






RESEARCH REPORT

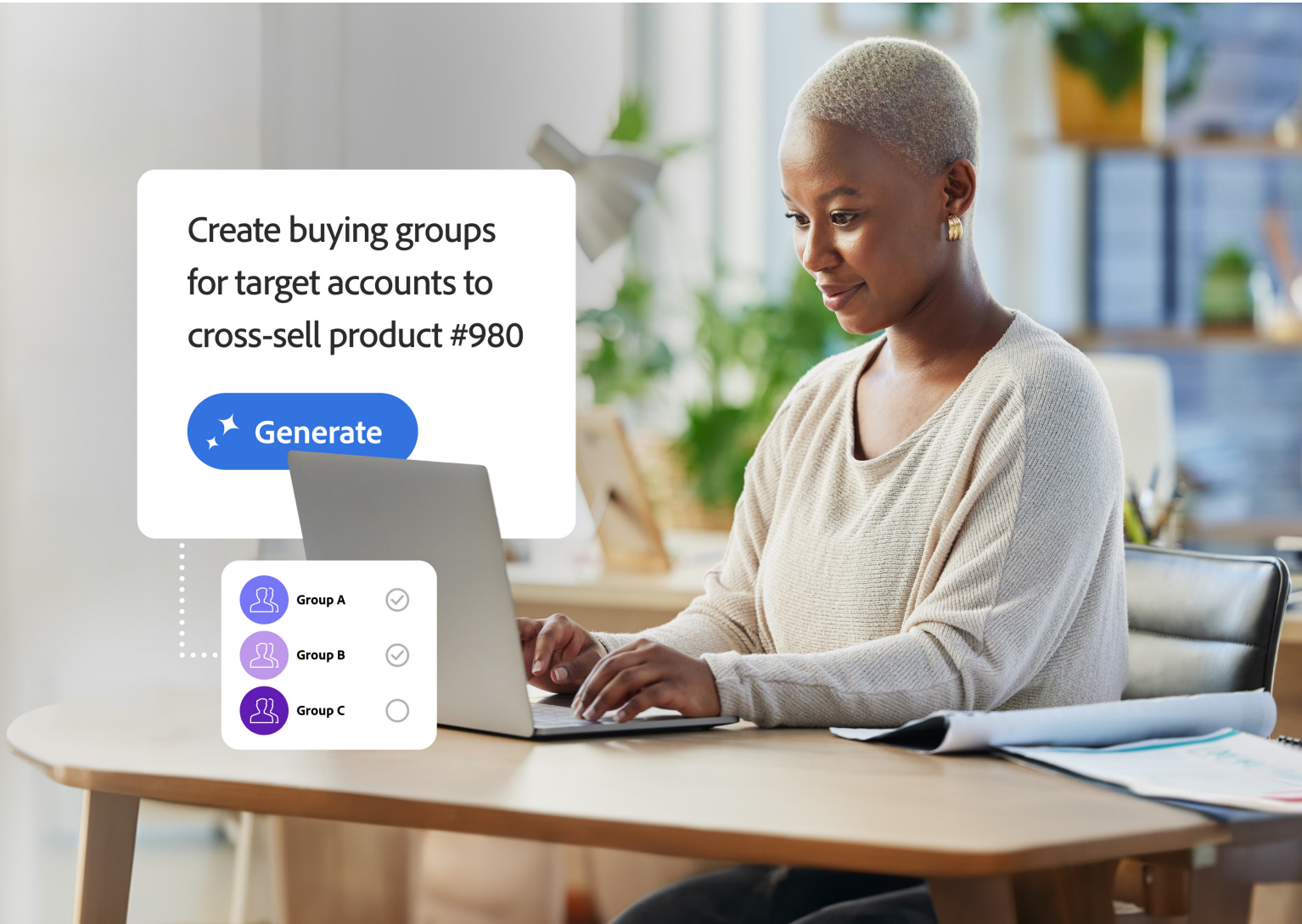
The state of marketing automation in the age of AI.

Keys to marketing success and B2B growth in 2024 and beyond.

