

# Magic Quadrant for Content Marketing Platforms

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Digital marketing leaders use content marketing platforms to create relevant content, as well as manage and measure content operations. Focus has increased on these activities to address changing needs amid disruption. Use this research to find the right CMP based on your business needs.

## Market Definition/Description

### What Is a Content Marketing Platform?

Gartner defines content marketing platforms (CMPs) as software solutions that support the practice of content marketing. Content marketing involves creating, curating and cultivating text, video, images, graphics, e-books, white papers and interactive content assets that are distributed through media platforms and social media. These assets are used to tell stories that help brands engage with and nurture customers, prospects and other audiences. The goal of content marketing is to drive awareness, demand, preference and loyalty through deeper engagement with customers.

CMPs, as a result, include capabilities to engage in:

- Ideation
- Editorial planning
- Calendarization
- Collaboration, workflows and audit approvals
- The creation, assembly, curation and distribution of all content types
- The measurement and optimization of content performance

Many content marketing platform vendors complement their software with optional services, such as content strategy development and training to drive adoption and utilization. CMPs also feature integrations to existing marketing technologies — for example, marketing automation, web content management (WCM) and digital asset management (DAM).

This Magic Quadrant does not cover related categories, such as:

- Stand-alone work or project management or marketing work management (MWM)
- DAM
- Stand-alone social publishing tools
- Sales enablement platforms
- WCM platforms

While many of these solutions have overlapping capabilities, they don't meet the minimum inclusion criteria for this market and don't properly support the use cases required by marketing leaders responsible for content marketing.

## Magic Quadrant

**Figure 1: Magic Quadrant for Content Marketing Platforms**



Source: Gartner (March 2021)

## Vendor Strengths and Cautions

### Contently

Contently is a Challenger in this Magic Quadrant. Its platform has strong creative planning and editorial workflow features with a focus on sales enablement and integrations for B2B use cases. Contently's freelance and creative talent network is a differentiator for resource-strapped teams. Clients consist of B2B and B2C companies, mostly within finance, insurance and technology. Contently continues to invest in StoryBook. Anchored by competitive content strategy data, the tool provides audience, competitive and channel analysis and more. In 2021, it expanded to include content measurement via an algorithm based on search value.

### Strengths

- **Ease of use:** From a clean interface and logical workflows and sharing features to well-regarded customer service, Contently is well-positioned to help customers get the most out of its platform. This includes customer workflows, filters and personalized user views.
- **Resource management and talent network:** Detailed analytics support resource management and process improvements. Users can track content usage, resource allocations and more, empowering teams to streamline their processes and find efficiencies. This includes the ability to seamlessly integrate resources from the talent network into broader processes.
- **Creative workflow:** Contently continues to improve its features that support content consistency and optimization. Brief and workflow templates can be customized to support different content types. Automated brand governance speeds production with reviews for quality, search engine optimization (SEO), and tone and voice, while newly added strategy planning, pillars and map-to-personas features help translate clients' strategies into their execution.

### Cautions

- **ROI measurement:** While StoryBook quantifies the ROI of content based on equivalent pay-per-click costs associated with keywords that generate organic search traffic, this approach may not meet the needs of organizations looking to measure content ROI across other dimensions. Organizations can determine content's impact across the buyer's journey with performance analytics and Docalytics, a proprietary lead capture, generation and sales collateral measurement tool.
- **Social listening:** Contently lacks social listening capabilities, so it may not have the breadth of inputs that other solutions provide. Instead, its Content Intelligence product takes a different approach by using competitive insights, channel analysis and SEO to power strategy recommendations.
- **Integrations:** Contently's focus on out-of-the-box integrations that support B2B use cases (including sales enablement) may leave B2B2C and B2C marketers needing custom integrations to ensure they can use the platform to its full capabilities. For example, Contently

relies on a third party, Zapier, for some of the more common B2C integrations, leaving companies looking to integrate with more complex social media management solutions reliant on a custom integration.

## CoSchedule

CoSchedule is a Niche Player in this Magic Quadrant. The CoSchedule platform is mainly focused on editorial planning and marketing project management. CoSchedule serves both B2B and B2C clients with a focus on midmarket organizations, although it also offers a separate product for large enterprise organizations. CoSchedule remains committed to optimizing user experience, which is reflected through product updates, such as the addition of templates to support the completion of frequently executed projects, as well as new integrations with Microsoft Office 365 and Salesforce Marketing Cloud.

### Strengths

- **Agile marketing planning and execution:** CoSchedule's Idea Board allows marketers to flexibly ingest, triage and prioritize content ideas. CoSchedule clients can also track content assets through creative workflow stages using customizable Kanban tools. Project management dashboards allow clients to assess team resource capacity and quickly respond to any bottlenecks by redelegating tasks.
- **Ease of use:** Gartner Peer Insights users frequently note that CoSchedule's platform is easy to use, with an intuitive user experience. CoSchedule's instinctive interface and on-demand training tools facilitate a simple, fast onboarding process.
- **Social media publishing:** CoSchedule's new Social Organizer allows clients to schedule, publish and measure social media content from the platform. CoSchedule also enables clients to monitor engagement with brand social posts and respond in real time.

### Cautions

- **Product strategy:** While CoSchedule offers sufficient application capabilities for inclusion in this Magic Quadrant, its focus on marketing work management has led to limited support across many of the required and optional capabilities of a CMP. CoSchedule offers limited capabilities in support of ideation insights, content curation and content sourcing.
- **Content performance analytics:** CoSchedule has limited capabilities to measure the performance of content assets and programs, as its product is focused on tracking social media engagement and reporting on internal work management. A lack of lead or revenue attribution capabilities hampers content marketers from measuring deeper ROI.
- **Ideation insights:** CoSchedule offers limited content ideation capabilities. Tools to support content headline and email subject line optimization leverage public domain data to make recommendations. However, the platform lacks native functionality to source search engine or third-party social media insights to support the generation of new content ideas.

