

IBM, Adobe... The race is on...

LONDON, UK: Ovum reveals IBM and Adobe are ahead in the race to become the enterprise digital marketing platform provider of choice.



With mega-vendors investing tens of billions of dollars to gain a foothold in the enterprise digital marketing platforms market, Ovum reveals that IBM and Adobe have the short-term advantage thanks to the strength of their branding propositions. According to the global analyst house, the key to vendor selection is in their services offerings and strategic directions, rather than just product functionality.

In the first report to provide a strategic perspective on the complete end-to-end digital marketing landscape, Ovum evaluates the products, services, and brands of the six mega-vendors from the buying perspective of an enterprise CMO or a Head of Digital. Ovum finds Adobe has the strongest proposition from a CMO perspective, whereas IBM has the strongest proposition from a CIO/IT perspective, standing them ahead of Oracle, SAS, Salesforce, and Teradata. In terms of overall product capabilities, all of the vendors are relatively comparable, reinforcing the importance of looking past functionality to the bigger picture when choosing a strategic partner.

"Don't over-emphasise features and functions when evaluating digital marketing platforms. These are fast and easy for other vendors to replicate," suggests Gerry Brown, senior digital marketing analyst at Ovum and author of the report. "Focus more on the vendor's strategic fit to your business, including the quality and depth of relationships and a shared vision for the future of modern marketing in a digital world."

Ovum's research goes on to suggest that vendor selection should revolve around compatibility with existing IT architectures and databases, ability to articulate a cogent solution to a defined marketing operations challenge, and the comfortableness of forming a long-term potentially highly intimate relationship with the vendor. "CMOs are under pressure to consolidate and rationalise their many existing digital marketing products and services. CMOs need a single, unified, and consistent platform for a complete real-time view of the customer activity to enable the activation of relevant and timely marketing campaigns and sales engagements," comments Brown.

Conversely, it is recommended that vendors move away from a product-centric approach. Vendors must provide true business solutions, appropriate services, and attractive branding to be successful in digital marketing. An important enabler is a complementary partner ecosystem that includes advertising agencies, marketing services providers, management consultants, and systems integrators. Adobe is the only mega-vendor that can currently boast maturity here. Equally, it is also important to embrace a triumvirate vendor-CIO-CMO working model, and only IBM has really grasped this nettle.

"Enterprise customers need to form strategic business relationships with their digital marketing vendor partners, so shared values and mutual trust are imperatives. Marketing in the future will need to act and react in real-time. Vendors will have their work cut out to become more fleet of foot and agile in operations, rather than just product acquisition. It's essential that vendors mirror the way that marketing is now operating within their enterprise clients," concludes Brown.

**Evaluating Mega-Vendors' Digital Marketing Platforms and Strategies*

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