

GUIDE

# Marketing AI Transformation and the Role of CDP

13 leading CDPs compared— across AI readiness,  
activation, and architecture



# Contents

Transform Marketing AI by Reimagining the CDP's Role	3
The Future of Customer Data Platforms	4
CDPs Will Become Completely Composable	5
CDPs Will Be Integral for CX, AI and Data	6
Defining CDP Categories	7
Composable CDPs	8
Composable CDPs	9
One Category, Four Warehouse Integration Methods	10
Marketing Cloud CDPs	12
The Next Generation: AI-First CDPs	13
The CDP Market	14
Uniphore	15
Adobe	15
Amperity	16
BlueConic	16
Census	17
GrowthLoop	17
Hightouch	18
Lytics by ContentStack	18
mParticle by Rokt	19
Salesforce	19
Simon Data	20
Tealium	20
Treasure Data	21
Twilio Segment	21
Will Customer Data Platforms Exist in 2026?	22

# Transform Marketing AI by Reimagining the CDP's Role

Marketing AI is transforming the way that marketers orchestrate AI at scale, leverage intelligent agents to reduce complexity and accelerate decision-making, and create tighter alignment between business strategy and execution.

Marketing AI can discover blind spots and surface high-value strategies that may have gone unnoticed, adapt continuously to market changes and other external signals and eliminate organizational silos and fragmentation. But are CDPs keeping up with the promise?

But in the post-ChatGPT era, Enterprise AI demands more: more automation, sharper personalization, and greater efficiency. **CDPs are evolving beyond standalone platforms into deeply integrated systems that connect directly to Enterprise AI, enabling real-time decision-making and seamless customer experiences.**

Yet, while 75% of businesses are increasing AI investments, less than half are confident in their data quality. At the same time, marketing budgets remain under pressure, data regulations are tightening, and customer expectations for real-time, personalized engagement continue to rise.

This guide will show how CDPs are evolving to meet these challenges—from becoming fully composable to powering AI agents that drive the next wave of customer experience.

We'll take a look at some of the key trends that CDP buyers need to know, and we'll dig into each category of CDP before diving into the strengths, weaknesses and insights on each category and vendor.



**75% of Businesses Will Invest in AI This Year—but Data Quality Issues Threaten Their Ambitions.**

AiThority, 5 Mar. 2025




# The Future of Customer Data Platforms

As customer expectations grow and AI becomes more embedded in business operations, CDPs are taking on a new role. Instead of acting as standalone databases, they're becoming the connective tissue between cloud data platforms, AI and the tools that power customer experiences. This shift is being driven by two major trends:

**CDPs will become completely composable** Businesses want to work directly from their cloud data warehouse or lakehouse, not create another data copy or silo. Composable CDPs make this possible by integrating seamlessly with existing data infrastructure.

**CDPs will be the integral for CX, AI and Data** AI models need high-quality, real-time customer data to deliver real impact. CDPs are providing the customer data that AI agents need to make smarter, faster decisions, with the activation and orchestration to connect all the dots.

Data is the foundation of AI. These changes are redefining what a CDP can do and where the CDP is positioned in the AI story and the AI stack as a whole—moving beyond just storage and activation to become the engine that powers customer intelligence. Below, we'll dig into these trends a bit more.



CDPS will be  
completely composable

CDPs will be integral  
for CX, AI and Data



# CDPs Will Become Completely Composable

Businesses need direct access to a single source of truth—not another data silo. That’s why enterprise businesses are making composability a requirement for their CDPs, tapping directly into cloud data warehouses and lakehouses rather than storing and processing data in isolation.

This shift unlocks:

**Data access** AI models, analytics tools, and activation platforms all work from the same up-to-date dataset, giving more accurate, cross-channel and organization wide intelligence and insights.

**Less complexity** No need to copy and move data across multiple systems—instead, data remains securely where it lives.

**Stronger security and governance** Data stays in one place, with governance built in. Without extra copies floating around, brands have less risk and better data governance.

With data warehouse spending expected to hit \$30 billion by 2027, businesses are doubling down on centralizing data. CDPs that plug into these systems will be essential for making customer data available across the business to easily orchestrate and activate from the source of truth.

If a CDP doesn’t integrate with data warehouses like Databricks, Snowflake, Google BigQuery, Amazon Redshift or Teradata VantageCloud, it’s not going to get you where you need to go. Below, we’ll discuss how the method of data warehouse integration matters for your business, and break down each type.





