Top-of-Mind Marketing:
A Snapshot of B2B Marketing Automation

Research Conducted in Partnership with Ascend2

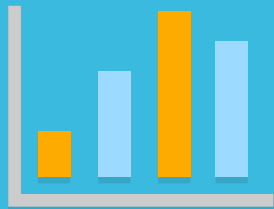**iContact**

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Top-of-Mind Marketing:
A Snapshot of B2B Marketing Automation

Email marketing has been around for decades. And despite all the tools available to marketers today, email remains one of the most effective ways to reach an audience.

However, today's customers are demanding more personalized and valuable messages as they work their way through the marketing funnel. That's where marketing automation comes into play.

Marketing automation can be used to automate repetitive marketing tasks from sending and responding to email, to updating social channels, and testing, measuring, and optimizing marketing ROI and revenue. Perhaps most importantly, the tools of automation allow marketers to take a much more personal approach with their prospects, allowing the targeting of messages tailored to each contact based on previous behavior, preferences, and progress through the customer journey.

Think of it like this. If email marketing is the reliable and trusted family car that gets you to your destination, marketing automation is the spaceship that takes you to the stars.

Yet the adoption rate of marketing automation remains surprisingly slow. Some marketers even buy automation products with aspirations of using the automation features, but end up only adopting a very basic use of the product, missing out on much of the potential it has to offer.

We wanted to dig deeper into the current state of automation to find out how marketers are approaching implementation and identify what factors could be holding them back. iContact partnered with Ascend2 to survey marketing decision-makers about their use of automation. The resulting report, *Top-of-Mind Marketing: A Snapshot of B2B Marketing Automation*, represents the opinions of 85 marketing influencers who are on the frontlines of business-to-business marketing.

Please feel free to put this research to work when implementing your organization's marketing strategy. Clip the charts and write about them in your blog or share them on social media. We only ask that you credit this research if shared or published elsewhere.

Monica Hoyer
Marketing Director

METHODOLOGY

Ascend2 benchmarks the performance of popular digital marketing technologies and practices using a standardized questionnaire and the proprietary *3-Minute Survey* format.

This survey was fielded to a panel of marketing influencers and research subscribers.

Following is a breakout of respondents to the survey:

Number of Employees

More than 500	36%
50 to 500	43%
Fewer than 50	21%

Role in the Company

Owner/Partner/CXO	47%
VP/Director/Manager	45%
Non-management Professional	8%

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Marketers are always under a lot of pressure to justify costs and prove measurable ROI. Marketing automation allows just that.

Marketing automation streamlines, targets, and measures so you can get more done in less time. In doing so, automation boosts leads and conversions — allowing businesses and organizations to realize stronger returns on marketing investment than is possible with time-consuming manual processes. The end result is a significant increase in marketing ROI.
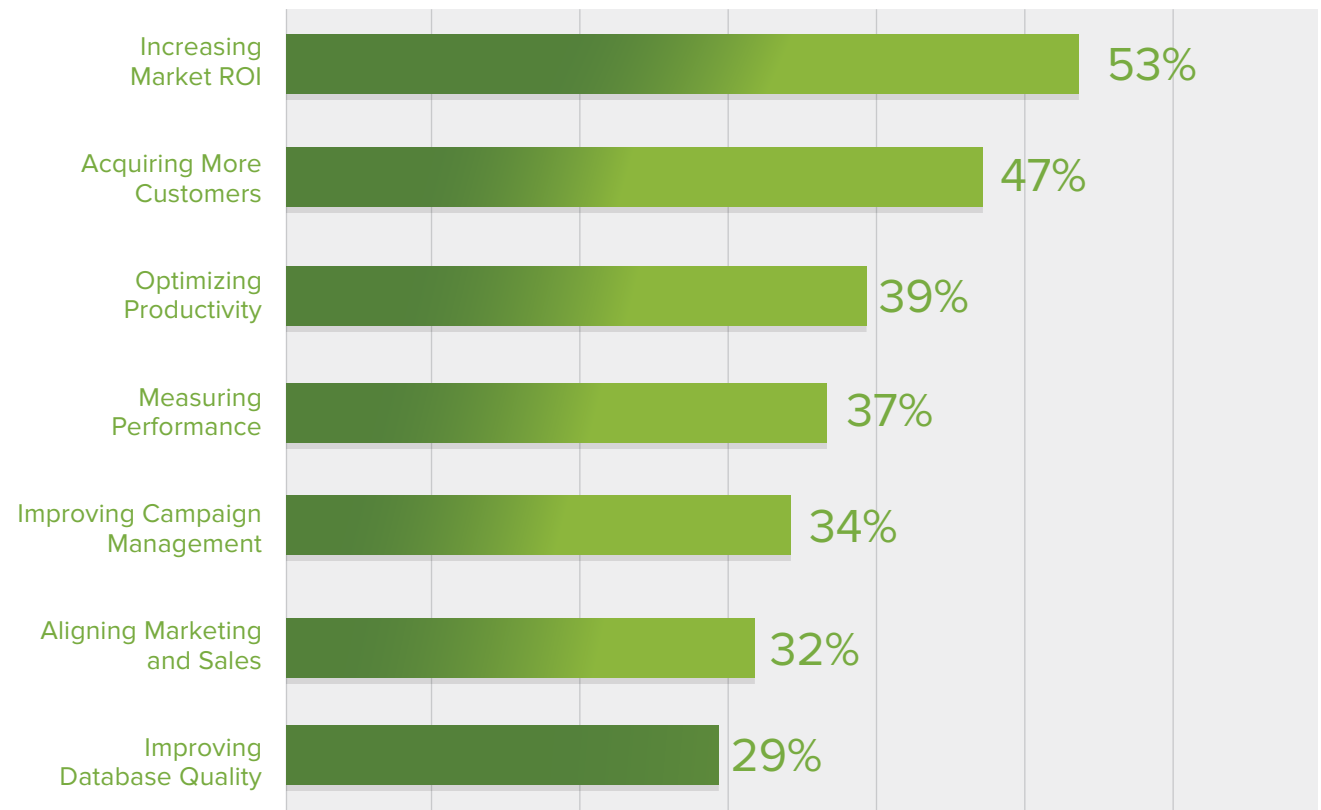
FIND OUT HOW SIGNIFICANT ▶

