



Recognizing the Top IT Partners in the CGT Universe

“The future of IT is that there should be no IT,” said Bala Subramanian, chief digital officer (and formerly chief technology officer) at Best Buy, while speaking on a panel at the annual National Retail Federation show in New York last month.

Lest you get the wrong impression, Subramanian was making the point that information technology has become so integral to the business of consumer goods — and so vital to its success — that it no longer makes sense to talk about IT as a distinct function.

In that type of reality, identifying the best IT tools and solution providers has become more of a mission-critical exercise than ever before. As industry luminary Andy Walter says, what’s needed aren’t vendors that just sell software and services, but true partners “who will co-invest with you” to mutually build the businesses.

With this premise in mind, CGT undertook its 18th annual Readers’ Choice Survey, our yearly effort to find out which solution providers are having a significant impact on the consumer goods industry.

Covering Business Intelligence, Supply Chain Planning and 13 vital functions in between (alphabetically, not functionally), CGT’s 18th annual Readers’ Choice survey spotlights the industry’s preferred solution and service vendors. The resulting Top Providers lists can serve as a valuable first-step guide for



helping your company make future business and IT decisions.

In recent years, we've supplemented the Readers' Choice results with editorial commentary about general trends within each category. Since that's something we strive to do all year round, we decided this year to place greater emphasis on the solution providers themselves by profiling four "notables" in each category (which we'll explain below).

As usual, *CGT* also presents "Editors' Picks," an overview of intriguing technology and service providers that aren't represented on any of the lists but which should be on the industry's radar.

Survey Methodology

The Top Providers list for each category showcases the companies that received the best "Total Scores" for the solutions and/or services they deliver in that area. Although the goal is to present 10 solution providers in each category, we always rely on the results to determine the final "worthy" number.

These lists were determined by responses from hundreds of executives and employees who work with these tools daily. Because we often encounter outright ties and "too close to call" vote totals and satisfaction scores, we present these solution providers in alphabetical order.

To ensure the integrity of the survey, only employees of consumer goods companies — the clients of these providers — are eligible to vote, and only once. (*CGT* has internal checks in place to detect fraudulent voting activity.) We also ask respondents to vote only in the categories that match their areas of expertise, whether that's in supply chain, product development, sales and marketing, or general IT.

In each relevant category, respondents were asked to identify the provider whose tools or services they currently use. They were then asked to rank their level of satisfaction with that provider on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being "extremely dissatisfied" and 5 being "extremely satisfied").

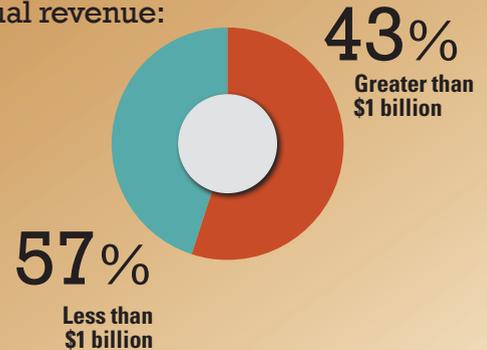
A company's "Total Score" was then computed by multiplying the number of votes it received in the category by its average customer satisfaction rating in that same category.

In addition to the list of Top Providers in each category, *CGT* recognizes three companies for special recognition:

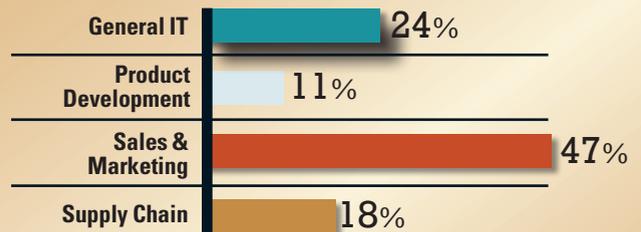
- **Best in Category:** The provider that received the highest total score in its category.
- **Customer Satisfaction Leader:** The provider that earned the highest average user satisfaction rating in the category (after qualifying by receiving an acceptable number of votes).
- **SMB Market Leader:** The provider that received the highest total score in the category from respondents whose companies generate annual revenue of \$1 billion or less (small or mid-sized business). *CGT*

Survey Demographics

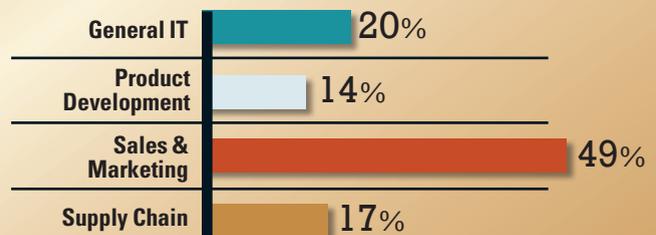
Company size by annual revenue:



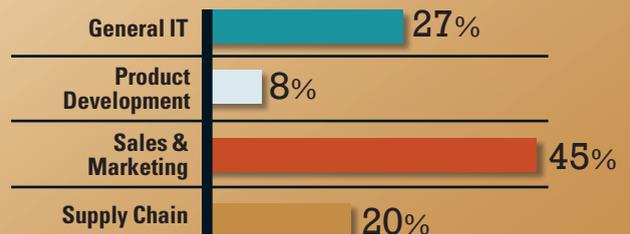
Area of expertise, all companies:



Area of expertise, large companies:



Area of expertise, small/mid-sized companies:



Cover Story



BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE

The CGT community's preferred solution providers for business intelligence applications including reporting, analytics and data mining/warehousing.

Best in Category: SAP

SAP's prominence in the consumer goods market (and just about every other industry) makes it the Meryl Streep of Readers' Choice voting. Outlining the company's various BI solutions (SAP BusinessObjects, Analytics Hub, Roambi, etc.) would fill up the page. The goal of all, of course, is to deliver insights throughout and across the enterprise that will drive better business performance.

Like the rest of the market, SAP has been busy modifying and upgrading its suite of tools to add AI capabilities and keep moving to cloud-based platforms. Building up its partner stable has been another key initiative.

SMB Market Leader: Microsoft

Microsoft's status in the SMB segment of the consumer goods market is reflected in one simple fact: Roughly 40% of SMB Readers' Choice respondents identified the company as its BI partner. The fact that Microsoft's customer satisfaction ratings are well above the category average suggests that many of these clients are content with that choice.

Among recent activity, a fall 2017 upgrade to the Microsoft Power BI Desktop suite was designed to speed up the data-to-insights time line by, among other improvements, eliminating the need to import data by enabling direct access to Microsoft Azure or other big data warehouses.

Customer Satisfaction Leader: Tableau

Speaking at the NRF Show in January, Coca-Cola shopper insights director Douglas Waller quantified the ways in which Tableau's tools ended the "organized chaos" that once typified activity on the CG's Walmart/Sam's Club team, where the excessive time spent on information management left too little time for interpretation: Seven people, 15 hours and 30 Excel reports were reduced to three people, three hours and five dashboards. Now, a common question among team members is, "Can you Tableau this for me," Waller said.

