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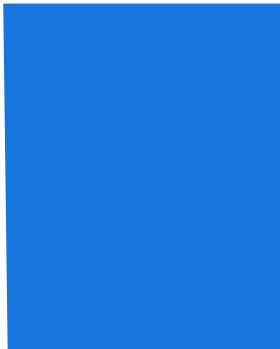


Building a Stronger Brand with a Unified Marketing Platform

July 2022



Authored by



Today's marketers are focusing an increasing amount of their time and budget on digital marketing: The global digital marketing and advertising market was estimated at \$530.9 billion in 2022 and is projected to reach \$860.8 billion by 2026. [1]

The good news is that from social media to SEO and from email marketing to mobile apps, there's an app to help marketers connect with customers and prospects across digital channels.

The bad news is that small and medium businesses (SMBs) often wind up with a jumble of disconnected digital tools to create, execute and measure the success of different digital marketing initiatives. Over time, it can become difficult for marketing teams to manage multiple campaigns and channels cohesively and provide customers with a consistent brand experience. And when data is siloed in numerous applications, it's also tough to get an accurate, holistic view of customer behavior across the buying journey.

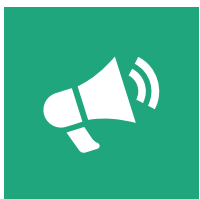
As a result, many marketers want to take a more integrated approach—one that consolidates all marketing tools, collaborative capabilities, reporting, and analytics that teams need into a unified marketing platform.



In this report, we discuss:



The customer buying journey, and why it's increasingly important for marketers to build consistent, cohesive digital marketing strategies.



Why companies are turning to integrated marketing platforms to align marketing initiatives across different digital channels.



How marketing teams can use a unified marketing platform, such as Zoho Marketing Plus, to streamline operations, provide customers with a consistent, personalized experience across channels, and gain more accurate insights about how well their campaigns are working.

Living In a Digital Marketing World

The customer buying journey has been steadily moving online, and the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly accelerated this digital migration. Experts say that half to two-thirds of the buyer's journey is now digital. Most people agree that buyers progress through three broad stages in the buying journey:



Awareness is when buyers know what they want or what their problem is and are ready to start researching products, services, or solutions that may fit the bill. Of course, when customers already associate a brand with a specific need, they'll be more likely to consider that option when a need arises. In addition, most people will also turn to Google, Amazon, Yelp!, and other marketplaces to search for alternatives. In this phase, the marketing priority is to show up early and often across all relevant channels.



Consideration is when buyers start to dig deeper to vet different alternatives. At this point, vendors need to stand out from the crowd and differentiate from competitors in terms of expertise, value, pricing, credibility, and other factors. Marketers need to provide relevant content across channels to demonstrate their value and earn trust, as buyers are likely to eliminate contenders that don't readily supply this information from their "shortlists."



