6-STEP MARKETING PLAN:

A Blueprint to Exceeding Your Goals

One Week Remains...

One week before Liz, a marketing director for a midsize software firm, must stand in front of her executive team and deliver her annual executive report. And she's worried.

All year, it seems, she's been running from campaign to campaign, and from tactic to tactic. Despite working ever longer hours, and capitalizing on all the latest trends, Liz just can't seem to get her department in order.

She's not sure which tactics are working and which aren't, how her programs tie to revenue, or how she should prioritize her time and her budget. She's stuck on the dreaded execution treadmill – and her programs are flagging as a result.

What Liz needs is a clear plan of action. Not only to give her peace of mind, but because marketers who have a clearly defined plan achieve higher performance than their peers.

This guide provides a six-step blueprint to developing your high-performance marketing plan, so that you can plan, execute, and measure high-impact campaigns.

Ready? Let's get started.

Companies with a clear marketing plan, that regularly measure their efforts, see 60% faster growth than those without a marketing plan.[1]

1. Create Goals That Excite Your Executives

If your executives could see just one result from your marketing programs, what do you think it would be? Brand awareness? Likes on Facebook?

Beyond anything else, what executives want to see from their marketing is more sales.

So when building your high-performance marketing plan, make sure you tie your goals back to your firm's strategic and revenue goals. Today, despite common wisdom, it's not content, but measurement and accountability that are king.

Set Yourself Up For Success

Develop High-Performance Goals

Benchmark goals that won't be difficult to achieve.

1

Identify your company's revenue goals.

If you don't have goals, work with your leadership team to define them.

2

Identify the % of revenue that will come from existing versus new customers.

This will differ depending upon your industry, company size, and stage of growth.

3

Identify the % of leads marketing will source:

As a benchmark, SiriusDecisions reports that marketing will source from 10% to 45% of leads and influence up to 75%. This will vary based on your targets and company size.[2]

4

Calculate your average deal size and win/loss rate.

This will show you how many opportunities are required to meet your goals.

5

Determine how many leads you will need to reach your goals.

Working backwards from your desired number of opps, you can now determine how many leads you'll need to generate to reach your goals. If you don't know your conversion funnel metrics, use the benchmarks on the next page as a guide.

Tiered goals to set expectations:

1. **Key Performance Indicator:** Benchmark goals that won't be difficult to achieve.
2. **Stretch Goal:** Achievable but ambitious.
3. **Dream Goal:** Lofty and ambitious, but not out of reach.

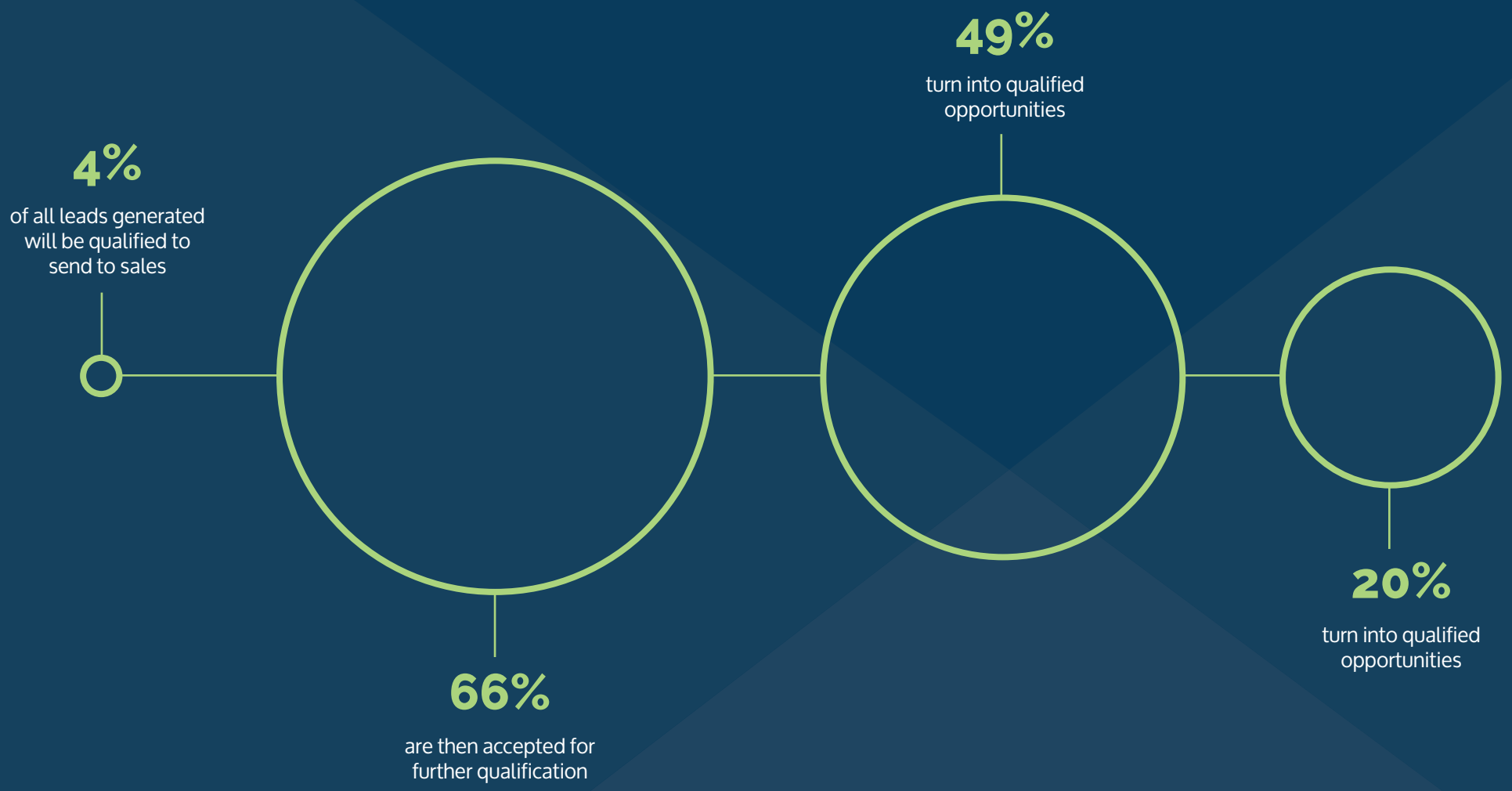
Tiered goals give you the benefit of safe benchmarks, with room for excellence and overachievement.

