How to select the right data management platform.

The demand for data management platform (DMP) solutions has been growing rapidly for the past few years. A key driver for this growth includes the desire for organizations to break down their internal data silos and gain a more complete understanding of their customers so their teams can deliver more targeted customer experiences across different devices and channels. Every organization is at a different point in their ability to integrate customer information from different sources, as well as their familiarity with relevant requirements and capabilities to look for in a DMP solution.
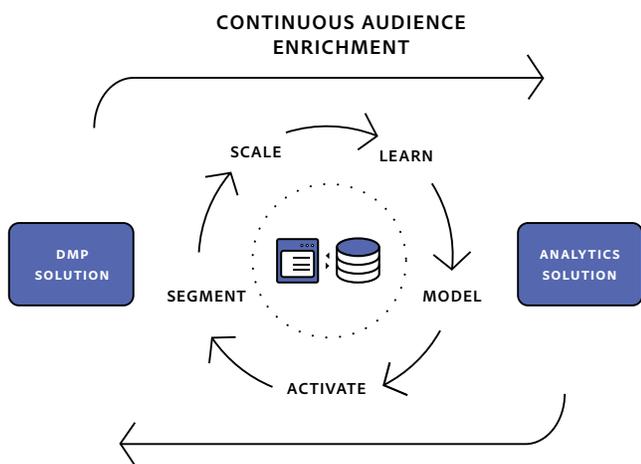
Wherever you are in your DMP journey, investing in a new solution is an important decision that will have significant short-term and long-term impacts on your marketing efforts. Reaching the best decision for your organization will take considerable time and effort that will likely involve you engaging in substantial research and evaluation. To help you in that process, this guide covers some of the most important questions you should ask and issues you should investigate. It provides tips for navigating the information and targeted marketing you'll encounter along the way to help you make informed, objective assessments of the solutions you evaluate.

Real-time activation.

If you can't deliver a personalized experience in real time, what's the point of even trying to deliver a personalized experience? When you're late on delivery, you miss that opportunity to be relevant. That's why one of the most important capabilities to look for in a DMP solution is real-time activation. That gives you two important capabilities: 1) the ability to update your customer profile data based on in-the-moment developments, and 2) the ability to send updated profiles to destinations like your personalization engine or demand-side platform for instant activation. This lets you create and deliver experiences while they are still relevant. For example, when a customer buys a

new product, you will want to immediately stop showing ads for that product to that customer—across all the channels and touchpoints you use. Otherwise, you'll annoy the customer with ads they don't care about, while wasting your advertising spend. Real-time activation lets you suppress those no-longer-relevant ads and retarget your customers with more compelling messages, such as a complementary product.

Real-time activation hinges on the number of server-to-server integrations the DMP has with the demand-side platform (DSP) partners you use. But those server-to-server integrations are only the start. The effectiveness of those integrations depends on whether they actually provide real-time activation. Some DMPs might only have two or three real-time, server-to-server integrations, while the rest of their integrations are batch-based. While the level of integration is sometimes dictated by the partner technology and not always in the DMP vendor's control, beware of solutions with an abundance of batch-based integrations. This often means that the vendor is looking for quick fixes and defaulting to integrations that are faster and cheaper to build, even though they don't adequately serve your needs as a DMP customer. Look for a DMP vendor that makes real-time activation a high priority—and can prove it with the number of real-time, server-to-server integrations they offer and the engineering resources they employ to build out new integrations at that level.

CONTINUOUS AUDIENCE ENRICHMENT

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SCALE      LEARN

DMP                              ANALYTICS
SOLUTION                         SOLUTION

SEGMENT    MODEL

ACTIVATE
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To further understand the benefits of server-side integrations, it's important to know that server-side integrations better ensure the fidelity of your data. For example, if you have a client-side integration between your DMP and analytics tool, each one will have its own set of code. So, if someone navigates away from a web page quickly or drops off before the DMP tag fires, you end up with inconsistent, incomplete data. But a server-side integration between your DMP and analytics tool typically gives you a single set of code resulting from the back-and-forth flow of data between the solutions. Also, a client-side integration requires ongoing work to maintain segment maps between the analytics tool and DMP.

POTENTIAL GOTCHA:
Beware of vendors that claim real-time activation but actually have a day, week, or longer delay in activation.

Questions to ask:

How many real-time, server-to-server integrations does the DMP have with the tools you use for marketing and advertising? You'll want a vendor that has dozens to choose from, not a select few.

Agnostic approach.

There are two aspects of an agnostic approach to keep in mind when evaluating DMPs: their relationship with third-party data sources and their ability to integrate with all the marketing tools in your technology stack. In terms of third-party data relationships, some vendors sell DMPs with the primary goal of selling their own third-party data.