Automation workflows allow marketers to take a personalized and targeted approach to nurturing prospects through the sales cycle — increasing the odds for successful conversion.

LEARN HOW TO NURTURE ▶

Important Strategic Objectives

While increasing marketing ROI is an important objective for a majority of B2B marketers **(53%)**, acquiring more customers is a close second with **47%**.

WHAT ARE THE **MOST IMPORTANT OBJECTIVES** OF A MARKETING AUTOMATION STRATEGY?

Objective	Percentage
Increasing Market ROI	53%
Acquiring More Customers	47%
Optimizing Productivity	39%
Measuring Performance	37%
Improving Campaign Management	34%
Aligning Marketing and Sales	32%
Improving Database Quality	29%

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To reap the full benefits of a marketing automation platform, marketers need to take advantage of every strategic opportunity that automation offers.

Using custom objects within an automation tool allows you to send timely, personalized content based on a subscriber's interaction with your brand.

CUSTOM OBJECTS ▶

Behavioral segmentation gives marketers more opportunities to understand customer tendencies, allowing for more targeted and personalized communication.
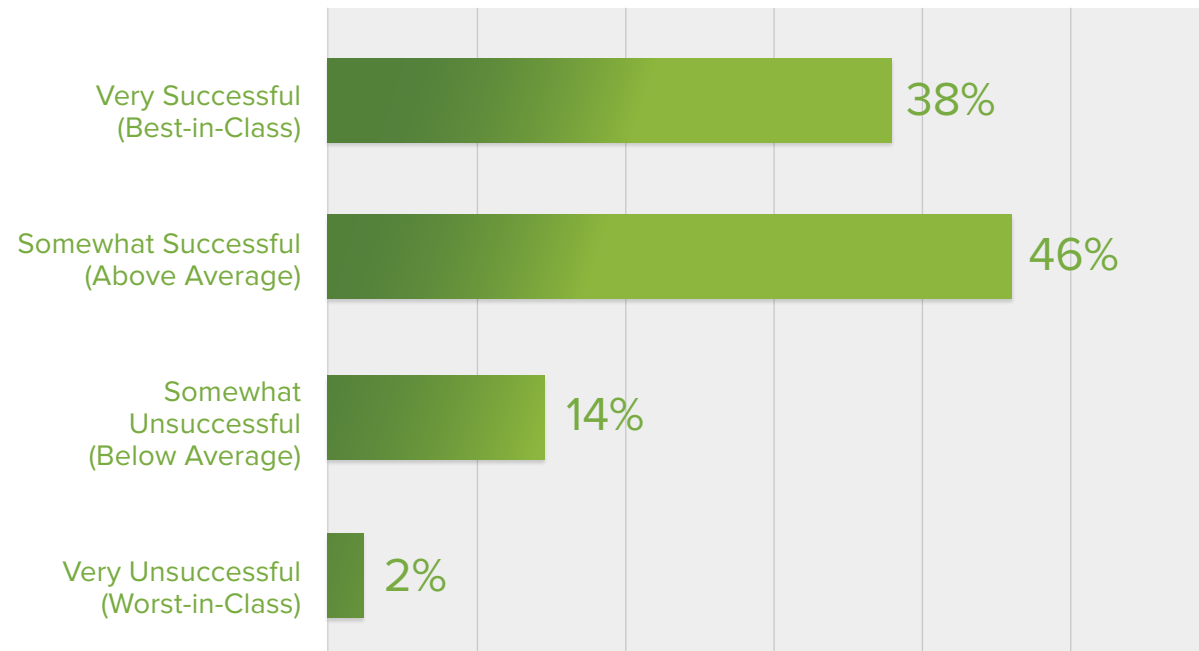
BEHAVIORAL SEGMENTATION ▶

