

A GUIDE TO MARKETING TECHNOLOGIES FOR DISTRIBUTED TEAMS

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Introduction

With the rise of internet technologies, mobile devices and global brands, marketing has become increasingly sophisticated, which introduces new challenges for marketers competing for customer attention. As a result, it has become imperative to find robust technology solutions to help distributed marketers and sales teams reach customers online, offline, and on-product.

Over the past decade, a number of new marketing technologies have emerged to help teams manage marketing initiatives. These systems have tremendous potential, and do some things very well, but it can be challenging for marketers to identify and select the right technology to address their specific needs and activities. In this paper, we'll take a look at the current state of marketing technologies, and present some frameworks to help marketers align these technologies with the needs of their organizations.

Current State of Marketing Technologies

As new tools have evolved to manage the various aspects of marketing strategy, operations, and campaign execution, marketers find themselves in the unexpected role of technologist, expected to harness these increasingly complex systems to maximize the reach and efficacy of their team's efforts.

This can be difficult to manage across a fragmented landscape of tools that are not necessarily designed to interoperate. Systems that manage customer data may not communicate seamlessly with systems that automate marketing campaign activities, capture sales data, or allocate enterprise resource plans—and marketers are forced to invent highly manual workarounds to compensate. Reporting and analytics are often an afterthought, and it can be challenging to bring the visibility and insight marketers need to gauge the performance of their key initiatives across multiple sales and marketing channels.

It is also difficult to use these systems to effectively manage end-to-end execution between online and offline marketing initiatives. Campaign planning, content management, and other tasks of closed-loop marketing are particularly challenging for teams to execute without significant manual effort.

Furthermore, many marketing technologies are not optimized for collaboration outside of a corporate marketing organization. For companies that rely on a field marketing model, or those who need to work closely with a distributed sales force, either directly or indirectly, using these tools often requires additional effort and adds tremendous complexity.

Marketers have many tools in their arsenals, and it can be hard to know which technology to use for which activities. Some of these include:

MARKETING ASSET MANAGEMENT

These tools allow marketers to manage digital assets, track the use of these assets across the organization, and employ version control.

STRENGTHS: These systems make it easy for a centralized marketing team to update assets such as logos, brochures, sales materials, or other digital collateral.

GAPS: Marketing Asset Management tools essentially function as a repository for visual or content assets, with no ability to customize those assets as needed. Most do not have sophisticated analytics or deep integration with campaign management systems.

MARKETING RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

These systems are designed to help marketers plan, staff, schedule, and manage resources to support marketing operations.

STRENGTHS: These systems can be especially effective in helping marketers coordinate distributed teams of internal and external resources.

GAPS: Marketing Resource Management tools support the activities of project management, but do not address areas of control, consistency, and brand management.

CAMPAIGN MANAGEMENT

These tools support the launch, distribution, and tracking of marketing campaigns.

STRENGTHS: Campaign Management tools are most effective at managing individual digital marketing campaigns in a single channel, such as email or text. These systems enable detailed segmentation, and often have integrated analytics to measure campaign effectiveness.

GAPS: With a focus on individual digital marketing campaigns, it can be difficult to use these tools to manage strategic operations across distributed teams, products, and projects, especially for print or other non-digital initiatives.

WEB CONTENT MANAGEMENT

Designed to support and distribute marketing content across Internet technologies, these tools are effective in supporting campaign efforts with consistent messaging and brand assets.

STRENGTHS: Among the first marketing technologies, Content Management systems have been used in many ways to support consistent marketing efforts and content versioning across various channels.

GAPS: With a focus on web content, it is challenging to use these tools to support print content management or other digital content that lives outside the web.

MARKETING AUTOMATION

These systems automate repetitive tasks such as campaign scheduling, approval workflows, and data integration.

STRENGTHS: Marketing Automation tools are quite helpful for marketers who manage significant quantities of customer data. By automating the tasks of data and campaign management around triggered activity thresholds, marketers are free to focus on more creative or strategic initiatives.

GAPS: These tools are often quite complex, and tend to require central management rather than support collaboration in a distributed environment.

MARKETING ANALYTICS:

These tools provide insight into campaign engagement and effectiveness by presenting snapshot and trend data.

STRENGTHS: Marketing Analytics tools provide visibility and enable marketers to measure marketing success in a variety of ways.

GAPS: It can be difficult to extract actionable insight from analytics tools and use these learnings directly to build more effective campaigns. Additionally, these tools often require both marketing and technology expertise to manage and evaluate the data. These systems are most effective for centralized digital campaigns, and can be less effective for distributed campaigns with both online and offline components.

