

CHOOSING
MARKETING AUTOMATION:



2 MUST-HAVES THAT PREDICT SUCCESS

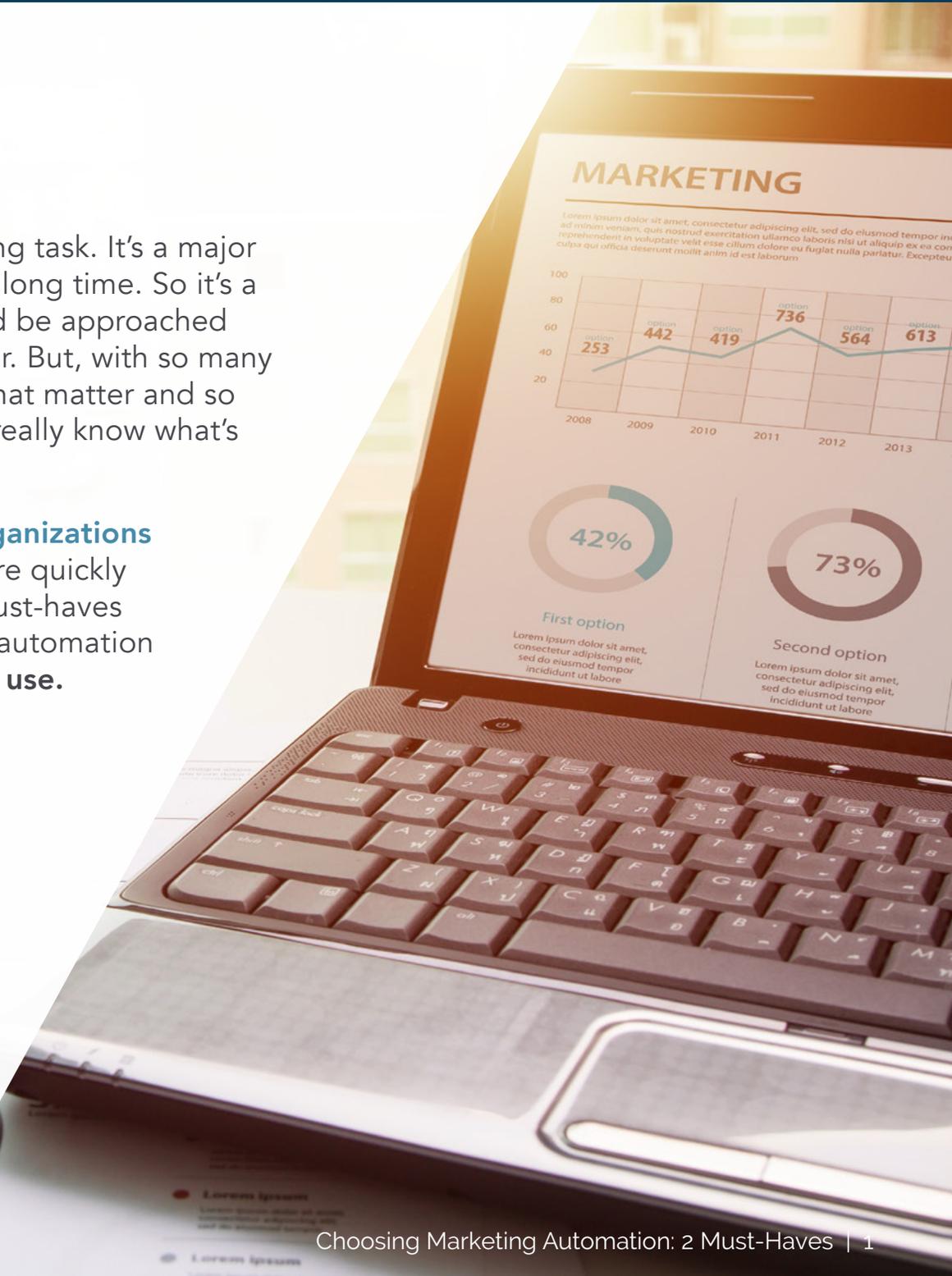
The Critical Roles of
Time to Value and Ease of Use



Introduction

Evaluating marketing automation can be a daunting task. It's a major investment, and one you will (likely) live with for a long time. So it's a decision that shouldn't be taken lightly and should be approached only after you know exactly what you're looking for. But, with so many vendors emphasizing their features are the ones that matter and so many options from which to choose, how do you really know what's most important?

