

# Your Digital Experience Technology Strategy Starts With A Customer Journey Map

Strategic Plan: The Digital Experience Delivery Playbook

by Ted Schadler

December 15, 2015

## Why Read This Report

As firms like Rewe Group and Schneider Electric have learned, digital experience strategy shapes the technology you need — an investment that can take five years and cost between \$20 million and \$200 million. To help define the strategy, application development and delivery (AD&D) professionals should follow the lead of customer experience teams: 1) Start with a customer journey map; 2) apply cloud-hosted, mobile-first, and insights-driven thinking; and 3) implement a digital experience platform to serve customers along every step of their journey.

## Key Takeaways

### **Digital Experience Strategy Starts With A Customer Journey Map**

The top three actions that firms will take to improve the customer experience are digital. To get them right, start by understanding the digital interactions in your customer journey.

### **Four Factors Focus Your Digital Experience Technology Strategy**

In our research with 22 companies, we found four factors behind the technology strategy: 1) It's a three- to five-year program, not a project; 2) customer journey maps bring relevancy to your investments; 3) cloud, mobile, insights, and loose coupling shape your vendor choices; and 4) digital experience platforms direct your technology investments.

### **A Digital Experience Technology Platform Will Support Agile Delivery**

You will need technology to deliver quick wins and also to lay the foundation for future agility. The foundation is a digital experience platform from vendors like Acquia, Adobe, Demandware, EPiServer, IBM, Oracle, Salesforce, SAP hybris, SDL, and Sitecore.

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## Notes & Resources

Forrester interviewed more than 20 vendor and user companies, including Accenture, Acquia, Adobe, Backbase, Connective DX, Danfoss, EPAM, EPiServer, FCV Technologies, Hippo, IBM, KPMG, Liferay, Mainline Information Systems, SDL, Sitecore, Tahzoo, and Valtech.

## Related Research Documents

- [Assess Your Digital Experience Delivery Maturity](#)
- [The Integration Imperative Of Digital Experiences](#)
- [TechRadar™: Digital Customer Experience Technologies, Q1 2015](#)

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## Strategy Kicks Off A Three-Step Planning Process

Digital customer experiences are half of what it means to be a digital business. The other half is digital operational excellence.<sup>1</sup> As firms like The Home Depot, Rewe Group, Schneider Electric, and Westpac have learned, the two go hand in hand to bring new digital capabilities to market. The investments you make in the systems of engagement, including the digital experience platforms, that customers touch will be massive — think \$20 million to \$200 million over five years.

To plan the technology investments necessary to transform to a digital business, you need a digital experience technology strategy that's informed by the needs and digital behaviors of your customers. To help AD&D professionals do this, we are writing three reports in a sequence starting with strategy (see Figure 1).

**FIGURE 1** Strategy Kicks Off A Three-Step Planning Process

## Digital Experience Strategy Starts With A Journey Map

Forrester's most popular research today is on how to measure and improve customer experiences. In a recent survey of 1,821 enterprise business and technology decision-makers, we learned that the top three investments firms make in customer experiences are all in digital customer experiences (see Figure 2). Therefore, any investments you, as an application development and delivery professional, make in digital experience technology should start with your digital experience strategy. To ground your technology strategy planning, please read the "Develop Your Digital Customer Experience Strategy" Forrester report.<sup>2</sup> In that report, you will learn how to:

- › **Define business and brand objectives.** If you have a strategy for digital transformation, you're far down the definition path and ready for the next step. If not, pause and build business sponsorship by reviewing corporate objectives and interviewing stakeholders. Your goal is to have a detailed understanding of where your business priorities intersect the digital experience strategy. Virgin America focused on one principle it wanted to emphasize in its website overhaul — boost conversions through mobile engagement.<sup>3</sup>

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- › **Identify customers' digital interactions and devices.** This is where a journey map — a visual representation of every major interaction a customer or potential customer has with you as they attempt to complete a goal — comes in. A good journey map is detailed, comprehensive, and comprehensible. Details include a specific customer's goals, context, motivations, and interactions. It's comprehensive to cover your major customer journeys in every phase of their life cycles.<sup>4</sup> And it's comprehensible so people in your company and ecosystem can understand it.
- › **Prioritize and fund interactions that benefit customers and are valuable to you.** This is the theme we will develop much further in the next three reports. Whether your investment is straightforward (mobile-enable the website) or inconceivably vast (become a digital business), the same simple tool will guide your investment levels and priorities: Fund digital experiences that benefit your customers and improve your business. Domino's digital investments, for example, aim to boost orders and sales from web and mobile channels.

