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# The Interactive Marketing Metrics You Need

by Rebecca Jennings  
for Interactive Marketing Professionals



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How To Measure The Results Of Your Interactive Campaigns

by **Rebecca Jennings**

with Shar Van Boskirk and Alice Bresciani

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With interactive marketing forecast to grow 17% in Europe this year and 32% in the US, the reliance of marketers on these channels becomes increasingly obvious. But with increased spend comes increased expectations; tracking results through basic measures such as click-throughs won't be sufficient. Interactive marketers need to progress from using these simple operational measures to looking at overall customer engagement with their messaging. In most cases, this will require working with a number of measurement and tracking vendors.

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Forrester analyzed data from Forrester's European Technographics® Benchmark Survey, Q2 2007

### Related Research Documents

["Getting More Out Of Online Ads"](#)

April 30, 2008

["Marketers' New Key Metric: Engagement"](#)

August 8, 2007

["Case Study: Allstate Masters Marketing Measurement"](#)

June 4, 2007

["Why comScore And Nielsen Disagree, And Marketers Moan"](#)

May 1, 2007

## THE MARKETING METRICS THAT MATTER

Forrester estimates that around €10 billion will be spent on interactive marketing in Europe and \$24 billion in the US this year — increases of 17% and 32% from 2007.<sup>1</sup> As interactive marketing becomes an increasingly important channel for interactive marketers, it will be vital to get the metrics right from the start. However, 48% of interactive marketers say that their interactive marketing organization struggles to prove the ROI of its efforts, and 69% agree that their organization is understaffed.<sup>2</sup> The result? Marketers today are overwhelmed by the volume of possible metrics available to them and fail to combine metrics to get a holistic understanding of the success of campaigns.

## MARKETERS MUST TAKE A CUMULATIVE APPROACH TO MEASUREMENT

To cut through the plethora of metrics available today, interactive marketers must understand the various types of measurement and appreciate how they fit together and complement each other. This reports looks at the main “buckets” of metrics and their benefits: 1) reach (basic, primarily reach-related); 2) efficiency (insight into consumer behavior across channels); 3) consumer (attitudinal and longer term); 4) cross-channel (models revealing the impact each channel has separately and together); and 5) emerging metrics (such as online sentiment). However, the most successful interactive marketers will appreciate that these metrics work best when used in concert to help discern marketing effectiveness at achieving specific goals (see Figure 1).

### Reach Metrics Offer A Good — But Shallow — Starting Point

The most basic of online measures, reach metrics track primarily how many people are exposed to campaigns, along with some simple reaction measures. For instance, the number of impressions, unique viewers, or ad click-throughs would be reach metrics. These metrics provide a good starting point for interactive marketers just beginning to measure campaign results because they:

- **Can be tracked easily and cheaply.** With free applications such as Site Meter, Google Analytics, and Yahoo!’s Search Management capabilities (previously known as Panama), even the smallest advertisers can track site traffic or clicks on search keywords. And most publishers and advertising networks will supply ad click-throughs and impressions to marketers as part of billing statements.<sup>3</sup> Marketers should expect reach metrics as standard reporting from any ad server, search marketing agency, bid management tool, or email service provider worth its salt.
- **Allow for simple benchmarking.** Because reach metrics are simple measures that reveal little business-critical data, marketers often share basic reach metrics with service providers or other marketers for benchmarking purposes. For example, marketers seeking reach benchmarks for comparing their program’s performance with others’ can find email delivery rates from Bronto Software, click-through rates from the Direct Marketing Association (DMA) or the Internet Advertising Bureau (IAB), and monthly unique users from Nielsen/NetRatings.<sup>4</sup>

