The Forrester Wave™: Experience Optimization Platforms, Q2 2018
The Eight Providers That Matter Most And How They Stack Up
by James McCormick and Emily Miller
June 20, 2018

Why Read This Report
In our 24-criteria evaluation of experience optimization platform (EOP) providers, we identified the eight most significant ones — Adobe, Dynamic Yield, Evergage, Monetate, Optimizely, Oracle, SAS, and SiteSpect — and researched, analyzed, and scored them. This report shows how each provider measures up and helps customer insights (CI) professionals make the right choice.

Key Takeaways
Adobe Leads The Pack
Forrester’s research uncovered a market in which Adobe leads the pack. Optimizely, Evergage, Monetate, and SAS offer competitive options. Oracle, Dynamic Yield, and SiteSpect lag behind.

Experience Optimization Practice Evolves From Testing And Personalization Projects
Vendors have built their experience optimization platforms in response to the continued consolidation of online testing, behavioral targeting, and recommendations practices within enterprises. This remit of a modern optimization practice is to continually learn from the digital customer interactions and to deliver evolving experiences that provide the best value to the customer and the brand.

Platform Integration, Channel Execution, And Personalization Techniques Differentiate
Two key areas of differentiation are the ability to execute tests across different digital channels and touchpoints as well as the level of sophistication when applying behavioral targeting and recommendation techniques. The level of integration between the vital capabilities to form a platform also created clear gaps between the vendors we assessed.
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The Eight Providers That Matter Most And How They Stack Up

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EOPs Evolve From Experimentation And Personalization

Leading enterprises have moved away from project-based approaches to online testing and personalization techniques such as behavioral targeting and recommendations — all of which were historically run in isolation from each other. Today, many enterprises have consolidated these practices into centers of excellence that synchronize these different approaches to achieve a common goal: to optimize the experience of digital customer experiences across the entire digitally transformed life cycle of customer engagement. This comes at a time when over two-thirds (68%) of enterprise marketing technology users value tools for their integration and ability to work together as much as for the specific functionality they deliver. Vendors have responded by investing — through integration, rebuilding, and acquisition initiatives — in consolidating and expanding the capabilities of their existing offerings to build out their modern experience optimization platforms.

Our Approach To Evaluating Experience Optimization Evolves To Keep Up With The Market

As we’ve witnessed and extrapolated this trend, we have morphed our online testing Forrester Wave evaluations into an evaluation of experience optimization platforms. This is an acknowledgement that online testing, behavioral targeting, and recommendations have merged within advanced enterprise practices and vendor technology offerings. The most advanced enterprise approaches and technologies are integrated into a digital intelligence architecture. This architecture collects and manages customer interaction data and analyzes it holistically to inform processes and systems that optimize decisions and actions as well as digital customer experiences (see Figure 1).

Most enterprises’ digital transformation is still underway, and these digital intelligence processes and architectures are works in progress. However, this hasn’t stopped early consolidation within parts of the digital intelligence stack — especially relating to the optimization tier. CI pros have accelerated the consolidation of experience optimization practices in response to growing expectations that brands must deliver supreme, individualized digital experiences across an ever-growing breadth of digital touchpoints. On top of that, personalization must occur all within the context of the existing relationship, historical interactions, and the customer’s needs at the moment of interaction.
FIGURE 1 Optimization Technologies Are Part Of The Digital Intelligence Architecture

- Customer context and behavior
- Digital touchpoints
  - Behavioral targeting
  - Online testing
  - Recommendations
- Optimization
- Analytics
  - Application analytics
  - Cross-channel attribution
  - Digital performance management
  - Interaction analytics
  - Internet-of-things (IoT) analytics
  - Predictive analytics
  - Social analytics
  - Spatial analytics
  - Voice of the customer
  - Web analytics
- Data
  - Data warehousing
  - Tag management
Optimization Pros Require Three Core Capabilities

People responsible for optimizing customer interactions — such as CI pros, marketers, eCommerce pros, customer service teams, and product managers — find themselves at the center of these initiatives. Savvy optimization pros seek to personalize customer experience across digital touchpoints by adopting a continuous optimization strategy, which Forrester defines as:

An analytics-driven approach that seeks to leverage every customer interaction to evolve the understanding of the customer, which is in turn used to evolve and optimize current and future customer experiences.

