



How Marketers Can
Implement Real-Time
Technology to Optimize
Marketing Spend and
Improve Conversions

Marketing teams are facing pressure like never before. McKinsey estimates that 80% of CEOs expect marketers to drive company growth. At the same time, consumers expect personalized messaging from brands that demonstrate an understanding of their needs.

Data is at the heart of marketing's ability to deliver on these demands, but it's not just a matter of getting the messaging right: It's also about delivering it at the right moment, in real time. Companies must be able to identify key inflection points customers have on their purchasing journey and reach them at those pivotal moments.

The end goal is to reduce noise in marketing communications and optimize the cost of campaigns, explains Luke McGrath, chief technology officer at Hitachi Solutions.

"Real-time marketing has been the most influential trend in marketing over the past few years," McGrath notes. "If we can identify the signals that customers are sending in real time, it allows us to deliver a more targeted and relevant message."

The good news is that the technology needed to make that reality possible is available and affordable today. The price of tools that analyze large amounts of data in real time has fallen such that these technologies are now available to organizations of any size. This whitepaper will look at how companies can leverage those tools to deliver real-time marketing effectively, as well as how marketers can think strategically about the implementation of real-time marketing to enhance the customer experience.

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CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER
AT HITACHI SOLUTIONS

WHEN NEAR REAL TIME ISN'T FAST ENOUGH

Many technology providers tout real-time marketing solutions that are actually near real time. That works in many use cases. For example, when marketers offer promotions based on customer purchases or send out abandoned cart notifications, near real-time marketing is sufficient.

However, other aspects of marketing data must be real time or your company risks losing customers. This is the case in customer-support interactions such as online chat. Real time is also important to activate contextual experiences.

When brands decide whether to utilize real-time data, factors beyond the use case itself are also important. The amount of data needed and the cost of the technology to access and process that data are key considerations.

“Brands should evaluate where real-time data will make the most impact versus the cost of providing the real-time data,” advises Deb Marotta, vice president of Retail & CPG Industries for Hitachi Solutions.

The Delta Lakehouse architecture is a best-practice approach to supporting changes in data and its usage. It gives companies the flexibility to deploy data quickly and in cost-effective ways. When it comes to first-party data, unifying and cleansing the data is paramount.

For third-party data sources, brands must consider whether to use cloud-based or on-premise servers, as this will determine how quickly that data can be leveraged. How long and the type of access they need to the data, their ability to unify it with first-party data and efforts to de-duplicate data are all factors that will determine a marketing team's ability to deliver real-time marketing.



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How Microsoft Customer Insights & Synapse Can Enable Real-Time Marketing

Microsoft Azure Synapse Analytics can help companies achieve their real-time marketing goals. When used alongside Microsoft Customer Insights, it can help marketers create and refine customer segmentation to drive personalized marketing campaigns.

Microsoft Purview also scans large volumes of data to identify personal identifiable information and uses this data to manage compliance.

Hitachi Solutions often works with clients to utilize these tools as a way to prepare large-volume datasets from complex data sources, interfacing a modern data-estate solution, optimizing performance and assisting with data transformations.

One of the key benefits of Synapse is that it makes it easy to pull information from many different sources and process it, McGrath explains. This is particularly true when the tool is paired with Microsoft Dataverse compliant applications. That makes the integration of information between business applications and the data environment almost seamless, McGrath explains.

“This Synapse-business applications pairing is especially powerful when Dynamics Customer Insights is included in the suite. Customer Insights allows for business users to update metrics and segments in an easy-to-use interface and have those metrics available to support the analysis done in Synapse,” McGrath notes.

Synapse also includes capabilities for more advanced users who wish to test hypotheses based on large data sets. This can help companies update their current models to better identify key inflection points on the customer journey.

It’s a powerful tool that can help marketers advance their real-time goals, adds Marotta.

“Using Synapse helps reduce the time for marketing teams to create and maintain segments, but also to make those more relevant to increase the return-on-investment of marketing campaigns,” Marotta notes. ■