**Figure 1** Different Metrics Should Be Viewed As Complementary Parts Of The Measurement Jigsaw

	Reach	Efficiency	Consumer	Cross-channel	Emergent
<b>Type</b>	Simple, reach-driven	Behavior- and cost-driven	Attitudinal and longer term	Multi- and cross-media influences	Perception and engagement
<b>Example metrics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ad click-throughs</li> <li>• Email opens</li> <li>• Ad impressions</li> <li>• Unique visitors</li> <li>• Single access ratio</li> <li>• Registrations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single Access Ratio</li> <li>• Cost per click</li> <li>• Cost per keyword</li> <li>• Cost per action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand perceptions</li> <li>• Purchase intent</li> <li>• Awareness</li> <li>• Recency</li> <li>• Frequency</li> <li>• Retention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Return on marketing investment (ROMO)</li> <li>• Marketing mix modeling ROI</li> <li>• Customer lifetime value</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sentiment on blogs, forums</li> <li>• Consumer attitudes</li> <li>• Word of mouth</li> <li>• Level of interaction</li> </ul>
<b>Insight</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of consumers reached</li> <li>• Very basic insight into actions driven by marketing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effectiveness of spend on direct action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How consumers' opinions are influenced by marketing</li> <li>• Proxies for loyalty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sales/awareness driven by specific channel investment</li> <li>• Influence of channels on each other and together</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Longer term, more all-around view of consumer</li> </ul>
<b>Benefit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benchmarking</li> <li>• Maximizing message coverage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enabling cost-based comparisons</li> <li>• Improving efficiency of online spend</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving the factors affecting loyalty</li> <li>• Improving segmentation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Optimizing spend across channels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflects real brand feeling</li> <li>• Suitable for multiple objectives</li> </ul>

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Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

- **Enable initial comparison with offline efforts.** Some reach metrics, like ad impressions or monthly unique users to a site, can at a very basic level be weighed against television program viewership or magazine subscribers, thus aiding cross-media planning. Of course, reach metrics reveal little about media users. Marketers need more advanced metrics to decide which would perform better, a TV spot or an online ad, even if both were likely to reach 500,000 consumers.

### Efficiency Metrics Measure Relative Channel Effectiveness

Reach metrics are popular and easy to track — over 65% of database marketers in a recent Forrester survey say they use response rates as a key metric.<sup>5</sup> But they only measure what users do, not what drives them to do it. Slightly more sophisticated than reach metrics, efficiency metrics let interactive marketers gain insight into the relative effectiveness of each channel in their mix by:

- **Inferring consumer attitudes or satisfaction.** Many efficiency metrics provide indirect insight into how consumers feel about products or marketing efforts. For example, the volume of referrals from one game player implies that the player loved the game. The single access ratio of a site (SAR) — the percentage of users who leave a site as soon as they arrive — suggests dissatisfaction or the site's failure to accomplish user goals. And the number of comments in site forums may indicate aggregate consumers' emotional reaction to the site, brand, or product being discussed.<sup>6</sup>
- **Comparing the cost-effectiveness of different online channels.** Efficiency metrics include cost per click, an ad sales model where the advertiser pays a fee every time an ad gets clicked; cost per keyword, the cost to own a keyword ad on a search engine over a period of time; cost per acquisition, the cost to acquire a new consumer; and cost per impression, the traditional model for buying ads.<sup>7</sup> Publisher and vendor rate cards often quote fees in CPMs — cost per thousand impressions — enabling advertisers to easily compare costs to reach the same number of customers from one provider to the next. Providers selling outside of a CPM model often set fees based on other behavioral metrics, like cost per click (CPC) or cost per action (CPA), which also allow for cost comparison.
- **Automating insight-gathering.** After some initial planning about which metrics they need, marketers can use analytics tools like those from Omniture or Unica to automatically track selected metrics and provide daily, weekly, or monthly reports or graphs to enable easy analysis and presentation. Also, nonmarketers can more easily relate to many of these metrics, such as cost per click, than to metrics such as SAR that are less directly related to costs.

