

# WHAT THE HELL IS A Marketing Cloud, ANYWAY?

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Based on interviews with senior client-side marketers and a survey of almost 200 digital professionals, this report explores the marketing cloud ecosystem, the pros and cons of an integrated suite of marketing tools from a single vendor, and key suite components.

# About ClickZ Intelligence

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# About this report

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## What you'll learn

In recent years, cloud-based software has been hailed as the ultimate business solution for a range of sectors, but to what extent is it a panacea for digital marketers?

In this report, we seek to separate the fact from the fiction about the so-called marketing cloud, and present the findings of a survey of almost 200 marketing professionals about the extent to which they are harnessing this technology for their businesses.

You've probably read and heard from many marketing cloud vendors in recent years, as they seek to promote their services and cross-sell their different tools. The report is focused on the client-side view, with insights from nine high-profile marketers across a range of industries aimed at giving a balanced view of the marketing cloud technology ecosystem and the business benefits conferred by this technology.

The report contains the following sections:

- An introduction to the term 'Marketing Cloud', including its components and capabilities.
- A look at the main marketing cloud providers and what they do, including data on marketers' use of cloud vendors.
- The impact - positive and negative - of marketing cloud technology on marketing activities and business performance.
- Predictions on what's next for the marketing cloud, and what might make it better, with insights from senior marketers at brands including Aviva, Flight Centre and Westfield.

## Who should read this report?

Marketing professionals, heads of communications and digital leaders developing a marketing cloud strategy for their organisations.

## List of contributors

- Fergus Boyd, VP Digital and IT, Yotel
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# Executive summary

This report seeks to explore what marketers understand by 'marketing cloud' technology, with an overview of the key vendors operating in this space and the marketing-related tools they offer. Based on a survey of almost 200 digital professionals and interviews with senior executives working for a number of leading brands, this research also looks at the reasons driving uptake of marketing cloud solutions and the most critical components within an integrated suite of marketing tools.

The research found there is some scepticism in the market about the concept of marketing cloud technology which our survey defined as '*an integrated suite of marketing tools which are available to marketers as web-based services offered by a software vendor*'. However, the majority of responding organisations (52%) claimed to be using marketing cloud technology, and a further 27% of companies said they were considering this. The research found that responding organisations are generally very positive about the marketing cloud, with our ClickZ Intelligence survey resulting in the following findings:

- 82% of responding organisations say that marketing cloud technology has had a positive impact on their organisation's marketing. The overwhelming majority of respondents (84%) also agreed that an integrated suite of marketing tools has a positive effect on customer experience compared to only 5% who disagree. Similarly, 88% agreed that an integrated suite of marketing tools has a positive effect on business performance compared to only 3% who disagree.
- The reasons most commonly cited for using marketing cloud software are '*reduced complexity*' (44%), a '*single data source*' (40%), '*better customer experience*' (38%), a '*unified user interface*' (36%), '*better visibility of return on investment*' (32%) and '*improved ROI*' (30%).

Despite the mainly positive views on marketing cloud technology, there is still some scepticism about the concept of a marketing cloud and the value that integrated tools from a single vendor can bring.

- 40% of respondents disagreed that vendors are transparent about the pros and cons of the marketing cloud, versus only 29% who agreed they were transparent. Asked about the principal disadvantage of a marketing cloud, 36% said that the vendor may not be 'best of breed' in all areas, while 30% thought that 'over-reliance on one vendor' was the biggest problem. A further 20% were most concerned about perceived 'increased cost'.

In a world where marketing departments have historically acquired marketing technologies in a fix-one-challenge-at-a time fashion rather than all at once, marketers have been pragmatic about using different marketing technology vendors where required, with open APIs giving them the ability to integrate different best-of-breed suppliers. However, there is also a growing understanding that using a single vendor is more efficient and that cloud-powered marketing optimisation through a single platform will increasingly hold the key to business success.

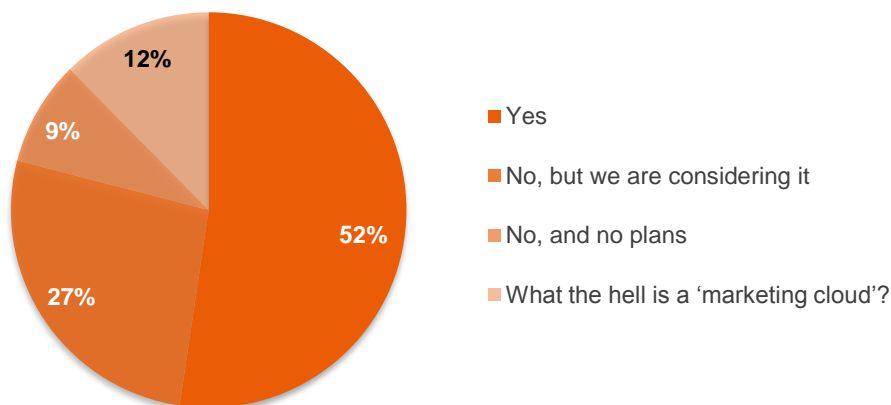
- Just under two-thirds of respondents (64%) said that they are happy to use different vendors for different types of marketing technology, though a greater proportion (70%) also agreed that an integrated suite of marketing tools provided by one vendor is an advantage.

# Introduction

'Marketing cloud' is becoming a near-ubiquitous term for any company proffering a suite of technologies or software that purport to solve any number of marketing's stickiest problems. From data gathering and crunching to outgoing communications, social listening and beyond to the near future of chatbots and artificial intelligence, increasingly it would seem that the marketing cloud has a tool for that. According to Myf Ryan, Chief Marketing Officer at Westfield UK and Europe: *"Consumers are channel-agnostic. They will buy and search through anything. What the cloud allows us to do is deliver marketing messages and communications in that channel-agnostic way."*

But do marketers really understand what providers mean by the term 'marketing cloud'? And is one cloud much like another? This research looks at the use of marketing cloud technology, with our survey of almost 200 digital professionals finding that more than half (52%) use some kind of cloud service (figure 1). Coupled with the fact that a further 27% of responding organisations are considering adoption, this majority percentage suggests not only that the marketing cloud is a widely recognised and implemented type of software-as-a-service, but also that the sector is set to exhibit healthy growth in the near future.

