



February 8, 2011

Emerging Technologies B2B CMOs Should Watch In 2011

by **Jeff Ernst**

with David M. Cooperstein and Matthew Dernoga

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Business-to-business (B2B) CMOs need to keep their eyes on emerging technologies that have the potential to improve customer engagement. Some of the most promising tools are not yet receiving a lot of attention. To highlight these technologies, this is the first in a series of reports on technologies that are being used by large enterprises to improve customer engagement at different stages of the customer life cycle. This report covers content curation, listening platforms, brand advocate platforms, as well as appointment routing and scheduling.

TO WOW CUSTOMERS, CMOs MUST UNDERSTAND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

The CMO must lead the definition of the brand experience and the orchestration of that experience across products, channels, departments, and external contact points.¹ Technology is playing an increasingly important role in delivering that exceptional brand experience, and CMOs must guide their organizations in the application of these new tools.

To help B2B CMOs stay on top of these emerging technologies, we've compiled a list of technologies for CMOs to investigate and experiment with in 2011 and beyond. We selected technologies that meet the following criteria: 1) The technology can improve how companies engage prospects and customers at one or more points in the customer life cycle; 2) it is easy for the business to implement; 3) enterprise-scale companies have started to use it; and 4) it does not have enough hype to be on everyone's radar.

Note: This is not a comprehensive list, nor are these meant to be vendor recommendations. We will continue to profile emerging technologies that we come across throughout the year.

TECHNOLOGIES TO WATCH IN 2011

In this report, Forrester has identified four technologies for CMOs to watch in 2011:

- Online content curation to build thought leadership and authority relationships.
- Listening platforms to monitor brand sentiment and gain customer insight.
- Brand advocate platforms to energize word of mouth (WOM).
- Appointment scheduling applications to engage people ready to buy.



Headquarters

Forrester Research, Inc., 400 Technology Square, Cambridge, MA 02139 USA
Tel: +1 617.613.6000 • Fax: +1 617.613.5000 • www.forrester.com

Online Content Curation Made Simple

Many B2B marketers display industry news and best-practices content on their websites as a way to position their firms as authorities in their market. Content curation tools have emerged to allow marketers to easily find the online content that is most valuable to their target audience, organize it, add their company's perspectives on it, and share it on their corporate website or microsite in the same way that a museum curator chooses items to put on exhibit.

- **What content curation tools do.** The tools let curators specify keywords that are used to search the Web for relevant content. The curator then scans through the content and decides what to share, and the tool detects patterns that let it improve the quality of content it finds.
- **Who provides it.** There are many content and news aggregation platforms that are designed for publishers, but a few are emerging that address the needs of marketers. HiveFire's Curata (www.getcurata.com) is designed to help marketers build thought leadership and nurture leads, and others such as Curation Station (www.curationstation.com) can be used by enterprises to add related news content to their existing website pages.
- **Why it's important.** Your buyers use the Internet to find information about their problems and typically bypass solution providers until late in their buying cycle. They prefer to get information that's been filtered by third parties they believe to be experts in the field. By delivering highly relevant industry news and best-practice articles on your website, you make your firm a valuable resource to your buyers, build trust, and increase the chances that they will consider your firm's solutions. But this can be challenging to achieve for marketers, who automate it either by putting a Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feed on their site that results in poor-quality content making it through or by spending a lot of time filtering through feeds and search results and posting selected content to the site. Content curation tools can greatly reduce the time it takes and improve the quality of the content you share. To be perceived as an authority, you should add your firm's perspectives on the external content you present and combine it with original thought leadership content.
- **How curated content is used.** Cambridge Healthtech Institute, a research, event, and consulting firm for the life sciences industry, uses Curata to engage biotech researchers by hosting a portal that aggregates news on the topic of biomarkers (www.biomarkerbreakthroughs.com). Novell is trying to create a new category around an emerging method of IT systems management called Intelligent Workload Management. It worked with Curata to create an industry destination site (www.intelligentworkloadmanagement.com) that combines curated content from selected cloud computing and virtualization publications with its own white papers and blog posts written by Novell executives.