# CDPs Will Be Integral for CX, AI and Data

AI is reshaping customer experience, but even the best models are useless without high-quality, complete data. Companies with strong customer data strategies grow revenue 2.5x faster than competitors, according to Forrester.

CDPs are quickly becoming the connective tissue that makes AI work, powering:

## Smarter automation

AI agents that can respond in real time, using the latest customer data.

## Better customer experiences

Predictive, personalized interactions across every touchpoint.

## Stronger alignment across teams

Sales, service, and marketing working from the same dataset.

What's next? AI is only getting more embedded in how businesses operate, and CDPs will be at the center of it all—turning raw data into the intelligence that drives every decision. Companies that make these connections now won't just keep up—they'll lead their industry.



# Defining CDP Categories

The CDP landscape has grown quickly, leading to a crowded and confusing market. With different categorizations and types of CDP existing within the ecosystem, it's hard for buyers to get organized and choose the one to best suit your needs. And with vendors taking different approaches and overlapping capabilities across platforms, it's easy to get lost in the noise. **To cut through the confusion, businesses should focus less on vendor claims and more on what truly matters: their use cases and data model.**

## How to Approach the Market

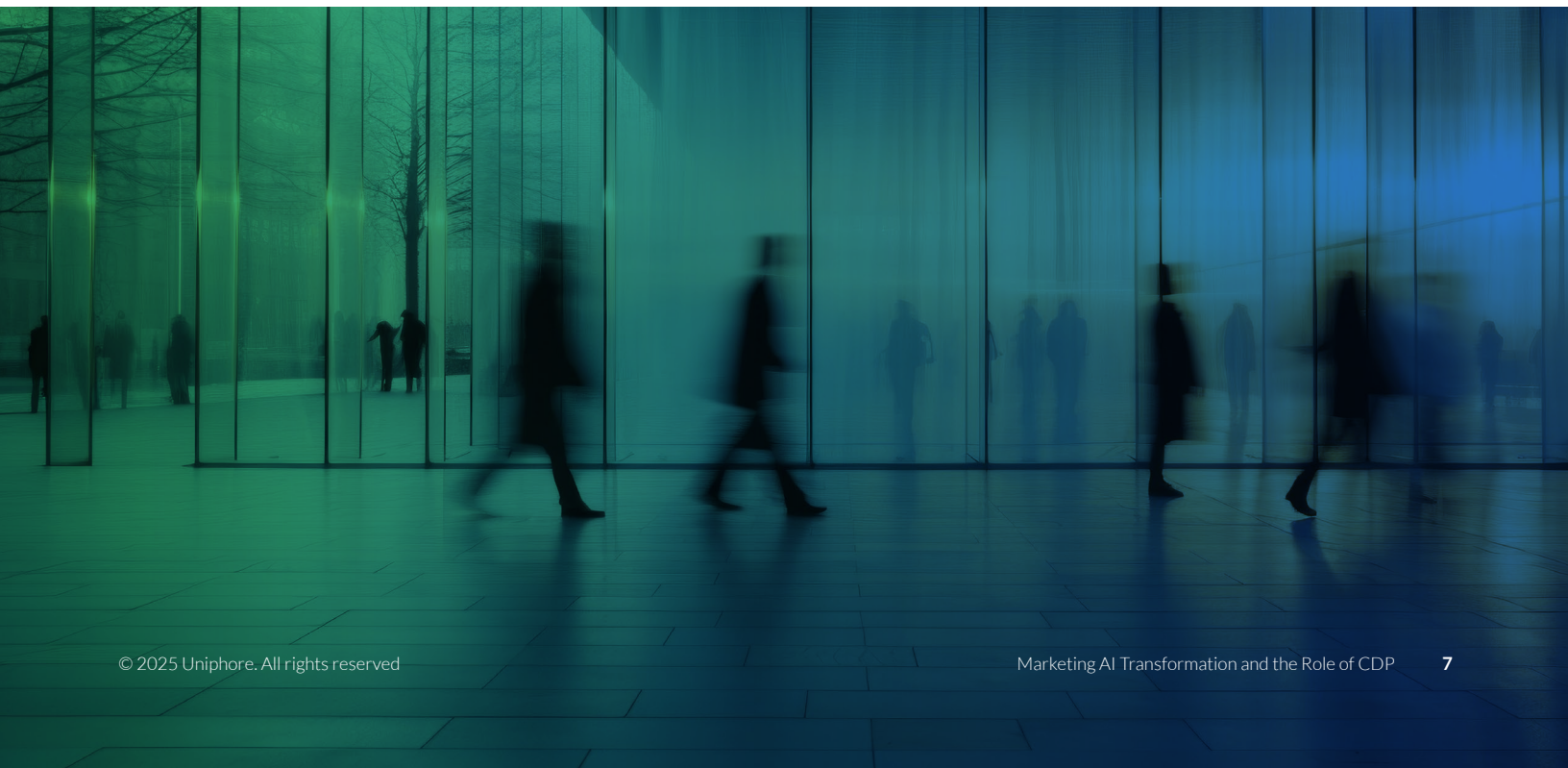
Many businesses start their CDP search by comparing features, but that's often the wrong approach. Instead, start with three fundamental questions:

