



# The Martech Spine: Our Methodology

Why you  
should move  
away from the  
Martech Stack



# THE CONCEPT OF THE 'STACK'

## Where did the concept of the 'Tech Stack' develop?

According to *Mixpanel*, a technology stack, also called a solutions stack or data ecosystem, is a list of all the technology services used to build and run one single application. The social site Facebook, for example, is composed of a combination of coding frameworks and languages including JavaScript, HTML, CSS, PHP, and ReactJS. This is Facebook's 'tech stack.'

## Have we applied it to the Martech stack in the same way?

In a word, No. Unfortunately, the term is sometimes applied to both Sales and Marketing capabilities e.g the martech stack and the sales stack. However, where it has lost its meaning, is that a tech stack is a collection of specialist tools that make up a coherent, easy to use application. That is the big difference, coherent.

The marketing tech stack is a complete 180 on this, in that it is a collection of applications that make up an incoherent marketing capability. A marketing minestrone where the vision and reality are even further apart than when the dream of Marketing 1:1 and mass-personalisation was first brought to our psyche by Messrs Peppers and Rogers.

## What is the market saying?

According to our own research, 68.5% of marketers have a stack that isn't fully connected or integrated. This contrasts starkly with the 31.5% of marketers that are happy and confident with a fully integrated tech stack. To go one step further, 25% of marketers have their CMS, MA or MC platform, and CRM operating in clear siloes.

The reality is that Clients, VCs, agencies; everyone has been woo'ed by the opportunity and the proliferation of new technologies – just look at the chiefmartech blog and THAT infamous slide. Fabulous and much referred to content, but, and it is a huge BUT, is this really a sensible way to consider your Martech investment?

## Keep it simple, stupid.

We don't think keeping it simple is stupid, in fact we think it is super smart when it comes to Martech.

I have personally vowed to never use that slide in a PowerPoint – it's a mess and it is not helpful. Yet it is the single slide that is almost ubiquitous in any martech presentation. Surely this is just a bibliography, it most definitely isn't a platform or an approach to build tech strategy on.

The author of chiefmartech, who started this out as an interesting hobby, early, has now seen this blog evolve into an adjacent Martech conference program promoting stacks and complexity. The blogger has since joined Hubspot as VP of Ecosystems? The emphasis there will no doubt be on complimentary point solutions, stacks and yet more complexity. This might be useful for Hubspot's agenda but is this useful for the CMO trying to figure out what to do.

To quote Richard Branson, *'any fool can make things complicated, the trick is to make things as simple as possible'*.

We think  
Simplicity is key,  
not complexity,  
and certainly  
not Stacks.

# THE CONCEPT OF THE 'STACK'

## So, Clients have had enough, surely?

We're not sure – while Marketers are getting frustrated with the number of technologies needed, the appetite for acquiring yet more technology shows no signs of letting up.

According to Gartner in 2020, more will be spent on marketing technology than on marketing resources. That is an incredible inflexion point.

SaaS is both a blessing and a curse. It is easily bought, configured and paid for out of the Marketing Opex Budget. But it does seem that for many Marketing functions their enthusiasm to acquire new technology, to believe the vendors hype, has led to tensions between marketing and IT and a growing frustration with vendors who promise everything in selling in but then leave the Customer Success to pick up the pieces. In fact, the average number of platforms in an organisations martech stack is 16, and as shown above, nearly 70% of marketers don't see these technologies as integrated or well utilised.

*"A marketing functions ability to acquire SaaS is exceeded only by their inability to integrate them into the business and optimise their investment in them"*

## Migration is in season, and every season too

What we do see in the market is a constant shift in needs; in fact, according to our research, 35% of all marketing functions are looking to change their MA platforms this year. For various reasons too, for example simplification, a technology vendor decision, or more functionality. Whatever the reason, and some of the rationale appears quite contradictory, the market is in a constant state of flux.

## Once bitten, twice shy

What, however does change, is that the second time around the amount allocated to services and support, training, and the wider understanding or integration with other technologies is typically far higher. In most cases this is good news. This is because marketers tend to associate SaaS with simplicity and a faster time to value, and it is not in the vendors interests to call out how hard and slow change can be, however necessary. They too want the lions' share of the revenue and don't want to see it lost to the services providers, even if it is the right thing for the customer.

Second time around marketers are a little smarter with the hype and focus instead on reality.

So, where should you start?

The average number of platforms in an organisations martech stack is 16 and nearly 70% of marketers don't see these technologies as integrated or well utilised.



# TOP TIPS TO AVOID A TECH STACK OVERLOAD

## 💡 DON'T START WITH THE TECHNOLOGY. EVER.

This is about better, smarter marketing, or marketing with a distinct advantage, and yes tech plays a part in that, but it shouldn't be the part or the reason.