**FIGURE 2** Digital Leads The Experience Improvement List

Base: global business and technology influencers and decision-makers whose firms prioritize improving the experience of their customers (1,000+ employees)

Source: Forrester's Business Technographics® Global Priorities And Journey Survey, 2014

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## Four Factors Focus Your Digital Experience Technology Strategy

Once you've defined your digital experience strategy, your technology strategy follows. Technology both enables and constrains the digital interactions that drive a great customer experience. To find out how advanced firms are building their digital experience strategy, we interviewed technology executives and their marketing and business counterparts in eight enterprises. We also interviewed 13 software vendors, digital agencies, and systems integrators. We found four consistent factors among these experts:

- 1. It's a digital experience program, not a web or mobile technology project.** You can't implement a meaningful strategy piecemeal. Think three- to five-year program funded by corporate budgets, not a website refresh paid for by marketing. This is what every sophisticated company we spoke with does.
- 2. Customer journey maps bring relevancy to your investments.** Understanding the specific devices, touchpoints, and interactions is the only way to know if your digital investments will directly improve a customer experience. DBS Bank in Singapore has built customer journey maps spanning web, mobile, call center, and branch experiences.
- 3. Four technology inevitabilities shape your vendor choices.** We are developing a technology strategy here. Cloud-hosted, mobile-first, insights-driven, and loosely coupled are the four technology principles AD&D pros should follow to support the strategy with an eye toward business responsiveness, cost, and laying foundations for the future.
- 4. Digital experience platforms direct your technology investments.** The bedrock of your digital customer experience is a portfolio of software to support marketing, commerce, and customer service interactions on smartphones, tablets, PCs, and all other screens. Forrester believes that every company's digital future rests on smart investments in these platforms.<sup>5</sup>

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### 1. It's A Digital Experience Program, Not A Technology Project

Successful firms don't do one-off tactical investments in digital experience projects. Instead, they make corporate commitments to an overarching digital experience program. A program approach avoids the awfulness of offering disconnected experiences. Don't do this: In the rush to roll out mobile capabilities, Air Canada didn't initially integrate its mobile app with its website. So while customers could book flights via its mobile app, they couldn't amend bookings made at aircanada.com on the app. A digital experience program:

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- › **Spans three to five years.** Most of our experts described a three- to five-year program with consistent investments and milestones for that duration. This is the only way to move quickly with tactical investments while investing in the systems of engagement you need for the long haul. Wal-Mart is investing \$2 billion in eCommerce, while General Electric has built major new software capacity for its industrial experiences.<sup>6</sup> Forrester expects customer experiences to drive \$82 billion by 2018.<sup>7</sup> Investments of that scale require multiyear programs.
- › **Is funded by corporate budgets.** One retailer we interviewed told us that its cross-channel program is the biggest technology investment it has made, and that it wouldn't have been possible without CFO-led funding. No marketing or technology budget alone can fund a \$150 million cost over five years, as one large fashion retailer is planning. These feel like big numbers, but CEOs increasingly treat digital as a theme in investor calls to justify multibillion-dollar programs like The Home Depot and Morgan Stanley are undertaking.
- › **Utilizes two-in-a-box leadership — business and technology executives.** With this approach, both groups plan more pragmatically and sympathetically. Tech teams understand customer journeys, and business teams learn about technical complexity. IHG uses two-in-a-box leadership for its mobile app. But this approach is also working at manufacturers like Schneider Electric and banks like Westpac in Australia. QVC learned the hard way about the importance of two-in-a-box leadership. After years of siloed thinking and disjointed experiences, the CIO and EVP of commerce platforms now meet quarterly to keep their teams in sync.<sup>8</sup>
- › **Uses milestones as investment hurdles the program team must clear.** No CFO will give you a blank check. A good digital experience strategy builds milestones into the plan so you can demonstrate progress against program objectives to secure funding for next year. The trick, as The Home Depot shows with its new you'll-find-it-in-aisle-13 digital service, is balancing near-term success and long-range investments to show progress on both fronts simultaneously. We will revisit investment milestones in the business impact report.