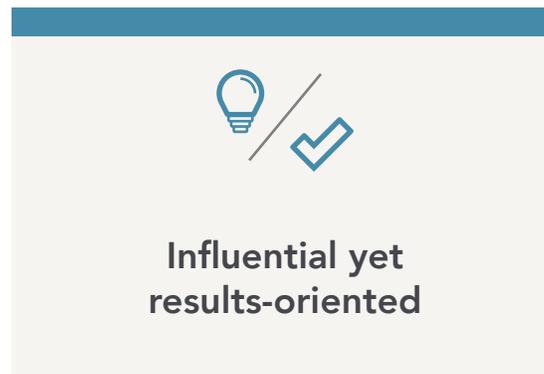
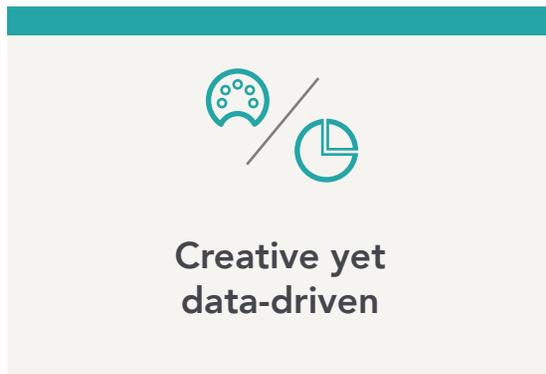
After nearly 10 years helping more than **5,000 organizations worldwide** leverage marketing automation to more quickly grow their businesses, we've identified the two must-haves that – above all – drive success for any marketing automation implementation: **time to value (TTV) and ease of use.**



The Two Must-Haves for Marketing Automation Success

As a modern marketer, you face mounting challenges. Today's businesses rightfully expect their marketing departments to demonstrate tangible contributions to the bottom line and consistent ROI for the dollars invested there. And budgets are tight, so marketers increasingly have to achieve the same (or better) results, but with less money and fewer resources.

At the same time, chief executive officers (CEOs) now hold marketing leaders accountable for the same kind of data-driven results as their sales counterparts. **Today's marketing leaders are expected to be:**



It's a tall order, one that plays a big part in the short average tenure of today's CMO – 44-48 months in the U.S., according to [Forbes](#) (compared to 6+ years for the average S&P 500 CEO).

As a result, showing fast success with marketing automation implementation – solidly backed by data – is critical to both the company as a whole and to marketing leaders as individuals. A common measure for fast success when it comes to technology implementations is time to value (TTV). And a critical driver for TTV is ease of use.



Ease of Use

Ease of use's criticality is no surprise when it comes to marketing automation. In a world where marketers face rising expectations yet shrinking budgets, they need a marketing automation platform that helps them do better work, more efficiently and effectively.

And, while ease of use might seem fairly self-explanatory, it's comprised of many more facets now. **Today, ease of use stretches beyond the daily needs of the marketing automation administrator or power user, to how easy it is:**

- for IT and marketing operations to deploy, integrate, maintain and support the platform long-term;
- and for new users to become fluent with the technology.

Seems straightforward, right? Unfortunately, most marketing automation vendors have a hard time truly delivering ease of use to their customers – they often forego it, instead delivering fancy but impractical, complex capabilities the typical user won't even deploy. In the marketing automation world, higher complexity can mean lower ease of use.

Ease of use is one of the **top three** most important criteria for evaluating marketing automation tools.

(Pepper Global)



85% of B2B marketers using a marketing automation platform feel they're not using it to its full potential.