## 💡 START WITH THE VISION AND 3 OR 4 KEY BUSINESS PRIORITIES.

We think there are at least 12 compelling business reasons for investing in Martech – it might be for better and smarter lead gen, it might be for a better CX, or compliance. Be really clear on your three or four reasons and focus on them in every Martech discussion. This sounds obvious, but it is amazing how quickly technology features can take you off piste.

## 💡 THIS IS 'AS IS' TO AND 'TO BE'

Again this is more 'businessy', but technology implementation is often about change and change management. We are big fans of Kotter and his book *Leading Change*. In here Kotter talks a lot about the key ordered stages of change management and also locking down the 'as is' and the 'to be'. We think this is a really useful exercise to complete.

## 💡 PERHAPS EVEN BENCHMARK YOURSELF TO YOUR PEERS.

If the language in review meetings is focussed on vanity metrics such as click-throughs and open rates, or leads generated through X campaign then that is necessary but insufficient at the business end of marketing. It is not going to get the C-suite motivated to stop to understand the role and importance or potential of marketing.

Increasingly the enlightened CMO is [benchmarking performance](#) not just against industry peers but against the best in the industry. If you would like to learn more about this you can download our guide on the best reporting and dashboarding processes [here](#).

## 💡 RECOGNISE THAT SOME TECHNOLOGIES ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN OTHERS

This is a really big issue, probably the biggest. There are too many features masquerading as products and too many products masquerading as platforms. Reducing the number of apps and platforms to a few key ones is ideal. Focusing on the information architecture is as important as the application architecture.

## 💡 DITCH THE STACK AND FOCUS ON THE SPINE™

The marketing stack as a coherent set of technologies for most companies is a fallacy. So, to help with clarity of thinking, we think and prefer to use the 'Martech Spine™' rather than the 'Martech Stack'. In fact, we think there are 4-6 core technologies, and the enlightened CMO should focus on them and ensure they are integrated, with the information management and flow mapped to support the organisations, not the other way round.



*Your job as a CMO is to connect the important technologies that make up the Spine so that reporting first click to end customer can be tracked for better insight and forward thinking predictability.*

*Your data has to flow across these apps, from first touch to customer.*

# THE 6 CORE TECHNOLOGIES OF ANY MARTECH SPINE

## 1 STRATEGIC CONTENT MANAGEMENT PLATFORM

A content management platform, such as Percolate, Contently and NewsCred, are ideal for the enterprise and the mid-market CMO who wants to keep a handle on resources, content curation and budgeting. A content management platform such as this within the Martech space allows content to then be published down into the last mile, be that on the web, in an MA or MC platform, or even a Sales Enablement platform.

These platforms typically incorporate budgeting technology and reporting tools, thereby allowing the CMO to see and control the budgeting and resources planning by time. i.e. the 'money, minutes and manpower'.

It is not to be confused with an Adtech CMP, sometimes referred to as programmatic marketing, which is ideal for the B2C that wants to drive quantifiable traffic to the company website and promotions.

A smaller organisation or one with a small product line or relatively few segments and markets probably doesn't need a Strategic Content Marketing Platform. For anyone in an enterprise or multi-product, multi-market/segment it is probably essential if comparison, efficiencies and control are top of your to do lists.

## 2 CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (CMS)

The content management system is the platform used to manage the creation and modification of digital content. CMS's are typically used for enterprise content management (ECM) and web content management (WCM). It is best to avoid getting locked into an obscure CMS developed by an agency.

In the enterprise space, platforms such as Coremetrics, Sitecore, Adobe Experience Manager and Episerver are popular. As are many opensource platforms such as Wordpress, especially amongst the SMB's.

The point of 'handshake' between a CMS and a MA/MC is on the landing pages/web forms.

## 3 MARKETING AUTOMATION OR MARKETING CLOUD PLATFORM

Increasingly clients are moving away from standalone email sending vehicles and investing in Marketing Automation (MA) or Marketing Cloud (MC) platforms. MA platforms are typically more appealing for B2B organisations where nurturing has a higher currency. MC platforms appeal to B2C and are typically more transactional by nature and can often deal with 'sends' in the millions and so there is an economic bias toward volume.

In both cases they are typically 'open', with a robust API to enable the free movement of data across applications, moving prospect data into the CRM.



# THE 6 CORE TECHNOLOGIES OF ANY MARTECH SPINE

## 4 SALES ENABLEMENT PLATFORM

Sales Enablement provides the ability for marketing to deliver the right content into the hands of Sales, making them more efficient, more on-message, and more relevant to the interests of the C-suite. Sales Enablement drives alignment, productivity and focus in ways that ABM barely touches, and with platforms such as Seismic leading the way in this space, and with 19.9% compound growth through to 2024, this is an essential part of any Martech Spine™.

## 5 CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT (CRM)

CRM was the first Martech app.