At the crux of continuous optimization are three capabilities that are central to this EOP evaluation:

› **Online testing.** These techniques compare how variations of customer interactions perform against a control group to determine the best treatment. Online testing allows organizations to create, deploy, measure, and manage A/B, multivariate, and other statistical experimentation types to compare multiple versions of an online experience. These tests provide objective, data-informed guidance to help optimize matching the right visitor segments with the right digital experience. Firms commonly use online testing to enhance marketing and product engagements.⁴

› **Behavioral targeting.** These techniques enable a firm to serve tailored experiences to digital visitors based on events, business rules, and the context, characteristics, behavior, and interactions of customers.⁵ Behavioral targeting tools allow users to deliver personalized experiences (like relevant discounts, promotions, or special functionality) to particular customer segments using rules or predictive algorithms.

› **Recommendations.** Recommendations processes are enabled by analytical engines that serve recommended experiences to digital visitors, such as those using websites or mobile apps. Recommendations can include suggestions for related content based on business rules, machine learning algorithms, or a combination of both. Recommendations are traditionally associated with eCommerce merchandising — showing visitors complementary or similar products with the goal of encouraging cross-sell conversions. However, today other industries, such as media and financial services, commonly apply recommendations (e.g., new movie suggestions on Netflix “because you watched The Blind Side”).
Experience Optimization Platforms Evaluation Overview

To assess the state of the experience optimization platforms market and see how the vendors stack up against each other, Forrester evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of top EOP vendors. After examining past research, user need assessments, and vendor and expert interviews, we developed a comprehensive set of 24 evaluation criteria, which we grouped into three high-level buckets:

› **Current offering.** Each vendor’s position on the vertical axis of the Forrester Wave graphic indicates the strength of its current offering. Key criteria for these solutions include online testing, behavioral targeting, recommendations, and platform experience.

› **Strategy.** Placement on the horizontal axis indicates the strength of the vendors’ strategies. We evaluated product vision, execution road map, performance, supporting services, and partner ecosystem.

› **Market presence.** Represented by the size of the markers on the graphic, our market presence scores reflect each vendor’s digital intelligence revenue, number of enterprise customers, and average deal size.

Evaluated Vendors And Inclusion Criteria

Forrester included eight vendors in the assessment: Adobe, Dynamic Yield, Evergage, Monetate, Optimizely, Oracle, SAS, and SiteSpect. Each of these vendors (see Figure 2):

› **Provides a complete experience optimization platform.** In other words, the vendor offers a software solution with advanced capabilities for online testing, behavioral targeting, and recommendation provisions.

› **Has an enterprise user base for experience optimization.** Forty or more enterprises use the vendor’s experience management platform in live production. Forrester defines enterprise-sized customers as firms with at least 1,000 employees and/or $1 billion in annual revenue.

