TECH CHOICES

Includes a Forrester Wave™

April 29, 2005

The Forrester Wave™: Commerce Platforms, Q2 2005

Lab-Based Evaluation Of Top Commerce Platform Vendors Across 200 Criteria **by Tamara Mendelsohn**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past 10 years, commerce platforms have evolved into much more than just a shopping cart to manage transactions. Today, they are the key to building a whole new sales channel that can stand alone or work in conjunction with existing channels. To assess the state of the commerce platforms market and see how the vendors stack up against each other, Forrester evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of top commerce platform vendors across 200 criteria. The result: ATG and IBM lead the pack for B2C-focused sites, and IBM, Oracle, and SAP provide the strongest options for B2B sites. Included in this report is an interactive vendor comparison tool that provides detailed product evaluations and customizable rankings.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Return Of Commerce Platforms

Licensed Solutions Fall Into Three Camps

Commerce Platforms Evaluation Overview

Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation Methodology

Evaluated Vendors

Vendors Leverage Legacy Expertise For Mature eCommerce Offerings

eCommerce Demands Rise Beyond The Basics

Vendor Profiles

Supplemental Material

NOTES & RESOURCES

Forrester conducted lab-based evaluations in February 2005, and interviewed 14 vendor and user companies, including ATG, BroadVision, IBM, Microsoft, Oracle, and SAP. We also analyzed data from Forrester's Business Technographics® November 2004 North American And European Benchmark Study.

Related Research Documents

"Commerce Server Interest Grows — Again" January 10, 2005, Market Overview

"A Buyer's Guide To Hosted eCommerce Solutions"

January 10, 2005, Market Overview

THE RETURN OF COMMERCE PLATFORMS

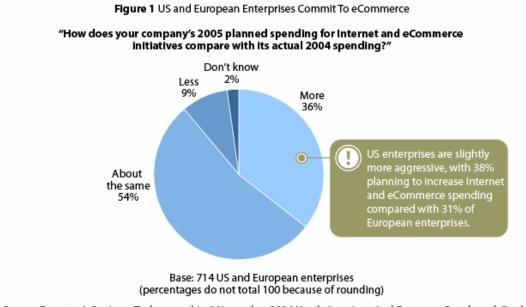
Commerce platforms first emerged in the late '90s as firms began to open online checkout lanes, some to augment their brick-and-mortar stores, others as their only channel for buyers. Firms made significant investments in eCommerce during this time, but the Internet was still immature, and most firms threw up sites without considering long-term strategies — partly due to the optimism of the time, but also because they were reacting to Amazon.com's and eToys' threat to encroach on their business.

In 2000, the bubble burst, and firms were forced to sit on their investments. They built on what they had, and continued to improve — but many remained constrained by the limitations of their technology investments. Today, the tech sector is in recovery, and the majority of online sites are profitable, proving the Internet to be a viable sales channel. The result? Thirty-eight percent of US enterprises and 31% of European enterprises will be increasing their Internet and eCommerce spend in 2005 (see Figure 1).

- Sellers expand B2C offerings. Outdated technology and homegrown solutions are reaching their limit as sellers look to expand their presence and meet new market needs. After establishing direct sales to consumers both online and offline, retailers like Williams Sonoma and Circuit City seek to improve multichannel experiences to satisfy cross-channel shoppers. Meanwhile, manufacturers like Panasonic that have been focused on B2B sales selling directly to distributors and retailers are now beginning to expand into the B2C world to have direct contact with consumers.
- B2B sellers get creative. Retailers like Best Buy and Staples recently opened dedicated B2B sites, with special promotions, pricing, and services, geared toward their business customers. Other firms use B2B sites to pursue more creative business models. For example, ChangingInc, part of NewPage Corporation, a paper manufacturer, provides its customers forms manufacturers with their own eCommerce sites to sell to distributors. Distributors also use the ChangingInc platform to build their own eCommerce sites that display the forms manufacturers' catalogs. The distributors use their own marketing campaigns and sell directly to end users, increasing sales for the distributors, form manufacturers, and ultimately for ChangingInc.

