Cool Vendors in Technology Marketing

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Initiatives: Technology Marketing Effectiveness

This year’s Cool Vendors help technology and service providers scale demand, improve win rates and accelerate deal velocity using AI-based sales acceleration and CX solutions. Technology leaders should consider these solutions to improve direct and indirect seller success.

Overview

Key Findings

■ Gartner has discovered through client inquiry that technology and service providers and buyers are still trying (and often struggling) to articulate and measure the value of a purchase.

■ Gartner has observed through vendor interactions that expert use of emerging technologies, such as machine learning and predictive analytics, is nascent, leading to more reliance on traditional enterprise rules over AI-enhanced tools to augment sellers.

■ Complex B2B technology purchases involve large buying teams (11 active individuals involved full time and seven others occasionally, according to Gartner buyer surveys). This can cause inefficient lead-to-account mapping, creating unplanned deal-related surprises and slowing a provider’s deal velocity.

■ Despite technology and service providers putting a greater emphasis on the entire customer life cycle, many are often hindered by a lack of an outcomes-based approach for managing it.

Recommendations

To improve technology marketing effectiveness, technology and service providers should:

■ Minimize sales time spent on poorly aligned opportunities by using best-fit profiles and tactics to improve engagement and prioritization.

■ Improve engagement effectiveness by elevating marketing and skills through utilization of AI-enabled insights and recommendations.
Stop deals from stalling by guiding sellers and marketers to develop highly engaging campaigns targeted at the right buyers at the right time.

Pursue a 360-degree view of the entire customer life cycle by focusing on the customers’ desired outcome and mapping the journey to it.

Analysis

This research does not constitute an exhaustive list of vendors in any given technology area, but rather is designed to highlight interesting, new and innovative vendors, products and services. Gartner disclaims all warranties, express or implied, with respect to this research, including any warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose.

What You Need to Know

Prospects and customers continue a growing trend of spending less of the overall customer acquisition life cycle with vendors. Buyer self-driven research and digital peer interaction are challenging technology providers to adjust marketing and sales motions that align with today’s buyer (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Preferred Methods for Learning About a New or Replacement Purchase**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preferred Methods for Learning About a New or Replacement Purchase</th>
<th>Percentage of Respondents by Method and Purchase Type</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="chart.png" alt="Chart showing preferred methods for learning about purchases" /></td>
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n = varies; explored a new purchase; explored a replacement purchase

Cta. Which three methods do you prefer to use when initially learning about potential products or services for a buying effort in a product/service category that is new for your business (a new purchase)?

Ctb. What about for a replacement purchase (where you are already familiar with the product/service category)?

Source: Gartner 2021 Technology End User Buying Behavior Survey

Note: “Self-Driven Search” consists of four separate categories; “Interactions” consists of five separate categories.
However, Gartner technology and service provider client inquiries show that sales enablement and acceleration continue to be of great importance to sales growth and seller productivity in 2021. To improve win rates and deal velocity, providers must tailor their sales enablement efforts around buyer behavior, focusing on data-informed prospect identification, ABM-centric influential buyer-enablement content that builds trust and customer success management. Marketers must also develop unique programs for new customer acquisition versus replacement opportunities, given buyer approach and content preference.

The future of sales is the permanent transformation of organizations’ sales strategies, processes and allocation of resources, moving from a seller-centric to a buyer-centric orientation and moving from analog sales processes to hyperautomated, digital-first engagement with customers.

Given the complexity and criticality of those efforts, technology providers must adopt new predictive guides that drive focus and alignment between marketing and sales. These efforts must be supported by analytics and multitouch attribution insights from both first- and third-party data that link value prediction and measurement across the buying processes.

These issues, along with the challenge of ensuring seller proficiency across various stages of the sales cycle, are leading technology providers to look at solutions to improve productivity and, more importantly, the effectiveness of their sellers. To that end, Gartner expects increased adoption of ABM, customer success and sales engagement solutions.

Beehivr
Montreal, Canada (https://beehivr.com)

Analysis by Julian Poulter

Why Cool: Beehivr breaks the linear presentation or “death by PowerPoint” experience in sales meetings and makes it more like a natural conversation — a two-way interactive discourse that uses attractively presented and navigable content. It can also pivot easily to using its built-in video calling, which is vital in this age of remote working. Sales reps can create dynamic interactions where the path to the sales objective is loosely followed while reacting to the prospects’ needs and questions. Beehivr helps sales professionals prepare for, execute and follow up sales meetings while working remotely.