## 2. Customer Journey Maps Bring Relevancy To Your Investments

Journey maps are the backbone of customer (hence, digital) experience programs.<sup>9</sup> That's Forrester's conclusion from analyzing seven years of our customer experience research on the role of journey maps. Using a journey map based on observational and evaluative research to frame your digital experience goals places customers at the intersection of your business, marketing, and technology teams — where they belong.

- › **Build a customer journey map with digital interactions.** A journey map conveys how — and why — customers interact with your products, services, and brand presence. By highlighting digital interactions, you will see where digital experiences matter — and matter most. Starbucks uses journey maps to identify challenges and opportunities in its mobile payment implementation — for example, how other customers might feel when a mobile customer saunters in and picks up a beverage that's conveniently waiting for her.

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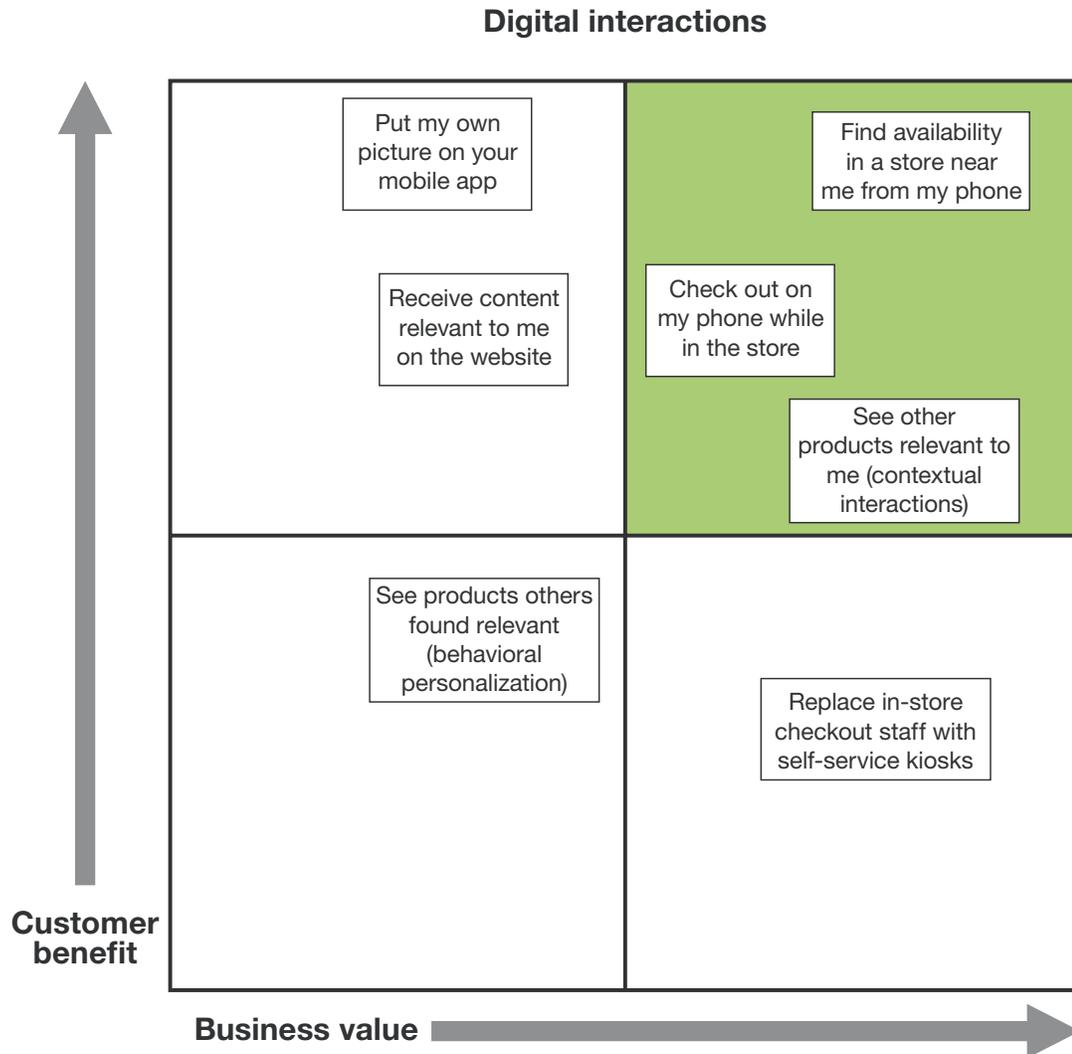
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- › **Evaluate digital interactions for customer benefit and business value.** There are hundreds of digital touchpoints you might identify on a journey map. You can't address them all, so you must prioritize them. Your business and marketing stakeholders can categorize the business value of the interactions. You can ask customers about the benefits of each one. Armed with these two vectors — business value and customer benefit — you can narrow your focus and sequence your investments (see Figure 3). We will discuss this extensively in the next reports on business impact and road map.
- › **Roll changes out incrementally.** People hate change. In a recent report, we outlined Dell's failure in rolling out a Big Bang website redesign.<sup>10</sup> The results were disastrous, with key financial indicators (like sales) dropping. Dell reorganized its efforts this time with Agile teams deploying new functionality incrementally. For example, it used responsive web techniques, like A/B testing, to incrementally and iteratively improve key pages and gauge small successes before moving to the next page.