› **Has market visibility in the experience optimization space.** Forrester clients often discuss the vendor’s experience optimization products through inquiries; alternatively, the vendor may, in Forrester’s judgment, warrant inclusion or exclusion in this evaluation because of specific approaches it has taken relative to experience optimization market trends.
## FIGURE 2 Evaluated Vendors: Vendor Information And Inclusion Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vendor</th>
<th>Product evaluated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adobe</td>
<td>Adobe Target Premium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Dynamic Yield | Dynamic Yield for web personalization, including recommendations  
                  | Dynamic Yield for email personalization, including recommendations  
                  | Dynamic Yield for mobile app personalization, including recommendations  
                  | Dynamic Yield for web testing and targeting  
                  | Dynamic Yield for triggered email  
                  | Dynamic Yield for landing page, ads, and links optimization  
                  | Dynamic Yield for server-side personalization and optimization  
                  | Dynamic Yield for customer data management, including CRM onboarding and  
                  | audience segmentation  
                  | Dynamic Yield for web product/content recommendations                         |
| Evergage   | Evergage 1                                                                          |
| Monetate   | Monetate Test & Segment, Monetate Intelligent Personalization Engine, and Monetate  
                  | Intelligent Recommendations                                                      |
| Optimizely | Optimizely Web Experimentation  
                  | Optimizely X Web Experimentation  
                  | Optimizely X Web Personalization  
                  | Optimizely X Web Recommendations  
                  | Optimizely X Program Management  
                  | Optimizely Full Stack Experimentation  
                  | Optimizely X Mobile Experimentation  
                  | Optimizely X OTT Experimentation  
                  | Optimizely X Full Stack Experimentation  
                  | Optimizely X Program Management                                                |
| Oracle     | Oracle Maxymiser                                                                   |
| SAS        | SAS Customer Intelligence 360                                                     |
| SiteSpect  | SiteSpect Starter, Single Page App Package, Server-Side Package, Client; Server-Side  
                  | Optimization Package, Enterprise Client; Server-Side Package, SiteSpect Replatform  
                  | Package                                      |
FIGURE 2 Evaluated Vendors: Vendor Information And Inclusion Criteria (Cont.)

Vendor inclusion criteria

1. The vendor provides a complete experience optimization platform. In other words, the vendor offers a software solution with advanced capabilities for online testing, behavioral targeting, and recommendation provisions.

2. The vendor has an enterprise user base for experience optimization. Forty or more enterprises use the vendor’s experience management platform in live production. Forrester defines enterprise-sized customers as firms with at least 1,000 employees and/or $1 billion in annual revenue.

3. The vendor has market visibility in the experience optimization space. Forrester clients often discuss the vendor’s experience optimization products through inquiries; alternatively, the vendor may, in Forrester’s judgment, warrant inclusion or exclusion in this evaluation because of specific approaches the vendor has taken relative to experience optimization market trends.

Vendor Profiles

This evaluation of the experience optimization platforms market is intended to be a starting point only. We encourage clients to view detailed product evaluations and adapt criteria weightings to fit their individual needs through the Forrester Wave Excel-based vendor comparison tool (see Figure 3 and see Figure 4). Click the link at the beginning of this report on Forrester.com to download the tool.
Leaders

Adobe Target scores well across all experience optimization techniques. Specifically, the product impresses with its testing and targeting capabilities. The vision for Adobe Target Premium is to use AI techniques to enable marketing and data scientists to optimize experiences within channels and across customer journeys. The offering is one part of a matryoshka doll that sits inside the Adobe Marketing Cloud — which in turn sits within Adobe Experience Cloud. Reference customers provided good satisfaction scores for most of the features surveyed. Areas for Adobe to work on include growing the appeal of Target beyond its traditional marketing and eCommerce base and improving the overall platform experience. Legacy systems also continue...
to be a challenge for some long-term customers already invested in parts of the Adobe stack. The challenge for the vendor is to make sure that Adobe Target's messaging to experience optimization buyers is not diluted with its Marketing Cloud/Experience Cloud approach.

**Strong Performers**

› **Optimizely X is built for enterprise-scale experimentation.** The vision for the Optimizely X product set is to enable businesses to build a culture of experimentation. The vendor aims to continue the trajectory of its past successes with a recent appointment of a new CEO and significant investment in developing its Optimizely Full Stack product line. Optimizely X continues to do well in areas such as testing and targeting. Also, the vendor's recent acquisition of Experiment Engine provides native program management capabilities that differentiate it from its competitors. However, the overall score for the EOP offering is dampened by relatively low scores for its recommendation engine capabilities. Customers would also like to see improvements in the reporting suite to create customized views. Going forward, Optimizely must clearly plot out a value-add and easy-to-understand relationship between the Web and Full Stack components of its Optimizely X Experimentation platform and accelerate its investment in its recommendation engine.