Sales reps are typically using a range of tools, but few of those tools actually help reps in the core aspect of their activity: the interaction with the prospect. In preparation for a meeting, a sales rep needs to collect all of the relevant content together, which can often be hard to find. Beehivr collates all of the relevant information in a repository, which is controlled by marketing so that all available content is
trusted and adheres to corporate, compliance or brand standards. The content is easily accessible and selectable for the meeting. Within the meeting, conducted on a mobile or tablet device, the content is accessible and shareable online. After a meeting, follow-up is important and the rep can easily choose the relevant content and use an email template to send to the client. The prospect or customer accesses the content via a secure portal where reading depth is tracked for performance metrics.

With the advent of the majority of sales staff working from home and remotely, this type of functionality is highly relevant. Beehivr is a member of the Apple Mobility Partner Program, one of about 100 companies with a close working relationship with Apple to increase sales of iPhones.

**Challenges:** The pandemic has prompted an uptick in interest of virtual sales effectiveness solutions. Many vendors offer solutions that enable sales reps to be more effective, with vendors often coming from very different backgrounds. Also, the major sales CRM, virtual sales and sales enablement vendors are rapidly building out their functionality, which adds to buyer confusion and hesitancy, slowing the pure-play adoption and growth potential.

Integration with other document stores such as a content management system or digital asset management system are possible but require customization. Content aggregation is essentially a manual process via the portal/dashboard. Many clients are supported by Beehivr services to create and load up presentations. Prospective clients need to research the skill levels and/or services provided by Beehivr to ensure it would be able to support their environment.

**Who Should Care:** Sales and sales enablement leaders looking to increase the impact and quality of meetings to win more deals, through improving efficiency by modernizing and standardizing their engagement with prospects in virtual or face-to-face meetings, stand to take interest in Beehivr. In addition, the many organizations supporting working from home and remote selling will benefit from this tool, including those who will blend in face-to-face meetings in the future.

**CaliberMind**
Boulder, Colorado, U.S. ([www.calibermind.com](http://www.calibermind.com))

**Analysis by Ray Pun**

**Why Cool:** CaliberMind helps B2B marketers explain their performance without having to manually integrate customer data via spreadsheets. Its marketing analytics and multitouch attribution solution can ingest a wide range of first-party and third-party data to help analyze sales and marketing effectiveness. It provides a set of prebuilt attribution models to help marketers understand the impact of channels and campaigns on pipeline and revenue goals. CaliberMind provides a data integration engine that supports out-of-the-box and custom data integrations for heterogeneous martech stacks, including B2B marketing automation vendors (e.g., Adobe Marketo, HubSpot, Oracle Eloqua and Salesforce Pardot), CRM/sales force automation vendors (e.g., Microsoft, Salesforce, and SAP) and advertising channels (e.g., Facebook, Google and LinkedIn).
In addition, to support ABM programs, CaliberMind provides account engagement scoring to track interactions with buying teams across the buying cycle. These engagement scores can be adjusted by including multipliers for specific buyer personas. For example, an IT decision maker receives a 1.2x multiplier to their score whenever they engage with a provider. Another cool factor is CaliberMind’s customer community that is designed to help users who are responsible for marketing operations. The community promotes learning and best practices via events, training courses and a Slack channel.

**Challenges:** Some CRM lead management platforms such as Adobe Marketo, HubSpot and Salesforce Pardot along with ABM platforms including Demandbase and Terminus (see [Market Guide for Account-Based Marketing Platforms](https://www.gartner.com)) have added attribution features to their solutions. In addition, there has been a recent trend of buyers leaning toward an integrated suite versus best of breed, likely due to budget cuts and conservatism during the pandemic. Consequently, CaliberMind will need to clearly differentiate its capabilities to buyers who are hesitant to purchase a separate tool. In addition, CaliberMind positions itself as a B2B customer data platform (CDP), which is a continuously evolving market with many competitors that support use cases for data collection, profile unification, segmentation and activation (see [Market Guide for Customer Data Platforms](https://www.gartner.com)). Consequently, it will need to differentiate its offering from other CDPs, including those provided by marketing cloud vendors like Adobe, Oracle and Salesforce.

