



ZOHO BETS ON UNIFIED MARKETING WITH ITS MARKETING PLUS LAUNCH. WILL IT PAY OFF?

IN BRIEF

The company takes a big step forward in addressing the needs of marketing executives and their teams by providing a unified and integrated approach to marketing that helps its mid-market and enterprise clients deliver a more cohesive experience to their customers.

| INTRODUCTION

Marketing leaders at enterprise and mid-market organizations are racing to deliver a customer experience that helps them stand out in a crowded, experientially-driven market.

They need to authentically engage with prospective customers as they progress through the marketing and buying journey — and they must do it whenever and however those prospective customers want.

But delivering this unified experience is challenging for marketing executives because they must bring together a vast and complex collection of marketing functions and capabilities to do so — and be prepared to rapidly adapt in a unified manner as customer expectations shift.

It's a tall order made all that more difficult by the fact that each of the various marketing functions uses a different set of tools and technologies and may have a different perspective on the customer.

In response to these growing challenges, Zoho has announced a new unified marketing platform it calls Zoho Marketing Plus that it says “brings together marketing activities across campaign ideation, creation, execution, management, and measurement, providing stakeholders across the entire marketing organization with a single, shared view of critical information for improved collaboration and results.”

THE EXPERIENCE MANDATE FORCING MARKETING'S HAND

While marketing leaders have long needed to simplify the marketing execution process, the functional needs of the various teams have resulted in a mishmash of disparate and often loosely integrated tools in most organizations.

These functional needs have often trumped a desire for a more cohesive marketing approach, primarily because integration has typically required a significant technical effort to forge this collection of tools into a unified whole.

But the growing importance of the customer experience — especially during the buying journey — is forcing marketing leaders to re-evaluate this stance.

According to recent studies by Sitel Group, 58% of consumers say the experience is one of their greatest influencers as they choose a specific brand, and 73% of them will sever ties with an organization after a single poor experience.

And it is clear that the disconnected functional and tooling silos are a significant impediment to delivering these differentiating experiences. A recent report by McKinsey identifies silo-driven fragmentation and a myopic focus on specific touchpoints as two of six “customer experience pitfalls to avoid.”

Moreover, the long-held belief that improving the customer experience comes at the cost of efficiency is also proving false. In fact, organizations are finding that not only are improving the experience and increasing efficiency not mutually exclusive, but they are symbiotic.

“Marketing drives awareness [and] this awareness helps us to support health research that benefits our community here in New Brunswick, Canada,” explained Shannon Payne, Director of Marketing and Engagement at New Brunswick Health Research Foundation. “Zoho’s marketing platform pulls all the data across the various channels we use together, and contains every tool we need to properly engage our partners, which has made our marketing process more organized and efficient.”

BREAKING DOWN SILOS AND BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

Zoho’s release of Marketing Plus is its attempt to help marketing leaders have the best of all worlds, simplifying and unifying while meeting the needs of each functional team.

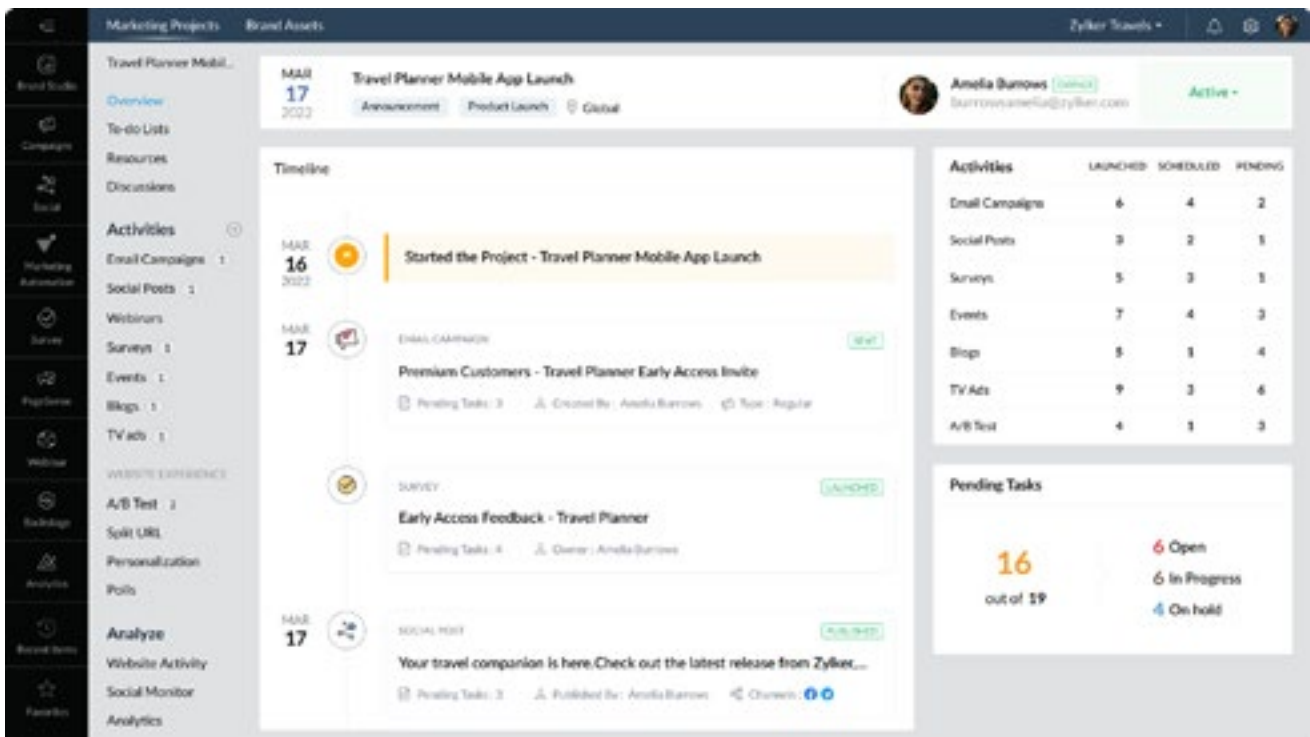
The company says its goal is to help “increase the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies by giving marketing leaders a deeper understanding of customer preferences and behaviors so they can deliver dynamic, high-value customer experiences that drive brand affinity and customer happiness.”