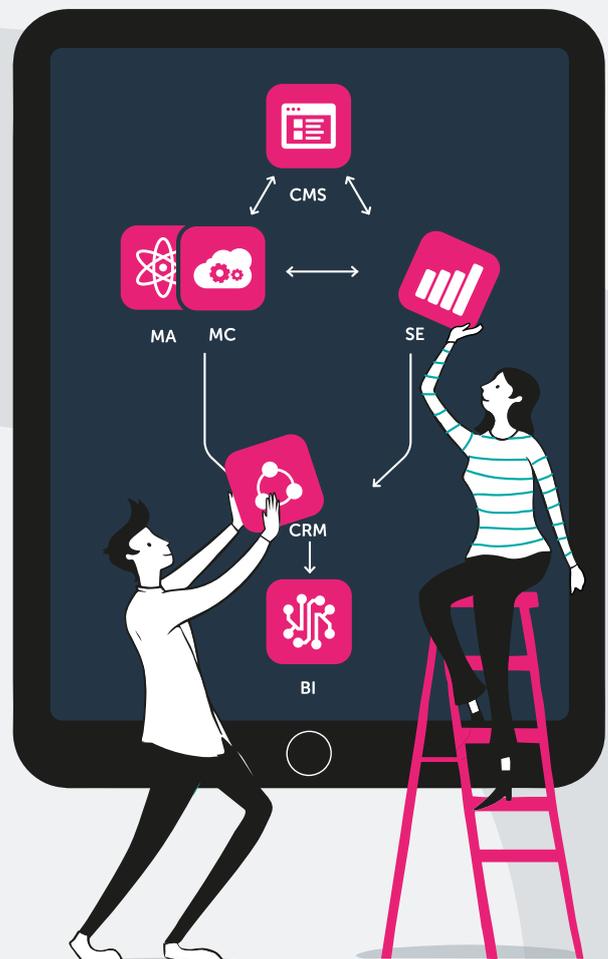
The Customer relationship Manager was often the only Database in the company. The real power of a CRM is the ability to forecast and predict future revenue outlook. The two main cloud plays are Microsoft Dynamics and SFDC. SFDC is a true platform play with capabilities throughout the Spine. Microsoft and Adobe have an alternative Spine play.

## 6 BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE PLATFORM (BI)

Business Intelligence is a platform for dashboard reporting and insight on any device. We think that a project where the outcome from the BI platform is shared at the very start of the project then the chances of a successful outcome is greatly enhanced.

Once the Spine is in place where next.

Platforms such as Seismic leading the way in this space, and with **19.9%** compound growth through to **2024**, this is an essential part of any Martech Spine™



# THE 6 CORE TECHNOLOGIES OF ANY MARTECH SPINE

## The Arterial Apps

Once the Spine is in place look at the next gen of apps that will enrich your business. We call these Arterial Technologies because, while they are important to the business, their impact is muted if the Spine is not in place. If the Spine is there then they are far more impactful.

### These categories might include:

1. Event apps like Eventbrite, Akkroo (now Integrate).
2. Video-conferencing like Teams, On24, BrightTALK.
3. CX tools like Drift; Predictive/AI technologies like Lattice Engines, Salesforce Einstein and Adobe Sensei.
4. Intent data like Bombora or Mintigo (now Anaplan).
5. Data enrichment platforms like ZoomInfo, D&B, DiscoveryOrg.
6. The biggest mistake any organisation can make is to list out loads of categories of Apps, but then fail to invest in the integration.

In reality it is the data architecture that is more important than the Application architecture.

### IN SUMMARY

- Forget the stack, it is incoherent, first establish the spine before thinking about secondary platforms.
- Focus as much on the information architecture and flow as on the applications themselves.
- When you do focus on the Spine, there are just 6 (or 4 if you are not enterprise) technologies you need to properly integrate and embed in your company. All before you look at the next second generation tools that sit behind the Spine.
- The second generation of Arterial apps might be more nuanced to your type of business or if you're operating under an adverse environment.
- Your job as a CMO is to connect the important technologies that make up the spine so that reporting click to customer can be tracked for better insight and forward thinking predictability.

So, there you have it, the top 4-6 technologies you should be considering as essential to your Martech Spine.

## ABOUT CLEVERTOUCH

Clevertouch Marketing is Europe's leading **martech software and services provider**, the B2B Marketing martech consulting partner of the year, an accredited 3-star Best Company for extraordinary levels of employee engagement, and a **Sunday Times' Top 100 Companies to Work For**.

Created by marketers with martech in mind, Clevertouch's purpose is to help clients make sense of their martech investment and prove the ROI. Clevertouch pioneered the concept of "the Martech Spine™", primarily based around Marketing Automation and Marketing Cloud platforms.

The only Marketo Platinum Partner domiciled in Europe, a leading Salesforce consultancy and the first strategic partner of both Seismic and Percolate in EMEA, Clevertouch has supported over 500 blue chip and ambitious clients on their martech journey, including **PayPal, Fujitsu, UK Cloud, and Shell**.

**clevertouch**  
love martech

For more information

Get in touch today