



Aligning IT and Marketing:

Why and How to Bring
These Teams Together



Introduction

IT and marketing. Once upon a time, the two could not have lived in more different worlds. Now, thanks to technological advances and sweeping changes in consumer behavior, IT and marketing must converge like never before. But just because these roles need to come together doesn't mean that they are or that they are working together well.

Let's take a look at why IT and marketing need each other, the best practices for aligning these two teams, and how cross-functional collaboration can benefit entire organizations.

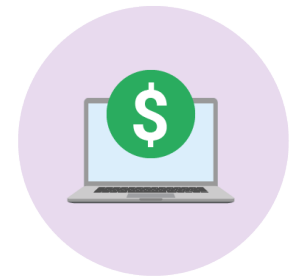


Why Marketing and IT Need Each Other

There's so much talk today about changing roles within organizations that it might be tempting to tune out such discussions, but it's important to note because it is such a significant shift. Technology and consumer behavior have changed, necessitating the evolution of roles and responsibilities within an organization. IT and marketing are both great examples of this transformation.

The proliferation of software-as-a-service (SaaS) versus on-premise solutions has played a big part in shaping the IT function in recent years. Before SaaS, IT teams had much more on-premise infrastructure to manage and maintain. In many organizations, they now focus more on making software work better for the company, from evaluation to implementation to ongoing use. On the marketing side of things, digital and inbound marketing now rule the day, and data is the hottest commodity. This means that marketing is now powered by technology. Marketing technology continues to flourish, with more than 5,000 solutions on the market today, and individual organizational marketing stacks continue to grow as businesses meet more and more of their marketing challenges with technology.

Given the state of things, if marketing hopes to increasingly adopt more technology and IT hopes to maintain oversight into all technologies used organization-wide, the two teams must come together. But beyond the necessity of working together, doing so has big benefits.



1/3 of marketing's budget today is spent on technology.

- Gartner

The Benefits of Working Together

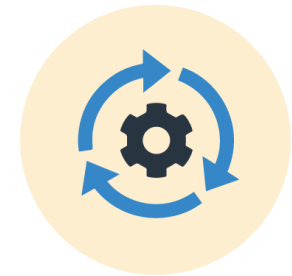
The relationship between marketing and IT has traditionally fallen into one of two camps: rocky or nonexistent. But the ways of the past can't pave the way for success in the future. Instead, high-performing organizations today know that cooperation and collaboration across departments is essential. Here are some of the biggest benefits of IT and marketing working together:

Improved Customer Experience

When IT and marketing work together, customers win. In the past, IT has often been more focused on internal audiences than external ones. By collaborating with marketing, whose focus is increasingly on customer experience, IT teams get more insight into customer needs and wants. This can help them better understand how customers benefit from the technology under their purview and, based on this understanding, can help hone their ability to evaluate, implement and maintain customer-facing solutions. IT's attention is then more equalized between back-office and front-office systems, creating a more balanced approach to organizational technology which further benefits customers.

Shift from a Singular to Integrated Mindset

Technology shouldn't exist in a vacuum, but it does in many organizations. IT professionals are often tasked with managing individual systems rather than types of systems. As the marketing technology stack grows, IT increasingly moves from looking at singular systems to a more integrated mindset. How do these technologies work together? And how do they help users, customers and the business when they do? For example, a CRM system is traditionally thought of as a sales tool, but with the value of using CRM with a marketing automation platform, an integrated IT mindset is more beneficial for achieving business goals and increasing organizational agility.



*Only 8% of marketers
feel that their marketing
technology has been
implemented well*

- Oracle

Better Data Management

With the explosion of available data today, it's unrealistic to expect one business function to manage it all efficiently and effectively. Instead, IT and marketing should work together to ensure that the proper processes and technologies are in place for successful data management. With a long history of dealing with data, IT can partner with marketing to drive better data management practices while marketing brings to the table knowledge of which data points are most important. In addition, the two teams can work together to ensure full compliance with data privacy regulations such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Changing Organizational Culture

To succeed in today's business environment, you must embrace change and collaboration. Silos are no longer advisable, or accepted in many organizations. IT and marketing coming together helps break down these silos and can create a change in organizational culture. Separately, marketing and IT have significant potential to impact culture with marketing driving the brand and IT managing the technology. Bringing these two together is a force for cultural change because they can better enable communications and collaboration. As an example, marketing creates employee communications while IT maintains the solution that will deploy them, such as an intranet. In addition, shared objectives between these two teams sets an example that business goals are more critical than individual departmental goals, which can be a significant cultural shift.

