

The background features a complex geometric design. On the left, a series of concentric, slightly offset rectangular outlines in white and light blue are set against a solid red vertical band. The rest of the image is a light blue field filled with various geometric elements: a large, dark blue, angular shape in the lower right; a series of thin, dark blue lines radiating from a point in the upper right; and a dark blue, curved, ribbed structure in the lower center. The overall aesthetic is modern and architectural.

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Utilizing Integrations with Adobe Experience Manager to Promote Hyperautomation and Technology Consolidation

INTRODUCTION

Marketing technology platforms are an integral part of a business' marketing journey. These platforms include everything from automated marketing software to workflow management platforms to creative design software.

One of the largest players in the martech industry is Adobe. Their Adobe Experience Cloud platforms support the entire marketing process from ideation to point of sale. The fact that Adobe offers such a wide array of platforms makes the Adobe Experience Cloud an extremely attractive option for many industry-leading businesses that are looking to equip their marketing teams with robust, current technology.

That said, one of the biggest struggles many businesses face is managing workflows and technology across disparate platforms – and this isn't true with just Adobe software. Historically, companies have implemented best-in-class platforms – even when those platforms were incompatible with other technologies in their martech stack. However, a recent survey by Gartner Marketing Technology found that companies today are looking for more than best-in-class out of their technology suite. 59% of businesses are looking for systems that can be a part of an integrated suite of technologies that can share data across platforms.¹

The creation of plugins and apps that help systems communicate has driven a revolution of creative thought that explores how businesses can integrate disparate technologies to improve efficiency, reduce costs, and decrease errors.

Drawing the discussion back to the features offered in Adobe Experience Manager (AEM), many businesses are exploring how widely these features can be applied to better serve their company. This ebook will explore several types of integrations that can be applied to AEM to extend its value and impact.

THE NEED FOR INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGIES

Hyperautomation is fast becoming a focus for many businesses. This is an approach to identify, vet, and automate as many business and IT processes as possible to reduce the need for human-machine interaction. In light of this effort, the need for integrated technologies is relatively simple: when integrated technologies are automated to communicate and share data, humans aren't responsible for manually translating that data across systems.

Further adding to this is the generalized effort to consolidate technology stacks across businesses by removing redundant technologies and widely applying a singular technology across the entire business. When considering this in terms of martech platforms, this leads to a reduction in available platforms or a change as to which platforms are available to use. With this in mind, it quickly becomes clear that best-in-class, stand-alone platforms may not be the best solution (or even an available solution) for many marketing teams.

When businesses explore their technology stack through the lens of hyperautomation and technology consolidation, systems that are not integrated or that don't integrate begin to create problems. These problems can have relatively far-reaching implications.

Inefficiency:

When multiple platforms in the martech stack serve different purposes but contain and use some of the same data, marketing teams must translate these data across multiple systems. This can be very time consuming for people who are trying to manage multiple projects with different tools.

Data integrity:

As with inefficiency, translating data across systems is a process that is rife with a margin for error. Busy teams can easily forget to share information, share the wrong information, or share the information incorrectly when they are working in multiple systems. Data integrity is important to effectively utilizing both the platform and a marketing strategy, and every step should be taken to control data accuracy and integrity.

Process control:

As teams grow and technology stacks evolve to encompass new platforms to do more tasks, processes can become disorganized. This simply stems from the fact that most people have different working styles, and they will come up with time-management and work-management systems that work for them as individuals. Ensuring consistent processes across the business becomes very difficult to manage when multiple teams with multiple people are using related but disconnected technology platforms.

Workflow management:

Most marketing teams have a workflow management tool to help track projects from ideation to archival. These tools can be tremendously helpful for larger teams, remote teams, or teams that focus on a large number of projects simultaneously. However, when the martech stack is not integrated, the workflow management system operates independently from the marketing systems. Teams must remember to change project statuses, attach the right file to the project, and ensure the workflow captures all the correct data for the project. All of these are at risk when working with unintegrated technologies.

File management:

Perhaps one of the most important aspects for marketing teams is file management. This is an area where using different systems, especially different systems for different teams, can be incredibly detrimental to file management. When teams are using different technologies to manage their marketing (or marketing-related) assets and efforts, files get lost, source file integrity is at risk, and maintaining process control is very difficult.

Cost:

This is likely where many businesses can see the greatest impact of unintegrated technology. Certainly, from a worker efficiency standpoint, integrated technologies offer value. However, this isn't the only place where integrated systems can impact cost. It's not uncommon for different teams throughout the same company to be using different software to accomplish the same goals. When businesses look at integrating their systems, they can remove redundant systems while also setting up specific processes and protocols to maintain system integrity across their company.