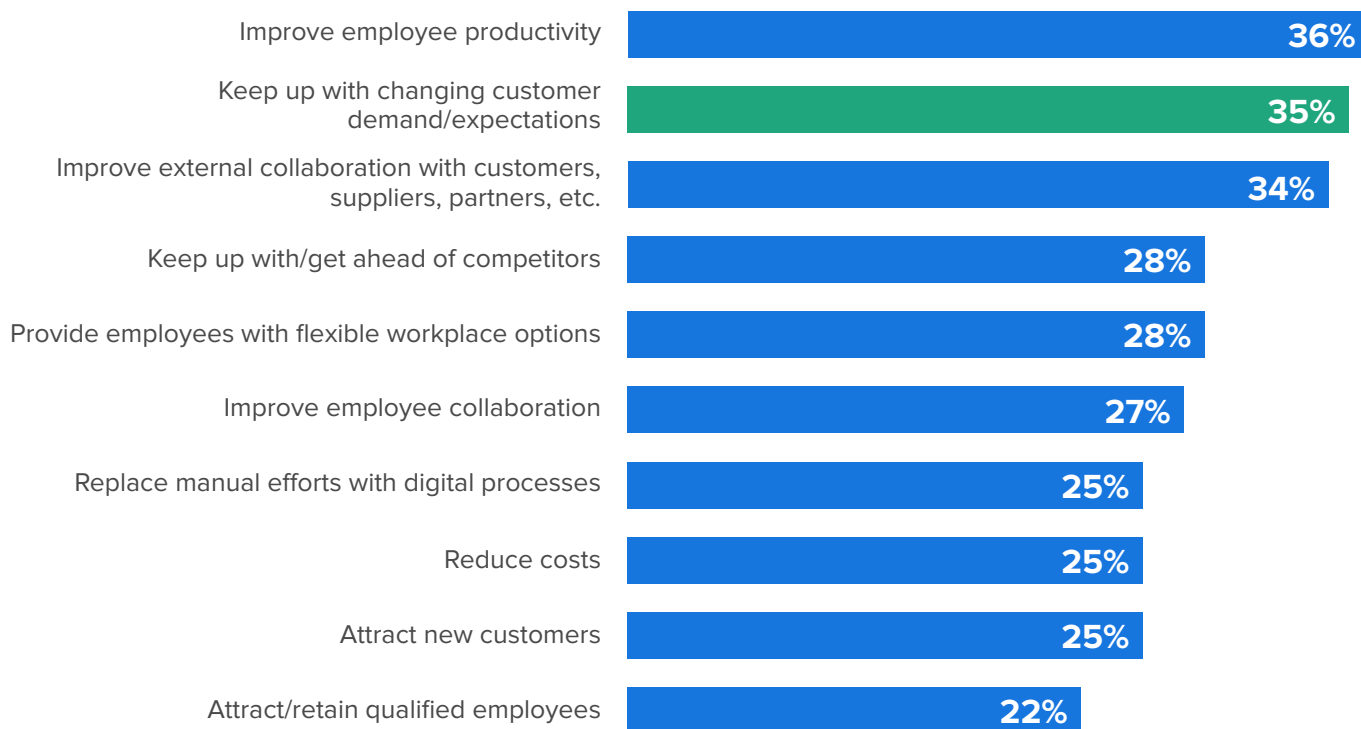
Decision is when buyers are ready to act—but may be looking for a little something extra before they purchase. In some cases, an incentive, such as coupons, discounts, or other promotions may trigger them to buy from one vendor instead of another. For more complex or expensive purchases, buyers may also want reassurance that they're making the right decision. Customer references, free trials or other inducements can help to trigger the sale.

In each of these stages, businesses must provide buyers with the content and interactions they want, when they want them, on the channels they prefer—or risk losing them to more nimble competitors.



Top Drivers for SMBs to Invest in Digital Solutions

What are the top three drivers for your company to invest in digital technology solutions?

