The Forrester Wave™: Real-Time Interaction Management, Q4 2020

The 13 Providers That Matter Most And How They Stack Up

by Rusty Warner
October 20, 2020

Why Read This Report

In our 30-criterion evaluation of real-time interaction management (RTIM) providers, we identified the 13 most significant ones — Adobe, Boxever, Emarsys, FICO, IMImobile, Kitewheel, Pegasystems, Precisely, Salesforce, SAS, Teradata, Thunderhead, and Treasure Data — and researched, analyzed, and scored them. This report shows how each provider measures up and helps B2C marketing professionals select the right one for their needs.

Key Takeaways

Pegasystems, SAS, Thunderhead, And Teradata Lead The Pack

Forrester's research uncovered a market in which Pegasystems, SAS, Thunderhead, and Teradata are Leaders; Kitewheel, Treasure Data, and Boxever are Strong Performers; FICO, Adobe, and Salesforce are Contenders; and Precisely, Emarsys, and IMImobile are Challengers.

Real-Time Decisioning, AI, And Journey Orchestration Are Key Differentiators

RTIM integrates customer data, content, and channels with sophisticated decision engines to personalize customer experiences. Vendors that enrich real-time decisioning with streaming data ingestion, embed artificial intelligence (AI) to power advanced analytics, and deliver value-based journey orchestration position themselves to successfully meet evolving RTIM requirements.

The Forrester Wave™: Real-Time Interaction Management, Q4 2020

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Table Of Contents

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The Forrester Wave™: Real-Time Interaction Management, Q4 2020
The 13 Providers That Matter Most And How They Stack Up

RTIM Is Personalization Done Right

Forrester advises B2C marketers that effective personalization aligns strategy and technology to deliver customer value.[1] Enter RTIM. Our fourth installment of this evaluation focuses on driving successful outcomes in the moments that matter to customers across their holistic journeys with brands. It builds on the momentum we observed in 2019 for aligning marketing and customer experience (CX) initiatives.[2] But now RTIM users are looking beyond integration capabilities that ensure cross-channel consistency. They are demanding — and leading vendors are delivering — even more sophisticated solutions that automate and optimize CX with real-time decisioning based on enriched data sets, experience-focused artificial intelligence (AI) that incorporates empathy and ethical best practices, and journey orchestration to ensure a mutual value exchange for both customer and brand.

As a result of these trends, RTIM customers should look for providers that:

› **Deliver enterprise data and decisioning scalability.** Successful RTIM deployments must keep pace with ever-increasing demands for real-time streaming data from disparate sources, high-volume decisioning in 100 milliseconds (or less), and experience delivery across digital and offline channels. Nearly half of the RTIM references we interviewed for this study manage databases with more than 10 million customers each, and nearly one-third told us they leverage their RTIM solutions to process at least 500 million customer interactions per annum.[3] Financial services and telecommunications firms dominate RTIM's most scalable list, but digital-first companies across sectors also demand extreme scalability.

› **Enrich and optimize cross-channel experiences.** RTIM has evolved from being the inbound yin to cross-channel campaign management's (CCCM's) outbound yang. Leading RTIM solutions apply their predictive analytics, machine learning, and AI capabilities to enhance CX —regardless of channel — by focusing on customer needs, preferences, and outcomes. They integrate directly with applications for human-assisted channels, interactive voice response (IVR) systems, internet-of-things (IoT) devices, and digital assistants, and they provide an intelligence layer for marketing technology (martech) solutions that manage channels like email, short message service (SMS), mobile app, web, and e-commerce.

› **Orchestrate journeys aligned with your brand strategy.** RTIM solutions represent three functional segments: next best experience, cross-channel marketing, and personalization.[4] Our evaluation focused on next-best-experience solutions with cross-functional journey orchestration for marketing, sales, service, and operational use cases. Such investments typically apply to financial services, telecommunications, utilities, online gaming, and health care firms. Those in retail, travel, and media sectors, and other firms that rely on marketing and advertising to drive customer acquisition and e-commerce microjourneys, should also consider the cross-channel marketing and personalization vendors included in this study.

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The Forrester Wave™: Real-Time Interaction Management, Q4 2020
The 13 Providers That Matter Most And How They Stack Up

October 20, 2020

Evaluation Summary

The Forrester Wave™ evaluation highlights Leaders, Strong Performers, Contenders, and Challengers. It's an assessment of the top vendors in the market and does not represent the entire vendor landscape. You'll find more information about this market in our Now Tech report on RTIM.

We intend this evaluation to be a starting point only and encourage clients to view product evaluations and adapt criteria weightings using the Excel-based vendor comparison tool (see Figure 1 and see Figure 2). Click the link at the beginning of this report on Forrester.com to download the tool.