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**FIGURE 3** Prioritize Digital Interactions Based On Customer Benefit And Business Value



### 3. Four Technology Inevitabilities Shape Your Vendor Choices

Your role as an application development and delivery professional kicks into high gear now. You are the master of technology — the second-in-a-box leader of the digital experience strategy. But think with a future-leaning posture. Build the strategy for the next 10 years. And, of course, technology has changed massively since the last time you built a website. Keep these four inevitabilities in mind as you seek solutions for your digital experience technology:

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1. **Cloud-hosted.** Do everything you can to run your digital experience software in the cloud.<sup>11</sup> Accenture now advises all clients to run new digital applications in the public cloud — Amazon Web Services or Microsoft Azure, for example — where possible. The cloud delivers steadily improving economics, digital-ready availability, and, increasingly, exactly the software you need to deliver great digital experiences.
2. **Mobile-first.** Customers are mobile. Seventy percent of walmart.com's traffic last holiday season was from mobile devices. If your numbers aren't the same, then ask whether your experiences are mobile-friendly. One manufacturer told us that its mobile traffic jumped from single digits to more than 20% in one year simply because it used responsive web techniques on its search and product pages.
3. **Insights-driven.** Personalization is one plank of a great customer experience.<sup>12</sup> New technologies are coming online to help you personalize digital experiences using all available insights — not just clickstream data and thinly defined profiles. Target did this with its mobile app using online and offline data to generate incremental sales beyond basic personalization of \$50 million to \$100 million.<sup>13</sup>
4. **Loosely coupled.** Closed software stacks existed because, in the olden days, performance required tight links between all components. But today's high-bandwidth, Internet-connected world allows firms to assemble more independent software building blocks using a microservices architecture.<sup>14</sup> The CTO of the newly PG-rated playboy.com created a digital experience platform from 11 independent cloud services using loosely coupled integration.

The bedrock of your digital customer experience is a portfolio of software to support marketing, commerce, and customer service interactions.

## 4. A Digital Experience Platform Directs Your Technology Investments

Now that you have a prioritized set of digital interactions to address and a future-leaning frame of reference for technology investments, you are prepared to bring the reality of technology products and services into the strategy planning process. You're not quite ready for a technology road map — that will come after assessing the business impact of digital interactions coming up in the next report — but you can help separate long-range platform investments from quick-win extensions to your existing software. As AD&D pros strategize around technology for digital experiences, they should:

- › **Unify the technology architecture with a digital experience platform.** As vendors did with enterprise resource planning in the 1990s and customer relationship management in the 2000s, they are now assembling content, customer data, marketing, analytics, commerce, and service software to deliver digital experiences (see Figure 4). These digital experience platforms both

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support and constrain your digital experiences: It can take years to fully implement a platform. Forrester has evaluated platforms, including Acquia, Adobe, EPiServer, IBM, Oracle, Salesforce, SAP, SDL, and Sitecore, to accelerate your choice.<sup>15</sup>

- › **Lay the platform foundation to support Agile development teams.** More than half of firms we recently surveyed prioritize Agile teams to help them deliver new capabilities quickly.<sup>16</sup> The mobile teams already operate this way using the IDEA cycle: Identify moments, design experiences, engineer solutions, and analyze to optimize.<sup>17</sup> It's time for the entire digital team to master the same continuous improvement process. Digital experience platforms can help. But you also can't wait to get started.
- › **Augment existing capabilities even while implementing the new platform.** The leaders we interviewed shared this essential lesson: You can't wait years to implement a new platform to deliver new capabilities. We'll develop this analysis further in the road map report, but make sure your strategic plan includes a clear separation between what to do now and what to do once the platform is in place.