In addition, according to product review sites, some users have commented on usability challenges such as the lack of options to customize the reporting interface and the need for database programming skills (e.g., SQL) for configuration and setup.

**Who Should Care:** Technology marketers who are responsible for demand generation, marketing operations, revenue operations or marketing analytics are likely to take an interest in CaliberMind. Since its product provides a broad set of integrations, B2B marketers should consider CaliberMind if they need to integrate data from marketing automation and sales force automation platforms. In addition, marketers seeking account-level aggregations should consider CaliberMind to accommodate account or organizational aggregations of contacts who are associated with a specific enterprise, in support of ABM and B2B lead management.

**LeanData**
Santa Clara, California, U.S. ([www.leandata.com](http://www.leandata.com))

*Analysis by Alastair Woolcock*

**Why Cool:** LeanData eliminates the “manual” revenue processes between marketing, sales development reps (SDRs) and sales, by automating lead-to-account matching and routing, an essential component for modern go-to-market teams. These actionable account engagement insights drive focus and alignment, particularly important for RevOps teams and subworkflow activities like ABM reporting. They provide the dynamic association of sales and marketing leads and contacts with sales’ CRM accounts, improving account engagement understanding and account-based marketing analytics, without relying on IT to
modify hard-coded routing rules in CRM systems. LeanData provides marketers with essential lead-to-account matching, routing and engagement capabilities that enhance the efficiency of leads delivery to sales, ultimately improving deal focus and productivity.

Also, to properly implement an ABM strategy, leads need to be matched to accounts. LeanData enables marketing and sales to see who is engaged in every account along the account journey using flexible reporting and ABM analytics. Tracking KPIs and metrics from contacts and accounts will enable a more simplified and accurate view of performance. This holistic view and analysis enable rapid and coordinated sales follow-up, ensuring that marketing and sales efforts are aligned with the ABM strategy.

Finally, LeanData’s view on automation of manual processes between sales (CRM) and marketing (leads) is a key development for companies looking to benefit from RevOps models and buyer process alignment. In RevOps, a communal data layer is critical because it provides the backbone to connect revenue streams and buyer insights. LeanData helps to automate the workflows of interconnected revenue streams in the communal data layer.

**Challenges:** Given the diversity of B2B marketing and sales platforms, combined with highly variable CRM configurations, LeanData should continue to expand its lead-routing capabilities and tunability in line with customers’ ever-changing needs. This will require attention to market and customer demand due to the complexities of customer CRM installations and the impact on data load times.

LeanData will need to develop positioning that will provide clear differentiation in the workflow automation space and also help clients to understand its differences in approach against ABM platforms that are beginning to provide lead-to-account matching, such as 6Sense, D&B Lattice, Demandbase, Integrate and Leadspace (see Market Guide for Account-Based Marketing Platforms).

**Who Should Care:** Tech companies that struggle with high lead volumes and have complex sales and multiple buyer touchpoints can benefit from LeanData. Additionally, tech providers looking to improve automation of the buyer experience, accelerate time to revenue and increase operational alignment between marketing and sales should investigate LeanData. The LeanData platform automates various demand generation and account execution actions for inbound, outbound and account-based efforts to reduce operational cost and better align the buying task with the correct internal process.

**MetaCX**


*Analysis by Michael Maziarka and David Yockelson*

**Why Cool:** MetaCX provides a platform for putting the often decoupled or deemphasized projected and realized value of the technology purchase at center stage, ensuring that both the provider and customer can assess business-outcome value consistently. It creates a clear link between the elements of value
prediction used to make the sale and value measurement obtained throughout the owning cycle. It enables sellers and buyers to agree on value-generating goals (or in MetaCX’s lingo, outcomes, which are driven by the purchased product or service). To support those goals, users can define actions (playbooks), timelines and milestones (moments), and key performance indicators (KPIs) that show progress toward meeting those goals. This creates a context of value for both buyers and sellers by linking offerings more directly to buyers’ business needs and value drivers. Throughout that process, both parties collaborate in a shared space where any of the elements can be revisited and either adjusted (when overly optimistic in setting, or reflecting realities of the situation) or replaced with new ones (when goals have been achieved, and a new vision established). The goals and progress toward them through the KPIs can be surfaced through dashboards or embedded directly within your own application for team and executive review, and exported into reports to serve as a record of achievement and CX.