**What are your key use cases?** Are you primarily focused on activating data for marketing campaigns, improving AI decision making and automation, or creating a unified customer profile across the enterprise?

**Where is your customer data?** Are you working from a cloud data warehouse, or do you need a system that centralizes and stores customer data separately?

**What are your AI initiatives?** Are you getting the data needed to feed your AI models? Do you have your use cases ready with a solution to support them?

**The right CDP should fit into your long-term data strategy, not just solve for today's challenges.** AI, real-time decisioning, and evolving privacy regulations will continue to shape the landscape, so businesses should choose a platform that aligns with where they're headed—not just where they are now.



# Composable CDPs

Bundled solutions are officially dead in favor of a more centralized, agile composable stack. While every vendor has its own positioning, most CDPs fall into three main categories.

## Composable

Built to work directly with cloud data warehouses and lakehouses, these platforms don't store customer data separately. Instead, they provide the tools to unify, transform, and activate data within a business's existing infrastructure. Best for companies that already have a strong data foundation and want maximum flexibility and control. However, businesses will need to pay attention to the warehouse integration method—they vary and have different implications, which we'll list for each vendor. We'll break down and identify each type for each vendor.

## Marketing Cloud

CDPs offered by major marketing cloud vendors (e.g., Adobe, Salesforce) that are tightly integrated with their ecosystems. These platforms are designed to work seamlessly with their parent company's tools but can be challenging to integrate with external systems. Best for enterprises already invested in a specific marketing cloud.

## The New Generation: AI-First

A newer category focused on AI-driven decisioning and automation. These CDPs prioritize real-time intelligence, AI-driven segmentation, and automated personalization. Best for companies looking to scale AI-driven customer experiences with minimal manual intervention using AI Agents across the organization.

Choosing the right CDP category isn't just about features—it's about finding a platform that fits your data strategy, AI ambitions, and long-term business goals.

**In each section, we'll break down the pros, the cons, and the best fit for different types of organization.**



# Composable CDPs

The days of duplicating customer data across multiple platforms are officially gone. As more providers embrace composable architectures, the ability to activate data directly from a cloud data warehouse or lakehouse is quickly becoming the standard—not a differentiator.

A Composable CDP eliminates redundant data storage, reducing complexity, and risk. Instead of managing multiple copies with divergent models, businesses can work from a single source of truth, ensuring consistency across every activation channel.

This approach not only improves security and governance—with instant control over data access—but also accelerates deployment, cutting implementation timelines from months to days.

With cloud platforms like Snowflake and Databricks driving this shift, vendors that rely on bundled storage and rigid architectures will struggle to keep up. In the near future, composability won't just be an option—it will be the expectation.

## Pros and Cons of a Composable CDP

The Composable approach offers brands a pathway to the best of what CDPs can offer while maximizing their investments in data infrastructure.

### PROS

- Best-of-breed functionality
- Highest levels of data security
- Fulfills diverse organizational needs

### CONS

- Requires a relatively mature Data Warehouse / Data Lake strategy
- Saturated market with many options. Brands need to identify the warehouse integration method right for them.

## Who Should Adopt a Composable CDP?

### GOOD FIT

- Brands who are heavily invested in centralizing data in a Data Warehouse
- Brands with a strong customer 360 initiative and limited business impact
- Brands in highly regulated industries
- Brands needing deep functionality and complex use cases

### BAD FIT

- Brands with limited existing data infrastructure investment
- Brands with critical tech gaps that are easier to be addressed with a single solution.



