



# CRITICAL QUESTIONS

— TO ASK YOUR —  
**COMMERCE MARKETING  
AUTOMATION VENDOR**

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# COMMERCE MARKETING AUTOMATION VENDOR

With a growing number of marketing applications available, marketing teams are struggling to see differences among them. Meanwhile, IT teams are bogged down with development and maintenance requests to migrate or manage the use of multiple platforms already in use.

Gartner's 2016-2017 CMO Spend Survey found that marketing departments are spending 38% of their tech budgets on external development services and cross-charges from internal IT teams. Strategic marketing and IT leaders are looking for ways to streamline technology and eliminate solutions that limit integrations and scalability. It's important to look at the resources required to maintain the marketing applications you use and compare them to other options available in the marketplace.

Choosing a marketing technology partner is a total-revenue-performance decision. Ask questions about integration and scalability. Find partners whose marketing automation is built to scale with your business, and select vendors whose teams provide the critical support and services you'll need along the way.

### Scalable Architecture

- History of solid integration
- Capacity for deep segmentation
- Commitment to innovation
- Expert services
- Exceptional support

### Congested Architecture

- One-off solution or lacking integration
- Pre-set, you have little to no control
- Problems during times of high demand
- Little to no services offered
- Limited live support



## SOLID INTEGRATION

### Top Benefits: Saves Time and Avoids Hassles

Integration is king. As mid-size and enterprise businesses add new sales channels and more sophisticated processes, they can end up with a number of stand-alone applications that each handle short-term, tactical needs. These applications are likely purchased through several different vendors and operate separately from other tools. Disconnected systems cause functional silos and create process bottlenecks. Thoughtful integration avoids that.

Integrated systems work best when they share, in both directions, the data that matters most to your business. It's great when your CRM and your marketing automation platform are integrated, but if that integration doesn't include the product feed from your ecommerce platform, it's not enough. Integration with the things that matter most to you is exactly what makes automation successful and worthwhile.

### Affected Areas

- Revenue generation
- Employee productivity
- IT time investment
- Cost
- Customer attraction and retention
- Visibility to inventory
- Business performance



### Look For

**Marketing automation vendors whose architecture and connectors promote bi-directional sharing of data with your ecommerce application.** Accurate, real-time communication between your ecommerce platform and your marketing automation platform is both critical and valuable. Automation should enhance your existing data. Being able to collect more shopper preferences today can help you improve your marketing efforts a year or five years from now.



## Questions to Ask

1. What data will your solution share with my ecommerce application?
2. Can your solution automate data transfer from my ecommerce platform, or is it a manual process?
3. Can you share data bi-directionally with my ecommerce platform, or is it a one-way push?

## Who's Doing it Well?

Value retailer **Poundland** integrated Bronto with its Magento ecommerce platform and discovered its customers shop differently online than they do in stores. The website has an average transaction value six times higher than in-store.

“We were doing too much manual work. We used a proprietary CMS for the website with no automation, so we spent too much time moving data between our ESP and the website. The Magento integration has proved invaluable.”

**Paul McDermott**, Head of Ecommerce, Poundland



## DEEP SEGMENTATION

### Top Benefits: Personalization Tools That Align With Your Business Goals

Today's multi-channel retail marketplace demands a more personalized approach based on shoppers' actions, essentially to the point of one-to-one marketing. Let's say you provide health and beauty products. By collecting perfume preferences over time, you can deliver a much more accurate, relevant and personalized set of recommendations on a highly personal product.

You know your business best, and you work hard to gather the data you can use to increase revenue. Now consider the kind of data you want to collect to begin even more sophisticated marketing programs. You'll need deep segmentation to target particular consumer segments for special deals, higher-margin products and categories you haven't had time to consider yet.

#### Look For

**A solution that allows you to send custom messages based on your broader business goals.** It's important to control how you include product content in your messages, so you can target sales based on higher profit margin, for example. Your marketing automation solution should allow you to customize more product attributes so you have more room to add the data that's important to your business.