Licensed Solutions Fall Into Three Camps

Firms that don't want to dedicate the resources to support their platform in-house will go with hosted options but will have to relinquish some control over the customization and creativity of their site. For firms that require the control and flexibility of owning and managing their eCommerce platforms in-house, the license software market presents them



Source: Forrester's Business Technographics® November 2004 North American And European Benchmark Study

Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

with mature options. The licensed commerce platform vendors fall into three camps: specialists, application vendors, and infrastructure vendors.

- **Specialists.** In the late '90s, eCommerce vendors flooded the market, but the downturn after the bubble burst weeded out most of the vendors that didn't have strong offerings or viable strategies. The result? Highly refined products from specialized vendors with a clear strategy like ATG and BroadVision.
- **Application vendors.** The application vendors like Oracle and SAP go to market with an integrated suite approach, a unified set of tools integrated with and enhanced by their ERP and CRM products.
- Infrastructure vendors. These vendors, including IBM and Microsoft, rely on their underlying platform to manage data and provide a complete view of the customer. They go to market touting platform flexibility, integration capabilities, performance and scalability, and mature tool sets.

COMMERCE PLATFORMS EVALUATION OVERVIEW

To assess the state of the commerce platforms market and see how the vendors stack up against each other, Forrester evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of top commerce platform vendors.

Evaluation Criteria

After examining past research, user need assessments, and vendor and expert interviews, we developed a comprehensive set of evaluation criteria (see Figure 3). We evaluated vendors against more than 200 criteria, which we grouped into three high-level buckets:

- Current offering. To assess product strength, we evaluated each offering against eight groups of criteria: architecture, administration and management, catalog and content management, sales and marketing capabilities, customer data management, order management, B2B-specific features, and reporting and analytics.
- **Strategy.** We compared the product and go-to-market strategies of each company with Forrester's forward-looking vision of the eCommerce market to assess how well each vendor is positioned for future success.
- Market presence. We combined information about each vendor's installed base, recent sales momentum, revenues, employee numbers, and partnerships to determine current market presence.

Evaluation Methodology

Forrester used a combination of three data sources to assess the strengths and weaknesses of each solution:

- Hands-on lab evaluations. Vendors spent one day with a team of analysts who performed a hands-on evaluation of the product using a scenario-based testing methodology. We evaluated each product using the same scenarios, creating a level playing field by evaluating every product on the same criteria.
- **Vendor surveys.** Forrester surveyed vendors on their capabilities as they relate to market presence and strategy. Once we analyzed the completed vendor surveys, we conducted vendor calls where necessary to gather details of vendor qualifications.

	Figure 3 Evaluation Criteria
CURRENT OFFERING	
Product architecture	How well is the product built for delivering high performance and scalability across channels and globally?
Administration and management	How robust are the product's administration and management features?
Catalog and content management	How extensive are the product's tools for catalog and content management?
Sales and marketing	How extensive are the product's sales and marketing features?
Customer management	How strong are the tools to manage customer information and self-service capabilities?
Order management	How well does the product facilitate order management?
B2B capabilities	How well does the product support B2B environments?
Reporting and analytics	How sophisticated is the product's set of tools for reporting on and analyzing buyer interactions and the efficacy of marketing campaigns?
STRATEGY	
Product strategy	How strong is the vendor's product strategy?
Financial resources to support strategy	Is the vendor profitable and what is the vendor's cash flow? Does the company have sufficient revenues, profits, and cash flow to support its strategies?
Cost	What is the cost of this product?
MARKET PRESENCE	
Installed base	How large is the vendor's installed base of customers for this product and for all products?
Revenue	What is the vendor's revenue over the past four quarters?
Revenue growth	What is the vendor's year-over-year revenue growth over the past four quarters?
Systems integrators	How many integrator partners have completed three or more deployments of any version of this product in the past 18 months?
Services	How strong are the vendor's implementation and training services?
Employees	How many engineers does the vendor have dedicated to this product? How big is the vendor's sales presence?
Technology partners	How strongly do technology partners support this product?

Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

• Customer reference calls. To validate product and vendor qualifications, Forrester also conducted reference calls with two to five of each vendor's current customers.