(Sirius Decisions)

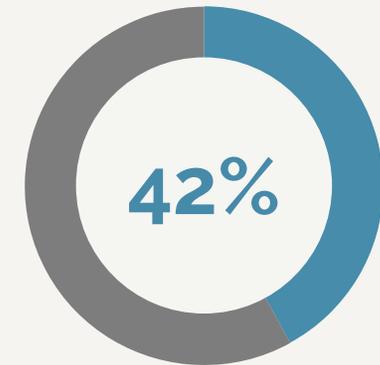


Time to Value (TTV)

A technology's ease of use plays a big part in its calculated time to value (TTV). TTV represents how much time it takes to realize the promised value of the solution itself – the time from project start to the time at which cumulative business benefits exceed cumulative costs. Looked at another way, it's how quickly you expect to receive benefit from your investment – the time it takes to reach perceived value from your (not the vendor's) perspective.

Technology vendors/solutions that deliver the fastest TTV to their customers:

- **Are feature-complete, not feature-rich.** They provide the most friction-free, intuitive journey for customers. Clear instructions, properly labelled buttons, simple menus with easy-to-access settings, easy integrations with other key technologies – all these elements play a role in how quickly users can deploy, learn and utilize a vendor's technology to achieve their business goals. Alternatively, "feature-rich" solutions (usually the result of acquisitions) often attempt to achieve an "all-in-one" approach but fall way short of meeting user expectations as individual components become dated and incompatible with each other.
- **Constantly test and improve the user experience.** Via user testing and product usage statistics, they continually tweak and optimize, identifying areas where small user experience improvements can make a big difference in TTV.



42% of respondents to the Marketing Automation Trends Survey from Ascend2 said the most significant barrier to marketing automation success was the complexity of the system.



Time to Value (continued)

- **Go above-and-beyond when it comes to onboarding.** They provide modern onboarding guides – delivered in-product and/or via drip emails and documentation – that feature clear deployment instructions, detailed best practices and incremental learning opportunities.
- **Encourage self-service with user-friendly training.** They typically lead the market with their best-in-class resources offering, leveraging new technologies and best practices to continually impress and exceed the needs of their customers. They usually offer as training options a combination of live, instructor-led training; on-demand training; custom training; and user boot camps.
- **Provide a “Customer Success” function for more advanced needs.** They offer a Customer Success team that can assist with set-up, offer personalized training sessions and be a great first contact point for customers when needed.
- **Help customers identify quantifiable goals and benchmark results against them.** They advise customers on best practices for identifying, measuring and monitoring the metrics that determine success for their type of implementation.

44% of marketers aren't fully satisfied with their marketing automation systems. The top three reasons why not:

1. Takes too long to implement 

2. Too difficult to learn 

3. Too expensive 

(Autopilot 2015 Marketing Automation Performance Report)

How Top Vendors Rank Against the Two Must-Haves

It's easy to see why TTV and ease of use are important to those considering marketing automation. **Yet more often than not, these important factors are overshadowed by the very things that degrade them – things like:**

- A “what-if” feature set that’s rarely utilized (*what if I might need to do that at some point in the future?*)
- Complex integrations with other applications that don’t work out-of-the-box
- Familiarity with a different solution’s platform or UI, even though it’s stale, lackluster and not intuitive

So how do we overcome this? We at Act-On decided to put a spotlight on TTV and ease of use by scoring top marketing automation vendors against what we believe are key TTV and ease of use criteria. Based on findings from the “[2016 Forrester™ L2RM Platform Vendors Q4 2016](#)” and [G2Crowd Winter 2016 Marketing Automation](#) reports, here’s how we score top marketing automation vendors.

