

FOLIO: HOW PUBLISHERS ARE STREAMLINING THEIR BUSINESSES WITH MARKETING AUTOMATION

A Folio: special report on using data to boost efficiency in operations and open new opportunities, with experts from BNP Media, Bobit Business Media and PMMI Media Group

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From controlling the temperature in our homes and offices to helping drive our cars, automation is changing our everyday lives.

This shift is transforming the way that we do business as well, and has been a game changer in the way that publishers approach marketing. By tapping into marketing automation on both the front- and back-ends of the business, publishers are creating more efficient operations that can deliver synchronized messaging on multiple platforms in a virtual instant. From social media to email to telemarketing and SMS and several other channels, automation has a number of use cases publishers should be exploring.

However, like most technologies, automation is complex and has a language of its own. But that hasn't stopped some publishers from leaning into it and reaping all the benefits it offers. These publishers have released that success in today's media landscape because of their willingness to embrace technology and capture insightful data. And they have streamlined their operations across a multitude of channels, thus maximizing their output.

► START SIMPLE

When data management technology provider Omeda rolled out its *Odyssey* marketing-automation platform nearly a year ago, there were so many options available to publishers that many didn't know where to begin. The program allows users to do everything from creating welcome emails to running advertisers' campaigns.

Publishers who've had success with the platform say that the key is to start with a simple campaign and then build it out from there once you see what's working and become more comfortable within the platform. For example, you may use a database query to find local prospects working at specific companies in order to send them emails and social media ads aiming to get them to come to an upcoming conference.

"The big thing is not to overcomplicate it," says Elizabeth Kachoris, senior director of digital and data at PMMI Media Group. "Start simple. Decide how you're going to measure your success, and just do that at first."

PMMI's first use of the platform was an onboarding campaign with two simple components: a welcome email and a follow-up a few weeks later.

"Now, it's evolved as we learned the tool and learned what was working," Kachoris says. "It's better to start simply and just get started, rather than worrying about perfecting the end game right away."

Bobit Business Media used *Odyssey* to create a welcome series of emails that go out to new subscribers. After an initial confirmation email, new subscribers receive a welcome email that introduces them to the brand and highlights editor blogs. If subscribers open that email, they'll receive another one a few days later, focused on the site's top 10 articles.

Subscribers who don't open the first email receive a follow-up asking them to add the publication to their whitelist of recognized senders. If they don't open that email, the communication ends.

"The first version that we spec'd out was super complicated," says Bobit's director of audience development, Kati Tucker. "We had different actions based on whether they clicked or didn't click, or if they didn't open the email. We kept getting stuck the more complex it became, so we finally decided to scale back and make it simpler. If they open the email, they go down one path. If they don't open it, they go down another."

The beauty of marketing automation is that while you can "set and forget" the campaigns that work well, it's easy to quickly tweak a campaign that's not giving you the desired results. This allows marketing teams more flexibility in making necessary real-time changes to create a journey that engages readers.

These types of tests on a publisher's own products are particularly important before rolling out campaigns with advertisers.

"Personalized event registration campaigns, targeted renewal efforts or even experimenting with new email newsletters are all great ways to put the technology through its paces," says James Capo, Omeda's chief revenue officer. "The worst that happens? You don't get great results, but you aren't damaging an advertiser relationship, and in the process you learn something."

► INCREASED EFFICIENCY

Marketing automation allows smaller publishers, who may not have a large marketing department, to create complex, responsive campaigns tailored to their readers—the type of programs that may have previously been available only to larger companies with more resources. Once they've put the automation in place, they're able to move on to other tasks they might not otherwise get to.

At PMMI, for example, marketing automation has created a process around onboarding and renewals in a way that didn't exist before.

"We would come around to audit time and realize we hadn't run enough renewal campaigns in emails," Kachoris says. "So we would try to get one out real fast and get a couple hundred responses. Now, it's happening every month and it's not on anyone's radar to do that anymore. That frees up my production staff for other projects. It seems so basic, but that's the whole point, right? You automate it so you don't have to think about it."

Among the projects that staffers are tackling: improving the value of the company's lists.

"None of these marketing efforts work if we aren't reaching the right people," Kachoris says. "So we have taken some of the time that marketing automation has freed up for staff, and we have them focused not just on new list acquisition and existing list retention, but also on determining that the quality of our list is as high as possible."



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— Elizabeth Kachoris, Senior Director of Digital and Data, PMMI Media Group

While Kachoris says it's too early to calculate the exact return on investment of the marketing automation program, she has already seen increased efficiency from her team and the potential to further streamline and cut other costs in the future.

"This is the year that I think it will really hit our bottom line, as we're automating Facebook and the DFP [DoubleClick for Publishers] integration," she adds. "Hopefully we will have to make fewer telemarketing calls, because I have other channels to reach those people. I'm getting names on my own now, too, because I'm experimenting with other ways to market my products that don't involve buying a list and sending it to a telemarketer. It's all part of our 2019 plan."