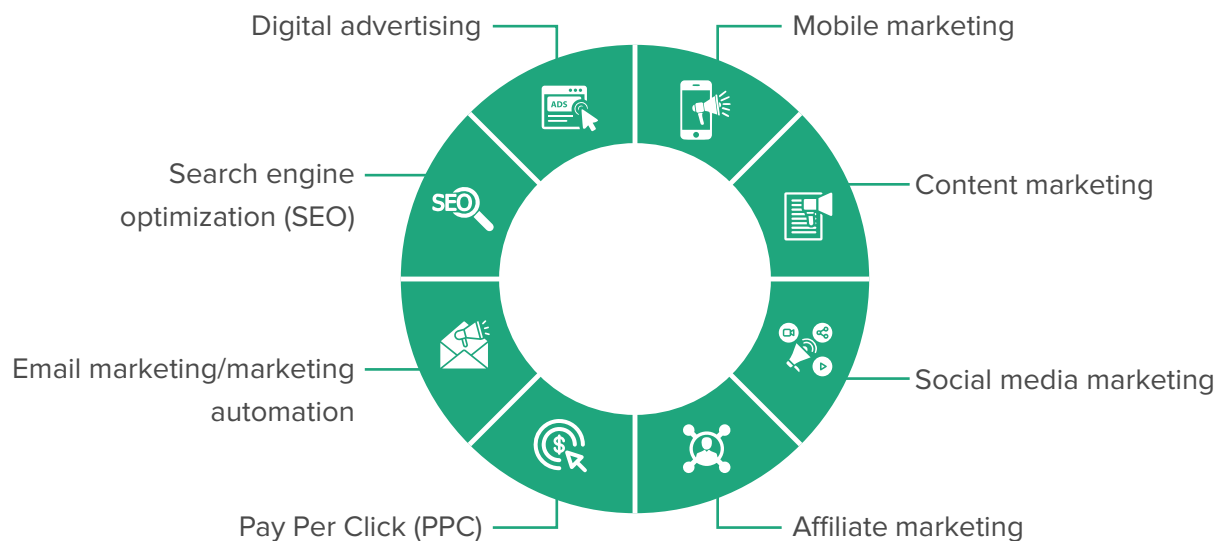


Source: SMB Group 2021 SMB Technology Directions Study, March 2021

Given this reality, it's not surprising that small and medium businesses rank "keeping up with changing customer expectations and requirements" as a top three driver to invest in digital technology solutions.¹

In fact, businesses are now investing the lion's share of their marketing dollars in the digital world. In the U.S. for instance, companies spend 72% of their marketing budgets on digital marketing.²

Frequently Used Digital Marketing Tactics



¹SMB Group 2021 SMB Technology Directions Study

²Gartner, The State of Marketing Budgets 2021

“Digital marketing” encompasses a myriad of strategies and tactics that companies use to identify, build, and target prospects to convert them to customers. As customers increase their use of digital channels to research and interact with brands, marketers need to understand the role each channel and piece of content plays throughout the customer journey.

Creating and refreshing content for websites, digital ads, email marketing and social media marketing, blogs, webinars, podcasts, customer testimonials, and more is only part of the challenge. Marketers must also stay on top of and respond to online reviews and inquiries, research keywords, monitor the brand, and refine their initiatives to improve results.

Ideally, they need to understand how well—or not—different aspects of a campaign perform through each phase of the journey, from discovery to selection and purchase, and what’s happening in interactions that occur after the sale.

For optimum results, marketers need to aggregate data and use analytics to “connect the dots” to see how different campaigns, content, and channels work with different types of customers.

When Siloed Marketing Solutions Get in the Way of Growth

The cloud has made it much easier for businesses to access and use new digital marketing tools quickly. As a result, hundreds, if not thousands, of solutions are available, and there is no shortage of articles on the top 5, 10, or 25 “must-have” solutions. However, as new channels emerge and customer preferences change, the list of “must-haves” changes too. To keep up, marketers often add new point solutions on an ad hoc basis.

Instead of streamlining marketing operations, too many disjointed tools end up creating friction in the marketing process. Marketing teams spend too much time reconciling redundant information in different applications; and as a result, data gets lost in translation as it falls through the cracks. Managing digital marketing activities cohesively and measuring marketing outcomes becomes difficult. At this point, marketers often look to integrate different solutions, which can pose challenges: SMBs cite “integration difficulties” as one of the top three obstacles to successfully deploying new technology solutions.³



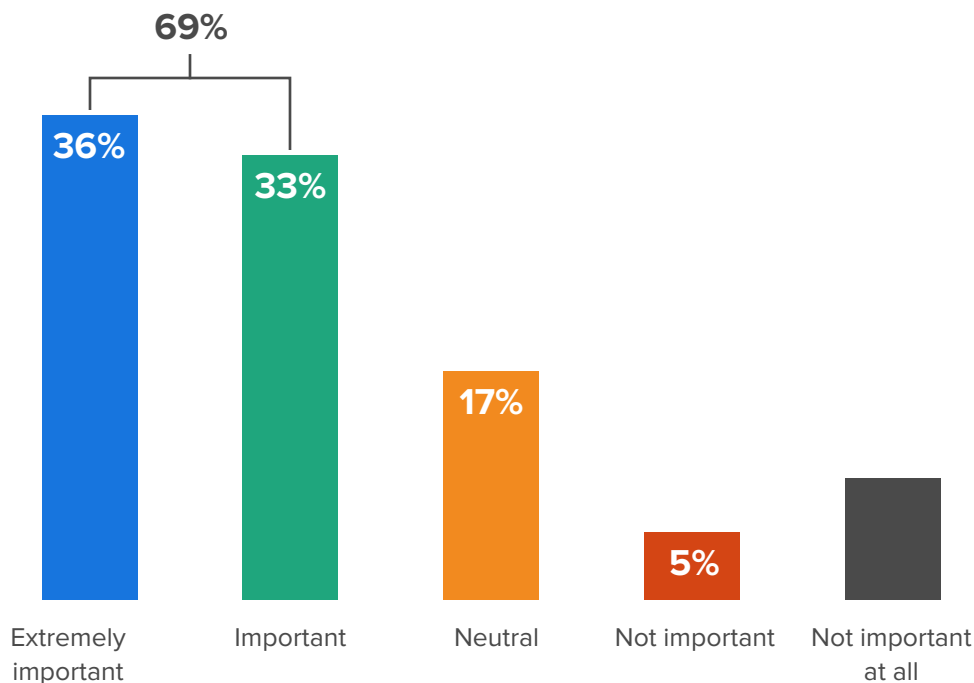
Unlocking the Full Value of Digital Marketing with a Unified Marketing Platform