Learn how using workflows can help marketers grow and maintain a healthy and engaged contact list — the lifeblood of successful email marketing.

USING WORKFLOWS ▶

Evaluating Strategic Success

While half of marketers surveyed feel they are very to somewhat successful with their automation strategy, another **16%** report less success.

HOW SUCCESSFUL IS YOUR MARKETING AUTOMATION STRATEGY AT **ACHIEVING IMPORTANT OBJECTIVES?**

Very Successful (Best-in-Class)	38%
Somewhat Successful (Above Average)	46%
Somewhat Unsuccessful (Below Average)	14%
Very Unsuccessful (Worst-in-Class)	2%

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A successful list strategy is one important key to email success; increasing the quality of list prospects can have a measurable impact on campaign success.

A healthy contact list is key to email marketing success. Collecting, segmenting, and managing an email marketing list should be at the top of every email marketer's priority list, yet it is often overlooked.

HOW QUALITY MATTERS ▶

Taking a data-driven approach to measuring campaign success yields superior results — ensuring that you continue to talk to the right people, at the right time, and with the right message.
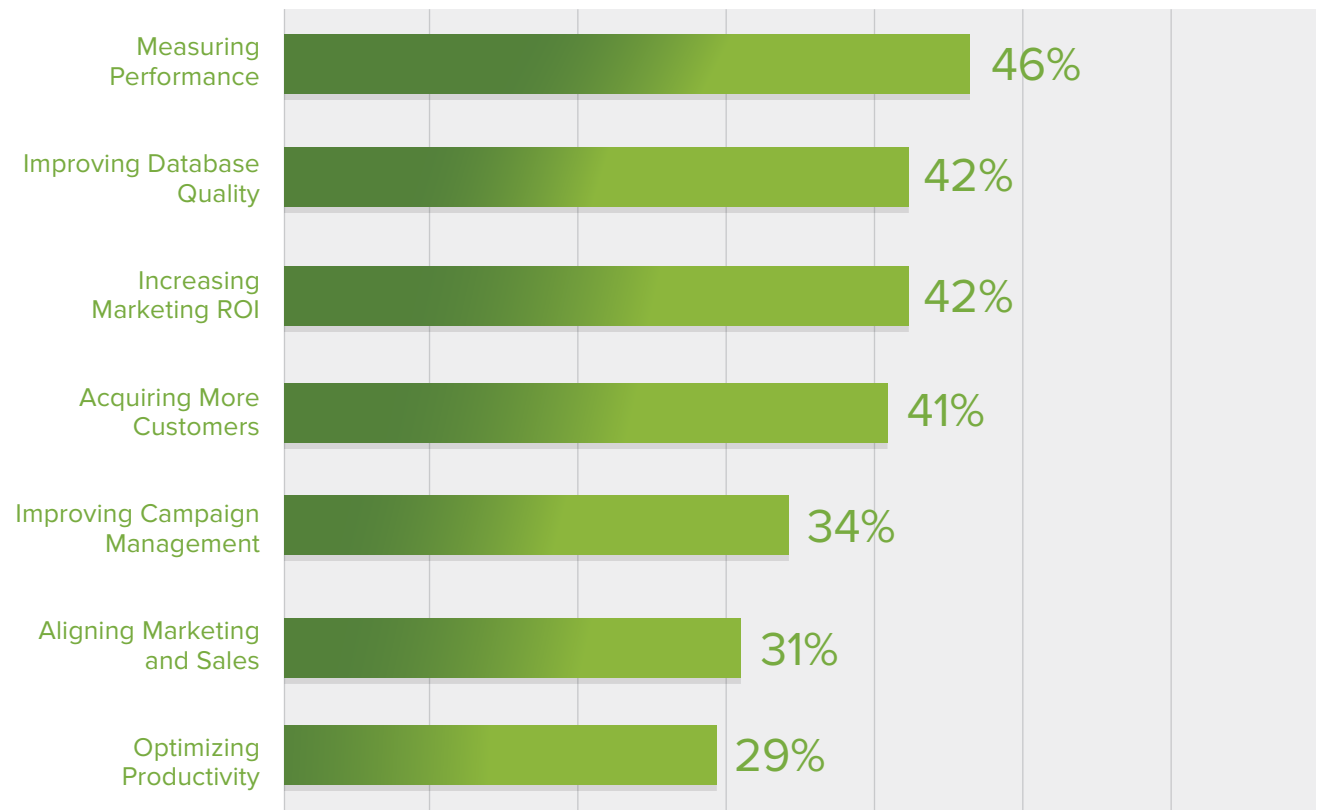
THE METRICS THAT MATTER ▶