**Figure 1:**  
Does your organisation use marketing cloud technology?



Interestingly, 12% wondered 'what the hell is a marketing cloud?', demonstrating that there is still some resistance to the term or at least confusion about what this actually means. This sentiment was borne out by our qualitative analysis, which included a series of interviews with senior client-side executives. Many of those we spoke to were initially sceptical that they in fact used software that could be termed 'marketing cloud'. However, when they ran through their vendors and the tasks those vendors' products accomplished, it was discovered that they did in fact use what can be described as marketing cloud technology.

This report looks at what a marketing cloud actually is, what it can – and can't – do and what marketers are really looking for. It also explores what information marketers and marketing cloud providers need to share to identify how best to meet strategic needs.

# What the hell is a marketing cloud?

Technology is a means to an end. It is the tool companies use to maximise their ability to deliver great customer experience. According to the recent ClickZ Intelligence report, *Operationalising Customer Experience*, any strategy should comprise four key elements:

1. Business strategy: overall competitive strategy, PEST/SWOT, value chain, culture and structure.
2. Brand strategy: vision, mission, essence and overall value proposition.
3. Customer experience (CX) strategy: customer insights/segmentation, service mapping/design versus CX 'pillars', customer journey models/design, people and processes/workflows.
4. CRM strategy: communications programs (marketing, sales and service) across all touchpoints/channels across all customer life stages that supports the target approach in each of the six pillars of CX<sup>1</sup>.

It is points three and four – CX and CRM strategy – that are best served by Marketing Cloud technologies. These are supported by a range of marketing technologies, or 'martech' that are broadly covered by the following capabilities:

- Data management
- Tag management
- Campaign management/marketing automation
- Content
- Community management
- Personalisation
- BI/Reporting
- Analytics
- Channel:
  - Email
  - Web/ecommerce
  - Social
  - Mobile
  - Search marketing (generally paid search)

Issues in getting the martech elements to integrate smoothly with CRM technologies have been where brands' ability to deliver optimal customer experience has fallen down in the past. Marketing cloud providers suggest that their product suites are designed to create a more harmonious marriage between the CX and CRM technologies.

For the purposes of this research, we have identified the major providers of cloud technologies as:

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<sup>1</sup> The six pillars of customer experience excellence: Personalisation, Integrity, Expectations, Resolution, Time and Effort, Empathy

- Adobe
- Oracle
- Salesforce
- Marketo
- IBM
- Microsoft

We examined each of these providers' website product pages to see how closely their offerings matched the ideal CX/CRM technology provision listed above. *Table 1* below is a representative table of each brand's respective 'cloud' offerings:

**Table 1: Key Marketing Cloud Components as Advertised by Vendors**

Oracle Marketing Cloud <sup>2</sup>	Adobe Marketing Cloud <sup>3</sup>	Marketo <sup>4</sup>	IBM Marketing Cloud <sup>5</sup>	Salesforce Marketing Cloud <sup>6</sup>	Microsoft Dynamics CRM <sup>7</sup>
Marketing Automation	Analytics	Marketing Automation	Campaign Automation	Email Studio	Sales
Cross-Channel Orchestration	Audience Manager	Account-Based Marketing	Digital Marketing	Mobile Studio	Service
Content Marketing	Campaign (cross-platform management & personalisation)	Email	Lead Management	Social Studio	Marketing
Social Marketing	Experience Manager	Mobile	Journey Design	Web Studio	Social
Data Management	Media Optimizer	Social	Email Marketing	Advertising Studio	Enterprise resource planning
Platform Testing and Optimisation	Primetime (TV Platform)	LaunchPoint <sup>8</sup>	Mobile Marketing		Small and midsize business
	Social		IBM Universal Behavior Exchange (connecting data)		<b>Adxstudio Inc:</b>
	Target (Personalisation)		Customer Experience Analytics		Web Portals
					Online Engagement Solutions
					Application Lifecycle Management Solutions

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.oracle.com/marketingcloud/products.html>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.adobe.com/uk/marketing-cloud.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://uk.marketo.com/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ibm.com/marketplace/cloud/digital-marketing-and-lead-management/uk/en-uk>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.salesforce.com/uk/marketing-cloud/overview/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/dynamics/crm.aspx>

