SEVENROOMS

The Restaurateur's Guide to Marketing Automation

In order to run a financially successful restaurant business, marketing efforts are not just crucial to attracting new customers but play a critical role in turning first-time guests into loyal regulars.

In an ideal world, restaurateurs would have unlimited resources to reach thousands of new guests each day that would fill their dining rooms and they would serve them all flawlessly. But in the real world, resources are limited. Maximizing time, talent, and financial resources is critical to a restaurant's profitability and longevity. That's where marketing automation comes into the picture.

In this guide to marketing automation you'll learn:

- What Marketing Automation is
- Why it matters to the hospitality industry
- How guest data is used in marketing automation
- The different types of marketing automation
- How to create memorable moments that turn guests into regulars
- How to measure the success of your marketing automation efforts

Additionally, we'll share case studies of restaurants successfully using marketing automation to grow their business and provide examples and inspiration for you to use in your marketing strategy.

What is Marketing Automation?

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Marketing automation leverages technology to put your restaurant's marketing efforts on autopilot, freeing your team up to provide the memorable service experience that technology can't replace. Many marketing departments automate repetitive tasks such as email marketing, social media posting, and even ad campaigns

For example, rather than manually emailing guests to ask for feedback, you can use marketing automation software to send guests a survey after a visit or takeout order.

The Benefits of Marketing Automation

- **Time Savings**

  You don't have to waste precious time doing repetitive tasks that software can handle for you.

- **Cost Savings**

  When marketing takes less time, you can spend less on labor and professional services.

- **Consistency**

  Tedious marketing tasks can get lost in the shuffle on a busy day of service. Automation ensures these critical outreach efforts don't get left behind and you maintain consistent contact with customers.

- **Increased Customer Retention**

  When guest outreach is automated and consistent, your customers will regularly receive reminders, updates, and offers from your restaurant, making them more likely to return.
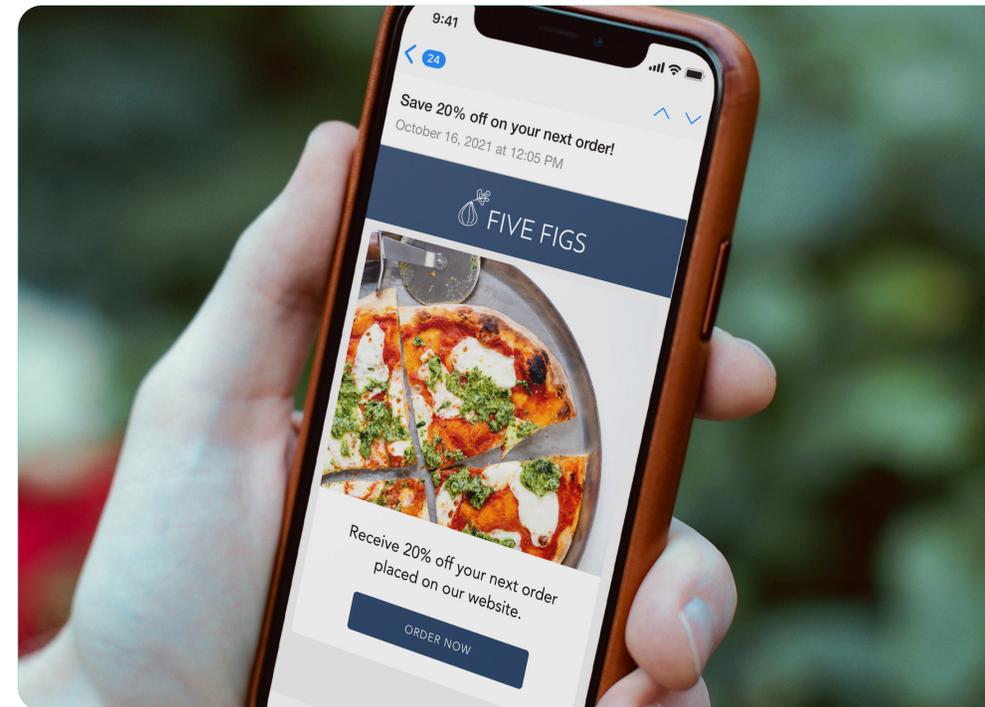
Why Marketing Automation Matters to the Hospitality Industry

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Personalization is a hallmark of hospitality. It matters to restaurant guests, and even inspires them to spend more. According to research by Google, consumers are 40% more likely to spend more than they had planned when they are presented with an individualized experience.

Customization also leads to more repeat business. Personalized marketing efforts have been shown to increase return visits for full service restaurants by 6-12% and quick service restaurants by 8-20%.

Unsurprisingly, repeat customers are worth more to restaurants than new customers. Six in ten small businesses report that returning customers account for more than half of their sales. Moreover, even just a 5% boost in customer loyalty can lead to a 95% increase in sales, according to Harvard Business Review.

Nurturing guest relationships and turning first time visitors into regulars is critical to boosting revenue. The key to winning repeat business is delivering memorable, personalized service. Unfortunately, personalization typically takes a lot of time.