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October 20, 2020

The Forrester Wave™: Real-Time Interaction Management, Q4 2020
The 13 Providers That Matter Most And How They Stack Up

FIGURE 1 Forrester Wave™: Real-Time Interaction Management, Q4 2020

THE FORRESTER WAVE™

Real-Time Interaction Management
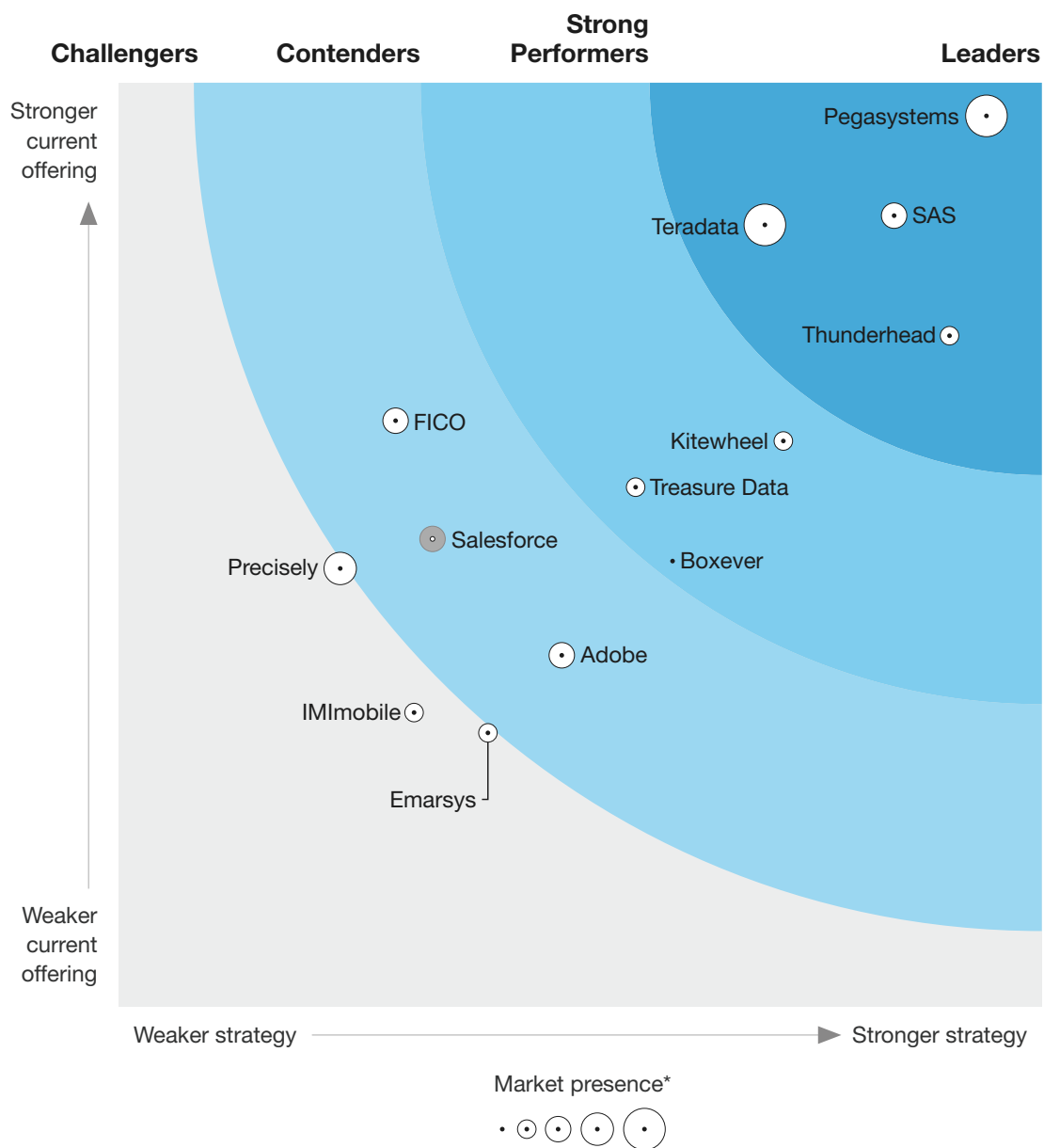
Q4 2020

*A gray bubble indicates a nonparticipating vendor.

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The Forrester Wave™: Real-Time Interaction Management, Q4 2020
The 13 Providers That Matter Most And How They Stack Up