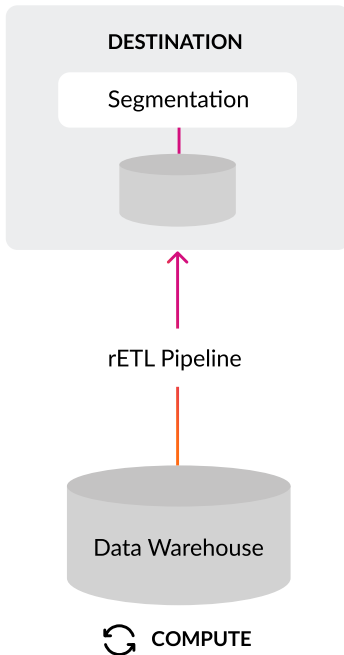
**“The future is composable, where brands control their data, apply AI where it lives, and activate it anywhere. The real shift is moving away from rigid, all-in-one platforms to flexible architectures that plug into existing AI and data investments.”**

David Wells, Industry Principal for Media, Entertainment, & Advertising at Snowflake

# One Category, Four Warehouse Integration Methods

Four key methods of data warehouse integration have emerged in the market—and each will have implications on your data strategy.

Let's take a look at each method of data warehouse integration, with the solutions that support each.



## REVERSE ETL

A simple solution that is built for data teams, not for marketing.

The Vendors:



Reverse ETL solutions have made it easier for data engineers to move data into the client's martech stack.

A Reverse ETL pipeline can be a fast and simple way to copy data from the warehouse to a destination without creating another silo.

However it is extremely limited in its ability to allow business users to orchestrate campaigns and experiences in a way that CDPs typically enable, and it can only pipe data from one single database to a destination. While this is a tried and true method for data teams to connect non-martech systems in the stack, it is not practical for marketing and CX use cases.

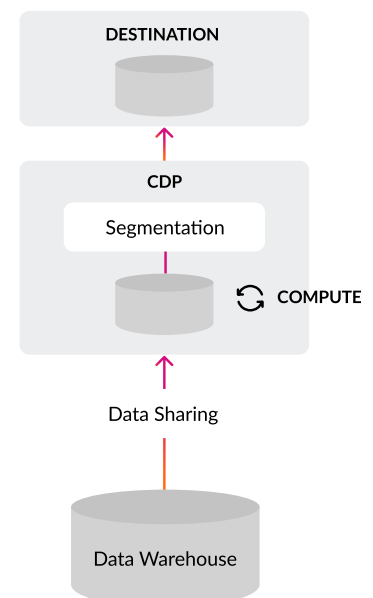
## DATA SHARING

Easy to integrate your CDP to your data warehouse and an improved data copy solution for traditional ETL, but still requires a data copy to additional systems.

The Vendors:  **Simon**  **UNIPHORE**

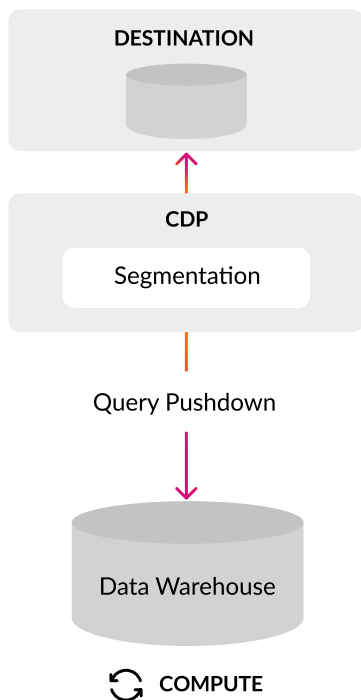
Data Sharing solutions provide a storage layer with access to data. The compute layer (e.g. execution of the query), however, is decoupled and not provided in this scenario.

A Data Sharing integration enables a CDP to access data in the data warehouse and use it for orchestration and other CDP functions, but it is limited to one specific warehouse and requires a lot of data copy in the process.





# One Category, Four Warehouse Integration Methods (continued)



## QUERY PUSHDOWN

Easy to integrate your CDP to your data warehouse, computing queries in up to one warehouse.

The Vendors:

 **hightouch**  **GrowthLoop**  **Simon**  **Census**  **UNIPHORE**

CDPs use query pushdown to delegate compute to where the data is stored, in this case a single cloud data warehouse.

This offers both the benefits of a CDP and a high degree of benefits that composability provides, by essentially no compute or storage.

However, query pushdown necessitates that all the data needed to compute is stored in just one place—limiting scale and flexibility of data that is outside the warehouse.

