing automation

Based on the learnings from the case and the theoretical framework, implementation plan that considers the factors technology, process, people, and data is necessary for marketing automation to be successful. The adoption is integrated in two equally important parts. The first one consists in the technical implementation of the software, in which the change occurs at an organisational level. The second is based on operations, which explain the agreements and processes of both marketing and sales teams. Making "full use of an innovation," and true adoption refers more to use than purely initial adoption (Rogers, 1983, cited in Parthasarathy, M. & Sohi, R.S., 1997).

Knowing the elements of adoption of an enterprise software, it is possible to define the best practices for a successful implementation of marketing automation. The best practices is influenced by the factors, so it considers the most important aspects of the project. The structure follows the methodology of PRINCE2 previously described.

Understanding the nature of marketing automation

The first principle of the methodology is to have a clear justification of the project. For this reason, the stage 0 foresees the actual purchase of a marketing automation software. At this stage is very important to have a clear understanding of what it is and how can it help the company achieve the expected goals.

Purchasing an enterprise software requires a complete evaluation of the risks and making an informed decision should involve listening to other users' experiences and scenarios.

Goal	Actions
Stage 0 - Understanding the nature of marketing automation	
Research the value proposition of marketing automation	- Understand the current sales process of the company - Be informed about the latest trends in marketing automation
Make an informed decision	- Write down the company's goals of the project - Identify the sales and marketing requirements - Evaluate vendors against different scenarios - Talk to references - Focus on the value and not the price

Acquisition of technology

After making the buying decision it is necessary to agree on a solution that fits the specific needs and goals of the customer. At stage 1, the relationship with the vendor is strengthen

and the communication is an essential part to tailor the solution. The pilot test is necessary to see on first-hand how the system works and whether management can implement it for lower levels of the organisation. Based on the pilot test and the initial feedback, the plan takes a clearer shape and the customisation is evaluated.

Goal	Actions
Stage 1 - Acquisition of technology (Marketo)	
Sign contract	- Agree on the project plan that best suits the overall strategy - Understand the terms and conditions offered by the vendor
Build relationship with vendor	- Book meeting to explain the goals of the project and requirements established previously - Provide important information about the roles and processes to the vendor, so they can provide a tailored plan for implementation - Get the contact information of key support people on the vendor's side - Establish roles and responsibilities on the customer's side
Create a pilot test for management	- Based on the vendor's understanding of the customer's needs, and the key capabilities provided by Marketo, different scenarios should be run in the platform - Get access to actual accounts and run the pilot together with the vendor - Invite system administrators only
Provide feedback and adjust	- Based on the pilot test, the customer should provide feedback on the first experience with marketing automation software - The vendor should make the appropriate changes if possible to provide a customised solution - Run a second workshop to evaluate the adjustments - Approve the plan if everything is in order

Planning and documentation

At stage 2, the customer and the vendor prepare a plan for each of the factors. The first one is specific to the processes based on the experience from the vendor with guidelines. The second one focuses on the people, agreeing on training of the personnel of the marketing and sales department. The third plan describes the process in which data will be managed, based on the regulations applicable. It is important to keep the documentation, as it is one of the success factors to learn from experiences and make further modifications.

Goal	Actions
Stage 2 - Planning and documentation	
Agree on a process plan	- The vendor should prepare and deliver: 1. A technical plan with operational procedures, system requirements and other technicalities 2. A user plan with guidelines of how to use the marketing automation software for the different levels of users - The customer should prepare feedback for the documentation provided - Make necessary adjustments
Agree on a training plan	- The vendor should suggest a training plan based on the customer's objectives - Set the priorities for training based on the core capabilities and secondary functions - Define which users are receiving the training and set a timeframe and location, both parties should approve

Agree on a plan for data protection	- Based on the regulations applicable for the sector and the company, the vendor and the customer should agree on a plan that explains the process for data management
Archive documentation	- Both parties should keep records on the plans and agreements made at this stage - Agree on periodical meetings for evaluation and adjustments during and after the implementation

Implementation of marketing automation solution

The implementation stage considers all the feedback provided in the plans and it integrates all the factors for an optimal environment. At this point, marketing and sales representatives are introduced to the system and are trained in modules. Further documentation should be provided. When the training is concluded, it is expected that the staff has a complete knowledge of the technical procedures to use marketing automation software.