The tools also strengthened Coke's partnership with Walmart when the retailer needed help finding solutions for its category-level out-of-stock issues. The analysis recovered \$20 million in lost Coke sales in just the first 13 weeks.

Noteworthy: MicroStrategy

Earning a high customer satisfaction rating from a significant number of clients earned MicroStrategy the "noteworthy" nod for the category. Recent efforts to improve its agile analytics capabilities led ZDNet to

proclaim last month that MicroStrategy "is back" after a few quiet years.

The company is focused on helping global enterprises such as Campbell Soup Co., 3M, Coach and Dr Pepper Snapple Group apply advanced analytics and mobility solutions across diverse and complex data to improve processes throughout the value chain. One Readers' Choice respondent cited the company as his "MVV" (most valuable vendor) because of its ability to provide "key business insights." ●

Business Intelligence

Best in Category: **SAP**

SMB Market Leader: **Microsoft**

Customer Satisfaction Leader: **Tableau**

TOP PROVIDERS

IBM www.ibm.com

Microsoft www.microsoft.com

MicroStrategy www.microstrategy.com

Oracle www.oracle.com

Qlik www.qlik.com

SAP www.sap.com

SAS www.sas.com

Sequoya www.sequoya.com

Tableau www.tableau.com

Teradata www.teradata.com

Category Customer Satisfaction Score **3.78**

CONSULTING

The CGT community's preferred providers for third-party strategic and tactical consulting services.

Best in Category: Accenture

In addition to its vast size and scope (9,000 tech consultants across 40 industries), Accenture attributes its strength to the fact that it's also part of the tech ecosystem. One customer echoed that idea by praising the consultant's "excellent combination of business/functional knowledge and technical expertise." "Accenture is helping to drive business transformation and restructuring our processes to a higher level," said another.

The perennial "Best in Category" consultant presented its own general strategic position last September in an industry report that advised consumer goods companies to "evolve to a modern enterprise which can operate at two speeds: one for efficiency to support the core business and one for agility to support the new models that must be established."

SMB Market Leader: Capgemini

Capgemini returned to the Readers' Choice ranks (after a two-year absence) with a bang by earning the SMB nod. The consultancy has been helping CG clients build customer-centric supply chains, predictive analytics capabilities and personalized consumer engagement strategies. Recent tech initiatives have included helping customers "find their voice" in the area of conversational commerce.

While celebrating its 50th birthday in 2017, Capgemini expanded its digital commerce expertise by acquiring Lyons Consulting Group and Itelios and its overall IT chops by grabbing the North American operations of tech services specialist Ciber Inc. Last spring, Tim Bridges took the helm at the Consumer Products, Retail and Distribution unit.

Accenture advises CGs to "evolve to a modern enterprise" that can simultaneously support the core business while addressing critical new models.

Customer Satisfaction Leader: Clarkston Consulting

Clarkston claims to have a 14-year average client satisfaction rating of 97%. Since the consultancy's Readers' Choice customer satisfaction score was a full point higher than the category average, CGT has no reason to argue. Clients include L'Oreal, Coca-Cola, Pfizer and Seventh Generation.

The company has been building out a new management practice first launched in 2016 to help clients develop a detailed understanding of why companies struggle to innovate and how breakthrough innovation actually occurs. Another

Consulting

Best in Category: **Accenture**
SMB Market Leader: **Capgemini**
Customer Satisfaction Leader: **Clarkston Consulting**

TOP PROVIDERS

Accenture	www.accenture.com
Boston Consulting Group	www.bcg.com
Capgemini	www.capgemini.com
Chainalytics	www.chainalytics.com
Clarkston Consulting	www.clarkstonconsulting.com
Cognizant	www.cognizant.com
Deloitte	www.deloitte.com
EY	www.ey.com
PwC Strategy&	www.strategyand.pwc.com
Wipro	www.wipro.com

Category Customer Satisfaction Score **3.50**

key focus is digital transformation: Clarkston has been hiring new staffers to focus exclusively on helping customers understand and adopt new digital solutions.

Noteworthy: EY

EY understands that the current challenge for traditional CGs is to identify strategies that will let them maintain business continuity while adopting the changes needed to succeed in an evolving marketplace — what Richard Essigs, principal in EY's Consumer Products & Retail practice, recently called "addressing both the 4th quarter and the 4th Industrial Revolution."

Areas of expertise include strategy, supply chain, finance, people and organizational change, and IT risk and assurance. Blue chip customers include Procter & Gamble, Mondelēz International and Nike. Among key areas of emphasis these days are retail transformation, winning in emerging markets, creating a "fit for the future" supply chain and, as always, driving growth and improving commercial performance. ●

Cover Story



CONSUMER EXPERIENCE MANAGEMENT

The CGT community's preferred providers of solutions for improving consumer engagement through social media, online platforms, digital content, advertising and omnichannel management.

Best in Category: SAP

As it does in most tech areas, SAP offers a number of consumer experience management tools whose solutions span revenue management, marketing, merchandising, sales, service and commerce. But its core platform increasingly is the full-service SAP Hybris (acquired in 2013), which seeks to be a one-stop shop for omnichannel management needs. Clients include Carlsberg, Henkel, Nestle and Pirelli.

Last fall, the company announced upgrades to the SAP Hybris Marketing Cloud that included facial recognition and IoT technology to enable personalized product recommendations; embedded customer attribution tools to better measure conversion and campaign effectiveness; and integration with WeChat, China's 889 million user-strong social media app.

SMB Market Leader: NetBase

After a one-year absence, social media analytics specialist NetBase returns to the Readers' Choice in a competitive category that still isn't being dominated by any single vendor, big or small. (Topping the SMB list, of course, represents a nice return to the ranks.) Customers include L'Oreal, Polo Ralph Lauren, Yamaha and Coca-Cola.

NetBase began 2017 by promoting a new Customer Experience Analytics tool, which turns consumer sentiment from social media, digital, surveys, customer care and other sources into actionable insights. And it ended the year touting an enhanced version of the NetBase 360 platform, which offers learning courses, best practices and how-to info for marketers looking to become analytics experts.

Customer Satisfaction Leader: Salesforce

Salesforce topped the satisfaction ratings for the category. "Users love it and it gets the job done," noted one client, the ranks of which include Birkenstock, Kimberly-Clark, Adidas and Canon.

The company's cloud-based solutions are enabling both large enterprises like Nestle Waters, which uses the Salesforce Marketing Cloud to build omnichannel experiences, track social sentiment and communication across various digital media; and smaller companies such as sportsmen-minded cooler brand Yeti, which uses the platform to deliver personalized automated customer communication. In 2017, a new partnership with IBM Watson began letting the Salesforce Einstein platform connect to enable a new level of AI-based engagement.

Noteworthy: The Mars Agency

In a first for the CGT Readers' Choice survey, a marketing agency made the list of solution providers. (We'll find out next year if this was an anomaly or the start of

a trend.) The shopper marketing specialist's client roster includes Campbell Soup, Samsung, Clorox and Chattem.