Voila! **You now have clear lead goals to which you can map your activities, as well as attribute revenue. Armed with your goals, you can now move to Step Two.**

Lead Conversion Benchmarks

Chart excerpted from SiriusDecisions.[3]

If you lack sufficient data to calculate your own conversion rates, use these.



2. Look Backward to Move Forward

Here's a quick question for you: If your leadership walked into your office right now and asked, "Which one of our marketing tactics delivered the largest percentage of qualified leads, with the highest ROI, in the last calendar year?" what would your answer be?

If you're not sure of the answer, don't worry.
You're not alone.

That said, before you can move forward and start developing messaging or deciding on tactics with any confidence, you must first look backward to see what worked, and what didn't.

Evaluate Past Successes Based on Your Buyers' Journey

All great marketers know one thing for certain: Great marketing isn't about us; it's about them. It's about creating content and messaging that is relevant to the prospects' daily lives, and helps them solve their problems.

That's why we recommend taking a prospect-centric approach when evaluating your programs. That way, you can experience your messaging the same way your prospects do.

Buyer Persona Elements Excerpted from Buyer Persona Institute.[4]

Priority Initiatives

What were the initiatives that caused buyers to invest in your solution? Consider evaluating notes in your CRM as well as trends, such as hot industries.

Success Factors

What operational or personal results does your buyer hope to achieve? Consider analyzing your won/lost deals, in addition to your messaging.

Perceived Barriers

Look backwards to see when and why deals stalled.

Buyers' Journey

Review tactics and channels to determine how and where they are accessing information. Also, evaluate which campaigns and promotions netted the highest number of marketing-attributed leads and revenue.

Decision Criteria

Work to understand the single most important message you should be delivering to your market.

Post-Evaluation

After this exercise, your action items should include an update to your buyer personas, as well as a list of "starts, stops, and continues" that will influence your future plans.

3. Develop Your "Big Idea"

In 1992, a young Democratic governor from Arkansas decided to run for president of the United States. Competing against a formidable incumbent, the young governor was fighting an uphill battle.

In order to break through the noise and create a memorable impact, his now-fabled campaign strategist James Carville hung three simple points on the wall:

1. **Change vs. more of the same**
2. **The economy, stupid**
3. **Don't forget health care**

The candidate? Bill Clinton.[5]

Since the end of World War II, only three incumbent presidents have been unseated.[6] And it was these three seemingly simple themes that are largely credited with the campaign's success.

The world is a noisy place. It's the profoundly simple messages that shine through. So, in Step Three of your plan, you'll work to create simple yet impactful "campaign themes" that will be the backbone of your efforts.