Listening Platforms Build Social Intelligence

Consumer marketers first adopted listening platforms to track what's being said about their brands on social media sites. As the uses of social data for informing marketing and business strategies expand, B2B marketing leaders should add listening technology to their arsenal.

- **What listening platforms do.** Listening platforms consist of technology and analytics infrastructures that mine the conversations occurring across a broad range of social media sources. They gather real-time opinion data about companies, products, customers, competitors, and employees, analyze this data to determine the sentiment of the opinions, and deliver actionable insights.
- **Who provides it.** Although the listening platform market is in its infancy, there are a large number of players, ranging from startups to software giants, making it very confusing for marketers to figure out which one best serves their needs. Forrester classifies the market into three categories — social dashboards, multichannel analytics providers, and listening service partners.² Forrester evaluated nine players that serve large enterprises and found that Nielsen (www.nielsen-online.com), Radian6 (www.radian6.com), and Converseon (www.converseon.com) lead the market.³
- **Why it's important.** If you join a conversation at a cocktail party and want to show good manners, you listen to what people are discussing before jumping into the conversation so that you know how to contribute. Similarly, if you're going to engage prospects and customers through social media, you need to start by listening to the conversations that are already occurring. Listening platforms have evolved beyond basic brand monitoring tools into integral technologies that inform a variety of marketing and business functions like campaign measurement, market research, customer support, crisis identification, and sales enablement. Although consumers drive much of online conversation, listening platforms help B2B brands find, monitor, and measure targeted sources, which is a cumbersome manual task.
- **How social intelligence is used.** A major financial services firm uses a listening platform to identify sales opportunities through Twitter, LinkedIn, and industry discussion forums. By tracking online conversation and identifying financial advisors, the firm can engage with targeted leads, which are normally hard to uncover. Intel uses a listening platform to identify and learn from influential technology buyers within online communities.

Energizing Advocates To Spread The Word

Every company or brand has advocates, but companies haven't had a scalable way to automate and amplify WOM through social technologies. Consumers are more proactive in their advocacy of their favorite brands than B2B customers, but B2B marketers can use brand advocate platforms to encourage WOM by loyal customers and generate sales leads.

- **What brand advocate platforms do.** Brand advocate platforms let marketers identify the people most likely to recommend a company or product to their friends and colleagues. They then energize those people to spread the word by writing reviews, telling their stories about working with the company, answering questions from other potential buyers, as well as sharing content and special offers. Since these platforms facilitate sharing through social and digital channels, their analytics engines track the results of WOM campaigns and quantify their impact on sales.
- **Who provides it.** Zuberance (www.zuberance.com) provides a technology platform for building your own network of brand advocates that you identify through a Net Promoter Score survey. Klout (www.klout.com) helps you find influencers by keyword or hash tag. PeerIndex (www.peerindex.net) helps you rank opinion-formers in your category. BzzAgent (www.bzzagent.com) lets you tap into its network of 750,000 people to accelerate WOM.
- **Why it's important.** People like to talk about products and purchases to the point that the scale of online peer influence compares with the influence of online paid media.⁴ People trust each other more than they trust most marketing communications. To get them talking about you, you can't engage one-by-one with everyone who has influence — there are just too many of them. Brand advocate platforms allow you to tap into these influencers with efficiency and scale. For B2B marketers, these platforms offer a great way to generate new content for customer testimonials and references and get advocates sharing your thought leadership content with their networks.
- **How brand advocacy is used.** Symantec has used Zuberance to recruit more than 10,000 customers to help energize others through tools that help increase online ratings and reviews. As a result, it doubled product reviews on popular review sites and increased online sales by \$26 million.

Facilitating Meetings With Prospects And Clients On Their Schedule

Your marketing team works hard to get people to your website and optimize it for conversion, but prospects that get to your site and are ready to talk have to fill out a form and wait for a call or email, which can then take multiple communications to set up a meeting. In the meantime, the prospects' interest wanes or the competition gets to them first. Companies are turning to online appointment scheduling tools to reduce this back and forth, which can be time-consuming at best and maddening at worst.

- **What online scheduling tools do.** Online appointment scheduling technologies can address this problem by replacing the traditional "Contact Us" form with a mechanism for a prospect to immediately reserve an available time to speak to a sales rep or call center agent, reducing the need to chase leads that are ready to talk. It also gives marketers a way to convert campaign responses directly into sales meetings by including a scheduling call to action in email campaigns and on landing pages.