Create buying groups for target accounts to cross-sell product #980

 **Generate**

-  **Group A**
-  **Group B**
-  **Group C**



Welcome to the second edition of *The State of Marketing Automation*. This report offers real-world insights into how marketing leaders use automation today—and what they're planning for tomorrow. It's a great resource for:



B2B marketers, from CMOs through directors, managers, and practitioners



B2B marketing operations leaders and practitioners



B2C marketers with a long demand funnel that requires B2B tools

What's inside.

This year's report addresses key trends including:

- Generative AI
- Buying group engagement
- Content supply chain
- Conversational marketing
- AI-driven marketing measurement

About our research.

We asked marketing leaders at over 600 organizations to tell us how they use marketing automation. Our goal was to uncover pressing concerns, pinpoint best practices that separate leading marketing teams from everyone else, and capture leaders' thoughts on forward-looking trends and strategies.

First impressions.

Marketing teams must continue to evolve by modernizing their technology and processes. Artificial intelligence (AI) is still leading the conversation, and our collective understanding of how and where AI is making an immediate impact has come into sharper focus. Today's marketing leaders are embracing the automation revolution and have already begun integrating AI tools to gain a competitive advantage.

In fact, when it comes to planned marketing investments over the next 12 months, "technology" topped the list of categories expected to see the largest increase.



Personalized experiences



Business growth

Contents

- The evolution of marketing automation.** 5
- Research methodology.** 6
- Marketing objectives and budget.** 7
- Marketing performance segments.** 8
- Keys to success.** 9
 - Data foundation and artificial intelligence. 10
 - Next-generation B2B go-to-market orchestration. 12
 - Personalized content at scale. 14
 - Intelligent, interactive engagement. 16
 - Modern marketing measurement. 18
- In closing.** 20

The evolution of marketing automation.

Marketing automation can be defined in a few different ways. At its highest level, it represents any use of technology to automate, optimize, and scale marketing efforts. Marketing automation platforms (MAPs), on the other hand, represent a specific category of software-as-a-service (SaaS) applications. These applications continue to be known as “the heart of the B2B martech stack,” even as new technologies emerge to strengthen marketing overall. Adobe Marketo Engage has been a leader in this space for years. This research is inclusive of all B2B marketing automation providers.

1 Before marketing automation

Marketers struggle to drive engagement and growth through an increasing number of channels with no integrated way to automate, orchestrate, and measure campaigns.

2 Introducing MAPs

MAPs become a much-needed data and technology foundation for demand marketing and operations. They integrate closely with CRMs and other martech solutions.

3 Modern MAPs

MAPs such as Marketo Engage continue to be the keystone technology for most organizations. They have become powerful, both in and of themselves, through AI, and through tighter integration with applications that specialize in customer data and insights, content creation and deployment, and personalization across channels and touchpoints.

+ MAPs + digital experience platforms

As MAPs evolved, another next-generation platform also emerged. Digital experience platforms (DXPs) allow businesses to better manage a broader range of customer experiences. DXPs such as Adobe Experience Platform, the foundation of Adobe Experience Cloud, provide unified customer data and centralized AI services that unlock new capabilities and make MAPs and other applications more powerful.

“Marketing automation is what runs the end-to-end programming of marketing.

Vladlena Mitskaniouk
Head of Demand Generation, Solo.io

Research methodology.

Our goal was to learn from enterprise B2B marketing leaders, demand generation teams, growth teams, and marketing/revenue operations teams about their perspectives and experiences using marketing automation. We conducted interviews and a double-blind survey of 600 organizations in collaboration with an independent research partner.



Job level

- 31% CMO or VP
- 32% Director
- 36% Manager

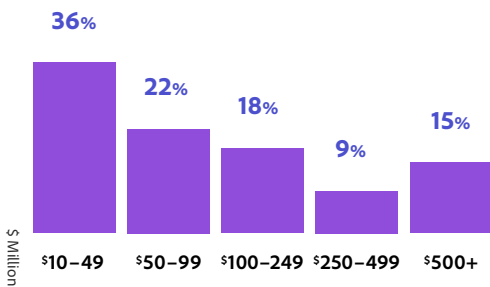


Top 5 B2B marketing automation providers

- 36% Adobe
- 24% Microsoft
- 17% Salesforce
- 15% Hubspot
- 8% Oracle



Company size by annual revenue (USD MM)

