

Act-On Is A Leader Among Lead-To-Revenue Management Platform Vendors

Excerpted From: The Forrester Wave™: Lead-To-Revenue Management Platform Vendors, Q1 2014

by Lori Wizdo

with Peter O'Neill, Sheryl Pattek, Laura Ramos, and Michael Shrum

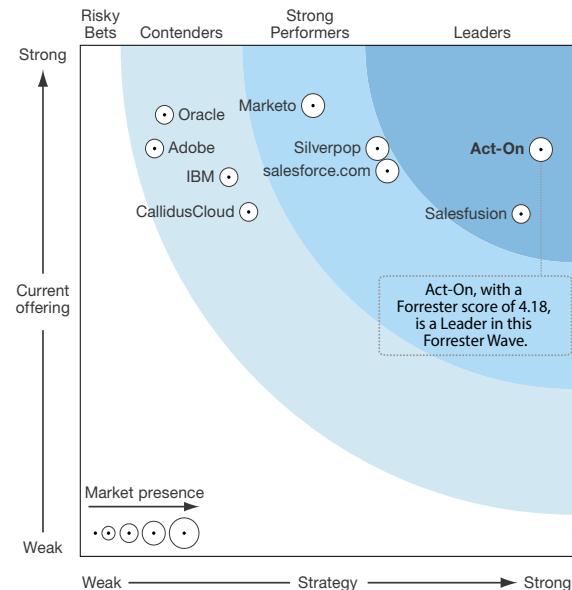
ACT-ON IS A LEADER AMONG LEAD-TO-REVENUE MANAGEMENT PLATFORM VENDORS

Since 2008, Act-On has offered marketing automation solutions for small and medium-sized businesses. The product and delivery models are right-sized for that market: The company offers an attractively low entry price, and the user interface is consistent and simple, with many tasks guided by wizards and templates. The product's L2RM platform capabilities more than meet the needs of companies with uncomplicated product portfolios, simple marketing campaigns, and straightforward channels to market. Act-On's prebuilt connectors — to sales force automation (SFA) platforms, webinar platforms, analytics packages, data services, and email deliverability testing — are sufficient for the average small business. Act-On also offers a number of native capabilities to help small marketing teams improve their digital marketing programs: search engine optimization (SEO) features to improve inbound traffic; a Twitter-prospecting tool to monitor relevant conversations between influencers, customers, and prospects; and a Google AdWords management console. The company is currently expanding to a more comprehensive L2RM platform suitable for departmental enterprise solutions, as well as SMBs. Recent investments in a library of RESTful application platform interfaces (APIs) into the Act-On platform, increased emphasis on building a more robust partner ecosystem, and a vertical industry go-to-market strategy are all part of the expanded enterprise focus.

Forrester Wave™: L2RM Platform Vendors:
For Large Enterprises, Q1 '14



Forrester Wave™: L2RM Platform Vendors:
For Small Marketing Teams, Q1 '14



See below for more information on Act-On's current offering, strategy, and market presence.



Headquarters

Forrester Research, Inc., 60 Acorn Park Drive, Cambridge, MA, 02140 USA
Tel: +1 617.613.6000 • Fax: +1 617.613.5000 • www.forrester.com

Act-On Evaluation Overview

CURRENT OFFERING

Background info	Forrester evaluated Act-On Marketing Automation Platform, Act-On Inbound, and Advanced Reporting. The platform was first released in 2009, the Inbound add-on was released on May 2013, and advanced reporting is available as of Q3 2013. The Marketing Automation Platform is required, while Act-On Inbound and advanced reporting are optional solutions.
Customer engagement management	The Act-On system enables customer preference management through a customizable web-based interface for management of contact preferences. The system can enforce contact policies — at the contact level, not the company level — based on recency, frequency, blocking rules, segment, offer, product, and channel level. Act-On requires an opt-out link in all emails to comply with CAN-SPAM requirements. Opt-outs are automatically managed within the Act-On platform. Multiple email signatures may be created to adhere to different global requirements.
Lead data management (integration, analytics, extension)	The Act-On system has a simple data model with only one required field: email address. This simple schema can be expanded via a web-based user interface to map additional fields. Marketing users can easily change the schema by adding or removing columns in a list. External data can be imported through the use of tables. The system offers strong data quality management tools and capabilities.
Campaign design, execution, management	The Act-On system enables the marketer to quickly build outbound marketing campaigns. Multichannel campaigns are supported. The product offers strong inbound marketing support with the optional inbound module. Email development and delivery are robust, reflecting a strong email heritage in the management and development team.
Cross-channel engagement management	The Act-On system leverages contextual information and other data gathered from customer behavior across online and offline channels to facilitate automated engagement decisions. The system uses data and analytics to deliver consistent offers in both inbound and outbound channels.
Content and asset management	Act-On has the ability to host many different forms of content, as well as dynamically access and provide content that is held in an external content management system. Content can be updated so existing URLs will point to the latest version. Content management capabilities include the management of images and documents of various types (HTML, DOC, DOCX, XLS, PPT, PDF, ZIP, etc.). Image extensions supported include: JPG, JPEG, GIF, PNG, and ZIP. Assets are organized by folders and all assets can be easily added to messages and landing pages via the Act-On graphical user interface (GUI). A plug-in for WordPress provides use of assets inside of WordPress. A rich text editor supports double-byte characters to support content creation in multiple languages. There is no limit to the number of assets or asset types.