The good news is: with the assistance of automated marketing software, there's no limit to the customized messages, offers, and invitations you can send customers to provide the personalization that will turn them into loyal, high-spending regulars.

Adding the SevenRooms Marketing Automation to our email marketing strategy has been a huge timesaver for our staff and allows us to treat each of our guests like a VIP. We love the professional approach taken with each of the emails, they're well thought out and are a good representation of our brand. We definitely see an uptick in repeat customers and the revenue associated with our campaigns support that. We're just getting started with these campaigns and the impact has been almost immediate.

David Haffner,
General Manager, Brodeur's

# The Benefits of Marketing Automation for Restaurants

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Restaurants that embrace marketing automation are rewarded in many ways.

More Memorable Guest Experiences

Nearly **7 in 10 customers** won't return to a business if they feel the business is apathetic towards them. Automation makes it easy for restaurateurs to make guests feel special before, during, and after a dining experience – at scale.
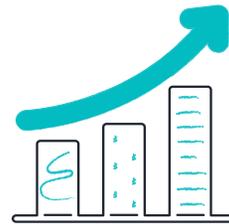
Higher Profit Margins

About **one third** of a restaurant's revenue goes towards paying staff. When software automates mindless, repetitive marketing tasks, your team is free to focus on initiatives that require the human touch, which can help you streamline staffing needs and reduce labor costs.

More Repeat Business

Automated marketing outreach ensures that every diner receives reservation reminders, birthday offers, feedback surveys, and other marketing messages – without fail. When your restaurant stays top of mind, guests will be more likely to show up to reservations, place online orders, review your restaurant online, and keep coming back for more.

How Guest Data Powers Marketing Automation

Guest data is the key to successful, personalized automated marketing campaigns.

LOCAL

HIGH SPENDER

VEGAN

How Guest Data Powers Marketing Automation

Why Guest Data is Critical

The better you know your guests, the better you can target them with personalized offers and anticipate their needs to create lucrative, memorable dining experiences that keep them coming back.

Customer relationship management (CRM) software is the hub of any marketing automation program. It's where restaurants gather information about their guests, like dining preferences and order history, and use them to build guest profiles.
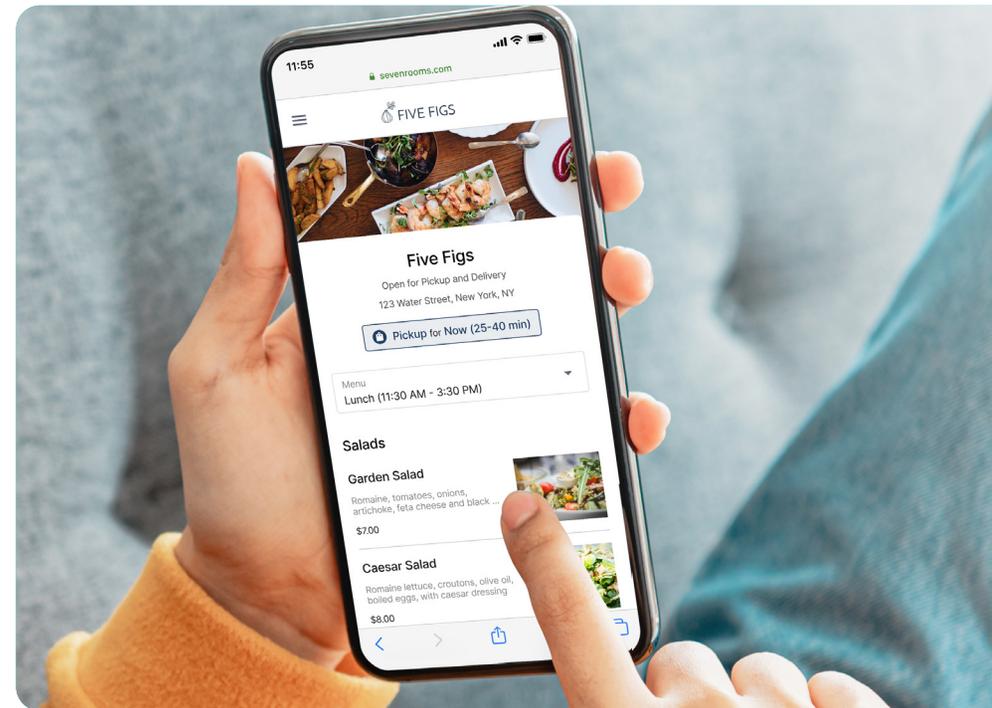
Restaurant Guest Data Collection 101

Here's what you need to know about how to access guest data and which data points to collect in your CRM.

Where To Get Your Guest Data

- [Reservations and Waitlist Platform](#)

- [Online Orders](#)

- Walk-Ins

- Anecdotal Information from On-Premise Dining

- Wifi Login Portal

- POS Data

Restaurant Guest Data Collection 101

What Guest Data You Need to Collect

- **Name**
  Knowing your customer's name makes it easy to personalize marketing messages and service.