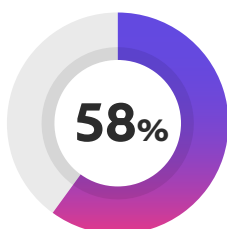


Industry

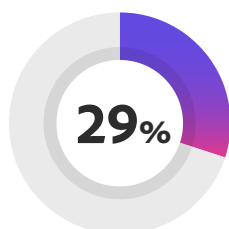
- 39% Technology
- 29% Business services
- 12% Manufacturing
- 11% Financial services
- 5% Healthcare
- 4% Other



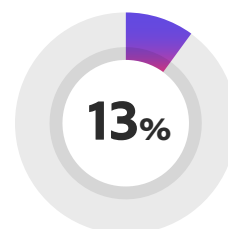
Region



North America



Europe



Australia & New Zealand

Marketing objectives and budget.

Our research suggests that marketing teams are working toward multiple high-priority goals. When asked about objectives this year, we saw nearly a three-way tie between:



Improving customer experience (CX)



Improving marketing return on investment (ROI)



Growing pipeline and revenue

Last year, ROI took the top position. As one CMO stated, “Revenue is great, but not at any cost.”

This year, CX edges out the others, sending a message that B2B marketing is becoming as focused on experiences as B2C marketing. In B2B, strong customer relationships are key to business growth. Ultimately, the three objectives are linked. ROI enables the efficient and cost-effective delivery of experiences that, in turn, fuel pipeline and revenue growth. Finally, the presence of pipeline and revenue growth in marketers’ top three goals indicates that demand and deal velocity are top of mind this year—and that marketers are hoping to harness CX and greater efficiency to accelerate funnel progression across all stages.

“ Our success hinges on two key factors: growth and the speed at which we can achieve it.

Justin Brady
Head of Marketing OnDeck

Planned marketing investment.

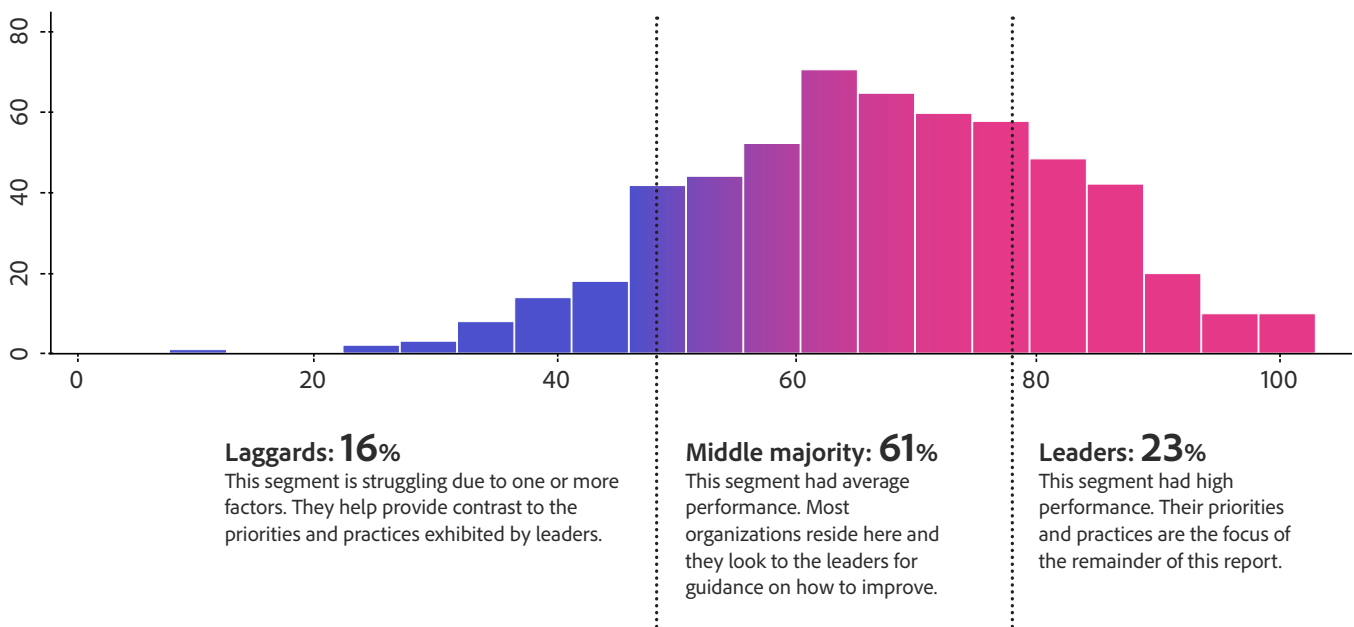
A majority of B2B marketing leaders plan to increase investments, with technology and marketing programs expected to lead the way.

