

# How to select the right marketing analytics solution.



*Data powers everything you do. More and more organizations are looking to marketing analytics as a system of intelligence that adds greater value to the individual components of their marketing stack. Whether it's experience optimization, audience segmenting, or other marketing activities, the capabilities in a robust marketing analytics solution can create a multiplier effect that enables marketers to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of everything they do. Every organization is at a different point in their ability to leverage marketing analytics capabilities, as well as their familiarity with relevant requirements and capabilities to look for in a marketing analytics solution.*

Wherever you are in your marketing analytics journey, investing in a new solution is an important decision that will have significant short-term and long-term impacts on your marketing efforts. Reaching the best decision for your organization will take considerable time and effort that will likely involve you engaging in substantial research and evaluation. To help you in that process, this guide covers some of the most important questions you should ask and issues you should investigate. It provides tips for navigating the information and targeted marketing you'll encounter to help you make informed, objective assessments of the solutions you evaluate.

## **Integrating data collection.**

The tools you use from different vendors collect, store, and format data in their own ways, creating silos when it comes to analyzing it. The marketing analytics tool you ultimately choose must have the ability to centralize those disjointed pieces of data, so you can create complete, cohesive customer profiles that can be used by every channel that touches the customer experience. That means more than just being able to use remarketing data. It means being able to gather data from all the channels where your customers

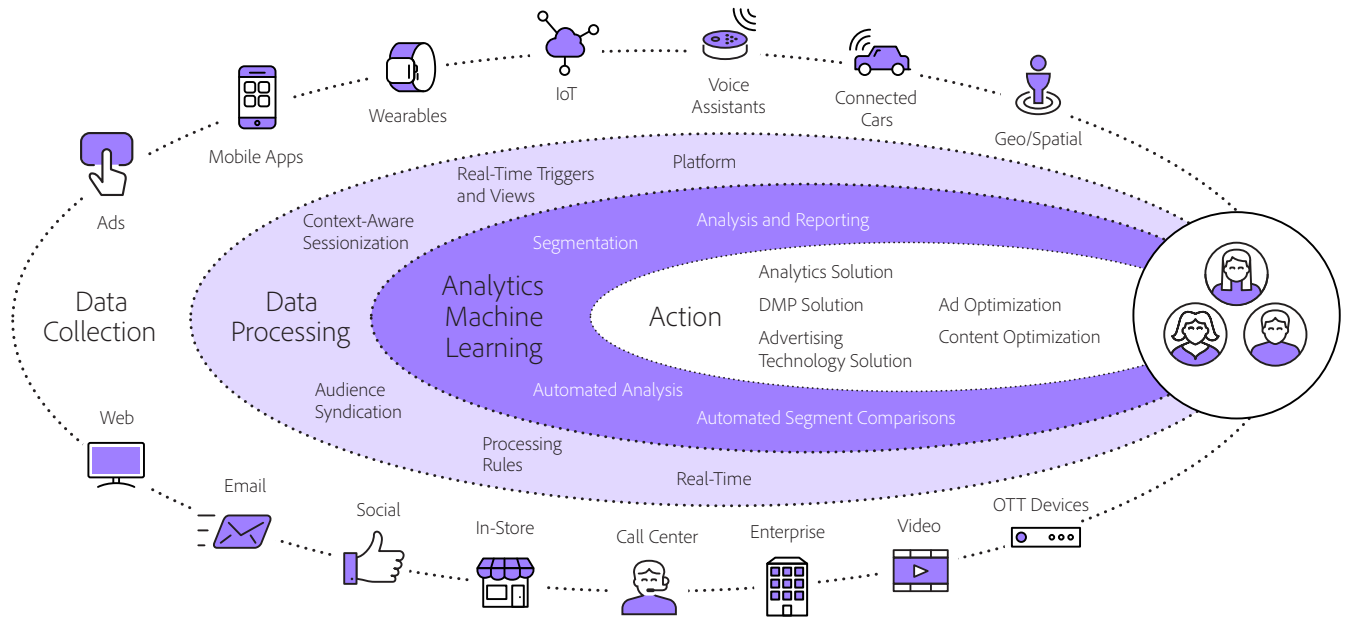
engage with you, such as web, mobile, social media, call centers, in-store interactions, digital assistants, surveys, kiosks, rewards programs, and more.

### **POTENTIAL GOTCHA:**

***Some marketing analytics solutions not only have limits on the data sources they can draw from, but they have limited or no ability to share insights with downstream solutions.***

For example, if an online retailer only has access to a customer's web traffic behavior, they might identify a customer browsing a children's doll collection and use that insight to inform their ongoing marketing and advertising to that person. But perhaps the customer's daughter just had a birthday and those particular searches were one-time events. If the retailer continues to base all of its personalization efforts on that information, not only will

## Data to value.



it end up annoying the customer, it will waste time and money on personalization that is no longer relevant. But if a marketing analytics solution can bring in data from other sources—such as previous purchasing history from the retailer’s loyalty program, surveys, or customer data they purchased from a third party—it can create a clearer, more accurate picture of who the customer is and what they’re interested in at that moment.