Goal	Actions
Stage 3 - Implementation of marketing automation solution	
Include customisations in the solution	- The vendor should make the necessary adjustments to create the optimal environment for the customer - Include set of rules to manage data and information according to the plan for data protection - Adapt the current channels, content, and third party software to the marketing automation solution - The customer should provide a final round of feedback and make sure the environment runs according to the plan and documentation
Run technical training of the marketing automation system	- The users should receive training in basic, intermediate and advanced modules - The users should be provided with material that includes guidelines and technical information in a format that is easy to understand for all levels

Integrate Marketing and Sales processes

The first stages of this implementation plan can be similar for all B2B companies, however internal processes should be paired with the solution. In stage 4, management should discuss with their marketing and sales department the processes for each and for collaboration.

It is important to put in practice with real experiences everything that has been implemented by running the operational training. Marketing automation is fully implemented at this stage including a clear operational plan.

Goal	Actions
Stage 4 - Integrate Marketing and Sales processes	
Develop operational plan	- Establish a standardised process for marketing activities - Establish a standardised process for sales activities - Establish a standardised process for the collaboration and support of sales and marketing

Run operational training of the marketing automation system	- Create hypothetical scenarios in which sales and marketing employ marketing automation to manage the Marketing funnel at all stages - Test the marketing automation system with sample leads and follow throughout the process live - Get feedback from marketing and sales
Archive documentation	- Have a complete operational plan that is documented and includes the learnings and limitations from the implementation stage - Set up periodical revisions to the document and keep updated and available for users
Kick-off of marketing automation strategy	- Set a date to launch the software - Make sure all users and administrators have understood the plans and technical capabilities

Monitor, evaluate and adjust

There is a learning curve that must be monitored and evaluated. In this last stage, the performance of the team is evaluated based on the results obtained on the first weeks. New areas of opportunity can be found in the beginning and working closely with the vendor throughout the process can help the company succeed with this strategy.

Goal	Actions
Stage 5 - Monitor, evaluate and adjust	
Monitor	- The customer should observe the performance and understanding in the first stages
Evaluate	- The customer should evaluate the performance of the team based on periodical results
Adjust	- Develop an adjustment report for Marketo and the Marketing and Sales team - Implement changes to the technical and operational plans - Keep documentation of the experiences - Set a date for the next monitoring stage

For management it is important to know the expected duration of the program, as resources can be limited, planning of every stage should be enough detailed. For the purposes of the implementation of a marketing automation software like Marketo, B2B companies can expect over five months to complete the project. Although every business is different by its nature, the following plan provides a clear idea on the time spent at each stage.

6.3 Impact of marketing automation in B2B

To understand the impact of marketing automation in B2B, three main results were identified in the GE Healthcare case study and framework: sales growth and shorter sales cycles, a

transformation of the marketing and sales operations, and improved customer engagement with marketing communication.

Sales growth and shorter sales cycles

First, the most evident impact of the implementation reflects in sales. According to Stephanie Meyer, "GE Healthcare drove 2 billion dollars (USD) worth of opportunities in their sales funnel, with 600 million dollars (USD) worth of wins from result of implementing marketing automation". Marketo. (2015). GE Healthcare had already identified prospects that were ready to buy, and with marketing automation, these prospects were more likely to be aware of the offerings of the company.

The reason for the impact in sales is also implied in the case when the Marketing and Sales funnel is re-evaluated to fit the automation process. The integration of marketing and sales helps companies have a better focus on the most prominent prospects and have higher rates of closing sales. Interviewee A (2019), explained that one of the key benefits of marketing automation is growth in sales and shorter sales cycles.

This comes to explain that the value of implementing a marketing automation solution has a direct relation to the main goals of B2B marketing and sales departments measured in sales. Not only the amount of sales is influenced, but as mentioned previously on section 2, one major challenge identified in B2B is the complexity and length of the sales cycle. Marketing automation is then an option that supports B2B companies with this pain.

