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EXPERIENCE DIGITAL FREEDOM

YOUR MARKETING STACK IS MORE LIKE FRANKENSTEIN THAN VOLTRON

If you're like other companies, your marketing stack is a hodgepodge. You have a CRM from one vendor, an email marketing tool from another vendor and a CMS from another. You may even have something you developed in-house, such as an application, an e-commerce platform or one of those first systems mentioned. And then you likely have a number of other smaller applications or plug-in modules that perform simple tasks like extracting data or loading data from one major component to the next.

The typical marketing stack often ends up as a morass of code from different computing generations and languages — a Frankenstein, if you will (sure, it's technically 'Frankenstein's Monster,' but so what?). If this setup sounds familiar, you may be used to telling yourself, "It works, but it's not pretty."

How much does your Frankenstein Marketing Stack (or FrankenStack) affect the way you do your job? Even in the best-case scenario, a clunky kluge of barely cooperating software is going to sap your productivity and cause you to expend unnecessary work hours. In the worst-case scenario, your FrankenStack might be mangling your valuable data and scaring customers away. So, does this really have to be true? How did we get to this point? And, more importantly, how can we fix this?

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PIECES OF FRANKENSTEIN'S MONSTER

Scott Brinker, editor of chiefmartec.com, first began cataloguing the marketing automation ecosystem in 2011, counting around 150 companies in the space. By 2017, there were 5,000 companies in the space — leading to the informal term 'the Martech 5000.' That term is now obsolete — it took only 12 months for the industry to add nearly 2,000 additional businesses.[1]

These solutions are designed to fill a single bullet point in your marketing stack. Individually, they might work quite well — high-functioning, well-supported pieces of product that work as intended. When you begin aggregating single-point solutions, however, you start heading into Frankenstein territory.

Companies can now create fully integrated, fully featured marketing stacks that are basically a constellation of single-point solutions strung together using out-of-the-box integrations, custom-developed integrations or middleware solutions. In fact, this is more of the norm than the exception, with the average company running up to 14 products per stack.[2] A stack like this is fragile, verging on house-of-cards territory. Many solutions won't integrate natively, so you'll have to spend time developing for them, and then testing what you've developed. Every time you add a new solution, delete an existing solution, or even apply a patch, you'll have to retest and redo a lot of your work. And if you're even somewhat organized, you'll have to re-document it all as well. This is a slow process, but your company relies on speed.

In order for your marketing efforts to succeed, your tech stack needs to be able to scale and pivot quickly. It also needs to be a stable and resilient platform that recovers quickly from unexpected downtime. Lastly, it needs to help you get as close to real time as possible by achieving tight integration that allows data to be shared, accessed and activated instantly throughout your organization — this is the non-negotiable foundation to creating a seamless customer journey.

As you might expect, the vast majority of these businesses operate in a niche. Most create one or two pieces of software that do just one or two things, such as:

– Import .CSV files
– Send newsletters
– Build landing pages
– ABM
– A/B testing
– Site personalization
– Live chat

SOURCE READING
1. Chief Marketing Technologist Blog, "Marketing Technology Landscape Supergraphic (2018): Martech 5000 (actually 6,829)," April 2018.
2. Martech, "How Your MarTech Stack Fails to Serve the Customer," August 2018.

OH, THE HUMANITY!

What does a monster do? Generally, it lurches, frightens the locals, and must one day be destroyed. When your marketing stack is made from a set of single-point solutions that have been hastily stitched together, the same descriptors will apply. Your FrankenStack will be subject to:

Components Crashing
Think of everything you might miss while your systems are down. Unexpected downtime costs companies across all industries an average of $260,000 per hour.[3] Depending on how your company is set up, an outage in your marketing stack may prevent customers from contacting sales or support, contributing to a large fraction of lost revenue.

Unexpected Slowdowns
On a similar note, your FrankenStack might not fail outright, but it might not perform adequately either. Application slowdowns are another cause of lost productivity — even if your company is affected by slow application performance only 10% of the time, that still works out to a loss of $150,000 per year.[4]

Hitting API Call Limits
Many SaaS applications have built-in license restrictions that let you use their APIs only a certain number of times per day. If you call the application too many times, it will throw up Error 429 — too many requests — resulting in a production bottleneck.

Your FrankenStack isn't just buggy, it's also extremely unlikely to be flexible — and in today's marketing environment, flexibility is what matters most. Flexibility is what lets you create a personalized end-to-end customer experience, with personalization that goes far beyond "Hello <firstname>" email greetings.

Race Conditions Between Systems
When your marketing stack slows down or hits a call limit, this can generate a race condition: events that are designed to happen in a certain order — such as a lead being generated automatically and assigned to a salesperson — start to happen out of sequence, or not at all.

Data Collisions Between Tools
This occurs when two different programs attempt to manipulate the same data set at the same time. It's important to time workflows correctly so that this doesn't occur, otherwise bizarre things will happen to your database. If your marketing stack contains many point solutions, you will find this tricky.

Endless Loops
In programming, an endless loop is a process without an exit condition. When this happens in marketing automation, it can be caused when a workflow generates too many cascading calls. In an environment with a large number of single-point solutions, the cause of an endless loop can be very difficult to debug or work around.

Mapping Inconsistencies
Different applications will ingest data in different ways. It's important to normalize data fields across applications so that you can retain detailed information about each contact — but once again, having a large number of point solutions may make this difficult to do.

SOURCE READING
3. Aberdeen, "The (Rising!) Cost of Downtime," April 2016.
4. AppNeta, "Finding the Cost of Poor Application or Network Performance," October 2017.