## Percolate

Percolate is a Leader in this Magic Quadrant. Its CMP provides a unified solution for creating, managing and distributing content across marketing and sales channels. Percolate largely serves enterprise B2B clients that have complex content operations and manage content across many regions and/or lines of business. Building on Seismic's 2019 acquisition of Percolate, Percolate has developed deep integrations with Seismic's sales enablement platform to facilitate cross-team collaboration and coordination. In 2021, a planned partnership between Seismic and Skyword will extend access to Skyword's talent network to Percolate customers to support custom content creation.

### Strengths

- **Marketing and sales alignment:** Percolate's native integrations with Seismic's sales enablement platform enable content, analytics and metadata to sync between the two platforms. This allows marketers and sellers to access consistent, refreshed content, and offers marketers insight into how buyers and sellers use content during the sales process.
- **Organizational complexity support:** Percolate's team hierarchy model allows clients to align permissions, calendars and creative workflows to the needs of complex and distributed brand or regional marketing teams. Editorial calendar views offer cross-enterprise visibility into content. Clients can set localization creative workflows to facilitate brand governance.
- **Integrations:** The Percolate Relay add-on provides integration templates for automating tasks across integrated technologies. For example, required approvers can receive an automated notification through messaging applications (for example, Salesforce's Slack or Microsoft Teams) to approve a request to advance a project to the next workflow stage.

### Cautions

- **High upfront and add-on costs:** Gartner Peer Insights users note high costs to purchase and maintain Percolate. Gartner clients say it's often necessary to purchase Percolate's professional services to ensure proper implementation and maximize the platform's value. Costs may become more tenable for large organizations needing support for complex content operations. However, smaller, centralized organizations should assess whether they can acquire "must-have" capabilities at a cheaper price from other vendors.
- **Ideation insights:** Percolate offers limited functionality for sourcing third-party insights in comparison to other Leaders in this market. Insights are limited to historical performance data. Marketers in need of more robust social listening and public-domain content intelligence will need to consider additional third-party tools.
- **Integrations required for ROI and sales analytics:** Percolate offers fairly robust content performance analytics. However, some analytics capabilities, such as revenue attribution analytics, are dependent on purchasing and integrating Seismic's sales enablement platform or other cross-tech stack integrations with a business intelligence (BI) tool.

## Sitecore

Sitecore is a Niche Player in this Magic Quadrant. Its CMP is focused on streamlining production, modularizing content for reuse and effective governance. It serves both B2C and B2B enterprise and midmarket clients across many industries. Sitecore's product roadmap focuses on advancements in artificial intelligence (AI)/machine learning (ML) to support operational efficiency and creative development. Currently, AI drives its automated content tagging and image sourcing. Its pricing model supports user- and performance-based pricing, making it a flexible solution, particularly for organizations that have other Sitecore products.

### Strengths

- **Product portfolio integration:** Sitecore continues to focus on deeper integrations between Sitecore Experience Platform (XP) and Sitecore Content Hub, which provides a consistent UX and a seamless flow of content assets and tagging for organizations leveraging both platforms. The addition of a taxonomy import allows marketing teams to maintain taxonomy associations across platforms.
- **Creative workflows/agile production process:** Sitecore's capabilities expanded to include a search capability that crawls ideas, in-progress or completed campaigns and projects to find content faster. Support for agile workflows is robust and enables clients to support complex approval processes (for example, legal and highly regulated content).
- **Integrations:** Sitecore CMP is part of Content Hub, which has fully integrated but separately billed, implemented and serviced DAM, campaign management and MWM solutions. Sitecore's APIs serve headless content on-demand to any channel; this capability supports atomic content strategies but also requires a high level of digital maturity from organizations to implement.

### Cautions

- **Platform approach:** A large percentage of Sitecore's growth comes from upselling and cross-selling existing clients using other Sitecore products. Its CMP supports visibility and consistent tagging from planning through distribution when fully connected to its DAM and WCM. However, those unfamiliar with the user experience from other Sitecore products should account for additional time to productivity.
- **Ideation insights:** Sitecore does not use social listening or SEO to provide ideation insights. Instead, it uses inspiration pages fueled by historical performance data to help organizations plan new content. Organizations seeking real-time ideation insights will need to look to other tools for this functionality.
- **Analytics:** Sitecore focuses content key performance indicators (KPIs) around operational metrics, including asset downloads, content produced and content reuse. It measures engagement value based on an assessment of where content is used against the cost of campaign creation and media buying to determine ROI. However, organizations looking for real-

time performance metrics or to map content to lead generation will need to supplement the offering with additional distribution measurement solutions.

## Skyword

Skyword is a Leader in this Magic Quadrant. The Skyword360 CMP offers high-level customer service and helps clients create and manage audience-centric content strategies. It's supported by a flexible resource model to help scale content production. Skyword serves a majority of enterprise B2C and B2B clients. It announced a partnership with Adobe in October 2020 that will support deeper integrations with Adobe Experience Cloud and Adobe Creative Cloud due to Adobe's acquisition of Workfront. In 2021, a planned partnership between Seismic and Skyword will extend access to Skyword's talent network to Percolate customers.