The Four Tenets of Effective **Campaign Themes**

All effective campaign themes are:

1. Based on buyer pain points and needs. Not your product's features and benefits.

2. Simple to understand. As the previous story illustrates, the simplest ideas are often the most powerful.

3. Relevant during all stages of the buyer's journey. Including the awareness, consideration, transaction, and loyalty buying stages.

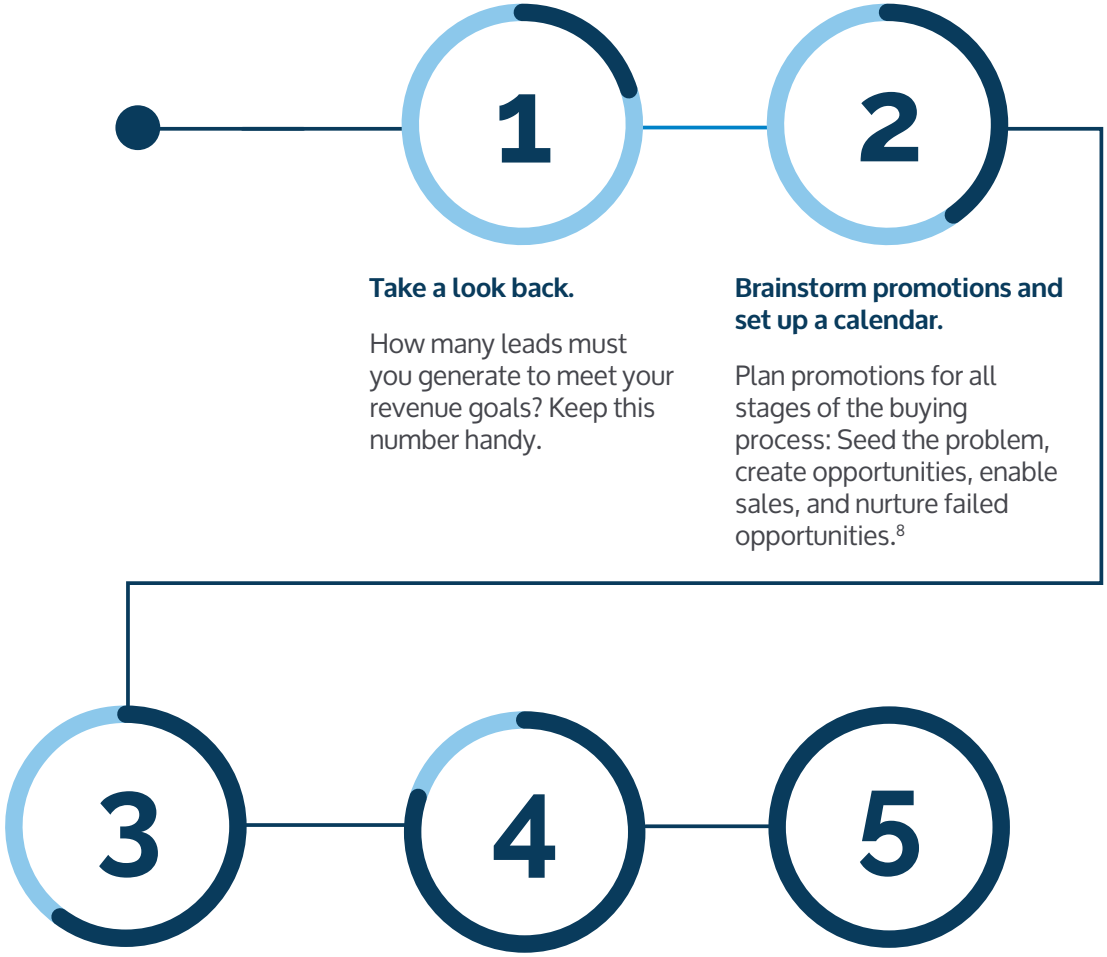
4. Enduring enough to stand the test of time. While you may choose to test themes before rolling them out, once they are decided upon, run them for at least 12 months. It will take time for your messages to be remembered.

What Is a Theme?
Ideas that unify and underlie your marketing communications. They are what you want your prospects to think about your company and products.

What Isn't a Theme?
Taglines, creative concepts or customer communications. Rather, they are the ideas that will inform the creation of future content.

4. Decide How You'll Tell Your Story

Here's where you take your "big ideas" and map them to activities. On the next page, we outline a five-step process for planning your quarterly activities. If you're not sure what activities to use, this chart shows what others find effective.



Take a look back.

How many leads must you generate to meet your revenue goals? Keep this number handy.

Brainstorm promotions and set up a calendar.

