



## Supporting The Adaptive Marketer

The Adaptive Marketing Technology Suite

*How to structure and apply the technology that transforms  
a fragmented discipline into a focused success engine*

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### Introduction

2010 is the year that marketing steps up its game. Marketing in “real-time” is now a reality, and in order to remain competitive, agencies and internal marketing organizations must learn to adapt, transform and iterate in real time. Forrester Research has noted this change with Lisa Bradner’s “*Adaptive Brand Marketing – Rethinking Your Approach to Brands in the Digital Age*”. In that paper, Lisa discusses how over the next five years, a new set of “the four P’s” will begin to emerge – permission, proximity, perception and participation.

This is core to what we believe at Big Blue Moose. Our blog – the Adaptive Marketer – focuses on how marketers are changing in real-time - and these series of White Papers are meant to outline the parts of a process that the Adaptive Marketer can use to support their strategy.

This Technology focused paper is to outline how the right technology suite, supported by strategy and fueled by insight transforms today’s digital marketing effort into a unified view of the customer across channels. With this process, the digital marketer is empowered with new capabilities, and a renewed focus. It provides for the ability to change quickly, manage more creatively, measure more effectively and communicate more successfully.

### The Digital Marketing Crisis

Digital Marketing is in a crisis. The same technology that has enabled us to become more efficient has now flattened our world to the point where every person with an Internet connection manages Web content and interacts with digital marketing. And, to that end, consumers are overwhelmed by information, messages and are becoming immune to it. As digital marketers, we find ourselves struggling to keep up with the furious pace of technology; both the myriad ways to get our message out and the ways to manage the process. With margins shrinking, and the capability of measurement growing, we have to achieve “more with less” while we measure “less of more”.

Today’s digital marketer struggles with a seemingly conflicting set of expectations vs. capabilities. The expectation for “proof” and “ROI” is coupled with a desire to “engage” and “converse”. We can measure and test everything – including (as Google did) the 41 shades of blue on a web page<sup>i</sup>. We lament the lack of scientific templates – or more precisely “maps” - that we can simply follow to achieve success; but also strive for the unique, creative message that will differentiate our product or service. As being “data-driven” becomes more and more pervasive in our lives –

the yin and yang balance between the “art” and “science” of marketing seems to become ever-more imbalanced.

However, there is an ancient Chinese proverb that says a crisis “is an opportunity riding the dangerous wind”. And so, we now find ourselves riding that wind. We find we have an opportunity to:

- Transform our web sites from brochures into online marketing engines.
- Effectively and creatively manage our message beyond the bounds of our web site.
- Capture and manage both the quantitative and qualitative data coming into our digital marketing strategy.
- Establish focused strategies that measure the most important metrics – yet give us the capability to change what’s important.
- Optimize our message automatically based on those metrics – so that we are delivering more relevant content to our prospects and our customers.
- Have the insight and wisdom to more effectively improve our message and generate more success.

All of these opportunities hinge on our content. And to truly realize all of them, we must focus our efforts around three core elements:

- **Strategy:** Developing A Strategic Process To Manage Content Marketing
- **Technology:** Applying A Web Content Marketing Platform
- **Insight:** Using Data and Measurement to effect change to the process.

In this second of three parts, we outline the Technology Platform – and (in more detail) explain how the right technology suite, supported by strategy and fueled by insight transforms the digital content marketing effort into a single view of the customer across channels.

## Technology Platform - The Adaptive Marketing Hub

The idea of an online marketing hub has been floated for a few years – but hasn't really been realized. The reason for this is because it is most often associated with an analytics solution. Many Web analytics vendors extol the promise of success by becoming “*a data driven marketer*”. Unfortunately, being a data driven marketer only makes sense if you have something relevant to measure. Where is the online marketing hub that both delivers data to the digital marketer, and enables her to have insight and, most importantly, manage and optimize the content?

