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What Dangers Are Lurking in Your Tech Stack?

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Contents

Introduction

For marketers, technology has become the purpose, not the means. We need to reverse that.

Many of us say we have tech stacks, but instead, we have become consumed by them. We have moved away from a focus on the human elements of marketing – the strategy, the content, and the creative elements – to instead tend to the machines: the tools, the platforms, the software, the widgets. Why? It's the ongoing search to assemble the magical tech stack that will help us get ahead of the competition.

Some marketers wear a complex, towering tech stack as a badge of honor. A giant stack is nothing to be proud of, though. In fact, it's inefficient, expensive, and introduces immense organizational risk.

In this whitepaper, we'll get into why you should use caution when constructing your tech stack. We'll also propose some ways to avoid the common mistakes today's marketing leaders make when it comes to technology.

The Downside of a Giant Tech Stack

Before we get into the risks related to overgrown tech stacks, let's first take a look at what they are and how they came to be.

Over the past two decades, the influx of consumer data created the need for marketers to become more data-driven in their strategies and tactics. The problem was that over time, "more data" turned into "too much data." Marketers had more work than ever before and they turned to technology to help them get it done. To meet the demand from marketers, almost 5,000 companies offered marketing technology of some kind in 2017. It's a brisk business for a few reasons:

- On average, marketers use between 6 and 10 different tools to manage campaigns and data.
- In 2017, 80% of marketing execs added between 1 and 5 new technologies.
- Nearly 60% of marketing budgets go to integrating, maintaining, and managing various technology tools.

So what does all of this new technology mean for marketers?

On the plus side, it certainly provides several options to choose from. This means that finding the right tech for every specific need is not only possible, but often pretty easy to do. However, the challenge comes in determining how much tech is too much tech. And that challenge can lead to a lot of pains for the marketing organization.

We have moved away from a focus on the human elements of marketing – the strategy, the content, and the creative elements – to instead tend to the machines: the tools, the platforms, the software, the widgets.

But relying on too much technology can be inefficient, expensive, and introduce immense organizational risk.

Inefficiency

As we introduce more technology to our marketing organizations, we also introduce the need to manage it all. This has shifted the role of many marketers from creator and strategist to tech integration manager and data facilitator. Not only is this a frustrating and demotivating shift for many marketers away from what they envisioned for their careers, it is also inefficient and steals away time and energy that should be applied to creating content that actually converts customers.

The result? Marketers are losing more and more time every month, every year:

- 82% of sales and marketing professionals lose up to an hour a day switching between marketing tools.
- 75% of mid-level marketers spend an hour a day analyzing data from different technologies.

Think about it. How many platforms do you have to be fluent in to do your job? How many sales and analytics programs are you currently working in?

An average enterprise company uses 57 file-sharing services, and unless every employee is properly trained for each application, perhaps even certified, there will be serious barriers that prevent your staff from collaborating with each other effectively.

Expensive

Additionally, the costs of all those niche tools and point solutions add up. While each piece may be affordable on its own, when the total running cost of a tech stack is calculated, it is often far more than marketing leaders would imagine. Here's the reality:

- 68% of marketing leaders will allocate bigger budgets for marketing this year.
- 59% of marketing leaders use 2 to 5 dashboards and reporting programs to gauge marketing performance.
- 70% of marketers believe the marketing tools they have to use include some redundancies, which is another needless cost.
- According to a recent EMC study, data loss, downtime and other inefficiencies cost a total of $1.7 trillion each year.

Organizational Risk

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly in our time of data breaches and hacks, is something many marketing leaders don't often consider: the risk these tech stacks introduce to the business. As new technology is brought in by the marketing team, it's not always vetted by IT. Nor are the methods used to integrate it or the various data management systems and processes behind it all. This is called Shadow IT, and it breeds vulnerability and risk for the organization.

6-10
different tools

Marketers use 6-10 different tools to manage campaigns and data.

80%
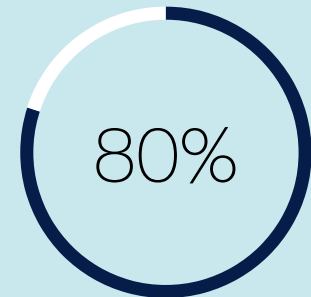
80% of marketing execs added between 1 and 5 new technologies in 2017.
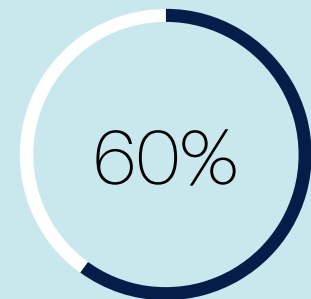
60%

Nearly 60% of marketing budgets go to integrating, maintaining, and managing various technology tools.

So, What SHOULD Marketers Do?

Simplify your tech stack by choosing a unified marketing platform.

We need technology, but we don't need a myriad of different — often redundant — tools that devour our time, cost more than the results we're getting from them, and prevent us from delivering the truly personalized interactions our customers expect.