How Top Vendors Rank Against the Two Must-Haves (continued)

Here's a breakdown of the scoring and criteria:

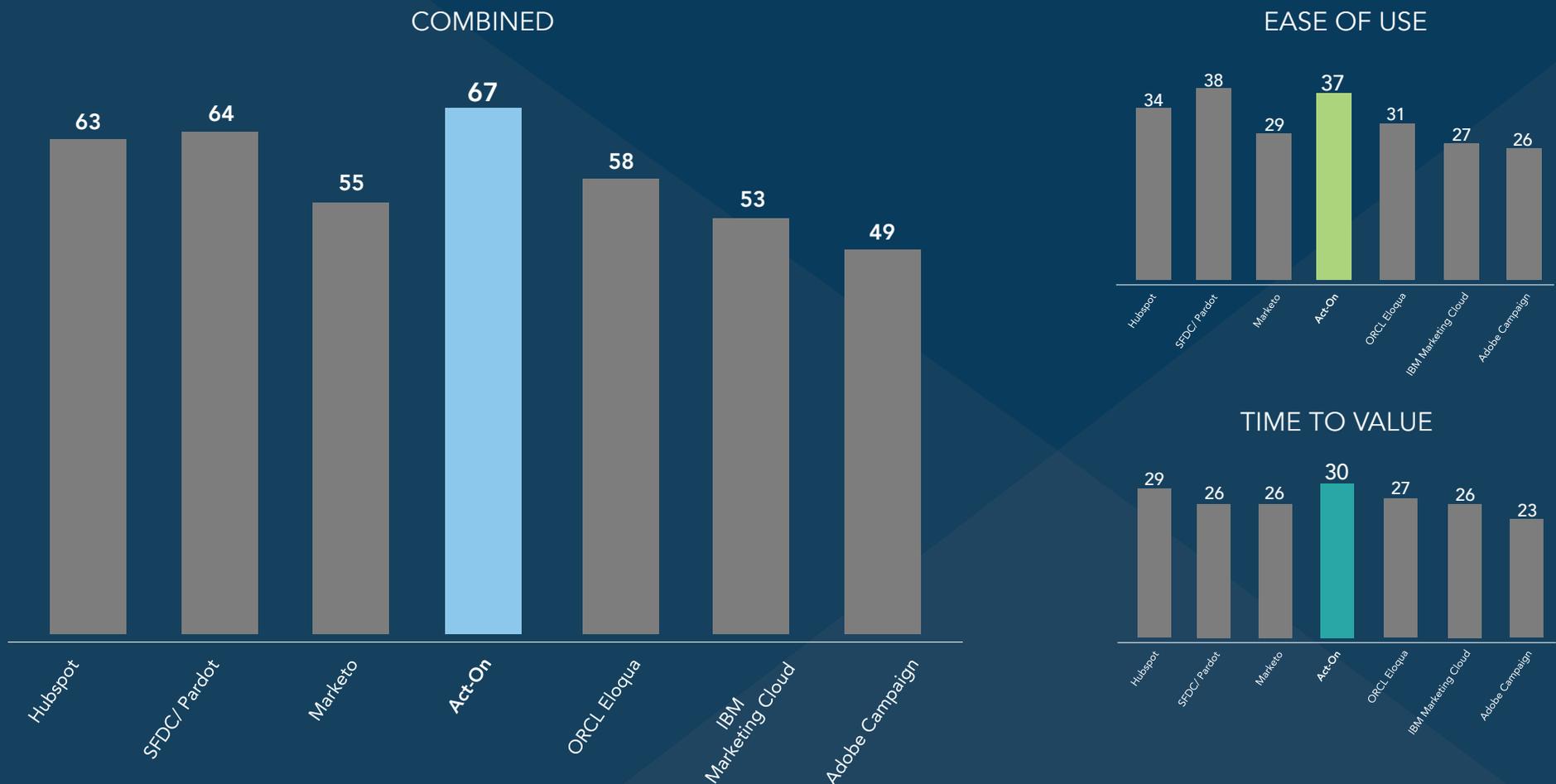
Act-On Scoring Conversion (%)