- **Contact Information**
  Collecting an email address or phone number helps you send automated reservation reminders and promotions via email or SMS.

- **Special Dates**
  When you know about birthdays and anniversaries, you can send guests individualized promotions on their special day(s).

- **Dining Preferences**
  From dietary restrictions to drink of choice, dining preference tags on guest profiles help your marketing automation campaigns share recommendations and offers that guests will be more likely to accept.

- **Spend History**
  Identify loyal regulars and high spenders via POS data to give them incentives to keep coming back, like freebies.

- **Order History**
  Use this data to send relevant updates to customers about new menu items they may like based on past meals and provide personalized service.
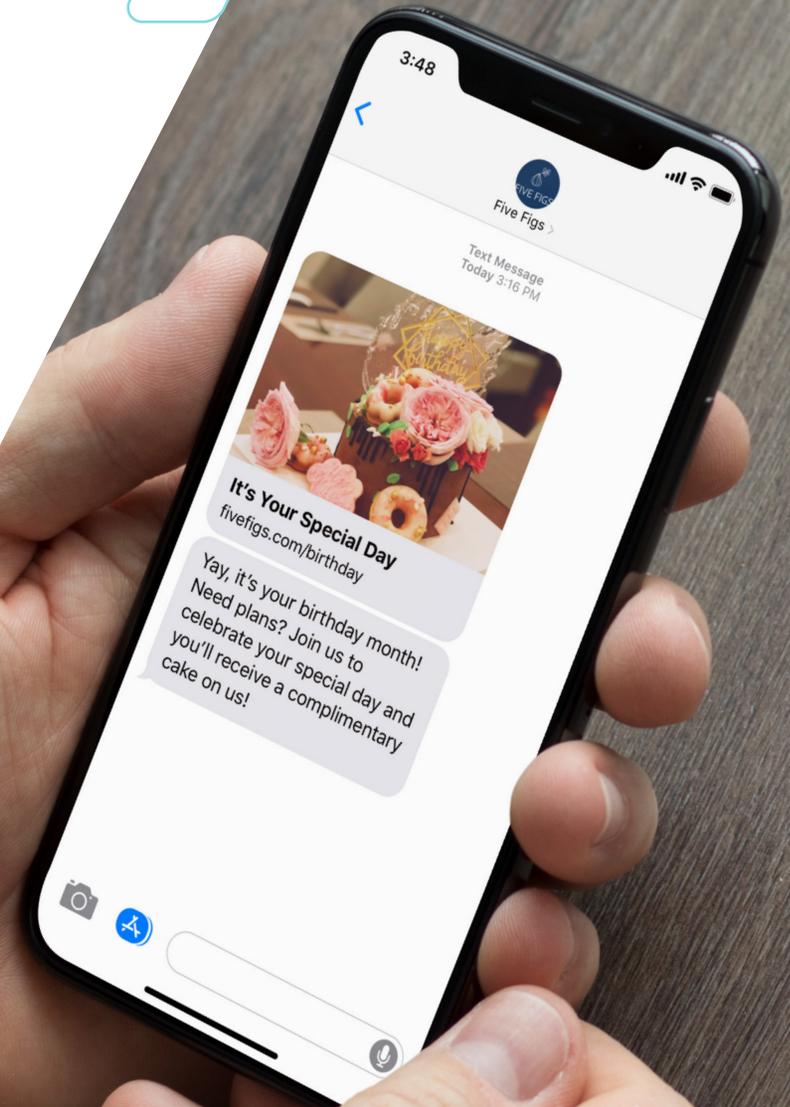
- **Feedback & Reviews**
  Any information about a guest's past experiences (positive or negative) can be used to send follow up emails that build trust and loyalty.

Types of Marketing Automation for Restaurants

Implement any of these automations at your restaurant to turn first-time guests into repeat customers.

Email Marketing

The options are endless when it comes to email marketing but these examples are some common marketing automations loved by restaurants:

- **Reservation Confirmation & Reminder Emails:**
  Confirm & remind guests of reservations, and give them the opportunity to cancel or modify a booking to ensure that your restaurant can accommodate waitlist guests.

- **Feedback Surveys:**
  When your marketing automation platform sends surveys to guests after a visit or takeout order, you never miss an opportunity to improve the dining experience.

- **Birthday or Anniversary Offers:**
  Send an email several weeks before a guests special day to entice them to celebrate with you by offering a freebie customized to their dining preference, like their favorite glass of wine or dessert.