So how should you go about finding the tech solution that best fits the marketing goals of your company?

Step One: What Do You Want to Accomplish?

The first thing to do is understand the goals your marketing team wants to achieve. Whether it's to drive engagement, retain existing customers, or improving processess, you must establish a strategy for each goal and then look for the tech that will best help you get there. All too often marketers get their hands on the tech and then map goals to each tool. That's how you end up with a massive tech stack that overlaps in features and cripples your efficiency.

Step Two: Self-Audit Your Stack

Rather than contract a third party to tell you what they think about your stack, evaluate your own stack first by asking these questions:

- Are you effectively executing an omnichannel marketing strategy? How many tools does it take?
- How much time are you spending managing your technology?
- How much money are you spending on your entire tech stack?
- Are members of your team spending their time managing technology? Or are they leveraging tools to be more strategic, creative marketers?
- Where is your team growing in effectiveness? Are you getting better at making your technology work together? Better at integrating it all? Are you putting your technology to work for YOU so you can focus more on strategy, on content, and on creative work?

Step Three: Seek Out the Right Marketing Platform Partner

Here's where the hard work of research comes in, but if you go in already knowing your goals and the tools your marketers need most to achieve them, you will be able to cross off many vendors from your list early on. Above all, you should look for a unified marketing platform vendor that:

- Provides a platform that will unify your customer data and processes scattered across a range of sources.
- Gives you a single unified view of each customer so that you can properly segment and personalize interactions.
- Allows you to create, execute, and measure an omnichannel marketing strategy all from within the platform.
- Is developed internally by the vendor, not grown through a series of tech acquisitions. These "acquired clouds" deliver the same headaches as a home-grown tech stack, but they transfer the power of selecting and integrating all the piecemealed point solutions to your vendor instead of you.

Your tech stack must support your automation and analytics, as well as all the channels you work within. So you must find a vendor with powerful omnichannel tools. Make sure each channel feeds off the unified customer profiles that reside in your marketing platform so everything you do works together seamlessly.

Step Four: Seek Out the Right Marketing Platform Partner

Once you've narrowed down your list of prospective partners, it's time to bring IT into the process. Work with them to champion an official platform and software approval process that is both as swift as possible for your team and as controlled as possible for IT and the security of the organization. Marketing and IT should also be the leading advocates of customer data security, and together you should find the platform that will keep your most valuable asset — your data — safe.

Final Thoughts

There is nothing wrong with a tech stack. Marketers today have the incredible advantage of leveraging technology to deliver exponentially better experiences (and results!) than ever before. But if your team relies on Frankensteined solutions, you're probably experiencing more headaches than effectiveness.

The edge that separates good marketing from excellent marketing is in how your company leverages that technology to achieve several objectives:

- A secure, and maintainable tech stack vetted and supported by IT
- Fewer vendors to coordinate, manage, pay, and go to for support
- An easy-to-use solution for marketers to efficiently complete their daily task
- A platform that allows your team to execute and measure an effective, personalized omnichannel strategy

RESOURCES

https://corporate.delltechnologies.com/en-us/newsroom/announcements/2014/12/20141202-01.htm
https://www.emarsys.com/resources/blog/

Why Toppan Merrill?

The Toppan Merrill Connect™ platform offers the tools and functionality a modern marketer needs. Perhaps more importantly, our platform allows clients to potentially reduce their tech stacks and enjoy these three areas of improvement:

Tech Unification

This is where the Toppan Merrill Connect™ platform outperforms other marketing solutions. Many of our clients come from a patchwork of tech vendors, some with overlapping features which they pay for but do not fully use. Adopting the Toppan Merrill Connect™ platform solves the problem of having to deal with multiple third parties, but it also saves you money. Going from a long list of vendors to just a few dramatically frees up budget for other strategic and creative work.

Marketing Efficiency

Technology should solve challenges, not create more work which is what happens when you're managing a range of point solutions. However, a single platform that allows you to effectively and efficiently manage and execute your omnichannel campaigns significantly reduces the amount of time marketers spend switching back and forth between tools, or worse, the countless hours spent manually segmenting and crafting campaigns. Even if your organization requires a couple of specialized tools from other vendors, the Toppan Merrill Connect™ platform has many integrations in place with third party vendors. Anything that takes you from a towering stack of point solutions to a single unified platform with a couple of complimentary apps is a tremendous step forward for your brand and the efficiency of your marketing team.

Measurable Results

Improving the bottom line is often what convinces a marketing leader connect to do something as dramatic as replacing the tech stack in place today for an entirely new platform. Over and over, our clients have seen the Connect™ platform deliver those increases within a few months of implementation. Our platform has been built with omnichannel in mind, enabling our clients to maintain a consistent channel presence online and off.

See how the Toppan Merrill Connect™ platform can help your marketing team.
Visit toppanmerrill.com for a demo

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