Evaluated Vendors

Forrester included six vendors in the assessment: ATG, BroadVision, IBM, Microsoft, Oracle, and SAP. Each of these vendors has:

- A combined B2C and B2B focus. As more firms look to support both B2C and B2B sites on one platform, Forrester chose to evaluate products that provide features to support both channels and that have an installed base of both B2C and B2B customers.
- A traditional licensed offering. To provide a fair and accurate comparison, we evaluated only traditional licensed offerings in this study. Firms that choose a hosted offering often have different requirements, and the hosted offerings themselves have differentiators unique to their market.
- Revenues of more than \$50 million. To ensure vendor viability in this relatively mature market, Forrester evaluated vendors that have substantial revenues to sustain them more than \$50 million. Our criteria are geared toward large deployments as well as firms that may have gotten burned when the bubble burst and therefore proceed with caution when deciding on a platform to support their main online channel.

Our evaluation methodology depends in part on input from the vendors, including lab evaluations, questionnaires, and customer references. In this evaluation, one vendor, SAP, chose not to provide a full set of inputs. Its evaluation is based on our analysis from a partial set of inputs, including product briefings, demonstration, and interviews with reference customers.

VENDORS LEVERAGE LEGACY EXPERTISE FOR MATURE eCOMMERCE OFFERINGS

Commerce platforms have evolved to provide much more than another means to proceed through checkout. Today, vendors offer full portfolios of sales and marketing features — tools to not only facilitate sales, but also to increase them. Through the evaluation process, we also discovered that although they support both, vendors tailor their products to support either B2C or B2B sites, depending on the vendor's background and expertise. The evaluation uncovered a market in which (see Figure 4 and see Figure 5):

• ATG and IBM dominate B2C deployments with multichannel aspirations. ATG has been refining its B2C eCommerce offering for more than five years, resulting in a highly specialized and flexible product. ATG is a good fit for firms like Neiman Marcus that have complex merchandising requirements around trends and designers,

Figure 4 Forrester Wave™: Commerce Platforms For B2C Sites, Q2 '05 Risky Strong Bets Contenders Performers Leaders Strong Market presence The Forrester Wave ATG Go online to download BroadVision the Forrester Wave tool for more detailed product evaluations, feature Oracle Microsoft Current offering comparisons, and customizable rankings. Weak Weak ➤ Strong -Strategy-

Vendor provided full input for our evaluation methodology.

Vendor did not provide full input for our evaluation methodology.

Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

Figure 4 Forrester Wave™: Commerce Platforms For B2C Sites, Q2 '05 (Cont.)

	Forrester's Weighting		ATG	BroadVision	IBM	Microsoft	Oracle	
CURRENT OFFERING			3.82	3.53	3.50	3.16	3.08	
Product architecture	5%		3.64	3.68	3.87	2.30	3.11	
Administration and management	20%		3.94	4.18	3.68	2.91	2.23	
Catalog and content management	15%		3.72	3.10	2.12	2.87	2.49	
Sales and marketing	20%		3.76	2.96	3.73	3.65	2.93	
Customer management	25%		4.12	4.44	4.33	3.56	3.82	
Order management	10%		3.66	1.93	3.06	2.31	3.72	
B2B capabilities	0%		2.50	2.95	3.39	1.72	3.51	
Reporting and analytics	5%		2.94	3.08	2.40	3.68	3.86	
STRATEGY Product strategy Financial resources to support strategy	70% 30%		4.40 5.00 3.00	3.37 3.95 2.00	4.86 4.80 5.00	4.16 3.80 5.00	3.22 2.45 5.00	
Cost	0%		2.50	3.50	2.50	5.00	1.00	
MARKET PRESENCE Installed base Revenue	25% 25%		2.09 2.10 1.00	1.83 1.80 1.00	4.36 3.80 5.00	4.05 4.60 5.00	3.75 4.00 4.00	
Revenue growth	10%		3.00	0.00	4.00	5.00	4.00	
Systems integrators	10%		3.00	4.00	5.00	0.00	4.00	
Services	10%		4.00	3.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	
Employees	15%		1.60	2.00	4.20	3.00	3.00	
Technology partners	5%		1.50	2.50	2.50	4.00	0.00	
All scores are based on a scale of 0 (weak) to 5 (strong).								

Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

or companies like Best Buy that have extensive catalogs and benefit from creating highly personalized site experiences. IBM, which provides firms with a robust platform to build commerce applications, now packages much of the functionality for easier deployment. Both firms have a strong understanding of cross-channel strategies, although they slate many of the features to support these strategies for future releases.

- IBM, Oracle, and SAP lead the B2B offerings. With deep roots in B2B selling organizations, Oracle and SAP offer strong solutions to meet the complex demands of the B2B world. Their eCommerce solutions leverage much of their back-end application expertise, and both solutions are enhanced through integration with these products. IBM offers rich functionality for online storefront creation with unique business rules and marketing campaigns but shared central management and data. This centralized model enables firms like MeadWestvaco to pursue new and interesting eCommerce strategies.
- Microsoft and BroadVision offer competitive alternatives. Microsoft and BroadVision, while not leaders, will still be the right choice for some firms. Microsoft's Commerce Server is a strong solution for Microsoft shops like Harrods that want to take advantage of existing Microsoft platform skills, and Microsoft offers the lowest price point of all the vendors we evaluated. Microsoft's current version lacks a lot of packaged functionality and doesn't provide many options for B2B sites. But the next release scheduled for 2006 will be more tightly integrated with BizTalk Server and the Windows Server System, which will increase its integration and B2B capabilities. BroadVision is a good option for firms looking to get sites up and running quickly. BroadVision Commerce's strong technology places it with the second-best current offering for B2C sites, but because of its negative revenue growth and negative cash flow, the vendor's strategy is not as strong as others. BroadVision's Process product has the potential to make the offering extremely strong and flexible, but it is currently only partially integrated with eCommerce.

eCommerce Demands Rise Beyond The Basics

The renewed interest and increased spending on eCommerce has caught most vendors unprepared. As firms come to the table with requirements for cross-channel and internationalization strategies, most of the vendors are hard-pressed to meet all the demands with out-of-the-box functionality.

• Cross-channel experience. B2C-focused vendors like ATG, BroadVision, and IBM understand the importance of cross-channel shopping and its implications to

Figure 5 Forrester Wave™: Commerce Platforms For B2B Sites, Q2 '05 Risky Strong Bets Contenders Performers Leaders Strong Market presence The Forrester Wave Go online to download Oracle the Forrester Wave tool for more detailed product ATG BroadVision • evaluations, feature Microsoft (• Current comparisons, and offering customizable rankings. Weak Strategy Weak ➤ Strong Vendor provided full input for our evaluation methodology. Vendor did not provide full input for our evaluation methodology.

Figure 5 Forrester Wave™: Commerce Platforms For B2B Sites, Q2 '05 (Cont.)

Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

BroadVision ATG CURRENT OFFERING 3.01 3.18 3.41 2.58 3.59 Product architecture 5% 3.83 3.60 4.10 2.49 3.47 Administration and management 5% 3.94 2.91 2.23 4.18 3.68 Catalog and content management 10% 3.39 3.21 2.56 2.99 2.25 Sales and marketing 5% 3.64 4.03 3.71 3.41 2.81 Customer management 5% 4.12 4.44 4.33 3.56 3.82 Order management 15% 3.94 2.20 3.19 2.39 4.14 3.69 B2B capabilities 45% 2.66 2.98 3.64 1.96 Reporting and analytics 10% 2.88 3.88 4.06 2.74 2.60 STRATEGY 3.77 2.63 4.30 3.53 3.53 Product strategy 70% 4.10 2.90 4.00 2.90 2.90 30% 5.00 Financial resources to support strategy 3.00 2.00 5.00 5.00 0% 2.50 3.50 2.50 5.00 1.00 MARKET PRESENCE 2.09 1.83 4.36 4.05 3.75 Installed base 25% 2.10 1.80 3.80 4.60 4.00 Revenue 25% 1.00 1.00 5.00 5.00 4.00 Revenue growth 10% 3.00 0.00 4.00 5.00 4.00 Systems integrators 10% 3.00 4.00 5.00 0.00 4.00 Services 10% 4.00 3.00 5.00 5.00 5.00 15% 3.00 **Employees** 1.60 2.00 4.20 3.00

Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

4.00

0.00

2.50

1.50

2.50

5%

All scores are based on a scale of 0 (weak) to 5 (strong).