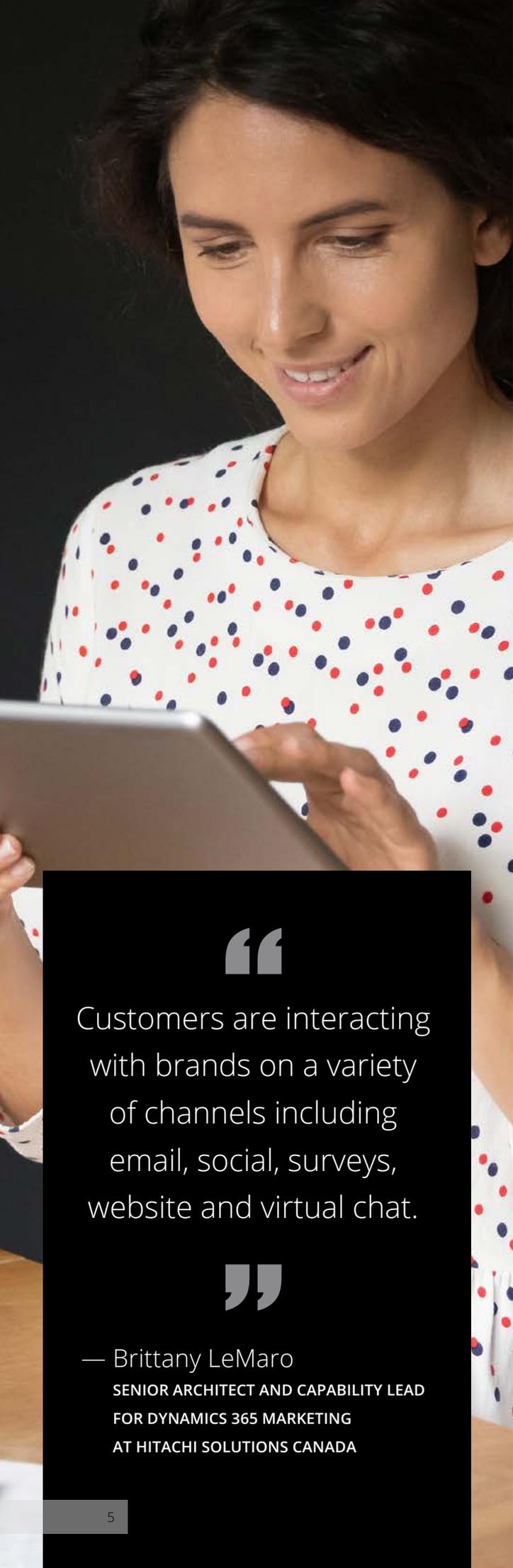


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SENIOR ARCHITECT AND CAPABILITY LEAD
FOR DYNAMICS 365 MARKETING
AT HITACHI SOLUTIONS CANADA

As new regulations are introduced, security and compliance requirements around personal identifiable information data are also key factors to consider, especially on complex global implementations.

Each of these decisions must ultimately be based on business considerations as well as market demands.

“The stakes are high for businesses to become in sync with consumer behavior and interests,” notes Brittany LeMaro, senior architect and capability lead for Dynamics 365 Marketing at Hitachi Solutions Canada.

LeMaro says customer experience is now more important than price and product when it comes to brand differentiation, and customers are looking to brands to become experience leaders.

“Customers are interacting with brands on a variety of channels including email, social, surveys, website and virtual chat. High-performing marketing teams are required to map out these touch points and create dynamic and personalized experiences that span the entire lifecycle of a contact,” says LeMaro, noting that the bar has been raised by increasing competition. “A poor experience has become easier to spot and more difficult to tolerate. Speed and convenience are baseline expectations.”

TOP CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING EFFECTIVE REAL-TIME MARKETING

In modern marketing, the Achilles’ heel is organizational silos. The traditional lines drawn among marketing, sales, customer service, finance and other departments have resulted in disparate customer data and disjointed information about customer journeys. Often, marketers lose sight

of prospects once they become customers or if a customer support case is created.

Today's marketing demands a more synchronized approach. Marketers require a full and clear picture of how customers interact with a brand throughout the customer lifecycle.

One way companies are addressing this is by adding a customer experience team that is responsible for orchestrating communication and touch points throughout the entire customer journey. Forrester recently [surveyed](#) consumer perceptions of 221 brands and found that the top 5% of brands maintained their customer experience quality between 2021 and 2020. On average, these elite brands evoke 26 positive emotions for every negative one, compared with a ratio of 11 to 1 for other brands. In short, the top brands valued customer experience — and they won market share as a result.

The data itself must be consolidated as well.

“The consolidation piece has gotten easier to manage with the maturation of the tools on the market, but it still requires a solid understanding of how to massage the data to get it to a state where we can answer questions that cross marketing channels,” McGrath notes.

It is essential that data models supporting these analytics have the capability of supporting both real-time and traditional marketing metrics. It must also give marketing teams the ability to modify components such as segment definition and metrics to suit their needs.

When marketers have such tools available and the technical capabilities on their team to utilize them, they can deliver the dynamic



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customer interactions that are table stakes today. These include seamless cross-channel experiences, the ability to send a promotion based on an item in a cart or make a recommendation based on browsing activity, dynamic landing pages online and in mobile apps, as well as notifications that are based on a customer's place in the purchasing journey.

"Today, technology such as chatbots, virtual agents, customer data platforms, Delta Lakes, artificial intelligence and machine learning, and natural language processing give brands the tools to create personal interactions with their marketing," Marotta says.

CONCLUSION

With marketers facing pressure to deliver like never before, the ability to deliver personalized, real-time interactions has become imperative. Yet the drive toward real-time analytics is a journey that can take time and needs to be well rationalized.

"Brands that are in their customer experience infancy do not need to worry about getting to their end goal within one project iteration," says LeMaro, who suggests that companies start with a digital marketing road map.

"This road map will serve as a guide for the future that involves iterative milestones." ■



ABOUT

Hitachi Solutions America

Hitachi Solutions is a leading global cloud-services systems integrator that specializes in Microsoft technologies. Powered by nearly two decades of experience, we deliver end-to-end business transformation through advisory services, industry and technology expertise and implementation excellence. Our goal is to accelerate digital modernization initiatives that drive value for retail customers.

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