

The next step in your marketing? You're probably already using it

 By [Adam Howatson](#)

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As noted futurologist Roy Amara observed in 2006: "We tend to overestimate the effect of a technology in the short run, and underestimate the effect in the long run."



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Never have these words been truer than with marketing technology. Who could have predicted the almost wholesale shift from 'traditional' marketing to what we see today as totally normal. From one-to-many advertising and one-size-fits-all messages to bespoke to personalised experiences on any device. Plus, individually tailored copy that targets a customer or prospect at the exact moment they are looking to buy.

Of course, some areas are still catching up – even in digital. How often are you chased by online adverts across web pages for something you have already bought, sometimes only moments before.

Digital marketing services have exploded over the past decade. You may be embracing the change, attempting to evade it, or perhaps you're just exhausted by it, but the next tranche of advancements may bring some relief.



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A truly personalised experience

Advances in artificial intelligence (AI) coupled to programmatic ad or digital media buying, chatbots and advanced recommendation engines will take much of the guesswork out of digital marketing. Even relatively early stage technologies like automated copywriting or design will start to make inroads as customers learn to expect a truly personalised experience whenever they interact with your brand.

Some of these technologies aren't particularly new, and there continues to be some industry hostility towards them, despite significant improvements recently in functionality and result.

The initial enthusiasm for new technologies tends to be short-lived as the promises of salespeople turn into the reality of using new tools across a marketing organisation and embedding them into normal business practice. The Gartner Hype Cycle model encapsulates this well, with all technologies moving from the 'peak of inflated expectations' to the 'trough of disillusionment' before a long climb to the 'plateau of productivity'.

Machine learning in action

However, if we look outside of marketing technology, many of the technologies we might currently discount are already common to our customers. Technologies such as Amazon's Alexa, or virtual assistants baked into every smartphone like Apple's Siri or Google Help, already make use of advanced algorithms that can learn from the user and adapt to their needs. This is machine learning in action.



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Increasingly, AI systems already outperform humans in certain areas, particularly where the sheer volume of data makes interpretation and insight difficult. In healthcare, AI systems are tracking early onset signs of diseases such as cancer and dementia by picking up tiny changes in individual cases that doctors can't see. This is AI in action, and the benefits and applications will only grow over time.

For marketers, scepticism is understandable as revolutionary technologies move towards the trough of disillusionment. P&G's top marketer [Marc Pritchard](#) spoke out in early 2017 against the lack of transparency and effectiveness he sees in many new approaches. The staggering growth – and effect – of fake news has reinforced a general mistrust, both with marketers and customers. And when an algorithmic or programmatic approach serves up ads to sites that no brand would ever wish to be associated with, it's easy to see why there is growing alarm.

Scepticism will give way to pragmatism

But is this mistrust rational, or fair? The leap to technologies such as programmatic has been swift because the promise is clear. Such approaches take the guesswork out of media buying, and while the AI and programmatic systems need time and training to work effectively, the ultimate goal and benefits will greatly outweigh the current challenges and teething problems.

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Despite these kinks in buying programmatically, it is [estimated](#) that two-thirds of ad display (67 percent) will be sold this way by 2019, with some major players, like Adcolony, having made the switch to a 100% programmatic ad-serve model.

Skepticism will give way to pragmatism, and I do believe we are currently underestimating the importance of AI and machine learning as a core – and vital – component of marketing in a digital world.

ABOUT ADAM HOWATSON

Adam joined OpenText in October of 2001 and has served the organisation in numerous roles, including Product Management, Marketing, Engineering, Information Technology, The Office of The President/CEO and PMO, Partner Development and Mergers & Acquisitions. Adam presently holds the station of Chief Marketing Officer and SVP and also oversees OpenText's Global Partner & Alliance operations.

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