<sup>8</sup> A partnership network of 'marketing as a service' providers

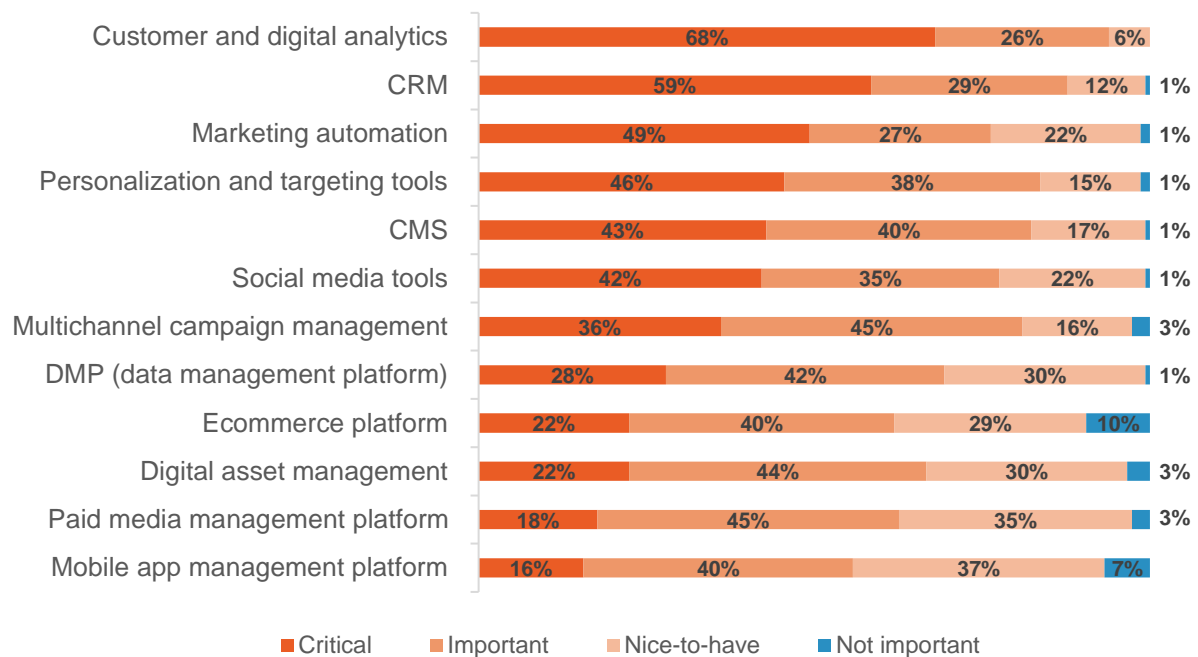


A not insignificant number of the executives interviewed for this report began their discussions with us seeking clarification of the definition of a marketing cloud. Some executives who declined to be interviewed stated that they didn't even know what one was or whether they had it. Further research revealed their organisations, without exception, used marketing cloud technology in some respect.

For our ClickZ Intelligence survey, carried out in September 2016, we defined a marketing cloud as 'an integrated suite of marketing tools which are available to marketers as web-based services'. Within that suite, a number of tools were considered by respondents to be critical, including CRM (59%), marketing automation (49%) and personalisation/targeting tools (46%).

However, the largest percentage (68%) felt that customer and digital analytics were the most critical core product within a cloud service (figure 2), a finding which is consistent with ClickZ's view that top-notch customer and digital analytics – in addition to marketing automation and CMS capabilities – are the bedrock of the best marketing cloud offerings in the market.

**Figure 2:**  
**What do you regard as the most important elements of technology for a marketing cloud or integrated suite of marketing tools?**



A significant minority (between 43% and 28%) felt that social media, multichannel campaign management, a data management platform (DMP) and a CMS were also critical cloud components.

Taking these factors down a level from critical to important shows even more executives valuing these as components of a marketing cloud service. Multichannel campaign management and paid media management platforms both scored as 'important' with 45% of executives surveyed. Digital asset management (44%), a DMP (42%), ecommerce (40%) and mobile apps (40%) were also highest in the next-level tier of importance.

Digital asset management is particularly important for Fergus Boyd, VP of Digital and IT at hotel chain Yotel. Having to oversee the individual marketing efforts of various properties both in Europe and the US,

he needed a system that would allow digitally unskilled local managers a degree of autonomy when it came to their marketing efforts:

*“A lot of brand awareness work is done from HQ but local hotels can create their own campaigns based on templates. They can access customers who have particular opt-ins. These email campaigns are part of a triggered workflow and we can measure what’s going on. We can understand when to send out very targeted survey campaigns and quickly see the open rates in an hour, unlike seeing them in a week with an external service provider.”*

This suggests that once marketers have navigated the data nightmare, their next priority is making it actionable. The biggest challenge they face in doing this is tying all the channel elements together and getting the best distribution of marketing messages.

It is instructive that the largest number of respondents stating an element was ‘nice to have’ (more than a third, 37%) was in the mobile app management platform arena. There is no shortage of insight that suggests mobile has become the most important battlefield for customer attention, with its pivotal role in the customer journey and well-documented ability to act as the ‘glue’ between online and offline.

So why would a comparatively large number of respondents feel mobile app management is not a critical cloud element? Returning above to the ‘what is a marketing cloud?’ analysis above may provide some of the answer. Of our list, only three out of the seven suppliers mention mobile as a specific product area. Every provider undoubtedly addresses mobile needs – no brand can operate successfully in this day and age without using the channel – but only three are overt about it.

To give both marketers and vendors the benefit of the doubt, it may be that mobile excellence is seen as something which permeates all marketing disciplines and related software, without needing to exist as a standalone channel or indeed silo.

#### What the brands say

‘Marketing Cloud has become a very generic term. It’s an advertising expression and almost meaningless now. It used to be about automation and then the companies kept adding pieces to it.’  
*Fergus Boyd, VP Digital and IT, Yotel*

‘We track the life of a customer from prospect to partnership, for the life of the partnership and beyond. If we lose a client we still hold all that information. We know who they went to and hopefully, we can bring them back. Personalisation is also important, keeping key marketing messages relevant through behavioural analytics.’  
*Sue Robinson, Corporate Marketing Manager, Flight Centre*

# Who is leading the cloud race – and why?

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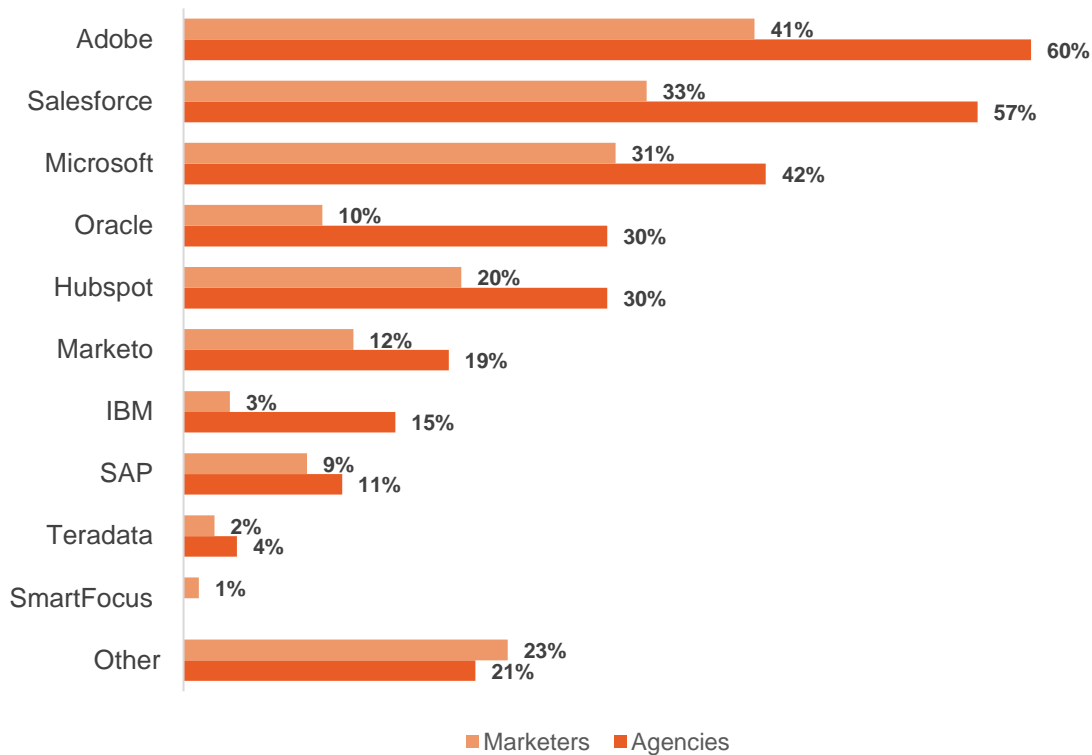
*Figure 3* below shows the use of different marketing technology vendors, with some very familiar brands shown to have the most traction in the market.