- **Evergreen Engagement Emails:**
  Create emails that are triggered by milestones. For example, a "We Miss You" email 60 days after a visit or order.
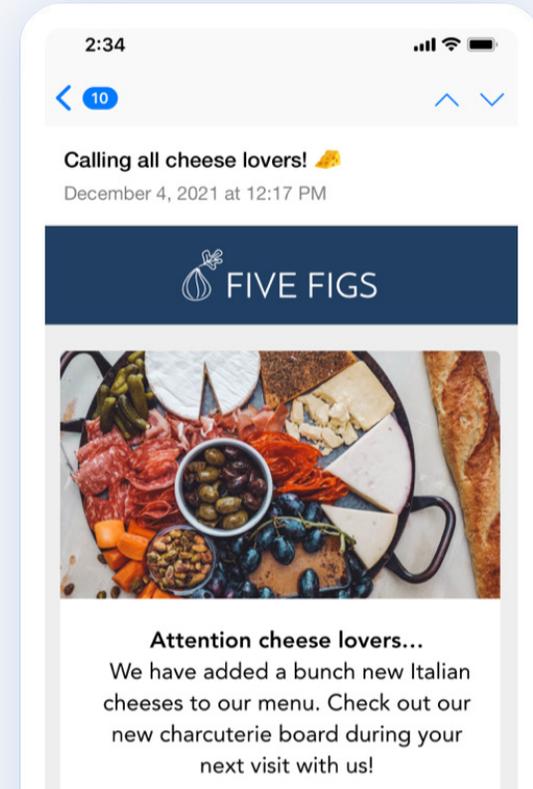
PRO TIP

While they're not automated, one-off emails about events, menu changes, and announcements can also help you stay relevant. Plus, they're simple to customize and execute when you have access to guest preferences.

For example, if your wine & cheese bar is unveiling a new Italian cheese board, you could send the update to guests who have previously ordered or expressed an interest in Italian cheeses.
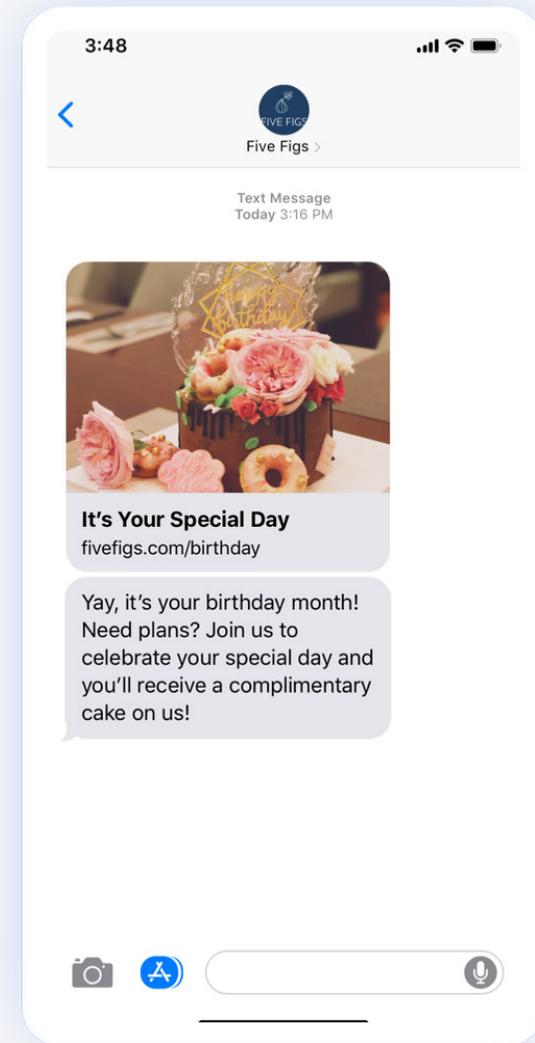
SMS Marketing

Consumers are almost five times more likely to open a text message than an email. **Restaurants can leverage automated SMS marketing in many of the same ways as emails, including:**

- **Reservation Confirmation & Reminder Texts:**
  Many restaurants ask diners to confirm reservations by texting back the number 1, or cancel by texting back the number 9.

- **Feedback Surveys:**
  Send customers a link to a mobile-optimized survey after an order or visit.

- **Birthday or Anniversary Offers:**
  Invite guests to celebrate their special occasion with your restaurant and offer a freebie to entice them to visit.

- **Evergreen Reminders to Return:**
 Offer shortcuts for making reservations via text.

Automated Loyalty Programs

Restaurants are replacing punch cards with digital loyalty programs that incentivize repeat business and larger order values through gamification. Digital loyalty programs track guest activity and award points for number of visits, amount spent, or other milestones. Guests can then redeem these points for freebies, gift cards, and perks.

Once restaurateurs set up the parameters of their loyalty program, all aspects of it – from point tracking to reward redemption – can be automated.