### Consumer Metrics Demonstrate Response To Marketing Influences

Consumer metrics reveal consumer attitudes and behaviors in response to marketing efforts, instead of just inferring them as efficiency metrics do. These metrics:

- **Disclose consumer influences and intentions.** Through surveys, interviews, or self-reported consumer feedback — gathered during polls administered on the site — consumer metrics reveal changes in brand awareness or purchase intent in response to marketing exposures. These metrics help marketers evaluate the emotional effect marketing has on consumers separately from the actions it drives them to take. For example, metrics like “satisfaction” or “willingness to recommend” can indicate a customer's long-term brand engagement better than the more immediate “did they buy/click?”
- **Develop loyalty insight over time.** Operational and efficiency metrics measure results of a single interaction; consumer metrics track changes in user behavior over time. Metrics such as recency (time since a consumer engaged with a marketer), frequency (how often they do so), retention (level of repeat custom/engagement), and changes in purchase size (for retailers)

give marketers insight into how to target messages. For example, those who visit and spend frequently on a site might be sent invites to a “Special Customers Only” event, while frequent visitors who rarely buy may be prompted into purchase by a discount email on products they often look at.

- **May already be in use in your organization.** Unlike operational and efficiency metrics, which are unique to the interactive channel they are tracking, consumer metrics measure user response to marketing messages — in any channel. This means that many consumer metrics — like unaided and aided awareness, brand image, and purchase intent — will likely already be in use in the typical marketing organization. Marketers can research consumer metrics in several ways, including face to face, online, or phone-based surveys and interviews, depending on the target audience and sample size. For example, SIS International Research conducted brand image studies through telephone interviewing for Lufthansa and through focus groups for Calvin Klein.<sup>8</sup>

### Cross-Channel Metrics Serve Today’s Advanced Interactive Marketer

The most sophisticated of interactive metrics, cross-channel metrics measure the synergies between different channels within a multi-channel campaign and the combined effect of these channels to influence desired marketing outcomes. For example, studies from Rex Briggs’ marketing measurement firm, Marketing Evolution, show that print, television, and online advertising often combine to lift brand metrics such as awareness and purchase intent more than each channel does on its own.<sup>9</sup> Cross-channel metrics include:

- **Return on marketing objectives (ROMO).** ROMO looks at the effectiveness of marketing spend. Specifically, it tackles how well a marketing investment delivers on its defined objectives, such as building awareness of a new product launch or driving sales of a seasonal offer. The most important factors when using ROMO is to ensure that the goals of the marketing investment are clearly defined — they may be financial, such as lifting sales, or attitudinal, such as increasing purchase intent — and that a process is in place from the beginning to track progress toward those goals.
- **Revenue contributions by marketing activity (marketing mix models).** This methodology uses statistical techniques such as linear and multivariate regression analysis to look for correlations between marketing activity and sales volume and teases out metrics such as the sales impact of individual media or promotional elements of a campaign.<sup>10</sup> For example, a brand manager can build a model comparing the amount of revenue attributable to coupons delivered via online ads or trade promotions, while an advertising manager can determine the effects of TV, radio, Internet, and print ads. Marketing mix modelers have measured traditional media for years, and some now include online data, even though the methodology works best when based on extensive historical data, which many interactive marketers lack.

- **Profitability metrics.** By making assumptions about the impact of consumer perceptions and behavior on retention and conversion rates, and by incorporating measurement of sales volumes, values, and changes, marketers can analyze the influence of interactive channels on direct value and profitability metrics such as customer lifetime value (CLV) and return on investment (ROI). These metrics require marketers to have quite high-level insight into the investments and returns of their business, so to use them a marketer will need direct financial responsibilities or strong liaisons in corporate finance or operations.

