Simple Sells: Creating and Selecting the Best Tools for the Modern Marketer

By Allen Bonde
November 2013

Highlights

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Content is king, omni-channel is the rule

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Make it easy to get insights, deliver the right content

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Focus on broad adoption - value for all!

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Embrace data-driven marketing, inbound principles

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Executive Summary

Reaching and engaging today's consumer is both an art and a science. The same is true if you are a software or services firm looking to reach and engage with the modern marketer. With more channels to manage, more content to create, and more connections and stakeholders to satisfy, being a digital marketer has become an exercise in extreme multi-tasking. And if you've graduated to chief marketing officer (CMO) or head of marketing, your role may also incorporate being the chief storyteller, brand architect – and even data analyst! With all this complexity, there's a movement under way to simplify not only our marketing messages, but also how we create campaigns, consume data, and manage our everyday tasks.[1] This philosophy underpins a new blueprint for how forward-looking organizations should be creating (and selecting) their marketing and sales tools, as well.

The business opportunity for companies that attract the hearts and minds (and budgets) of the modern marketer is significant, especially as the CMO gains more budget authority and replacement cycles for early-generation customer relationship management (CRM), content management, and email marketing tools come due. Meanwhile, always-on, omnichannel media consumption requires marketing tools that *make it* easy to target and get insights from multiple sources, track customer needs wherever they occur, and be responsive (quickly tailor content, launch a campaign, make an offer) in near-real time, at the point of interest. Beyond productivity benefits, tools also need to integrate with other solutions, scale with the organization, and embrace self-service models.

In this paper, we focus on recommendations for both creating and selecting tools that meet these needs. To start, we review the key market and technology drivers creating demand for new approaches to marketing automation and sales effectiveness tools. Then, we'll provide a blueprint for delivering such applications, along with the design principles and benefits of supporting both brand "artists" and brand "scientists" in their everyday roles. Finally, we'll outline a checklist for embracing this philosophy and putting it into practice.

Reaching Today's Modern Marketer

A number of trends have converged to make marketing more challenging – and more dynamic – than ever before. The explosion of inbound, content marketing, and big data, the emergence (or reemergence) of marketing automation, mobile adoption and social selling, and accelerating changes in approaches to email and search engine marketing (SEM) are all top of mind for many marketers. Yet, through all these changes, a few constants remain:

- **Content is still king.** Even as new channels come and go, the key to being found by popular search engines, getting attention, and driving (meaningful) engagement – especially at the top of the funnel – continues to be a fresh supply of rich, tailored content, delivered in the right place, at the right time. Above all else, streamlining this type of content marketing continues to be Job No. 1 for many marketers today.

- **Omnichannel is the rule.** Having more channels makes it harder to deliver consistent experiences and creates even shorter attention spans, but it also provides an opportunity to "create once, publish (in multiple formats) everywhere." The explosion of digital channels also creates more new types of "digital breadcrumbs" to understand preferences via big and small data.[2] Simplifying the management of both publishing and analysis, and making it easier to target the entire funnel versus just one portion of it, are a key focus of today's enterprise marketing solutions.

- **SaaS is the choice.** In corporate environments, high-demand technical skills are often scarce, and teams are tasked to fit in more in less time. For these reasons, front-office tools that are easy to purchase, configure and run using a Software as a Service (SaaS)/cloud delivery model – such as HubSpot, Offerpop, and Salesforce – are becoming the tools of choice for many small and midsize marketing teams.

As we'll discuss, these three areas can be viewed as top-level requirements that are a must in marketing apps and tools for the modern marketer, particularly the functions that make it easy to do everyday tasks associated with content marketing, omni-channel management, and the setup and measurement of email and social campaigns.

Strategic drivers

In addition to streamlining everyday marketing tasks, there's also a broader set of strategic capabilities that appeal to CMO agendas, an important consideration given projections that CMOs will outspend CIOs by 2017.[3] Keeping an eye on the evolution of the marketing function can also help to align tool functionality with the most critical needs and avoid the "shelf-ware" issue resulting from poor user adoption or the inclusion of features that users never use.

In many ways, today's corporate marketing leader needs to be a storyteller, brand architect, and data analyst – plus a motivator, organizer, and talent evaluator.[4] Many of these roles require timely access

to "just the right" data and tools, making marketing organizations major consumers of technology services. In some cases, this demand also creates additional strain on relationships with IT, especially when tools require experts to set up or involve time-consuming integration work when there's a shortage of technical resources.