At the head of the pack is Adobe, with 41% of respondents stating that they use its products, eight percentage points ahead of Salesforce in second place. Adobe's success in this space dates back to the acquisition of Omniture in 2009, when its strategy started to embrace the world of marketing as well as the creative software for which it was historically best known.

Key Adobe acquisitions since then include Day Software (CMS) in 2010 and Neolane (email marketing and marketing automation) in 2013, the subsequent integrations of which have helped to define the essential building blocks of a best-in-class marketing cloud.

Salesforce's footprint in the marketing cloud space also owes much to its acquisitions of other technology companies, most notably ExactTarget in 2013, an email and marketing automation provider which gave it some impetus in the business-to-consumer space.

**Figure 3:**  
**Does your organization (or do your clients) use any of the following vendors for marketing activities?**



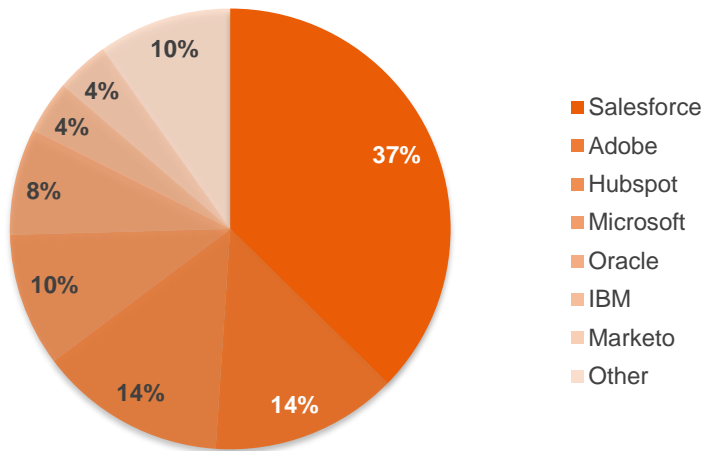
The major marketing cloud providers have evolved to a point where many offer a similar suite of products covering the main marketing needs outlined in *Table 1* above. However, executives who have started out with one provider have had no qualms in integrating another should they prefer an alternative approach. This is made possible because of the relatively open architecture and application programming interfaces (APIs) that cloud vendors by necessity provide.

Microsoft also figures prominently in *Figure 3*, with a third of respondents using its tools for marketing. With its history as a general provider of office software among a myriad of other products, Microsoft’s brand could well be skewed towards the SME market and indeed, its product offering includes a package aimed specifically at this segment.

Agency-based executives’ responses followed a similar pattern with Adobe and Salesforce dominating the vendor landscape and Microsoft taking third place.

Of those executives surveyed who answered that their organisation was already using a marketing cloud provider, Salesforce was mentioned most frequently (37%) with the other major players registering less than half as many customers.

**Figure 4:**  
Which marketing cloud vendor do you use principally?



Salesforce’s Marketing Cloud began life much more on the operational front, allowing sales teams to manage leads and develop sales analytics. Its acquisition of ExactTarget has also brought it a larger cohort from the marketing fraternity.

Marketers have often complained that investment is prioritised in more operational departments where, before the extensive digital analytics enjoyed today, the clearest use case and return on investment could be demonstrated.

It is notable that the two next most popular brands, Adobe and Hubspot, are also closely associated with brands whose products are more easily demonstrable or physical, i.e. the development of creative assets (Adobe) and content creation (Hubspot).

#### What the brands say

‘It all came from email and SMS. Adobe started focusing on customer experience and graphics while Oracle and Salesforce were more on the functional side.’

*Fergus Boyd, VP Digital and IT, Yotel*

‘We plug Marketo into Salesforce to integrate our email, lead nurturing and automation. The good thing about clouds is that they’re being designed with this plug in ability. Adobe might have a strength in creative from their DNA that Salesforce doesn’t. We rely on Marketo for deployment and analytics.’

*Sue Robinson, Corporate Marketing Manager, Flight Centre*

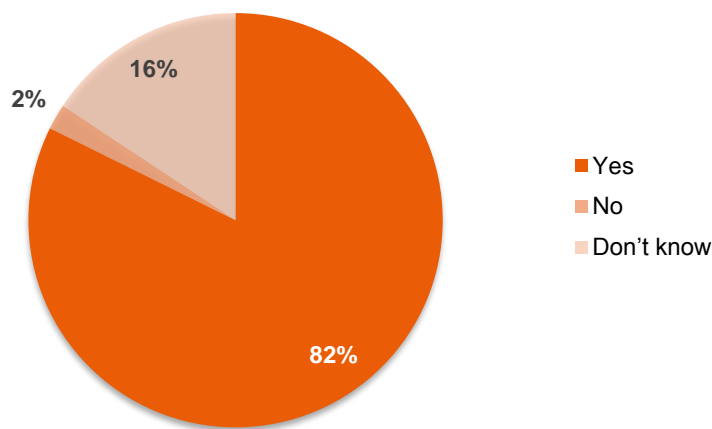
‘The big names are too big for what I need. In this market I’m asking myself, do I go with IBM or do I go lower. I do find they tend to be a hodgepodge of services all chucked together that are quite confusing to navigate. We all have different requirements.’

