ITERABLE

The Future of Martech Is Composable

How to Power Customer Engagement With Data

The Martech Stack Dilemma—Promise vs. Reality

Martech stacks are built on a simple promise: manage the customer data lifecycle and empower marketing teams with actionable insights. But in reality, most stacks fall short—fragmented data, siloed tools, and disconnected workflows slow down execution and limit impact.

There's much debate about how to architect and build a martech stack for optimal data performance. For example:

- How should marketing and data teams collaborate for seamless activation?

- What's the right balance between governance and agility across multiple solutions?

- Should you use specialized point players or consolidate under an all-in-one platform?

The debate isn't new. As a recent industry analysis put it:

> The martech landscape has long been caught between two competing narratives: the promise of all-in-one marketing suites and the flexibility of point solutions.

The future of marketing isn't about choosing one or the other—it's about breaking free from rigid, outdated models and activating customer data on your terms. Let's explore how that works.

The Reality of All-in-One Platforms

All-in-one platforms promise to be the "single source of truth" for customer data. But in practice, they rarely deliver. The average company juggles over 2,000 data silos, making it nearly impossible for marketing teams—and the data engineers supporting them—to consolidate everything into a marketer-friendly system on their own.

For data centralization to be successful, you need a company-wide effort. To compensate, businesses often store the same information across multiple tools, creating **duplicative storage**.

What is duplicative storage?

Duplicative storage happens when the same customer data is stored across multiple systems due to disconnected platforms and siloed workflows. This redundancy increases costs, creates inefficiencies, and leads to inconsistent insights. Consolidating data into a centralized warehouse eliminates redundancies, improves accessibility, and ensures more accurate, up-to-date insights.

But even then, data remains locked in separate systems, forcing data teams to extract insights manually. The result? No single, unified view of customers, campaigns, or performance. It's no surprise that only 4.2% of companies use multi-product marketing suites as their central platform.

The problem doesn't stop there. Even when marketers buy into an all-in-one solution, they still need point solutions to get the job done. **83% of companies end up using alternative tools** instead of the built-in features of their primary platform. Why? Because most all-in-one platforms aren't truly integrated—they're a patchwork of acquired technologies, not purpose-built solutions.

This leads to:

- **Fragmented workflows** – Marketers juggle multiple logins just to access basic functionality.

- **Disconnected data** – Customer insights remain siloed across channels.

- **Lagging performance** – Even when data is available, it's often not in real-time, slowing decision-making and delaying critical marketing moments.

This gap between the promise of all-in-one platforms and reality has significant negative consequences for marketing teams.

THE COST OF FRAGMENTED MARTECH

Efficiency Gap	Marketing Impact
Broken Workflows Marketers must switch between multiple logins and disconnected tools just to execute customer communications.	**Reduced Marketer Agility** Marketers file JIRA tickets for data access, slowing down their ability to deploy customer communications at the right marketing moments and drive real-time decisioning.
Disconnected Data Customer insights remain siloed, making it difficult to orchestrate seamless, personalized experiences across channels.	**Backlogged Data Teams** Data teams must allocate bandwidth to support marketing with extraction and integration versus transforming data into valuable signals or predictive models.
Lagging Performance Even when data is accessible, it's often delayed, leading to missed opportunities for timely engagement.	**Increased Organizational Spend** Internal inefficiencies and missed engagement windows drive up spend on re-engagement and manual workarounds. Budget that could be allocated to customer acquisition, headcount, and more is spent on technology.

The 3 Foundations of a Best-in-Breed Martech Stack

The good news is that marketers no longer have to choose between rigid all-in-one platforms and fragmented point solutions. Instead, they can build integrated, best-of-breed stacks that give them faster access to data, better insights, and smarter decision-making—without the trade-offs.

Here's what brands should keep top-of-mind when building a martech stack that works for them.

1. Data Activation: Turning Storage Into Strategy

Marketing technology keeps evolving, but one thing remains constant: **data is at the center of everything**. This may sound simplistic until you consider the rise and fall of third-party data, privacy and browser changes, and the resultant return to first-party data as the linchpin of customer intelligence.