## FEDERATED QUERY PUSHDOWN

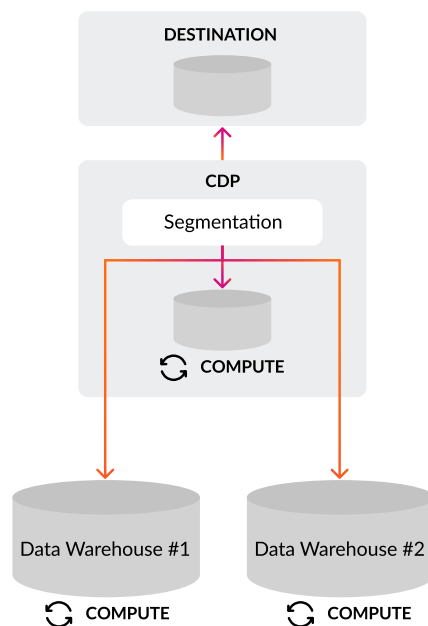
Ability to activate all your data – not just your warehouse – no matter the type or source.

The Vendors:

  **UNIPHORE**

Combine data on-the-fly from cloud warehouses and local CDP data stores to power sophisticated use cases.

Unlike other Composable CDPs, CDP Agent brings CDP capabilities to your unique data environment – not just your warehouse – enabling you to scale valuable use cases no matter the state of your customer experience initiatives.



# Marketing Cloud CDPs

Marketing Cloud CDPs—offered by Salesforce, Adobe, and Oracle—promise a unified customer view but often function as walled gardens, restricting data portability and locking businesses into their ecosystems. With rigid data structures and export limitations, they can slow down marketing teams and complicate AI-driven activations. While useful for web personalization and campaign orchestration, these CDPs struggle with speed, scale, and flexibility.

While CDPs like Salesforce have made strides in Agentic AI, as it advances, businesses will need open, adaptable systems—not ones that keep them locked in. Organizations should carefully assess whether a Marketing Cloud CDP truly aligns with their data strategy and AI goals before committing.

## Pros and Cons of a Marketing Cloud CDP

The marketing cloud approach is a tempting choice for enterprises looking to minimize the number of vendors in their stack, but it doesn't unlock the business value of customer data like other approaches will.

PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Limits number of unique vendors in stack</li><li>• Improves interoperability of cloud solutions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Creates vendor lock-in</li><li>• Fails to deliver best-of-breed capabilities of other CDPs</li><li>• Reliant on technical resources and designed for technical users</li><li>• Incremental licensing creates high total cost of ownership</li></ul>

## Who Should Adopt a Marketing Cloud CDP?

### GOOD FIT

- Brands with large to unlimited budgets
- Buyers with significant job security that can withstand constant delays and budget overruns
- Organizations that have no option to bring in new vendors

### BAD FIT

- Brands looking for fast time-to-value and ROI
- Organizations with limited budget and resources
- Organizations looking to avoid potential security risks through repeated data copyings
- Organizations utilizing several non-cloud technology providers

# The Next Generation: AI-First CDPs

As AI moves from experimentation to execution, CDPs are becoming a critical part of the enterprise AI stack. The next generation of CDPs won't just unify and activate customer data—they'll power AI agents that drive automated decision-making, real-time personalization, and predictive analytics at scale, sitting at the center of the AI stack.

By integrating directly with AI models and workflows, these platforms enable businesses to generate insights,

automate responses, and refine predictions without manual intervention. This shift makes AI-driven customer engagement not just faster, but smarter and more autonomous.

With Agentic AI accelerating demand for more dynamic and responsive data systems, CDPs that can't seamlessly feed AI models and orchestrate AI-driven experiences will fall behind.

## Pros and Cons of an AI-First CDP

An AI-powered CDP promises smarter, faster decision-making by integrating customer data directly into enterprise AI workflows. But while the potential is massive, businesses must be ready to adapt quickly—requiring a flexible approach and the right data foundation.

### PROS

- Enhances AI-driven decision-making by feeding real-time customer data into models
- Automates personalization at scale, reducing the need for manual segmentation and rule-based workflows
- Continuously learns and adapts, refining audience insights and optimizing customer engagement in real time
- Integrates deeply with enterprise AI stacks, ensuring seamless coordination with machine learning models and analytics tools

### CONS

- Dependency on data quality, requiring clean, well-structured data to deliver meaningful AI outcomes
- Computationally intensive, potentially increasing cloud costs for real-time AI processing
- Early-stage market maturity, with vendors taking different approaches and lacking standardization

## Who Should Adopt an AI-First CDP?

### GOOD FIT

- Brands with large-scale data operations that require real-time decision-making and automation
- Companies focused on hyper-personalization at scale, where AI can drive autonomous engagement
- Organizations with good data infrastructure looking to integrate customer data into predictive and generative models