› **Evergage sees an opportunity to build relationships between brands and individuals.** The vendor has sought to build the Evergage 1 product to deliver the right message to the right person and channel at the right time. Evergage 1 differentiates itself with strong recommendations and behavioral targeting capabilities scores. Overall, Evergage has high customer satisfaction scores, with one reference stating, “Their ability to collaborate and listen to client needs, and then come up with a solution, is something that stands out to me.” The product's overall scores are impacted by its testing capabilities, where it lags compared to other vendors. Marketing and eCommerce teams remain predominate buyers, but the vendor has started to gain appeal with other business functions. Evergage must continue to foster appeal beyond its traditional buyer base, build on its recommendations heritage, and strengthen its testing capabilities.

› **Monetate drives meaningful interactions with individuals during moments of time.** With its newly refurbished platform, Monetate seeks to do this across all touchpoints, using everything shared between the customer-brand relationship. Monetate scores well within all of the major categories, particularly for overall platform experience. It’s no surprise then that most of its customers use each of the product’s key EOP capabilities. Monetate’s scores for behavioral targeting techniques were weakened by a reduced sophistication compared with some of the other vendors. Also, some customers say that the vendor’s recommendations are not 1:1 yet and are looking forward to deeper individual personalization in the future. Monetate should continue to cater to the marketing and eCommerce users, but to strengthen its relevance and take advantage of shifting trends, it should expand the proportion of product managers and product developers using the product.
› **SAS Customer Intelligence 360 leverage the vendor's heritage in analytics.** SAS’s vision for its Customer Intelligence 360 platform is to use analytics to deliver superior customer experiences and optimize marketing across the customer journey. SAS Customer Intelligence 360 is one of the components of its digital intelligence platform. The product has a good, balanced level of competencies across most of the EOP capability areas assessed, and customers liked its segmentation capability. Some customers that Forrester spoke with were looking for improved ability to aggregate and integrate customer data and increasing the variety of out-of-the-box channel integrations. Each year, SAS invests heavily in research and development, and customers will be happy to see an updated UI as well as integration improvements in the next six to 18 months. To grow the product’s strength as an EOP, one area to focus on is building out a more robust recommendations capability.

**Contenders**

› **Oracle Maxymiser continues to excel across many aspects of experience optimization.** Oracle is swiftly progressing into the digital intelligence space with its recent acquisition of Maxymiser and other analytics technologies. Its vision for Oracle Maxymiser is to help enterprises optimize their experience beyond digital marketing to all customer engagement across the lifecycle and many different digital touchpoints. The product continues to do well in the variety of techniques for testing, and customers are attracted to Oracle for its industry reputation and full-service technology suite. While Oracle does well with its supporting services, it has opportunities to improve the product’s self-serviceability. References would like to see a more intuitive UI with more streamlining for campaign setups. Customers feel excited about Oracle's EOP strategy, which is to rapidly unify Maxymiser with its other digital data, analytics, and machine learning technologies to build out a digital intelligence platform. However, Oracle must take care to reassure existing customers as it makes the transition.

› **Newcomer Dynamic Yield shows good growth in the EOP market.** Dynamic Yield has found success with both enterprise and midmarket customers. The product set is built on the vision of providing brands with an experience optimization operating system to support a new era of digital user experiences. The product’s recommendation capability scores are strong, and it does well with overall platform experience. Clients are attracted to Dynamic Yield’s easy-to-use interface and prebuilt templates for banners, display ads, emails, landing pages, and more. The vendor has a tightly integrated platform, and users are generally pleased with its easy-to-access customer data integrations. Opportunities for improvement exist in areas like testing, analysis/reporting capabilities, and partner ecosystem. Also, Dynamic Yield must continue to build out its professional services offering to support its expansion.