Technology partners

retailers. While BroadVision and IBM provide adapters for PDAs and in-store wireless devices, none of the vendors offer a template for display of the site through in-store kiosks. While some retailers simply display their online sites directly through the kiosk interface, others will require a more tailored experience to account for instore product availability and inventory. Similarly, many retailers like Circuit City implement buy online/pick up in store features. ATG comes closest to meeting this need with support for multiple inventory locations, but the product still requires customization for in-store pickup.

- Internationalization. As more firms look to expand their global presence and capitalize on growing international eCommerce and broadband adoption, they require platforms that can both scale globally and support central and delegated administration. Microsoft and Oracle provide platforms localized in the most languages, but ATG and IBM provide the strongest support for managing one central catalog that contains region- and language-specific content and creative as well as the ability to delegate management of these items to regional administrators.
- Process management. It's no secret that the online sites that can react fastest to customer needs and pains will win. Process management features embedded directly within the eCommerce platform allow business analysts to build and modify end-to-end processes from simple checkout flows to complex, time-based customer relationships and campaigns without having to tinker with the underlying code. This reduces the need for IT resources and speeds up firms' reaction time to site problems and opportunities. ATG provides the most integrated solution today, Microsoft offers a basic flow editor, and BroadVision has a very competitive process management tool, although it is not fully integrated into the product today.

This evaluation of the commerce platforms market is intended to be a starting point only. Readers are encouraged to view detailed product evaluations and adapt the criteria weightings to fit their individual needs through the Forrester Wave Excel-based vendor comparison tool.

VENDOR PROFILES

• ATG. ATG is a midsize software company with annual revenues of \$70 million that has been in the commerce platforms market since the mid '90s. This experience results in a highly specialized product, with strong marketing and personalization features. These tools are well-tuned for complex B2C sites, but aren't necessarily a great fit for B2B sellers. ATG has weathered the past four years of decreased commerce platform spending and has positioned itself well to capitalize on the renewed interest in this technology.³

- **BroadVision.** With a headcount of 346 and annual revenues of \$78 million, BroadVision still struggles to recover from the tech bubble bursting, and it hasn't experienced positive revenue growth for more than four years. But the company still attracts new customers 35 in 2004 with its strong technology and, in 2004, experienced its first year of profitability since 2000. While BroadVision still has some work to do integrating its Process product into its Commerce offering, the Agility Suite provides a strong platform for fast deployments, with the flexibility to grow over time.⁴
- IBM. Although IBM views its commerce application less as an application and more as an extension of its strong application server platform, the product has evolved to be much more than a tool set. IBM has significantly increased the number of packaged processes and features available for firms to build commerce sites. Given its flexibility, the product is a good fit for large-scale efforts with multiple sites, making it attractive for both B2C and B2B deployments. Still, all of the IBM reference customers that Forrester spoke with are using IBM Global Services for deployment help. This means that firms should expect and budget for consulting services to get sites up and running.⁵
- Microsoft. Microsoft Commerce Server is the only major commerce platform in the market based on Microsoft technology, so firms seeking to leverage their Microsoft development skills aren't left with many options. Luckily, Microsoft's offering is solid and, with the addition of Feature Pack 1, provides improved management features and scalability.⁶
- Oracle. Oracle provides a strong eCommerce solution through a combination of its iStore product and eBusiness Suite. Oracle has traditionally sold its eCommerce solution for use in B2B scenarios but recently has gained traction in the B2C market, especially as manufacturers and other traditional B2B selling firms begin to sell direct to the consumer. Today, 30% of Oracle commerce deployments support B2C sites, but the vendor's fundamental strengths and expertise still lie with B2B.⁷
- SAP. SAP has improved its eCommerce offering over the past few years and now offers a stronger online storefront to its back-end applications. The product is tightly integrated with SAP's CRM offering and is enhanced when used in conjunction with its ERP and PRM solutions. It provides strong internationalization support along with a graphical segmentation builder to target personalized campaigns. However, firms that deploy SAP's e-Selling as a front end to other back-end systems will face tough integrations and increased customization requirements.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

Online Resource

The online version of Figure 4 and Figure 5 is an Excel-based vendor comparison tool that provides detailed product evaluations and customizable rankings.