### BAD FIT

- Brands with smaller datasets that don't require complex AI models to drive customer engagement



# The CDP Market

Uniphore

Adobe

Amperity

Blueconic

Census

Growthloop

Hightouch

Lytics by Contentstack

mParticle by Rkt

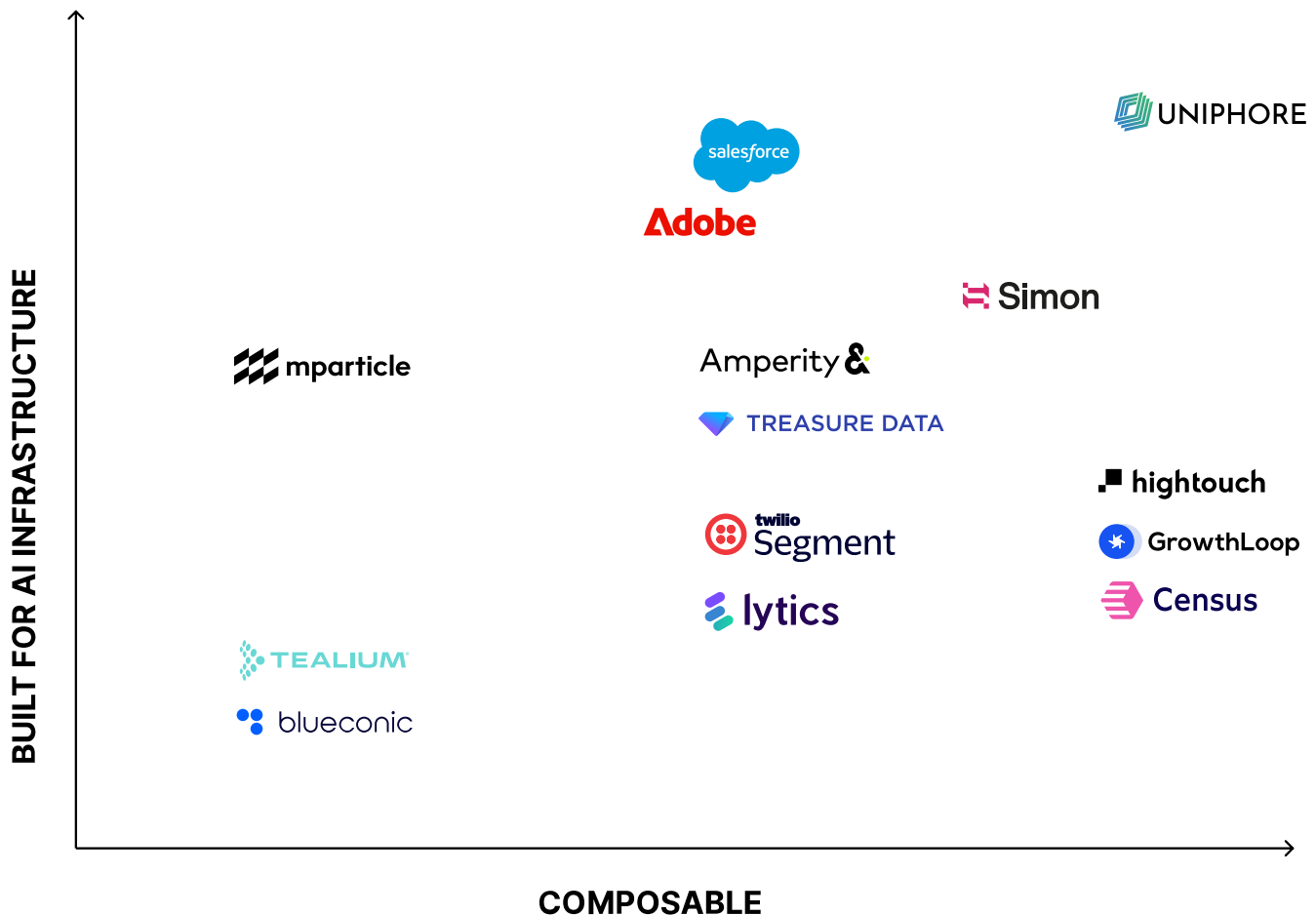
Salesforce

Simon Data

Tealium

Treasure Data

Twilio Segment



CDP Agent is a cutting-edge, AI-powered Customer Data Platform. It specializes in creating a flexible, composable data ecosystem that allows enterprises to activate customer data without unnecessary data duplication. The platform's strength lies in its ability to integrate seamlessly with modern cloud infrastructures, enabling sophisticated data management and activation strategies. With new investment from Uniphore in AI, CDP Agent is positioned to scale AI across the enterprise—from marketing and customer service and beyond. Uniphore brings expertise in conversational AI and automation, bringing new AI-native capabilities to CDP Agent.