>85% = 5 75-84% = 4 65-74% = 3 45-64% = 2 <44% = 1

EASE OF USE	Hubspot	SFDC/Pardot	Marketo	Act-On	ORCL Eloqua	IBM Marketing Cloud	Adobe Campaign
Usability (Forrester Wave™ for L2RM Platform Vendors, Q416)	5	5	3	5	4	4	3
Likely to Recommend (G2Crowd Winter 2016 Marketing Automation report)	5	5	4	5	4	2	4
Ease of Use (G2Crowd Winter 2016 Marketing Automation report)	5	5	4	5	4	2	3
Ease of Setup (G2Crowd Winter 2016 Marketing Automation report)	5	4	3	4	4	3	2
Ease of Administration (G2Crowd Winter 2016 Marketing Automation report)	5	5	4	5	4	3	3
Ease of Doing Business (G2Crowd Winter 2016 Marketing Automation report)	5	5	4	5	4	4	4
Ease of Partner Marketing w/ Multi-tier Sales Channel Report (Forrester Wave™ for L2RM Platform Vendors, Q416)	1	5	3	3	3	5	2
Ease of Social Media Engagement (Forrester Wave™ for L2RM Platform Vendors, Q416)	3	4	4	5	4	4	5
Point Subtotals by Vendor	34	38	29	37	31	27	26
TIME TO VALUE (TTV)	Hubspot	SFDC/Pardot	Marketo	Act-On	ORCL Eloqua	IBM Marketing Cloud	Adobe Campaign
Platform Customization (G2Crowd Winter 2016 Marketing Automation report)	5	4	4	4	4	3	5
Data Import/Export Tools (G2Crowd Winter 2016 Marketing Automation report)	5	5	4	5	5	3	4
Integration APIs (G2Crowd Winter 2016 Marketing Automation report)	5	4	4	5	5	4	4
Average User Adoption (G2Crowd Winter 2016 Marketing Automation report)	4	3	3	3	3	2	3
Average Implementation Time to Go Live (months) (G2Crowd Winter 2016 Marketing Automation report)	4	4	3	5	3	4	2
ROI - Average Payback Period (months) (G2Crowd Winter 2016 Marketing Automation report)	4	4	3	5	3	5	0
Reporting, Analytics and Alerting (Forrester Wave™ for L2RM Platform Vendors, Q416)	2	2	5	3	4	5	5
Point Subtotals by Vendor	29	26	26	30	27	26	23
POINT TOTALS (EASE OF USE & TTV COMBINED)	Hubspot	SFDC/Pardot	Marketo	Act-On	ORCL Eloqua	IBM Marketing Cloud	Adobe Campaign
Point Totals by Vendor	63	64	55	67	58	53	49

How Top Vendors Rank Against the Two Must-Haves (continued)

As you can see, Act-On has one of the top scores for Ease of Use and is the stand-out leader for TTV. But in order to predict initial and ongoing success with marketing automation, we believe you need both of these criteria. And when you look at the combined score totalling ease of use and TTV, Act-On is the clear winner.



Criteria based on findings from the 2016 Forrester Wave Report and the G2Crowd Winter 2016 Marketing Automation report. Usability scores for each item listed above rank from 1 to 5 (with 5 being the best). Sources: The Forrester Wave™: Lead-To-Revenue Management Platform Vendors, Q4 2016. Nov. 18, 2016; G2Crowd Winter 2016 Marketing Automation report.

How Top Vendors Rank Against the Two Must-Haves (continued)

Key industry influencers and Act-On customers agree – here's what a few had to say.

Reference customers praised Act-On for its ease of deployment, ongoing resource requirements, and 'above and beyond' customer support.

FORRESTER[®]

Forrester Wave™ for L2RM Platform Vendors, Q416

Act-On has given me the freedom to work faster and with greater independence.



KERI KEELING
Bluenose

Act-On rolls data into a single dashboard that lets us quickly assess the effectiveness of our activities. The feedback is immediate and actionable, and the interface is so easy to use. If you can use a computer, you can use Act-On.