POTENTIAL GOTCHA:
Some vendors claim a lower upfront cost but hit you with unexpected costs later on, such as charging for the creation of new integrations or building segments in real time instead of batch. Unless you make yourself aware of these hidden fees and other ongoing costs, it's difficult to understand what your true total cost will be even after the DMP is in place.

It might seem appealing to go with a DMP with built-in data. The theory, of course, is that it will be easier and quicker to get data from one source, but it can actually compromise your marketing efforts. This is because DMP vendors with their own data sources often restrict or make it hard to access the data sources you really need. Some vendors might even discount their DMPs to promote the purchase of their data. But if that data isn't relevant to your target segments, it is worthless. For most organizations, the best solution will be a data-agnostic DMP that gives you the freedom to work with whatever third-party data sources meet your precise audience and targeting needs.

Another must-have is the ability to integrate well with your other marketing tools, such as analytics, campaign management, experience optimization, device graphs, customer relationship management (CRM), and more. Native integrations with a vendor's own marketing suite can provide seamless sharing of data and great benefits, but it's also important to be able to easily integrate with the third-party marketing solutions you currently use, as well as those you might consider using in the future. Look for a solution that can ingest data from—and export data to—a wide variety of
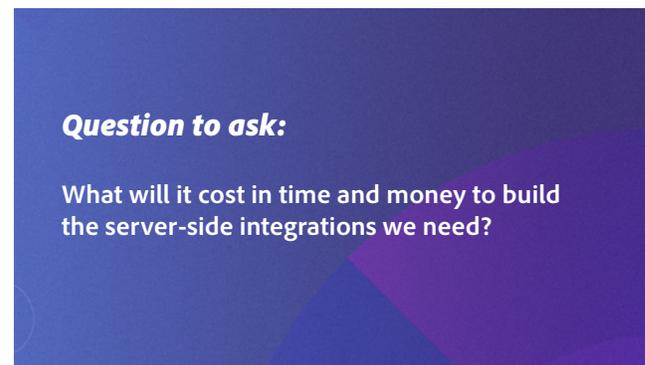
analytics and DSP solutions. To further ensure flexible integration, look for vendors with established industry partnerships and a growing partner marketplace that offers a wide selection of third-party connectors and extensions. This includes looking for a DMP vendor that doesn't charge you for investing time and resources in building the server-side integrations you need with other solutions and partners.

POTENTIAL GOTCHA:

Watch out for DMP vendors who are more interested in selling their own third-party data than making sure you can easily access the data you really need.
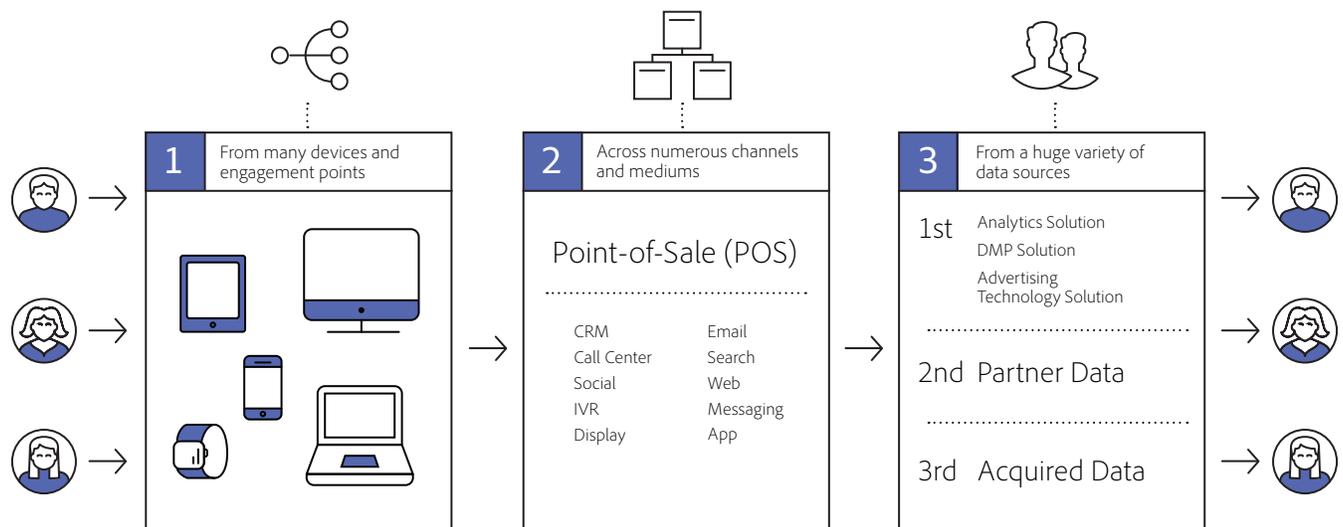
Customer IDs beyond cookies.