The danger of approaching digital marketing from a purely statistical point of view is best summed up by baseball player Bobby Bragan. When commenting on those in baseball that rely too heavily on percentages, he said: “*say you were standing with one foot in the oven and one foot in an ice bucket. According to the percentage people, you should be perfectly comfortable.*”

Being a purely “data driven” marketer has similar perils. It only allows you to measure what you have – and not empower you to do anything about it. Data without insight are just statistics – more dangerous for what they don't say, rather than what they do.

Rather, in today's interactive marketing landscape – marketers need both the insight and the tools to help them bring prospects into the measurement in the first place. Marketers need a solution that helps optimize their creativity – and deliver more and more success into their organization. In short, analytics delivers efficiency. Content, and the ability to optimize that content, delivers growth.

## Content Marketing & Strategy

As was stated in Part I of this Series, The importance of content, a content marketing strategy and the importance of managing it well, is starting to be recognized with the growth of content marketing, landing page optimization, content segmentation strategies, and certainly web content management in general. In *Maximize Business Results Online: How Web Content Management Technology is Transforming Digital Marketing*, the Aberdeen Group found that 70% of all the businesses they interviewed placed content “optimization and distribution of online content as a high priority in 2009.”<sup>ii</sup>

However, managing content, without the ability to measure the success or failure of that content falls just as short as having the ability to measure without the ability to do anything about it.

Interactive marketers need a solution that accomplishes all of this. An Adaptive Marketing hub should help the marketer manage their web content – including their web sites, micro-sites, landing pages and social media. It should help them capture and manage conversions such as leads or other user generated data. And, finally it should provide for the ability to help optimize the content based on those measurements.

Solutions to do select pieces of this exist today – but are a bit like the quintessential committee charged with building a horse – and ending up with a camel. No one solution offers these capabilities armed with both the platform and the insight to assist the online marketer who still feels overwhelmed. So, even the online marketer who wants to assemble this solution will be faced with a large, unwieldy technology project.

### **Existing Solutions Are Too Big, or Too Specialized:**

- **Web Content Management Solutions Are Singularity Focused:** While some Web content management solutions offer some online marketing elements such as A/B and Multivariate testing and content segmentation and targeting – none have the depth of marketing automation solutions in terms of Email Management, Social Media monitoring and lead management nurturing.
- **Enterprise Marketing Suites Will Not Manage Web Content:** There are many offerings here from companies such as Unica and Aprimo. These expensive marketing resource management (MRM) applications are large and intensive – and usually require an extraordinary amount of IT Support. Additionally, they offer virtually no web content management capabilities, aside from managing digital assets – and (in some cases) some landing page capabilities.
- **Lead Management Solutions Lack Any Web Content Expertise:** A number of lead management and lead nurturing applications are available to offer analytics on the “who” is visiting a web site – offering the ability to tag qualitative data on the visitor, their interests and campaign success. Solutions such as Eloqua, Manticore, VTrenz and others emanate from the e-mail space – and focus their lead management capabilities there. Once integrated, these solutions can provide insight across the entire web content

repository – but again without content management, it means either no ability to make a change, or a large technology project to integrate a web CMS.

- **Analytics Vendors Approach The Solution Too Late:** Analytics vendors have certainly become popular with online marketers over the years – measuring web traffic from the aggregate level. Some, such as Omniture have acquired other solutions such as Offermatica (now Omniture's Test & Target) to optimize content based on business rules or analytics. The challenge with Analytics Vendors is, like the Lead Management Solutions, they don't empower the online marketer to change the message. And, unlike the Lead Management Solutions most don't add the qualitative "who is visiting my web site" insight into the aggregate analytics data. They don't capture content – or allow the marketer to manage content based on those analytics functions.