Google Analytics provide a wealth of information to help you gain a better understanding of marketing performance. Learn about six key Google Analytics reports that every marketer needs.

ANALYZE THIS ▶

Challenges to Success

There are a number of barriers to success competing for the top spot; however, measuring performance is the most critical challenge for a majority **(46%)** of B2B marketers.
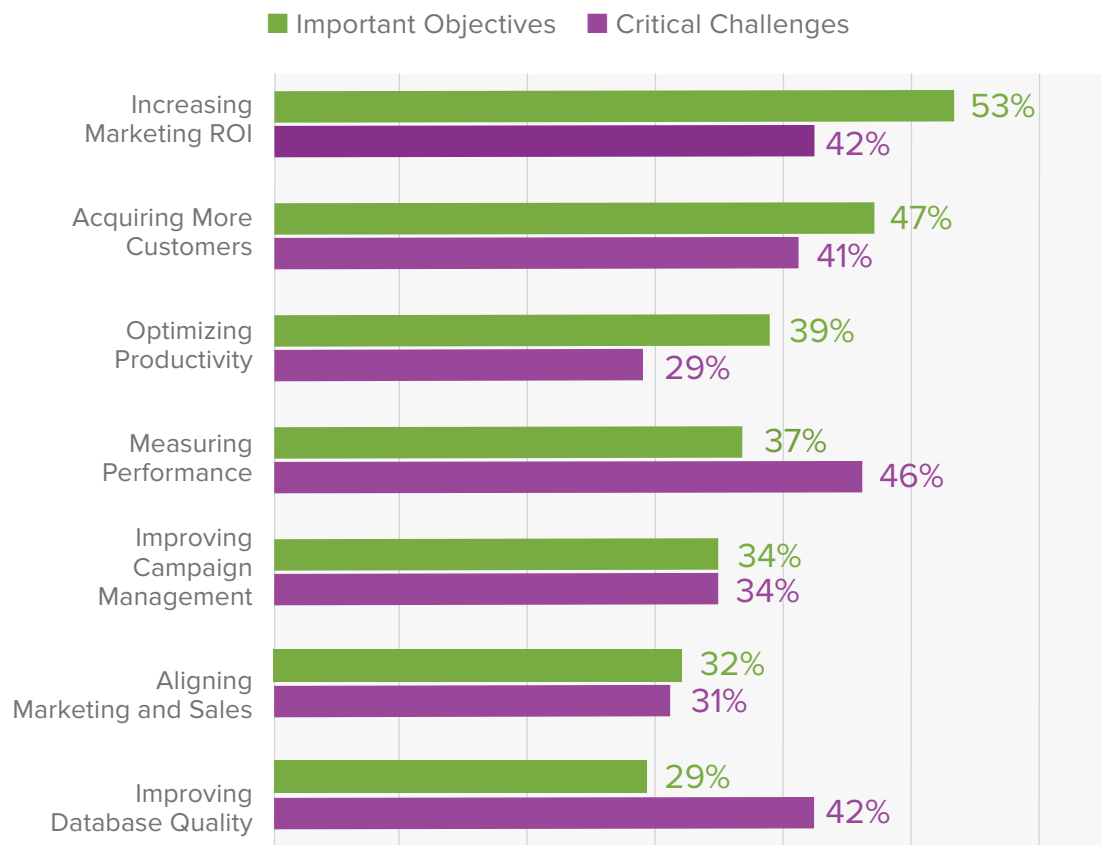
WHAT ARE THE **MOST CRITICAL CHALLENGES** TO ACHIEVING MARKETING AUTOMATION SUCCESS?

Challenge	Percentage
Measuring Performance	46%
Improving Database Quality	42%
Increasing Marketing ROI	42%
Acquiring More Customers	41%
Improving Campaign Management	34%
Aligning Marketing and Sales	31%
Optimizing Productivity	29%

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Objectives Versus Challenges

Objectives that are significantly more important and have a clear avenue to success (increasing ROI, for example) should be given the highest priority in the development of an effective marketing automation strategy.

