

Revenue Architects eBook: Marketing Automation Selection

Five steps to select the right marketing
automation solution.



Need Marketing Automation?

So, you've realized that you need Marketing Automation. What now? With a variety of different solutions available – from enterprise to start up – how do you know which solution is right for your organization?

This guide will provide you with the information you will need to assess marketing automation vendors and choose which solution is right for you.



Selecting the right solution is not easy

- Marketing Automation evaluations typically involve both a diverse stakeholder team and a myriad of potential solutions.
 - Diverse choice - many marketing automation suppliers, sales force automation solutions, eMail marketing solutions, etc.
 - Committee buying – the need to facilitate a group of stakeholders in the decision (often including the board of directors)
 - Stakeholder viewpoints –managing a variety of needs (tactical vs. strategic) to align sales, marketing and technology teams
 - Political persuasions – more often than not, key team members bring pet projects and pre-established preferences
 - Organizational culture –implementing a marketing automation solution involves business alignment across the organization – the culture must be supportive and aligned to adopt the new strategy.

So many choices...where to begin?

Below is a useful graphic from Marketing Automation Software Guide illustrating and categorizing players in this space:



While this guide will not go into detail about the individual offerings of every marketing automation vendor on the market today, it will give you the tools to evaluate the vendors for yourself.

Use an Objective Process

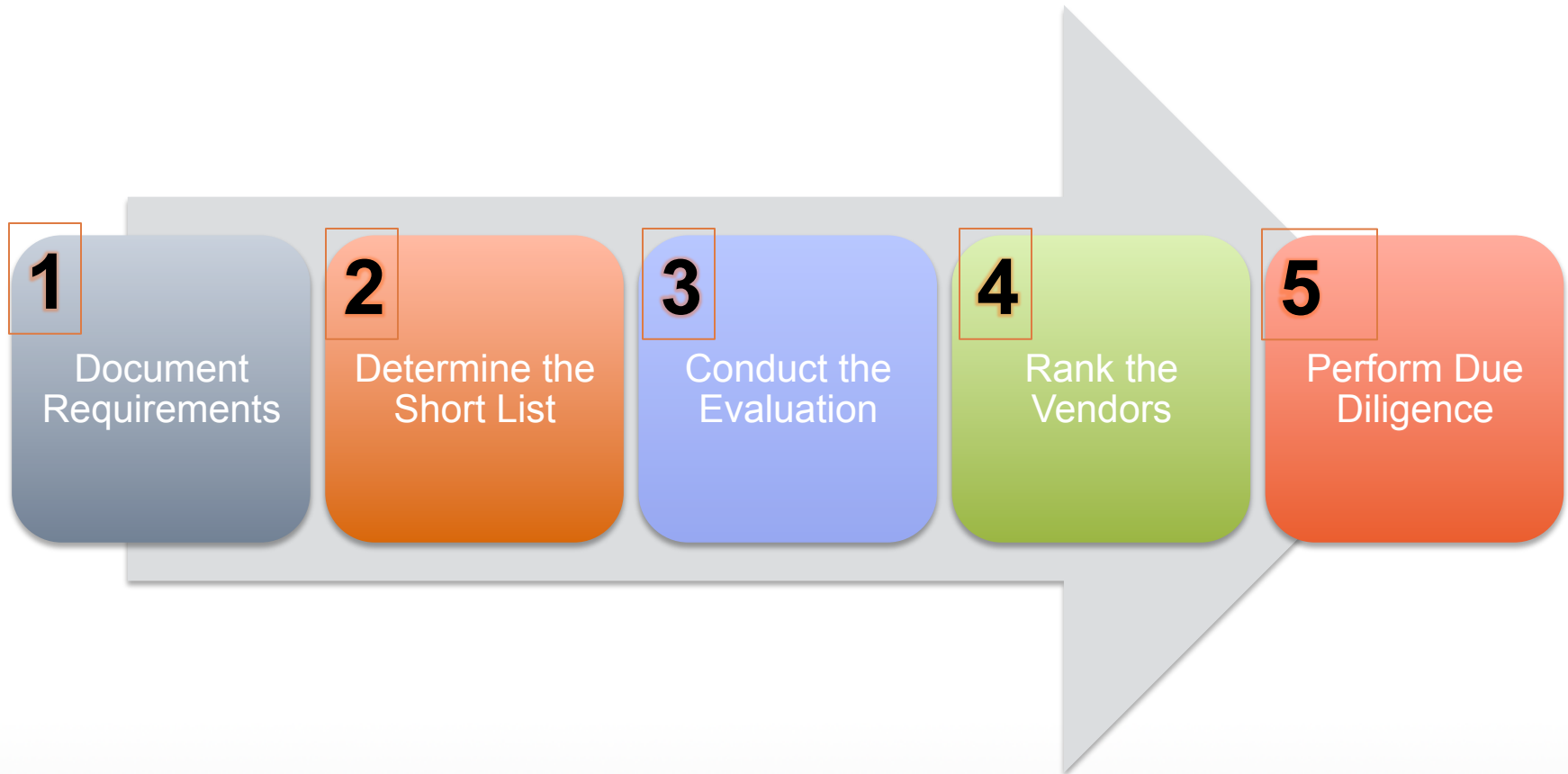
- The process should be objective and facilitative to align the organization around a clear choice.
- Need help? We can help you facilitate the process with our Objective Solution Selection (OS²) methodology.