Transformation of the marketing and sales operations in B2B

In the case, it is clearly visible how the operations were modified according to marketing automation. It was identified in the management process of the Marketing and Sales funnel. The integration of marketing and sales processes, together with marketing automation, allowed GE Healthcare to have cleaner data to identify better leads at first glance. It also impacted in a more efficient flow of leads throughout the funnel and a better visibility of the stages in the process.

Also, during the implementation plan, GE Healthcare identified that a qualifying model, such as BANT, was necessary. This way the company was able to get the MQL in an efficient way for qualification and for creating opportunities. Interviewee A (2019), explains that other metrics to measure the value of marketing automation is through the amount and quality of leads, MQLs, SALs, and wins and lost rates.

This evidences that by improving the collaboration of marketing and sales departments, the performance of both teams increases.

Improved customer engagement with marketing communication

GE Healthcare was also able to improve communication with target audiences and brand awareness after software automation. Meyer mentioned, "[…] customers are making up their minds earlier, before they see a salesperson. Marketers have to think about content in the context of where the customer is versus where we are. In the past, we mostly thought about closing the deal. What we are seeing now is that content can be delivered higher upstream. Chahal, M. (2015).

This outcome is explained with the effective use of the engagement programs in marketing automation. Having clusters of people with the same interest, increase the engagement rates of personas with the content in different channels. When the messages are more specific to the customers' needs, a better reception of the messages increases the brand awareness too.

6.4 Contribution to knowledge

Explaining a relatively new concept in the marketing field that has the potential to impact sales and the way B2B companies operate. The main contribution to knowledge with this study is a general overview of the impacts of marketing automation in B2B companies and what the implementation considered for this to be possible. The research provided a new perspective on the factors to consider when implementing technology for automation in B2B companies, specifically for commercial purposes. The results open a discussion for other researchers to dive in into more specific areas of the research.

This study also aims to influence to the decision-making process of purchasing a marketing automation solution; as it provides a clear understanding of the different elements of this technology, its benefits, implications, and methodology to manage a project of implementation. It is intended for B2B companies to take this research as a base to get a better value of their investments in technology for marketing and sales purposes. The results provide a better understanding of how automation can have an impact in sales revenue, the transformation of their marketing and sales operations, and brand management, and in consequence, achieve a competitive advantage.

On the other hand, it is also of great value for technology companies to understand, throughout this reasoning, how can they prove value to their customers. Selling a solution is just the first step of a long-lasting relationship. Vendors like Marketo, as B2B organisations too, should also have the sensibility of the customers, as they are for the most the reason they exist.

Finally, from the references provided, it can be said some processes and elements of technology for B2B are still relevant even from more than 20 years ago. Implementation of any software still has some of the same challenges and implications that are also a matter of discussion for the technological industry. This is an important observation as it suggests that researchers will encounter similar elements in literature that may apply to upcoming innovations.

6.5 Limitations of the study

There are two main limitations of this project. The first one is related to the complexity of implementation due to company size, size of marketing and sales team, tech-skills from users, among other. The intention of this research is to provide, at a higher level, a scope of how can B2B companies evaluate the implementation of automated processes in marketing and sales based on more specific requirements. Many internal and external factors can also influence the success or failure of the implementation.

The second important limitation is the lack of attribution to marketing automation in sales. As a relatively new concept, information regarding this distinction is not clearly noted in the financial statements of public companies. For B2B companies that have recently implemented it can be challenging to measure the specific impact on this attribution. This is an important limitation, as it reduces the scope for research of the impact of marketing automation in the financial statements. The impact in sales is based on suppositions, as sales are typically attributed to the joint efforts of marketing and sales departments together.

This project, also, does not intent to provide evidence of which individual applications of the marketing automation are the most influential to the impacts. This is due to the lack of available quantitative and qualitative data that provide attribution to singular elements. Rather, the results are based on the supposition that all applications of marketing automation have equal level of importance.

6.6 Opportunities for further research

Further research should be focused on studying specific attributes to the impact of marketing automation. This study intents to open a discussion to research the impact attributed to marketing automation in sales, performance of operations, and brand management. This is an opportunity due to the few literatures available about this trending subject. This study has the potential for other researchers in the marketing field to explore in more detail, and from the inside of an organisation with real-time quantitative data, a punctual attribution to each impact.

