

# How to Buy a Distributed Marketing Solution



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# Buying a Distributed Marketing technology solution can seem complex.

And that's understandable, considering the national-to-local marketing challenges brands face. Inefficient marketing processes, incompatible systems, conflicting marketing strategies and brand-compliance dilemmas can have a ripple effect from corporate headquarters to local markets.

Brand marketers tasked with finding solutions for Distributed Marketing or Co-Op Advertising can't afford to get lost in industry jargon. Whether you call it Distributed Marketing, Local Marketing, Indirect Marketing, Channel Marketing, Through-Channel Marketing Automation, or Partner Marketing — the subset of marketing designed to help brands sell products in local markets, through independent partners or brand-owned locations, is a multi-billion-dollar industry.



And the diverse ecosystem of marketing technology providers built for Distributed Marketing can range from single-solution vendors to comprehensive SaaS marketing automation platforms. Yet, navigating the process of finding a Distributed Marketing solution doesn't have to be complicated.

**That's why we've broken it down into three critical buying stages with insider tips and best practices to help Brands find leading Distributed Marketing solutions that meet and exceed their expectations.**

# Early Stage Buyers



The initial buying stage involves identifying Distributed Marketing problems that need to be solved. This should include challenges faced by both the brand and its partner network. It's important to know who your key brand stakeholders are and how they define concerns and priorities for a marketing technology solution. Keep in mind that partners (retailers, dealers, distributors, resellers or agents) within your brand's network often struggle with different local marketing issues to resolve.

**It's critical in the early stage to lay the groundwork for consensus among brand stakeholders.**

**Key brand decision-makers need to have a shared understanding about the issues a Distributed Marketing solution should solve. This means agreeing on what the problems are and how to define them.**

**At this early stage, it's not necessary to determine how to solve those problems — although more often than not, brands tend to begin solutioning too early.**

Education and research play a pivotal role in the early stages of finding the right Distributed Marketing solution. As mentioned, different marketing technology providers may use different terms. It's important to know how providers define their own solutions and how they describe the benefits of Through-Channel Marketing Automation (TCMA), Local Marketing Automation, Software-as-a-Service, Digital Asset Management, Ad Building, Co-Op Advertising, Claims and Reimbursement and Marketing Analytics.



# Mid-Stage Buyers

After identifying problems and conducting initial research, it's essential to understand the minimum requirements a Distributed Marketing solution should deliver for your brand and its partners. This typically involves working with brand stakeholders to reach a consensus on requirements.

At this stage, it can be helpful to know which Distributed Marketing solutions other companies in your industry use to address similar problems to those your brand has identified.

Find out who the recognized leaders in Distributed Marketing are.

Keep in mind that independent research firms regularly evaluate Distributed Marketing — or Through-Channel Marketing Automation providers — and rank them based on systematic research and established criteria.





Conducting RFIs and RFPs can help brand teams gather more detailed information to explore and compare various Distributed Marketing solutions and determine which marketing technology providers meet the current needs of the brand and its network.

However, if you limit the search to your brand's present needs, it's a missed opportunity. The solution you choose should be equipped to grow with your company, to address future problems and those you may not even know you have.

Brands focused on maintaining a competitive edge need Distributed Marketing solutions that exceed minimum requirements and continuously innovate. Minimum requirements still serve an important role, helping your brand marketing team to qualify and disqualify potential marketing technology providers.



# Late-Stage Buyers

When Brands reach the final stage of choosing a Distributed Marketing provider, the majority of the legwork is done. What you need now is clarity on whether the marketing technology providers on your short list can deliver on their promises.

Demos can give you a more detailed look at how a Distributed Marketing solution would work, or not work, for your brand and its partners. It's important to ensure that Demos include not only key decision-makers but also those who would actually be using the platform on behalf of the brand.

This allows the Brand to experience the platform and discuss feedback prior to the final buying decision. Establishing a consensus among brand stakeholders at this stage should build upon the consensus and shared priorities identified in earlier stages of the Distributed Marketing buying process.







The Discovery process is another crucial part of the late stage. Discovery is designed to give brands greater clarity on their own requirements and goals, while testing the marketing technology provider's ability to meet those goals.

Discovery should result in a roadmap for execution that can expose potential feature gaps, identify areas for custom development, and reconfirm the appropriateness of pricing and budget allocations. Typically, Discovery takes anywhere from four to eight weeks, but it's well worth the time and expense. Because it offers an in-depth preview of how well the solution will work — or not work — the Discovery process gives brands a chance to avoid buyer's remorse before a final decision is made.

Successfully selecting a leading Distributed Marketing technology provider hinges on clearly identifying what your brand needs, systematically verifying the provider's capabilities and gradually building consensus among brand stakeholders at every stage. It can take time to determine the scope and size of problems and solutions. Knowing from the start what to expect and how to navigate the process puts your brand one step closer to finding the right Distributed Marketing solution.



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