Plan promotions for all stages of the buying process: Seed the problem, create opportunities, enable sales, and nurture failed opportunities.[8]

Forecast activity performance and optimization metrics.

During this step, also determine the metrics you'll track (e.g. opens, page views) for activity optimization.

Fill in gaps.

After your forecast, you may find that you fall short of your lead goals. Add additional activities as needed.

Determine internal readiness.

A house without a solid foundation cannot stand. Here, you ensure you have the necessary foundation to execute on your campaigns. More on this next.

The Internal Readiness Assessment

This is a critical step, so take the time to do this well. Skimp here, and you'll find yourself missing opportunities and deadlines when it becomes time to execute. Here's a list of key boxes to check.

Can your staff handle the work, or is outside help needed?

Key considerations include:

- Internal bandwidth
- Technology expertise
- Breadth of skills
- Subject matter and strategic expertise

Do you have the content you need?

Find out by:

- Reviewing competitors' content
- Conducting a content audit based on your buyer personas
- Analyzing content based on their typical buying journey

Is your data ready?

Make sure that:

- Your email database is 90%+ deliverable
- Your data is complete and up-to-date

Is your technology ready?

Needs to consider:

- Automation
- Segmenting
- Reporting

Determine your internal review process:

An efficient review process:

- Includes deadlines
- Defines reviewers for all tasks and deliverables, based on expertise.
- Avoids "too many cooks in the kitchen." Two reviewers are usually sufficient.

5. Assign Who, What, And When

High-performance marketing plans take care to assign responsibilities early, and hold contributors accountable, in order to make sure plans turn into action.

This step is all about creating a clear, action-oriented task list that addresses three key questions:

- **Who:** Include both creators and reviewers.
- **What:** Include the gist of the promotion, such as a working title and campaign elements (since not all will be finalized in advance).
- **When:** Include key dates, such as email sends and event dates.

5. Assign Who, What, And When (continued)

When you're planning, take care to include time for both internal review cycles and campaign creation.

Notice how all activities, MQLs, and deadlines are accounted for.

6. Track, Optimize, And Report

In the late 1800s, John Wanamaker – the revolutionary marketer credited with the invention of fixed, no-haggle prices and money-back guarantees – uttered a few words which have plagued marketers for the better part of a century: "Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is I don't know which half."

In the new age of accountable marketing, this type of waste is no longer necessary or tolerated for long.

That is why a high-performance marketing plan includes a process for the careful tracking of key metrics, so that programs can be optimized and executives can clearly see their value.

Schedule Reporting Cycles

When scheduling your review cycles, set aside time to review program performance as well as internal processes. Constantly work to improve. The key with review cycles is to conduct them frequently, but not so frequently that theyimpede execution.

Several times when you'll want to review results:

- **During a promotion:** Such as during an event registration push
- **After a major event:** Such as a trade show or webinar
- **Quarterly:** Take a more holistic view
- **Annually:** A comprehensive review to aid yearly planning

DO:

Analyze the success of your messaging during campaigns, so that you can adjust and optimize them.

DON'T:

Abandon your themes prematurely. Market education takes time. Rather than change the themes, consider changing their positioning – for example, from "pain" to "aspirational" messaging.

Delivering Reports That "Wow"

Engagement, open rates, clickthroughs – these are all worthwhile metrics that you should track.

But, come reporting time, if these are the stats you're delivering to executives, you'll find yourself standing in front of a glassy-eyed audience, all wondering, "Great, but why should we care?"

Here are four secrets for delivering reports that "wow."

Give a quick background:

Don't walk folks through every detail, but do give a summary of your strategy, as well as a few highlights from your campaigns.

Speak in plain language:

Remember that the simplest concepts have the biggest impact. Explain concepts like you're speaking with a friend.

Share stories in addition to metrics:

Walk folks through a few of your biggest successes – and failures. What insights did you glean from failures? What are your less-tangible successes? Include quotes.

Close with metrics that really matter:

Tie everything together by showing them how it panned out, in terms of cold, hard metrics – **revenue and ROI.** "Funnel" and "Revenue Impact" reports should be a staple.