So in order to solve all three of these challenges, online marketers must piece together solutions from all of these vendors. Typically, they choose a WCM (Web content management) solution for managing their web site, and/or micro sites. Then, they choose an email and/or lead management vendor to handle their lead nurturing and conversion metrics solutions – and they choose a web analytics vendor and/or an optimization vendor to handle global site analytics and content optimization. Since each of these solutions can be large technology projects – many marketers are simply doing "the best they can" with what they have.

## The Adaptive Marketing Suite - A Framework

Today's Marketers need a framework of technology to close the loop on managing an online marketing engine. They need new capabilities from a suite of tools that enable both a technology platform – and the insight to fuel it.

For Adaptive Marketing Management there are three connected components – centralized - that together enable a process from content creation, optimization and aggregation, to execution, capture and measurement of campaign related data.

But much more important than the features within the technology products, is aligning the tools with the strategy. To that end, the components below suggest the idealized situation, and below that we suggest examples of low, medium and high-end solutions which could provide the solution.

The complete suite to support the Adaptive Marketing engine is:

- **A web content management system.** This goes beyond simply updating pages, and providing an easy way for non-technical people to update a web site – but instead is focused on the core functions marketers need from web content focused on online marketing. This includes publishing Search Engine Friendly pages, providing for landing page management and form building, and the ability to publish any content to any destination in any format. Web content now lives beyond the bounds of the web site. The capability for a single console to manage content that may live in Flash ads on other sites, content snippets that reside in social networking sites and/or digest content posted by users on the marketers site or other web sites is critical. A Web content management system that has these capabilities is the key.
- **An inbound marketing, conversion management and/or data capture and management system.** This is the ability for online marketers to create registration forms, or landing pages – and capture the data from those forms in a central unified data model. This data should, like the content that is managed, be able to be published or exported to any format at any time. For example, leads should be able to be exported to Salesforce.com. Ingested content from a blog posting should be able to be posted back out to the blog – or in content syndication or to a social networking site. Additionally, the system should be able to enable the marketer to easily assign campaigns and tags for leads and data so that it can be tracked from first engagement, through to close for later analysis.
- **A content optimization and targeting system.** This is not “personalization” as has been represented in many types of solutions – but is rather segmentation of content based on an explicit or implicit set of criteria. Aside from e-commerce retailers, today’s marketers really do not have the quantity of content (or desire) to “personalize” a page at an individual level. Rather, the desire is to deliver the right message to the right person at the right time. So, therefore a B2B marketer that sells to both IT and Marketing wants to ensure that once a visitor to their web site is known, that they are given optimal messaging that delivers a relevant message to their target audience. Or, a B2C marketer may want to enable a coupon for consumers – but only if the prospect offers up a valid email address or demographic information. The online marketing engine tools must enable the online marketer to deliver this content based on their customer segments.

Further, the online marketing engine will have:

- **Standards based architecture for data portability.** Marketers will need support for content re-use and models for the fast-changing landscape of the digital marketing model. Therefore, the ability to store, re-use and re-purpose any content, analytics data or captured data is critical. The system will need to be able to export data in a format that will be consumed by another platform.
- **Module Based.** Marketers need to be able to launch small experiments in a timely manner. In many cases they may already have pieces of this solution already in place. They may already have a web content management solution, or a lead management solution, a content optimization solution or an aggregate analytics solution. Marketers need to employ a solution that is able to mold itself around any existing solution to close the loop on their online marketing engine – without requiring them to start anew. Further, they need to be able to roll these new programs out, without the added or extra support from technology specialists. The ongoing services and technology required to support this solution – should not be onerous on the online marketer.
- **Software Delivered “As” And “With” Services.** Today, most effective Web marketing technology solutions are almost all delivered as a SaaS. Whether one looks at Web Analytics, Email Campaign Management, Ad Serving, Lead Management and Content Management solutions – the SaaS delivery model makes it easy for digital marketers to employ their strategies without incurring the overhead cost of a technology support infrastructure. But further, as digital marketing matures, the need for Digital Marketers to employ support services is also growing. From best practices around landing page design and management, to support on SEM and SEO optimization – a web marketing technology platform is only as good as the creativity, expertise and process that supports it. Successful companies employing an online marketing engine will have both.