### New Measurement Types Will Appear For New Media

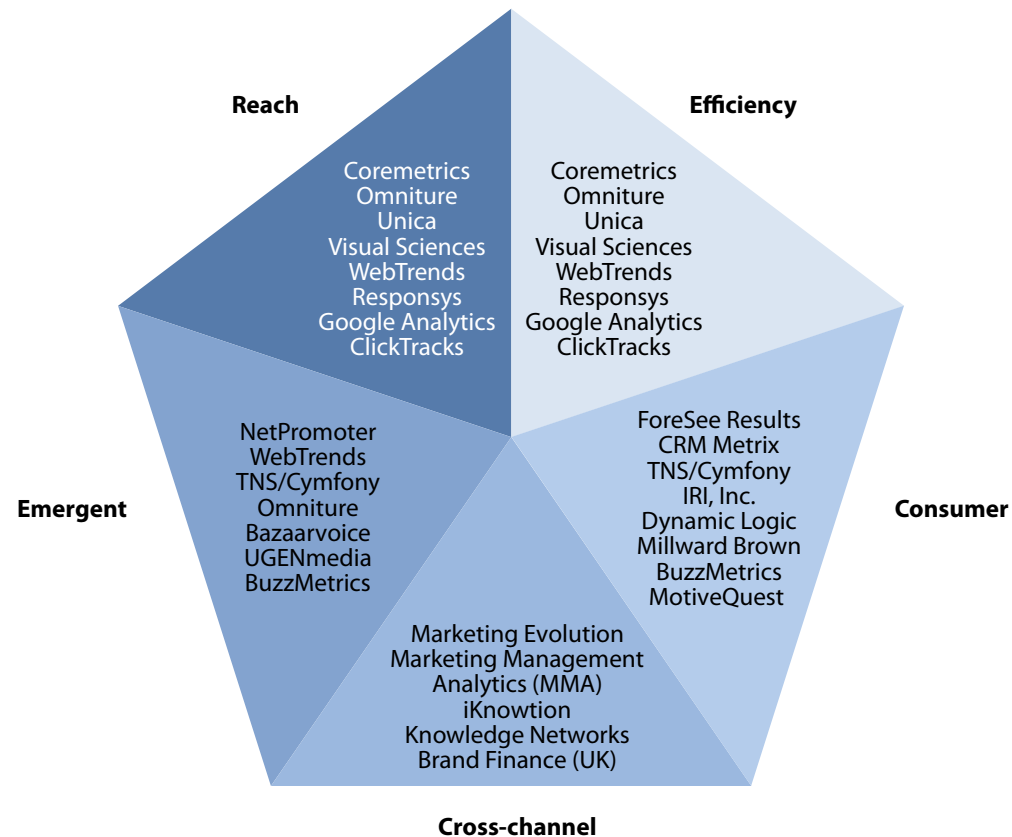
As consumers spend more time in new social media, marketers will look for additional metrics like consumer buzz or peer referrals to track nontraditional marketing results. Some new metrics in this arena include:

- **Online brand perception.** Whether for public relations activities, fraud violations, or competitive intelligence, marketers have long monitored media for information related to their brands. But fragmenting media and changing consumer behavior means there are now millions of potential sources of comment. For example, Technorati currently tracks over 110 million blogs, along with 250 million pieces of tagged social media.<sup>11</sup> This means that marketers have to up the ante on how they track mentions of their companies and brands online, which normally means turning to a third-party tracking company. For example, Toyota uses BuzzMetrics to monitor online attitudes to marketing such as TV spots.
- **Consumer engagement.** Engagement is the level of involvement, interaction, intimacy, and influence an individual has with a brand over time, giving a more holistic overview of a brand's influence and the customer's actions.<sup>12</sup> To measure engagement, marketers should monitor consumer behaviors like length of game play, comments made in forums, type and frequency of content uploaded, or items tagged, as well as qualitative metrics like net promoter scores or the influence an engaged customer has on others.<sup>13</sup> Measuring engagement is a complex task, which requires that even sophisticated marketers significantly invest in the services of multiple vendors. Marketers looking to track engagement should begin by focusing on a small set of objectives (such as linking positive reviews to increased basket sizes) and concentrate on unifying their view of the customer across channels.