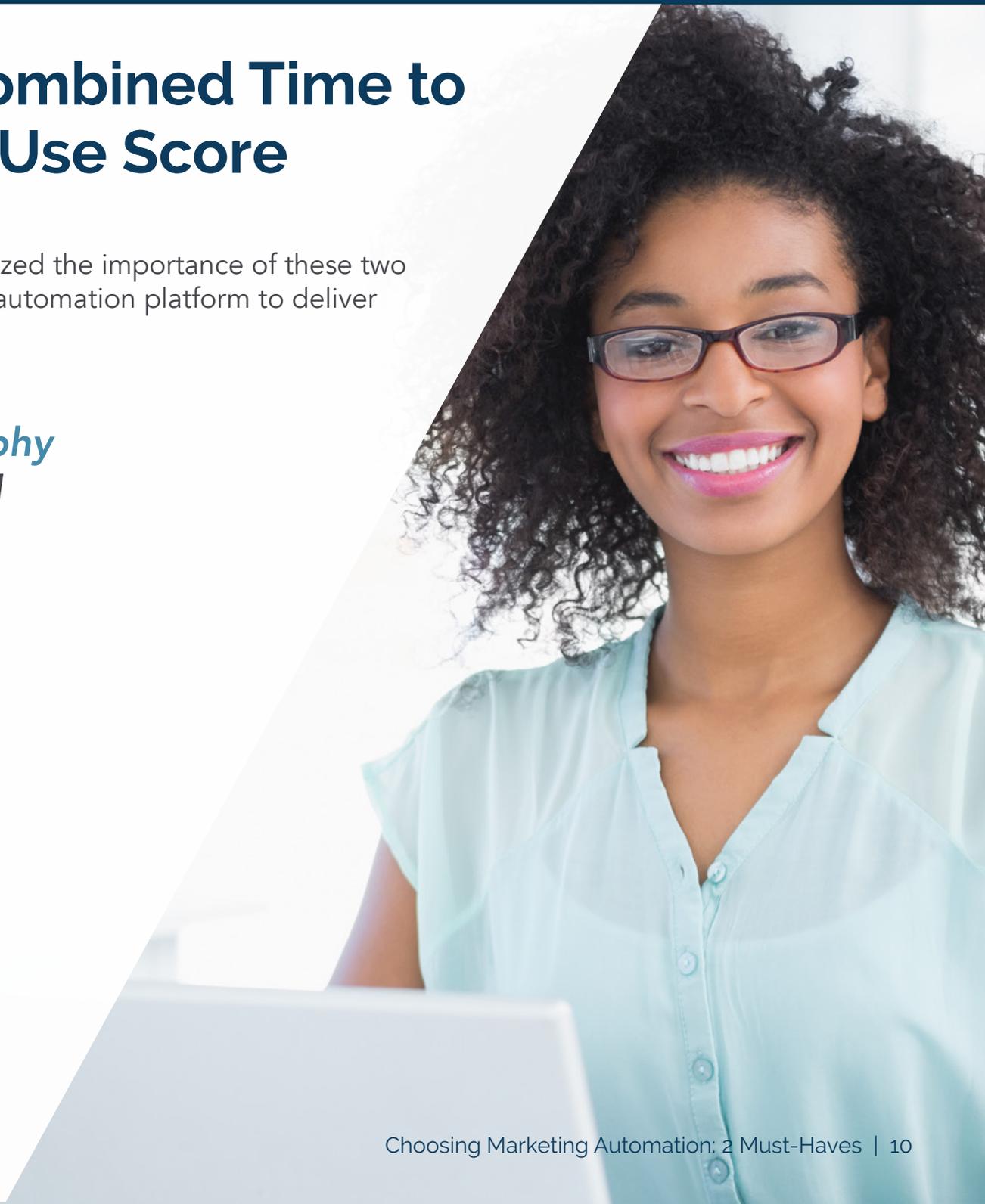
CYNTHIA SCHULTE
GM Nameplate

Act-On: Highest Combined Time to Value and Ease of Use Score

From the beginning, we at Act-On recognized the importance of these two key criteria and developed our marketing automation platform to deliver them. How'd we do it?