Very Effective Metrics for Evaluating **Marketing ROI by Organization Size**

Chart excerpted from MarketingSherpa B2B Marketing Benchmark.[9]

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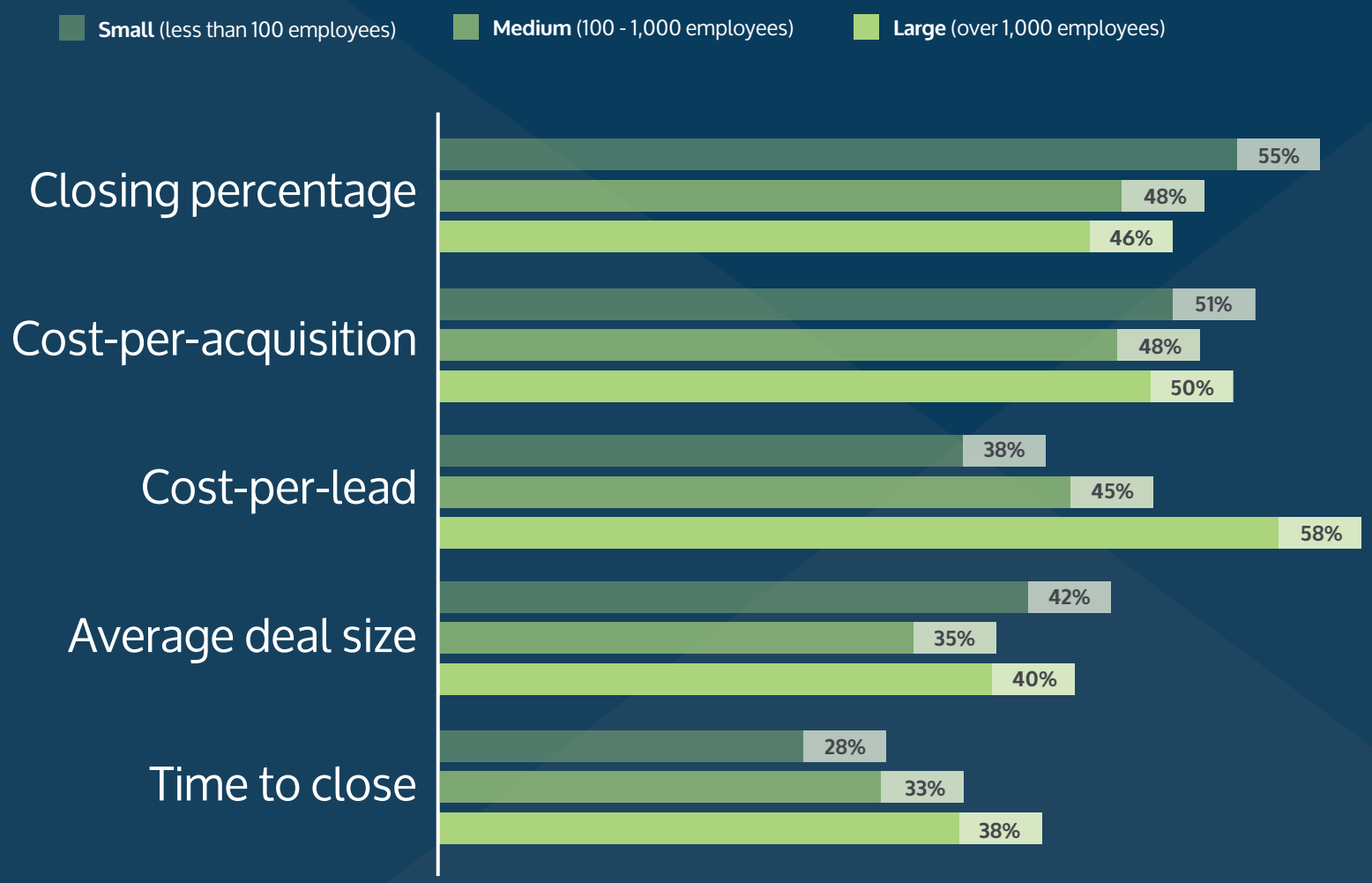

It's Your Time: Join the **High-Performance Marketing Elite**

A year has passed since we last checked in with Liz. She's taken our advice and followed our six-step plan. It's a week before her annual executive report – how does she feel now?

Thanks to her planning, her year has been far more orderly. Campaigns now run on a predictable schedule, and her team knows what's expected of them, and when. Liz is happy, because she now has clear insights into her programs and knows what's working and what isn't. Her executives will also be happy, once they see the revenue and successes her programs are generating.

Get started on your plan today by gathering your team and beginning at Step One. Next year, your results and your executives will thank you.

Additional **Resources**

- The Business Case for Marketing Automation: How to Craft a Compelling Case the Executive Team Will Approve
- CEO Perspectives: 5 Ways Marketing Automation Can Optimize and Grow Your Business
- Creating a Content Marketing Strategy: 6 Best Practices That Work
- Fast Facts: Latest Sales & Marketing Stats
- The New Marketing Metrics for B2B

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