But data maturity matters. In fact, brands that activate more of their data **achieve 2.5x better business outcomes**, including higher revenue, better efficiency, and higher NPS scores and customer lifetime value.

With data volumes skyrocketing, brands are moving away from duplicative storage and fragmented systems. Instead, they're consolidating their data into centralized data warehouses, a shift that's reshaping marketing technology.

- The data warehousing market is set to resurge to **$51.18 billion by 2028**.

- **Gartner** predicts that organizations that prioritize data democratization will outperform peers in cost savings, new revenue, and risk mitigation.

- Forbes found that companies utilizing data warehouses see **a 41% boost in revenue** over those that don't.

- **IDC** found that businesses using data warehouses for decision-making save an average of 23% in costs.

What does it mean to be data mature?

Companies with data maturity effectively use data to guide decision-making, ensuring that insights drive personalization, automation, and business growth. They collect, unify, and activate data seamlessly across systems, enabling faster, smarter marketing execution.

Businesses that tap into these benefits know that collecting data isn't enough—activating it in real-time is what drives results. Marketers need a way to access, interpret, and act on data in a way that powers **decisioning**.

As brands **centralize data** in their data warehouse, marketers need a robust set of features designed for them. Without a marketer-friendly activation layer, brands risk ending up right where they started—with inaccessible data and marketing teams still dependent on data engineers.

What is decisioning?

Decisioning is the process of using data-driven insights to determine:

- **Audience:** Who gets the message?
- **Content personalization:** What does the message say?
- **Orchestration and optimization:** When does it go out?
- **Channel:** How is the message delivered?

2. Composability: The Power to Build Your Own Stack

Another benefit of centralizing data in a data warehouse is that it allows you to build your martech stack your way. We call this composability, and it's the Goldilocks solution to the all-in-one marketing platform vs. point solution debate.

Choosing best-in-breed solutions over an all-or-nothing platform unlocks key advantages for marketers:

- **Data Flexibility** – Work seamlessly across structured and semi-structured data, unlocking deeper insights and delivering richer customer experiences.

- **Cost Control** – No more paying for underwhelming, bundled features. Marketers can allocate budgets strategically, investing only in the tools that drive real value.

- **Greater Autonomy** – Marketers can adopt technologies that simplify data movement and activation, putting marketers in the driver's seat, reducing reliance on tech teams, and accelerating speed to market.

**What does it mean to be composable?**

Composability refers to the ability to combine different tools to create flexible, tailored solutions. For marketers, this means choosing specialized, best-in-breed solutions trusted by their engineering teams—without being locked into rigid platforms.

Composable technology is also a key pillar of the MACH (Microservices, API-first, Cloud-native, and Headless) approach, which ensures flexibility, scalability, and future-proof integrations. As a **MACH-certified platform**, Iterable ensures seamless, scalable integrations that adapt to evolving needs—without compromise.

CRITERIA FOR COMPOSABILITY IN MARTECH

To fully realize the benefits of composability, marketers need solutions designed for two things.