*Will Lockie, Programme Head, Multichannel, Evans Cycles*

# A positive impact

There is near universal agreement that adopting a marketing cloud technology to some degree has had a positive impact on organisations' marketing with a scant 2% stating otherwise (*figure 5*).

**Figure 5:**  
Has your adoption of marketing cloud technology had a positive impact on your organisation's marketing?



The reasons for using a cloud (*figure 6*) are varied but the most commonly cited are the fact that integrated cloud technologies reduce complexity (44%), either in terms of choice in a crowded vendor marketplace or in implementation, and provide a unified user interface (36%). More and more staff across different departments are expected to interact with technology, share information and create campaigns or reports off the back of this data.

## What the brands say

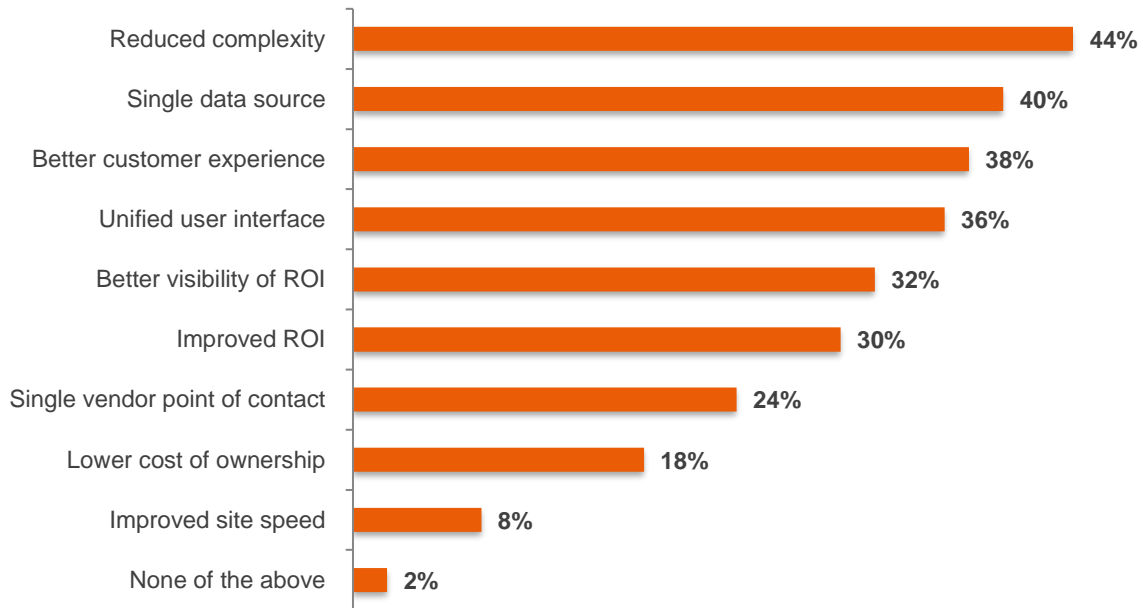
'The right use of cloud technologies can transform capabilities in the marketing team. These tools help you get activity out faster and it changes the nature of people's jobs. You spend a lot less time on grunt work so you can get on and make the most of your skill set.'

*Pete Markey, Brand Communications & Marketing Director, Aviva*

'We went with ExactTarget and Salesforce because we wanted to bring email and automation skills in house. It's not one of our great capabilities. We want to drive more satisfaction and revenue through email and had been using a totally managed service which was OK but the flexibility and responsiveness weren't there.'

*Fergus Boyd, VP Digital and IT, Yotel*

**Figure 6:**  
**What do you see as the main advantages of an integrated suite of marketing tools provided by one vendor?**



*Methodology note: respondents could check up to three options*

A single point of interaction that reduces duplication and is easily learned or understood by people in different functions is vital to maintaining momentum. As a result, the single data source also scored highly in the executive survey with 40% stating it was one of the main advantages of an integrated suite of marketing tools from one vendor. Many felt that the cloud service was directly influential in creating a better customer experience (38%).

Return on investment, either an increase or improved visibility of, was also an important concern but secondary to the integration potential noted above, gaining support from around a third of executives. In a bottom-line focused climate, being able to pinpoint strategies that return tangible profits is always going to be a highly sought-after skill.

#### What the brands say

'We are wholeheartedly embracing cloud technology and are excited about what it can deliver for us. At the moment we use a lot of unintegrated and slightly archaic systems to deliver marketing communications and analyse them. The future is to take advantage of the cloud to simplify our process, giving us more control over basic communications tasks as well as stripping out unnecessary cost.'

*Hamish Rickman, VP Marketing, Virgin Atlantic*

'The danger is that some marketing tasks are essentially a project management sausage machine. What a really good cloud does is get that process done for you. You don't need people for that, you need people for their brains.'

*Pete Markey, Brand Communications & Marketing Director, Aviva*

'If cloud providers could connect the dots between customer behaviours it would be useful, particularly in integrating the offline activity with online. I'd like to know who has downloaded white papers, what case studies they have read. Then I'd know when I was running an event, who I wanted to invite.'

*Sue Robinson, Corporate Marketing Manager, Flight Centre*

'Flexibility and speed of response are key. If something changes in the marketplace it can be on the market in an hour. In a previous world, we would have had to write a brief, cycle round, have a telephone conversation. A week later, something might happen. It does mean with cloud that the onus is on the internal teams to get moving but that's what I'm looking forward to – us owning our own destiny.'

*Sue Robinson, Corporate Marketing Manager, Flight Centre*

#### What you told us: success with marketing cloud technology

"Cycle times to execute activities dramatically dropped."

"Getting everyone managing email campaigns and social via a dedicated platform for each has made our analytics easier to make sense of in each area."

"Improved visibility to customer insights throughout their buying journey, leading to shorter buy cycles and increased conversions."