## Bringing meaningful form to data.

Once your disparate data is integrated, it needs to be normalized in order to be usable. This can be difficult since data from different sources often has its own unique data formats or schemas. This creates challenges for presenting that data in consistent data models or customer profiles that allow you to perform holistic analysis. When you’re only able to analyze each data set individually, you lack the ability to understand combined context and see the complete picture.

For example, a solution that focuses primarily on analyzing site traffic might also allow you to analyze advertising data. But too often such solutions only provide an individual analysis report on each set of data rather than illustrating the correlation between advertising and site traffic, including the impact advertising has on the behavior of various audiences regarding macro-conversion events (like purchase) instead of micro-events (like click-through rate).

To avoid disjointed data analysis, your marketing analytics solution needs to be able to perform free-form dimensional analysis. Simply put, dimensional analysis allows you to break down and analyze your data sets in context with other data sets. So when you analyze your website data, you can layer in your advertising or email campaign data to understand the overall success of the campaign in terms of product orders. This is achieved by

### Questions to ask:

Can the marketing analytics solution collect data from all of the sources that matter to my business, and will it be able to collect data from emerging sources in the future?

Does the solution integrate multi channel data at the customer level for analysis?

### Question to ask:

Can the solution create an analysis report that shows how findings from one data set impact the findings of other types of data sets?

aggregating and normalizing data sets in a way that temporarily transforms them from diverse schemas into a common, customer-based schema that can be viewed and analyzed in a more meaningful, useful way.

It's also important to find a solution with the ability to non-destructively process and manipulate data so it can be used in a variety of outputs. Some solutions only offer fixed outputs

#### IMPORTANT TO KNOW:

***Some organizations have built their own data lakes and might also be considering trying to build their own marketing analytics engine and processes. Internally engineering your own marketing analytics capabilities is a complex, time consuming effort that can not only overburden IT, but jeopardize your ability to perform meaningful data analyses and respond in real time to marketing requests.***

with constraints on the definition of certain data attributes. For example, when you define a timeout window for a user session, the solution might require that you apply that definition to all your channels. Setting it for 30 minutes might be fine for web sessions, but it won't make sense for mobile sessions that need a much shorter window. Instead, it's best if the solution allows you to create virtual reports where you can dynamically modify attributes and definitions in a way that makes sense for different channels and circumstances.

## Leveraging artificial intelligence.

Organizations collect staggering amounts of data to help them better understand their customers. While all of that data is essential to targeting audience segments and personalizing the customer journey, there's simply too much of it for humans to process on their own. Machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) are critical elements of any marketing analytics solution, because they enable you to surface insights from the seemingly never-ending streams of data that pour into your business every day. While you shouldn't expect AI to take the place of all human involvement, it can save significant analysis time and surface new insights by detecting anomalies and causal factors that you might miss, as well as facilitate audience segment building. In short, it can make the unknown known.

#### POTENTIAL GOTCHA:

***Some solutions might have AI capabilities, but aren't designed to actually analyze data from all your different marketing channels, limiting your ability to get insights on the full customer experience.***

That said, a solution's AI needs to be usable by the intended users so you can take advantage of it in the moments that matter. Some marketing analytics solution vendors pride themselves in the high-powered sophistication of their tools, but they are likely only usable by hard core data scientists. Others claim to have AI that does all your thinking for you—just feed in your data and it magically spits out the answers you need. That's not the way AI works.

AI can surface insights and recommendations. It can help you see things you might not see on your own. It can quickly narrow your focus and let you know when you should pivot. But it should be usable by and beneficial to a wide spectrum of users from marketers to data scientists. To enable actual real-time insights, it shouldn't require a data scientist to analyze and interpret its findings. And for organizations that might not have the ability to hire an experienced data analyst, the AI should be intuitive enough that anyone can use it.

When evaluating a solution, it's a good idea to ask about the algorithms being used by the AI. Does it use well-known, open-source algorithms that are statistically sound and have a good reputation in the market? Secondly, how transparent is the

## AI Analytics Capabilities



Attribution



Personalization



Anomaly Detection



Sentiment Analysis



Intelligent Audience Segmentation

## Business Value of AI in Analytics



Content Velocity  
Making you faster



Signal Recognition  
Making you smarter



Focus on What's Important  
Prioritizing what's critical



Inspire Creativity  
Remove clutter, add genius



Magnify Efficiency  
Get more done with less

algorithm? Does it allow you to understand why it makes the recommendations it does? Some solutions function like a black box, requiring you to blindly trust their recommendations, even when those recommendations coincidentally tell you to invest more in the vendor's advertising services. Ideally, the openness and transparency of the AI's algorithm should allow you to build upon and customize it as your needs evolve.

While there's a lot to look for and expect from AI in a marketing analytics solution, vendor claims don't always match reality. To make sure you really get what you want and need, have the vendor demonstrate how your end users can actually take advantage of the AI, and how the AI delivers on each of the critical aspects discussed.