Selecting and Implementing the Best Technology

When a marketing team looks at implementing a new technology, they have a long list of criteria they consider including the problem or need it addresses, ease of use, how it will improve their marketing initiatives and more. IT's evaluation criteria looks very different, with factors like integration, data security and reliability being of concern. Bringing these two lists together ensures that organization's select and implement the very best technology – not just functionally, but technically too. For the greatest benefit, IT should be brought into the evaluation process as early as possible, so they can help vet potential vendors alongside their marketing colleagues.



Marketing decision-makers consider marketing technology to be the most difficult digital marketing tactic to execute

- ClickDimensions and Ascend2

Best Practices for IT and Marketing Alignment

Creativity has always been at the core of great marketing. But unlike their predecessors in years past, CMOs and other marketing heads today are also likely to be tech savvy, which now makes them more natural partners for their tech counterparts. This sets the stage for an easier alignment between IT and marketing than in the past, but there are still best practices for getting it right.

Respect Differences

Despite now being more similar than ever, IT and marketing still are very different business functions that attract very different types of people. Marketing focuses on driving revenue and customer retention while IT's priorities center on data security, avoiding risk and ensuring systems function as expected. When aligning your IT and marketing teams, it's important to respect these differences. Acknowledge the expertise and traits that each side brings to the table and formulate a plan for how to best utilize these strengths and knowledge for success.

Conduct an Audit

What technologies are in place? What systems are on the implementation to-do list? Who owns what? Who has access to what data? These are just some of the questions you will want to address when aligning IT and marketing. It's also important to document current processes that exist between the two departments. While these may change as the two teams align more closely with one another, knowing where everything stands at present will help both parties determine if that's the most effective way to move forward in the future.

Create a Shared Vision

While conducting an audit of the present state of the IT and marketing relationship, take the time to map out what the future holds as well. Discuss how working together will help the organization achieve its goals, as well as those of each department and even each team member. Create a shared vision for the future of the working relationship and what can be accomplished together, and define the steps required to get there.



78% of IT professionals think they work collaboratively with marketing, but only 58% of marketers agree that that's the case.

- eConsultancy

Agree on Roles and Responsibilities

Problems between IT and marketing sometimes arise from disagreements regarding who takes the lead on a given project or process. Take steps to stop these conflicts in their tracks by defining and documenting roles and responsibilities for the two teams and their individual members. Be rigid enough in these definitions that things don't fall through the cracks causing frustrations to mount, but flexible enough in your approach that you can make changes to accommodate organizational growth or changes. Also, be sure that IT and marketing have equal opportunities for leadership in their interactions so they can form a true partnership.

Meet Regularly

In many organizations, IT and marketing aren't in the habit of meeting regularly. However, it's exactly this type of communication that will bring about alignment. The meetings don't have to be as frequent as weekly, but often enough that they become established and expected – monthly will work well for most organizations. The agenda can be flexible, but be sure that empathy plays a part in the discussions. Each team should strive to better understand the pressures faced by the other as well as current priorities and those on the horizon. Even if what's discussed has nothing to do with one another on the surface, it's all part of deepening understanding, resolving problems and ultimately aligning IT and marketing.



50 – 65% of marketing executives anticipate spending more on marketing technology in the coming year

- Gartner

About ClickDimensions

ClickDimensions is the only marketing automation platform that is exclusively created for and natively built in Microsoft Dynamics 365. Our solution brings together email marketing, campaign automation, web intelligence, surveys, web forms and landing pages, social marketing and more to help organizations attract more leads, close more sales and more effectively engage customers – all from the comfort of Dynamics 365.

To learn more about getting more out of Dynamics 365 with a powerful and user-friendly marketing toolkit, visit us at clickdimensions.com, read our blog at blog.clickdimensions.com or follow us on Twitter at [@ClickDimensions](https://twitter.com/ClickDimensions).