### REACH OUT TO VENDORS FOR ACTIONABLE TRACKING AND REPORTING

Many interactive marketers struggling with extracting insight from metrics can find help by engaging a third-party expert vendor (see Figure 2). Marketers should evaluate vendor partners by asking themselves the following questions:

**Figure 2** Example Vendors For Interactive Marketing Measurement



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Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

- **What in-house capability do we have?** As the importance of analytics grows, many marketing teams will find that their current staffing — at least in the short term — lacks the expertise to get the most out of analytics packages. Web analytics leaders like Omniture and Unica can help here, especially for marketing teams who demand extensive customization and have the expertise to support and maintain the implementation.<sup>14</sup> Smaller marketing teams will probably be better off with vendors that can provide analytic advice and analysis, such as MotiveQuest in the brand monitoring space, or even devolving responsibility to their interactive agency, as long as it's one with strong analytics capabilities, such as OgilvyInteractive.<sup>15</sup>
- **What level of cross-channel sophistication do we need?** Are you running small, online-only programs or coordinating extensive cross-channel efforts? Effective measurement within one channel needn't require extensive investment. Simple, free tools such as Yahoo!'s Search Management dashboard can help new online marketers track their efforts in search, while email service providers such as e-Dialog provide extensive email analytics as standard. Marketers with



complex multi- and cross-channel investments, however, will require vendors like Marketing Management Analytics, which can cope with sophisticated marketing mix models, or solutions like Omniture, which can bring together measurements from multiple sources.

- **Do we require in-depth industry expertise?** How important to you is focus within your own vertical? Many vendors, including Omniture, operate across a wide variety of verticals, while others prefer to narrow it down. Brand monitoring vendor Branddimensions, for example, focuses strongly on automotive, entertainment, and pharmaceuticals.<sup>16</sup> Vertical specialization means these vendors have expertise in the most industry-relevant metrics plus experience creating strategy out of these measures. However, vertically oriented vendors may be less apt to parlay learnings from one industry into another. Marketers prioritizing vendors with industry experience should be careful to not fall into the trap of thinking, “It worked for client X so it will work for client Y.”

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### MAKE METRICS WORK FOR YOU BY FOCUSING ON RELEVANCE

Not all metrics will be equally relevant to all marketers; marketers should emphasize the metrics that address their goals. For example, metrics such as search keyword click-throughs and basket size over time resonate with online retailers, whereas consumer packaged goods (CPG) companies may focus on brand awareness and marketing mix models. To ensure they focus on the metrics most important to their business, interactive marketers must:

- **Not measure everything.** Just because you can measure something doesn't mean you should. In fact, the amount of online data available can paralyze marketers who try to track it all. Better to focus on a small subset of metrics that align closely with clearly defined business goals. Retailers looking to increase online sales should track metrics that relate directly to revenue growth such as visitor traffic, click-throughs by product type, and conversion rates. Media advertisers such as film studios aiming to drive awareness and ticket sales should focus on time spent watching rich media spots, number of registrants for associated games, and sentiment expressed in online film review forums. Vertically oriented measurement vendors can help you identify which metrics track to your business goals.
- **Continually review the metrics you use.** For marketers venturing into new online channels, the most important — and actually most usable — metrics may not be immediately obvious. To identify which metrics are actually helping diagnose marketing performance, interactive marketers should continually review which metrics: 1) Correlate directly with business goals; 2) Provide insights that improve results; and 3) Turn out not to give useful insight. For example, retailers may find that dwell time on product pages is not related to purchase likelihood, whereas time spent reading product reviews is.

