

# **A Little Less Conversation, A Little More Action Please**

By Ginger Conlon • Designed by James Jarnot



A man in a dark suit and light blue tie is sitting on a light-colored bench. He is looking to his right and gesturing with his right hand, palm up. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

**A**dmit it: As a marketer you can't help but get caught up in the hype of a hot new trend. You get drawn in by shiny objects. You're excited to test the latest marketing technique. That's cool. Own it. Excitement about what's new and trendy is part of marketers' DNA and what helps them keep their campaigns and strategies fresh.

Mostly.

Sometimes the hype is just too much. It becomes all talk, no action. Of course, hype abounded in marketing over the course of 2016. There was plenty of hullabaloo over all the strategies, technologies, and trends that marketers "should" act on. So, I had to ask: What hype are you so over from 2016 that you can't bear to talk about it anymore? What's the reality that marketers should be focused on instead? Six industry insiders shared the hype they've had just about enough of, thank you very much.

## **OUR EXPERT PANEL**

### **Martyn Etherington**

CMO and SVP Operations,  
Cisco Jasper

### **Doug Conely**

Chief Product and Strategy  
Officer, Exponential

### **Dan McDade**

President, PointClear

### **Ray Kingman**

CEO and Founder,  
Semcasting

### **Dennis Dayman**

Chief Privacy and Security  
Officer, Return Path

### **Mike Burton**

Cofounder and SVP Data  
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# MARTYN ETHERINGTON

**Martyn Etherington, CMO & SVP  
Operations, Cisco Jasper**

**@Etherington\_CMO | @Cisco\_Jasper**

I am so overall marketing predictions period. Entrepreneur, Forbes, Inc.—name a business publication and it's certain to have posted at least one article, or possibly several, on predictions for this year and beyond: virtual reality, Facebook streaming, employee engagement.... Really?

Reality is this. Customers want solutions to drive business outcomes. Know who your customers are and what they value. Deliver content in their voice that helps them make an informed purchase decision. Get to their gemba (the point of impact), get the real voice of the customer. In short, start putting the customer, not your product, at the center of your business.

# DOUG CONELY

**Chief Product and Strategy Officer, Exponential  
@exponentialinc**

Virtual reality, voice assistants, autonomous vehicles, artificial intelligence and, behind it all, endless exhortations to be “disruptive.” Many of these trends are presented today as must-have B2C technologies, though the current applications are often more gimmick than true utility. We believe these technologies will take a bit longer to bear fruit and may even be better suited for B2B applications. In the meantime, marketers should resist Shiny Object Syndrome, and focus on consumer experiences and proven advertising that works.

For consumer experience, focus on how your products and services can make people’s lives better. If the answer is through a custom integration with the latest AI-powered voice assistant, great; but there are probably less shiny, easier, and more impactful options.

For advertising, focus on how you can reach and engage prospective and existing customers effectively. Machine learning, though currently trending, has been around longer and has more mature applications than AI; it’s particularly well suited to delivering better campaign ROI with fewer “fingers on keyboards” while exposing your brand to more relevant prospects. Get this right and you’ll free up more people to work on data strategy and consumer experiences. Meanwhile, augmented reality and 360-video are trending technologies that can engage consumers, but balance this with ongoing investment in your best creative asset: namely, video.

By all means, be aware of the trends and opportunities of hot topics, but our advice to marketers is to focus on the long-term objectives and the iterative tactics that will get you there.



# DAN McDADE

President, PointClear

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Industry pundits want you to believe that buyers are 57 to 77% of the way through the buying process before they're ready to engage with a sales executive. While this might be true for lower ticket and commodity products, services, or solutions, it is not true for enterprise or strategic purchases that have a higher price tag.

There is no question that buyers have access to much more information today as compared to just a few years ago. However, senior executives desire early and direct contact with solution providers that have solved a problem multiple times—because the buyer is only going to have one chance to solve it.

According to ITSMA SVP of Research and Thought Leadership Julie Schwartz, regarding the 57 to 77% statistic, "ITSMA's data says that for high consideration technology solutions, this is a myth." She goes on to say: "In fact, we believe just the opposite, [that] 70% of B2B technology solution buyers want to engage with sales reps before they identify their short list. In fact, buyers perceive value in interacting with sales at every stage of the buying process—even the early stages." You can read more about this topic here.