October 20, 2020

FIGURE 2 Forrester Wave™: Real-Time Interaction Management Scorecard, Q4 2020

	Forrester's weighting	Adobe	Boxever	Emarsys	FICO	IMImobile	Kitewheel	Pegasystems
Current offering	50%	1.90	2.41	1.48	3.17	1.59	3.06	4.82
Customer recognition	10%	3.00	3.00	1.00	4.00	1.00	3.00	5.00
Contextual understanding	10%	1.80	2.20	1.00	1.00	1.00	4.20	5.00
Decision arbitration	35%	1.50	2.40	1.00	4.10	1.30	3.10	5.00
Experience orchestration	20%	2.30	2.30	2.10	1.90	2.80	2.90	4.40
Measurement and optimization	10%	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	1.00	4.00	5.00
Integration	15%	2.20	2.60	1.40	3.00	1.80	1.80	4.60
Strategy	50%	2.40	3.00	2.00	1.50	1.60	3.60	4.70
Product vision	25%	3.00	3.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	3.00	5.00
Innovation roadmap	20%	1.00	3.00	3.00	1.00	1.00	3.00	5.00
Market approach	15%	1.00	1.00	1.00	3.00	1.00	3.00	5.00
Performance	15%	3.00	5.00	3.00	1.00	3.00	5.00	3.00
Supporting products and services	10%	5.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	5.00
Partner ecosystem	10%	3.00	3.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	5.00
Commercial model	5%	1.00	3.00	3.00	1.00	3.00	5.00	5.00
Market presence	0%	3.00	1.00	2.00	2.50	2.00	1.50	4.50
Revenue	50%	4.00	1.00	2.00	3.00	3.00	1.00	5.00
Customers	50%	2.00	1.00	2.00	2.00	1.00	2.00	4.00

All scores are based on a scale of 0 (weak) to 5 (strong).

FOR B2C MARKETING PROFESSIONALS

The Forrester Wave™: Real-Time Interaction Management, Q4 2020
The 13 Providers That Matter Most And How They Stack Up

October 20, 2020

FIGURE 2 Forrester Wave™: Real-Time Interaction Management Scorecard, Q4 2020 (Cont.)

	Forrester's weighting	Precisely	Salesforce*	SAS	Teradata	Thunderhead	Treasure Data
Current offering	50%	2.37	2.53	4.28	4.23	3.63	2.81
Customer recognition	10%	2.00	2.00	5.00	4.00	3.00	3.00
Contextual understanding	10%	1.80	3.00	3.80	5.00	4.20	2.60
Decision arbitration	35%	2.50	2.90	4.60	4.50	3.60	3.30
Experience orchestration	20%	2.30	2.40	3.80	3.90	3.70	2.30
Measurement and optimization	10%	2.00	2.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00
Integration	15%	3.00	2.20	4.20	3.80	3.40	2.20
Strategy	50%	1.20	1.70	4.20	3.50	4.50	2.80
Product vision	25%	1.00	1.00	3.00	3.00	5.00	3.00
Innovation roadmap	20%	1.00	1.00	5.00	3.00	5.00	3.00
Market approach	15%	1.00	1.00	5.00	5.00	3.00	1.00
Performance	15%	1.00	3.00	5.00	3.00	5.00	5.00
Supporting products and services	10%	1.00	3.00	3.00	5.00	3.00	1.00
Partner ecosystem	10%	3.00	3.00	5.00	3.00	5.00	3.00
Commercial model	5%	1.00	1.00	3.00	3.00	5.00	3.00
Market presence	0%	4.00	2.50	2.50	5.00	1.50	1.50
Revenue	50%	3.00	2.00	3.00	5.00	1.00	2.00
Customers	50%	5.00	3.00	2.00	5.00	2.00	1.00

All scores are based on a scale of 0 (weak) to 5 (strong).

*Indicates a nonparticipating vendor

Vendor Offerings

Forrester included 13 vendors in this assessment: Adobe, Boxever, Emarsys, FICO, IMImobile, Kitewheel, Pegasystems, Precisely, Salesforce, SAS, Teradata, Thunderhead, and Treasure Data. (see Figure 3). We invited Insider to participate in this Forrester Wave, but it chose not to participate, and we could not make enough estimates about its capabilities to include it in the assessment as a nonparticipating vendor.

FOR B2C MARKETING PROFESSIONALS

October 20, 2020

The Forrester Wave™: Real-Time Interaction Management, Q4 2020
The 13 Providers That Matter Most And How They Stack Up

FIGURE 3 Evaluated Vendors And Product Information

Vendor	Product evaluated
Adobe	Adobe Experience Cloud (primarily Adobe Campaign Classic)
Boxever	Boxever (full platform)
Emarsys	Emarsys Marketing Platform
FICO	FICO Marketing Solutions Suite
IMImobile	IMIconnect
Kitewheel	Kitewheel Customer Journey Hub
Pegasystems	Pega Customer Decision Hub
Precisely	Precisely EngageOne Suite, Precisely Spectrum Quality
Salesforce	Interaction Studio
SAS	SAS Customer Intelligence 360
Teradata	Teradata Vantage CX
Thunderhead	Thunderhead ONE Platform
Treasure Data	Treasure Data Enterprise Customer Data Platform

Vendor Profiles

Our analysis uncovered the following strengths and weaknesses of individual vendors.