Marketing investment	Increase	Same or Decrease
Marketing technology	75%	25%
Marketing programs	69%	31%
Marketing agencies/consultants	58%	42%
Marketing staff	55%	45%

Marketing performance segments.

While marketers' goals tell us a lot about their intent, they don't tell us much about their performance. To separate Leaders from Laggards, we considered self-reported performance and exhibited marketing maturity across a set of high-level best practice areas identified by Adobe in prior research. These include data-driven planning, sales and marketing alignment, channel orchestration, and technology adoption.

Maturity index



A leader's advantage is significant.

Improving buyer and customer experience:

Leaders are 10x more likely than laggards to be outperforming.

Growing pipeline and revenue:

Leaders are 10x more likely than laggards to be outperforming.

Improving marketing ROI:

Leaders are 27x more likely than laggards to be outperforming.

Keys to success.

What Leaders are doing and where they're investing.

Our interviews and survey showed that Leaders are focused on the following five areas:

- 1 Data foundation and artificial intelligence:** Leaders agree that AI is an increasingly important tool in marketing. It can identify patterns and generate content in ways that are exceptionally valuable to marketers. Good AI, like everything else in marketing today, is dependent on a solid data foundation.
- 2 Next-generation B2B go-to-market (GTM) orchestration:** B2B typically requires engaging with and nurturing buying groups within accounts. However, most organizations lack the processes and tools they need to do this well. Leaders are exploring new GTM orchestration methods and AI technologies that build upon and integrate today's lead-based and account-based approaches.
- 3 Personalized content at scale:** Content is the fuel of marketing. However, scaling the creation of personalized content to support better and more sophisticated segmentation is difficult. Leaders are honing their content supply chains and incorporating AI to tackle this challenge and unlock precision targeting and engagement.
- 4 Intelligent, interactive engagement:** As buyer attention spans and patience decline, the desire for real-time conversations on digital channels is greater than ever. Leaders are adopting integrated solutions to gain agility and are leveraging AI in real-time customer conversations with chatbots and business development reps.
- 5 Modern marketing measurement:** The complexities of B2B make marketing attribution and customer journey analytics particularly challenging. Leaders are implementing AI-based processes to finally get attribution right and are using a new category of specialized journey analytics applications. These new tools give them the insights they need to optimize tactics, investments, and customer experiences.

1

Data foundation and artificial intelligence.

Without a solid data foundation, AI-based services aren't able to maximize their ROI. And without AI, you won't extract maximum value from even large amounts of data. Only by combining quality data with the right AI tools can teams expect gains in efficiency (scaling at speed), productivity (capacity to launch more programs and campaigns), and overall sales productivity.

Applications such as MAPs and customer data platforms (CDPs) help B2B marketing leaders capitalize on the value of data and AI by expanding beyond the confines of operations based on customer relationship management (CRM). Leaders are now investing the time to centralize data and test new AI capabilities. Many organizations are creating a centralized hub for customer intelligence to unify data from many sources and, when combined with the right AI tools, enrich customer profiles in real time with data generated by customer activity across online and offline channels.

CDPs underlie modern marketing architecture.

Both CRM and CDP integrations are critical in B2B, but Leaders now rate integration between marketing automation and a B2B-capable CDP as even more important than CRM integration. According to our respondents:

98%

Marketing automation integration with a CDP is "very important."

94%

Marketing automation integration with a CRM is "very important."

