



Marketing is responsible for Customer Data in your company

Peter O'Neill, Research Director Research in Action.

Providing the optimal customer experience is impossible without having a unified Customer Data Management (CDM) process in place. That is: consolidating/aggregating all data collected in separate systems across the company about a customer, ideally down to a personal level. I don't mean a routine IT-centric data warehouse or data lakes project -- it should be a Marketing-led initiative. But that is not always the case, as I often hear in my discussions with marketing executives.

Often, when initiated by IT, the project is labelled a Customer Data Platform (CDP) and the focus is to ensure that there is a consolidation of all data silos and that there is a consistent system of record for each customer element. Somewhat nice, academically and technically, but not a great contribution to CX.

For Marketing, however, the aim is to establish a comprehensive and dynamic view of each customer by capturing data from multiple systems, linking the bits related to the same customer, and storing it in order to track behaviour over time. The process creates personal identifiers used to target marketing messages and track individual-level marketing results. The data stored in the CDM system (or CDP if you like) can be used by other systems for analysis and to manage customer interactions.

So, "who leads the CDM project" was a question I asked in my latest global survey of 1,500 businesses globally for the new [Vendor Selection Matrix™ report on Customer Data Management](#). I report that nearly 80% of CDM initiatives are marketing-led projects and over two-thirds of the projects are top-down projects that serve the complete enterprise.

My survey and consulting work also enables me to assess the maturity of marketing organizations for a process and I see these five phases for CDM:

- **Chaotic.** Marketing neophytes commonly first focus on eMail campaigning to *purchased or built-up lists*. The goal is to distribute content to qualified contacts and provide rudimentary leads to Sales.
- **Reactive.** Companies create/consolidate their customer data into a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system usually shared with Sales. The data is mostly *contact data and sales progress* reporting.
- **Stable.** An operational Digital Experience Management system begins to collect *behavioral data on customers and website visitors*. Predictive Analytics are incorporated into the process.



- **Proactive.** Marketing’s role matures from supporting sales transactions to ensuring a customer experience. The necessary functionality is found in a CDM project which creates a *system with personal identifiers used to target marketing messages and track individual-level marketing results.*
- **Predictive.** Over time, the goal for more advanced marketing organizations changes to a more holistic *Customer Engagement Management* process. Customer data is imperative to this process and the CDM system is likely to become the mission-critical key to success for both B2C and B2B companies. Data experts will become as essential as creative skills.

Now, depending on how much you believe the claims, there are between 120 and 150 vendors with CDM solutions, often calling their software Customer Data Platforms (CDP). We asked the respondents to give us their feedback about the CDM vendors they know enough about. The resulting vendor landscape for CDM is a broad mix of vendors with a wide variety of claims: data consolidation, collecting entire clickstreams, creating a “golden record” through identity resolution, enabling intelligent engagement, and identity tagging. The CDM challenge varies across the B2C and B2B spectrum and also differs by company size, which we describe in detail in the report.

Who came out on top? Well, these are the Top 15 vendors as selected by the 1,500 surveyed based upon their rating of product, company and service quality (listed alphabetically):

Acquia, ActionIQ, Adobe, BlueConic, Commanders Act, CXSense, Eulerian, Evergage, NGData, Oracle, Quaero, Redpoint Global, Salesforce, Sitecore, Tealium.

Although **CXSense** and **Evergage** have since been acquired by Piano and Salesforce respectively, I have left their scores in the matrix for completeness. Time will tell whether the brand prevails or becomes absorbed into the larger corporate identity.

Congratulations to **Tealium**, who were scored as the #1 Global Leader in the report.

Remember, our research discovers a “vendor landscape” – those vendors most highly regarded by users for automation of the process (or family of processes) we discuss in the survey. Due to geographical, segmentation and functional differences, it is not always a list of direct competitors. In fact, some respondents may deploy two or more vendors to cover their needs.

Always keeping you informed!

Peter O’Neill