7. Conclusions

This study has provided evidence through the case study and references, to support the research question about the impacts of marketing automation in B2B. The main results identified were the increase in sales and shorter sales cycles, the transformation of the marketing and sales operations, and the improved customer engagement with marketing communication. These results were described based on observations of real-life experiences to give grounds to the value of the solution and present the automation alternative as a tool that can bring benefits to other B2B companies.

It can be said that marketing automation is a technology that supports B2B processes, and, although it integrates several applications of digital marketing, it facilitates the workflow and efficiency. It has also proved to tackle the main challenges of B2B companies including the complexity of customer management and the number of influencers and decision makers, in a way that keeps everyone engaged with the message of the company. This is also a key factor towards building long-term customer relationships. Lastly, its capabilities to integrate processes and tools assists in the understanding of marketers entering in the B2B world.

This study takes the reader to the conclusion that investing in technology without clear purpose and guidelines is useless. It requires a broad understanding of the elements, integrated into a concise implementation plan to aim towards the desired results. As shown through the eyes of the most competitive organisations in their fields, there is no fast track to achieve it. But when perfectioned, it takes the organisation to a different level.

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9. Appendix

9.1 Phone interview transcript - Interviewee A – Digital Partner Marketing Manager | LatAm

Interviewee A – Digital Partner Marketing Manager | LatAm

Company A – B2B company, leading in technology

Conducted on May 20th 2019

Contact: +52 (1) 81 8020-9533

What are the main reasons of your organization's decision to implement a marketing automation solution?

The company needed a solution in the cloud that could be used by all the demand generation, digital marketing and business development teams. Marketing automation helps them to listen, learn, and engage with prospects and customers, providing them the right content at the right time to acquire, grow, and build brand advocates. All the global ones, there are in the USA, LATAM, Europe, Middle East, Africa, Japan. It's practically new, they've been with the project for less than a year. The intention is that through the platform marketing automation campaigns could be created that facilitate communication with prospects and customers; and to facilitate Brand awareness and brand positioning, among other initiatives.

What were reasons considered to select the marketing automation vendor?

It was done as a tender evaluating as 5 suppliers, the most relevant in the market. They were based on the studies of Gartner, Forrester, and SiriusDecisions. They do their SWOT analysis of each of the providers. We were looking for one that fits well with what the company was looking for. Relevant issues of the company were evaluated, such as, for example, the security configuration of the company. in this case, the company needed a configuration that could support the multilevel operation, which was scalable, among other reasons. Marketo was chosen based on its recognition as a leader in the industry. Marketo helps organizations transform the digital marketing strategy with constant product innovation, a vibrant community of marketers and a robust partner ecosystem.

What are the key factors that impact the success of implementing a marketing automation solution? Please explain.

Define the use cases of the platform. Unlike many marketing companies, this company has a structure in which the corporate dictates the pattern of all campaigns. They create the templates; they have teams that are called 'bar-raisers'. To create campaigns, you have to use the structure dictated in this way. Once you have your review campaign, you have to send it to the digital quality department. In this way they can ensure that they are done correctly and that they are approved through all of their global offices.

For the manuals of use, anyone who will use the license must take a Certification called 'Marketo Ignition'. The certification has to go through different levels of approval through the internal platform of the company. That a person can pass the exam does not mean that he will use the platform. We defined who were the active roles (who are the users, bar-raisers, etc), and the configuration and operation processes such as templates, authorization.

What are the benefits of implementing a marketing automation solution in your organization?

The benefits have been ROI. For example, a Marketo license we had quoted in my previous company as 40, 000 pesos (MXN) per month. Marketo has an alliance with this company currently. They carry a very strict process that audits the use of each license, and blocks when it is not used based on the established plans. For the ROI, they considered the expenses for process implementation, by trial and error.
Another important benefit is that marketing automation helps shorten sales cycles. They are given a weight and follow up to each of the activities within the commercial process so that the communication that prospects and customers are constant. To do cross-selling, upselling, etc.
The fact that we have automated processes gives us a competitive advantage.