ANALYZING IMPORTANT OBJECTIVES VERSUS CRITICAL CHALLENGES

■ Important Objectives ■ Critical Challenges

Category	Important Objectives	Critical Challenges
Increasing Marketing ROI	53%	42%
Acquiring More Customers	47%	41%
Optimizing Productivity	39%	29%
Measuring Performance	37%	46%
Improving Campaign Management	34%	34%
Aligning Marketing and Sales	32%	31%
Improving Database Quality	29%	42%

Aligning sales and marketing is often a delicate balancing act when it comes to achieving objectives. But when it is done successfully, the payout is significant — increased productivity and ROI.

READ MORE! ▶

An automation feature like lead scoring is a tool that both marketing and sales can use to determine which prospects deserve the most focus and have the potential to pay back marketing investment in the form of generating revenue.

LEAD SCORING ▶

Of course, productivity also comes down to the personal level. Establishing a system for meeting personal goals and objectives also goes a long way in helping meet professional objectives and challenges. We have some useful tips and strategies from our productivity webinar.

PRODUCTIVITY AT WORK FOR YOU ▶

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You'd never buy a car without first taking it for a test drive, right? Marketing automation shouldn't be any different. It's important to try a solution before you go all in, to ensure you are buying all the bells you need — without all the extra whistles you'll never use.

When you are evaluating solutions, **ask yourself a few questions.**

QUESTIONS ▶

Use our checklist to help you evaluate the various automation solutions.
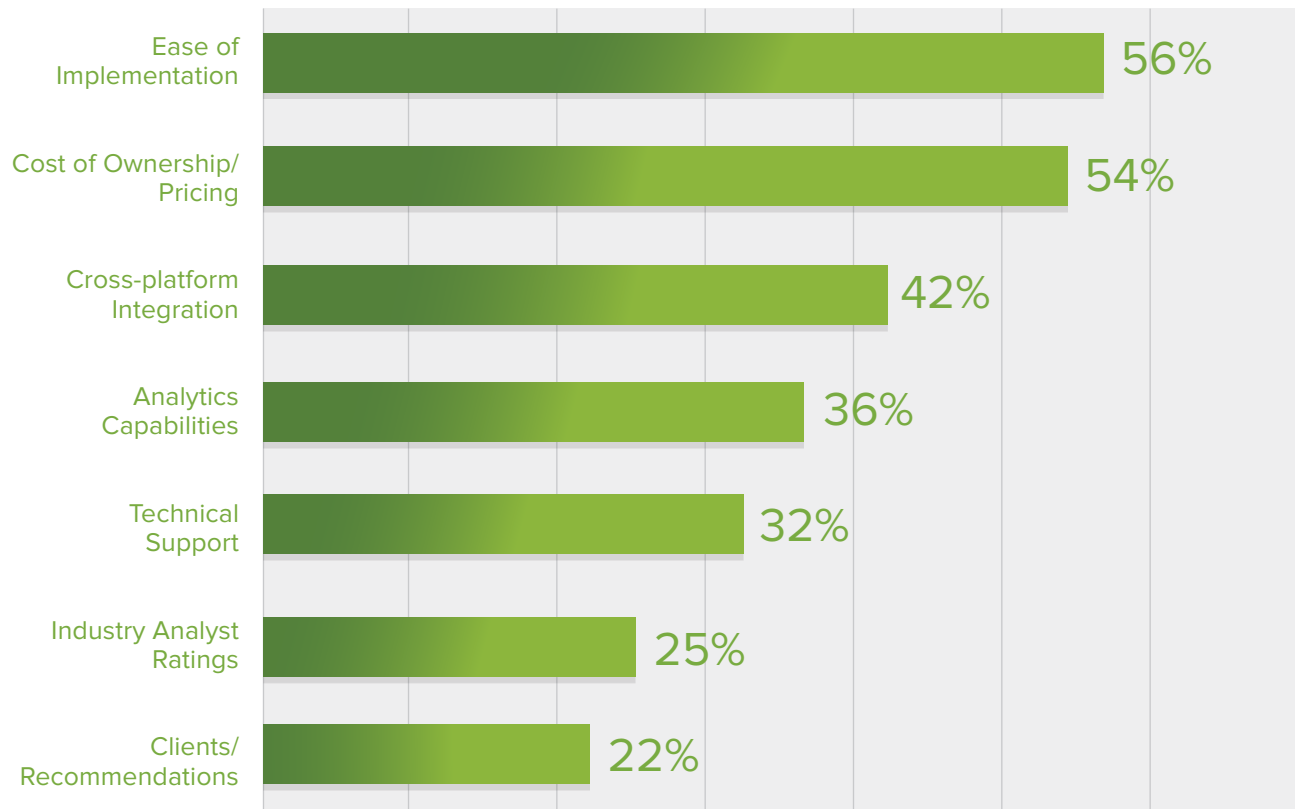
CHECKLIST ▶

Ready to give automation a spin? **Sign up for a free, 30-day trial of iContact Pro.** No credit card is required. See for yourself what automation can do.