1. Marketer-First Approach	2. Adaptive Personalization at Scale
A composable stack is only as powerful as a marketer's ability to access and activate data—without waiting on data teams.	Customers expect personalized, in-the-moment marketing experiences. The ability to activate full customer profiles in real-time is critical to delivering this level of relevance at scale.
What to Look For: • Intuitive, no-code interfaces for selecting, transforming, and syncing data • Direct access to first-party data without technical dependencies • Flexibility to personalize campaigns in real-time	**What to Look For:** • Goal-oriented recommendations that tailor personalization based on behavioral data • AI-driven decisioning to predict, automate, and optimize engagement at scale • Dynamic channel optimization to ensure messages land on the right channel at the right time
Red Flags: • Requires engineering support to move data from the warehouse • Needs custom-built tables for basic marketing workflows • Lacks direct access to first-party data, creating executional bottlenecks	**Red Flags:** • Data updates in batches instead of real-time • Personalization that is rule-based rather than dynamic • AI and predictive insights that are limited or unavailable
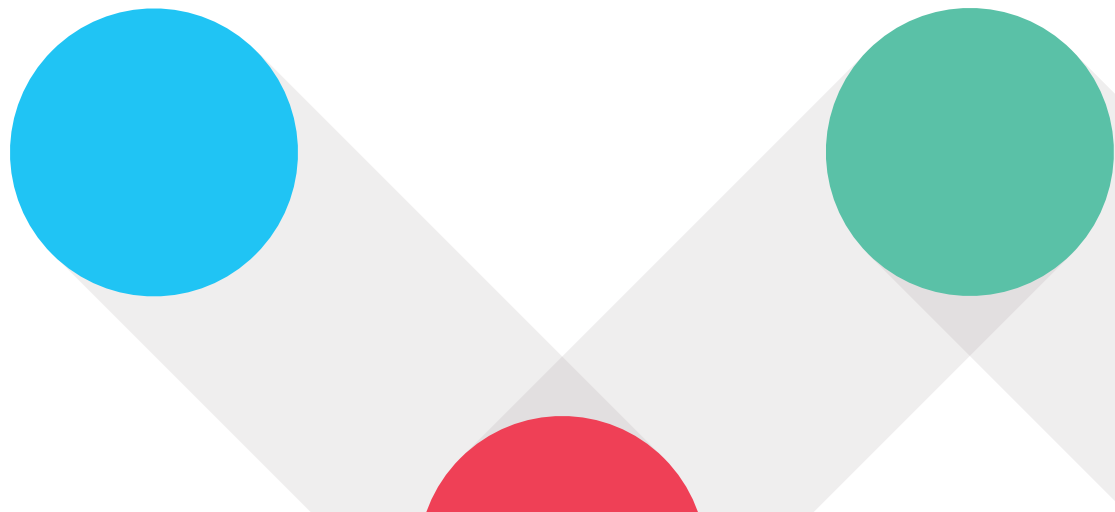
3. Decisioning: Real-time Engagement

A modern engagement strategy isn't about managing isolated campaigns—it's about orchestrating real-time, cross-channel journeys that treat customers as individuals rather than segments. This approach requires a fundamental shift in how brands contextualize and respond to each customer moment as part of a larger, connected experience.

Instead of reacting to incomplete data, marketers need a system that continuously learns from engagement patterns and applies those learnings across *every* touchpoint. That's why a centralized command center for customer engagement is essential.

Customer engagement platforms (CEP) don't just store and move data—they use it to power better decisioning across all channels.

When integrated with a composable **customer data platform (CDP)**, this creates a two-way flow of data that powers more precise personalization at scale by:

- Activating warehouse data for always-up-to-date, unified customer profiles.

- Storing real-time behavioral responses to messaging, timing, and promotions.

- Pushing enriched insights back to the warehouse for closed-looped data flow and smarter decisioning.

This continuous exchange of insights is what turns raw data into real-time action. Creating a seamless data-to-engagement flow enables marketers to apply learnings from one channel to another, dynamically trigger messages based on customer behaviors, and continuously refine engagement strategies in real-time.

The result? **Seamless, personalized experiences** that evolve with each interaction.

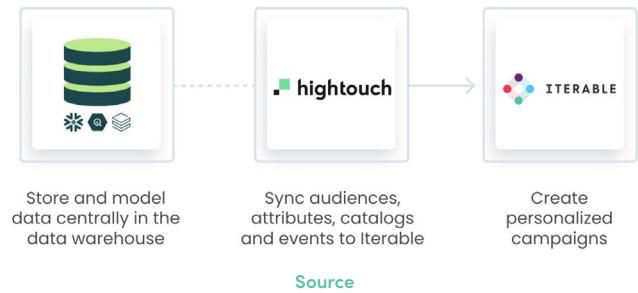# Iterable + Hightouch: Bridging the Gap Between Data and Decisioning

We've talked in this guide about the need to make smarter, more agile marketing decisions. Without a **Composable CDP** to unify data and a CEP to activate real-time decisioning, marketers remain reliant on fragmented systems and slow workflows.