**Challenges:** Like most providers in the area of value assessment and measurement, MetaCX is nascent and must build awareness through demonstrable wins and results. Many tech and B2B providers are unaware that there are platforms available to address value assessment, often focusing on the relatively simplistic (but also important) notion of an ROI calculator as the goal. MetaCX must “sell upstream” and convince organizations that may not have account management or sales/marketing strategies mature enough for its platform that a value assessment approach is best. Additionally, overlap and competition comes from existing value assessment providers (e.g., DecisionLink, Mediafly, VisualizeROI) and customer success platforms (e.g., Gainsight, Medallia, Totango). However, some of these organizations may be potential partners as well. Implementing the platform will also require integration with data sources, such as CRM solutions (e.g., Microsoft Dynamics, Salesforce) and digital adoption solutions (e.g., Mixpanel, Pendo). To that end, MetaCX introduced Integration Hub, with over 200 established integrations, and it has recently established an implementation services partnership with Valuize.

**Who Should Care:** Tech providers must provide value assessment content and activities for buyers to build trust, differentiate, purchase and ultimately renew or expand implementations. Those who wish to directly relate their implementations to their customers’ value metrics should investigate MetaCX. The role that MetaCX can play for subscription-based products is clear, but the product may have an even stronger play in land-and-expand strategies for service providers that want to capitalize on successful projects.

**ringDNA**

Los Angeles, California, U.S. (www.ringdna.com)

**Analysis by Alastair Woolcock**

**Why Cool:** ringDNA solves the problem of aligning the right selling activity and conversation with the buyer’s needs in the critical moment of client interaction in real time. No more waiting and guessing and training for tomorrow; instead, ringDNA immediately enables sellers to be better aligned with their buyers. ringDNA enables actionable, real-time, data-driven insights across an end-to-end revenue
process, breaking down the traditional barriers of siloed sales, marketing and CX teams. This aligns with Gartner’s prediction that by 2023, 25% of organizations will amalgamate marketing, sales and CX into a single function (see Predicts 2021: Marketing Hits Reset). ringDNA’s unique approach aligns the sales and CX process into a single communication platform, driving both customer acquisition and customer expansion. Its new tooling is aligned well to the emerging domain of RevOps, enabling end customers to more easily apply AI-empowered conversational insights across the buyer and postbuying activities.

The guided selling process of ringDNA utilizes a multitiered product approach that gives reps the situational intelligence to quickly align with buyers and build empathy. Certain newer offerings like YODA AI allow real-time coaching alerts to assess buyer/seller engagement effectiveness. Conversational AI is the component that helps managers identify good versus bad rep behaviors for coaching. In a time of ever-increasing need for digital selling techniques, this kind of support is critical at driving an increase in booked client meetings and conversion rates. This is all achieved due to ringDNA’s strengths in assessing signals from both the sales reps’ live interactions and the customers’ reactions and responses. This functionality is native to ringDNA’s out-of-the-box platform functionality.

Technology, business services, financial services and other industries with growing or complex sales and marketing teams are achieving better conversion rates from ISRs, improved buyer engagement due to the real-time buyer behavior analytics given to sellers and overall improvements in revenue production per rep. Customers are seeing average handle times (AHT) of leads being improved from days to hours to minutes, which is key for improving the conversions of sales stages.

**Challenges:** B2B sales is growing in complexity with more usage of digital channels. ringDNA focuses largely on the human-based elements of revenue production, enabling ISR/SDR/BDR and CX team functions to be more successful. However, the near future will require increased insights across a multitude of digital channels to ensure that the same level of triggers and buyer signals are understood. Within the RevOps space, new entrant companies are rising and focusing on specific aspects of automation in the revenue production space. ringDNA will need to increase integration and automation of non-human-driven processes (i.e., seller-free and digital people) over time to remain competitive. Companies looking to evaluate ringDNA should have discussions around product roadmap and automation.