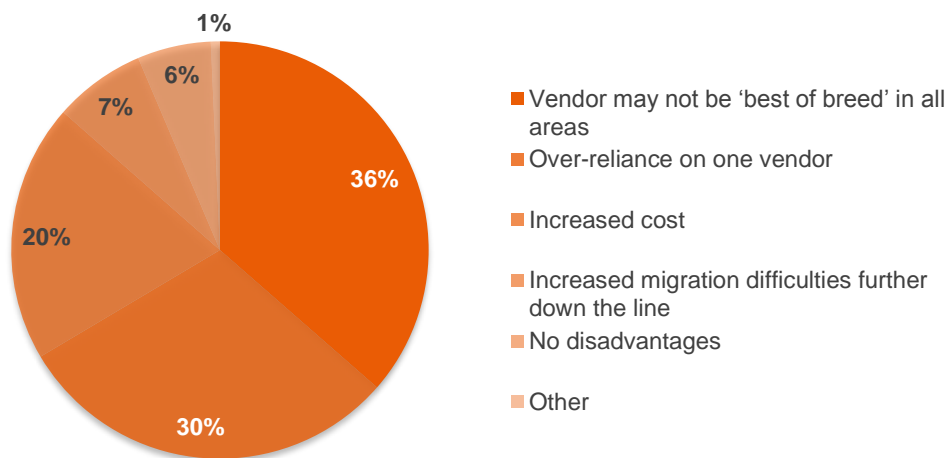
"[We get] better targeted prospect marketing."



# Must try harder

While aiming to solve many of the current challenges marketers face, marketing clouds aren't perfect. This is unsurprising. Few would expect a single, largely generic (though modifiable to a degree) technology solution to solve all of the very individual problems specific to each brand. As a result, executives felt its biggest failing was not to be best of breed in all areas (36%, *figure 7*).

**Figure 7:**  
What do you see as the principal disadvantage of a marketing cloud?



A further 30% felt nervous about relying on a single vendor for all marketing solutions while 20% stated that it had actually increased costs for them.

## What the brands say

'I don't think the cloud solves every problem and it's not a one-stop shop. However, I'm not so concerned about this because other tools integrate with Salesforce or can work alongside it. I don't really want to get caught up in thinking that technology will solve all of my marketing problems.'

*Sue Robinson, Corporate Marketing Manager, Flight Centre*

'It's still to be determined if cloud actually does decrease cost, particularly in distribution. People always assume digital is cheaper and faster but that's not always the case. It can ultimately become more expensive because of the number of different formats you end up using.'

*Myf Ryan, CMO, Westfield*

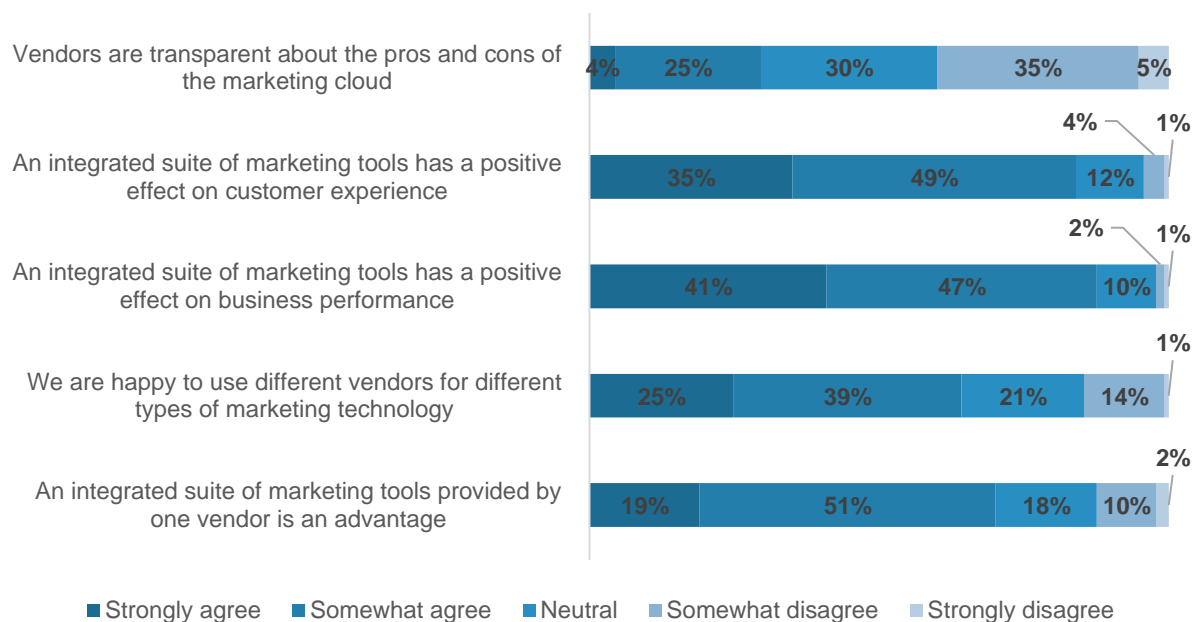
*Figure 8* shows the extent to which survey respondents agreed or disagreed with a number of statements relating to the marketing cloud. More than two-thirds of respondents (70%) agreed that using an integrated suite of marketing tools provided by one vendor was an advantage. Paradoxically, the majority (64%) of

respondents also agreed that they were content to use different vendors for different types of marketing technology.

Despite this pragmatic approach to using a mixture of vendors, ClickZ Intelligence believes that the drive for efficiency and optimal marketing performance will dictate that marketers will increasingly seek to consolidate their vendor relationships into a single vendor platform.

The research also found that many marketers believe that vendors were not as transparent as they could be, despite purporting to shed some light on the chaotic world of marketing technology. Over a third (35%) 'somewhat' disagreed that vendors were open about the pros and cons of the marketing cloud (figure 8), and a further 5% 'strongly' disagreed

**Figure 8:**  
Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:



Adding to the lukewarm reception, a further 30% claimed to be neutral on this account with only 25% somewhat agreeing that marketing cloud vendors were transparent and a negligible 4% strongly agreeing.