Act-On Evaluation Overview

Inbound support	Act-On offers a social publishing tool to push content to multiple social channels at once and be able to track their effectiveness. Act-On also provides a social analytics tool to allow Act-On users to rate their social and online presence against that of its competitors or peers. The system supports "social applications." Contests, sweepstakes, games, and referral offers can be built into Act-On landing pages and then shared socially through the Act-On Social Publish feature. Act-On Inbound contains two capabilities to improve inbound traffic: 1) SEO optimization of all assets created in the Act-On system, such as landing pages and forms, and 2) SEO audit and optimization of website pages and/or microsites. Twitter Prospector allows users to search for related keywords within Twitter to monitor relevant conversations taking place between influencers, customers, and prospects.
Lead capture	Act-On offers website visitor tracking, form creation, social media integration, and webinar integration to enhance the lead information capture process. Gated content, progressive profiling, and data.com integration are appending capabilities available in the out-of-the-box solution. Profile of leads captured through organic search or AdWords includes the search terms the lead was using, when available. This can then be used in follow-on segmented campaigns. Act-On offers a strong Google AdWords integration that enables lead capture through a native integration with Google and provides tracking and measurement of AdWords campaigns from click-through to lead capture to opportunity creation and opportunity close. At present, the product does not support social sign-on or any sophisticated techniques for offline data capture.
Lead management	Act-On's lead management capabilities are well-designed for companies with noncomplicated product portfolios and sales organizations. The capabilities are right-sized for that context and easy to use.
Sales tools and interaction	Sales reps can leverage assets (campaigns, emails) in the Act-On marketing system to engage with their prospects and customers. All sales-generated emails are CAN-SPAM compliant and respect customer contact policy controls. Leads in the Act-On system can be routed to sales reps within the CRM system based on the rules set by the marketer. Sales reps can reject leads, and those leads can be automatically moved into a nurturing workflow program. Marketers can set up alerts for sales based on a variety of prospect behaviors (visited my price page, contact me form submission, download this whitepaper, etc.).
Integration to CRM systems	Act-On supports integration with salesforce.com, Microsoft Dynamics, SugarCRM, and Saleslogix. Integration with NetSuite is in limited beta. Act-On offers varying degrees of data integration for different CRM systems. The system does not support more than one CRM system at the same time, which should not be an issue with Act-On's target customers. The data integration process is resilient to changes in the data structures. The system has the ability, within each supported CRM, to drive the significant key processes (e.g., push/pull leads, add CRM contacts/leads to campaigns, sent/set alerts). Although the specifics vary with each CRM, the solution has the ability to view customer profile data, behavioral data and lead scoring from within the CRM interface.