**Who Should Care?** Tech providers looking to drive improved operational efficiency and revenue capture from sales, marketing and customer success teams should investigate ringDNA. Since ringDNA’s products provide a broad set of integrations (i.e., CRM, hypercloud providers, sales enablement tools, data intelligence tools and sales engagement technologies), companies with complex selling processes or those in high-growth segments can benefit from evaluating its solutions. In addition, SDR leaders looking to drive improved virtual-selling techniques with higher degrees of client empathy should care about ringDNA.

xiQ

Redwood City, California, U.S. (https://xiqinc.com)
Analysis by Christy Ferguson

Why Cool: xiQ enables technology marketers to add a level of personalization in ABM programs, at the person level based on personality analysis in addition to more traditional account- and persona-level personalization. At the account level, xiQ’s AI-powered B2B sales and marketing platform curates account news and the insights from contacts within each account to support both marketing and sales teams in their ABM initiatives. The platform curates all publicly facing news about a target account and breaks it down into different categories, such as CxO moves, partnership news and strategy. This enables marketers to prioritize accounts, segment contacts and create personalized ABM plays to engage with the account and buying team members.

At the person level, xiQ leverages the DISC (an acronym formed from four personality traits: dominant, influencing, steady and conscientious) personality analysis to provide SDRs and seller insights into preferences for communication and selling approaches. For example, a report for a Chief Strategy Officer at a Forbes 2000 company might indicate a dominant personality trait and advise sellers to make the point quickly and be bold and confident. Meanwhile, a report for a CMO at the same company might include insights that show an influencing personality that appreciates collaboration. In this example, the report would advise sellers to earn trust before making their point and project politeness and respect versus the bold approach used with the Chief Strategy Officer.

In addition, the report curates recent online activity in social channels to identify relevant content for each prospect. Technology providers can serve this content via multichannel marketing, including websites and owned social media channels and SDR outreach. These insights can be exported into an account-specific PowerPoint with a single click for sharing with key stakeholders. Daily-alert emails include suggestions for SDRs to share owned or curated relevant content to the account on their own social channels or via email to support ABM programs. Technology marketers can source this content by adding keywords or using third-party intent data. The platform provides marketing and sales team members with these account-level insights and buying team insights.

Challenges: Technology providers using xiQ run the risk of using the insights to become too personal in marketing and sales communication. xiQ’s buyers should ensure that personalization is tuned and that there are checkpoints in place to monitor how this data is used. While xiQ positions itself as an ABM platform, it lacks ABM capabilities. For example, xiQ is not currently integrated into advertising platforms. In addition, the platform currently only integrates to a limited number of lead management CRM solutions and doesn’t currently integrate to any of the major ABM platforms, such as Demandbase or 6sense.

Who Should Care: Technology providers running sophisticated, one-to-one ABM programs for customers and/or new logo business should consider xiQ. The solution is better suited for large technology providers, managing sophisticated ABM programs with dedicated marketing and SDR support of these programs.

Evidence
Gartner’s 2021 Technology End User Buying Behavior Survey was conducted to understand how organizations approach large-scale buying efforts for enterprise technology. The research was conducted online from October through December 2020 among 1,500 respondents in organizations with at least $1 million in revenue and 20 employees in the U.S. (33%), France, Germany, U.K. (15% each), Australia, India (8% each), and Canada (5%). Industries surveyed include: Manufacturing and Natural Resources, Banking and Securities, Retail, Government, Insurance, Healthcare, Communications/Media/Services, Education, Utilities, and Transportation. Of note, technology vendors across industry categories were excluded from this sample. Respondents were required to be manager level or higher, in a role that involves the evaluation or selection of products or services for technology projects, and aware of large-scale buying efforts for technology (including net new purchases, renewals and replacements) occurring in the past two years. For the purposes of this study, “large-scale” purchases are defined as follows:

- Organizations with fewer than 250 employees: more than $15,000 USD
- Organizations with 250 to 999 employees: more than $25,000 USD
- Organizations with over 1,000 employees: more than $50,000 USD

The study was developed collaboratively by Gartner analysts and the Primary Research Team.

Disclaimer: Results of this study do not represent global findings or the market as a whole but reflect sentiment of the respondents and companies surveyed.

Recommended by the Authors

Tap the Potential of B2B Marketing Technology for Your Top Use Cases
Optimize Technology Use to Address Critical B2B Marketing Challenges
Plan and Manage a Successful Account-Based Marketing Program
Market Guide for Account-Based Marketing Platforms
Market Guide for Sales Enablement Platforms