**FIGURE 4** A Digital Experience Platform Bridges Silos

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**Recommendations**

## A Strategy Workbook Will Shape Your Business Impact Analysis

We have separated strategy, business impact analysis, and technology road map precisely because this sequence will help you determine the best actions, prioritize investments, and build an execution plan. But AD&D pros still need a strategic plan. Aided by digital experience service provider Connective DX, the daycare center company Kindercare took this approach to become immediately practical (for example, delivering status updates on children's days to parents via SMS) and innovative long-term (for example, overhauling the content management system to allow each daycare center to create a community for its unique collection of parents and children). A strategic plan includes four sections:

1. **Goals.** Starting with the journey map, work out the goals as a group. Then capture them in plain language. "Improve mobile conversion of marketing programs" might be an example. Or "serve business customers with documentation on tablets." Or "accelerate customer self-service through mobile notifications."
2. **Interactions.** Digital interactions flow logically from goals derived from the journey map. Be specific. Use "personalize customer experiences in the mobile app" rather than "personalize experiences." It's OK to have an action hierarchy starting with overarching goals and then drilling down to broad interactions followed by specific actions. Expect to have between 20 and 50 specific technology actions.
3. **Resources.** Now that you've established two-in-a-box leadership, where are you going to get the people and money to accomplish the goals? The next report in the sequence will help you prioritize investments in immediate capabilities and platforms for the future. Many firms turn to outside strategic and implementation help, often from different providers. Be sure to manage knowledge and skill transfer between your firm and these providers.
4. **Schedule.** When defining your strategy, any schedule reflects business priorities and resource commitments — not a calendar of activities. After refining your priorities in the business impact analysis phase, you will build a technology road map and schedule that intersect and coordinate with changes in process, organization, and systems integration.

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## Supplemental Material

### Survey Methodology

Forrester's Business Technographics® Global Priorities And Journey Survey, 2014, was fielded to 13,822 business and technology decision-makers located in Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, New Zealand, the UK, and the US from SMB and enterprise companies with two or more employees. This survey is part of Forrester's Business Technographics and was fielded from January 2014 to March 2014. Research Now fielded this survey on behalf of Forrester. Survey respondent incentives include points redeemable for gift certificates. We have provided exact sample sizes in this report on a question-by-question basis.

### Companies Interviewed For This Report

Accenture

Acquia

Adobe

Backbase

Connective DX

Danfoss

EPAM

EPiServer

FCV Technologies

Hippo

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IBM	SDL
KPMG	Sitecore
Liferay	Tahzoo
Mainline Information Systems	Valtech

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> For more information on how to drive successful digital business outcomes globally, see the [“Your Company Needs A Digital Business Acceleration Team”](#) Forrester report.
- <sup>2</sup> For more information on how to ground your technology strategy planning, see the [“Develop Your Digital Customer Experience Strategy”](#) Forrester report.
- <sup>3</sup> For more information on Virgin America’s model for customer experience professionals, see the [“Case Study: Disciplined Simplification Elevates The Brand In Virgin America’s Site Redesign”](#) Forrester report.
- <sup>4</sup> Customer experience (CX) is rapidly increasing in importance across all phases of the customer life cycle — including early phases over which marketing traditionally had exclusive purview. As brand and CX converge, CX pros need to ensure that CX improvements align to brand goals. This report lays out actions for CX pros to partner with CMOs and use the customer life-cycle framework and customer journey mapping tools to align brand, marketing, and CX. For more information, see the [“What CX Pros Need To Know About The Customer Life Cycle”](#) Forrester report.
- <sup>5</sup> For more information on how Forrester defines the emerging digital customer experience delivery platform, explores the vendors delivering these solutions, and provides insight into the approaches these vendors take to integrate with the technologies in which their customers have already invested, see the [“Market Overview: Digital Customer Experience Delivery Platforms”](#) Forrester report.
- <sup>6</sup> Source: Kim S. Nash, “Wal-Mart to Pour \$2 Billion into E-Commerce Over Next Two Years,” CIO Journal, October 14, 2015 (<http://blogs.wsj.com/cio/2015/10/14/wal-mart-to-pour-2-billion-into-e-commerce-over-next-two-years/>).
- <sup>7</sup> Source: Interview with John C. McCarthy, analyst at Forrester.
- <sup>8</sup> At Forrester’s CXNYC 2015 Forum for customer experience (CX) professionals, QVC shared the practices it follows to create a great omnichannel customer experience. In addition to being a leader in Forrester’s US Customer Experience Index (CX Index™), Q1 2015, QVC’s eCommerce sales are now 47% of its US revenue. For more information, see the [“Brief: How QVC Creates Great Omnichannel Customer Experience”](#) Forrester report.
- <sup>9</sup> Customer experience (CX) professionals have been quick to adopt journey mapping. Despite this, journey maps remain underutilized because practitioners view them as point solutions for addressing specific problems. To better understand the full potential of journey maps, we conducted a systematic review of Forrester research on journey mapping combined with practitioner interviews. What we discovered is that journey maps are more than just a tool for mapping customer experiences. Rather, they are a foundational document that forms the backbone of CX programs: a common thread that runs through nearly every activity CX professionals perform. For more information, see the [“Journey Mapping Best Practices”](#) Forrester report.
- <sup>10</sup> The Big Bang website launches and marketing splashes of yesterday are dying. It’s time to enter the new era of iterative, progressive improvements to web experiences. For more information, see the [“Make This Website Redesign Your Last”](#) Forrester report.