Leaders

› **Pegasystems drives business outcomes with a veritable RTIM powerhouse.** Pegasystems (Pega) deploys its Pega Customer Decision Hub for enterprise firms with complex cross-functional RTIM requirements. It integrates digital decisioning and process automation with real-time data management, analytics, and business-focused AI, and it offers innovative approaches to voice, mobile, chatbot, and human-assisted interactions. It further integrates with martech tools to provide "the brain" for digital RTIM. Pega pivoted in early 2020 to three core business solutions: intelligent automation, customer service, and customer engagement, and the third centers on RTIM as a line of business in its own right. It focuses on global banking, insurance, telecommunications, and other enterprise firms, and its install base of around 250 RTIM customers spans the Americas, Europe, and Asia.

Pega excels in nearly every aspect of this evaluation, distancing itself from other vendors in all but a few digital marketing criteria. It raises the bar for enterprise RTIM that runs the gamut of digital self-service and human-assisted touchpoints across the entire customer lifecycle. References praised its holistic commitment to customer-focused outcomes and attributed significant business results to their Pega solutions. One explained that his firm "initially deployed Pega for a customer retention use case, but now it's a revenue generator — it's become an addictive drug that we use in pretty much every customer-facing channel." References for several other vendors also acknowledged using Pega as the decision engine within their RTIM ecosystems. Enterprises (especially those in regulated industries) looking to implement RTIM as part of a CX-focused digital transformation should consider Pega.

› **SAS showcases analytics prowess to optimize RTIM decision-making.** SAS delivers RTIM via SAS Customer Intelligence 360, which provides customer engagement and digital intelligence on top of SAS Intelligent Decisioning. Many customers add these capabilities to SAS environments that include its broader range of data visualization, advanced analytics, predictive modeling, AI, IoT, and event stream processing solutions. Just over 100 customers use the RTIM as part of SAS Customer Intelligence 360, but nearly 10 times that number leverage the underlying decisioning functionality to support broader RTIM use cases. Three-quarters of SAS's mostly enterprise customers are from outside North America, primarily in the financial services, telecommunications, and retail sectors across Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

SAS's dedication to analytical decision-making gives it a competitive edge for decision arbitration, which is the heart and soul of RTIM. It continues to bolster its RTIM capabilities for business users, like journey analytics visualization and digital experience orchestration. One reference, a long-standing user of multiple SAS solutions, is incorporating SAS Customer Intelligence 360 as a critical element of an evolving RTIM architecture across both inbound and outbound channels. References for multiple other vendors reported using SAS as part of their RTIM ecosystems for customer analytics, decision management, and/or performance dashboards. SAS offers a compelling solution for enterprises that need advanced analytics embedded in marketing and CX applications to drive next-best experience initiatives.

› **Thunderhead fuses RTIM and customer journey orchestration.** The Thunderhead ONE Platform bundles the ONE Engagement Hub with ThunderBay, which the vendor launched in early 2020 as its AI-enabled customer analytics offering.[5] Thunderhead is a leading journey orchestration provider, and it positions RTIM as mission-critical functionality to optimize interaction decisions within a broader customer journey.[6] It increased its annual recurring revenue by over 200% in 2019, and this growth came from a mix of direct sales and strategic partnerships (chiefly with Salesforce, which acquired Evergage in early 2020 to establish its own competing RTIM solution). Eighty percent of Thunderhead's nearly 200 customers are enterprise firms in the financial services, telecommunications, travel and leisure, retail, and utilities sectors across the Americas, Europe, and Asia.

We evaluated Thunderhead as Salesforce Interaction Studio in our last RTIM study, but this is its first standalone appearance. We were impressed with its vision and roadmap for customer journey decisioning based on individual contextualization and intent inference. Thunderhead lags more established RTIM vendors in terms of advanced analytics, which it is now addressing with ThunderBay's unique query engine and business language approach to analytical modeling. References praised Thunderhead for its ease of integration with data sources and delivery channels. One described it as a "middleware solution that slots into an existing environment," and a second went so far as to call it "fast and easy." Thunderhead provides an enticing, lighter-weight RTIM alternative for enterprises that want to implement a customer journey orchestration layer.

› **Teradata doubles down on RTIM with its Vantage CX reboot.** Teradata rebranded its former Customer Journey platform as Vantage CX in late 2019.[7] Teradata Vantage CX leverages Teradata Vantage for customer data management and analytics, and it includes Teradata's RTIM and CCCM solutions. A strategic go-to-market partnership with Celebrus complements Teradata's capabilities with real-time data capture and digital intelligence.[8] Teradata now offers software-as-a-service (SaaS) options in addition to its established cloud, on-premises, or hybrid cloud offerings. It focuses almost exclusively on large enterprises, and its global install base includes telecommunications, financial services, retail, and healthcare firms across the Americas, Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

Teradata typically deploys RTIM into enterprise environments that already include its customer data management and analytics solutions, which are its key differentiators. We spoke to references who had worked with Teradata for 15 to 20 years on the data side but implemented RTIM within the last few years. References revealed that their RTIM projects required considerable effort, mostly due to their own complex architectures and ambitious goals. One told us, "It was definitely a challenge to get it working with our in-house web capabilities, but we had brilliant support from Teradata." Multiple references for other vendors also mentioned Teradata as a key customer data component for their RTIM ecosystems. Enterprise firms, particularly those with existing Teradata environments, should evaluate Teradata Vantage CX and review Teradata's new capabilities and cloud deployment options.