At the same time, the marketing function is expanding its reach in many organizations to become a hub for selling, customer interaction (especially online), and even driving innovation in areas such as customer analytics, mobile delivery, and social channels. In cases where sales and marketing are looking to be more aligned, *campaigns and playbooks can help to provide a common focus and language, with leads becoming the new "currency."*

Overall, both marketing and sales are evolving. Teams are often virtual, technical skills can be hard to come by, and time to market and responsiveness have never been as important. To meet these needs and prepare for the strategic drivers above, we need to re-envision the future of front-office software. That's exactly what we aim to do in the next section.

A Blueprint for Making it Easy

Considering the multifaceted needs of modern marketing and sales teams, a number of design goals emerge if we want to deliver solutions that are both comprehensive and approachable. First, it's clear that the conversation needs to shift from single-channel solutions to omnichannel customer experience management and sales effectiveness. Second, these solutions need to be largely "out of the box," mobile- and social-ready, and data-driven instead of process-driven.

The following are reasons why marketing teams are at the center of this transformation:

- Marketing has been at the front lines of web, mobile, and social innovation in most organizations already.

- Marketing generally owns the "new" customer data – database marketing, social listening, web analytics, and content consumption data – that will power new apps.

- Leadership in marketing (and sales) is increasingly under pressure to show hard ROI and tap the power of big data.

- As more organizations embrace inbound marketing principles, marketing teams are looking for simpler tools to quickly create landing pages, apps, and campaigns that provide fresh, engaging content – especially at the top of the sales funnel.

Design principles

Modern marketers (and sales pros) need marketing apps and tools that make it easy to get insights from multiple sources, track customer needs, and deliver the right content and offers in near-real time. This notion of *responsiveness* is critical, since "ubiquity negates scarcity," as DCG's Tim Walters has noted, creating unparalleled consumer choice and putting a premium on relationships and time to value.[5] In practical terms, this means being able to quickly tailor content, target and launch a campaign, position a sales pitch, or respond to a service issue.

More specifically, when creating or selecting tools, we should be guided by these core design principles:

1. **Make it *simple*.** Platforms need to employ visual tools that make it quick and easy to build landing pages, launch and track campaigns, and monitor customers; offer built-in tutorials for those who need help; and are simple to integrate with other apps and data. Today, the appeal of having a suite of easy-to-use tools is driving demand for all-in-one, subscription-based platforms. In fact, CRM/marketing SaaS tools are the fastest-growing area of all enterprise software categories.[6]

2. **Make it *smart*.** Tools need to support and enable the latest inbound techniques, automate back-end content management processes, and offer built-in small data analytics and web/email

personalization. Tailored content on websites and in email campaigns can boost engagement and conversion rates, driving greater customer insight and helping to provide more qualified leads to sales teams.[7]

3. **Make it *responsive*.** Tools need to work where customers are and where employees want to work – especially with the widespread adoption of bring-your-own-device policies and personal mobile devices. On the delivery side, platforms need to enable native multichannel campaigns across web, email, and social channels, as well as deliver content, offers, and answers in *context* on each customer's channel of choice.

4. **Make it *social*.** The best marketers and sales pros are social, so the best tools should be social too! Tools should offer support for team collaboration, social sharing, and listening and monitoring out of the box. Plus, there's tremendous value in support communities and bringing together customers via community events such as HubSpot's Inbound event and Dreamforce, the largest vendor-led tech gathering.[8]

Of course, the benefits of making it easy start with the broad and rapid adoption of tools – by brand "managers," "artists," and "scientists." Adoption is also a forcing function in attaining scale within an organization, boosting the number of content and data creation, and of course avoiding shelf-ware!

Some other benefits of widespread adoption of tools include the following:

- **Adoption drives ROI.** Better productivity leads to less duplication (efficiency matters).

- **Adoption drives innovation.** Businesses and consumers both benefit when more users have more insights, and thus can be more creative (knowledge matters).

- **Adoption drives better experience.** More insight means faster service (timeliness matters).

With this blueprint as a guide, and with benefits framing the business case, we can outline a checklist for planners, buyers, and solutions providers – which we do in the next section.