That's where **Iterable and Hightouch** come in. Together, they create a seamless, two-way flow of information that gives marketers:

- Flexibility to access any and all customer data, both online and offline.

- Easier and faster access to data—say goodbye to IT bottlenecks. Marketers can self-serve to build audiences for campaigns directly in Hightouch.

- A single, centralized source of truth—No more duplicative storage.

- Smarter, dynamic automation—powered by real-time computed data.

- Unmatched cross-channel impact—orchestrate every touchpoint with precision.

- Personalized 1:1 experiences with AI Decisioning.

In a martech landscape full of rigid, all-in-one platforms and opaque, restrictive contracts, Iterable and Hightouch offer a flexible, **MACH-certified** alternative that marketers and engineers love.

If you're ready to **activate data faster**, personalize at scale, and streamline cross-channel engagement, let's talk. Get in touch today.

Store and model data centrally in the data warehouse — Sync audiences, attributes, catalogs and events to Iterable — Create personalized campaigns

Source

About Iterable

Iterable is the AI-powered customer communication platform that helps organizations like Redfin, Priceline, Calm, and Box to activate customers with joyful interactions at scale. With Iterable, organizations drive high growth with individualized, harmonized and dynamic communications that engage customers throughout the entire lifecycle at the right time. Learn more at **www.iterable.com**.

About Hightouch

Hightouch is the leading Composable CDP and AI Decisioning platform that empowers companies to activate their data warehouse to power personalized marketing and business operations. Trusted by leading organizations like Autotrader, Calendly, Cars.com, Monday.com, and PetSmart, Hightouch enables anyone to deliver personalized customer experiences, optimize performance marketing, and move faster by leveraging data and AI across their organization.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. **Data activation drives better business outcomes**. But most brands aren't using their data effectively.

2. **Marketers need real-time access to actionable data**. Otherwise, they remain dependent on data teams.

3. **Composable stacks outperform all-in-one platforms**. Best-in-breed solutions provide flexibility, scalability, and seamless integrations without vendor lock-in.

4. **AI-driven engagement is the future**. Real-time adaptability and predictive insights deliver smarter, cross-channel, and 1:1 experiences.

5. **Iterable + Hightouch unify data and activation**. A two-way data flow enables instant insights, automation, and scalable personalization.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. **What is a Customer Engagement Platform (CEP)?**
A Customer Engagement Platform (CEP), like Iterable, activates customer data in real-time to orchestrate personalized, cross-channel marketing experiences. Unlike traditional automation tools, CEPs continuously analyze behaviors, trigger messaging, and optimize engagement across email, SMS, push, and other channels.

2. **What is a Customer Data Platform (CDP)?**
A Composable Customer Data Platform (CDP), like Hightouch, collects, unifies, and organizes customer data from multiple sources into a single customer profile. CDPs make data accessible and actionable, integrating with marketing tools so teams can use insights without IT dependency.

3. **How do CEPs and CDPs work together?**
CEPs and CDPs serve distinct but complementary roles in a modern martech stack. A Customer Data Platform (CDP) centralizes and unifies data, while a Customer Engagement Platform (CEP) activates that data in real-time to trigger personalized, cross-channel engagement. Together, they bridge the gap between data storage and decisioning, ensuring insights turn into action instantly.

4. **What makes a composable martech stack better than an all-in-one platform?**
A composable martech stack lets marketers choose best-in-breed solutions they trust instead of being locked into bundled, all-or-nothing platforms. This approach improves performance, scalability, and cost-efficiency, while ensuring seamless data integration and flexibility.

5. **What is a two-way data flow, and why does it matter?**
A two-way data flow creates a continuous feedback loop between data collection and engagement. Instead of relying on static data, marketers always have real-time, updated insights to refine decision-making and deliver timely, relevant experiences.