OS² Methodology

OS² Methodology

1. Document Requirements
2. Determine the short list
3. Conduct the evaluation
4. Rank the vendors
5. Perform due diligence

OS² Process



1. Document Requirements

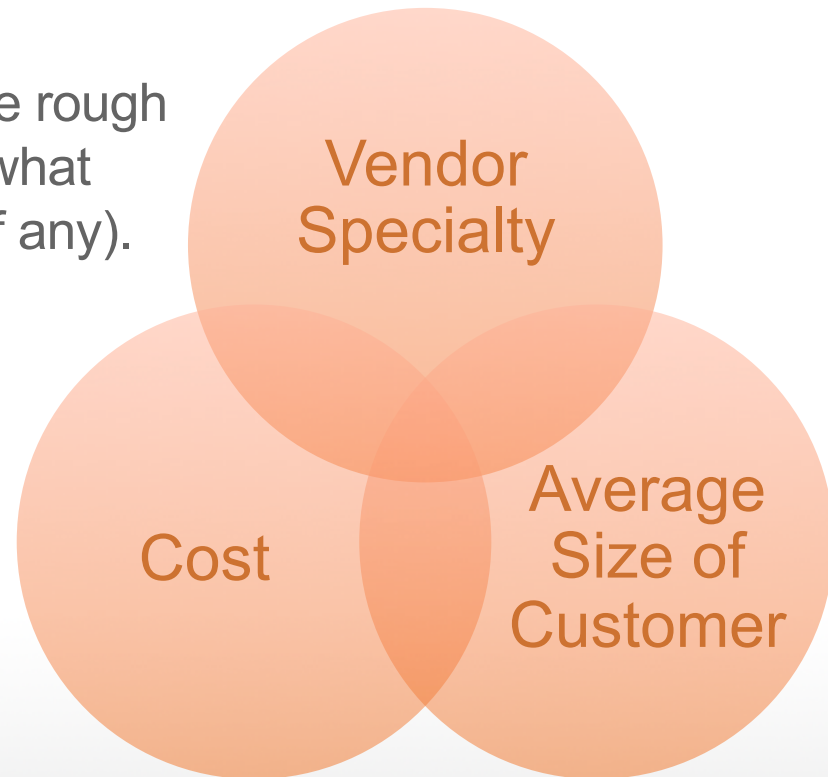
- a. Take a step back and identify who the key stakeholders are in your organization. Of course this will include members of the Marketing department and typically individuals from Sales and IT are involved.
- b. Determine what you are trying to achieve and your requirements. Your initial list is best done **before** you begin researching vendors so that your list is truly reflective of what you want out of a system – not what vendors are offering. Then, you can enhance requirements iteratively as you understand vendor capability against internal needs.
- c. Put anything and everything you can think of on this list, then go back and prioritize with MoSCoW “Must Have” and “Should Have”, “Could Have”, “Won’t Have”.
- d. Knowing exactly what you are looking for will put you in a better position to quickly eliminate any vendors who cannot meet all of your “Must Have” requirements.