In facing this, some IT departments are moving toward applying the 20/80 rule, in which they focus their efforts on the essential 20% of tasks that produce 80% of the business value.² IT teams often start this endeavor by consolidating technologies and applying the remaining systems more widely throughout the business. This allows them to reduce costs in terms of software and overhead dedicated to systems that offer marginal value – especially if those systems are redundant, even if it means pigeonholing their teams into a specific platform.

However, if this specific platform can be integrated with the remaining technologies at the business, it can unlock valuable, new use cases for business' existing technology stacks that would otherwise be impossible.

There are three types of integrations when it comes to AEM Sites and Assets:

1. AEM Sites and Assets to Adobe integrations. This type of integration allows systems within the Adobe Experience Cloud to share data and functionality.
2. AEM Sites and Assets to third-party integrations. This integration allows AEM to work with systems and tools created by other businesses.
3. AEM Sites and Assets to custom technology integrations. This integration allows information sharing between AEM and a custom technology created by or for the business (most commonly a custom database).

ADOBE EXPERIENCE MANAGER TO ADOBE EXPERIENCE CLOUD PLATFORM INTEGRATIONS

One of the many reasons businesses may choose to invest in Adobe Experience Cloud technologies is because they have created a suite of technologies that cover a very wide array of marketing use cases.

- **Adobe Experience Manager Assets:** Digital asset manager
- **Adobe Experience Manager Sites:** Content management system
- **Adobe Commerce:** eCommerce platform
- **Adobe Analytics:** Website analytics platform
- **Adobe Customer Journey Analytics:** Customer journey analytics at an individual level
- **Adobe Real-time CDP:** Customer data profiles
- **Adobe Audience Manager:** Audience segmentation
- **Adobe Target:** Testing, personalization, and automation
- **Adobe Campaign:** Dynamic campaign delivery
- **Adobe Journey Optimizer:** Omnichannel campaign management
- **Adobe Marketo Engage:** Marketing automation
- **Adobe Workfront:** Workflow management

This suite of martech platforms covers an enormous spectrum of what many marketing teams need and utilize to deliver personalized digital experiences to their customers, and for that reason, many businesses find Adobe Experience Cloud to be an attractive solution to suit their marketing needs.

Part of the reason for this is because many of the Adobe Experience Cloud platforms work in conjunction with one another. Many of these systems hinge on AEM Sites and Assets. These two systems are often the crux or the base foundation that the rest of these systems use to deliver and utilize the content.

As a result, Adobe Experience Manager is often the focus when it comes to integrations, and in the case of Adobe to Adobe integrations, it is designed to be used in conjunction with many of the analytics and personalization tools. As a result, it almost goes without saying that AEM will integrate with Adobe's analytics and personalization platforms.

However, Adobe has also created a tool that integrates AEM Sites and Assets with Adobe Workfront, the workflow management software. This integration allows AEM to share information with Workfront, allowing teams to avoid redundant work and manual data sharing across the two platforms.

Additionally, it can help ensure that the appropriate information stays with the appropriate project, version control, and the integrity of the source file. When this integration is coupled with an AEM + Adobe Creative Cloud (Adobe's media and design suite) integration, businesses have a robust asset, design, storage, and management system in place that automatically shares critical information across all three systems to deliver personalized digital experiences and easily manage workflows.

Beyond that, this type of integration allows creatives to work entirely from their creative platform in the Adobe Creative Cloud – allowing them to use one system to manage data across all three platforms.

Adobe's robust and integrated portfolio of martech software allows many businesses to buy a full suite of marketing technology that often meets their immediate needs as well as providing them the tools they need to evolve into a more robust marketing strategy in the future.

ADOBE EXPERIENCE MANAGER TO THIRD-PARTY INTEGRATIONS

While Adobe to Adobe integrations are a relatively logical offering, integrating Adobe technologies with third-party systems can be a more uncertain prospect, and, in some cases, it may not be (immediately) possible. That being said, as businesses move toward leaner business models, integrations are not only preferred, but they are becoming the crux of what many businesses require from their technology investments.

Gartner reported that the majority of marketing departments that are facing budget cuts also struggle to utilize the full capabilities of their marketing technologies.¹ When considering this in conjunction with the 20/80 approach from IT mentioned above, the lack of comprehensive usage means that many marketing teams are facing scenarios in which they will lose software platforms that they are using, but not using in their entirety.

In all, this means that many marketing teams are cutting specific technologies while simultaneously adopting new ones that serve a similar purpose and that are being widely applied across the enterprise. This is where system integrations become absolutely critical to helping marketing teams maintain their complete functionality with fewer software platforms.

This move toward using one technology more expansively has led to an increase in connectors and connective apps for large software platforms. These apps allow enterprise businesses to connect their disparate technologies to each other, allowing them to utilize their systems more efficiently and to a greater degree.