Strong application integration is key to streamlining marketing operations, creating better customer experiences, and getting a unified, consistent view across marketing activities and interactions. When data is unified, marketers can get deeper and more actionable insights, and more easily compare the return on investment from different channels and campaigns.

However, there are many ways to integrate applications, including custom coding, direct integrations and third-party integrations. But many businesses have found out the hard way that connecting different applications “after the fact” with one-off integrations can be costly and time-consuming—and still fail to deliver the results marketers need.

Importance of Pre-Built Integrations When Selecting New Solutions

When evaluating new solutions for your business, how important is it that vendors provide pre-built connectors to integrate with other solutions?



Source: SMB Group 2021 SMB Technology Directions Study, March 2021

As a result, more marketing leaders are considering a different approach: Using a platform that can pull together a variety of marketing tools, campaigns, and processes into a shared space. In fact, 69% of SMBs say that pre-built connectors that integrate applications with other solutions are extremely important or necessary when evaluating new technology solutions. A unified platform removes friction from the marketing process, making it easier for marketers to coordinate different initiatives, share and repurpose content, and get the insights they need to drive better campaign performance and optimize customer engagement.

“ For the past 11 months, I’ve been using Zoho’s Marketing Platform to coordinate daily activities, which include scheduling social media posts, creating surveys, running campaigns, and checking reports, to name a few. There’s a lot going on simultaneously. With access to such an array of tools, working together and sharing data seamlessly under one roof, I’m able to do more with more, but in much less time and at significantly better value than the other products around. ”

Mackenzie Baron,
Marketing Coordinator, Data-Tech, USA

Connecting the Dots with Zoho Marketing Plus

[Zoho Marketing Plus](#) is designed to solve this problem. It offers marketing teams a unified, collaborative way to work across the spectrum of marketing tasks, including ideation, creation, execution, management, and measurement.

The Marketing Plus platform combines capabilities from Zoho’s time-tested marketing and collaboration solutions, including Campaigns, Marketing Automation, Analytics, PageSense, Social, Survey, Meeting Backstage, and Workdrive to create an integrated digital marketing workspace. As part of Marketing Plus, Zoho is also introducing “Brand Studio”, a centralized workplace where brands can create and manage all marketing campaigns from one place. Marketers within Brand Studio can create and work on everything they need for a campaign: emails, social media posts, surveys, webinars, SMS campaigns, blogs, tradeshow, and more. In addition, this solution provides a timeline of all project activities, so everyone can see what’s been completed and what needs to be done next.

Each individual solution is powerful, but the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. As an integrated solution, Zoho Marketing Plus enables marketing teams to collaborate more efficiently to create, deploy and measure their marketing campaigns. From one central platform, marketers can:



Create and store marketing assets in unified repository.



Easily find and access documents via machine-learning powered search.



Collaborate and track progress across different activities and campaigns, with comments and version control capabilities available to internal and external stakeholders.



Manage all channels—email campaigns, social media, surveys, webinars, events and more—using a common interface across the platform.