The shop has been building up its e-commerce practice to deliver end-to-end services that go beyond traditional marketing to encompass strategic planning, media & merchandising activation, analytics and business management. The practice has more than doubled in size over the last two years. Mars has also been beefing up the internal Performance Analytics team. ●

Consumer Experience Management

Best in Category: **SAP**

SMB Market Leader: **NetBase**

Customer Satisfaction Leader: **Salesforce**

TOP PROVIDERS*

Adobe Systems www.adobe.com

Bond Brand Loyalty www.bondbrandloyalty.com

Maxpoint <https://maxpoint.com>

NetBase www.netbase.com

Oracle www.oracle.com

Salesforce www.salesforce.com

SAP www.sap.com

SiteCore www.sitecore.net

Sprout Social www.sproutsocial.com

Forge Worldwide <http://forageworldwide.com>

The Mars Agency www.themarsagency.com

Category Customer Satisfaction Score **3.90**

* This category lists 11 companies due to a tie.

CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

The CGT community's preferred providers for customer relationship management solutions including marketing, sales force automation, customer service and category management.

Best in Category: SAP

The clear-cut segment leader among large enterprises, SAP has been steadily rolling out client-requested functionality updates to the SAP CRM platform. "Overall comprehensive, integrated and a good value," said one client.

The SAP Sales Management platform aims to deliver value throughout the buying journey by providing sales teams with all the tools needed for collaboration, including visibility into insight and analytics and intuitive mobile apps. Recognizing that the buyer-seller relationship is changing dramatically in the digital world, AI-enabled SAP Hybris for Sales aims to expedite delivery of critical data to the field. Elsewhere in 2017, SAP kicked off a digital transformation partnership with IBM that uses near real-time data to improve store planning and execution.

SMB Market Leader: Salesforce

A regular Readers' Choice standout, Salesforce earned "Best in Category" honors in two of the previous three years. Its first recognition as SMB Market Leader illustrates the company's efforts to truly serve CG companies of all sizes — down to the \$25-per-month "Out of the Box CRM" it markets to mom-and-pop businesses. Last fall, it unveiled Salesforce Essentials, the first product for SMBs that runs on the same platform used by larger customers.

Among 2017 releases with wider appeal, Einstein Account Based Marketing was designed to help marketing and sales teams better target key accounts, personalize campaigns and engage with prospects at scale.

Customer Satisfaction Leader: RW3 Technologies

Having already earned the Customer Satisfaction nod in both 2016 and 2017, RW3 Technologies outdid itself this year by achieving a near-perfect score. "Great products and great staff with amazing service," said one respondent. "Great product and very reactive to our needs," said another. The client list includes Jennie-O, Energizer, Sony, Timex and Kimberly-Clark.

The company's solutions range from BI analytics to competitive pricing to field sales, all supported by mobile apps. In addition to the software and direct services, RW3 seeks to help clients respond to industry trends such as order-to-shelf technology and single-source retail service.

Noteworthy: Microsoft

A leading CRM solution provider on both the large and small side of the CG industry, Microsoft continues to upgrade its offerings. The company released version 9.0 of Microsoft Dynamics 365 last July, upgrading capabilities across its five individual apps for sales, customer service, field service, project service automation and marketing. The modular structure lets companies of various sizes deploy the entire package or just the apps that fit their current needs — then add others as they grow.

Recent initiatives have sought to bring more AI-driven analytics into the planning process and "more authentic and personal engagement" (according to marketing materials) through an alliance with the LinkedIn Sales Navigator. ●

Customer Relationship Management

Best in Category: **SAP**
 SMB Market Leader: **Salesforce**
 Customer Satisfaction Leader: **RW3 Technologies**

TOP PROVIDERS

Accenture www.accenture.com/cas

AFS Technologies www.afsi.com

Exceedra www.exceedra.com

JDA Software Group www.jda.com

Microsoft www.microsoft.com

Oracle www.oracle.com

RW3 Technologies www.rw3.com

Salesforce www.salesforce.com

SAP www.sap.com

StayinFront www.stayinfront.com

Category Customer Satisfaction Score **4.06**

Cover Story



DEMAND DATA ANALYTICS

The CGT community's preferred providers of solutions for collecting, cleansing, analyzing and integrating point-of-sale, syndicated and other sources of downstream data.

Best in Category, SMB Market Leader: IRI

IRI sits atop the Demand Data Analytics category for the second straight year. The POS data giant consistently broadens and improves its capabilities by moving into new sales channels, deepening its partnerships with retailers and strengthening its analytics prowess.

One major initiative in 2017 was building up e-commerce understanding, harmonizing actual sales data with proprietary panel data to provide a clearer view of a channel that's still pretty hazy; an alliance with Clavis Insight helps add some causal info to the equation. Key client wins during the year included Hershey Co., which will utilize IRI to "help us make faster and better decisions, so that we can target the right consumer in the right channel in the right moment," Hershey senior director Abbey Asem said in a release announcing the agreement.

While its partnerships with global consumer goods companies and national retailers garner most of the attention, IRI rose to the top of our SMB ranks as well this year. The need for analytics shops to embrace smaller CGs is evident in IRI's own industry research, which consistently finds newer brands stealing market share from the traditional leaders.

Among other efforts, the firm last June introduced an IRI Personalization suite that helps marketers customize promotions and definitively measure effectiveness.

Customer Satisfaction Leader: Retail Velocity

Retail Velocity apparently continues to churn out happy customers by offering easy-to-use, readily accessible analytics tools. CGT content partner Supply Chain Insights recently acknowledged the company's ability to "clean and harmonize the data that enables their CPG clients to better generate actionable intelligence." And one Readers' Choice respondent tapped Retail Velocity as its most valuable vendor for "the team's ability to modify their software to fit our needs." Clients include Revlon, Hanesbrands and Bissel.

The company's analytics tools are built to empower CGs to identify insights, share them across internal functions and develop real-time sales and inventory strategies. Through its Velocity tool, clients can access a library of more than 300 retailer and distributor adaptors, providing more precise sources of store-level POS and inventory signals like weather, shopper demographics, social media sentiment and syndicated data.

Noteworthy: Nielsen

Nielsen held the top spot as Best in Category, SMB Market Leader, or both in each of the last three years. And it wasn't very far behind the leaders in either slot this

year. The other POS data giant's price and promotion platform helped General Mills empower the "everyday users" of the sales force with flexible, account-specific analytics that drove incremental sales, pleased retailer partners and earned the CPG our 2017 Customer Management Award.

Last April, Nielsen rolled out Everyday Analytics, a suite of tools designed to make advanced analytics accessible enough to drive daily decision-making. In September, it acquired Visual IQ, a provider of multi-touch attribution modeling for advertising on digital platforms. ●

Demand Data Analytics

Best in Category: **IRI**

SMB Market Leader: **IRI**

Customer Satisfaction Leader: **Retail Velocity**

TOP PROVIDERS

1010data www.1010data.com

Atlas Technology Group www.atlastechgroup.com

IRI www.iriworldwide.com

JDA Software Group www.jda.com

Nielsen www.nielsen.com

Oracle www.oracle.com

Retail Velocity www.retailvelocity.com

Salesforce www.salesforce.com

SAP www.sap.com

Teradata www.teradata.com

Category Customer Satisfaction Score **3.58**

DIGITAL COMMERCE

The CGT community's preferred providers of solutions for BTB and B2C transactions, direct-to-consumer selling and other types of e-commerce.