Social Media Marketing
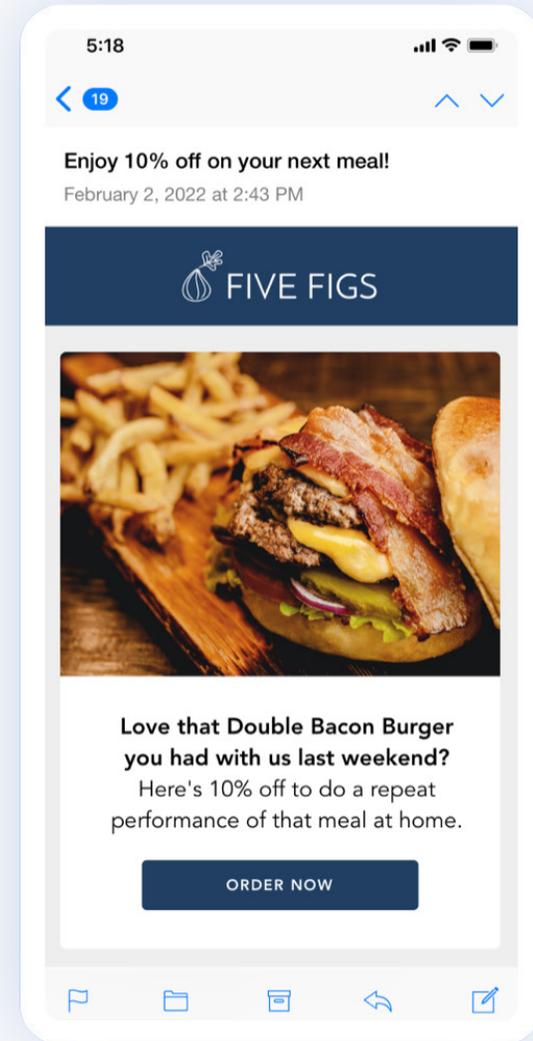
Social media marketing remains a powerful way to communicate with customers, encourage repeat business, and attract new guests. **Here's how to leverage marketing automation on your restaurant's social media channels:**

- **Aggregate Questions:**
  Use social media management platforms like Hootsuite or Loomly to gather incoming questions and comments from all of your social accounts into one place. Being able to respond to all inquiries from one dashboard can save your team lots of time.

- **Schedule Posts:**
  If you're still manually publishing social media updates ad hoc, you're not using your time wisely. Instead, use a social media marketing tool to plan and schedule posts in bulk at the start of each month.

Review Aggregation

Rather than having to visit your TripAdvisor, Google My Business, and Yelp profiles to read and respond to customer reviews, you can use a review aggregator to see and respond to all incoming reviews in one place, which greatly speeds up the process.
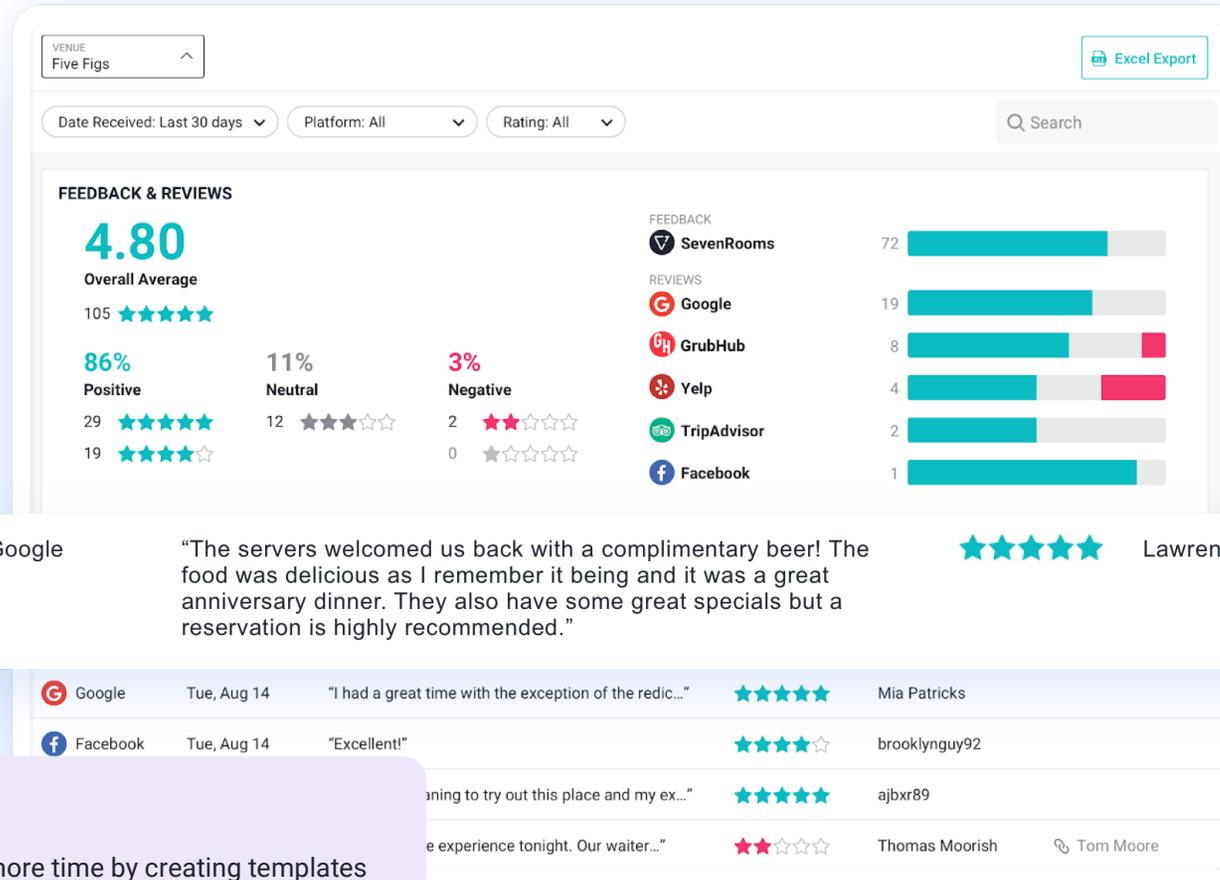
PRO TIP

You can save even more time by creating templates for review responses and answers to FAQs.