## Strengths

- **Ease of use:** Skyword continues to invest in making the platform easy for its clients to use in managing their content development needs — particularly clients looking for global scale and local relevance. Its editorial planning tool allows users to build personas directly in the platform, launch a new project with recommended keywords and align projects to target audiences. Workflows support time-stamped video comments to easily review video assets produced by distributed teams and freelancers.
- **Service and partnership:** Gartner Peer Insights users reference Skyword for its exceptional customer service. Skyword supports clients with complex content needs (for example, operational and global complexity) by providing audited workflow consultation and managing contributor recruitment. Its configuration, implementation and internal training focus on time to productivity and organization wide adoption. It also offers managed services to provide strategic support.
- **Talent marketplace:** Skyword continues to expand its global network of creators, thought leaders and subject matter experts, which represent a diverse population. Its marketplace is supported by advanced contributor searches powered by AI, which helps identify ideal creators based on past performance and the organization's needs.

## Cautions

- **ROI measurement:** ROI analysis is centered around how content influences organic search and its equivalent to paid search (in U.S. dollars), but the correlation to paid search value may not meet the needs of organizations looking to measure content ROI. Skyword can use client first-party data to support ROI around lead generation and sales, but lacks these native ROI capabilities.
- **Integrations:** Skyword has made investments in integrations, including WordPress and Drupal, but, even with an open API, the platform is not as mature in this area as its competitors. At present, many integrations depend on custom development.



- **Pricing structure:** Skyword recently launched a content credit model in response to client content needs and to support organizations as they navigate disruption. This flexibility allows some to take advantage of a base product, but prospects should note the increased costs to access all of the features like intelligence, social listening and country dialect subscriptions. Clients that purchase managed services receive these features as a bundle.

## **Sprinklr**

Sprinklr is a Leader in this Magic Quadrant. The platform features strong social listening and performance analytics. Sprinklr serves B2C and B2B enterprise clients and midmarket clients across all industries. Its AI implementation expanded to support operational and creative content functions. Sprinklr's product development roadmap aims to operate across a large portion of the digital marketing technology ecosystem via features to supply content for customer service and advertising use cases. These are likely to increase the platform's complexity.

### **Strengths**

- **Content performance analytics:** Sprinklr allows organizations to measure content and ROI with performance metrics, production metrics, and reputation and governance. The ability to track these metrics and apply them to content and process optimization gives organizations the flexibility to determine ROI based on business objectives. Sprinklr's heritage in social marketing also supports holistic performance metrics across paid, owned and earned channels.
- **Editorial planning:** Sprinklr can serve as the single source of truth for organizations looking for consistency across global and local campaign content. Its content planning tools also support consistency in multichannel messaging and the ability to tailor messages across audience journeys.
- **Scale powered by AI:** Sprinklr's continued AI investments provide customer insights from social listening and brief-based strategy recommendations. Sprinklr's operational AI capabilities support content optimization, automated review processes and workforce management that assigns content creation tasks based on expertise, availability and priority.

### **Cautions**

- **Broad roadmap:** Sprinklr's vision of a customer experience strategy that unifies various Sprinklr platforms triggers short-term complexity. Clients must invest time in understanding primary use cases, training and data capabilities to get the most out of the platform. Some expressed concern about keeping up with new capabilities. Weigh the desire for a seamless user experience against adjusting to the platform's aggressive roadmap.
- **Requires advanced maturity:** Less mature marketing organizations may not be prepared to take advantage of some of Sprinklr's more advanced features, like sentiment analysis. These features can add to the complexity of the platform and require more time training core and extended teams to use the platform. Marketers should match their content marketing maturity roadmap to Sprinklr's capabilities to ensure utility of the features.



- **Customer service:** Gartner Peer Insights users and clients cite inconsistent customer service, which directly impacts their ability to fully utilize the complex, rapidly changing product's feature set. As noted in last year's Magic Quadrant, Sprinklr faces continued challenges with reliability and consistency.

## **Upland (Kapost)**

Upland (Kapost) is a Visionary in this Magic Quadrant. Its platform focuses on helping large, distributed B2B organizations with complex sales cycles orchestrate end-to-end content creation and execution. Upland Kapost exclusively serves B2B clients, typically with teams of at least 20 marketers. In 2020, Upland Kapost introduced the ability to add universal IDs to content. This unique identifier for content assets allows clients to track content performance across other tools within the marketing technology stack. Upland Kapost's product roadmap includes improved workflow management for better collaboration on content creation and greater project visibility.

### **Strengths**

- **B2B sales enablement:** Sales reps can access relevant, approved content assets through Gallery, Upland Kapost's digital asset management solution and through integrations with Salesforce Sales Cloud. Gallery can be embedded into Salesforce Sales Cloud, which enables personalized content recommendations based on the context of a given lead, opportunity or account.
- **Multigeography support:** Clients can take a piece of content within the platform and click a "localize" button, which triggers a new creative workflow template to support the localization of that asset. Editorial calendars can be manipulated to show overall content planning at the regional level, as well as to show the specific workflow steps involved in localizing existing content.
- **Editorial planning:** Upland Kapost's editorial planning tools help B2B marketers align their content portfolio to discrete business and customer objectives. Clients can view a matrix board to map out how specific planned or in-development pieces of content align to important dimensions of a predefined content strategy (for example, customer journey stage, persona or business objective). Similar functionality allows clients to audit their existing content portfolio to view coverage across those dimensions.

### **Cautions**

- **Technical support:** While Upland Kapost offers 24/7 customer support, some Gartner Peer Insights users note frustrations with customer service, citing inconsistencies in terms of speed and quality of technical support.
- **Ideation insights:** Upland Kapost's platform is unable to collect third-party insights from the public domain to source content ideas. Clients can use Upland Kapost to conduct an analysis of their content portfolio to identify dimensions of their content strategy that lack sufficient coverage, but marketers looking for more robust ideation insights should consider additional tools.