Act-On Evaluation Overview

Reporting, analytics, and alerting	Act-On has reporting functionality that will meet most marketers' need for reporting and analytics. The system is strongest in reporting designed to measure and benchmark performance at the operation level (campaign, channel, and tactics). The system also offers rudimentary reporting and analytics for campaign optimization and attribution.
Support for multilayer sales channels	The system supports the creation of parent-child accounts that can be used by multilayer and indirect sales channels. Companies can roll out Act-On to their partners and work jointly with those partners on campaigns. Specifically, here are the things that can be done: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creation of specialized stationery for each partner account. - Partition lists for partner accounts and keep these lists separate so that partner attribution for leads remains accurate. - Create campaigns centrally and then deploy variations of this campaign for each partner.
Support for decentralized marketing operations	The Act-On system contains a main account and subaccount functionality called the Agency Dashboard that is used to enable field marketing, subsidiary branches, affiliates, and others. This capability allows a marketing user to set up subaccounts, share assets, and create multiple segments of leads that can be marketed to by multiple teams.
Support for global marketing operations	Act-On's platform is internationalized and localized. User interface is available in 32 languages in real-time (translations happen instantaneously). Act-On has offices, with native employees, in the US, the UK, and India. Act-On works with partners in all geographies and relies on them heavily for referrals and sales in the countries where it does not have a physical presence. Act-On has 20 staff members dedicated to supporting non-US customers, who are located in the UK and India. Approximately 15% of the client base uses the system to manage and execute campaigns outside the US.
Technology and architecture	The Act-On system is delivered via a SaaS model. The system is proven in smaller environments but has been used successfully by customers in larger environments as well. The system has an intuitive interface to moderately complex functionality. The system can be accessed through multiple devices and offers average support for third-party integration, user roles, and responsibility schemes.
Service and support	The company has a commitment, along with a strong internal capacity, to deliver a fast time-to-value for its customers and support those customers well.
STRATEGY	
Corporate strategy	Act-On has a well-articulated vision and a clear plan to be the premier and primary supplier of marketing automation technology to small marketing teams — whether those teams are found in small businesses or larger enterprises. The key areas of investment for Act-On include product innovation, sales, and international expansion.

Act-On Evaluation Overview

Product strategy	Act-On has a well-researched product road map. The company is currently expanding from its current small and medium-sized business (SMB) and email strengths to a more comprehensive L2RM platform suitable for departmental enterprise solutions, as well as SMBs. Act-On has a multifaceted strategy for expansion in several industries, including: financial services, healthcare, travel and hospitality, retail, technology, and education.
Cost	The average Act-On contract is \$1,000 per month subscription. Act-On Marketing Automation Platform starts at \$500 per month for 1,000 active contacts. Act-On Inbound starts at \$249 per month for 500 keywords and 1,000 pages.

MARKET PRESENCE

Installed base	Act-On has more than 1,800 customers as of Q3 2013. Act-On adds more than 300 customers per quarter.
Financials	Act-On collected \$10 million in subscription revenues in 2012. For year-end 2012, Act-On's revenue was 298% greater than its revenue in 2011. Act-On expects to reach profitability by Q1 2014. It has raised \$32 million in venture financing and needs no further cash to reach profitability.
Partnerships	Act-On has three types of partners: technology ecosystem (e.g., CRM), agencies, and referral partners. Act-On's partners, which are responsible for 15% to 20% of its revenue, number more than 300 in total.

WHY READ THIS REPORT

FROM THE FORRESTER WAVE™: LEAD-TO-REVENUE MANAGEMENT PLATFORM VENDORS, Q1 2014

In Forrester's 75-criteria evaluation of lead-to-revenue management (L2RM) platform vendors, we identified the nine most significant solution providers in the category — Act-On, Adobe, CallidusCloud, IBM, Marketo, Oracle, salesforce.com, Salesfusion, and Silverpop —and researched, analyzed, and scored them. This report details our findings about how well each vendor fulfills our criteria and where they stand in relation to each other, to help marketing leaders select the right partner for their lead-to-revenue initiatives.

Forrester Research (Nasdaq: FORR) is a global research and advisory firm serving professionals in 13 key roles across three distinct client segments. Our clients face progressively complex business and technology decisions every day. To help them understand, strategize, and act upon opportunities brought by change, Forrester provides proprietary research, consumer and business data, custom consulting, events and online communities, and peer-to-peer executive programs. We guide leaders in business technology, marketing and strategy, and the technology industry through independent fact-based insight, ensuring their business success today and tomorrow.

© 2014 Forrester Research, Inc. All rights reserved. Forrester, Forrester Wave, RoleView, Technographics, TechRankings, and Total Economic Impact are trademarks of Forrester Research, Inc. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. Reproduction or sharing of this content in any form without prior written permission is strictly prohibited. To purchase reprints of this document, please email clientsupport@forrester.com. For additional reproduction and usage information, see Forrester's Citation Policy located at www.forrester.com. Information is based on best available resources. Opinions reflect judgment at the time and are subject to change.

Act-On_95221