Strong Performers

› **Kitewheel leverages partners to deliver RTIM and customer journey orchestration.** Kitewheel markets its Customer Journey Hub as "everything you need to orchestrate the perfect customer experience." Its leading journey orchestration solution enables brands to take an outside-in view of marketing, sales, and service from the customer perspective.[9] Kitewheel supplies a native rules-based decision engine and ingests analytical models and scores to address RTIM as part of a customer's overall journey. It sells directly to about 15% of its 140 customers, and it serves the remainder via an extensive network of original equipment manufacturer (OEM) partners and resellers, including other technology vendors, agencies, and services providers. Most of its customers are financial services, retail, travel, utility, and automotive companies in North America and Europe, with a handful in Asia.

FOR B2C MARKETING PROFESSIONALS

October 20, 2020

The Forrester Wave™: Real-Time Interaction Management, Q4 2020
The 13 Providers That Matter Most And How They Stack Up

Kitewheel's focus on customer journey orchestration really pays off with RTIM requirements for contextual understanding based on journey analytics and strategy optimization based on customer outcomes. Its ability to utilize existing data and analytics infrastructures is a plus for interoperability, but rivals surpass it with robust native capabilities. Some Kitewheel partners, like Cheetah Digital, integrate it with their own customer data platform (CDP) and analytics tools to provide a more complete solution. References described Kitewheel as the "middleware" or "connective tissue" that links customer data and analytics to marketing and CRM systems for rules-based journey orchestration. One reference told us, "Kitewheel enabled an easy switch to care and nurture journeys during the COVID-19 crisis." Firms looking to integrate a customer journey-oriented decision engine with an existing analytics environment should check out Kitewheel.

› **Treasure Data positions RTIM atop an analytics-focused CDP.** Treasure Data markets its RTIM solution as an enterprise CDP with real-time capabilities for personalized marketing. It owes its debut in this evaluation to impressive growth (greater than 50% annually) over the last five years and its increased enterprise wallet share. In July 2020, Arm announced a proposed separation of Treasure Data from its IP business, and it will operate independently when the transfer completes in Q4 2020.[10] Forrester estimates that over 200 Treasure Data customers leverage its CDP for RTIM and that the majority are enterprises. It has an established install base in Asia, with a strong and growing presence in North America and Europe, across media and entertainment, retail and consumer goods, automotive, and financial services.

Treasure Data's CDP provides scalable customer data ingestion, and its Treasure Boxes provide an extensive library of packaged analytical models with "white box" configurability so users can customize and tune them to specific business objectives. It still has work ahead to align its analytics with business logic (a user experience [UX] for building business rules is in its roadmap), and it needs to enrich its integration with content, offline channels, and operational applications. We interviewed references with RTIM use cases across marketing and e-commerce, including personalized emails and SMS, online product recommendations, and social media advertising. References across the board cited ease of use as a key benefit, and one added, "The UX gives marketers access to underlying analytical complexity that is beyond most martech vendors." Treasure Data offers a good solution for firms looking for a CDP with built-in analytics to drive next best experiences.

› **Boxever proves its mettle alongside more established RTIM stalwarts.** Boxever applies its entire platform to RTIM use cases for managing personalized customer interactions across marketing, e-commerce, and CX operations. It advocates an API-driven approach whereby its CDP ingests data from relevant sources to derive insights that its rules engine then surfaces via customer touchpoints. Boxever found initial success in the airline industry by aligning digital self-service interactions (email, mobile, web, and airport kiosks) with human-assisted CX (contact center agents, ground staff, and flight crew). It then branched out to cover similar needs for financial services, online gaming, telecommunications, and retail. Its relatively small — but growing — install base includes customers in Europe, Asia, and Latin America, and it is eyeing the US market.

FOR B2C MARKETING PROFESSIONALS

October 20, 2020

The Forrester Wave™: Real-Time Interaction Management, Q4 2020
The 13 Providers That Matter Most And How They Stack Up

Boxever takes a microjourney approach to optimize interactive decision points that impact the bigger customer journey, such as checking in for a flight, completing a loan application, or placing a bet on a sporting event. It helps its customers prioritize uses cases and layers its solution on top of an existing environment versus a from-the-ground-up infrastructure or full stack approach. References described rapidly evolving (slowed by COVID-19) environments that are building on the success of early use cases. One told us, "Boxever is our solution to reconcile and simplify CX to make it more cogent across our siloed business units," and all references echoed the concept of Boxever as an engagement hub. Boxever lacks the functionality breadth and analytics depth of more established RTIM vendors, but it is an attractive option for enterprises looking to add a decision engine to mature ecosystems.