- **Content sourcing and curation:** Upland Kapost does not offer third-party content sourcing or content curation capabilities. It has explored these capabilities in the past, but has made the strategic decision to curb future investments, citing lack of value for its client base.

## Welcome

Welcome is a Leader in this Magic Quadrant. Its platform rebranded from NewsCred to Welcome following its 2Q20 divestment of its content services business to Industry Dive. Welcome is broadly focused on delivering a comprehensive solution to support content and campaign planning, production, management and measurement. It supports both B2C and B2B clients, primarily within global enterprise organizations with multiple markets, brands and lines of business. Its product roadmap includes investments in resource management capabilities, aligning to Welcome's vision as a platform that extends beyond the capabilities of a traditional CMP and unifies capabilities across CMPs, MWM and DAM.

## Strengths

- **Innovation:** Welcome continues to invest in capabilities to help marketers improve or automate decision making across the content production life cycle. Its roadmap includes investments in operational and creative AI to help marketers identify emerging, relevant topics as part of ideation and to intelligently recommend copy, content or images that adhere to strategic briefs and brand compliance.
- **Content performance measurement:** Welcome's robust reporting capabilities enable clients to measure operational performance, content engagement, and lead and revenue attribution. Integrations with marketing automation platforms allow clients to see how individual leads are engaging with content within the Welcome platform.
- **Ideation insights:** Welcome aggregates public-domain SEO, social trend data and competitiveness data to help clients generate content ideas that resonate with their target audience. Clients can conduct a query for a broad or narrow content theme and see suggested keywords, commonly asked questions associated with the topic and an analysis of competitor coverage of the topic.

## Cautions

- **Long-term vision:** Welcome's long-term vision is to continue expanding its marketing solutions beyond the capabilities of a traditional CMP, with a focus on building out marketing work management capabilities. Marketers considering Welcome should evaluate its long-term product roadmap to ensure it will support their content marketing needs in the future, as well as consider whether redundancies exist with any of their current MWM tools.
- **Original content sourcing:** Welcome's divestiture of its content services division eliminated its network of in-house or freelance content creators. Welcome's content creation services are now limited to its partnership with Industry Dive and can be purchased at an additional cost.

- **Integrations:** Welcome offers access to a wide network of complementary out-of-the-box integrations. However, Gartner clients noted that many custom integrations require close, high-effort collaboration with Welcome's team and incremental costs to ensure that the APIs feed the proper data and dimensions for effective content distribution.

## Vendors Added and Dropped

We review and adjust our inclusion criteria for Magic Quadrants as markets change. As a result of these adjustments, the mix of vendors in any Magic Quadrant may change over time. A vendor's appearance in a Magic Quadrant one year and not the next does not necessarily indicate that we have changed our opinion of that vendor. It may be a reflection of a change in the market and, therefore, changed evaluation criteria, or of a change of focus by that vendor.

### Added

No vendors were added to this year's Magic Quadrant. However, Welcome was known as NewsCred in the last iteration of this research.

### Dropped

No vendors were dropped from this year's Magic Quadrant.

## Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

This Magic Quadrant research identifies and analyzes the most relevant providers and their products in a market as of **1 December 2020**. The inclusion criteria represent the specific attributes that analysts believe are necessary for inclusion in this research.

To qualify for inclusion, providers need:

- A minimum of \$5M in annual revenue for the product submitted for consideration.
- To provide comprehensive, integrated support for at least six out of the seven following capabilities:
  - **Ideation Insights:** Data-driven idea and theme sourcing leveraging aggregated insights from the public domain (for example, social listening, search engine optimization and internal/first-party data) about topics and trends that suggest audience demand for content.
  - **Editorial Planning:** Planning tools for idea, calendaring and resource management, with multiple views or visual layers that enable agility in planning and communication across digital marketing. Planning should be connected to concepts like personas, themes, topics or campaigns to ensure alignment to content marketing objectives. Editorial calendars and visual constructs include calendar view, Kanban view and Gantt chart view.
  - **Creative Workflow:** Management of the steps to produce content across teams and geographies, including creative briefs, drafts, revisions and approvals with documented tracking and change management. It includes alerts and collaboration tools and may include

plug-ins to common office or creative suites. It must be content-type-agnostic with support for formats including but not limited to articles, images, video, blogs, e-books, white papers, infographics and interactive assets.

- **Content Metadata Management:** Ability to assign custom attributes to content that extend beyond basic descriptors but could include things such as persona, journey stage and business line. These tags or planning metadata can be used to perform robust content audits, and content personalization should carry through publishing either natively or via integration (these are not SEO-specific metadata). This does not require incorporation of a natively built or white-label DAM system, but may be delivered via an integrated third-party DAM provider.
- **Distribution:** Ability to author and distribute content assets from within the application and/or through direct integration to at least three categories of distribution endpoints. Examples include WCM systems, social publishing tools/social media outlets, print publishing tools, sales enablement tools and email marketing programs.
- **Content Performance Analytics:** Data and insights that connect content to the context of the customer journey, including performance measurement across owned and external content. This may include closed-loop analytics with detailed asset-level attribution or sales influence data that support return on investment (ROI) calculations, which may incorporate a strategy service.
- **Integrations:** Out-of-the-box integration (such as API-enabled or scripts) with three or more of the following categories of complementary tools:
  - **CRM systems:** Microsoft Dynamics, Salesforce, SugarCRM, etc.
  - **DAM:** Adobe, Aprimo, Bynder, Widen, etc.
  - **Lead management or multichannel marketing:** Adobe, HubSpot, Oracle, Salesforce, etc.
  - **Marketing analytics:** Adobe Analytics, Google Analytics, Coremetrics, etc.
  - **MWM:** Adobe's Workfront, Wrike, etc.
  - **Sales enablement:** Brainshark, Highspot, Seismic, Mediafly, etc.
  - **SEO or content intelligence tools:** BrightEdge, BuzzSumo, seoClarity, etc.
  - **Social publishing:** HootSuite, Socialbakers, Sprout Social, etc.
  - **WCM:** Acquia's Drupal, Adobe, Sitecore, etc.