Making the Magic Happen in the Dining Room

Making the Magic Happen in the Dining Room

Your work has only just begun when a customer makes a reservation or places a takeout order after receiving an automated marketing message from your restaurant. Fortunately, the same technology that sent this message can also help your team execute the operational aspects of personalized service that drive customer loyalty.

Automation technology can update your CRM and guest profiles to highlight important details about a guest and reservation or order so that staff is in the loop and can provide a memorable experience.

Let's say you send emails offering couples free champagne for celebrating wedding anniversaries at your restaurant. When a guest makes an anniversary reservation via this email, the free champagne offer is automatically applied to their guest profile.

The CRM then reminds front-of-house staff about the offer and occasion so that they can greet the couple by name upon arrival, wish them a happy anniversary, and have the champagne waiting at their table.

How to Measure the Success of Marketing Automation
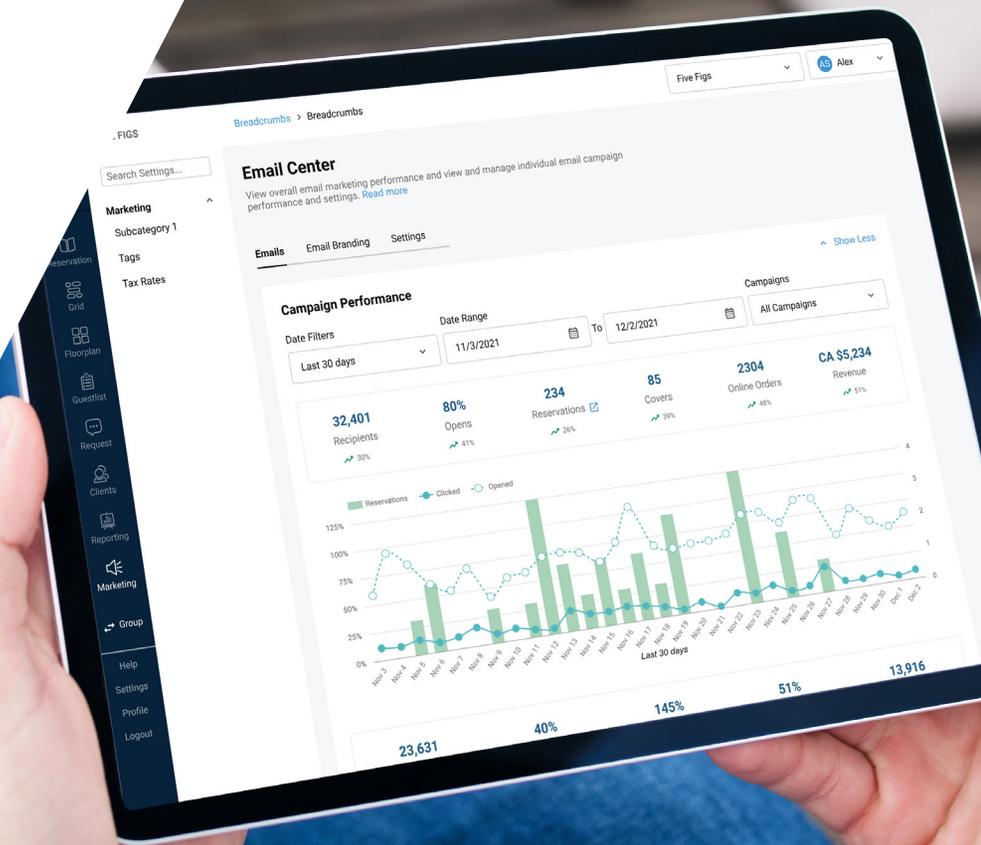
How to Measure the Success of Marketing Automation

What's better than having a gut feeling about the success of your marketing automation campaigns? **Data that shows results.**

The beauty of the technology that makes automation possible is that it also gives restaurateurs access to key data points like:

Email Open and Click Through Rates (CTR)

Repeat Orders

Repeat Reservations

Value of Repeat Business

Customer Lifetime Value (LTV)

You can use these insights to:

- Prove success to key stakeholders and investors

- Forecast revenue

- Inform future marketing campaigns and A/B test current ones

- Inform business decisions like expansion and new menu items

SevenRooms
Case Studies

/ CASE STUDY

Brodeur's BISTRO

Abbotsford, BC

Brodeur's Bistro decided to explore reservation and marketing solutions that would help them effectively meet the changing needs of their clientele, while building a direct relationship with these loyal guests.

