Marketing Technology: A Key Asset for Success

By: Laura Patterson, President

"The aim of marketing is to know and understand the customer so well that the product or service fits him and sells itself" — Peter Drucker. For 99% of businesses, achieving this goal (a requirement for surviving in today's hyper-competitive environment) requires the right investment in Marketing Technology. If you want to optimize the performance of your Marketing organization and become more efficient and successful, you must know how to identify which technologies are need, in which order, and how to effectively implement and use the tools.

There are over 300 companies in 45 categories in the marketing technology space. So, it's hard to keep up! As the number of tools and solutions for marketing has grown, the marketing technology landscape has evolved. Today, we need to know both the types of technologies available, as well as how to implement and leverage them as a holistic system.

Marketing Technology and the Work of Marketing

The marketing landscape can be confusing, and the acronym alphabet soup used to describe these technologies only adds to the conundrum: DAM/MAM (digital asset or marketing asset management), MOM (marketing operations management), MAP (marketing automation platforms), and MRM (marketing resource management). In their study, "Realizing the Promise of Marketing Technology," ITSMA defined marketing technology as "the software for improving marketing and sales processes to achieve business objectives." This definition provides a way to frame the marketing technology landscape, which currently consists of a very large and growing list of players.

With so many options, where do you start? The purpose of marketing technology is to facilitate the work of marketing, so one of the most valuable ways to frame the landscape is to think in terms of the work Marketing performs. Phil Kotler, currently the S. C. Johnson Distinguished Professor of International Marketing at the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University, posits that Marketing has three, and just three, responsibilities: find customers, keep customers, and grow the value of customers. Therefore, the technology we employ should optimize these capabilities, our ability to make customer-facing, creating, and engaging decisions, and prove the value of marketing.

From this perspective, we can organize marketing technology tools into four broad categories:

- Market and Customer Intelligence and Insights for using data and analytics to identify customer and market opportunities
- Customer Interaction and Engagement for acquiring and keeping customers
- Project/Workflow/Operations Management for managing the work of marketing
- Performance Management for improving and proving the value of marketing

Let's examine each of these a bit further.

1. **Market and Customer Intelligence and Insights:** These technologies support automating intelligence gathering, such as social media monitoring/monitoring and business intelligence tools. The purpose of these tools is to turn market and customer data into actionable insights.

2. **Customer Interaction and Engagement:** These technologies facilitate creating and monitoring customer interaction, and support the customer-buying journey. This is where many organizations have made most of their current and rather extensive technology investments. Most marketing/email campaign automation, customer relationship management, contact management, demand generation and lead management, and sales force automation tools fall into this category.

3. **Project/Workflow/Operations Management:** These technologies enable marketing to manage projects and produce work by enhancing marketing efficiency and productivity. Marketing resource management, digital/marketing asset management, content management and curation, and project management are examples of technologies that fit into this group.

4. **Performance Management:** These technologies help monitor, measure and communicate marketing's value, impact, performance, and contribution to the organization. Technologies that fall under this category include marketing analytics tools, marketing reporting and dashboard tools, marketing models, and alignment and accountability tools.

Each of these categories include important tools that facilitate the work of marketing. Without proper planning, it is easy to end up with a hodge-podge of technologies that do not work or play well together. Therefore, to realize the most from your technology investments, you need an effective plan.

Planning for Success

A technology roadmap is a plan that applies to a new product, process, or technology and provides a vehicle to match both short and long-term capabilities with specific technology solutions. These solutions enable the user and organization to realize its goals faster. Developing a marketing technology roadmap provides the means to:

1. Create consensus about a set of needs and/or capabilities, and the technologies required to satisfy those needs
2. Forecast/identify technology developments and requirements
3. Plan, prioritize and coordinate technology developments and investments

Here are a few steps that will help you pave the way for developing your marketing technology roadmap:
- Secure a sponsor from the executive team who will commit leadership, time, and effort to supporting the roadmap development and implementation.
- Decide and document what capabilities will be addressed, developed and/or improved by adding a technology platform or enhancing an existing technology platform.
- Determine who within the organization will provide input and participate in the current state assessment, roadmap planning horizons and processes.
- Define the vision, scope, and boundaries for the marketing technology roadmap, including timing and investment parameters.

It's important to remember that technology won't automatically fix inefficient processes or improve your marketing skills, and it won't make bad data good. In fact, if not addressed these issues might become even more obvious as a result of technology.

Developing a vision, strategy, scope, and roadmap that you can execute and that is adopted by the entire organization will enable you to realize the most from your technology investments, and achieve success. Your Marketing Operations function serves as the choreographer and conductor for helping Marketing release the power from the investments it's making in data, analytics, technology, processes, and talent.