Since the last iteration of this Magic Quadrant, we've shifted the "publishing" criteria to "distribution" to more accurately reflect Gartner's research terminology. "Integrations" was also

updated to “out-of-the-box integrations” due to the ubiquity of custom integrations within CMPs, although the quality of such custom integrations varied tremendously.

## Optional Capabilities

In addition to the above basic capabilities, providers in this evaluation may have some or all of these capabilities:

- **Content Storage/DAM:** Repository and library service features (for example, create, retrieve, update and delete), metadata and taxonomy management, search and guided navigation features, life cycle and rights management capabilities, access and identity management, asset editing, manipulation, and transcoding. (See the integrated DAM definition in [Market Guide for Digital Asset Management](#).)
- **Content Curation:** Ability to ingest, assess (using automated assessment against predefined criteria) and suggest relevant user-generated or existing published third-party content with appropriate rights management and moderation.
- **Content Sourcing:** Managed access to third-party content creators via a talent marketplace or other resources. These resources enable content marketing leaders to augment in-house staff via scalable staff managed through their existing toolsets and editorial processes.
- **Multibrand/Multigeography Support:** Ability to partition the system, roles and workflows by distinct programs that may be separated based on business unit, geography or other dividing lines. This enables a brand to use a single system to roll up all content operations while allowing subteams to function independently.

## Honorable Mention

### Curata

Curata remains an honorable mention this year, as a consistent contender in the CMP market. It is focused on helping clients curate and contextualize content to drive lead generation. Curata serves both B2C and B2B clients ranging from small and midsize businesses to enterprise clients across a variety of industries. It's recognized for ease of adoption and integration with social, multichannel platforms and sales enablement tools. Curata was not included in the Magic Quadrant because it did not meet the minimum revenue inclusion criterion.

### DivvyHQ

DivvyHQ is a cloud-based content planning and workflow solution recognized for a high level of customer service. The platform is focused on supporting global teams with content request intake, content and campaign planning, asset production and management, performance analytics, and facilitating collaboration throughout the content process. DivvyHQ serves large brands, agencies, media companies and publishers. It offers user-based pricing and is at a lower price point than others in the category, which may meet the needs of small businesses. DivvyHQ

was not included in this Magic Quadrant because it did not meet the minimum revenue inclusion criterion.

## Evaluation Criteria

### Ability to Execute

This analysis evaluates vendors on the quality and efficacy of the processes, systems, methods or procedures that enable marketing provider performance to be competitive, efficient and effective, and to positively impact revenue, retention and reputation within Gartner's view of the market. Sales execution/pricing and marketing execution receive medium weights as indicators of growth potential. For this market in particular, our analysis took into account the visibility and breadth of vendors' own content marketing efforts. Overall viability was given low weight in this analysis. That is because of the rapid evolution of the category coupled with an active landscape of mergers, acquisitions and divestments.

Market responsiveness/record is now weighted moderate, due to the increased disruption to creative production resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to respond to rapidly changing client needs.

Operations are weighted low due to relative lack of differentiation in this area. As the market evolves and more longitudinal analysis is available, these may become more important and readily analyzed criteria.

### Ability to Execute Evaluation Criteria

**Product or Service:** Products or services consist of core goods and services that compete in and/or serve the defined market. These include current product and service capabilities, quality, feature sets and skills. These can be offered natively or through OEM agreements/partnerships as defined in the market definition and detailed in the subcriteria. This includes an evaluation of the product's or service's full list of critical capabilities and whether those capabilities possess basic or advanced features.

**Overall Viability (Business Unit, Financial, Strategy and Organization):** Overall viability includes an assessment of the organization's overall financial health as well as the financial and practical success of the business unit. It views the likelihood of the organization to continue to offer and invest in the product, as well as the product's position in the current portfolio.

**Sales Execution/Pricing:** Sales execution and pricing encompass the organization's capabilities in all presales activities and the structure that supports them. This includes deal management, pricing and negotiation, presales support, and the overall effectiveness of the sales channel.

**Market Responsiveness/Track Record:** Market responsiveness/track record includes the vendor's ability to respond, change direction, be flexible and achieve competitive success as opportunities develop, competitors act, customer needs evolve and market dynamics change. This criterion also considers the vendor's history of responsiveness to changing market demands.

**Marketing Execution:** Marketing execution includes the clarity, quality, creativity and efficacy of programs designed to deliver the organization’s message in order to influence the market, promote the brand, increase awareness of its products and establish a positive identification in the minds of customers. This “mind share” can be driven by a combination of publicity, promotional activity, thought leadership, social media, referrals and sales activities. This criterion includes the organization’s own use of content marketing as a tactic with an eye to the quality and utility of the advice it provides, as well as success in driving relative visibility to its brand.

**Customer Experience:** Customer experience includes products and services and/or programs that enable customers to achieve anticipated results with the products evaluated. Specifically, these include quality supplier/buyer interactions, technical support or account support. It may also include ancillary tools, customer support programs, availability of user groups and service-level agreements. Customer experience is evaluated through Gartner Peer Insights feedback, ease of use and availability of services.

**Operations:** Operations refers to the ability of the organization to meet goals and commitments. Factors include quality of the organizational structure, skills, experiences, programs, systems and other vehicles that enable the organization to operate effectively and efficiently.