Tucker adds that Bobit is also already seeing savings, since the company has been able to scale back on the costly direct mail efforts they'd previously been using as a primary means of subscription renewals.

► YOUR LIST IS YOUR CURRENCY

While the list has always been the king for publishers, marketing automation opens new opportunities to build the most focused list possible, rather than simply aiming for the largest possible list without regard to the relevancy of those on it.

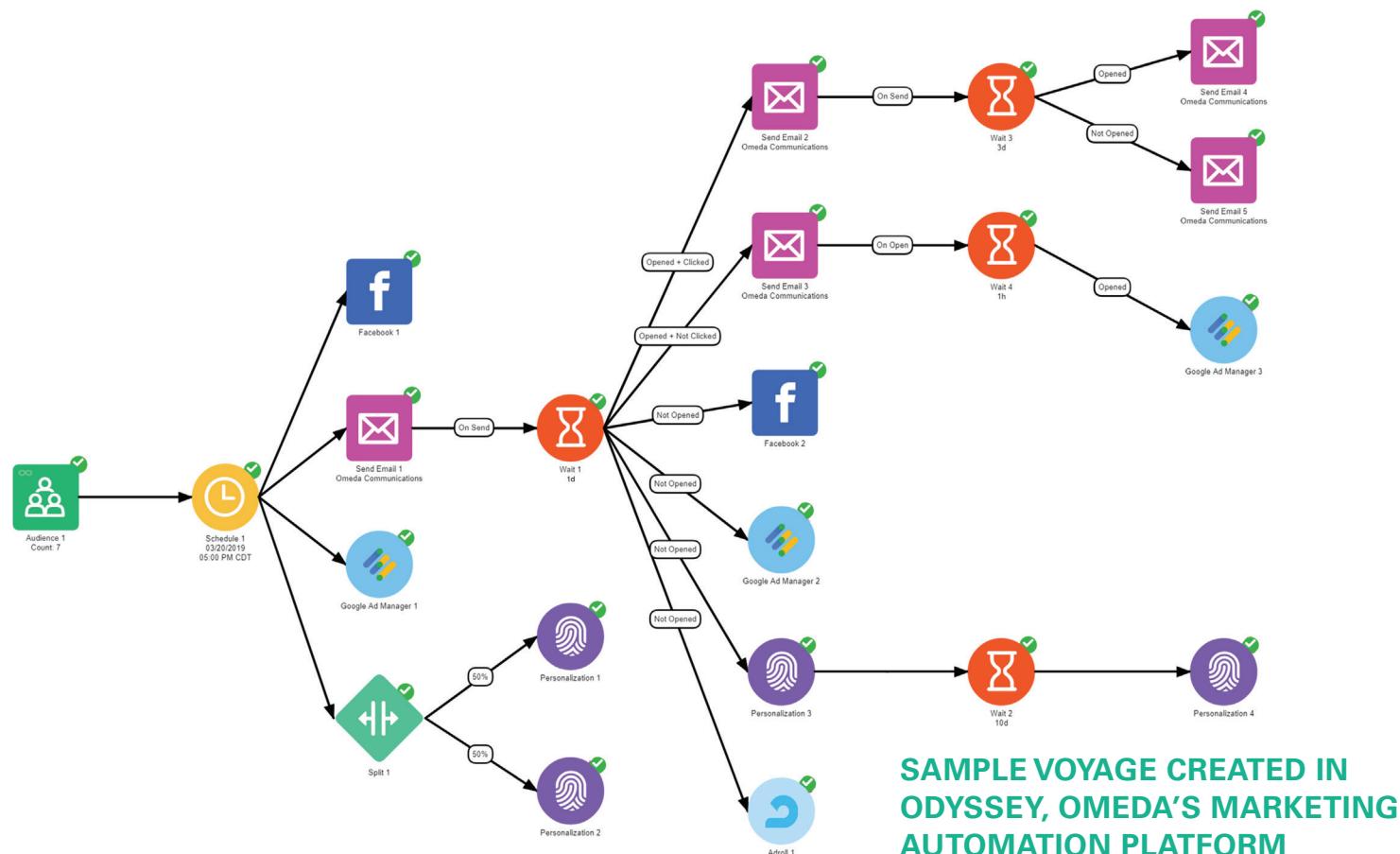
"Just like many other industries, our approach to B2B marketing was rooted in a batch and blast mentality," says Darrell Dal Pozzo, chief experience officer at BNP Media. "In the past year, we've moved away from that approach. Specifically, we're focusing in on how our audience engages with us. We're no longer manually sending everything to our entire list when we blast something out."