### STRENGTHS

- Highly adaptable composable architecture
- AI-powered experience orchestration across online and offline touchpoints
- Business-friendly UI
- Real-time CX

### WEAKNESSES

- Requires data infrastructure investment
- Best suited for enterprises with mature data teams

## Adobe

The Adobe Marketing Cloud, of which the Adobe CDP is one product offering among many, operates similarly to other marketing clouds. It's a portfolio of point solutions brought together under one roof. Marketing cloud point solutions—which are often the result of vendor acquisition—are ostensibly designed to operate on their own, but this isn't always the case in practice. Adobe Marketing Cloud is best suited for those who have already adopted Adobe Experience Cloud, so they can tap into other Adobe tools more easily.

### STRENGTHS

- Robust real-time data flows
- Dashboarding and analytics capabilities
- Campaign design and delivery
- Real-time audience segmentation

### WEAKNESSES

- Significant vendor lock-in
- High implementation costs
- Limited interoperability with non-Adobe platforms

Amperity specializes in solving complex customer data fragmentation challenges. The platform leverages artificial intelligence to create highly accurate, unified customer profiles by merging and cleaning data from disparate sources to improve data quality for AI initiatives. Since SQL knowledge is necessary for optimal use, Amperity is aimed at data engineers and analysts, not average business users.

## STRENGTHS

- Best-in-class AI-powered identity resolution
- Sophisticated AI-driven data unification
- Powerful data cleansing
- Data cleansing and enrichment

## WEAKNESSES

- Primarily focused on identity resolution
- Limited journey orchestration capabilities
- Less comprehensive activation capabilities
- Not a business-friendly UI

BlueConic is geared toward marketing users—often found on e-commerce teams—who are focused on personalizing offers for site and app visitors.

Because it's a pre-packaged application—as opposed to a highly configurable platform—it lacks the enterprise-grade customization necessary to manage complex omnichannel use cases. It tends to appeal most to mid-size businesses that are looking to kick start their personalization efforts. They are ideal for first-party data activation, web personalization, and lightweight segmentation.

## STRENGTHS

- Intuitive, user-friendly interface
- Contextually relevant customer recommendations
- Website and app personalization
- Profile unification
- Profile history tracking

## WEAKNESSES

- Heavy reliance on IT teams
- Less flexible data activation
- Lacking in AI capabilities
- Pre-packaged solution that lacks customization and scalability not suited for enterprise



Census specializes in enabling enterprises to activate data directly from their cloud data warehouses through Reverse ETL, eliminating unnecessary data movement and reducing operational complexity. It serves as a lightweight activation layer for existing data infrastructures.

## STRENGTHS

- Minimizes data duplication
- Reduces security risks
- Cost-effective data activation
- Warehouse integration

## WEAKNESSES

- Limited data ingestion capabilities
- Lacks comprehensive transformation features
- Lacks support for advanced marketing use cases

Growthloop provides a lightweight, flexible CDP solution that allows marketing teams to leverage existing data infrastructure for audience creation and activation. The platform emphasizes simplicity and direct data utilization. GrowthLoop launched GenAI audiences and a number of other advancements at the end of 2023.

## STRENGTHS

- Easy to deploy on cloud data warehouses
- Lower costs
- High velocity roadmap, though depth of offerings remains to be seen

## WEAKNESSES

- Lack of market maturity, with gaps in real-time and identity
- Reverse ETL limited to one data warehouse
- Built for IT Teams, with less mature marketing-friendly UI

Hightouch functions as a data movement tool, moving data from the Data Warehouse to the different activation channels. Hightouch started integrating select elements of CDP workflows within its reverse ETL framework, but still lacks maturity, and has gaps in essential CDP functionalities.

## STRENGTHS

- Initial deployment is straightforward
- Warehouse agnostic, available to deploy on all major data warehouses
- Low cost makes it accessible to engineers despite limited access and capabilities in lower tiers
- New advancements in AI decisioning (separate from their CDP)

## WEAKNESSES

- Does not persist customer data
- Requires well-structured data warehouse
- Lacks answers for critical needs such as identity and real-time
- Built for technical teams, with a new, add-on Customer Studio

Lytics by ContentStack offers a wide range of CDP functionality, taking a broad approach. While its strength lies in real-time website personalization and email-based use cases, the tradeoff is that some core functionalities, such as advanced segmentation and data management, inevitably fall short. Lytics was recently acquired by ContentStack, a CMS platform.