Contenders

› **FICO focuses on enterprise decision management as a foundation for RTIM.** The FICO Marketing and Customer Engagement Solutions portfolio packages multiple RTIM-related products. It complements these with technology and services from its broader portfolio to deliver advanced analytics, decision management, and business process optimization. FICO is well-known in the financial services industry, and it also markets to the healthcare and pharmaceutical, retail and consumer goods, and telecommunications sectors. Approximately 80% of its predominantly enterprise customers are US firms (many with global operations), but it also serves customers in Latin America, Europe, and Asia.

FICO's strengths lie in its secure customer data management, advanced analytics, and digital decisioning that underpin business processes for credit, risk, and fraud management, offer eligibility, originations, and collections. Its roadmap includes plans to consolidate functionality from its independent products into a next-best-action (NBA) solution with a marketer-friendly UX. References described how they currently provide business logic to FICO so it can process customer records on their behalf to determine appropriate offers for individuals. One explained, "Because we don't have rights to the personally identifiable information (PII), we can only take ownership of the data when we make an offer to a customer." Enterprises — especially those in regulated industries — should consider FICO for scalable offer preprocessing. They should also review its broader product portfolio and roadmap against their specific RTIM use cases.

› **Adobe shows RTIM promise as its Experience Cloud begets its Experience Platform.** Adobe applies nearly every component of the Adobe Experience Cloud to various aspects of RTIM. But it relies on Adobe Campaign Classic (ACC) and its built-in interaction module to deliver primary RTIM capabilities. Approximately 100 customers use ACC for RTIM, and they are some of Adobe's largest global customers across retail, media and entertainment, financial services, and telecommunications. These users typically complement ACC with Adobe Analytics, Adobe Target, Adobe Experience Manager, and Adobe Audience Manager. The vast majority of references across all vendors in this study also integrate one or more of these Adobe products with their core RTIM solutions.

Adobe's main RTIM capabilities revolve around personalized outbound campaigns (email, SMS, and push messaging) and inbound offers (web, e-commerce, and mobile app), but the vendor also creates advertising audiences and delivers predetermined leads to human-assisted channels. Adobe plans to address more complex RTIM use cases with Adobe Experience Platform (AEP), which includes real-time customer profiles, journey orchestration, and offer decisioning modules. AEP will provide ACC users access to these new capabilities via a services layer. References told us their core data and analytics tools reside outside Adobe, and one described "a lot of custom work to get ACC to meet [his firm's] needs." Only one acknowledged long-term plans to move to AEP; others were skeptical, citing integration issues and limitations with proof of concept (POC) projects. Current and prospective Adobe customers should review ACC and AEP roadmap timelines against their specific needs.

› **Salesforce shifts its RTIM course with its acquisition of Evergage.** Salesforce markets Interaction Studio as its primary RTIM solution, but it replaced the underlying technology in early 2020. It previously based the solution on a joint development effort with Thunderhead; it now incorporates Evergage, which it acquired in February.[11] Salesforce continues to support its customers using Thunderhead, while it will focus new sales efforts on the Evergage product. The biggest difference: Salesforce positioned Thunderhead for customer journey analytics and orchestration in financial services, and Evergage has a track record primarily as a personalization engine in the e-commerce sector. The combined Interaction Studio install base also includes media and entertainment, travel and leisure, and high-tech firms globally, though the majority are US organizations.

Current transition efforts complicate our evaluation of Salesforce. In addition to changing Interaction Studio's core technology and managing customer upgrades and/or migrations, Salesforce must integrate Evergage into its Marketing Cloud to align with its Journey Builder UX and workflows. It also has work to do on the data and analytics side because Evergage's CDP (based on MongoDB) and AI capabilities differ from Salesforce's Customer 360 Audiences and Einstein offerings. Preacquisition Evergage references raved about its email, web, and e-commerce personalization — a complementary add-on to martech ecosystems from various vendors.[12] Salesforce is a good choice for firms in need of such capabilities, and they should ask how Salesforce plans to extend those strengths to a broader array of RTIM use cases. Salesforce declined to participate in the full Forrester Wave evaluation process.

Challengers

› **Precisely provides a reliable RTIM mainstay and an array of point solutions.** Syncsort created Precisely as a new company in May 2020 following its acquisition of the Pitney Bowes software and data business.[13] Precisely configures RTIM solutions using multiple former Pitney Bowes products from its EngageOne (marketing and CX) and Spectrum (customer data management and analytics) offerings. Precisely emphasizes its data integrity leadership, and it focuses on data integration, quality, enrichment, and analytics to power intelligent business decisions. It now serves

more than 600 global RTIM customers, mostly in the insurance, telecommunications, finance, retail, and healthcare industries. Forty percent are enterprise organizations across the Americas, Europe, and Asia.