How B2B marketing organizations view generative AI.

24%

"We trust AI to optimize our marketing activities without any need for human oversight."

48%

"We trust AI to optimize our marketing activities with some human oversight."

28%

"We are cautious about the use of AI in marketing. We only use it for very tightly defined use cases with mandatory human review and approval."

“ For any sort of marketing sophistication, and to build the best possible experiences, you need to have the right data scheme in place, and remove, as far as possible, the dependency on developers within the business.

Kieron Wogan
Chief Marketing Officer, Carbar

“ I think AI will be a game changer in marketing. Start small, test, learn, and only then scale your AI initiatives. It's not too late to level up and get in the game.

Robert Gillespie
VP of Marketing, JP Morgan Chase

Generative AI use cases and adoption growth.

Marketing investment	Leaders	Laggards
Generating text for content/communications	67%	41%
Generating content/conversation summaries	66%	28%
Generating imagery and design for content/communications	62%	33%
Generating digital conversational experiences	58%	27%
Generating content and guidance to aid human conversations such as those in sales and business development	56%	22%

72%

of marketing leaders trust AI to optimize their marketing activities with some human oversight.

Adobe Spotlight: [Adobe Real-Time CDP](#) and [Adobe Sensei GenAI](#)

2

Next-generation B2B go-to-market orchestration.

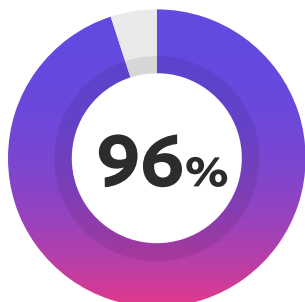
Marketing Leaders are keen to be early adopters of new B2B GTM orchestration practices and tools in addition to implementing AI.

In B2B, leads (individual people, including initial purchase champions) are critical. So are accounts and the ability to prioritize account targets. Most B2B purchase decisions are made by a group of individuals (a buying group). Yet, in most organizations, marketing and sales don't have a great process for working together to understand and nurture buying groups through all stages.

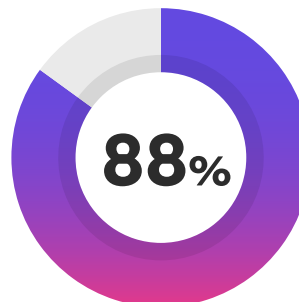
Ultimately, though, it's always been about buying groups, and leaders are exploring new processes and technologies with Adobe and others to enable this new generation of B2B GTM orchestration.

Leaders' point of view on buying groups.

Leads are important. Accounts are important. According to marketing leaders, however, connecting with buying groups is where B2B GTM efforts can most effectively create, progress, and win deals—whether through new business or sales to existing customers.



of leaders agree or strongly agree that an ability to systematically identify and engage with B2B buying groups is important.



of leaders agree or strongly agree that marketing to one person is ultimately too narrow and marketing to every person in an account is too broad.

“ Buying groups are 100% where we are now. You're not selling to an individual, you're selling to a whole team of people.

Esme Cottle

Director of Demand Generation
Thomas International

Aligning marketing and sales.

In our study, 93% of leaders agreed marketing had enough influence in setting fiscal year market and account priorities. However, 87% told us it's easy to lose alignment with sales over time. This is, in part, due to today's multiple disconnected GTM processes within and across marketing and sales.

Top 3 most-recognized potential benefits of buying group–centered GTM.

- 1 Long-sought marketing and sales alignment:** Marketing is able to manage demand and assist with progression in a way that matches how sales would like to receive it—with an account, opportunity, and buying group lens instead of just a single person focus.
- 2 More effective GTM orchestration:** Buying groups create a basis of alignment which can unlock seamless workflows for planning, multiple GTM motions and plays, orchestrated engagement, and shared measurement.
- 3 Deal velocity and better CX:** Organizing engagement around buying groups can help B2B companies move more quickly through their decision-making process and reach consensus. That's a win-win. The vendor gains deal velocity. And the customer gets the kind of buying experience they want—an efficient one.

“ When you start to infer insights based on interactions of the buying group, that could be really powerful. Also, having that as a signal that you can provide to sales is important as well.

