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Case Study #CS31778:

## [Marketing Automation Tool Drives List Growth, Boosts Registrations 664%](#)

by David Kirkpatrick, Reporter MarketingSherpa

**SUMMARY:** Making the change from the corporate world to entrepreneurship can be difficult. A large company offers the advantage of having different teams focused on particular business areas, but the entrepreneur is often pressed into service in many areas at once.

Because of these demands on their time, entrepreneurs are always looking to increase efficiency. Marketing automation tools are one way to streamline and integrate email marketing, event marketing, online surveys and social media marketing. See how one entrepreneur successfully made the transition from a corporate position to a thriving six-person company, and how automation helped in the process.

### **CHALLENGE**

Barb Girson began her business career as a successful entrepreneur and followed that time with ten years in the corporate world. She found herself downsized in the summer of 2008 and rejoined the entrepreneurial world when she founded My Sales Tactics, a professional skill development firm, in January 2009.

Girson had three criteria for the new company:

- o Low overhead
- o The ability to work out of her home
- o For the business to be completely portable, requiring nothing more than a computer and telephone

All three criteria meant moving from a business environment with teams of employees meeting specialized functions, such as segregating databases and producing creative output, to a very streamlined atmosphere where Girson handled these functions herself.

Given the nature of My Sales Tactics' business, which involved coaching, speaking, teleclasses, webinars and consulting, building a contact list was a priority for Girson, and creating effective processes for informing and engaging with that list was paramount. In the early days of the firm she would manually work with her contact list for reaching out to members expressing an interest in different services offered, but Girson knew this was not going to be long-term solution to maintaining and managing her growing contact list.

"I would create a marketing email about the teleclass, and then I would create a spreadsheet for those who indicated interest," Girson explains. "And when they would register I would manually type in their name and their email and their phone number."

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#### **Featured:**

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**12/08/2010**  
1 | Page  
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## CAMPAIGN

A contact list must be nurtured and grown to a sufficient size before managing the list becomes a challenge. Girson began the process of building her contact list from day one of My Sales Tactics by networking with her target market -- other entrepreneurs. She used both local and national opportunities to interact with her target and became involved with groups such as the International Coach Federation and the National Association of Women Business Owners.

Girson made certain to ask for permission to add new connections to her contact list, and before actually adding someone to a group email marketing list she followed up with a personal email to remind the person they opted-in to the list.

Along with networking, referrals and reaching out to her audience at speaking engagements, Girson used her website to capture new contact list members. She combined keyword-rich content and SEO tactics with online button and banner advertising to reach her target market.

She describes her website as her "storefront" and source of credibility. She feels this approach to website marketing provides My Sales Tactics with targeted leads, but she is always looking to improve that performance by testing the layout and content of the site.

As the contact list grew, Girson realized that manually handling all of the details, such as spreadsheet data entry, creating marketing email, e-newsletter segmentation and more, was becoming an overwhelming task. Ten months into running My Sales Tactics, Girson decided to find a better way to manage her contact list.

## Automation

Manually working with her contact list created a number of issues for Girson. First was the time-consuming grunt work labor, which also made segmenting and organizing the list more difficult, and made keeping track of who opened or forwarded the mail impossible.

To improve this process, Girson found a marketing automation solution that gave her much more control over her contact list and her entire marketing process. Girson used this integrated marketing automation tool to combine her event marketing with her email marketing database. This integration allowed her to create invitations and then send emails to people who indicated interest in an event. Her next step was to create a landing page for the event on the My Sales Tactics website with a link where respondents to the email could register. The entire process could be integrated with PayPal so everything from event creation to collecting payment was highly automated.

This automation significantly improved online event registration for My Sales Tactics. Girson explains that once she'd import the list of registered contacts, a spreadsheet was automatically created.

"I can communicate with those people. Here's the dial-in information (for a teleclass), here's the handoff that you need. (Automation) took away a lot of the manual process plus it increased my ability to target specific individuals," she says.

Another place automation improved Girson's marketing efforts was social media. She was

already thinking more about a top-down strategy to combine her email, network and social media marketing efforts, and found marketing automation made this goal easier to realize. Her software solution provided reminders and one-button ease-of-use to tweet messages several times between the announcement of an event and the day of that event. Making social media marketing an integral part of her overall efforts helped Girson "crystallize" her use of Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.

As Girson explains, "The core of my marketing strategy is a four-prong mix of networking, driving website traffic, event marketing and email marketing -- blending high tech and high touch."

## RESULTS

Girson set out to grow My Sales Tactics contact list through a variety of methods including direct contact, website and referrals.

- o Her contact list has grown to 2,620, and is regularly increasing
- o First teleclass after automation registration grew by 2,096%
- o First teleclass attendance grew by 664%

One of My Sales Tactics' strategies to grow the contact list and to position Girson as an expert in the professional skill development field is offering free teleclasses several times each year. Before Girson began using marketing automation, the classes averaged 20 to 30 registrants and attendees. The first seminar after implementing automation had 524 participants register, and 166 who actually dialed into the call. Because automation eased the time requirements for the free teleclasses, Girson was then able to offer them more frequently and maintain the increase in both registrants and participants.

What's more, Girson saw impressive results from her email marketing as well:

- o 3.7% bounce rate
- o 40.7% open rate
- o 25.7% clickthrough rate

The bounce rate for her email contacts increased to 3.7 percent, a number Girson hopes to improve by having a newly hired assistant make weekly calls to contacts with a bad email addresses to try and obtain a working address.

The open rate for Girson's email marketing efforts increased to 40.7 percent and the clickthrough rate also went up to 25.7 percent. She attributes these numbers to building a personal relationship with her contacts and using automation to effectively segment the list for targeted messages.

Perhaps just as impressive as the results themselves are the facts that Girson has results to speak of at all. Previous to utilizing marketing automation Girson had no way of measuring or tracking these numbers, and in her coaching she has found many small business owners either don't pay attention to these metrics, or like Girson in the early days of her business, have no way of tracking email marketing campaigns.

Automation helped Girson manage email marketing by providing usable metrics on how current

campaigns perform. These metrics have allowed Girson to look at factors such as day of the week, the time of day, the content, the subject line and the time of year email marketing messages are sent. With that information she has been able to analyze the metrics and make better, and more informed, decisions on improving My Sales Tactics' campaigns.

For example, she no longer sends her list email on long weekends at the change of a season, such as Memorial Day or Labor Day. She has found the opt-out rate goes up at those times, so Girson now avoids email marketing during those long weekends.

And these increased results have come at less expense to Girson since marketing automation provided her a tremendous savings in time.

"The time saving has been significant," Girson says. "Instead of needing to manually register each person, entering their data to a spreadsheet, creating a group, emailing program details, and sending post-program communications is all streamlined to an automated process."

## Useful links related to this article

### CREATIVE SAMPLES

1. [Teleclass replay invite](#)
2. [Teleclass preview invite](#)
3. [Teleclass preview email](#)

Members Library -- [Investing in Marketing Automation: The Benefits of Pilot Testing](#)

Members Library -- [Special Report: 8 Criteria for Choosing a Lead Scoring/Marketing Automation Vendor](#)  
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**12/08/2010**  
4 | Page  
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