› **SiteSpect continues to appeal to technology buyers.** SiteSpect’s vision is to empower its customers to continuously optimize experiences at scale. To do this, the vendor focuses on omnichannel testing and personalization. Its continued focus on testing and behavioral targeting has kept it competitive in these areas. Also, SiteSpect rightly touts that its reverse proxy
implementation is a differentiator for technical and operational buyers. However, its low-scoring recommendations capabilities weaken its position compared with the other big EOP players. This product will continue to appeal to developers, IT pros, and product owners in addition to technically driven marketing professionals we commonly see in the EOP space. To increase its appeal to business programs, the vendor must build strong optimization capabilities beyond testing and targeting and promote/enable the business value it provides alongside the technical differentiators it clearly espouses.

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Supplemental Material

Online Resource

The online version of Figure 3 is an Excel-based vendor comparison tool that provides detailed product evaluations and customizable rankings. Click the link at the beginning of this report on Forrester.com to download the tool.

Data Sources Used In This Forrester Wave

Forrester used a combination of 24 data sources to assess the strengths and weaknesses of each solution. We evaluated the vendors participating in this Forrester Wave, in part, using materials that they provided to us by March 5, 2018.

› **Vendor surveys.** Forrester surveyed vendors on their capabilities as they relate to the evaluation criteria. Once we analyzed the completed vendor surveys, we conducted vendor calls where necessary to gather details of vendor qualifications.

› **Product demos.** We asked vendors to conduct demonstrations of their products’ functionality. We used findings from these product demos to validate details of each vendor’s product capabilities.

› **Customer reference calls/surveys.** To validate product and vendor qualifications, Forrester also conducted reference calls and fielded an online survey with three of each vendor’s current customers.

The Forrester Wave Methodology

We conduct primary research to develop a list of vendors that meet our criteria for evaluation in this market. From that initial pool of vendors, we narrow our final list. We choose these vendors based on 1) product fit, 2) customer success, and 3) Forrester client demand. We eliminate vendors that have limited customer references and products that don’t fit the scope of our evaluation. Vendors marked as incomplete participants met our defined inclusion criteria but declined to participate or contributed only partially to the evaluation.

After examining past research, user need assessments, and vendor and expert interviews, we develop the initial evaluation criteria. To evaluate the vendors and their products against our set of criteria, we gather details of product qualifications through a combination of lab evaluations, questionnaires, demos, and/or discussions with client references. We send evaluations to the vendors for their review, and we adjust the evaluations to provide the most accurate view of vendor offerings and strategies.

We set default weightings to reflect our analysis of the needs of large user companies — and/or other scenarios as outlined in the Forrester Wave evaluation — and then score the vendors based on a clearly defined scale. We intend these default weightings to serve only as a starting point and encourage readers to adapt the weightings to fit their individual needs through the Excel-based tool.
The final scores generate the graphical depiction of the market based on current offering, strategy, and market presence. Forrester intends to update vendor evaluations regularly as product capabilities and vendor strategies evolve. For more information on the methodology that every Forrester Wave follows, please visit The Forrester Wave™ Methodology Guide on our website.

**Integrity Policy**

We conduct all our research, including Forrester Wave evaluations, in accordance with the Integrity Policy posted on our website.

**Endnotes**

1. Acquiring tools that work together in concert is as important as functionality: 68% of enterprise marketing technology users share this perspective, telling Forrester that the ability to integrate is the most important feature of marketing tools. See the Forrester report “The Next Generation Of Enterprise Marketing Technology.”


5. See the Forrester report “The Forrester Wave™: Digital Intelligence Platforms, Q2 2017.”
We work with business and technology leaders to develop customer-obsessed strategies that drive growth.

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