LET ME TRY ▶

Choosing a Marketing Automation Platform

Why is ease of implementation so important for **56%** of B2B marketers? Because the more difficult a marketing automation system is to implement, the less likely it is to become successful in a timely manner, regardless of cost.

WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT **EVALUATION CRITERIA** FOR SELECTING A MARKETING AUTOMATION SYSTEM?

Criteria	Percentage
Ease of Implementation	56%
Cost of Ownership/Pricing	54%
Cross-platform Integration	42%
Analytics Capabilities	36%
Technical Support	32%
Industry Analyst Ratings	25%
Clients/Recommendations	22%

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Implementation of marketing automation is as complex as you want to make it. Incorporating automation tools such as simple workflows and landing pages does not have to be complex in order for automation to be effective.
Read about how one iContact customer used automation workflows to implement a giveaway campaign over several months.

READ BLOG ▶

Landing page creation is one of the best tools that marketing automation brings to the table. Download our free e-guide, *What Is a Landing Page?*, and learn how landing pages are a crucial part of the lead generation process.

DOWNLOAD E-GUIDE ▶

Once you sign up for a free trial of iContact, try your hand at creating a beautiful and professional-looking landing page with the same software you use for email marketing. Take our 60-minute Landing Page challenge and do it yourself. You'll be proud of your results.
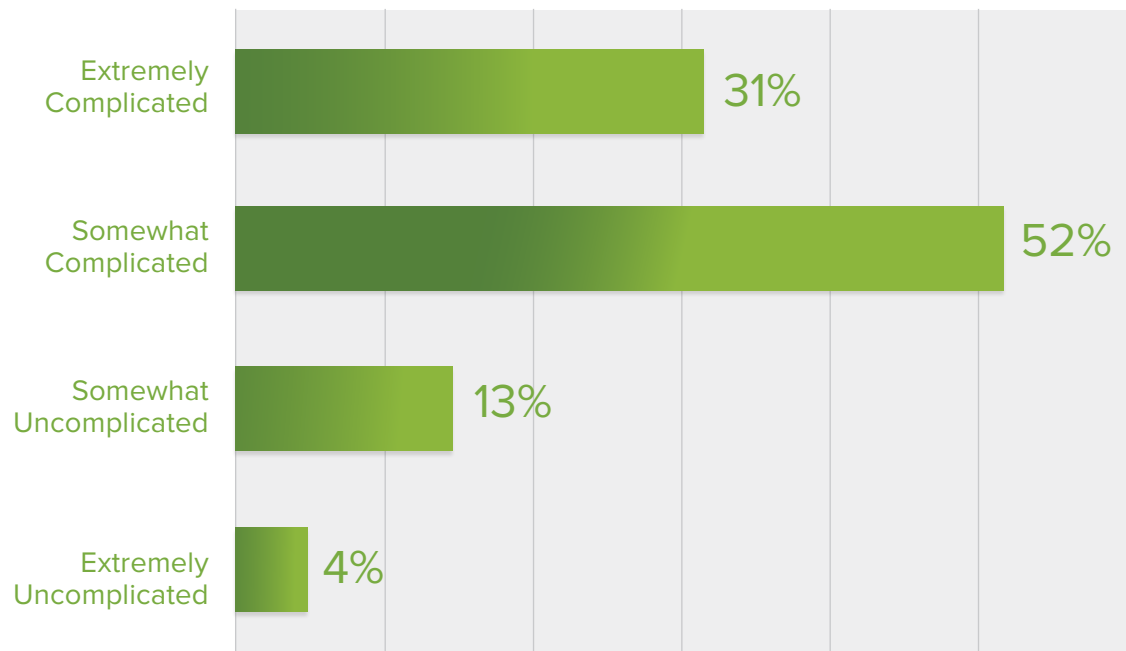
LET ME TRY ▶

Implementation: Perception Versus Reality

When it comes to implementing marketing automation, the perception of difficulty often lags behind reality. **83%** of B2B marketers view marketing automation as complicated to some extent. A full **31%** describe it as extremely complicated.

HOW COMPLICATED IS THE **IMPLEMENTATION** OF A MARKETING AUTOMATION SYSTEM?

Category	Percentage
Extremely Complicated	31%
Somewhat Complicated	52%
Somewhat Uncomplicated	13%
Extremely Uncomplicated	4%

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iContact in partnership with Ascend2, **May 2017**

Implementation: Resources Used and Resources Needed

The perception of automation complexity drives many marketers to look for outside resources to help with implementation. A total of **87%** of marketers surveyed outsourced all or part of their marketing automation. Only **13%** relied on in-house resources only.