Through the automated review and response email campaigns within SevenRooms Marketing Automation, Brodeur's Bistro was able to solicit and immediately respond to all guest reviews. For satisfied and unsatisfied guests alike, this provided the reassurance that their voices were being heard.

As a result, Brodeur's achieved:

In the first month alone, these emails drove **nearly $4,000 in additional revenue**

9,000 guests added to the database

Email open rate reached **65%**

New York, NY

As In Good Company ("IGC") expanded from one to eight locations, they realized the need to improve their technology systems to revamp guest experiences across the organization and automate marketing to save time.

To stay competitive in the New York market, IGC turned to SevenRooms to implement a new reservation, seating and guest management platform that connects all their locations and enables personalized guest experiences and hyper-targeted automated marketing campaigns.

As a result, IGC was able to:

Drive a **400% increase** in their guest database

Achieve a **68% increase** in email marketing open rates

Deliver highly personalized service across all restaurant locations

/ CASE STUDY

SAFFRON
INDIAN BISTRO

San Carlos, CA

As Saffron Indian Bistro experienced a massive uptick in their delivery and takeout business while also dealing with frequently-changing restrictions on indoor dining, a leaner staff was now responsible for ensuring on- and off-premise operations ran smoothly.

Aiming to meet the changing needs of their clientele while continuing to build meaningful relationships with their guests, the team turned to SevenRooms – utilizing our full platform to enable direct, commissions-free online ordering and reservations, plus marketing automation tools proven to drive incremental visits and orders.

As a result, Saffron Indian Bistro was able to:

Achieve a **68% open rate** with automated marketing emails

Generate **$2,000 incremental revenue** with those emails in their first six months

Create **additional guest touch points and stronger guest relationships**

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Marketing Automation Inspiration

Take inspiration for your restaurant's automated marketing efforts from these sample emails and SMS messages.

Reservation Confirmation Reminder SMS Series
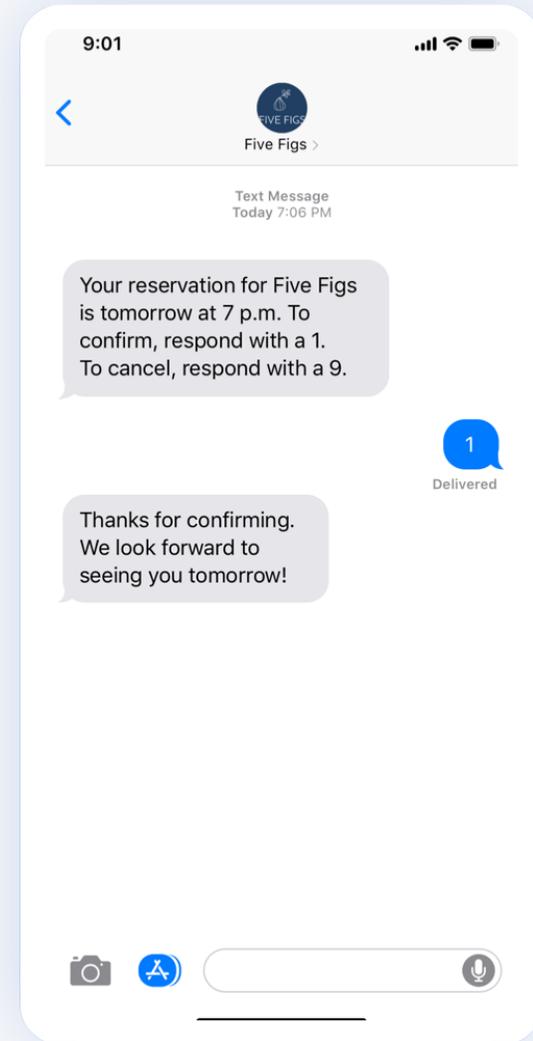
Use Case:

This SMS series is triggered after a guest makes a reservation. The messages are sent to the phone number that the reservation was made with to help reduce no shows and keep top of mind with guests.

When reservation is made:

You've booked an outdoor table for four at Five Figs on May 16th at 7 p.m. See you then!

One day before reservation:

Your reservation for Five Figs is tomorrow at 7 p.m. To confirm, respond with a 1. To cancel, respond with a 9.

First Visit Emails

Use Case:

Ask first-time customers for feedback on what they thought of their experience and to express appreciation for their business.

1. **Send a Simple Survey via Email or SMS:**
   Thank you for dining with Five Figs! From a scale of 1 to 3, with 1 being poor and 3 being excellent, what did you think of your dining experience?

Their response can be shared with management, so personal follow-up can be done to address any feedback provided and with the right automation tool responses to negative feedback can be automated.

Automated response for poor feedback:

We strive to give every guest a stellar experience, so we are sorry to hear that wasn't the case. May we call you to learn more about your experience?

2. **Send a Personalized Email from Management:**
   Pro Tip: This same flow can be applied to first time orders when guests order delivery or pick up.

Automated response for average feedback:

Thank you for your response. How could we have improved your experience?

