



There is always something new in marketing technology, and there is usually someone nearby who is very excited about it. A new platform promises better personalization, a cleaner view of the customer, faster campaign execution, more useful data, better attribution, or some combination of all five. More recently, artificial intelligence has added another layer of possibility. Some of these developments are genuinely important, and some will change how we work. That makes separating useful innovation from our natural enthusiasm for the next new thing rather difficult.

A colleague once told me a story that captures the problem rather well. The organization had a digital marketing team and a digital function within IT. The IT team already had a CRM and technology stack capable of supporting what the marketers wanted to do, but the marketing team wanted its own solution. The proposed platform was new, impressive, and expensive, and the marketers felt strongly enough about it that the decision eventually made its way to the CEO.

They won. The technology was purchased, set up, and maintained, and the organization continued paying licensing and associated costs for five years. Yet the platform was never really implemented in the way everyone had imagined when the case was made for buying it.

I suspect most experienced marketers have encountered some version of this story. Perhaps the technology was different, or perhaps the investment was less dramatic, but the underlying temptation is familiar. We see what a new tool could allow us to do and become excited by the possibility. That enthusiasm can move us quickly toward acquisition before we have fully understood the capabilities, limitations, and unrealized potential of the technology already sitting inside the organization.

This is Lust in healthcare marketing: an intense, immoderate desire for the bright, shiny thing.

How the MarTech stack grows

It would be easy to blame vendors for this. They are, after all, exceptionally good at selling technology. But most complicated MarTech environments were created through a series of perfectly understandable decisions made by people trying to solve real problems.

A team needs to launch campaigns faster, so it adds a tool. Another team needs better reporting and finds a solution for that. New channels emerge. Data sources multiply. Personalization becomes more sophisticated. An organization acquires another health system and inherits its technology. Someone identifies a genuine gap that needs filling. Each decision has a rationale, and over several years those individual decisions accumulate into an ecosystem that nobody ever sat down and designed as a whole.

Our book, *Stop the sprawl: maximizing your MarTech*, describes what happens next. Functional overlap begins to appear. Ownership spreads across systems and stakeholders. Data fragments. Teams create workarounds to move information from one platform to another. IT inherits tools it did not select and is nevertheless expected to support, while marketers become dependent on systems they may not fully control. The stack continues to grow but understanding how all of its pieces contribute to business outcomes becomes progressively more difficult.

The utilization data suggests this is more than an architectural concern. Gartner's [2025 Marketing Technology Survey](#) found that organizations were using only 49% of their available MarTech capabilities and that use of the full range of MarTech capabilities had declined from 58% to 42% in two years. At the same time, more than half of marketing leaders reported a gap between the outcomes they expected their MarTech to deliver and the results they actually achieved.

Those figures describe an interesting contradiction. We have access to extraordinary capability, and we continue to add to it while a substantial amount of what we have already purchased remains underused. The question for marketers is therefore not simply whether the next technology is good. It is whether adding it will make the entire system better.

Technology has to live somewhere

A technology purchase can look wonderfully self-contained in a business case. There is a problem, a platform solves it, a price is agreed, and implementation begins. The reality becomes more complicated because technology has to live inside an organization.

It needs owners, data, integrations, governance, and security. People have to learn how to use it, and the way they work may need to change. Marketing, IT, analytics, operations, and finance can all have legitimate interests in how the technology performs and what it costs. In healthcare, privacy, regulatory requirements, and patient trust add further responsibilities.

The day-to-day operating model ultimately determines how much of the promised capability becomes useful. A sophisticated platform may contain advanced functionality that teams rarely touch because using it requires additional setup, complicated handoffs, or changes to familiar workflows. Under pressure, people quite reasonably gravitate toward the tools and processes they know will work. Over time, a platform capable of doing ten things may effectively become a platform used for three.

This is one reason adding technology can produce disappointing results even when the technology itself is

excellent. The organization gains another set of capabilities while the conditions that limited the previous ones remain. If ownership was unclear before the purchase, another platform gives us another ownership question. If data did not move cleanly between systems, another integration gives us another place where it can break. If people lacked the time or training to use advanced functionality, adding more functionality increases the distance between what the stack can theoretically do and what the organization can realistically execute.

Better performance therefore depends on understanding the system in which the technology operates. The most valuable work may involve improving workflows, clarifying ownership, strengthening integrations, building platform fluency, or deciding which system should perform which role. None of those activities will produce quite the same excitement as unveiling a new platform. They can produce considerably more value from the investment already made.

Restraint: *Fully utilize what you have before chasing what's new*

Our corresponding virtue is Restraint, which we define as the discipline to fully utilize what you have before chasing what's new.

Restraint starts with a clear understanding of the outcome you are trying to achieve. From there, you can identify the capabilities required to support it and examine how well the existing ecosystem meets those needs. That exercise creates a much stronger basis for deciding what to optimize, integrate, replace, or add.

