Digital Experience Delivery Platforms

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A recent report by Forrester Research on digital experience delivery platforms has named Adobe and Hybris as leading strong performers. Adobe was recognised for its web experience management suit which includes content management, digital assets management, targeting and personalisation capabilities. Hybris was acknowledged for the e-commerce experience management with strong presence in product information management (PIM) and digital commerce space. Apart from Adobe and Hybris, SiteCore and IBM also barely made in strong performers list.

So what is digital experience delivery platforms? Digital experience delivery platforms are built on top of content management systems or e-commerce systems with objective to support an organisation's desire to create and deliver relevant, cross-channel, contextual experiences to it's customers. These experiences can be delivered at any point in customer journey via any channel.

Unfortunately, unified digital experience delivery is harder than it seems. Let me explain this.

Firstly, organisation are struggling with both organisational and technology silos. Unified digital experience delivery requires a close collaboration between marketing, information technology, sales, and other business units across the company which in my experience is really difficult . Organisational silos can be attributed to poorly chalked out roles and responsibilities. Due to lack of effective technology management, organisation have created their own **technical debts**. More and more organisation are facing challenge with overlapping and redundant technologies acquired by different departments with no or little integration between these technologies.

Secondly, none of the platform vendors truly offer an end-to-end solution. According to Forrester report, *Vendors have functionality gaps and many customers don't want a one-stop shop*. Quest for holy grail of the customer experience, a truly on-stop unified digital experience platform is still on. Some vendors have come close to finish line but completeness and integration is holding them back. In my opinion Adobe definitely ahead in this game. Many have questioned the practicality of one-stop solutions especially when number best-of-breed point solutions is growing rapidly.

Coming back to Forrester report, report suggests that *Vendors' integration of acquired products lags in maturity*. Adobe's aggregation strategies appears most promising. Unlike other vendors, Adobe has great success in integrating acquired technologies in its platform. Adobe strategy is architecturally superior, at least from engineering perspective Adobe is betting on common architecture (Apache Felix OSGi bundles and JCR implementation Apache Jackrabbit). Adobe has also adopted single UI pattern for all it's product (known as Coral UI or CloudUI visual style). In terms of aggregation and integration, despite having best of breed tools like ATG, Fatwire, Endeca, Responsys, Eloqua, Oracle failed to capitalise the market. IBM has a very similar story, WebSphere Commerce, Coremetrics, Unica, Tealeaf - a basket full of products still lot more desired in terms integration and maturity.

A key aspect of unified digital experience platform is third-party software integration. In most of cases either it falls far short of needs or burned due to growing competition for one-stop solution in this space. Basic API-level integrations are often fragile and usually not upto the mark. Deep integrations although work seamlessly requires commitments from both parties. Typically big players like Adobe, Oracle and IBM has less incentive for integrations with third-party products.

In a nutshell, success and adaptation of digital experience delivery platforms will depend on the integration.