Automated response for great feedback:

Thank you for your response. We're so glad you enjoyed your time at Five Figs. We look forward to seeing you again soon!
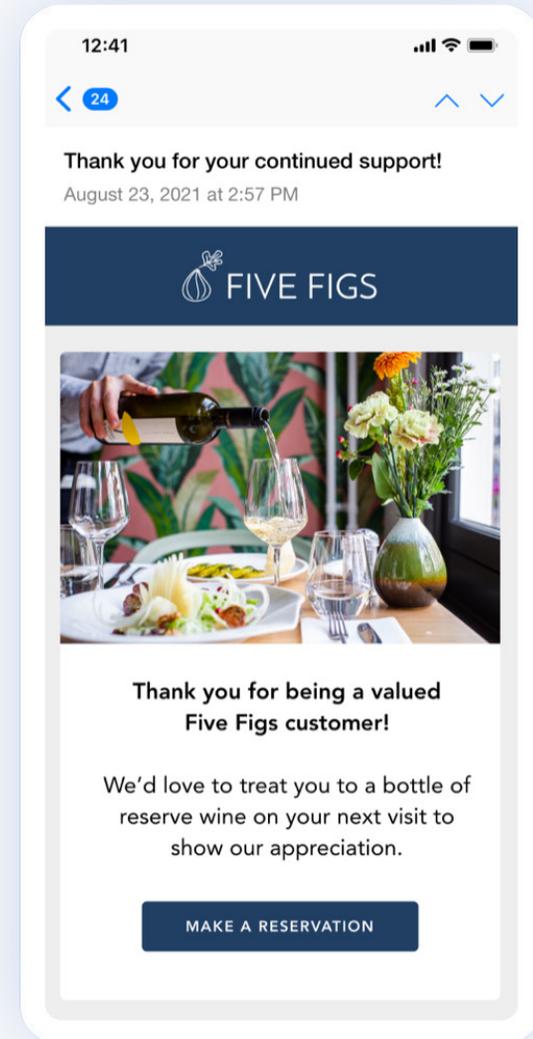
High Spender Email

Use Case:

Let high spenders know you appreciate their business by sending them an offer or perk when they reach a certain lifetime value.

Thank you for being a valued Five Figs customer!

We'd love to treat you to a bottle of reserve wine on your next visit to show our appreciation.

*[Make a Reservation]*

"We Miss You" Email

Use Case:

Nudge customers you haven't seen in a while to return or place an order. Set your thresholds for what is the right time frame after their last visit or order to trigger the We Miss You email.

We miss you!

We haven't seen you at Five Figs in quite some time – let's change that.

Save 10% on your next meal.

[Make a Reservation] [Place a Takeout Order]
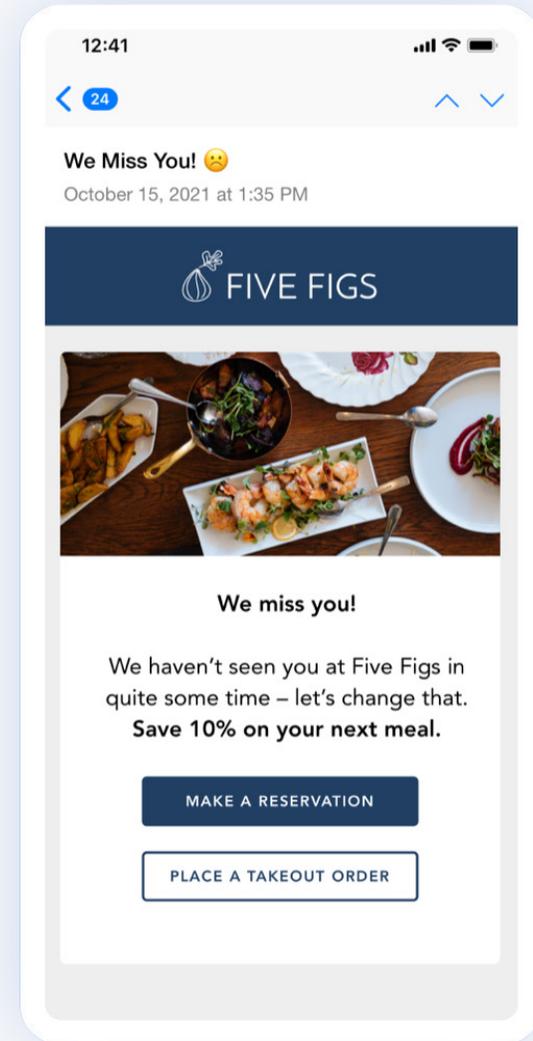
Marketing Automation Technology Helps Restaurants Drive Repeat Business

Restaurateurs want to connect with guests on a personal level and create experiences that keep them coming back. While time and staffing constraints typically limit how restaurants interact with diners, marketing automation technology can remove those barriers. Marketing automation tools that are tied to your restaurant's CRM unlock your guest data so your business can drive revenue and retain customers for years to come.

Automate your restaurant's marketing with SevenRooms. **Request a demo today**.