Let’s look at these pieces in scenarios.

## Example Technology Platforms

As indicated earlier, the below are just examples of how technology suites can be assembled. These are not endorsements of products – but rather examples of how various software products can work together to provide varying degrees of the Adaptive Marketer’s technology solution.

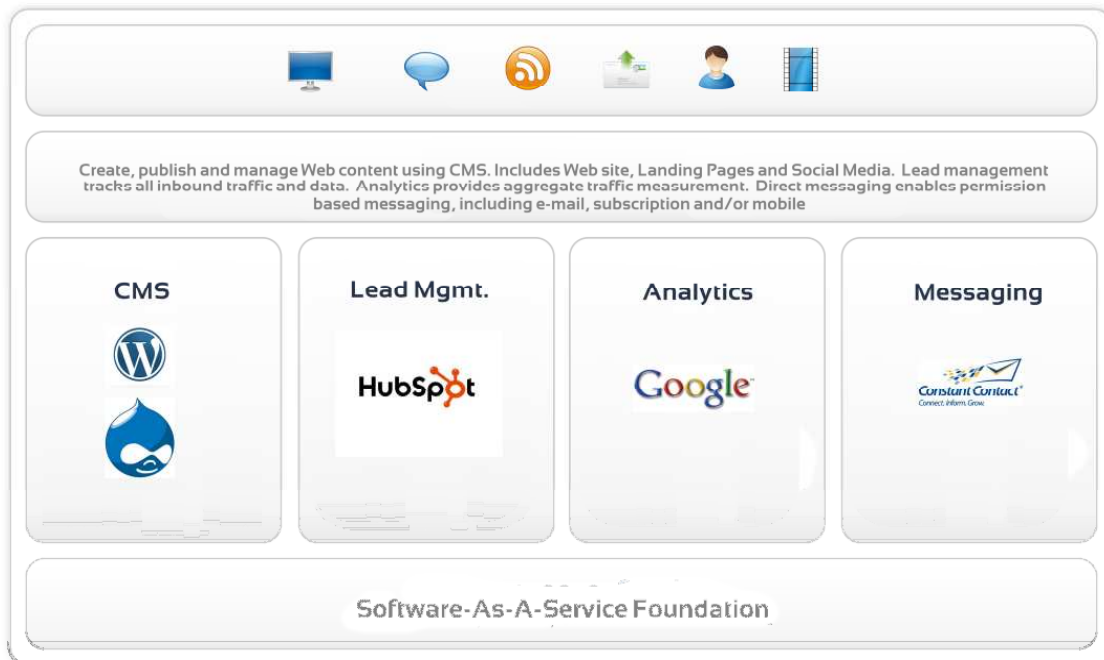
Your mileage may vary greatly on any one of these products – and again the focus should be on your process, and your strategy to determine the right mix of technologies to support it.

### Low End Solution (e.g. the “Free software” solution)

**Who’s it right for:** Smaller organizations, personal brands, or organizations looking to do something limited to “just get the job done”.

**Why It Works:** These solutions provide for the basic pillars of the Adaptive Marketers technology solution, without the complexity and price of a full blown solution. Many of these solutions are free or so close to “free” that the cost is negligible. Great for quick experimentation.

**Why It Doesn’t Work:** This solution will provide a limited feature set – and portability will be difficult. Additionally, most of these solutions won’t integrate together to give you a full “suite” of functionality.