### What the brands say

'You have to make it simpler to understand what the offering is. We always end up asking what the customer is going to see. What will happen? Get rid of all the jargon.'  
*Will Lockie, Programme Head, Multichannel, Evans Cycles*

'Every time we choose a technology provider we start backwards from what we're trying to achieve. Some providers can have it all but not all of the individual components are as good as one another. We choose partners that are excellent in specific areas. It does make it heavier in terms of account management but when you know the platforms are giving you the absolute best functionality and capability on the market, it trumps having it all integrated.'  
*Raluca Efford, Head of Digital and Social Media Marketing, Direct Line*

'Part of the challenge is that no one is sitting around waiting for a solution. It's all about how marketing cloud suites are packaged. The ones that are successful are addressing a particular problem. Adobe's cloud elements are always benefits-led. Providers need to talk less about the cloud and more about the benefits.'

*Pete Markey, Brand Communications & Marketing Director, Aviva*

Cloud providers will need to address this with urgency as their proposition is built around transparency and eliminating complexity. The flip side of this coin is that using individual vendors is confusing and lacking in compatibility.

#### What the brands say

'I've got no doubt that a smarter use of data and automation and all that cool stuff will make for a better customer experience and it makes us smarter about where we spend money and what we get back. But it's just confusing. Rather than buying wholly into the cloud [*Evans Cycles uses Fredhopper, recently acquired by the SDL eCommerce Optimisation cloud*], why not focus on what we've already got and just use it more practically. Are we actually making the most of what we've already got?'

*Will Lockie, Programme Head, Multichannel, Evans Cycles*

*"It's not until you play with technology that you see what you can do and realise – ah, the other one doesn't have this. You may know what you want at a high level but it's not until you feel the different technologies that you realise how streamlined your process to decision making could be. There is a huge benefit from marketers experiencing different vendors across analytics, social, CRM and so forth so that in the near future, when one of them claims to have it all then we can assess that objectively."*

*Raluca Efford, Head of Digital and Social Media Marketing, Direct Line*

Despite the advantages of the cloud, executives rarely jump in with both feet and so the fact that the technology can't answer every marketing problem or limits choice is not one they feel particularly hamstrung by.

That said, the implication is that marketing cloud providers are better at cutting through the clutter in the sector than most. Respondents were largely in agreement that integrated tools had a positive effect on customer experience (84%) and business performance (88%).

#### What the brands say

'We don't want to run before we can walk but we have a realistic ambition. As we set out to embrace this new technology it will be about optimising in the early stages and making sure we're doing brilliant basics. In two or three years we can ramp up the complexity and use the full capability of technology that is out there. We've got to make sure we're realistic about what the cloud delivers.'

*Hamish Rickman, VP Marketing, Virgin Atlantic*

'We'll never be big enough to use all of any vendor's whole suite. In a previous role I've used the Adobe content management and social listening tool which made sense because of the volume of customers I was dealing with. We have bought a small part of the huge iceberg and a lot remains below the surface that we may not need.'

*Fergus Boyd, VP Digital and IT, Yotel*

### What you told us: challenges with marketing cloud technology

“We're currently looking for a marketing cloud but as a small ecommerce company with just one person managing the marketing, it is hard to find something that isn't too complicated to use but offers everything we need, particularly for someone with no previous experience of marketing cloud technology.”

# What is the future for the cloud?

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Observers suggest that even the cloud market is currently too fragmented for the market to sustain. As providers continue on their technology shopping spree, the individual clouds are becoming umbrella brands that cover an increasing number of specialist technologies and solutions. From Oracle's early acquisition of Bluekai to boost its DMP offering to SAP's acquisition of the Fredhopper sales tool, cloud providers are becoming the tech equivalent of the media behemoths such as WPP or Publicis. Eventually, it is suggested, the market will calm and consolidate down to only two or three brands.

The fact that the cloud providers are boosting their offerings through acquisition is seen as no bad thing by some of their clients. Sue Robinson from Flight Centre says:

*"My experience has only ever been with Salesforce because that's what we chose eight years ago. What I love is that it has developed. When we were first introduced it was deemed a sales tool. You could keep leads in it and do a few marketing bits. We've built an environment and adapted it to our needs."*

After they complete their shopping lists and manage consolidation, will marketing clouds achieve the 'one stop shop' nirvana that today is only a reality in a marketing strapline? Few seem to think so but it's not a prospect that many are disturbed by. Raluca Efford from Direct Line says:

*"Of course there's this dream of having everything under one roof, all systems talking to each other which would make business processes very streamlined and effective. Some vendors claim to have that integration today, but the reality is no one is there just yet. When it gets to that place though, we must have matured our internal capability and expertise with cloud technology. At the point of saying yes to one vendor, we have to have experienced many different ones to make the best decisions. Our brief is always open to who provides what and to what degree of capability."*

Increased automation is on some executives' wish lists, acknowledging that one of the most significant failings in the use of cloud comes from within. Robinson continues:

*"The biggest drawback of any technology is 'rubbish in, rubbish out'. Any marketer using a CRM tool is at the mercy of the sales people manipulating the records. If there was a way of refining the input process so that it was more accurate, it would make everyone's life easier."*

As the big vendors continue to acquire smaller providers apace, it looks like the once tech-focused specialists are becoming marketing service umbrella brands. If this is the case, marketers have a request. Myf Ryan of Westfield continues:

*"One of the big disadvantages of the cloud in a physical business is that when we use cloud to market our products, consumers can't touch anything. What we own as a brand is people's ability*

*to touch, smell and taste. We still need to be able to maintain that physicality and it's not currently possible in a marketing cloud. The world won't move only to digital communications. We're still human beings and we crave the use of all of our senses."*

Aviva's Markey welcomes the ongoing use of automation in marketing but warns against marketers hitting autopilot as the technologists take over. Without keeping one eye at least on technological developments, marketers risk losing sight of innovations, innovations that could be matched to emerging customer needs and drive the next business transformation. He says:

*"We're all thinking about future-proofing. It's not bad having a single provider as long as you have a sense of how technology is going to develop into the future. You don't want to outsource your intellectual property. You don't want technology to do the thinking for you to the point where you're not keeping up with how you do what you do. Technology is a tool. It's down to the marketer to protect the strength of their organisation."*

Direct Line's Efford concludes by warning that no technology provider should be resting on their laurels and no brand should sit back and let someone else drive:

*"We make a technology choice today based on certain business needs but that brief stays open and we always look around. As everyone develops their technologies they will be putting emphasis on different areas. Whoever was best at something two years ago may not be the best at it today."*

#### What you told us: your comments and experiences about marketing cloud technology

"I would prefer solutions and platforms that don't lock me in with one vendor but a platform that is open and could integrate with solutions from different vendors/developers."