Unless your customer experiences are limited to a computer web browser, you will need a DMP that uses more than just cookies to manage customer IDs. Leading mobile web browsers block cookies, so at a minimum your DMP also needs to support mobile device IDs for iOS and Android mobile devices. Still, that's not really enough to fully track customer engagement and continually build and update your customer profiles. If you use a CRM, find out if the DMP can support the CRM's customer ID so you can

Question to ask:

What will it cost in time and money to build the server-side integrations we need?

combine your organization's customer interactions with the DMP customer profiles.

Also, can the DMP deal with customer IDs used in other app interactions that you might want to track? What about customer IDs specific to streaming set top boxes, game consoles, or other IoT devices? What about IDs from customer loyalty programs, including those from brick and mortar retailers that would enable you to pull in offline point-of-sale customer interactions? A wide variety of customer identifiers far beyond cookies are employed today. A DMP that has the flexibility to leverage those identifiers, as well as identifiers that will emerge in the future, will be able to give you a more robust and useful customer profile than a DMP that is limited to cookies and only a few fixed-device IDs. To support your real-time targeting efforts, it's also important to understand how quickly that ID data can be collected and activated within the DMP.

Your top challenge? Piecing together fragments of visitor profile data.

1	From many devices and engagement points	2	Across numerous channels and mediums	3	From a huge variety of data sources

Point-of-Sale (POS)

CRM	Email
Call Center	Search
Social	Web
IVR	Messaging
Display	App

1st — Analytics Solution / DMP Solution / Advertising Technology Solution

2nd Partner Data

3rd Acquired Data

POTENTIAL GOTCHA:

DMP vendors that rely only on cookie data or have limited ID support to manage customer identities won't be able to provide a complete customer picture.

Once various customer IDs are ingested into the DMP, it's critical to understand how these identifiers are grouped together into user profiles. For some DMPs, this is a black box and methodologies are not publicly documented. This becomes problematic because many consumers use a combination of personal (e.g. mobile phone) and shared (e.g. family tablet) connected devices. Controls that let you decide whether to identify and group devices at an individual or household level can help you in your goal to deliver great, relevant customer experiences.

Visibility into AI.

There is a lot of excitement in the marketing world around artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning. These data science tools can infuse your marketing efforts with a tremendous amount of power and capability. But they can also create unintended and unexpected problems if they're treated as infallible black-box solutions. For example, if an algorithm has an error in it or is configured incorrectly, you can spend a significant amount of your budget targeting people with an ad that isn't relevant to them. That's why it's important that you have transparency into the AI your DMP uses, so you can understand why it's doing what it's doing and make any corrections if necessary. You need to be able to see and understand why certain decisions are made with the inputs provided and exactly what is informing those decisions.

The need for transparency can be illustrated in the DMP AI capability for look-alike modeling. This type of algorithm helps

you find more users who share a certain characteristic, such as one belonging to frequent visitors to your site. When the look-alike model is created, it's helpful to know how the algorithm weights certain aspects of the model so you can be sure it's on target. It's also beneficial if the AI can show you other relevant or related traits that might be valuable to explore. You should also be able to control the inputs into your look-alike models and exclude unwanted variables to avoid creating an inaccurate or heavily skewed output. DMP AI that only spits out a look-alike model, without allowing you to see the reasoning behind it or control the inputs, limits your ability to accurately target customers. Perhaps more importantly, understanding how AI makes the decisions it does, gives you big picture insights that can strategically inform your broader marketing decisions and efforts.

Additionally, some organizations have the misguided idea that AI should be able to save marketers the time of completing all the steps of creating and setting up new target audiences. While AI certainly can help save time, it shouldn't be relied upon on for autonomous audience creation with no human involvement. Machines don't have the innate context or understanding of relationships and behavior that humans possess. That means if you try to leverage AI to create audiences independent of guided human instruction, you'll likely end up with off-target audiences and missed opportunities. That said, a DMP that uses AI to surface audience recommendations, including the ability to tweak or reject those recommendations, can provide significant benefit to your marketing efforts.

POTENTIAL GOTCHA:

Some vendors promote AI features that don't yet exist in their product. To avoid this trap, ask for a demo or proof of concept.

Experience DMP.

When DMPs first came to market they were focused primarily on marketing use cases, such as building better audiences for buying or selling media. Today, it's all about instant personalization everywhere your customers interact, requiring DMPs to address a broader and deeper set of use cases. You need to collect data from more sources and activate it across more touchpoints, working broadly across your organization rather than within just one team. The bottom line is that you shouldn't limit your search to a marketing DMP, but set your sights on a true experience DMP. This shift not only creates the need for you to invest in a DMP that addresses all your experience DMP use cases, but it means you might also need to change your perspective on DMP ownership within your organization. To execute on those different use cases, you need to work more collaboratively with different teams across your organization, and your DMP needs to touch multiple facets and break down silos within your organization.