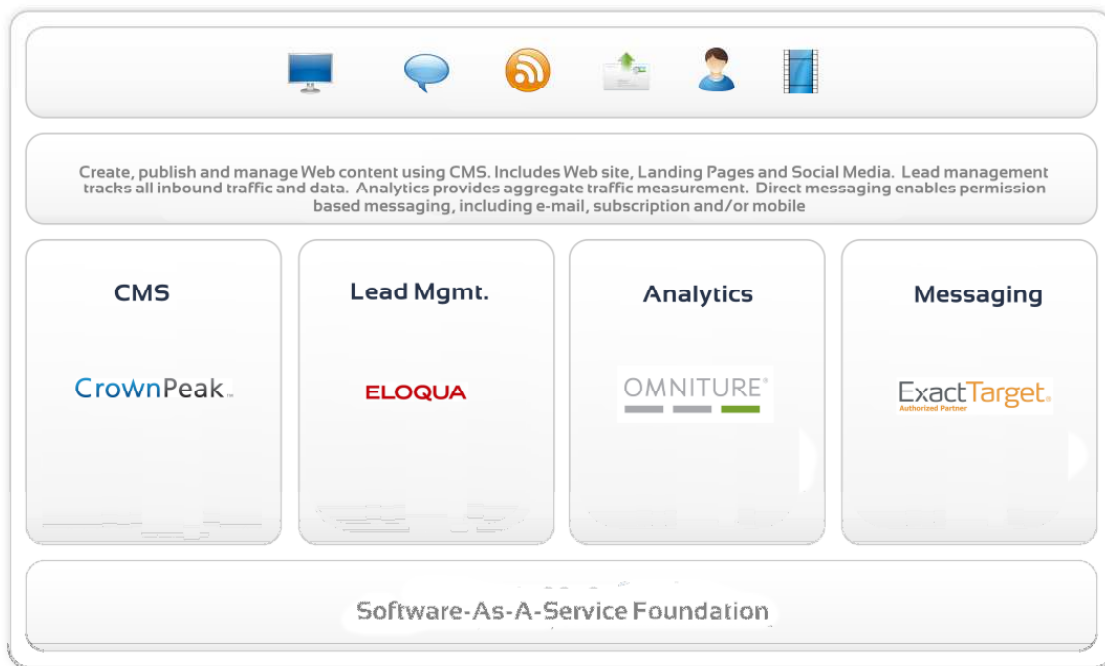


**Mid-Level Solution (e.g. the “Middle of The Bell Curve” solution)**

**Who’s it right for:** Mid-sized organizations to divisions or larger organizations with specific “projects”. These solutions can start in the hundreds to low-thousands of dollars per month – but will be robust enough for larger organizations and can scale accordingly.

**Why It Works:** Many of these solutions are “enterprise-class” and will offer the type of functionality that is needed. Additionally, most of these types of solutions offer some level of an API to be able to seamlessly integrate functionality to work between them.

**Why It Doesn’t Work:** For the lower end of this “mid-market” solution, combining all of these solutions will be cost-prohibitive – and so therefore, mid-level adaptive marketers will find themselves dipping into the “low level” bucket for one or more functions. On the high end of the market, some of these solutions may not scale to the level that a global brand may need.