## STRENGTHS

- Marketer-friendly UI
- Real-time personalization
- Broad range of reporting features

## WEAKNESSES

- Requires SQL expertise
- Lacks complex segmentation
- Primarily designed to support light-weight, real-time use cases rather than advanced data management

Originally designed for mobile app data capture, mParticle has evolved into a CDP focusing on capturing and unifying customer interactions across digital channels. While it has grown to adopt some CDP functionality, it was not built as a Customer Data Platform, so it lacks scale and integration. mParticle was recently acquired by Rokt, a leading ecommerce-focused platform.

### STRENGTHS

- Real-time event tracking
- Real-time data streaming
- Multi-source data unification

### WEAKNESSES

- Limited ability to leverage large amounts of historical customer data
- Limited audiencing and journey orchestration
- Behind on composable offering and AI



Salesforce claims its CDP is intended for business users, but the current offering of the product is more geared towards supporting technical users who are tasked with unifying data across technologies to create a customer 360 for their business teams. Salesforce's CDP represents their fifth attempt at creating a comprehensive customer data solution, primarily serving as a data integration layer for Salesforce users.

Salesforce has made strides with Agentforce—introducing AI Agents to support workflows. They also grew their composable capabilities this year with Data Sharing.

### STRENGTHS

- Native Salesforce integration
- Strong dashboarding and reporting
- Agentic AI
- Chatbot capabilities

### WEAKNESSES

- Limited self-service capabilities
- Incomplete CDP functionality like omnichannel
- Disjointed solutions
- Vendor lock-in with low integration



Simon Data offers a warehouse-native CDP leveraging Snowflake's backend, with a focus on robust data governance and management. It has limited partnerships and capabilities with any platform other than Snowflake.

## STRENGTHS

- Snowflake-native CDP
- Precise query management
- Business-friendly UI
- In-product reporting capabilities

## WEAKNESSES

- Limited cross-platform partnerships
- Lacks broader composability
- Snowflake environment dependency



Tealium started as a tag management system focused on JavaScript and SDK-based event tracking, later expanding into customer data management. While it offers data collection and integration capabilities, it is not a true Composable CDP, as it does not leverage cloud data warehouses for storage and processing.

## STRENGTHS

- Strong in real-time event collection and routing
- Well-established in tag and SDK management
- Strong partner ecosystem

## WEAKNESSES

- Limited capabilities for historical data activation
- Lacks deep cloud data warehouse integration
- Primarily functions as an event-based data router rather than a full-fledged CDP

**COMPOSABLE**

Treasure Data provides a comprehensive offers sophisticated identity resolution. Treasure Data was designed for analytics professionals. These data scientists, who often reside on IT teams, are tasked with extracting insights from customer data and measuring marketing performance.

**STRENGTHS**

- Data ingestion and management
- Self-service tools for developers
- Extensive pre-built integrations
- Configurable analytics models in UI

**WEAKNESSES**

- Complex implementation
- No business-friendly UI
- Relies on technical expertise
- Real-time offering is lacking

**COMPOSABLE**

Segment specializes in data collection and distribution via SDKs and integrations, originally designed for IT teams to manage customer event routing efficiently. Twilio Segment has attempted to evolve into a data activation platform with CDP capabilities that are less mature.

**STRENGTHS**

- Strong SDK and tag management for collecting digital event data
- Large catalog of integrations with a self-service setup
- Real-time event-triggered capabilities for transactional use cases

**WEAKNESSES**

- Incomplete CDP functionality, for orchestration and targeting
- Requires more technical expertise
- Only composable through Reverse ETL



# Will Customer Data Platforms Exist in 2026?

CDPs aren't going away—they're becoming something bigger.

This year alone, we've seen major mergers and acquisitions reshape the landscape—CDP Agent and Uniphore among them. As AI takes center stage in driving customer experiences, CDPs won't disappear; they'll evolve. No longer just a standalone platform, the CDP will become the intelligence layer fueling AI-driven engagement. The need for clean, connected, and real-time customer data won't change, but how it's leveraged will. Future-ready brands won't just activate data; they'll use AI to anticipate needs, automate decisions, and create more meaningful interactions—powered by human creativity.

The future isn't about whether CDPs exist—it's about how they adapt to power AI-driven customer experiences at scale.

**Learn more about the AI-First  
Composable DP Agent.**



Contact Us