It believes it can do this by delivering an integrated and unified experience for the entire marketing team, bringing all its necessary tools into a single platform.

While that sounds simple on the surface, the reality is that the complete end-to-end marketing process involves more than just core marketing applications. This fact is why Zoho’s approach is interesting.

In addition to core marketing functions (e.g., email marketing, marketing automation, social marketing, etc.), its platform puts a heavy focus on less sexy elements such as collaboration, document management, orchestration, and analytics. In its totality, its suite attempts to address the full marketing lifecycle, including:

- Planning & Ideation
- Creation & Collaboration
- Document Management (including marketing assets)
- Customer Data Management
- Orchestration & Personalization (including surveys, website data, and automation)
- Omnichannel Engagement (including webinars and events)
- Analytics & Optimization



And according to its customers, it appears to be delivering on its promise.

“Our previous marketing solution required time-consuming and costly customization and engineering support just to provide experiences for our customers that didn’t scale or produce meaningful insights,” shared Sundeep MV, Chief Marketing Officer of Techademy. “We embraced Zoho’s

Marketing Platform...and now we have a full-stack, unified sales and marketing solution wherein every relevant stakeholder in the organisation is armed with the data and tools to increase engagement and drive customer experience. Our teams collaborate within a single dashboard on the Platform, which houses all of the content and data we use to derive actionable insights and grow the business.”

ZOHO'S BET ON A UNIFIED APPROACH

The real question is whether or not this bet on a unified approach will pay off for the company and its customers.

The battle between best-of-breed point solutions and integrated platforms has a long history — and it has always represented a trade-off. The cost of unification is almost always some loss of functionality compared to purpose-built point solutions.

The question becomes, which is more important to marketing leaders?

Zoho is betting that unification and simplicity will make up for any lack of functionality in any one component of its platform.

It's a bet the company has been making for decades. The company has a long history of delivering integrated solutions across a wide swath of the enterprise application stack. More importantly for its customers, it has long focused its innovation efforts on providing the 80% of functionality that delivers most of the value for mid-market and mid-sized enterprise organizations.

Its Marketing Plus offering lives up to this pedigree. While some components are more advanced than others, the platform delivers most of the functionality that marketing leaders need to provide a unified experience collaboratively and cohesively.

A UNIFIED AND INTEGRATED FUTURE

Ultimately, it will be up to each marketing leader to decide what is more important to them — the specific needs of each functional team or the ability to deliver a unified experience via a unified marketing platform.

While the answer will always come down to each organization's specific needs and situation, I believe Zoho is on the right track here. The continual evolution of the experiential demands, the growing complexity of the marketing stack, and the evermore strategic mandate placed on the marketing function will combine to make it increasingly difficult for organizations to forge a compelling experience from a set of disconnected tools.

For most organizations, the ability to collaborate and coordinate within a unified marketing platform will outweigh any specific functional nicety and lead to a more differentiated customer experience and better business outcomes.

Zoho has commissioned this analysis and provided advance briefings and other information related to the launch of its solution. However, The Digital Experience Report maintains complete editorial control of this analysis.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

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ABOUT ZOHO

With 50+ apps in nearly every major business category, including sales, marketing, customer support, accounting and back-office operations, and an array of productivity and collaboration tools, Zoho Corporation is one of the world's most prolific technology companies.



Zoho is privately held and profitable with more than 10,000 employees. Zoho is headquartered in Austin, Texas, with international headquarters in Chennai, India. Additional offices are in the United States, India, Japan, China, Canada, Singapore, Mexico, Australia, the Netherlands, Brazil, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. For more information, please visit: www.zoho.com/