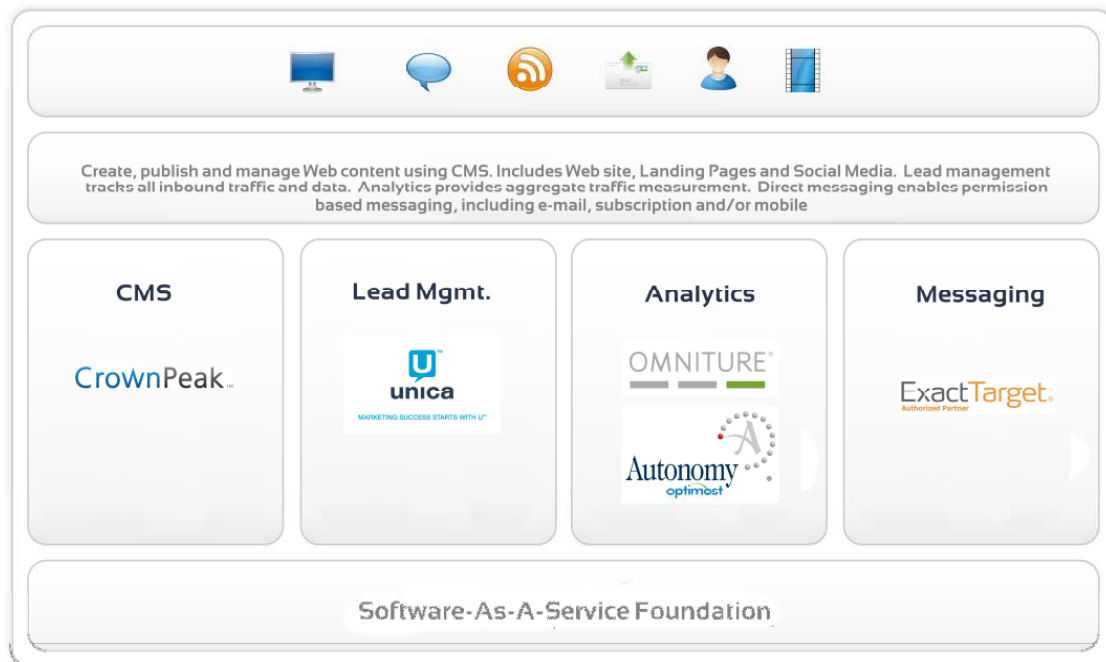


### High End Solution (e.g. the “Most Of You Don’t Need This” solution)

**Who’s it right for:** Large organizations, global companies with multiple brands that need to be centralized in an enterprise way. Organizations that have a high number of brand and online marketers.

**Why It Works:** These solutions are fully rounded and will provide any level of the functionality needed to make the Adaptive Marketing platform work.

**Why It Doesn’t Work:** This can be an extraordinarily complex and expensive set of tools – and is really only for organizations that need to scale to an enterprise level.



## Putting It Together – New Capabilities of Digital Marketers

As we stated in the beginning of this paper, there are three fundamental components of online marketing; Strategy, Platform and Insight. This technology platform is a promise; a potential to leverage web content, measure its success and optimize it to facilitate a compelling, engaging conversation with prospects – and compels them to become customers.

But a platform, just like any other tool, is just a more efficient way of doing something. A web content management tool is just a simpler and more efficient way of managing content. Analytics and conversion metrics are just a more meaningful way of aggregating traffic. And optimization tools – are just more efficient ways to refine your message based on those analytics.

The key to fueling the platform is insight. Insight is more than just data. It's the interpretation and application of analytics into a process that continually feeds upon itself – transforming the online marketer over time into a finely sharpened success generating machine.

This insight comes with both analysis of the measurable data – and with the application of creative content creation in order to realize the promise of a technology platform. It is the fuel for the online marketing engine.

Historically, this insight has come from a number of sources – whether it is the internal marketing team, an outsourced agency – or even a team providing the technology platform. The challenge with this now is that given the challenge of the marketer – and the overwhelming number of data they must parse, it is increasingly difficult for marketers to avoid isolating data and miss it's true meaning.

In the third segment of this chapter, we will explore this insight and how smart digital marketers are employing a “network” of partnerships and collaborations among their employees, agencies and technology companies to provide for more value and depth in the meaning of analytics.

In *HD Marketing 2010: Sharpening the Conversation* – a study produced by Booz Allen Hamilton and the Interactive Advertising Bureau pointed out – “the convergence of technology and advertising is changing the landscape.” In this changing landscape, the marketer must adapt and change and know which capabilities to keep in-house and which is better managed by external partners.

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<sup>i</sup> Goodbye Google: <http://stopdesign.com/archive/2009/03/20/goodbye-google.html>

<sup>ii</sup> “Maximise Business Results Online: How Web Content Management Technology Is Transforming DigitalMarketing – Aberdeen Group, March 2009