#### Affected Areas

- Data collection
- Conversion rates
- Inventory turnover
- Customer engagement and retention

## Questions to Ask



1. How many pre-defined product attribute fields do you provide, and what are they?
2. How many custom product attributes does your solution allow me to define?
3. Can I set filtering options to strategically merchandise select products? For example, can I automate recommendations for products above a certain profitability margin or limit recommendations to items associated to recently browsed or purchased products?

## Who's Doing it Well?

**Brooks Running** grew email-generated revenue 60% in the past year by building segments based on popular web products, then creating automated reminders for shoe buyers based on how many miles they run.

Brooks also uses triggered messaging tied to a user's location. A weather trigger, powered by Bronto's integrated partner Movable Ink, includes a three-day weather forecast and points readers to products that correspond to the current weather condition.

"We want to make our emails relevant so people are excited to see Brooks in their inbox."

**Stephanie Hileman**, Ecommerce Digital Marketing Specialist,  
Brooks Running



## COMMITMENT TO INNOVATION

### Top Benefits: Preparation for the Expected and Unexpected

When you purchase software as a service, you're entering into a partnership. You want your technology partners to be committed to innovation so you can achieve more than just the basics. They should fortify systems to prepare for increased demand during high-volume selling periods and develop strong industry relationships to ensure high deliverability for your messages.

Innovative tech partners provide more functionality and feel more like a one-stop shopping experience. They build their infrastructure, operations and support to scale dynamically with their customers' growth. They have proactive cybersecurity to protect you against outages and data breaches. Taking proactive measures to address cybersecurity is important because Gartner predicts that through 2020, 99% of vulnerabilities exploited will continue to be ones known by security and IT professionals for at least one year.

### Look For

**Marketing automation vendors with a commitment to omnichannel commerce, a high deliverability rating and a documented history of reliable performance.**

Pay attention to how they communicate with customers about imminent changes or unexpected problems. Beware of vendors who do not (or cannot) discuss their solutions' value in terms of your business model. Always bring the conversation back to how their solution will impact your business results.

### Affected Areas

- Revenue generation
- Time efficiency
- Conversion rates
- Cybersecurity



## Questions to Ask

1. What is your deliverability rating?
2. What is your history of down time? Have you had any problems on Black Friday or Cyber Monday? Please share documentation of that history.
3. What is your cybersecurity approach?

## Who's Doing it Well?

**RST Brands** is an outdoor furniture retailer that sells to retailers like Home Depot and Amazon and directly to consumers. Before selecting Bronto, they went with a marketing automation vendor that promised better functionality. "We saw an immediate performance hit to our click and open rates and experienced deliverability issues," says Matt Grimm, ecommerce manager.

"As soon as we started with Bronto, we saw an instant lift. Open rates have improved as much as 12%, click rates are up by as much as 30%. Email-driven revenue for this year is up by 60%."

**Matt Grimm**, Ecommerce Manager, RST Brands



## EXPERT SERVICES

### Top Benefits: Faster Time to Revenue

Individual heroics don't scale. The best successes come from a total solution with a team of experts who are available when you need them. Don't count on what you or your team alone can accomplish with marketing automation, particularly if you are among the growing number of marketing team members responsible for customer touchpoints or if you own or share P&L (profit and loss) responsibility. Access to ready experts reduces the time it takes to achieve your revenue and growth goals.

Some marketing automation vendors offer professional services, which gives you direct access to commerce marketing experts who can create campaigns for you or provide critical advice to help you set up campaigns more quickly. All of a vendor's customers benefit from the work of an internal professional services team because their real-time feedback drives enhancements to the platform.

### Look For

**Tech partners who have robust in-house professional services teams.**

They can help your team with any project, from simple integrations to the creation of complex, scalable, automated marketing campaigns. This is where scale can make a huge difference in quickly getting your marketing engine up to speed.

### Affected Areas

- Revenue generation
- Employee productivity
- Business performance visibility
- Cost
- Customer retention



## Questions to Ask

1. Can you assist our marketing team with launching new campaigns?
2. Do you provide managed services expertise and consulting in industry best practices?
3. Do you have development resources we can use to manage regular tasks when we're over capacity?