Best in Category: SAP

The market dominance SAP enjoys across so many Readers' Choice categories is rarely more evident than in Digital Commerce, where it provides the solution of choice for a full 40% of this year's respondents and was the no-contest leader among large enterprises.

The SAP Hybris Commerce Cloud offers tools for omnichannel commerce, including con-

solidated product information management, personalized search and merchandising, and order orchestration and management. Key outputs include data-driven customization, cost-effective order management and fulfillment, and real-time inventory management. Last month, SAP named Ariba head Alex Atzberger as president of Hybris to replace co-founder Carsten Thoma, who left last October.

SMB Market Leader: Salesforce

The Demandware name has given way to the new Salesforce Commerce Cloud moniker, but the platform itself remains a leading digital commerce provider — especially among small businesses. The overall mantra is to provide tools that deliver “buy anywhere, service anywhere, fulfill anywhere” experiences via real-time inventory visibility, order lifecycle management, and allocation/fulfillment logic.

Among client success stories, Birkenstock launched its first e-commerce sites in 20 countries (and eight languages) in a nine-month window, and Diane von Furstenberg tapped into the added capabilities of Salesforce Einstein to drive consistent omnichannel experiences. Addressing the need for companies to move beyond traditional retail channels and embrace other digital commerce options, Salesforce in January integrated with Instagram to let clients create shoppable posts for any product in their inventory.

Customer Satisfaction Leader: Amazon

Looks like the disruptor that's already keeping retailers and CG companies up at night might also be cause for insomnia among digital commerce solution providers — especially since Amazon grabbed the highest customer satisfaction ratings in the category. CG clients for its various services include Kellogg, Allergan, Brooks Brothers and Dole Food Co.

Amazon's status as the world's largest retailer makes it a logical choice to provide related commerce solutions, especially for new CGs or brands still trying to figure out the online landscape. Amazon Web Services offers 90 different tools that deliver a wide range of functionalities (ranging from infrastructure to AI) and begin with a basic tier of “always free” services.

Noteworthy: Shopify

A Readers' Choice first-timer, Shopify is “well known among small and medium-sized businesses involved in e-commerce,” according to *The Motley Fool*. Apple chief executive officer Tim Cook recently declared himself “a big fan of Shopify” for the way the company is “democratizing technology for entrepreneurs” and its efforts to bring augmented reality tools to its 500,000-strong list of clients.

However, the company is also making headway with larger CGs (such as Red Bull, Nestle, Anheuser-Bush InBev and Blue Diamond Growers) with Shopify Plus which, according to the company's website, delivers “multi-channel, enterprise e-commerce ... without the hefty price tag” of some other named vendors on the Readers' Choice list. ●

Digital Commerce

Best in Category: **SAP**
 SMB Market Leader:
Salesforce (Demandware)
 Customer Satisfaction
 Leader: **Amazon**

TOP PROVIDERS

3DCart	www.3dcart.com
Amazon	www.amazon.com
Salesforce Commerce Cloud (Demandware)	www.demandware.com
Digital River	www.digitalriver.com
IBM	www.ibm.com
Intershop	www.intershop.com
Magento	www.magento.com
Oracle (including NetSuite)	www.netsuite.com
SAP	www.sap.com
Shopify	www.shopify.com

Category Customer Satisfaction Score **3.85**

Cover Story



ENTERPRISE RESOURCE PLANNING

The CGT community's preferred providers of full-suite ERP solutions to empower finance, HR, CRM, BI, supply chain, PLM and other key business functions.

Best in Category: SAP

SAP is the perennial Best in Category for ERP solutions, this year garnering 45% of total respondents. The company will seek to maintain that hefty market share as it guides customers through a migration to the S/4HANA platform before phasing out other legacy systems by 2025. The world's largest public consumer goods company, Nestle, is already undertaking the move worldwide.

Released last September, the latest S/4HANA upgrade continues SAP's efforts to facilitate the real-time flow of information across the enterprise by adding new technologies such as IoT and AI. The platform "enables visibility, standardization, centralization and conformance across our dispersed global business," said one client. For small businesses, meanwhile, the vendor offers SAP Business One, which promises management of "every aspect" of the business with deployment taking as little as two weeks.

SMB Market Leader: Microsoft

It could be argued that, when it comes to SMBs, Microsoft is the "SAP of ERP," since the company accounted for 42% of the responses from small and medium-sized businesses this year.

Designed specifically for SMBs, the Microsoft Dynamics NAV platform covers all the ERP bases: financial management and accounting, business intelligence, manufacturing, supply chain, sales and marketing. The platform "is the lifeblood of our company systems-wise. Without it, we wouldn't be able to run," said one client, who selected Microsoft as his most valuable vendor. The newly released NAV 2018 includes a suite of AI-driven APIs for collecting data and consumer sentiment from text, audio and video.

Customer Satisfaction Leader: Infor Global Solutions

"Very satisfied" was how one client succinctly expressed his experience with Infor. The company's industry-specific CloudSuite series includes unique platforms for food and beverage, fashion, discrete and process manufacturers; SMBs get their own options as well.

At the 2018 NRF Show, the company celebrated the third anniversary of its Infor Retail division by touting the 2,500 fashion, grocery and retail clients it now serves worldwide. The CG client roster includes Tandy, L.L. Bean and Red Wing Shoe Co. Last summer, Infor launched Coleman, an artificial intelligence tool for the CloudSuite platforms that mines data and uses machine learning to improve processes and make business recommendations throughout the supply chain. In April, it acquired Birst, Inc., an advanced business intelligence platform and a pioneer of cloud-native analytics and data visualization.

Noteworthy: Oracle

Oracle has multiple horses in the ERP race. While most Readers' Choice respondents employ the JD Edwards EnterpriseOne platform, the company also offers a more-eponymous Oracle ERP as well as Oracle EPM (Enterprise Performance Management). It also owns NetSuite, the solution it acquired in late 2016 to move into the SMB market.

JD Edwards EnterpriseOne covers financial management, asset lifecycle management, order management and manufacturing management. Recent improvements have focused on mobile functionality via cloud architecture, IoT and real-time analytics. Clients include Pharmavite and Pernod Ricard. The NetSuite SMB stable features Lucky Brand, Topo Athletic and Asics. ●

Enterprise Resource Planning

Best in Category: **SAP**

SMB Market Leader: **Microsoft**

Customer Satisfaction Leader: **Infor Global Solutions**

TOP PROVIDERS

Infor Global Solutions www.infor.com

Microsoft www.microsoft.com

Oracle (JD Edwards) www.oracle.com

Sage Group www.sage.com

SAP www.sap.com

Category Customer Satisfaction Score **3.61**

MOBILITY

The CGT community's preferred providers of solutions for managing the mobility of internal and/or external communications.