Table 1: Ability to Execute Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation Criteria ↓	Weighting ↓
Product or Service	High
Overall Viability	Low
Sales Execution/Pricing	Medium
Market Responsiveness/Record	Medium
Marketing Execution	Medium
Customer Experience	High
Operations	Low

Source: Gartner (March 2021)

Completeness of Vision



This remains a growing market with the complexities of serving content marketing, and this analysis most heavily weights market understanding. Our analysis places emphasis on offering/product strategy, which indicates a vendor's approach to meeting market needs in current and future features. Similarly, it gives strong consideration to innovation due to the relative wealth of automation and insight opportunities that abound in the space, with keen needs from marketers to improve efficiency and quality.

The use of AI for ideation, production and customized distribution will play a greater role in vendor Completeness of Vision as AI technology evolves. Business model and geographic strategy are weighted low due to the limited overall diversity of the current market.

Sales and vertical/industry strategy are not rated, as there is limited evidence of concrete sales channel or go-to-market differences. Vendors did not exhibit strong vertical depth in the shape of tailored product, services or go-to-market approaches. At this time, clients evaluating CMP vendors should presume that the verticals referenced in our written analysis are relevant primarily in ensuring that others within an industry have seen success. However, clients should not presume any customization for their own unique industry needs.

### **Completeness of Vision Evaluation Criteria**

**Market Understanding:** Market understanding refers to the vendor's ability to understand customer needs and translate them into products and services. Vendors that show a clear vision of their market listen, understand customer demands, and can shape or enhance market changes with their added vision. Indicators include a clear understanding of content marketing practices and today's marketer challenges, as well as challenges coming in the next two to three years. Another indicator is the flexibility to address broader content use cases that generate content outside of a content marketing program (for example, ad content, brand content and event content).

**Marketing Strategy:** Marketing strategy refers to clear, differentiated messaging consistently communicated internally and externalized through social media, advertising, customer programs and positioning statements.

**Sales Strategy:** Sales strategy refers to a sound strategy for selling that uses the appropriate networks, including direct and indirect sales, marketing, service and communication. This includes partners that extend the scope and depth of market reach, expertise, technologies, services, and their customer base.

**Offering (Product) Strategy:** Offering (product) strategy consists of an approach to product development and delivery that emphasizes market differentiation, functionality, methodology and features as they map to current and future requirements.

**Business Model:** Business model is defined as the design, logic and execution of the organization's business proposition to achieve continued success.

**Vertical/Industry Strategy:** Vertical or industry strategy refers to the strategy to direct resources (for example, sales, product or development), skills and products to meet the specific needs of

individual market segments, including verticals.

**Innovation:** Innovation covers the direct, related, complementary and synergistic layouts of resources, expertise or capital for investment, consolidation, or defensive or preemptive purposes. For this criterion, vendors were evaluated on their general roadmap and investments related to CMP critical capabilities and specific investments in content intelligence, such as incorporation of SEO, analytics and AI-driven insights for content planning and ideation.

**Geographic Strategy:** Geographic strategy encompasses the vendor’s strategy to direct resources, skills and offerings to meet the specific needs of geographies outside the vendor’s “home” or native geography. This can be done either directly or through partners, channels and subsidiaries as appropriate for the geography and market.

Table 2: Completeness of Vision Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation Criteria ↓	Weighting ↓
Market Understanding	High
Marketing Strategy	Medium
Sales Strategy	NotRated
Offering (Product) Strategy	Medium
Business Model	Low
Vertical/Industry Strategy	NotRated
Innovation	Medium
Geographic Strategy	Low

Source: Gartner (March 2021)

Quadrant Descriptions

Leaders

Leaders possess capabilities across nearly all product requirements, most notably related to ideation insights, editorial planning, workflow and performance metrics. These strengths allow clients to customize their offerings and optimize them to unique business processes. Leaders

have solidified their market position and possess recognized strengths, each with one or two differentiators that make them competitively distinct. Leaders manage vibrant, growing businesses with progressive roadmaps.

## Challengers

Challengers have a developed understanding of the content marketing platform market and possess capabilities across some of the product requirements. Challengers manage growing businesses with client reviews that are generally positive.

## Visionaries

Visionaries provide a strong vision for the content marketing market, with roadmaps that show focused efforts to meet future client needs within a specific category. Although Visionaries show promise in content marketing, they may lack certain execution capabilities such as growth potential, resources or scalability.

## Niche Players

Niche Players in this market fall into two categories: heritage content marketing vendors building capabilities that fall outside the realm of the CMP; and new vendors that can support some content marketing use cases. For both types of vendors, this market's Niche Players offer many capabilities but lack heft in a few critical functions, such as ideation insights and performance metrics. Their particular mix of features enables them to serve the needs of some but not all content marketing clients, with generally positive client reviews.

## Context

When evaluating a content marketing platform, first identify where your organization is in its marketing maturity (see [Maturity Model for Content Marketing](#)). Next, pinpoint and engage all key stakeholders who will have an essential role within your efforts. This will ensure that you have the processes, skilled talent and internal resource commitments required to generate value from the tools. Generally, content marketing programs at Levels 1 and 2 are unable to fully leverage CMP capabilities. Upon graduation to Level 3, teams investing in CMPs are more likely to achieve the desired benefits of scale and pace.

Review your content marketing strategy prior to your vendor search. Doing so ensures the platform you select will service your strategy — not the other way around. A CMP simply enables your content marketing program. Its ability to deliver business benefit is only as strong as the strategy, narrative and process your team provides.