A Checklist and Final Thoughts

Everyone likes the idea of making it easy; recall Staples' highly successful "That was easy" campaign.[9] But all too often, the tools delivered to sales and marketing teams are anything but easy to install, learn, and use. Marketers and sales teams have difficult jobs that require greater insight and tools with increasingly more sophisticated capabilities for daily tasks. Yet, as Leonardo Da Vinci famously observed, *simplicity is the ultimate sophistication* – a philosophy that should inform the way we create and choose our tools. This starts by embracing data-driven marketing, along with the principles of inbound and content marketing as core drivers for efficiently managing customer experiences and staying ahead of the social and SEM game.

But even more importantly, we need to create value early and often, view users (and certainly their managers) as skeptics, and remember that *simple sells.*

In practice, whether you are designing or evaluating tools for modern marketers and sales teams, it pays to keep these goals in mind:

- **Make it easy to access all your tools and data from one place.** Offer built-in training, single sign-on, one place for all your data, and ideally a support community that is ready to help out at the click of a button.

- **Make it easy to create, publish, and repurpose content, as well as track effectiveness in driving conversations and conversions (sign-ups).** Daily campaign

management is critical, since delivering fresh, actionable leads is the surest way for marketing and sales to get along.

- **Make it easy to understand customer needs and create a complete picture of customers, their segments, influencers, and even competitors via rich profiles.** Tools that combine insights from social channels with web analytics and transactional data (advanced omni-channel marketing) will enable the next wave of CRM/CEM.[10]

- **Make it easy (and fun!) to measure and share campaign results, repurpose content and campaign templates, and engage other marketers and sales team members via playbooks and meet-ups to create successes that everyone can be a part of.**

Endnotes

1   Allen Bonde, "Simple Sells," Digital Clarity Group Blog, September 18, 2013, http://www.digitalclaritygroup.com/blog/simple-sells/.

2   See a definition of small data and some of its applications on the Small Data Group blog, http://smalldatagroup.com.

3   As featured in the Gartner webinar, "By 2017, the CMO Will Spend More on IT Than the CIO," http://my.gartner.com/portal/server.pt?open=512&objID=202&mode=2&PageID=5553&resId=1871515.

4   The author introduced the three roles of the new CMO on SAP Radio in the summer of 2013: http://scn.sap.com/community/customer-edge/blog/2013/07/31/the-new-cmo-in-the-age-of-customer-experience.

5   See Tim Walters' talk: "Digital Disruption and the CEM Imperative," presented at DCG Insights Day, New York, June 24, 2013.

6   See stats on SaaS growth by category in this piece: David Roe, "SaaS Growth is Triple Enterprise IT Average, Driven by CRM, Mobile Deployments," CMSWire, Aug 13, 2013, http://www.cmswire.com/cms/information-management/saas-growth-is-triple-enterprise-it-average-driven-by-crm-mobile-deployments-022082.php.

7   There are a number of studies that show the impact of tailored/personalized content and offers, including those from MyBuys/e-tailing group and Monetate/eConsultancy: http://finance.yahoo.com/news/mybuys-e-tailing-group-consumer-130000300.html http://econsultancy.com/us/blog/62636-just-13-of-businesses-implement-personalisation-on-mobile.

8   More than 120,000 people are expected to attend Dreamforce 2013. http://www.salesforce.com/company/news-press/press-releases/2013/10/131014.jsp.

9   See a recap of the early transformative effect of Staples' "That was easy" campaign: Michael Myser, "Marketing Make Easy," Business 2.0 (CNN Money), May 18, 2006, http://money.cnn.com/magazines/business2/business2_archive/2006/06/01/8378513/.

10 Allen Bonde, "In Search of Real, Practical Social CRM," Digital Clarity Group Blog, February 21, 2013, http://www.digitalclaritygroup.com/blog/search-real-practical-social-crm/.

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Digital Clarity Group

With a global research-driven advisory team, Digital Clarity Group (DCG) helps business leaders navigate digital transformation in their organization. DCG works with its clients across four distinct themes – Consumer Engagement, The Social Enterprise, Innovative Change and Adaptive Technology. DCG provides independent research, customized consulting, events, and one-on-one executive advisory programs. DCG also provides guidance to technology companies and the service providers that implement their products to help deliver insight that can guide them to better strategic decisions and more useful products and services. For more information about DCG, visit www.digitalclaritygroup.com or email info@digitalclaritygroup.com.

Contact Us

Email: info@digitalclaritygroup.com
Twitter: @just_clarity
www.digitalclaritygroup.com

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