Steve Armenti

Group Manager, Global Demand Generation, Google

Adobe Spotlight: [Adobe Journey Optimizer B2B Edition](#) and [Adobe Marketo Engage](#)

3

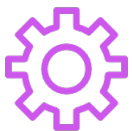
Personalized content at scale.

Delivering personalized content at scale is about more than reaching a lot of customers and prospects. Marketers also need to find ways to tailor content by personal and account profiles, persona, buying group role, and funnel stage. It's a complex challenge, one that's nearly impossible to achieve without automation.

As of 2023, 64% of Leaders were performing high-level personalization. Overall, Leaders felt that their systems of segmentation and marketing automation were capable of delivering highly personalized marketing, but an inability to create personalized content at scale was holding them back.

Many of these Leaders are working on a solution to transform their organization's content supply chain—the end-to-end process of planning, creation, delivery, activation, and measurement, supported by integrated workflows and AI at each step.

Content-related processes rate among “most important” and “most needing work” in marketing.



Dynamic personalized content
6th among 22 aspects of marketing automation



Integration with content supply chain
7th among 22 aspects of marketing automation

“ AI can have a big impact. Not replacing what humans do, but at least prompting them.

Mike Goodbourn

Marketing Automation Manager,
Victoria University of Wellington

“ From a copywriting perspective today, we use generative AI mostly for ideation. Today, we still need the combination of technology, automation, AI, and the human review layer.

Kerry Curran
Chief Growth Officer, Gen3 Marketing

AI is working its way into content lifecycle processes.

Marketing investment	Leaders	Laggards
“AI is very much business as usual in the context of our marketing activities.”	21%	3%
“AI has been operationalized into our day-to-day marketing activities.”	26%	13%
“We are experimenting but haven’t developed many proofs of concept.”	26%	61%
“We are aware of the potential but have not used AI capabilities.”	27%	23%

Adobe Spotlight: [Adobe Marketo Engage](#) and [Adobe GenStudio](#)

4

Intelligent, interactive engagement.

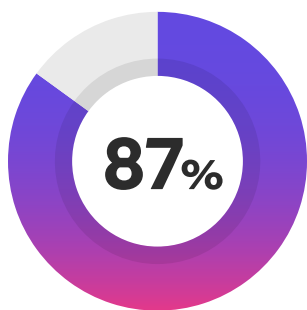
Leaders are continuing to upgrade their engagement mechanisms. In our findings, two key tools stood out—chat and webinars.

Chat can be far more effective than static landing pages and forms, with marketing getting higher quality opportunities to sales sooner and more seamlessly. Meanwhile, webinar participation represents one of the deepest levels of engagement you'll find among online marketing channels. And AI promises to take both chat and webinars to the next level.

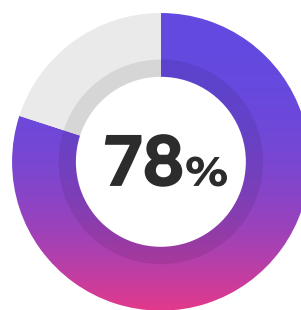
Both of these activities have traditionally been managed by dedicated platforms rather than marketing automation platforms. Many of today's marketing leaders are evaluating the benefits of transitioning from separate third-party chat and webinar tools to capabilities built right into their MAP. By leveraging AI tools such as chat in their marketing efforts, teams are experiencing greater efficiency with the ability to scale at speed, as well as increases in productivity through the capacity to launch more programs and campaigns.

Leaders weigh in on built-in chat and webinar capabilities.

Chat and webinars were identified as key digital channels in last year's research. Leaders continue to work on maximizing their value.



Built-in chat is "important" or "critical."



Built-in webinar delivery is "important" or "critical."

“ We’re marketers, we want to market. The less time we need to think about integrations, the better. We just want to get on and build amazing customer experiences and make an impact for the business.

John Watton

VP Marketing EMEA, VMware by Broadcom

Most recognized potential benefits of built-in chat and webinar capabilities.

- Eliminate integration complexities and cost.
- Automatically enrich person and account profiles based on activity.
- Automatically trigger or adjust nurture programs and retargeting based on activity.
- Automatically enable not just sales interaction and scheduling, but sales visibility and activity.
- Automatically adjust lead and account scoring and feed attribution calculations based on activity.