## Who's Doing it Well?

**Munchkin**, designer and marketer of products for parents and children, engaged Bronto's professional services team for a strategic assist: They wanted to understand best practices for automating campaigns and optimizing transactional emails. Ecommerce Manager Laura Bradford worked with Bronto to create a three-part welcome series that builds brand awareness and sells product by introducing customers to the brand and Munchkin's social presence.

"Moms love to share pictures of their children with our products. The welcome series has an open rate above 50%, a 24% click-through rate and a 42% conversion rate – all with just a 10% off coupon."

**Laura Bradford**, Ecommerce Manager, Munchkin



## EXCEPTIONAL SUPPORT

### Top Benefits: More Uptime and Reliable Revenue Generation

Make no mistake about it. Whatever your technology partner lacks in support has the potential to impact your financial bottom line. Customer support that is live and provided by friendly experts is a must-have for any marketing automation company you consider.

Important measures in this area are the availability of technical support, time it takes for the team to answer your phone calls or online requests, time to resolve issues, and average downtime that any lack of support could cost your team.

### Look For

**A vendor that includes support in your contract.** If it's not included, be sure you know how often you may contact the technical support team. If you are evaluating a global marketing automation provider, be sure the vendor provides support hours in your geographical region and emergency support around the clock. The best way to identify a partner who will provide great support is to ask questions.

### Affected Areas

- Revenue generation
- Employee productivity
- Uptime
- Cost



## Questions to Ask

1. Is technical support free? What hours is it available?
2. Via what medium do you provide technical support? (Phone, live web chat, email)
3. Do you offer live web chat? What percentage of issues are resolved via web chat versus phone support? What is your average time to answer via web chat?
4. If you use an email ticketing system, how many days is the average response time?

## Who's Doing it Well?

UK men's clothier **Joseph Turner** uses live web chat to contact Bronto for technical support. The high-end brand's marketing team likes having access to online support so it can get back to business quickly. "We don't cut corners on the quality of our garments, and we expect a high level of service when it comes to marketing automation," says Catherine Giles, marketing manager at Joseph Turner.

"I find that Bronto's customer service is the best of any supplier we use. Their accuracy, professionalism and response time are excellent."

**Catherine Giles**, Marketing Manager, Joseph Turner

# WHAT'S NEXT

It's not always easy to tell the difference between commerce marketing automation solutions, especially when sales representatives use buzzwords or jargon to describe how great their solution is.

According to *Global Ecommerce Becoming the Great Equalizer*, released by Forbes in January 2016, ecommerce is growing as a share of overall commerce. By 2018, the article says, that share will be double what it was four years earlier. So if you plan to grow your ecommerce business, you've made a smart decision.

Use this guide to get clear answers about how each solution performs on these essentials: integration, segmentation, innovation, managed services and support. Ask informed questions as you evaluate offerings and choose your commerce marketing automation. Your choice will have a critical impact on your team's productivity, your company's revenue generation, the cost to market your products online and your overall business success.

Bronto built its commerce marketing automation solution with a firm foundation in each of these essentials. Seamlessly integrate with virtually all ecommerce platforms, even if you built one yourself. Packed with features and built for speed and scale, Bronto provides the flexible architecture and powerful tools today's commerce marketers need to succeed. And we're also the leading provider to the world's top internet retailers.

Interested in learning more? Get in touch with us. We'd love to share how Bronto can boost your ecommerce revenue generation and business growth.

## ABOUT BRONTO

Oracle's Bronto Software provides a cloud-based commerce marketing automation platform to mid-market and enterprise organizations. Oracle's Bronto is the number one ranked email marketing provider to the global Internet Retailer Top 1000, with a client roster of leading brands, including Vince Camuto, Lucky Brand, Theory, Björn Borg, Ashley Homestore and Christopher & Banks. For more information, visit **[bronto.com](http://bronto.com)**.

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