WHICH BEST DESCRIBES THE **RESOURCES** USED TO IMPLEMENT A MARKETING AUTOMATION SYSTEM?

Outsourced to a specialist
28%

In-house resources only
13%

Combination of outsourced and in-house resources
59%
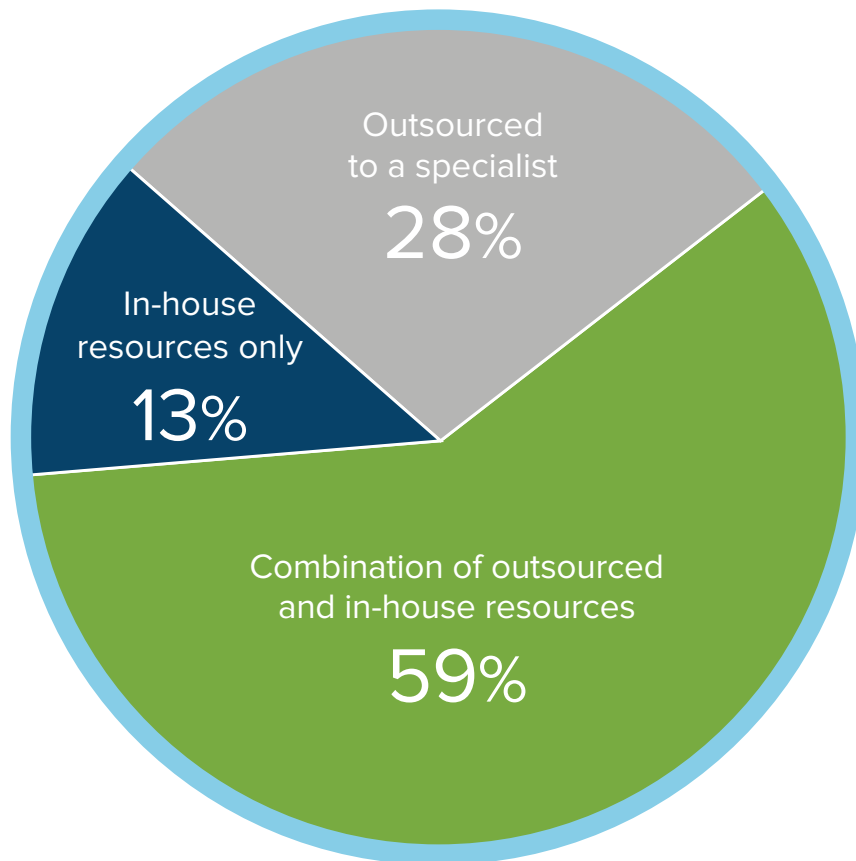
→ **iContact's Premier Services** act as an extension of your in-house marketing resources.

→ **A dedicated Strategic Advisor** provides one-on-one help with planning, execution, and optimization of every email campaign.

→ **With one of our experts on your team,** resources will never be a challenge to email success.

RESOURCES ▶

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No one wants to wait four months or more to realize ROI from a marketing automation platform.

iContact Pro has the features you need to put automation to work from day one — without the expensive extras that will never be used and collect dust on the marketing shelf.

See how easy implementation of marketing automation is helping one nonprofit with a small team maximize results and minimize the tedious, manual work that would otherwise take up limited staff time.

READ BLOG ▶

Implementing marketing automation is a whole lot easier when you have a team of support experts on standby and ready to work with you. Our award-winning support team helps customers get up and running in days — rather than weeks or months.

We've got your back, because success isn't something you should have to delay.

SUCCESS ▶

A Time Frame for Implementation

When it comes to success, most marketers want a quick payoff for any new strategy. Automation is no exception. A majority **(42%)** of B2B marketers consider a 4-6 month time frame reasonable for completing implementation of a marketing automation system. Another **36%** aim for a time frame of three months or less.

WHAT IS A REASONABLE **TIME FRAME** FOR COMPLETING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A MARKETING AUTOMATION SYSTEM?