- **Who provides it.** Online appointment setting tools for individuals have been around for years, but TimeTrade Systems (www.timetrade.com) has added enterprise capabilities geared for sales, marketing, and service teams. Since large sales forces assign reps by geography, product line, or company size, it uses configurable assignment rules like state, company revenue, or product-interest area to offer instant appointment scheduling with the most appropriate sales rep to a website visitor. Tungle (www.tungle.me) is a free service to watch that is rapidly attracting individual sales and marketing users and adding premium features such as branding.
- **Why it's important.** Online appointment scheduling means that prospects feel in control because they get on the right sales rep's calendar when they have the greatest level of interest. The rep doesn't have to spend the time chasing them down. And tracking data supports giving marketing credit for meetings with people who are deep in their buying process.
- **How online appointment scheduling is used.** Biscom, a provider of document delivery solutions, uses TimeTrade to add a "Schedule Now" button on the sales reps' outgoing emails as well as to email campaigns from marketing. This has tripled the number of qualified sales appointments it sets and has reduced missed appointments by 75%.

RECOMMENDATIONS

THRIVE BY RECOGNIZING WHEN TECHNOLOGY CAN RAISE THE BAR

There is an overwhelming volume of new technologies that promise to improve marketing effectiveness and increase impact on revenue. Marketing leaders need to keep their eyes on the ones that can give them a competitive advantage in the customer experiences their firm delivers. To determine which ones have the highest potential:

- **Ask your customers where they'd like you to improve.** Your customers have a lot to gain by helping your firm deliver better customer experiences. Ask them what they like and dislike about doing business with your firm as well as others they interact with on a similar level. Then deploy one of your technology-aware team members to investigate which technologies and vendors can address those opportunities.
- **Look outside of your industry for examples.** It's important to stay aware and ahead of your current competitors, but opportunities to leapfrog the competition are often found by looking outside of your industry. See what leaders in other sectors that sell to similar buyers are doing to enhance customer engagement. Stay close to your sphere of business. If you work in a regulated industry like finance, seek advice from the healthcare industry. If you supply chemicals, check out what the logistics or materials companies have done to improve their relationship with customers.

- **Experiment on a small scale.** Most emerging technologies are delivered as software-as-a-service (SaaS), which makes it very easy to experiment with one set of customers, campaigns, or employees without making a large upfront investment. Typically, the initial license cost is minimal or comes with a trial, but make sure you define a use case, test subjects, and desired results before starting the test.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

Companies Interviewed For This Document

HiveFire

TimeTrade Systems

Zuberance

ENDNOTES

- ¹ The marketing leader's role is to connect the dots across the marketing mix, commandeer all of the opportunities, and involve diverse companywide resources to deliver value — that brand experience — to the customer. See the December 14, 2009, "[Marketing Mandate: Connect The Dots](#)" report.
- ² Due to the large and fragmented landscape, marketing professionals struggle to find the listening platform best suited for their needs. To help, Forrester classified the market into three categories — social dashboards, multichannel analytics providers, and listening service partners — and identified the strengths and weaknesses of each segment. See the December 14, 2010, "[The 2011 Listening Platform Landscape](#)" report
- ³ In Forrester's 76-criteria evaluation of listening platform vendors, we found that Converseon, Nielsen, and Radian6 led the pack because of the range of product functionality and ability to meet businesses' needs beyond reactive brand tracking. The market has many strong performers: Cymfony with its strong services offerings, Visible Technologies with its myriad features, Alterian with its preferred dashboard, evolve24 with its strong data analysis, and Dow Jones Insight with its strong data coverage. Collective Intellect is an up-and-coming vendor with strength in its data processing technology. See the July 12, 2010, "[The Forrester Wave™: Listening Platforms, Q3 2010](#)" report.
- ⁴ The total number of consumer-generated impressions about products and services exceeded 500 billion in 2009. Compare that with the 2 trillion online ad impressions delivered over the same period, and it is evident that social applications now rival other mass media. See the April 20, 2010, "[Peer Influence Analysis](#)" report.