Analyze your marketing workflow to ensure that you're evaluating the right category of tools. Do you have a focused content marketing use case? Or do you have broader marketing issues to address, such as campaign or communications efficiency? Based on your needs, consider whether CMPs, work management tools or other technology is the best fit (see [The Future of Content Operations: How to Deliver Marketing in a Changing World](#)). If your needs are blended, shortlist the CMP vendors whose capabilities and vision span the full scope of marketing campaigns, content planning and workflow.

Finally, evaluate your strategy, staffing and business processes to determine which type of solution best suits your needs. Questions to guide your thinking include:

- What tools does my team need to better align content to meet the needs of my key personas along the customer journey?
- When will my content library and team scale to the point where we need robust DAM capabilities?
- How can my current staff and agency resources more efficiently create the content that my marketing efforts require? Should I plan to augment them with third-party or user-generated content?
- Is my content program distributed across brands and geographies, requiring multiple parent-child roles, calendars and workflows?
- How can my CMP integrate with other tools in my martech stack to enable the reporting and analysis that my strategy and leadership require?
- Does my organization require additional services in the form of strategic or tactical support to build content marketing muscle?

As you build your business case and requests for proposals, ensure you use not only product and capability criteria but also vision and cultural fit, scope of solution, and experience with your business model. Service has become an integral part of many CMPs. Understand your need for support, which may include technology adoption, content auditing and strategy services, among others, to help you leverage the technology to its fullest extent. Use your Gartner subscription to discuss your requirements with an analyst who can help refine your selection process (see [Beyond RFPs: How to Select the Right Vendor for Your Next Martech Solution](#)).

## Market Overview

### CMPs Narrow Their Focus to Primary Use Cases

Content marketing platforms (CMPs) are among the most highly utilized technologies in the marketing technology stack. Gartner's 2020 Marketing Technology Survey reports that 28% of its participants claim 67% to 100% utilization of their CMP's capabilities. <sup>1</sup>

With 2020 increasing the prevalence of employees working from home, teams need the ability to automate the content creation process while producing content for multichannel experiences and personalization.

Historically, CMPs have attempted to present themselves as a content marketing panacea, with diffuse rather than deep capabilities in areas that overlap with multiple adjacent markets, such as digital asset management, sales enablement and marketing work management. CMPs serve as a connector of content assets, creation and distribution, but lack the depth provided by DAM (for example, ingestion, storage, retrieval, collaboration and life cycle management of rich media

assets, such as text, graphics, images, video and audio) or MWM (tools to support the ideation, creation, production, and management of marketing materials and related products). Neither are CMPs suitable as stand-alone sales enablement tools. Modern CMPs typically lack the full range of capabilities needed by marketing operations teams to effectively run an entire marketing organization. These capabilities include:

- Asset usage metrics for globally distributed teams, including asset use to support product information management (PIM), dynamic creative optimization and programmatic advertising, among other platforms
- Operational and workflow capabilities that expand beyond content use cases to support teams like data and analytics and teams outside of marketing – for example, financial management, budgeting, capacity planning and workflow automations
- Lead generation and sales enablement tools and closed-loop analytics

Now vendors are narrowing their focus on their primary use cases in order to better serve their clients. In turn, clients must prioritize their own efforts and work closely with their vendors to ensure their needs are met. Otherwise, they run the risk of leaning on custom work that may fail to deliver on business requirements despite the costly investment.

## Three Key Trends Driving the Evolution of CMPs

The market for content marketing platforms and their planned capabilities are being influenced by three key trends:

- The demand for marketing agility
- The use of persona mapping and ideation insight to enhance content effectiveness
- The enhancement of the user experience for better adoption across a client's global team or business units

### The Demand for Marketing Agility

The need to respond quickly to environmental shifts and evolving customer needs amid the COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the importance of marketing agility. In fact, in Gartner's 2020 Marketing Operations and Organization Survey, 78% of respondents reported that they are more effective at adjusting content and messaging to reflect shifts in customer sentiments when their organization uses an agile approach to project management. This is in comparison to those who use more traditional approaches (44%). <sup>2</sup>

Yet 32% of the 165 marketers who responded to a Gartner webinar poll say their organization's biggest inhibitor of content production speed is complex production processes. Additionally, 36% of marketing leaders responding to Gartner's 2020 Marketing Operations and Organization Survey say they manage the workflow of content using methods like email, spreadsheets or document

management systems or without any system. These processes limit marketers' ability to both scale their efforts and respond to evolving needs in the face of disruption and customer needs.

CMP capabilities, such as agile planning tools, automated creative workflow templates and content production operational analytics, can enable marketers to improve content marketing agility.

### **Content Enhancement via Persona Mapping and Ideation Insights**

Digital marketing leaders aim to create impactful content that influences or aids their customers in accomplishing their goals. This includes supporting a consistent message across channels, while developing content that addresses specific channel needs. To do this, they turn to tools provided via martech, such as CMPs. Vendors that provide tools like content auditing, gap analysis and persona development empower their clients to achieve very specific desired responses. This is key for digital marketing leaders as the pressure to deliver ROI via their content marketing increases.

### **User Experience Enhancements That Enable Global Team and Cross-Unit Adoption**

The disruption to content creators as a result of COVID-19 brought the need for common workflows and calendars to the forefront to ensure that content was consistent across marketing channels. Content serves as a critical medium for both marketers and sellers to deliver highly relevant, valuable information to current and prospective customers. This further impacts B2B organizations, due to the nonlinear nature of the purchase journey, and most B2B buyers report using both supplier sales reps and supplier websites for support in completing each of their top buying jobs to be done. This means that consistent use of content between these two constituencies is paramount for an effective buying experience. <sup>3</sup>

CMPs can serve as a "single source of truth" for both marketers and sellers (direct or indirect) to access the most up-to-date, brand-compliant content. Many CMP vendors can grant sales reps "view only" access to the most relevant content, based on seller use cases. Many vendors offer integrations with sales enablement platforms, such as Showpad and Seismic, for sales reps to access synced, up-to-date content versions within their existing toolset.