### Performing freeform analysis.

Many marketing analytics solutions have a very rigid reporting structure that is unintuitive and cumbersome to navigate. This can severely limit the types of analysis you are able to perform and the ways you are able to report on data. You may be limited by the fixed parameters offered in the solution's custom report builder, as well as by your understanding of the tool's complex set of rules. That's often the equivalent of trying to fit a square peg into a round hole.

Solutions with freeform analysis provide a more flexible, extensible option that allows almost any user to easily explore data and insights in a virtually unlimited fashion. Freeform analysis lets you drag and drop different data dimensions, metrics, segments, and time granularities to find immediate answers to questions. The

ad hoc nature of freeform analysis can simplify the process of building concise customer segments that you can then compare to quickly identify insights and opportunities.

#### POTENTIAL GOTCHA:

***Don't mistake visualization tools for freeform analysis. Visualization tools can help you view data, but they won't surface insights on the follow-up questions you will inevitably have. Freeform analysis is built into an analytics tool to make analysis and insight generation easier and in real time.***

One of the main goals of freeform analysis is to make it easier for more people to make data-driven decisions. That means, no matter their job or role, they'll be less prone to making faulty decisions due to guesswork. Another major outcome of freeform analysis is that it enables self-service analysis. If your organization has a team of highly skilled analysts, most of their time is likely spent fulfilling report requests for others in the organization. Self-service analysis frees up those analysts' time to do the value-added work they're paid for, while enabling marketers and executives to get the answers they need right away.

### **Questions to ask:**

**How easily does the solution allow users to pivot data, structure and segment data, and break data down across all funnel stages in order to find meaningful insights?**

**Does the solution run anomaly detection and flag outlier data automatically? Does it provide a simple way to dig into a data point and identify causal factors?**

## **Taking action.**

The insights marketing analytics solutions provide can have a dramatic impact on your marketing efforts, but only if those insights are truly actionable. For example, when analysis indicates the winner of an A/B test, you don't need to wait for a meeting the next day to decide whether or not you should deploy the optimal experience. Your optimization solution should be able to automatically activate the experience based on marketing analytics data. Likewise, your marketing analytics solution should be able to build segments based on data from your advertising demand-side platform. It should also be able to automatically optimize campaigns as you reach out to customers through all the different touchpoints of their journey.

In other words, the marketing analytics solution should interact with the different technologies in your marketing stack to automatically trigger events and actions based on discovered insights. And it should be able to implement those actions at the optimal time based on the likes, dislikes, behaviors, and attitudes of the targeted audience segment. These automations empower your marketing analytics solution to add exponential value not only to the existing technologies in your marketing stack, but to the solutions you will add in the future.

The ability to automatically take action on insights and data requires the marketing analytics solution to provide outputs that can be readily ingested by your customer-facing technologies. Essentially, it

needs to support two-way integrations. Native integrations generally provide the most seamless capabilities, but at minimum you should be able to take advantage of pre-built data connectors or APIs that support automation and live, real-time sharing.

The greater the depth and breadth of integrations, the better. For example, if you settle for a solution that can only act on ad data within its own ad network, you prevent yourself from being able to automatically take action across multiple engagement points in the customer journey.

In addition to delivering actionable data insights to your marketing technologies, your solutions need to make those insights available to the business. Be sure to explore what features the solution offers in terms of dashboarding, reporting, and customization. How easily does it make that data available and digestible to any stakeholder within your organization? Can it present the information in tailored workspaces so individuals can easily see what they want or need to see, without being overwhelmed with data they don't care about? Be wary of complex user interfaces. The solution should be able to surface advanced functionality in a way that is easy to use, understand, and manipulate.

### **POTENTIAL GOTCHA:**

***Some vendors claim to have an integrated marketing stack, but in reality they have disjointed technologies that have yet to be integrated in a way that allows automated actioning on analytics data. Always ask for a demo to verify what the solution can actually deliver.***

## **Recognized marketing analytics leader.**

Marketing analytics plays an ever-expanding role in providing essential context to the customer journey and delivering actionable insights that impact all of your engagement points. The success or failure of an organization's efforts to gain that customer context and act on those insight rests largely upon its investment in marketing analytics and its relationship with the marketing analytics provider.



### **Questions to ask:**

How does the marketing analytics solution facilitate your ability to take action on the insights it provides? Does it have robust integrations with customer-facing technology to automate action, or does it require manual intervention?

Named a Leader in the Gartner "*Magic Quadrant for Digital Marketing Analytics*" and in "The Forrester Wave": Customer Analytics," Adobe Analytics delivers on all the key marketing analytics elements covered in this buyer's guide. It empowers marketers to easily collect and process data from nearly any online and offline source. With its powerful yet approachable AI and freeform analysis, it makes it easy to create a complete picture of your customers and analyze their behaviors across their entire journey. As an integral part of Adobe Experience Cloud and with its robust third-party marketing integrations, it gives you the ability to automatically take action on insights and data so you can get more value from your marketing investments and be more effective in all your marketing efforts, especially in the moments that matter most.

To learn more about what Adobe Analytics can do for your business, visit [www.adobe.com/analytics/marketing-analytics.html](http://www.adobe.com/analytics/marketing-analytics.html).