Each of these technology platforms manage some tasks very well, but there are certain gaps that surface over and over – most notably the need to accommodate distributed channels who need access to both online and offline content in order to fully participate in marketing activities. For example, many companies create regulatory content to be delivered in multiple formats. Sales teams also need access to this content, as well as the ability to send it to prospective customers, but may not have the marketing background or technology expertise to customize and deliver this content appropriately.

Until now, it has been challenging for a non-marketer to deliver content across online and offline channels, personalize within rules, and provide the corporate marketing team with high-value metrics and visibility.

A More Effective Approach

For marketers in distributed organizations to be successful, their tools must enable their extended teams to be highly effective and nimble in the core functions of their jobs:

- Message and brand consistency
- Creating and managing custom content
- Enabling distributed teams to manage online and offline content
- Delivering measurable results

A new category of marketing technology has emerged, not to replace existing marketing technologies, but to address these specific challenges. With a Content Distribution Management (CDM) platform, marketers can, for the first time, adopt tools to support best practices for managing marketing content across a distributed environment.

With a centralized resource to manage, adapt, and distribute content, a Content Distribution Management platform supports the activities of brand asset management,

email marketing, direct marketing, production and distribution, data and analytics to enable content management online, offline, and on-product. Enabling deep integration into existing marketing automation, CRM, and other marketing systems, a CDM platform is a new technology category that provides comprehensive marketing and sales channel enablement both online and offline.

A CDM platform is differentiated from other marketing technologies in three key areas:

- **An efficient centralized solution:** Designed specifically for the challenges of distributed teams—both geographic and functional—the CDM platform enables corporate and field marketers to share intelligence, assets, and workflows effectively.
- **Control and consistency:** With powerful version control and localization functionality, the CDM platform allows flexibility within consistent brand guidelines, enabling field marketing and sales teams to create and manage highly-targeted marketing initiatives.
- **Actionable insight into marketing activities:** By integrating the operations, campaign management and content asset management into a single platform, the CDM platform offers marketers a strong and strategic perspective on activities across distributed teams, online and offline channels, and key sales and marketing initiatives.

Choosing a Marketing Technology Platform

Choosing the right marketing technologies for your team can be overwhelming. Making a significant investment, both financially and in time and attention, requires careful planning and attention to detail. As you define your specific goals and requirements, here are some selection criteria you might consider:

1. **Configurability:** A marketing technology solution will only work for your team if it can address the specific needs of your users. Look for a system that allows you to define individual user roles and workflows.
2. **Customization:** You need a technology that allows you to personalize and localize both text and graphical assets in online and offline collateral.
3. **Brand asset management capabilities:** With brand integrity at the center of marketing efforts, it is critical that any system you employ can offer control throughout your distributed functional and geographic teams.
4. **Ease of use:** A successful tool will be accessible to marketers and non-marketers, with a user interface designed to support all stakeholders, regardless of technical expertise.
5. **Integration:** With critical process and project dependencies across existing business systems, any tool you choose must integrate easily and reliably.
6. **Regulatory compliance:** All key compliance and regulatory requirements for your industry should be easily managed and tracked within the system.
7. **Security:** It is imperative that any system you work with over a distributed network have a highly secure architecture to protect your most important asset, customer data. A well-designed access model enables easy access for people who need it and prevents access to intruders.

8. **Scalability:** As teams, companies, and markets evolve, it's important to have a system that can handle significant changes in scale, both for internal use and for external communication.
9. **Extensibility:** With new technologies entering the market every day, it is vital to consider how flexible your system will be in working with other systems. An open API will likely be an important consideration.
10. **Services:** The support of a strong services team can help speed implementation and time-to-market, as well as provide ongoing support for day-to-day marketing activities, and is a must-have for any significant technology on the market today.

After you've defined your business requirements, you'll likely evaluate a number of marketing technology systems before making an investment in a particular tool. In doing so, it is useful to define your key performance indicators (KPIs) and metrics you'll be using to track your team's success and return on investment, and use those to help select a technology that can best support your team.

Summary

Powerful marketing technologies have made it possible for marketers to connect with customers and prospects in timely, targeted, and meaningful ways, but it has been challenging to align these disparate technologies to best serve distributed teams and initiatives. The innovative Content Distribution Management technology offers a new approach, enabling teams to truly collaborate with centralized control, consistency, and insight.

For more information, visit [SMARTworks](#) online.

About the Author

Judith works with startups and leading companies to design, manage, and innovate consumer and enterprise product strategy. With over 15 years of in-house and consulting experience in interactive and software development, Judith brings strong experience design, content strategy, marketing/social media expertise and technical best practices to solve a variety of interesting challenges.