Best in Category, SMB Market

Leader: Verizon Wireless

Verizon Wireless is the fourth solution provider to capture Best in Category honors in the last four years, which makes Mobility the most volatile category in the Readers' Choice survey.

The company has emerged as a leader by offering a standout combination of general wireless communication offerings — like its national 4G LTE wireless network — and a number of supply chain-specific solutions

(such as sales force management/automation) that connect people, vehicles, equipment and devices through a secure network increasingly powered by IoT and machine-to-machine technologies. Oh, yeah, it can also supply the communication devices.

Verizon's asset tracking and fleet management solutions and resulting analytics help clients make better-informed decisions, control costs and improve customer relationship management. Verizon also offers workforce productivity and security tools designed to make collaboration fast, easy, secure and reliable.

The vendor's small business outreach includes a variety of starter incentives such as discounts, rewards and referral programs on a scaled-down menu of services reflecting the virtual nature of small business in the 21st century. In 2017, the carrier began offering unlimited data plans for SMBs. Dubbed Go Unlimited, Beyond Unlimited and Business Unlimited, the plans are designed to provide better value while maintaining the same technological quality.

Customer Satisfaction Leader: StayinFront

StayinFront earned one of the highest Customer Satisfaction scores of all this year in a category where the technology increasingly is becoming less a stand-alone solution and more a table-stakes capability of all other business technologies. The company's key sales force solution, StayinFront TouchCG, provides a single system equipped with full retail execution, selling, analytics, and management reporting tools to drive sales growth in both traditional and modern retail environments.

Appliance maker Breville last year began using TouchCG to give its Australian field force interactive calendars, automated processes and guided workflow to complete retail tasks more efficiently and manage territories more effectively.

Noteworthy: AT&T

Communications giant AT&T has been a consistent leader in the Mobility marketplace, having earned Best in Category, Customer Satisfaction and SMB Market Leader in, respectively, 2017, 2016 and 2015. Its tools for mobile workforce management and sales force automation (among others) combine with its general communications prowess to create a powerful solutions provider.

Through the AT&T Asset Management Operations Center, manufacturers can track, monitor, and manage virtually any connected asset from one centralized user interface. This solution simplifies IoT implementations, provides visibility on a single dashboard, and can help improve operational efficiencies. Elsewhere, the company's Fleet Management and ELD (Electronic Logging Device) Compliance tool identifies new opportunities to manage costs, improve fleet maintenance and refine scheduling, dispatch and response. ●

Mobility

Best in Category: **Verizon Wireless**

SMB Market Leader:
Verizon Wireless

Customer Satisfaction
Leader: **StayinFront**

TOP PROVIDERS

Accenture www.accenture.com/cas

AT&T www.att.com

Microsoft www.microsoft.com

Motorola www.motorola.com

RW3 Technologies www.rw3.com

Salesforce www.salesforce.com

SAP www.sap.com

Spring Mobile Solutions
<https://springglobal.com>

StayinFront www.stayinfront.com

Verizon Wireless www.verizonwireless.com

Category Customer
Satisfaction Score **4.00**

Cover Story



NPDI/PLM

The CGT community's preferred providers of solutions for new product development (including introduction) and various aspects of product lifecycle management.

Best in Category: Sopheon

A perennial member of the Readers' Choice NPDI/PLM list, Sopheon rose to the top of the ranks this year by providing solutions that inspired effusive praise from its client base: "An excellent system that meets or exceeds all of

our expectations and uses," said one client. "A flexible tool and excellent support," said another. But the piece de resistance came from a client who selected Sopheon as its most valuable vendor: "Their ability to understand our needs and work toward a common goal is a benchmark for a service provider."

Last November, Sopheon released the latest version of its Accolade Enterprise Innovation Management solution. The upgrade boasts an engine built to accelerate strategic investment decision-making for products, programs, portfolios and projects by delivering relevant, real-time information.

SMB Market Leader: Microsoft

Microsoft took the top spot among SMBs (last earned in 2015) after enjoying "Best in Category" status for the last two years. The company's proprietary and partnering solutions are now offered through the enterprise and business (250 employees or fewer) versions of Microsoft Dynamics 365, the new (November 2016) platform that united previously distinct ERP and CRM tools. The single system lets SMBs unite financial management, sales, service, and operations.

The company's focus is now on developing Microsoft Azure as a scalable cloud platform "to enable our partners such as AGR, Just-Enough, Kantar and Toolsgroup to build PLM and NPDI solutions," a spokesperson said.

Customer Satisfaction Leader: Oracle

Oracle earned raves numerically this year in the NPDI category, for which it earned Best in Category honors in 2015 and 2014. Oracle PLM is a suite that helps companies innovate, develop and commercialize a mix of products by providing a single data repository across each product's lifecycle — from ideation through design prototyping, certification, production, customization, service, recycling and, ultimately, retirement.

The Agile New Product Development and Introduction solution facilitates collaborative project and portfolio management to streamline and accelerate processes. Agile PLM's best practice templates help clients manage innovation and cross-functional collaboration in both the development and introduction phases.

Noteworthy: Infor Global Solutions

Infor has been a regular on the NPDI/PLM list for years, and its high satisfaction score in 2017 made it a "Noteworthy" no-brainer. The company's trifecta of PLM applications position Infor as a top player in the market.

The Accelerate, Optiva and Fashion PLM solutions each have their own unique functions fueled by machine learning and support from the Infor GT Nexus Commerce Network. Accelerate is designed to help customers keep up with changing best practices, while Optiva helps reduce time frames for developing and managing new or reformulated products while easily gaining regulatory and labeling compliance. The Fashion PLM solution integrates industry-specific planning into each stage of the PLM process. ●

NPDI/PLM

Best in Category: **Sopheon**

SMB Market Leader: **Microsoft**

Customer Satisfaction
Leader: **Oracle**

TOP PROVIDERS

Centric Software www.centricsoftware.com

Dassault Systemes www.3ds.com

Infor Global Solutions www.infor.com

Microsoft www.microsoft.com

Oracle www.oracle.com

PTC www.ptc.com

SAP www.sap.com

Siemens PLM www.siemens.com

Sopheon www.sopheon.com

WFX on Demand www.wfxondemand.com

Category Customer
Satisfaction Score **3.72**

OUTSOURCING/ IT INTEGRATION

The CGT community's preferred providers of business outsourcing and/or IT services and integration.

Best in Category: Accenture and Cognizant (Tie)

Results in this category are always competitive and, despite the presence of several industry heavyweights, are also typically marked by numerous smaller companies. Still, Accenture has come out on top for three straight years (although this year it shares that status).

Accenture certainly can't be accused of lying when it claims to possess the follow-

ing five core attributes: deep skills (via 15,000 professionals), global reach (20 integrated delivery centers), industrialized approach (proven stable of tools, strategies and processes), vendor independence (a deep bench of technology partners) and a focus on the client's unique business needs.

The company's always humming acquisition engine keyed in on digital capabilities in 2017: it bought commerce agency Altima, IoT-infused design shop Altitude and e-commerce solutions provider Media Hive (among others). The consultancy also expanded its partnership with SAP to place a greater emphasis on deployment of digital technologies.