Easily see what is happening across all marketing initiatives via this same shared space.



Quickly ascertain customer response to different marketing activities with AI-powered analysis, making it easier to tweak and improve them for better results.

By reducing the redundancies and frustrations of trying to work with fragmented solutions, marketers get a more accurate view of their campaigns and can spend more time creating meaningful, relevant campaigns that improve marketing outcomes.

“ Everything at Iron Roots starts with the data. But there’s a huge hole in the market, where channel solutions are siloed. Zoho marketing platform gives us a comprehensive view of our omnichannel marketing campaigns, allowing touchpoint cadence and the ability to visualize our entire strategy in one place. From this unified platform, we can install heat-maps, see the traffic to our landing and product pages, use PageSense to identify the average fold, measure engagement, and then extract incredibly valuable data from on-page experiences, which then fuels our subsequent marketing activities. In a nutshell, Zoho’s new marketing platform solves so many problems that are neglected by most marketing operations and marketing tools. ”

Saru Saadeh,
CEO, Iron Roots Inc., USA

As with all of its solutions, Zoho offers a free, 30-day trial for Marketing Plus. With [pricing](#) starting at \$25 per month for an annual subscription, the solution is affordable even for very small businesses.

Amplifying the Power of Integration

Marketing doesn't exist in a vacuum; marketers must continually refine their strategies and tactics to move people through the funnel and increase sales through digital and physical channels. For instance, when a lead comes into sales and is entered into CRM, marketers need to be able to see those leads and create new campaigns to target them.

When sales and marketing workflows are integrated, sales and marketing teams can share data, which they can use to improve operations and measure success. Zoho has integrated Marketing Plus not only with Zoho CRM, but with third-party CRM solutions, including Salesforce, Microsoft, HubSpot, and others to enable these capabilities.

“ We've been using Zoho's marketing platform for just under a year, and the impact it's had on our business was felt immediately. We especially love the PageSense, Marketing Automation, and social features of the platform. All our marketing efforts are in one place now, and that unification combined with automation capabilities has made managing this elaborate process simple for our team, creating better outcomes for our business. Once we integrated Zoho CRM, we were able to push leads to the marketing platform seamlessly, so that now we get more details and data-driven insights than ever before. ”

Alyce Netterfield,
Product Marketing Manager, WorkBuddy, Australia

These capabilities and benefits also extend to other areas of the business. For example, Zoho Marketing Plus also provides integrations to popular tools such as Google Analytics, YouTube, and Survey Monkey; financial management systems, including Intuit QuickBooks, Xero, and Stripe; and e-commerce platforms, such as WooCommerce and Shopify.

Looking ahead, Zoho intends to add more of its apps to the platform. New additions will include Cliq for real-time messaging, and LandingPage, a no-code page builder that helps marketers quickly create high-converting website landing pages.



Perspective

One hit wonder digital marketing campaigns are the unicorns of the marketing world.

At its best, marketing is a team sport. Marketers need shared visibility across channels, content, campaigns, and data. Zoho Marketing Plus brings all of the digital marketing tools marketers need into one unified platform.

With everything in one shared space, marketers can get organized, collaborate, streamline operations, and get the insights they need to refine and improve digital campaigns continually—and dramatically elevate the customer’s experience with the brand.

As digital channels continue to expand and become even more important to customers, it will only become more difficult for marketers to manage disconnected marketing tools and activities. Marketers can stay ahead of the curve and evolving customer preferences by moving from a patchwork quilt of disjointed solutions to a more unified approach, such as Zoho Plus.





About [SMB Group](#)

SMB Group is a research, analysis, and consulting firm focused on technology adoption and trends in the small and medium business (SMB) market. Founded in 2009, SMB Group helps clients understand and segment the SMB market, identify, and act on trends and opportunities, develop more compelling messaging, and more effectively serve SMB customers.



About [Zoho](#)

With 50+ apps in nearly every major business category, Zoho Corporation is one of the world's most prolific technology companies. Headquartered in Austin, Texas, with international headquarters in Chennai, India, Zoho is privately held and profitable with more than 10,000 employees. For more information, please visit: www.zoho.com/

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