- **Translate interactive jargon into common business terms.** Metrics such as CPC, unique visitors, and impressions are often meaningless to those not in the interactive marketing space. To engage this audience — which often includes the CMO — and encourage wider view of the value of interactive metrics, marketers need to translate “unique visitors” to “reach” and “stickiness” to “duration.” Additionally, many customer metrics, such as satisfaction, brand attitudes, and purchase intent, are shared between interactive and traditional channels and can provide a common ground of multi-media measurement discussions.
- **Get metrics out into the business.** Instead of letting metrics live only within an online dashboard or in monthly printouts, interactive marketers should think about how they can leverage provable success stories throughout the business. Share the latest highlights with other brand managers at strategy meetings, or incorporate metrics into cross-department reward structures. One idea: Bonus stakeholders on achieving desired interactive results. Give online marketers, product developers, and copywriters a bonus when their product page achieves the lowest SAR in a week.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> See the July 12, 2007, “[European Online Marketing Tops €16 Billion In 2012](#)” report Also see the October 10, 2007, “[US Interactive Marketing Forecast, 2007 to 2012](#)” report.
- <sup>2</sup> Interactive marketing is finally gaining executive attention. But, while budgets and expectations for interactive marketing programs are on the rise, supporting organizational structures are ad hoc at best. Forrester recommends that firms align their interactive teams with one of two models — channel managers or excellence centers — and then grow within these models to ultimately integrate into a Customer-Centric Marketing Organization (CCMO). Standardizing interactive marketing teams will compel skills development, improve media/budget alignments, and necessitate new agency services. See the May 1, 2007, “[Maturing Your Interactive Marketing Organization](#)” report.
- <sup>3</sup> Google Analytics released Version 2 of its product in May 2007. The tool has a simplified interface that’s based on extensive user research and provides context and visualizations that make data easy to understand. It provides a great deal of functionality for a free tool and is a great fit for small to midsize businesses, departments in large organizations, and large AdWords buyers. But Google Analytics doesn’t offer all of the features that today’s enterprises need, like visitor segmentation. That means that enterprise class shoppers will have to wait and see how Google’s plans to add more features materialize. See the September 11, 2007, “[Google Analytics Brings Basic Web Analytics To The Masses](#)” report.
- <sup>4</sup> For more information on these statistics, see [www.bronto.com/stats](http://www.bronto.com/stats), [www.iabeurope.ws](http://www.iabeurope.ws), [www.iab.net](http://www.iab.net), and [www.nielsen-netratings.com](http://www.nielsen-netratings.com).

- <sup>5</sup> We surveyed 107 direct and database marketers to understand their measurement successes and shortcomings and found that 69% of respondents say they are at least somewhat effective at measuring ROI. Despite this success, these marketers face several challenges that limit their ability to improve marketing ROI, such as a lack of staff, technology infrastructure, and timely access to data. So what drives success? Leaders in this space tell us they store more data, track more customer value metrics, and make significant investments in testing of new analytical strategies. See the March 12, 2008, "[Database Marketers Evolve Their ROI Measurement](#)" report.
- <sup>6</sup> For more examples of other types of interaction metrics, see the April 5, 2007, "[Three Winning Web Analytics KPIs](#)" report.
- <sup>7</sup> For more information about effective search marketing strategies, see the August 20, 2007, "[Get Serious With Search Marketing](#)" report.
- <sup>8</sup> See [www.sisinternational.com](http://www.sisinternational.com) for more information.
- <sup>9</sup> Source: [www.marketingevolution.com/services/ROMO](http://www.marketingevolution.com/services/ROMO). This site will give you more information about these studies and methodologies.
- <sup>10</sup> Increased demand by CEOs for greater accountability of marketing spending comes just at a time when proliferating media choices undercut the simplicity of measuring branding or sales impact. Companies can learn valuable lessons from CPG marketers who have begun to untangle multichannel marketing's effects using sophisticated statistical models. The keys to success lie in scoping the project correctly, gaining the support of stakeholders, and working with a modeling specialist who can apply the findings to business problems. See the August 25, 2005, "[Best Practices In Market Mix Modeling](#)" report.
- <sup>11</sup> Technorati is an online blog and social media tracking tool. More details can be found at [www.technorati.com](http://www.technorati.com).
- <sup>12</sup> The marketing funnel is a broken metaphor that overlooks the complexity social media introduces into the buying process. As consumers' trust in traditional media diminishes, marketers need a new approach. We propose a new metric, engagement that includes four components: involvement, interaction, intimacy, and influence. Each of these is built from data collected from online and offline data sources. Using engagement, you get a more holistic appreciation of your customers' actions, recognizing that value comes not just from transactions but also from actions people take to influence others. Once engagement takes hold of marketing, marketing messages will become conversations, and dollars will shift from media buying to customer understanding. See the August 8, 2007, "[Marketing's New Key Metric: Engagement](#)" report.
- <sup>13</sup> Net Promoter has become a popular way to measure customer satisfaction and loyalty. But, as with any single measurement, it doesn't tell the entire story. To put a Net Promoter Score — or any customer metric — into action, companies need to analyze it alongside other insights, operational metrics, and ongoing customer improvement efforts. See the February 2, 2007, "[Net Promoter Scores: Good, But Not Enough](#)" report.
- <sup>14</sup> Forrester evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of eight top Web analytics products against 127 criteria. Coremetrics came out as a Leader, with a product suite that balances power, usability, and strong customer service for firms that want a partner, not just a vendor — especially in retail, travel, financial services, and