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- <sup>11</sup> The digital experience (DX) platform market has been slow to move to the cloud. Fortunately, major digital experience platform vendors like Adobe and SAP hybris are now embracing the cloud to deploy and operate their software, and service providers like Deloitte, Razorfish Global, and SapientNitro have repositioned their managed hosting options as more cloud-like DX platforms. But what cloud benefits do vendors and service providers actually deliver? For more information, see the [“Make The Cloud A Foundation Of Your Digital Experience Platform Strategy”](#) Forrester report.
- <sup>12</sup> Companies that want to improve customer experience will increasingly rely on technology to close gaps in performance, convenience, personalization, and trust. Forrester has created a catalog showing which technologies can help close each of these four gaps. For more information, see the [“Close The Experience Gaps With The Right Business Technology”](#) Forrester report.
- <sup>13</sup> Brian Cornell, CEO of Target, reported in an August call with investors, “We replaced a third-party recommendation engine with an internally-developed product which incorporates both in-store and online guest history . . . This new engine is driving a meaningful increase in conversion . . . generating incremental sales of \$50 million to \$100 million so far this year.” Source: “Edited Transcript,” Thomson Reuters, August 19, 2015 (<http://phx.corporate-ir.net/External.File?item=UGFyZW50SUQ9MzAxNzE0fENoaWxkSUQ9LTF8VHlwZT0z&t=1&cb=635756680071126364>).
- <sup>14</sup> The future of software is more than decoupled components. It also requires highly decoupled runtimes. That’s called a microservices architecture: decoupled components available over the Internet as decoupled services. Think of it as a software component exposed as a microservice — a microservice component. Source: Ted Schadler, “Some Thoughts On Shippable Software And Microservices,” Ted Schadler’s Blog, October 1, 2015 ([http://blogs.forrester.com/ted\\_schadler/15-10-01-some\\_thoughts\\_on\\_shippable\\_software\\_and\\_microservices](http://blogs.forrester.com/ted_schadler/15-10-01-some_thoughts_on_shippable_software_and_microservices)).
- <sup>15</sup> In Forrester’s 40-criteria evaluation of digital experience platform vendors, we identified the 10 most significant software providers — Acquia, Adobe, Demandware, EPiServer, IBM, Oracle, SAP hybris, Salesforce, SDL, and Sitecore — in the category and researched, analyzed, and scored them. For more information, see the [“The Forrester Wave™: Digital Experience Platforms, Q4 2015”](#) Forrester report.
- <sup>16</sup> Forrester recently surveyed 135 technology, marketing, and business professionals with decision-making roles in customer-facing web and mobile experience delivery to ask about their strategies for the coming 12 months. We found that organizations struggle to manage hundreds of digital properties, with complex challenges like modernizing and integrating disparate technologies, dividing roles and responsibilities among many stakeholders, and finding the staff and skills they need to succeed. For more information, see the [“The State Of Digital Experience Delivery, 2015”](#) Forrester report.
- <sup>17</sup> Source: Ted Schadler, Josh Bernoff, and Julie Ask, *The Mobile Mind Shift: Engineer Your Business To Win In The Mobile Moment*, Groundswell Press, 2014.

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