"Integration of CRM and Marketing Automation systems are paramount. Often 'same vendor' solutions do not tick all the boxes. Marketing technology 'stacks' must be facilitated cost-effectively."

"Still a growing technology that has a bit of maturing to do as cloud storage size starts to overwhelm existing technology. Vendor shake-out still coming in many different areas."

"The technology is prohibitively expensive for the small companies that really need it. As a scalable platform, this doesn't make sense to price out the smaller companies. Secondly, the current MA business model is nonsensical - it charges companies that have grown their database by outreach or social activity, for having bigger databases! That backward logic that penalises success is nonsensical."

"They can be quite expensive and they also require in-house experts that know how to integrate and leverage their technology."

# Case study: RBS

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## Superstar DJs in a Superstar Cloud

The Royal Bank of Scotland has been working with Adobe Marketing Cloud since 2011. The bank engaged with cloud technology because it found that many marketing technology tools were, by their nature, overly technological and limited the number of people in the organisation who could interact with them.

*“We wanted everyone in the organisation to be able to use these things,”* explains Giles Richardson, Head of Analytics and Decisioning at RBS. *“Adobe did the hard work for us. We were confident that the products were within 10 per cent of the best in class, connect together and are usable at scale by the organisation.”*

Interconnectedness is vital to Richardson, who reveals that it is at the core of the company’s Superstar DJ strategy. RBS’s Superstar DJs are operatives within the bank who are super connected to the bank’s audience through their data. These people know within seconds whether content is going down well or badly and constantly experiment. *“We want to make the people who manage our digital experiences great,”* he says.

Speed is very much of the essence in the cloud. It is one of its defining advantages for Richardson: *“An integrated suite of products just works better together. If you have a separate package you can spot from the data that there is a problem with a page and it’s confusing customers. But then you have to begin replicating conditions across platforms – desktop, tablet, mobile and then replicate different audiences and prove out different experiences. You’re recreating your hypothesis three times. In a cloud you can do it all in one place and the velocity is greater with no gaps in your optimisation process.”*

Richardson is clear that he has invested in his relationship with the cloud, even if it doesn’t fulfil his brief to the very limit. *“We can do a lot of learning. It may not necessarily be able to do everything we want it to do but if a solution isn’t available immediately we can do it in a sub optimal way.”*

Nor is he limiting his future in this marriage of convenience. Richardson reveals that it is important to stay ahead of the competition by investing in the new ideas brought about from the startup community. Image validation for photo banking is one such innovation that has come from outside the cloud. But none of these things can exist in isolation. Integration remains key:

*“We are working with Clicktale to perform our session replays but the important thing is that there is integration with Adobe so we can spot the segment and with that connectivity test a solution when we find a problem. A whizzy technology is useless if it doesn’t integrate.”*

Equally, there is the acknowledgement that it’s simply not possible to squeeze every last drop of functionality out of a single point cloud solution. *“In real time use you generally only ever access 10% of its capability,”* Richardson admits. *“Our journey managers aren’t using 100% of the analytics capability day to day. Most of our needs can be answered with a light touch of what the platform can offer. And only occasionally will we need to use its full strength but we will still need it.”*

RBS has noted a definite step changes in performance – for the better – since engaging with cloud technologies. The real heart, he says, is the tag management system that forms part of Adobe’s core services. It gives him the ability to stitch the single view of the journey across multiple platforms. *“Doing something as simple as identifying your customers makes a huge difference. We couldn’t do that outside the cloud. We need it to drop the tags.”*

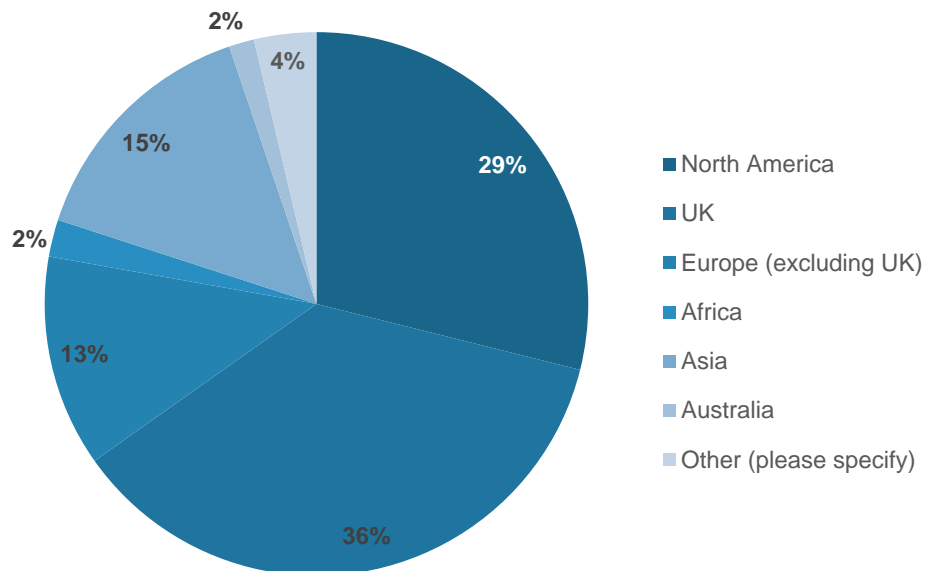


# Methodology

ClickZ surveyed 188 marketing professionals globally, of whom 60% are client-side marketers or digital professionals. The remainder work on the supply-side, comprising agencies, vendors or consultants.

Survey respondents were spread across a range of countries and regions, as shown in *Figure 9* below. The result of this survey was put to nine interviewees sourced from some of the UK's best-known, highly marketing and technology-driven brands.

**Figure 9**  
Respondents by geography



Additional data was sourced from ClickZ's own insight resource as well as vendor websites. The research was conducted during September 2016.

# Get in touch

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