media. Our analysis revealed that Omniture, Unica, Visual Sciences Visual Site, and WebTrends are also Leaders in the market by virtue of their powerful, complex platforms for enterprises with specialized data needs and a dedicated Web analytics team. Visual Sciences HBX is a Strong Performer, with one of the best user interfaces we saw and the option to overcome feature limitations by adding HBX Visual Workstation, a version of Visual Sciences' advanced data analysis tool for HBX clients. Both ClickTracks and Google Analytics are Contenders, offering streamlined reporting, some of the industry's best data visualizations, and a few analysis tools at a low price — a good choice for small to midsize businesses, departments within large enterprises, and anyone just getting started with Web analytics. See the September 11, 2007, "[The Forrester Wave™: Web Analytics, Q3 2007](#)" report.

<sup>15</sup> Forrester's evaluation of leading interactive marketing agencies across 52 criteria revealed a market adept at handling today's digital campaigns but lacking the thought leadership to drive more comprehensive brand strategies. In the current environment, OgilvyInteractive, Avenue A | Razorfish, Sapient, and Digitas lead because of their breadth of experience with interactive marketing campaigns utilizing many different channels (email, search, display ads, and emerging channels), as well as strong measurement and analytics capabilities. Strong Performers include VML, based on its strategic guidance, and Critical Mass and imc2, with their interactive skills rooted in Web site design. All of the agencies in this evaluation still have a lot of work ahead of them to prove that they have the acumen, vision, and road map to lead broader cross-channel marketing and brand strategies. See the December 4, 2007, "[The Forrester Wave™: Interactive Marketing Agencies, Q4 2007](#)" report.

<sup>16</sup> The power shift from media institutions to consumer communities means that marketers must track a diverse and growing range of influential voices. To find out how the emerging technology solutions that address this challenge stack up, Forrester evaluated leading brand monitoring vendors across 56 criteria. The results? Nielsen BuzzMetrics and Cymfony are market Leaders, thanks to their comprehensive technology platforms and extensive data source coverage. MotiveQuest — with the most services-focused and strategy-oriented offering — finishes as the leading Strong Performer. Biz360's focus on traditional PR monitoring services lands it as a midrange Strong Performer. Rounding out the Strong Performer category are Factiva, with its strong print orientation, and Umbria, which excels at speaker segmentation. Brandimensions falls into the Contender category, with targeted expertise in the automotive, entertainment, and pharmaceutical industries and an approach that relies heavily on human filtering. See the September 13, 2006, "[The Forrester Wave™: Brand Monitoring, Q3 2006](#)" report.

# FORRESTER®

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## Headquarters

Forrester Research, Inc.  
400 Technology Square  
Cambridge, MA 02139 USA  
Tel: +1 617.613.6000  
Fax: +1 617.613.5000  
Email: [forrester@forrester.com](mailto:forrester@forrester.com)  
Nasdaq symbol: FORR  
[www.forrester.com](http://www.forrester.com)

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