By rigorously fostering an innovative platform philosophy that focuses on the user and enables interoperability.

Let's dig into each one of these.



Innovative Platform Philosophy

Act-On was built with modern tools, on a modern platform, for today's digital marketer, from day one. With Act-On, you won't need to undergo painful architectural upgrades. Our singular focus originally was – and continues to be – making it easy for you to do your work better, get it done faster, generate better results and eliminate your dependence on the overburdened IT department.

Our product innovations keep us ahead of the market, delivering the tools you need to make a difference and keep you a step ahead of your competitors. To do this, you need a powerful engine that helps you build brand awareness, drive demand and expand customer relationships while helping sales, marketing, and customer teams seamlessly work together to acquire new customers and cultivate existing ones.

Act-On's recently-launched [Adaptive Journeys™](#) is one example of how we lead the market in innovation. With Adaptive Journeys, we're building upon Act-On's already modern, NoSQL architecture to help you market smarter, not harder. Powered by machine learning, Adaptive Journeys will enable marketers to connect with buyers and customers in more personalized ways, via point-and-click simplicity. Adaptive Journeys will recognize behaviors, preferences and interests, then use that data to deliver the best message, at the perfect time, and via the ideal communication channel, for more personalized engagements.



Act-On is going to make predictive intelligence the new normal, and that's a game changer for marketers like me in mid-sized organizations who often don't have access to that level of sophistication.



CYNTHIA SCHULTE
GM Nameplate

Innovative Platform Philosophy (continued)

A few Act-On features that highlight our innovative platform philosophy, and drive fast TTV and high ease of use, include:

- **Adaptive Forms™**. Leverage advanced form logic to present or hide questions in real-time as your prospects interact with your web forms; dynamically serve up extra questions only to relevant prospects while reducing form friction for the rest.
- **Adaptive Sending™**. Let Act-On predict the best time to deliver your message to each intended recipient, to maximize open rates based on previous email engagement.
- **Account-based marketing**. Target key accounts with personalized messaging and track overall account score to identify the accounts most engaged with your brand.



Act-On is one of our backbone systems and has helped us automate our world. I would have to double my staff to get the same results without it. That's a huge savings that allows us to provide more valuable content, produce higher-quality leads, and develop stronger marketing that can fuel and sustain our growth.



OREN FALKOVITZ
Jonas Construction Software

ACT-ON: HIGHEST COMBINED TIME TO VALUE AND EASE OF USE SCORE

User-Centric Focus

Good marketing isn't easy. You build a solid plan, develop smart strategies and tailor well-chosen tactics. You'd think, after all that, executing it would be easy, right? But all too often, putting your plan in place is a difficult slog, and you end up fighting with the very tools that are supposed to make your life easier.

We developed our Act-On marketing automation platform to include advanced, in-demand features like [account-based marketing](#), [behavior-based nurturing](#), [advanced social media management](#) and responsive design, but we never lost sight of our purpose: to give you what you need to succeed with your marketing plans – and make it easy to do so.

In fact, Act-On's so easy to use, we find those experienced with marketing automation are pleasantly surprised at how quickly programs moved from their legacy system to Act-On are ready to execute – typically in just days. And those upgrading from an email-only platform, with templates and programs already in place, can launch campaigns in just days and then add other capabilities as needed.



[Act-On is] simple to use, with a very flat learning curve, but full of functionality. We love it that you don't have to be certified to use this tool.



BILL DOUCETTE
Flycast Partners

User-Centric Focus (continued)

A few user-centric features that come standard with Act-On and drive fast TTV and high ease of use include:

- **Template catalog.** Download free and easily customizable email, landing page and nurture program templates directly from the Act-On platform.
- **Drag-and-drop builders.** Easily build and A/B test fully responsive emails, forms and landing pages that display just as you want them to on all devices. No HTML skills required.
- **Intuitive nurture programs.** Use a drag-and-drop interface to easily create simple or advanced nurture programs, while leveraging data from multiple sources and even incorporating multi-channel messaging.
- **Reporting and analytics.** [Gain insight](#) and measure what matters fast with pre-built dashboards featuring several common marketing metrics, such as lead conversions, revenue attribution, and sales funnel velocity.