Best in Category: Cognizant

Cognizant fully understands that the future of business is digital. It also believes that the digital experience should be driven through the cloud. Among the company's offerings is Cognizant RIM 2.0, a proprietary enterprise-wide device and process foundation that provides the building blocks for monitoring all network activities. Function-level specialties include trade promotion optimization.

Among recent work, Cognizant helped office supply manufacturer Acco Brands move its enterprise systems to the cloud (and a pay-per-use infrastructure-as-a-service model), consequently improving flexibility, availability and scalability. It also guided a leading frozen foods manufacturer through the creation of a comprehensive digital solution that maximized order volume and facilitated a streamlined consumer loyalty system.

SMB Market Leader: Deloitte

Deloitte this year regained the SMB Market Leader status it last held in 2015. The company understands the need for small businesses to better respond to changes in the marketplace: a recent in-house survey found that 80% of U.S. SMBs aren't taking full advantage of digital technology such as cloud software and analytics.

One of Deloitte's key talking points recently has been the need to ensure ongoing innovation by making it a deliverable within the outsourcing agreement (beginning with the RFP). Key areas of technology implementation include cloud services, process automation and cognitive applications, innovations that "offer new ways for businesses to interact with customers, vendors, and internal stakeholders," the company states.

Customer Satisfaction Leader: HCL Technologies

Earning the highest customer satisfaction rating is even more impressive in the Outsourcing/Integration category, where clients are particularly tough on their solution providers. HCL's core competencies include integrated services for end-to-end global product lifecycle management, and global labs and innovation centers designed to transform ideas into real-world solutions.

Significant moves in 2017 included the acquisition of automation-driven data management platform Datawav and the internal launch of an AI-powered process transformation platform. The company's 2018 began with news of a reseller agreement with SAP in which the HCL MRO (Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul) solution will be marketed as SAP EAP (Enterprise Asset Management). ●

Outsourcing

Best in Category: **Accenture and Cognizant (Tie)**

SMB Market Leader: **Deloitte**

Customer Satisfaction Leader: **HCL Technologies**

TOP PROVIDERS*

Accenture www.accenture.com

Capgemini www.capgemini.com

Cognizant www.cognizant.com

Deloitte www.deloitte.com

EY www.ey.com

HCL Technologies www.hcltech.com

HP www.hp.com

IBM www.ibm.com

Infosys www.infosys.com

Pomeroy www.pomeroy.com

Tata Consultancy Services www.tcs.com

Category Customer Satisfaction Score **3.41**

*This category lists 11 companies due to a tie.

Cover Story

READERS
CHOICE
★ 2018

PRODUCT INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

The *CGT* community's preferred providers of solutions for managing and updating product data internally and in conjunction with retailers and other sales partners.

Best in Category, SMB Market Leader: SAP Hybris

SAP is the lone "major player" in a still-evolving and highly competitive technology category: Four of this year's vendors weren't on last year's PIM list. SAP Hybris' status is, of course, aided and abetted by its full-service e-commerce capabilities, not to mention its parent company: SAP continues to integrate the platform with its other key business technologies.

SAP Hybris Product Content Management (part of the Hybris Commerce Cloud stack) helps consolidate, structure and maintain a simplified, single source of truth that will satisfy a client's e-commerce needs but also fuel "omnichannel customer experiences" by providing enterprise-wide access for use in marketing campaigns and other activity. The platform also syncs with SAP Hybris Digital Asset Management by OpenText to create, store and share rich media. Clients include Henkel Corp., RB and Maui Jim.

In a survey conducted last year on behalf of the vendor, Forrester Research noted that the Hybris ecosystem "includes a large, global implementation partner network, which customer references lauded for its breadth and depth and high standards for inclusion." One of our survey respondents even declared that SAP Hybris' work in B2B content management "is analogous to what Amazon has done for the B2C market."

For the SMB market, SAP Hybris offers a scaled-down version of its feature-rich enterprise solution.

Customer Satisfaction Leader: Salsify

Additional evidence that the PIM solution category is still evolving is the relatively low customer satisfaction scores it gets. Salsify, which has earned a spot on the Readers' Choice list since *CGT* began showcasing the technology space in 2016, topped the ratings this year. Clients include such leading packaged goods companies as Mondelēz International, Coca-Cola Co. and Campbell Soup Co.

Salsify's customer base has grown by 95% recently; the company boasts that more than 60% of the world's top product manufacturers are now using its platform. To address that growth, Salsify increased its employee ranks by nearly 50% in 2017. Last fall, it became the first PIM vendor to let customers publish directly to Amazon Vendor Central within its platform through integration with the e-tailer's new API.

Noteworthy: 1WorldSync

The commercial offspring of the GS1 global data synchronization initiative, 1WorldSync has been a key vendor in the PIM market since the company launched in 2012. Its content management platform is designed for businesses to exchange authentic, enriched product content to meet the evol-

ving demands of connected commerce. Clients include Kellogg Co. and Reynolds Consumer Products.

Near the end of 2017, 1WorldSync announced a strategic partnership with Label Insight to create a comprehensive solution for product data distribution and transparency. The agreement united 1WorldSync's extensive product content database with Label Insight's high-order attribute data to facilitate the global dissemination of comprehensive product information to retailers and, ultimately, increasingly discerning consumers. ●

Product Information Management

Best in Category: **SAP Hybris**
SMB Market Leader: **SAP Hybris**
Customer Satisfaction
Leader: **Salsify**

TOP PROVIDERS

1WorldSync www.1worldsync.com

Gladson www.gladson.com

Informatica www.informatica.com

Kwikee www.kwikeesystems.com

Liaison Technologies www.liaison.com

Salsify www.salsify.com

SAP Hybris www.hybris.com

Semarchy www.semarchy.com

Stibo Systems www.stibosystems.com

WebCollage www.webcollage.com

Category Customer
Satisfaction Score **3.61**

RETAIL EXECUTION

The CGT community's preferred providers of solutions for executing and monitoring in-store activity to identify tasks and improve efficiency and performance.

Best in Category: StayinFront

StayinFront "has transformed our go-to-market activities across nine countries in Asia-Pacific," said one of the clients who elevated the company to the top of the Retail Execution category this year. A combination of business-driving analytics and field force-empowering tools (see the Mobility category) has made StayinFront a key vendor in the market.

In 2017, Mondelez International rolled out StayinFront solutions across 23 markets in Europe, giving the CPG standardized processes and consistent tracking and measures. Kellogg implemented a sales force automation tool in North America and Europe that gives the field force easier, faster access to information and insights. In January, StayinFront acquired 20:20 Retail Data Insight, a UK-based analytics provider that will expand the company's ability to deliver actionable insights from electronic POS data.

SMB Market Leader: Retail Solutions, Inc.

While its client list boasts plenty of global blue-chippers (see below), Retail Solutions has always been a top solution provider for smaller companies like Stemelt Growers, as well. "They have a good core system and make innovative advances," said one client respondent. SMB-centric solutions included a pair of Target-specific applications (released in 2016) that give product suppliers with limited resources fast and easy access to the retail giant's data.