2. Determine the short list

- a. With your requirements list in tow, research the potential marketing automation vendors to see if their capabilities meet your “Must Have” requirements.
- b. Realistically, you should narrow the list down to 3-5 vendors and contact them for more detailed information and a product demo. If you are unable to narrow the list of vendors down to 3-5 just based on requirements, you can add other criteria.
- c. Keeping the list to 3-5 allows you to evaluate enough vendors so that you can get a competitive deal but not so many that you suffer information overload and can't keep each company straight.

Sample Criteria

Evaluate each vendor based on criteria such as the type of business the vendor caters to (large, enterprise clients vs. small to medium businesses), what the rough monthly or annual cost is, or what specialty the vendor serves (if any).



3. Conduct the evaluation

- a. Share your requirements with the vendor. This will allow the rep to understand your business needs upfront and deliver information that addresses your specific requirements. The more they know about your organization, the better positioned they are to provide you the right solution.
- b. Inform them about your selection process, so they are aware of other vendors you are considering and what your decision process entails.
- c. Get a live demonstration of each platform. This is probably the most important activity in the selection process, as you will get to see first hand how the system operates.
- d. Pay close attention to the user interface, how easy it is to perform tasks on your requirements list, and take notes to compare with the other demos you see. Use a scorecard to evaluate each solution against your established criteria.

10 Critical Questions You Must Ask When Evaluating Vendors:

1. What is the average amount of training needed to get up and running?
2. What CRM systems does your software integrate with?
3. How easy is it to maintain the system?
4. How much support is included and how do I contact support?
5. What can you share about your product roadmap?
6. Should we choose to stop using your software, what does it take to change vendors?
7. What is the set-up and implementation timeline?
8. Do you have best practice templates available?
9. How large is your user community?
10. How often do you offer updates?



4. Rank the vendors

- a. The easiest place to start is with your requirements list. Now you can consider both your “Must Haves” and “Nice to Haves”. Check off each requirement that a vendor meets and see where each vendor falls in “completeness” of providing a solution to your needs. Look at the monthly or annual cost, ease of use, training and support provided, and estimated ramp-up time.
- b. Make sure to include all stakeholders in the ranking process – it’s best to have each stakeholder rank the vendors on their own and then hold a working session where everyone shares their rankings and reasons why. With any luck you will come out of the meeting with a consensus on where each vendor lies.
- c. If there are still varying opinions, you can continue evaluating – have another demo, call on client references and do additional research in user communities.

5. Perform due diligence

- Before you make your final decision, do your due diligence on your top 1-2 vendors. This is the time to leave no stone unturned – read reviews of users, review the software agreement and scrutinize your contract.
- Make sure to have your legal department review the agreement and get finance's buy-in on your payment terms. This is your last chance to clarify any part of the contract and negotiate the final agreement.
- Make sure to call references and get feedback from actual users on important issues such as maintenance, system uptime, and support.

Congratulations!

You are now prepared to evaluate and select a marketing automation vendor. Once you make that decision, the real fun begins.

- Remember some keys to success:
 - **Objective:** Criteria used in the selection process comes from stakeholders and are clearly communicated and agreed. At any point in the process you can justify why a particular solution either is or isn't still being considered
 - **Collaborative:** The extended internal stakeholder team understand your requirements and criteria openly – and your vendor teams are able to put their best foot forward to meet your goals.
- Need help?
 - If you are interested in guidance selecting a vendor, or if you want to ensure success with the vendor you've chosen, Revenue Architects can assist you both pre- and post-vendor selection. We help select, deploy and manage revenue technology. We can map your processes and integrate marketing automation platforms.

Revenue Architects

We are a **Revenue marketing consulting agency** working with businesses that manage a considered or complex sale. These businesses need to architect a new revenue process that aligns marketing and sales and engages new digital strategies.

Services – What we do:

- **Strategy:** Aligning teams on a differentiated revenue model.
- **Systems:** Integrating brand, content, process, and technologies.
- **Programs:** Envisioning and launching integrated campaigns.

Business Model – How we differ:

- **Strategic:** A focus on innovation to drive competitive advantage
- **Responsive:** Flexible resourcing to respond to dynamic needs
- **Adaptive:** Engaging new technology and media.

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Working nationally and globally.

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