“ If it works, it’s a native integration, and it meets all our needs, I would say it’s our first choice versus going outside the stack.

Darren Greene

Director of Digital Marketing and Transformation
Destaco, a Dover company

Adobe Spotlight: [Adobe Dynamic Chat](#) and [Adobe Interactive Webinars](#), both built into [Adobe Marketo Engage](#)

5

Modern marketing measurement.

Dependable measurement tells us what tactics and investments are driving pipeline, revenue, and ROI. Without the ability to deeply understand step-by-step B2B customer journeys, we're unable to improve and optimize CX, and we waste time and money. That's not a winning combination for meeting the top three objectives of B2B marketers—drive growth, grow efficiently, and deliver a great CX.

Excelling with these goals requires the right marketing tools, and the right tools to measure your marketing efforts. Today's technology allows marketers to do both, better than ever. As a result, leaders are replacing their DIY measurement processes with automation, AI, and purpose-built analytics.

Last year's research revealed that over 90% of B2B teams planned to improve their attribution in the coming year. This improvement most often happens along a predictable maturity path—from single-touch attribution, to campaign-centric multi-touch attribution, to every-touch attribution powered by AI and a specialized, purpose-built B2B attribution app.

Meanwhile, a new category of customer journey analytics applications is augmenting the visibility into customer journeys available through core MAPs. While attribution apps focus on the performance of tactics through GTM funnels, these new apps focus on an equally important objective—understanding and exploring journey data at the deepest level to fuel optimization.



We'll probably be evolving our attribution. We'd love to bring AI into it since that's the next logical step.

Vladlena Mitskaniouk
Head of Demand Generation
Solo.io

Marketing attribution and analytics remain in the spotlight.

95%

Better attribution is
“important” or “critical.”

98%

Better campaign analytics is
“important” or “critical.”

97%

Better journey analytics is
“important” or “critical.”

Respondents identified the following high-potential benefits of AI-powered marketing attribution.

- AI can deliver higher accuracy by removing the bias and guesswork of traditional rules-based modeling and replacing it with the superior pattern recognition needed to extract insights from complex B2B data.
- AI can more easily manage multiple machine learning models for different segments, such as different order types, business units, or regions where the best marketing tactics will most likely differ.
- AI can more easily perform incremental attribution, which is the ability to remove background effects on revenue to focus performance measurement more specifically on marketing and sales investments, campaigns, channels, and content.

“ It’s amazing how your relationships with sales can build when you can give them insights and data that mean something to them.

Robert Gillespie

VP of Marketing, JP Morgan Chase

Adobe Spotlight: [Adobe Marketo Measure](#) and [Adobe Customer Journey Analytics](#)

In closing.

If you already work on a high-performance B2B marketing team, you know that technology and buyer needs are always changing.

Today's marketing Leaders are very focused on the future and how they can capitalize on a wide range of emerging technology changes—especially those outlined in the five “keys to success” sections (data foundation and AI; next-generation B2B go-to-market orchestration; personalized content at scale; intelligent, interactive engagement; and modern marketing measurement). The majority of our conversations were as much about what happens in core marketing automation as they were about the larger evolution of B2B martech.

Overall, 90% of respondents said they were satisfied with their current MAP. At the same time, 29% said they were “somewhat likely” to switch. When asked why, leaders included better innovation, features, and integration as their primary reasons. **While price, ease of use, and customer service remain critical, most are “trading up” to more powerful marketing automation platforms that unlock marketing potential through more advanced capabilities.**

While the platforms and processes that power marketing automation continue to evolve toward buying groups and AI, the end goal for marketers remains the same—to drive engagement and growth as efficiently as possible.

[Learn more](#)

Adobe

Adobe, the Adobe logo, Adobe Marketo Engage, Adobe Experience Platform, Adobe Experience Cloud, Adobe Real-Time Customer Data Platform, Adobe Sensei GenAI, and Adobe GenStudio, are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Adobe in the United States and/or other countries.

© 2024 Adobe. All rights reserved.