When looking at connecting disparate systems, utilizing a widely used platform can have significant benefits as many third-party companies develop apps that ensure their software works in conjunction with the biggest names in the industry. This is the case with Adobe Experience Cloud, and as one of the most widely used martech stacks in the industry, many third-party companies have found value in developing apps that connect various technologies with the Adobe martech suite – particularly AEM Sites and Assets. These technologies often include large brands and platforms like Salesforce, Fastly, Cludo, or SAP, and smaller platforms that may be highly functional but not as widely known. An exhaustive list of connectors may be found [here](#).

As businesses take more control over which platforms their company is using, connecting with both large and small technologies can be a critical aspect for many marketing teams to get the functionality they need out of their software platforms.

Bear in mind that most often these connectors are not considered plug-and-play. They frequently require expertise in one or both systems that are being connected, and the vast majority of companies work with an experienced implementation partner to successfully implement and connect both systems. In some cases, these implementations come with a “set up” aspect, where the integration is adapted to fit the specific needs of the company, further adding to the benefits of utilizing an implementation partner.

It's also worth noting that there are Adobe Experience Cloud implementation partners that can work with third-party systems to create connectors that do not yet exist. This is most valuable for businesses that have made a tremendous investment in a specific type of software or platform, and it would be more costly to abandon it than to continue using it. In these cases, finding an implementation partner that can work with the third-party to create a connector may be one the best ways to optimize the use of both systems and can lead to a more cost-effective solution than having the systems operate independently from one another.

For businesses with AEM Sites and Assets that are looking to apply the technology more broadly – or businesses that have widely used technology within their company that they would like to use in conjunction with AEM Asset and Sites, third-party system integrations can be a key to unlocking new features and greater functionality in both systems.

ADOBE EXPERIENCE MANAGER TO CUSTOM TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

In today's business world, it is not uncommon for enterprise businesses to have legacy, custom-built software that fulfills a long-standing business need. These are typically databases, and many businesses are often faced with the tough choice of making a significant investment in transitioning these platforms to a more modern third-party solution or making a lower-cost investment in continuing to service the custom platform.

Many businesses choose the second option because it is less expensive in the here-and-now, despite the fact that it can often be the more costly choice in the long run. Additionally, this practice tends to force these platforms to function in ways that they were not originally intended to, creating a square-peg-round-hole scenario as businesses try to get the most out of the platforms that they have.

This is where an integration with modern technologies can help extend the reach and functionality of legacy, in-house solutions. Often times, the lack of integration leads to redundant efforts or “band-aid solutions” to transition the data in the database to a platform that serves a different function. In the case of AEM Sites and Assets, this can create a significant amount of rework as marketing teams try to share important data from the database through their website and DAM. Additionally, manual translation of this data leads to a substantially higher margin for error.

These integrations can simplify the workflow by removing steps via automation and allowing various divisions to focus on the 20% of their tasks that provide 80% of the business value, rather than focusing on data sharing and translation.

Additionally, this allows these legacy platforms to do more than just store data; with an integration with AEM, they can provide real-time updates to Sites and Assets, they can become an integrated part of the marketing process allowing the ROI on the legacy software to improve, and they can extend their reach and value to the company.

Naturally, these types of integrations are also not plug and play, and they require the help of an experienced implementation partner that is already familiar with developing integrations for Adobe Experience Manager Sites and Assets. This team will work closely with the IT team that manages the legacy platform to ensure the capabilities and functionality best suit the business' needs.

For businesses that are set on maintaining legacy technology to realize the investment they've made in the platform, creating new integrations that can improve how the platform is applied with their technology stack can help further reach that goal.

CONCLUSION

As businesses drive toward leaner business models that rely more on automation and less on manual labor, technology integrations are going to be the next step in utilizing software platforms. As research has shown, when comparing teams that are using disparate, best-in-class solutions to those that are using integrated technology stacks, more marketing teams utilizing integrated technologies feel they are better meeting their business' needs and objectives.¹

The increasing focus on hyperautomation is bringing integrations to the forefront of business needs, making them more and more critical as technology stacks consolidate. This means that martech stacks will not only be trimmed for redundancy, but the remaining technologies will need to be able to integrate with platforms that are used more widely throughout the company.

For this reason, exploring martech that is widely used with known integration capabilities, like AEM Sites and Assets, can be an appealing option to many businesses. In exploring the three integration options above, AEM to Adobe Experience Cloud, AEM to third-party software, and AEM to custom, legacy software, there are viable solutions for many businesses using AEM Sites and Assets to find new ways to use their existing technologies and new technologies more widely and effectively.

Sources:

¹ <https://www.gartner.com/en/marketing/insights/articles/gartner-marketing-tech-survey-2020-4-steps-improve-martech-stack-utilization>

² <https://www.gartner.com/smarterwithgartner/the-360-degree-approach-to-it-cost-and-value-optimization>