So, what are the different types of use cases you need to make sure your DMP can address? It's different for every organization, but the thought process should begin with determining all the use cases where your DMP can add value to your business. Can you use it to connect offline and online experiences? That might mean tying online customer purchasing information to your call center system so that when customers call in they automatically hear a personalized voice greeting about their recent purchase. Or maybe it's tying a customer loyalty identifier from a recent point-of-sale purchase to a digital interaction. Can the DMP combine third-party
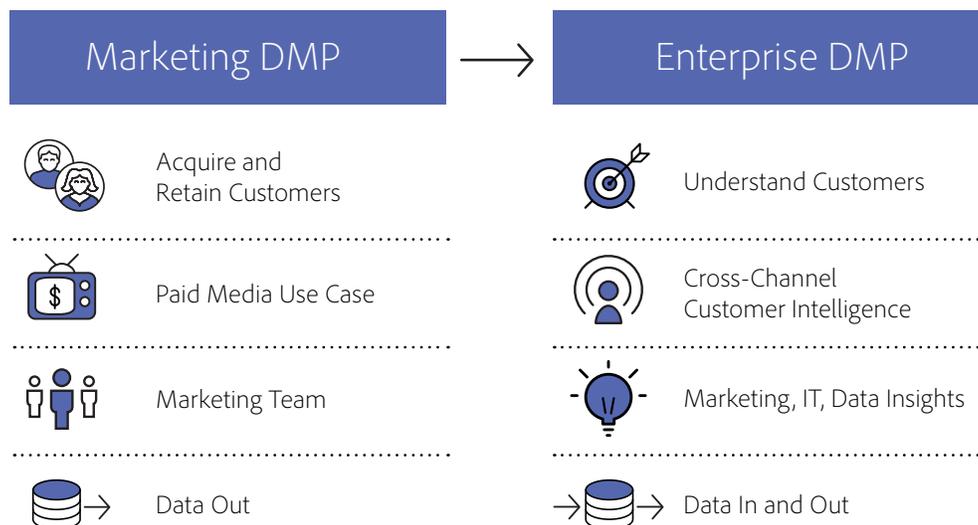
data from different sources with your first-party behavioral data so you not only know when someone is car shopping, but you know they're high income with a child that just turned driving age?

POTENTIAL GOTCHA:

Investing in a DMP that focuses primarily on a few specific marketing use cases—with the idea that you can add additional capabilities over time—can limit your growth, since many of those solution vendors simply can't offer the capabilities you need to expand.

Whatever DMP you choose, you want to be sure that you can derive long-term value from that investment. This is easier to do with a DMP that has the ability to deliver on a broad spectrum of experience-focused use cases. It's also essential to understand that a DMP's approach to real-time activation, server-side integrations, data agnosticity, identity management, and AI transparency will have a significant impact on its ability to play in the world of experience. Shortcomings in any of these areas will limit your ability to gain full value from the DMP and execute on use cases critical to your success.

Data management's value across the enterprise.

Marketing DMP	→	Enterprise DMP
Acquire and Retain Customers		Understand Customers
Paid Media Use Case		Cross-Channel Customer Intelligence
Marketing Team		Marketing, IT, Data Insights
Data Out		Data In and Out

Question to ask:

Can the DMP execute on the broad array of customer experience use cases vital to business success?

Recognized DMP leader.

DMP technology has become critical in marketers' efforts to turn fragmented data from different channels and devices into actionable insights for targeting audience segments and creating relevant personal experiences. The success or failure of an organization's efforts to really understand their customer behaviors and

attitudes—and then act on that understanding—rests largely upon its investment in DMP technology and its relationship with the DMP provider. You need a solution partner with a proven track record across the marketing technology spectrum that can deliver a true Experience DMP that addresses all the critical elements covered in this buyer's guide.

Named a Leader in *The Forrester Wave™: Data Management Platforms*, Adobe Audience Manager delivers the real-time activation, agnostic approach, customer ID breadth, AI transparency, and experience focus you need. It empowers marketers to bring together vast amounts of information from first-, second-, and third-party data sources and transform that data into meaningful audience segments that let you deliver the most relevant and personalized messages at the right time. It breaks down data silos, resulting in comprehensive user profiles that enable you to make sure every channel where you communicate with that customer delivers a consistent message. As an integral part of Adobe Experience Cloud, you can easily aggregate, consolidate, and leverage data from all the meaningful sources you need to power your strategic initiatives.

To learn more about what Adobe Audience Manager can do for your business, visit
www.adobe.com/analytics/audience-manager.html.