RSI's annual "Awards for Excellence" in retail collaboration showcase the company's capabilities. Unilever's Walgreens team was recognized for an innovative approach to display optimization that drove incremental merchandising opportunities and significant sales growth; Wm. Wrigley, Jr. was honored for helping Target test the effectiveness of adding incremental merchandising to the guest services area of stores.

Customer Satisfaction Leader: RW3 Technologies

Another near-perfect score (see the CRM category) gave RW3 its second straight nod as the leader in Retail Execution customer satisfaction. "Excellent customer relations and understanding of the CG industry," said one client. Another offered, "Great service. They enact changes to our system quickly."

Notable case studies include helping Jennie-O improve on-shelf availability, giving King's Hawaiian greater visibility into display compliance, and arming Bay Food Brokerage with its first digital sales force management tool. Last summer, RW3 upgraded its MarketCheck retail audit application to allow direct communication with third-party field forces, providing dra-

matically quicker response to on-shelf availability issues.

Noteworthy: Retail Velocity

A perennial member of the Readers' Choice Retail Execution provider ranks, Retail Velocity's point-of-sale analytics tools (scorecards, dashboards, and spreadsheets) "mashes up" (the company's term) POS data from 400-plus retailers with numerous third-party streams of behavior-driving data to help clients improve trade promotion execution, forecast accuracy, out-of-stock reduction, sell-through and profitability.

Among its clients are Crayola, Levi Strauss and Char-Broil. Success stories include helping a sporting goods manufacturer post a 40% increase in daily sales at serviced stores, a fashion supplier make the pivotal shift from reactive to proactive selling, and a candy maker improve the DC-to-store shipment of promotional pallets to Sam's Club. ●

Retail Execution

Best in Category: **StayinFront**

SMB Market Leader:
Retail Solutions

Customer Satisfaction
Leader: **RW3 Technologies**

TOP PROVIDERS

Accenture www.accenture.com/cas

AFS Technologies www.afsi.com

Oracle www.oracle.com

Retail Solutions Inc. www.retailsolutions.com

Retail Velocity www.retailvelocity.com

RW3 Technologies www.rw3.com

Salesforce www.salesforce.com

SAP www.sap.com

Spring Mobile Solutions
<https://springglobal.com/>

StayinFront www.stayinfront.com

Category Customer
Satisfaction Score **3.82**

Cover Story



SUPPLY CHAIN EXECUTION

The CGT community's preferred providers of solutions for supply chain planning including demand forecasting and inventory optimization.

Best in Category: SAP

One of the most consistent results from CGT's annual survey is that SAP will emerge as "Best

Supply Chain Execution

Best in Category: **SAP**

SMB Market Leader:
Manhattan Associates

Customer Satisfaction Leader:
Logility

TOP PROVIDERS

BluJay Solutions www.blujaysolutions.com

Elemica www.elemica.com

Infor Global Solutions (GTNexus)
www.infor.com

JDA Software Group www.jda.com

Logility www.logility.com

Manhattan Associates www.manh.com

Oracle www.oracle.com

SAP www.sap.com

Swisslog www.swisslog.com

TrueCommerce (Datalliance)
www.truecommerce.com

Category Customer Satisfaction Score **3.33**

in Category" for Supply Chain Execution. (We stopped our historical check at 2009, by the way.) The company's customers accounted for 39% of all responses in the category this year. Clients include Beiersdorf, Colgate-Palmolive and Hillshire Brands.

The primary platform is SAP Logistics and Order Fulfillment, which encompasses tools for warehouse and transportation management and tracking/tracing, each of which can be implemented individually. "SAP's suite [is] highly customizable in order to modify functionality to meet industry-specific or customer-specific requirements," IDC summarized in a recent "Marketscape" report. The key focus now is building out "Real-Time Supply Chain" solutions.

SMB Market Leader: Manhattan Associates

Last year's Customer Satisfaction leader extends its customer service beyond technology solutions to include industry recognition: The Manhattan Supply Chain Leaders program seeks to help the clients gain recognition for their vision and leadership via business media, industry events and other public opportunities.

Last May, the company launched Manhattan Active Omni, a unique "omnichannel-as-a-service" solution that unites order management and store fulfillment applications with next-generation, point-of-sale and clienteling applications on a single, cloud-native platform. The tool includes a process for optimizing direct-to-consumer orders. Also new in 2017 was Manhattan Active Distribution, which features what the company claims is the first warehouse management system to fully embed an option for waveless ordering. SMB clients include Carhartt, Kurt Geiger and 14 Degrees.

Customer Satisfaction Leader: Logility

Logility's Customer Satisfaction score was well above a category average that (let's be honest here, folks), leaves a lot to be desired. So the company must be doing something right. "They actually deliver the results," is how one client pithily explained it. Clients include Ingram Micro, Fabri-Kal and Rockline.

The Readers' Choice perennial (it earned Customer Satisfaction honors in 2015) has been helping clients move toward "dynamic allocation and replenishment" models that let them rethink the plan as close to real-time as possible. The fall 2017 acquisition of Halo Business Intelligence will help clients (which include Aldo Group, Hostess Brands and Spanx) analyze social sentiment — both the positive and the negative — to build more predictive and prescriptive plans. The addition also boosts Logility's artificial intelligence and machine learning capabilities.

Noteworthy: JDA Software Group

Another regular on the Supply Chain Execution list (the SMB Market Leader in 2017 and 2015), JDA's Intelligence Fulfillment platform can drive profitable distribution decisions by proactively planning within execution constraints and leveraging holistic visibility to identify risks and re-planning opportunities, thereby maximizing supply chain agility and efficiency. Clients include Grupo Modelo, Michelin and PepsiCo.

Early 2017 was all fun and games for JDA: Mattel tapped the vendor to drive digital improvements to end-to-end supply chain processes that would accommodate new routes-to-market (like e-commerce), new consumer segments and emerging international markets; Lego Group similarly adopted new digital solutions to build a more agile, synchronized system from manufacturing to retail. ●

SUPPLY CHAIN PLANNING

The CGT community's preferred providers of solutions for supply chain execution including warehouse management, transportation management and load optimization.

Best in Category: SAP

Not surprisingly, SAP's Readers' Choice supply chain dominance extends to the planning function (where we tracked its "Best in Category" wins all way the back to 2007). The company's Demand-Driven Business Planning solution provides a single platform to forecast demand and plan production, replenishment, transportation, inventory, and network design. Clients include Duzey Group, Vestel and Yorsan.

Supply Chain Planning

Best in Category: **SAP**
SMB Market Leader: **Microsoft**
Customer Satisfaction Leader: **Exceedra**

TOP PROVIDERS

Blue Ridge www.blueridgeglobal.com

Demand Management
www.demandolutions.com

Exceedra www.exceedra.com

Infor Global Solutions www.infor.com

JDA Software Group www.jda.com

JustEnough Software www.justenough.com

Logility www.logility.com

Microsoft www.microsoft.com

Oracle www.oracle.com

SAP www.sap.com

Category Customer Satisfaction Score **3.66**

"The ability to integrate the entire supply chain in one application provides the most value for our organization," said one client respondent, while identifying SAP as its most valuable solution provider. In late 2017, the company extended its cloud-based SAP Integrated Business Planning suite to better accommodate collaboration outside the enterprise.