## **Evidence**

<sup>1</sup> Gartner 2020 Marketing Technology Survey: Results presented are based on a Gartner study to understand how marketers are investing in, deploying and getting value out of marketing technology. The research was conducted online from July 2020 through September 2020 among 387 respondents in the United States (54%), Canada (3%), France (6%), Germany (8%) and the United Kingdom (29%). Respondents were required to have involvement in decisions related to their company's marketing technology strategy. Eighty-five percent of the respondents came from organizations with \$1 billion or more in annual revenue. The respondents came from a variety of industries: financial services (46 respondents), high tech (51 respondents), manufacturing (63 respondents), consumer products (27 respondents), media (40 respondents), retail (46

respondents), healthcare providers (48 respondents), IT and business services (44 respondents), and travel and hospitality (22 respondents).

The survey was developed collaboratively by a team of Gartner analysts who follow marketing, and was reviewed, tested and administered by Gartner's Research and Data and Analytics team.

Disclaimer: Results of this study do not represent global findings or the market as a whole but reflect sentiment of the respondents and companies surveyed.

<sup>2</sup> **Gartner 2020 Marketing Operations and Organization Survey:** The purpose of this survey was to validate organizational and operational challenges that most impact marketing organizational and operational effectiveness today. The research was conducted online from May 2020 through June 2020 among 429 respondents in the United States (41%), Canada (5%), France (12%), Germany (12%) and the United Kingdom (30%). Respondents were required to have involvement in decisions related to aligning marketing budget, resources and processes and/or marketing operations. Ninety-one percent of the respondents came from organizations with \$1 billion or more in annual revenue. The respondents came from a variety of industries: financial services (53 respondents), high tech (49 respondents), manufacturing (59 respondents), consumer products (51 respondents), media (48 respondents), retail (60 respondents), healthcare providers (46 respondents), IT and business services (22 respondents), and travel and hospitality (41 respondents). The survey was developed collaboratively by a team of Gartner analysts who follow marketing and was reviewed, tested and administered by Gartner's Research and Data and Analytics team.

*Disclaimer: Results of this study do not represent global findings or the market as a whole but reflect sentiment of the respondents and companies surveyed.*

<sup>3</sup> 2019 Gartner Buyer Survey.

## Evaluation Criteria Definitions

### Ability to Execute

**Product/Service:** Core goods and services offered by the vendor for the defined market. This includes current product/service capabilities, quality, feature sets, skills and so on, whether offered natively or through OEM agreements/partnerships as defined in the market definition and detailed in the subcriteria.

**Overall Viability:** Viability includes an assessment of the overall organization's financial health, the financial and practical success of the business unit, and the likelihood that the individual business unit will continue investing in the product, will continue offering the product and will advance the state of the art within the organization's portfolio of products.

**Sales Execution/Pricing:** The vendor's capabilities in all presales activities and the structure that supports them. This includes deal management, pricing and negotiation, presales support, and the overall effectiveness of the sales channel.



**Market Responsiveness/Record:** Ability to respond, change direction, be flexible and achieve competitive success as opportunities develop, competitors act, customer needs evolve and market dynamics change. This criterion also considers the vendor's history of responsiveness.

**Marketing Execution:** The clarity, quality, creativity and efficacy of programs designed to deliver the organization's message to influence the market, promote the brand and business, increase awareness of the products, and establish a positive identification with the product/brand and organization in the minds of buyers. This "mind share" can be driven by a combination of publicity, promotional initiatives, thought leadership, word of mouth and sales activities.

**Customer Experience:** Relationships, products and services/programs that enable clients to be successful with the products evaluated. Specifically, this includes the ways customers receive technical support or account support. This can also include ancillary tools, customer support programs (and the quality thereof), availability of user groups, service-level agreements and so on.

**Operations:** The ability of the organization to meet its goals and commitments. Factors include the quality of the organizational structure, including skills, experiences, programs, systems and other vehicles that enable the organization to operate effectively and efficiently on an ongoing basis.

## Completeness of Vision

**Market Understanding:** Ability of the vendor to understand buyers' wants and needs and to translate those into products and services. Vendors that show the highest degree of vision listen to and understand buyers' wants and needs, and can shape or enhance those with their added vision.

**Marketing Strategy:** A clear, differentiated set of messages consistently communicated throughout the organization and externalized through the website, advertising, customer programs and positioning statements.

**Sales Strategy:** The strategy for selling products that uses the appropriate network of direct and indirect sales, marketing, service, and communication affiliates that extend the scope and depth of market reach, skills, expertise, technologies, services and the customer base.

**Offering (Product) Strategy:** The vendor's approach to product development and delivery that emphasizes differentiation, functionality, methodology and feature sets as they map to current and future requirements.

**Business Model:** The soundness and logic of the vendor's underlying business proposition.

**Vertical/Industry Strategy:** The vendor's strategy to direct resources, skills and offerings to meet the specific needs of individual market segments, including vertical markets.

**Innovation:** Direct, related, complementary and synergistic layouts of resources, expertise or capital for investment, consolidation, defensive or pre-emptive purposes.

**Geographic Strategy:** The vendor's strategy to direct resources, skills and offerings to meet the specific needs of geographies outside the "home" or native geography, either directly or through partners, channels and subsidiaries as appropriate for that geography and market.

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