Highly calibrated MarTech organizations begin with outcomes and use cases, map the capabilities required to support them and assess the technology they already own against those requirements. A new investment follows when that process reveals a meaningful gap. The resulting business case is stronger because the organization can explain what the technology needs to accomplish, why the existing environment cannot accomplish it adequately and how success will be measured.

This approach also gives marketers a more constructive relationship with IT, analytics, finance, and operations. MarTech decisions affect all of them, so bringing their perspectives into the decision earlier helps surface the tradeoffs while there is still time to do something about them. Marketing can articulate the growth

or engagement opportunity. IT can assess integration, security, and scalability. Analytics can define what needs to be measured. Finance can examine cost and long-term exposure. Operations can tell us whether the organization can actually support what marketing hopes to create.

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Restraint, in this sense, is a form of intentional design. We are deciding what belongs in the system and why.

What Epic can teach us about getting more from what we have

Epic provides an especially useful healthcare example because many health systems have already made a substantial enterprise investment in it. For marketers, it can be tempting to think of Epic primarily as the EHR,

while other platforms are considered the natural home for marketing activity. In practice, Epic may already contain capabilities relevant to outreach, segmentation, patient communication, attribution, analytics, and growth planning.

For an organization already using Epic, that creates an obvious opportunity to understand what is available before assuming that a new platform is required. MyChart campaigns can support patient outreach. Cheers and related engagement capabilities can help teams reach and segment audiences. LinkSource can connect marketing activity to downstream behavior. Epic data can give marketers a closer view of scheduling, referrals, service line demand, payor mix and other signals that help explain what happens after someone responds to marketing.

The greater opportunity comes from connecting those capabilities. Engagement can generate demand, but the organization needs an access pathway capable of receiving it. A campaign can produce activity, but analytics need to help leaders understand whether that activity created something valuable. Marketing may identify an attractive growth opportunity, but capacity, staffing or referral workflows may determine whether pursuing it makes sense.

This is where an enterprise platform can become more than a collection of features. When engagement, workflow, data, and decisions reinforce the same priorities, the organization begins to get leverage from an investment it has already made.

The practical question for marketers becomes what should Epic help marketing, access, strategy, and operations accomplish together?

That question takes us somewhere more useful than a feature inventory because it starts with the work rather than the platform. A health system interested in preventive care outreach will have one set of audience, workflow, and measurement requirements. A service line growth initiative will have another. Dormant patient reactivation, referral leakage, and access recovery each create different demands on the system. Once the use case is clear, the organization can decide which Epic capabilities are relevant and what needs to happen around them for the work to succeed.

**Your current
state is data.
What you choose
next is strategy.**

Choosing what belongs where

Understanding the capabilities of an existing enterprise platform creates another important responsibility, deciding where it fits within the broader ecosystem.

Epic's scale naturally creates a degree of platform gravity. Existing contracts, security approvals, shared infrastructure, and familiar interfaces can make expanding within the platform attractive. Those advantages are real and can simplify integration, maintenance, and governance.

The decision still needs to begin with the use case. Work that depends heavily on EHR-connected data, patient portal behavior, access workflows, or internal performance signals may fit naturally within Epic. A broader consumer journey, a brand-building program or a specialized personalization requirement may be better served elsewhere. In some situations, the strongest answer will involve a specialized tool connected cleanly to the enterprise platform.

This is where Restraint becomes more interesting than simply buying less technology. It requires enough understanding of the existing environment to know when to optimize it and enough objectivity to recognize when something different would perform better. The goal is a right-fit ecosystem in which each component has a defined role and the added complexity of every new component is justified by the value it creates.

A useful way to approach that decision is to ask whether the capability advances a priority objective, whether existing technology can support it, how it will fit into real workflows, who will own the outcome and how performance will be measured. Those questions shift attention away from the feature list and toward the contribution the technology is expected to make.

Your current state is data. What you choose next is strategy.

Keep this in your pocket

Before your next significant MarTech decision, draw the ecosystem you already have.

It doesn't need to be a beautiful architecture diagram. Put the major platforms on a page and identify what each one is supposed to do, who owns it, which teams use it and where data or workflows move between systems. Then add the business outcome you are trying to achieve.

Look for the places where the picture becomes unclear. You may find duplicate capabilities, ownership gaps, broken handoffs, or functionality nobody realized was already available. You may also discover a genuine gap that makes the case for a new investment much easier to defend.

Either result is useful. Restraint gives us the discipline to understand the system before we expand it, so that when we do invest in something new, we know exactly why it deserves to be there.

The next temptation

Lust tempts us with the possibilities of something new. Restraint asks us to understand what we already have and choose what deserves to be added.

Of course, choosing gets considerably harder when everything seems worth having.

Gregory called it **Greed**.