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Overview of Best of Breed
Through-Channel Marketing Automation Platforms

A true best-of-breed TCMA platform should be able to address feature requirements relevant for market segments, channel partners' DIY capabilities and reporting capabilities.

Over the last couple of decades there have been a few dozen providers of **through-channel marketing automation platforms (TCMA)**, but until recently none has been able to address the needs of all verticals. That's beginning to change. In this article, we will provide an overview of what a best-of-breed TCMA platform looks like.

> " *A best-of-breed TCMA platform should also be affordable, even with localization features and global support. After all, most organizations selling through the channel these days sell globally, and partners selling in different regions of the world will need support that is tailored to their location and language.* "

> *TCMA platforms are used by organizations selling through a network of channel partners and resellers to keep these partners and resellers engaged and informed.*

First let's take a few minutes to explore the main two types of deployment of through-channel marketing automation platforms. TCMA platforms are used by organizations selling through a network of channel partners and resellers to keep these partners and resellers engaged and informed. This objective is fulfilled by what are known as "market to" activities. Our primary focus today, however, is on automating "market through" activities, which enable channel partners to plan and execute co-marketing activities using **co-branded assets** and marketing tools.

Now the "market through" activities in each of the market segments — such as retail, healthcare, manufacturing, technology, etc.—are necessarily different, because different segments have different kinds of products and customers, and they have different needs. Some tend to rely a lot on direct mail, while others tend to use a lot of integrated campaigns

using **search**, **social**, **email**, **event**. There are also plenty of industries/organizations that fall somewhere in between. It follows that all best-of-breed through-channel marketing automation platforms should be able to address the very diverse requirements of all of these different vertical segments.

In addition to having the market scope to cover the full range of verticals, a best-of-breed platform should be super easy to use and highly configurable. Even today, many TCMA tools fail to pass the ease-of-use test, and almost all fail to pass the configurability test. While it's true that many through-channel marketing automation platforms offer some self-service features aimed at channel partners, most platforms fail to provide comprehensive management and **configuration** access to channel marketing teams and administrators. This means those organizations are likely to struggle to keep up with changes in the marketplace and the demands of evolving business strategies without the help of the platform vendor. Working with the vendor on configuration changes can be a slow—and expensive—process.

Therefore, a true best-of-breed TCMA platform must be able not only to address feature requirements that are relevant for market segments and channel partners' DIY capabilities, but also provide complete "under the hood" access to administrative and **reporting** capabilities so that the users can customize and adapt the platform to meet evolving requirements without ever having to go back to the TCMA vendor for support.

Finally, a best-of-breed TCMA platform should also be affordable, even with localization features and global support. After all, most organizations selling through the channel these days sell globally, and partners selling in different regions of the world will need support that is tailored to their location and language.

When you are evaluating vendors that claim to provide a best- of-breed through-channel marketing automation (TCMA) platform, make sure you bring a detailed checklist of requirements to look for under the hood as well as the hood.

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