If marketers wait until the buyer is 57 to 77% of the way through the buying process before engaging, it is likely that they'll end up as column fodder in an evaluation already won by a more agile competitor. Get in early.

# RAY KINGMAN

**CEO and Founder**

**Semcasting | @Semcasting**

Programmatic audience targeting will grow to nearly three quarters of digital ad spend by 2017 according to some analysts. With an average annual growth rate of 46 percent in the past two years, audience-based targeting has seen a lot of success and has made real progress in market share. But, it's still scuffling around some fundamental marketing execution issues. The technology has continued to advance, and as we build more audiences and run more campaigns, there is a definite buzz coming from the CMO office that more should be expected.

“More” in this case is proven results. Instead of focusing all of the hype around onboarding, person-based marketing, mobile cross-device, account-based marketing, and other “shiny objects of ad-tech,” it's time to start delivering clients the proof points that demonstrate that their digital investment is working.

The hurdle the industry is likely to face next is the reality that behind every digital campaign is an advertiser who is also investing in other marketing channels. What is “supposed” to be common between digital audiences and audiences in other channels, is the identity of the audience being targeted. When we can deliver proof that there is a deterministic link from the online to the offline and back again, digital spend will continue to accelerate unabated.





# DENNIS DAYMAN

**Chief Privacy and Security Officer,  
Return Path**

**@ReturnPath**

People always want to talk about what worked the year before and what we predict what will work in the next year for marketing. For me it's like watch the movie Ground Hog Day.

Let's simply begin with how users don't want pop-ups in websites, they don't want you to connect with them all the time via social, they don't want videos in email because it takes too long to watch, they don't want their IoT devices to talk to them about your offers, and they don't want your mobile applications to push information to them on offers without permission or killing their already

overload iPhone batteries. What they want is email, plain and simple. Why? People want control and privacy over their days and lives. They don't want disruption and complications.

Yes, I know there's some new sexy marketing platform out there that we all talk about that marketers must have and will allow them to connect their offers in a more succinct way to their buyers. But, really, the use of the technology usually requires mass adoption by buyers or requires some data push to it before using it to understand the buyer.

In 2016 eMarketer said that 69.8 million Americans used an ad blocker, a jump of 34.4% over 2015, and predicted that in 2017 that figure will grow another 24.0% to 86.6 million people. Why? Again, people don't want to be bothered today. They want to control their buying habits and disruptions.

We all say and know that email has the lowest ROI costs and works...but it's always worked and will never go away. Why does it work? Everyone has it and they all know how to use it as their own disruption manager and scheduler of communications. So why do we predict newer technologies to replace it ever year?

# MIKE BURTON

**Cofounder and SVP Data Sales**  
**Bombora | @bombora**

In 2016 marketing automation tools were heavily promoted as “must-have” solutions that could simplify the business of B2B marketing. The promise of turning on a fire hose of leads, and streamlining sales and marketing turned out to be at odds with reality in a few ways.

First, there’s no way to move an unqualified prospect further down the purchase funnel—even if the messaging is tailored specifically to them. Indeed, you can only use marketing automation for people you have already interacted with, thus limiting the value in prospecting and converting.

Second, marketing automation is a victim of its own success. Nurture turns to nuisance when a passing interest demonstrated by a whitepaper download results in the inescapable and dreaded drip, drip, drip of email and sales calls. Multiple that by thousands of marketers and the result is inboxes stuffed with content of questionable value and decreasing response and engagement rates.

Last, marketing automation is anything but fully automated. Setting up and managing marketing automation is a time- and expertise-intensive task, even without the additional overhead of evaluation and managing third-party plug-ins. The fact is that while there is great value to be had, marketing automation can actually make for more complicated internal sales and marketing processes.

We will see less promotion of marketing automation as the magic bullet for B2B marketers this year. Instead, the focus will be on more accurate understanding of the investments in time and effort required to create real processes that help sales and marketing teams work better together to find and nurture highly qualified leads.