Increasing conversion rates is another benefit. Also, with automation it is possible to follow up each campaign quickly, this in turn facilitates conversion rates to be able to take action on those that do not perform well.

The more automated processes, we can cover more opportunities, more campaigns, more actionable in automatic. You can close more sales in this way.

Increase sales and productivity. The tool allows that business development (sales reps) do not have to be aware of all their accounts. There are times when there are many requests and it is not possible to attend them all. You have to carefully select the accounts with which you are going to work, and the others send them with a partner. You even have to have people trained even with partners to maintain the proper flow. Having the automated processes in marketing makes it easier for the sales to have a profiling of the prospects to make the decisions. It reduced their operating time so they could think more about strategy. Customer churn, for example, was not only to generate demand. It is also upselling and cross-selling. We need to have constant contact with the client portfolio. When there is a customer who is unattended, or has not informed him about new solutions, collaborations with another vendor, etc. They lost interest and it is possible that they left with the competition. In this way it reduced the customer churn.

There is a value within the leadership of the company that is called "furgality" to give the 'slap of furgality' in terms of expenses. Before they used different platforms. One was Pardot; This platform did not have a direct integration with Salesforce. Many people did not know how to use it. Because of how complex it was, other people went to outside agencies to make campaigns with this software. In this way the expenses were increased because the efforts were not unified under a single platform.

What are the metrics the organization uses to measure the value of marketing automation?

All the metrics of the field of marketing and generation of demand and analysis of databases. The tool is integrated with Salesforce. From there it pulls all the information. There is another similar software that is also integrated with Marketo and the ecosystem of partners. This automatically sends the leads to the appropriate partner, the local sales force. All those digital marketing and business metrics are used. There are usually Leads,

MQLs, SALs, SAOs, Wins, Losts, Opens, Holds, Database Growth, Engagement Rates, Impressions, CTRs, CTOs, Conversion Rates, etc. With these it is possible to check on the performance of marketing and sales reps.

In your experience, what are the main barriers or challenges during the implementation of marketing automation?

The main challenges of the project were the technological adoption of the users so that they could learn to generate campaigns and report results. Both on mobile and on the web. Because for example the company offers something called 'office hours', where they give you training to use the platform. But it is somewhat limited in terms of time. We are around 2,000 marketing people; it is difficult to make people change the 'mind-set' to use this platform. There was also resistance to change, and many collaborators preferred to use agencies to carry out many of the activities that run everything with software. Unifying efforts was a challenge, since there are many business units, regions. There was the cultural, language barrier. The use of resources to be able to train employees. The company has an internal training platform and there is a team dedicated to updating all the articles. If someone has a question, they must access that platform. So, communication is more direct with the use of technology.

How can B2B companies overcome these challenges?

The most important thing before starting the project is to align everything with the shareholders, collaborators, partners, etc. Each region has a different performance, each with its own metrics and numbers. The main idea was that we wanted this implementation to work for all business lines, for all regions, for all work teams. It aligns well with the objectives of the company and also prioritizes activities. You know what's going to happen first, we have to wait for it to happen, and what to do. Identify skill gaps, which are the technical and operational requirements. If they were already working with Pardot, who is going to do the data migration, how long will it take, what resources are needed, who is going to give the support, how are we going to make the reports. We had to invest training, we invested in the e-learning platform to make video tutorials and in the end, we did tests

to know if one is able to use the license or has to take the course again. It was a work in conjunction with all the regions because each one has very specific needs. Although all employees share the culture of the company, obviously in terms of generating demand in marketing, some were more advanced than others. The United States and Japan, for example, are more advanced in these techniques, and in Latin America there was still a lot of work to be done. You also have to review the processes constantly, and see what can be improved, what things have to change and what is not working. Make an embrace of the small goals and not see all the project as a. If the goal was to increase sales, first there was a focus on small objectives and to start helping people who understood those processes in order to reach the goal. This way you can take better control of the solution and it does not overwhelm stakeholders.

*There is a policy that does not allow collaborators to talk about the internal processes of the company, nor it is able to publish content that points directly to the company. For this reason, the name of the company and collaborator are subject to disclosure.