Precisely offers a broad range of customer engagement tools for marketing and customer services on top of its data and analytics platform. These stand-alone tools comprise a diverse catalog — versus an integrated RTIM solution — for email, SMS, chatbots, digital self-service, and personalized video functions. References discussed older on-premises software versions and universally referred to Portrait Interaction Optimizer, even though the EngageOne branding is more than five years old. Precisely is a good choice for businesses that manage long-standing customer accounts and need to deliver predetermined offers via human-assisted channels (contact centers and agents) or self-service portals (web and mobile app). Existing customers and prospects should also take a look at its EngageOne point solutions for relevant CX use cases.

› **Emarsys offers behavior-based personalization (a subset of RTIM) for e-commerce.** The Emarsys Marketing Platform combines digital marketing orchestration with a CDP that includes audience segmentation and reporting. Emarsys adds AI-enabled analytics, multivariate testing, and offer optimization to address RTIM use cases for personalized product recommendations based on customer behavior. Emarsys continues to expand its presence in North America and Asia, but nearly two-thirds of its more than 2,300 customers are European firms. It focuses on e-commerce organizations, primarily midmarket retailers and direct-to-consumer (DTC) manufacturers, as well as travel, media and entertainment, and financial services firms with online business operations. The vast majority use Emarsys for email marketing, and less than 15% are enterprise organizations.

Emarsys provides RTIM as an extension of its CCCM platform for customers in need of more advanced personalization capabilities.[14] References described using Emarsys in digital marketing environments for personalized email, web, and e-commerce offers, and one reported using it to build custom audiences for search and social advertising. A recurring theme with references centered on how Emarsys is the right size to understand their needs. As one put it, "Emarsys is both a vendor and a services provider, and it is dedicated to helping us grow our business in a way that we have not seen with larger martech providers." Emarsys does not address the full spectrum of RTIM functionality, but it is a good fit for e-commerce firms with personalization needs.

› **IMImobile introduces mobile-first innovation to the larger RTIM ecosystem.** IMImobile provides IMIconnect for RTIM use cases, which it augments with imicampaign for CCCM, and imiengage for cloud-based contact center management. As its name suggests, IMImobile focuses on mobile communications. It first established its install base among global telecommunications providers, and several of them now resell the platform. It then extended its go-to-market strategy to include financial services, retail pharmacies, utilities, and online gaming. About 35% of its more than 700 customers are enterprise firms. Nearly half are European organizations, but it also has strong market presence in North America, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

IMImobile supports cross-channel communications, but its mobile-first heritage is its core strength. Fewer than 10% of its customers utilize it beyond mobile channels. Its SMS tools are particularly strong for both one-way (alerts, notifications, and reminders) and two-way (surveys, appointments, and transactional offers) interactions. We spoke to references who also leverage IMImobile for email, multimedia messaging service (MMS), rich communication services (RCS), mobile app, push, and video, as well as integrations with WhatsApp and Apple Business Chat. References described RTIM ecosystems where IMImobile provides the channel orchestration, but data management and analytics reside in other systems. As one put it, "We have a lot of systems integrated into imiconnect to trigger messages, but it is really the channel layer." IMImobile is a good RTIM point solution for firms that need to coordinate mobile communications across marketing and customer services.

Evaluation Overview

We evaluated vendors against 30 criteria, which we grouped into three high-level categories:

› **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 customer recognition, contextual understanding, decision arbitration, experience orchestration, measurement and optimization, and integration capabilities across data, content, channels, and operations.

› **Strategy.** Placement on the horizontal axis indicates the strength of the vendors' strategies. We evaluated each vendor's product vision, innovation roadmap, market approach, performance, supporting products and services, partner ecosystem, and commercial model.

› **Market presence.** Represented by the size of the markers on the graphic, our market presence scores reflect each vendor's revenue from RTIM deployments, install base of enterprise customers that are deploying RTIM across at least five channels, and customer distribution across geographies and industries.

Vendor Inclusion Criteria

Forrester included 13 vendors in the assessment: Adobe, Boxever, Emarsys, FICO, IMImobile, Kitewheel, Pegasystems, Precisely, Salesforce, SAS, Teradata, Thunderhead, and Treasure Data. Each of these vendors has:

› **Robust RTIM functionality.** We included vendors that compete in one or more RTIM functionality segments: next best experience, cross-channel marketing, or personalization.[15] RTIM solutions across these segments enable brands to recognize customers using disparate channels and devices; understand the current context merged with detailed customer history; determine the appropriate decision, offer, or message; orchestrate experience delivery for multiple digital and offline channels; and capture interaction data aimed at measurement and optimization.

FOR B2C MARKETING PROFESSIONALS

October 20, 2020

The Forrester Wave™: Real-Time Interaction Management, Q4 2020
The 13 Providers That Matter Most And How They Stack Up

› **A broad range of RTIM customer use cases.** We measured each solution's depth and breadth of functionality across RTIM use cases spanning both digital and offline channels. We included vendors with at least 10 customers or 10% of their install base for each of at least 20 RTIM use cases across at least seven channels, including email, mobile messaging, mobile messengers, mobile apps, web, e-commerce, social media, digital advertising, contact centers, agents and advisors, IoT and networked devices, bots and intelligent agents, and digital assistants.