Marketing automation makes it easier to strengthen lists, allowing publishers, for example, to delete subscribers who haven't opened an email in six months or who consistently move correspondence into their junk folders. That's a task that Bobit has just recently started to undertake.

9 Channels You Can and Should Be Automating

1. EMAIL
4. ONSITE PERSONALIZATION
7. SMS MESSAGING
2. FACEBOOK
5. OFFSITE TARGETING
8. PRINT ON DEMAND
3. INSTAGRAM
6. GOOGLE AD MANAGER
9. TELEMARKETING

Lifecycle of a Marketing Automation Campaign



"We had seen some delivery problems because we had unengaged subscribers out there, so we made the decision to remove those people," Tucker says. "Did it make our advertisers happy? Not really. But it was what we needed to change our focus. It's not how many people. It's how engaged those people are."

Tucker's not the only publishing executive to report some pushback from advertisers who haven't fully embraced the concept of a behavioral marketing strategy. BNP Media has made it a point to educate its marketing partners about the added value that a quality list can offer.

"We're changing the way that we work every day," Dal Pozzo says. "There are still a lot of marketing partners that we work with who are asking about circulation and how many thousands of people your e-newsletter goes to, versus accepting quality over quantity."



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That emphasis on quality and reaching the right people is particularly important in the B2B space, says Tony Napoleone, VP of client success at Omeda. Rather than competing on scale, B2B publishers can instead capitalize on the value of targeted lists.

"If you're trying to reach nuclear engineers in the eastern half of the U.S., for example, there are maybe 100 of them," he says. "There are not thousands."

In addition to culling lists, marketing automation affords publishers the ability to run queries on their databases to create targeted names based on criteria that combines first-party data (such as their name, age, job or location), with information about an online user's behavior, such as articles they've recently read.

► QUALIFIED NOT QUANTIFIED PROSPECTS

As more advertisers begin to embrace the idea of targeted marketing, publishers can leverage the higher quality data that they now have to create new products and campaigns for those advertisers. For example, a publisher and advertiser might collaborate for a cross-promotion, in which a publisher can automatically deploy additional campaigns when audience members fall into the right combination of products, demographics and behaviors.

"For marketing partners that are trying to get stronger, more qualified prospects and behavior data into their database or marketing automation tools, we not only are sending them someone that clicked on an ad, but offering content intelligence pertaining to their company, business or industry," Dal Pozzo says.

Capo gives an example of an advertiser aiming to reach hospital CEOs who are interested in electronic medical records systems. A publisher might be able to sell the "right to communicate" with that segment for a period. So any CEO that visits the website during that period and reads about that topic would receive a personalized email with messaging based on clicks or engagement with that email. They might also get a personalized message on the website if they visit the next day, as well as messaging on Facebook or AdRoll.

"Now, you are truly creating 'surround-sound' marketing, all based on the behavior of a highly valuable audience segment," Capo explains. "You don't promise a certain number of CEOs, just that the advertiser's message will be in front of them at the right time, in the right context and on the right platform—wherever they are engaging."

As more publishers begin to view their data as a valuable asset, the number of stakeholders interested in marketing automation has grown well beyond the marketing department. In addition to the sales team looking for solutions for their clients, editorial teams can benefit from insight into exactly how their audiences are engaging with their content. At leading companies, the executive team has also taken an interest on the capabilities available via marketing automation.



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► DATA DETERMINES THE FUTURE OF AUTOMATION

As the value of data grows, so has its potential to become a liability as privacy concerns and regulations continue to mount.

“Privacy regulations are going to be huge, and they could single-handedly change the way that automation is used,” Dal Pozzo says. “But we will certainly adapt and our marketing partners will as well.”

The focus on privacy may also benefit some publishers, if they can prove themselves to be responsible handlers of their customers’ data.

“First-party data is important,” Napoleone says. “Everyone has had their digital marketing dollars eaten up by Facebook and Google over the past few years, but now some advertisers are starting to walk back from some of those things. Recent news hasn’t made them the most trustworthy places to put your marketing budget.”

It’s important for publishers to understand privacy regulations and to select vendors that can safeguard data and comply with rules around marketing consent. Touting their own first-party data may be an increasingly important way for publishers to differentiate themselves from the huge platforms that have become so difficult to compete within recent years.

In addition to focusing on privacy, publishers say that they’ll likely rely more on marketing automation going forward, expanding to use not only email, social and web platforms, but also other methods of contact, such as text messages and direct mail.

“We’re using marketing automation right now to reach our readers and magazine subscribers by email,” Kachoris says. “But I expect it to eventually take over the other ways we communicate with our readers, as well as the way that we communicate with our advertisers. I imagine it will be even more all-encompassing for all of the data in our world.” 



► ABOUT OMEDA

Omeda is the leading audience management platform allowing you to acquire, unify, activate & manage your data. Visit www.omeda.com for details.