Forrester Wave Methodology

We conduct primary research to develop a list of vendors that meet our criteria to be evaluated in this market. From that initial pool of vendors, we narrow our final list to those presented here. We choose these vendors based on: 1) product fit; 2) customer success; and 3) Forrester client demand. We eliminate vendors that have limited customer references and products that don't fit the scope of our evaluation.

After examining past research, user need assessments, and vendor and expert interviews, we develop the initial evaluation criteria. To evaluate the vendors and their products against our set of criteria, we gather details of product qualifications through a combination of lab evaluations, questionnaires, demos, and/or discussions with client references. We send evaluations to the vendors for their review, and we adjust the evaluations to provide the most accurate view of vendor offerings and strategies.

We set default weightings to reflect our analysis of the needs of large user companies — and/or other scenarios as outlined in this document — and then score the vendors based on a clearly defined scale. These default weightings are intended only as a starting point, and readers are encouraged to adapt the weightings to fit their individual needs through the Excel-based tool. The final scores generate the graphical depiction of the market based on current offering, strategy, and market presence. For ester intends to update vendor evaluations regularly as product capabilities and vendor strategies evolve.

Forrester selected the vendors for this Wave evaluation based on our judgment of current and potential leadership in this market, volume of inquiries from user organizations, and product fit with the scope of the evaluation. Our evaluation methodology depends in part on input from the vendors, including lab evaluations, questionnaires, and customer references. In this evaluation, one vendor, SAP, chose not to provide a full set of inputs. Its "bubble" on the Wave graphic is therefore shaded differently to denote that its evaluation is based on our analysis from a partial set of inputs, including product briefings, demonstration, and interviews with reference customers, and that there is no detailed scorecard information on SAP in this analysis.

ENDNOTES

¹ Many companies have eCommerce budgets that are measured in the low hundreds of thousands (or less) and have little desire to build new IT infrastructure. As a result, there has been a surge of interest in hosted or outsourced eCommerce solutions. To help clients navigate the myriad offerings, Forrester has put together a guide to what is involved in each of the various outsourced eCommerce options and the primary vendors in each category. See the January 10, 2005, Market Overview "A Buyer's Guide To Hosted eCommerce Solutions."

- ² Online retailers expect international sales to fuel their next stage of growth. But international expansion requires tremendous brand, marketing, and technology investment, making this endeavor not for the faint of heart. Those retailers that do decide to expand should centralize site management, engage in usability testing in foreign markets, and determine the most cost-effective logistics strategy: on-the-ground operations or outsourcing. See the March 11, 2005, Best Practices "Taking eCommerce Sales Abroad."
- ³ View the scorecard summary for more detailed analysis on how ATG fared in this evaluation. See the April 29, 2005, Tech Choices "Commerce Platforms Scorecard Summary: ATG."
- ⁴ View the scorecard summary for more detailed analysis on how BroadVision fared in this evaluation. See the April 29, 2005, Tech Choices "Commerce Platforms Scorecard Summary: BroadVision."
- ⁵ View the scorecard summary for more detailed analysis on how IBM fared in this evaluation. See the April 29, 2005, Tech Choices "Commerce Platforms Scorecard Summary: IBM."
- ⁶ View the scorecard summary for more detailed analysis on how Microsoft fared in this evaluation. See the April 29, 2005, Tech Choices "Commerce Platforms Scorecard Summary: Microsoft."
- ⁷ View the scorecard summary for more detailed analysis on how Oracle fared in this evaluation. See the April 29, 2005, Tech Choices "Commerce Platforms Scorecard Summary: Oracle."