3 Months or Less	36%
4 to 6 Months	42%
6 Months to 1 Year	16%
More Than a Year	6%

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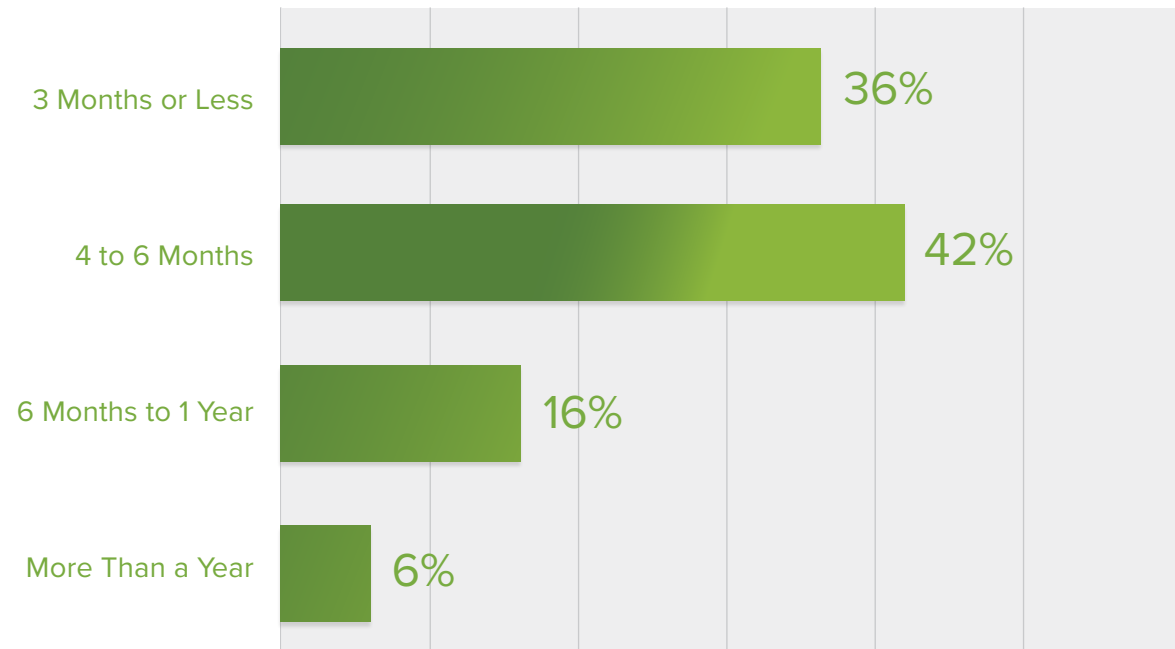
Additional Resources

We hope you find these additional resources helpful in learning more about results-driven marketing automation.
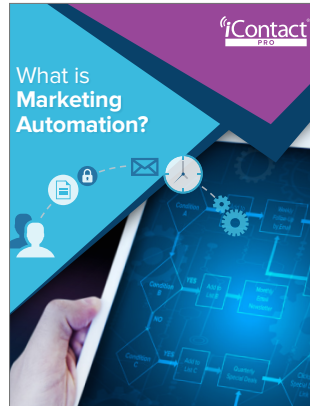
Eight Email Campaigns You Can Send Today

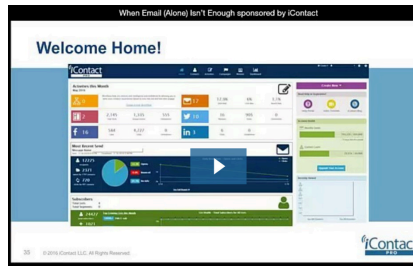Use the tips in this handy infographic to inspire new email campaign ideas.

Email Marketing Design Basics

Great design is as important as targeted messaging. Our mini-guide covers the essentials of email marketing design.

What Is Marketing Automation?

An iContact guide to automating and personalizing customer communication.

When Email Alone Isn't Enough

Automation allows you to grow your business by reaching today's consumer with the right message at the right time, and at any location. Learn how in our webinar.
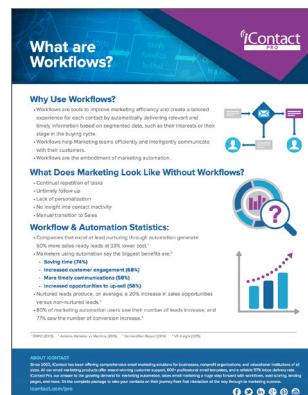
What Are Workflows?

Learn how workflows improve marketing efficiency and create a tailored experience for each contact.

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About the Research Partners

iContact

Since 2003, businesses and organizations worldwide have achieved significant results by turning to iContact's best-in-class automation and email marketing solutions and knowledgeable team. Scalable to serve the needs of high-volume senders, professional marketers, and businesses new to email, iContact's easy-to-use technology, available in both English and Spanish versions, ensures that all customers have what they need – whenever they need it – to succeed.

Learn more at iContact.com

Ascend2

Marketing technology and data companies and digital marketing agencies partner with Ascend2 to provide research-based demand generation. Our *Research Partner Programs* are transparent – featuring your brand and the interests of your market.

Learn more at Ascend2.com

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