› **Global enterprise B2C customers.** Forrester's evaluation criteria focus on the needs of enterprise B2C organizations above $1 billion in revenue, but we allowed for the inclusion of both large and small vendors. We included vendors with at least 100 enterprise B2C implementations and at least $30 million in RTIM revenue. We also included vendors with fewer than 100 enterprise customers with at least $15 million in RTIM revenue, if at least 75% of their install bases consisted of enterprise customers. We further qualified vendors based on their install base presence in at least 5 vertical sectors and across at least three geographic regions.

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FOR B2C MARKETING PROFESSIONALS

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October 20, 2020

Supplemental Material

Online Resource

We publish all our Forrester Wave scores and weightings in an Excel file that provides detailed product evaluations and customizable rankings; download this tool by clicking the link at the beginning of this report on Forrester.com. We intend these scores and default weightings to serve only as a starting point and encourage readers to adapt the weightings to fit their individual needs.

The Forrester Wave Methodology

A Forrester Wave is a guide for buyers considering their purchasing options in a technology marketplace. To offer an equitable process for all participants, Forrester follows The Forrester Wave™ Methodology Guide to evaluate participating vendors.

In our review, we conduct primary research to develop a list of vendors to consider for the evaluation. From that initial pool of vendors, we narrow our final list based on the inclusion criteria. We then gather details of product and strategy through a detailed questionnaire, demos/briefings, and customer reference surveys/interviews. We use those inputs, along with the analyst's experience and expertise in the marketplace, to score vendors, using a relative rating system that compares each vendor against the others in the evaluation.

We include the Forrester Wave publishing date (quarter and year) clearly in the title of each Forrester Wave report. We evaluated the vendors participating in this Forrester Wave using materials they provided to us by August 7, 2020 and did not allow additional information after that point. We encourage readers to evaluate how the market and vendor offerings change over time.

In accordance with The Forrester Wave™ Vendor Review Policy, Forrester asks vendors to review our findings prior to publishing to check for accuracy. Vendors marked as nonparticipating vendors in the Forrester Wave graphic met our defined inclusion criteria but declined to participate in or contributed only partially to the evaluation. We score these vendors in accordance with The Forrester Wave™ And The Forrester New Wave™ Nonparticipating And Incomplete Participation Vendor Policy and publish their positioning along with those of the participating vendors.

Integrity Policy

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

Endnotes

[1] See the Forrester report "Align Strategy And Technology To Deliver Next-Gen Personalization."

[2] See the Forrester report "The Forrester Wave™: Real-Time Interaction Management, Q1 2019."

FOR B2C MARKETING PROFESSIONALS

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[3] Source: Forrester's Q3 2020 Real-Time Interaction Management Forrester Wave™ Customer Reference Survey.

[4] See the Forrester report "Now Tech: Real-Time Interaction Management, Q2 2020."

[5] Source: "Thunderhead Announces ThunderBay: The First Comprehensive AI For Journey-Driven Engagement," Thunderhead, February 27, 2020 (https://www.thunderhead.com/about-us/thunderhead-news/thunderhead-announces-thunderbay/).

[6] See the Forrester report "The Forrester Wave™: Journey Orchestration Platforms, Q2 2020."

[7] Source: "Teradata Introduces Vantage Customer Experience and Vantage Analyst," Teradata press release, October 22, 2019 (https://www.teradata.co.uk/Press-Releases/2019/Introducing-Vantage-Customer-Experience-and-Vantage-Analyst).

[8] Source: "Teradata Announces General Availability of Vantage Customer Experience," Teradata press release, April 29, 2020 (https://www.teradata.co.uk/Press-Releases/2020/Teradata-Announces-General-Availability-of-Vantage-CX).

[9] See the Forrester report "The Forrester Wave™: Journey Orchestration Platforms, Q2 2020."

[10] Source: Hiro Yoshikawa, "NVIDIA to Acquire Arm," Treasure Data Blog, September 14, 2020 (https://blog.treasuredata.com/blog/2020/09/14/nvidia-to-acquire-arm/).

[11] Source: "Salesforce Acquires Evergage, Will Use Personalization to Enhance Customer Data and Deliver More Relevant Experiences," PR Newswire press release, February 7, 2020 (https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/salesforce-acquires-evergage-will-use-personalization-to-enhance-customer-data-and-deliver-more-relevant-experiences-301000691.html).

[12] See the Forrester report "The Forrester Wave™: Cross-Channel Campaign Management (Independent Platforms), Q4 2019."

[13] Source: "Syncsort Rebrands as Precisely, Powers Confident Business Decisions with Trusted Data," Precisely press release, May 14, 2020 (https://www.precisely.com/press-release/precisely-launch).

[14] See the Forrester report "The Forrester Wave™: Cross-Channel Campaign Management (Independent Platforms), Q4 2019."

[15] See the Forrester report "Now Tech: Real-Time Interaction Management, Q2 2020."

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