In less than an hour, I had a branded email template and a fully functioning landing page in place. The fact that Act-On passed my test with flying colors is what sold me on the product.



KERI KEELING
Bluenose

Interoperability

The biggest risk you face when using a stand-alone marketing tool like an email service provider (ESP) manifests when you need to add other capabilities to your marketing mix. With this tool-based approach, each new capability you try to add costs more time and money, and likely produces data difficult to integrate and reconcile with your other marketing applications.

At the same time, investing in a marketing automation platform lacking strong integration capabilities limits the technology you can add to your marketing mix in the future.

With Act-On, you avoid both of these costly scenarios. Act-On seamlessly integrates with other applications via [connectors](#) and [plug-ins](#), so you get more out of the tools you already use to make your team more productive and proficient.

Act-On's [open-architecture](#), [integration-ready marketing automation platform](#) saves time, makes actionable data across systems easily visible, and increases ROI on marketing and sales efforts throughout the customer lifecycle. You can build the technology stack you prefer, using the complementary tools you choose, and rest assured Act-On's interoperability will support it now and in the future.



The level of detail [Act-On] provides and the way it integrates with Salesforce is better than anything we've encountered.



SAM MENDELSON
Jonas Construction Software

Interoperability (continued)

A few key Act-On features that drive fast TTV and high ease of use with regards to interoperability include:

- **Seamless syncing with all major CRM systems.** Enjoy [native integrations with the top five CRM vendors](#) (Salesforce, Microsoft Dynamics, Sugar, Netsuite and Infor) that take less than an hour to set up, and let you easily manage leads and report on marketing-sourced and/or marketing-influenced revenue.
- **Webinar integrations.** Make webinar promotion, registration and follow-up seamless – [Act-On integrates](#) with Webex, GoToWebinar, ON24 and ReadyTalk, setting up in minutes via a simple point-and-click interface.
- **RESTful API.** Leverage an existing integration or build your own using our easy API and corresponding documentation.



Act-On has streamlined our workflow and drastically reduced development time for all HTML-based content. We can create and deploy multi-channel campaigns within hours, not days, and seamlessly integrate our activities with our clients' CRM.



BRAD FELDMAR
Trungale Egan + Associates

Conclusion

B2B marketers and their CFOs rightfully scrutinize a technology's return on investment according to time to value (TTV) – evaluating the success or failure of a technology purchase according to the time it takes to derive tangible value from it. Whether a seasoned pro or marketing automation newbie, TTV is key to determining the success of your marketing automation investment.

Yet some of the largest mid-market and enterprise marketing automation systems are overly complex, take 6-12 months to implement, and require significant IT resources to deploy and maintain. With tight marketing budgets, even tighter IT resources and increasingly analyzed investments, many of the leading marketing automation platforms simply don't measure up.

But that's not the case with Act-On. If you're prepared with a plan, strategy and content, you can go live on Act-On much faster than on other marketing automation platforms. In fact, Act-On is so easy to use, most marketers achieve mastery of the platform within 90 days or less.

It's clear today's modern marketers need a right-sized, user-friendly marketing automation platform that delivers fast time to value. That platform is Act-On.



Acclaim for Act-On



See all of Act-On's
awards & accolades...

About Act-On Software

Act-On Software is a marketing automation company delivering innovation that empowers marketers to do the best work of their careers. Act-On is the only integrated workspace to address the needs of the customer experience, from brand awareness and demand generation, to retention and loyalty. With Act-On, marketers can drive better business outcomes and see higher customer lifetime value. The Act-On platform provides marketers with power they can actually use, without the need for a dedicated IT resource.

Connect with us to learn more