Think of the kind of personalization that lets you serve up custom homepage offers based on industry or job title; that lets you tailor landing page imagery based on geography; that lets you customize emails based on past purchase behavior and color preferences. Triggering the most appropriate message to specific contacts exactly when they're most likely to be making a purchase decision is the kind of personalization that makes customers 80% more likely to do business with you,[5] and the kind that makes use of the detailed data that you worked very hard to collect.

A FrankenStack isn't going to let you choose your targets with that level of precision. Ideally, a delightful customer experience reflects the internal cohesion of marketing, sales, product and support. Your FrankenStack doesn't create that level of cohesion.

Although each of your single-point solutions will likely contain an API, you'll find that:

– They're often not fully-featured in terms of endpoints or capabilities — which means you can only tackle one task at a time.

– They're often not well-documented — which means you should prepare to spend a lot of time asking questions in support forums or on the phone with technical support.

– They'll often require custom development from in-house engineers — which means that your in-house engineers must also maintain and support this project over time.[6]

In the meantime, you'll find that out-of-the-box integrations won't adapt to your custom workflows or data flows, if they even exist at all. In the long term, you'll find that your FrankenStack is resistant to change. You'll have to compromise and adapt your workflows, your team, your process and your strategy to the product and not the other way around.

Eventually, you'll find that this leads to visible, frustrating and embarrassing mistakes that will earn you the scorn and displeasure of your customers. Mistakes such as:

– New products going live on your website before the marketing campaign officially launches.

– Customers dealing with major outages getting actively upsold by sales representatives.

– Email campaigns promoting special offers that have already expired.

– Personalization fields failing to populate.

– Drip campaigns going out in the middle of the night, over the weekend, on holidays and to contacts who have no business being in that campaign or segment to begin with.

This is not an optimized approach to converting prospects to opportunities. Here's the kicker: According to a recent survey from the CMO Council, only 3% of marketing professionals believe that their marketing stacks are adequately connected.[6] Let's flip that figure around: 97% of all marketers are running FrankenStacks. As an industry, we need to change this.

SOURCE READING
5. Epsilon, "The Power of Me: The Impact of Personalization on Marketing Performance," January 2018.
6. CMO Council, "Gaps and Fragmentation Plague Marketers Looking to Deliver Seamless Engagements to Connected Customers," Accessed September 2018.

80%
Personalization makes customers 80% more likely to do business with you.

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TURNING FRANKENSTEIN INTO VOLTRON

If you don't remember the original kid's cartoon, Voltron is a robot composed of smaller robots — much in the way that Frankenstein is a body composed of disparate limbs. The difference? Rather than a shambling monster, Voltron is a heroic protector that's geometrically more powerful than the sum of its parts. Voltron is what your marketing stack should be aiming for — not Frankenstein.

To continue the analogy, the components of your Voltron are your marketing team, sales team, product/ implementation team and support team — plus the tools they use. When combined, they're a powerful force for marketing — more powerful than any individual team. The trick is getting them there. How do you make your combined marketing stack more powerful than the sum of its parts?

This idealized stack would enable:

– Deep, granular automation that connects all components at all levels. Your applications would natively integrate and share data without any in-house development or support.

– Individualized sales and marketing campaigns based on contextual actions that occur after a customer contacts support.

– Automated marketing workflows would be able to target prospects at all stages of the funnel, not just the top.

– Dramatically personalized marketing campaigns based on individual user behavior.

Again, these are only goals. Getting there — creating a flexible marketing stack that Functionally encompasses the entire customer journey — is a different problem.

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ACQUIA: DEFENDER OF THE UNIVERSE

Acquia's marketing automation platform, Campaign Studio, helps your marketing stack be greater than the sum of its parts. It does this as an open marketing solution that can function as a broad marketing platform — similar to other legacy marketing products — but with added flexibility that lets you consolidate other systems from inside and outside our ecosystem. In other words, you can either build your marketing stack from the ground up using Campaign Studio or use it to fill in the gaps between your existing single-point solutions.

In addition to playing nicely with pre-existing tools you've bought, Campaign Studio is ideal for tools that you've built in-house. If you operate a SaaS platform, a handwritten mobile app, a customized e-commerce platform or any kind of proprietary customer support system or data warehouse, Campaign Studio will smoothly integrate with these systems.

Whether you're a startup with under 5,000 contacts or an enterprise with over 5 million, Campaign Studio has the power to simplify and transform your marketing stack. Both B2B companies and B2C brands will be able to create a holistic customer journey that encompasses every stage — from anonymous website visitors to known leads to trial users to paying customers to recurring customers. With Campaign Studio, you can effortlessly link your entire organization to this process — marketing, sales, product and support.

Building a marketing stack is never easy, and most companies report that, to one extent or another, their stack behaves like a Frankenstein: slow, lurching and prone to scaring off customers. Want to learn how to build a stack that's more like a Voltron instead? Contact Acquia today.

CAMPAIGN STUDIO WILL INTEGRATE WITH:

– Sales tools, including CRM platforms, video conferencing, live chat, e-commerce systems and sales email tools.

– Marketing tools, including CMS, webinar software, ABM, social platforms and mobile tools.

– Support tools, including ticketing, knowledge bases and training platforms.

To learn more about how Acquia can help transform your organization's customer experience, visit our website at **acquia.com/products/marketing-cloud/campaign-studio** or contact us at **sales@acquia.com**.

ABOUT ACQUIA

Acquia is the open digital experience platform for Drupal. We provide the world's most ambitious brands with technology that allows them to embrace innovation and create customer moments that matter. At Acquia, we believe in the power of community — giving our customers the freedom to build tomorrow on their terms.

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