SMB Market Leader: Microsoft

Microsoft has now held the distinction of SMB Market Leader in three of the last four years. The business edition of Microsoft Dynamics 365 helps SMBs handle financing, inventory management, sales, purchasing, reporting and analytics, and project management (with operations "coming soon").

The company recently began bringing artificial intelligence into the Dynamics 365 capabilities set with chatbot and virtual assistant tools. The offerings are pitched as giving companies a chance to start easily and "grow easily" as business growth demands. "Our response time is so much quicker now, and that creates loyalty and happy customers," according to client Christopher Gates, business operations manager of Quantico Boot, in marketing materials for the platform.

Customer Satisfaction Leader: Exceedra

Exceedra has built a solid reputation in the CG market over the last two decades as it grew from a UK business to a multi-national organization serving global customers. Those customers apparently like Exceedra's supply chain planning tools, since they came out to the polls in solid numbers and gave the vendor a satisfaction rating that was head-and-shoulders above the category average.

Designed exclusively for the consumer goods sector, the Exceedra Supply Chain S&OP platform supports demand and supply planning. The solution "allows us to forecast production plans and orders by day and SKU," said one client. "They provide us with full demand planning and investment appraisal in an effective tool," said another.

Noteworthy: JDA Software

JDA's Enterprise Supply Chain Planning and Optimization platform promises automatic, dynamic plan updates in real time. Top clients include Conagra Brands, Kraft Heinz and Hershey Co. The company's forward-thinking innovation initiatives include its own JDA Labs testing facility as well as JDA FLEX, a strategy for solution integration designed to implement current technology improvements and also identify future trends.

At this year's NRF Show, JDA announced a relationship with Mulesoft to power connectivity for digital supply chain transformations as part of the broader FLEX strategy for accelerated integration. JDA also recently struck a formal deal to help the Retail Industry Leaders Association develop best practices for digital supply chain transformation. ●

Cover Story



TRADE PROMOTION MANAGEMENT

The CGT community's preferred providers of solutions for trade promotion effectiveness, management and optimization.

Best in Category, SMB Market Leader: Exceedra

Exceedra's recent success is driven largely by its ability to help companies move beyond TPM/TPO toward more extensive integrated business planning and revenue management, which has earned it recent recognition from several industry groups.

Clients responding to CGT's survey were effusive with praise: "After extensive research, we could not find an alternative product or company that fit (our) requirements. Exceedra has been a game changer in our business," said one. "We've been able to spend more time analyzing and understanding our performance, enabling us to make better decisions," said another. "They go the extra mile," concluded a third.

In 2017, the solution provider started projects with 12 new customers around the globe and completed upgrades with seven existing clients. The new clients added in 2017 included Ainsworth Pet Nutrition, Twinings and Corby Wine & Spirits, which joined a roster that already boasted notables such as ACH Foods, Kimberly-Clark and McKee Foods. Elsewhere, after a successful implementation in the U.K., Bayer took Exceedra's TPM solution across the pond to the U.S.

Client wins continued in early 2018 with the addition of U.K. bottled water marketer Highland Spring, which will tap into Exceedra's demand planning and TPx solutions.

Customer Satisfaction Leader: UpClear

UpClear earned a customer satisfaction rating that far outpaced the category average. Why? Maybe because the company's BluePlanner revenue management tool "is providing visibility to data that we do not have elsewhere," explained one client, while identifying UpClear as the technology vendor providing the most overall value to his organization.

That client provided a list of the tool's many uses: sales forecasting, net sales financials, trade accrual, shared trade/marketing calendars, sales/finance reporting bridge, trade planning and ROI analysis — and then noted that "additional functionality" will come in 2018. "UpClear has provided an improved TPM tool year after year and has grown with our business,"

said another client. Key customers include Danone, Ferrero, King's Hawaiian and RB.

Noteworthy: T-Pro Solutions

A rookie on the Readers' Choice Trade Promotion Management list (after earning an "Editor's Pick" in 2017) as well as a relative newcomer to the space, 3-year-old T-Pro Solutions has been helping consumer goods makers like Kellogg Co., Land O'Lakes and Snyder's-Lance generate better business plans that improve spending efficiency and effectiveness.

"T-Pro has become a core component of our work. [The company] provides us with a deeper level of visibility to our promotional events, which allows us to make better investment decisions for both our retail partners and our customer teams," said Mike Downey, vice president of strategic planning and commercialization at Snyder's-Lance. ●

Trade Promotion Management

Best in Category: **Exceedra**
SMB Market Leader: **Exceedra**
Customer Satisfaction Leader: **UpClear**

TOP PROVIDERS

Accenture www.accenture.com

Adesso Solutions
www.adessosolutions.com

AFS Technologies www.afsi.com

Exceedra www.exceedra.com

IBM www.ibm.com

Nielsen www.nielsen.com

Oracle www.oracle.com

SAP www.sap.com

T-Pro Solutions www.t-prosolutions.com

UpClear www.upclear.com

Category Customer Satisfaction Score **4.08**

EDITORS' PICKS

A short list of additional vendors providing unique value to the consumer goods industry

Cierant/Foresight ROI/ Shopperations

This trio of solution providers constitutes what could be its own Readers' Choice category: Shopper Marketing Management.

Cierant's

Instigo software delivers spending transparency and streamlines program execution. The company's zBudget tool was designed specifically to help shopper marketers effectively implement zero-based budgeting.

Foresight ROI

offers proprietary performance measurement tools (and plenty of industry experience) that fuel performance-boosting planning insights. The company also has been instrumental in helping the industry benchmark shopper marketing effectiveness.

Shopperations'

"event lifecycle management" software is designed to drive more effective planning and budgeting. The 3-year-old company's client list already boasts Conagra Brands, Heineken, Pinnacle Foods and Hormel.

Clavis Insight/ One Click Retail

The recent merger of Clavis Insight and One Click Retail (via parent Ascential, plc.) creates a noteworthy specialist in e-commerce performance measurement. Enabled by data science and technology, the tandem offers insights into market share, traffic and conversion, search optimization and price analytics. The extensive client roster (10,000 worldwide) includes P&G, Nestle and Hasbro.

Fractal Analytics

Launched in fourth-quarter 2016, Fractal's Cuddle.ai tool is a "personal analyst" that employs AI and machine learning to automatically integrate and analyze various data sources to deliver advanced, actionable insights in real time. The company has been beefing up its executive ranks along with its capabilities: last June, it acquired analytics-based strategy consultancy 4i.

Inmar

The marketing services company's numerous tools for commerce (promotions, remarketing, returns), analytics (promotion, supply chain performance) and engagement (influencer marketing, mobile coupons) now include Prescriptive IQ, a data synthesis platform using AI to inform the selection of relevant social influencers, potential co-op brand partners and relevant marketing content and contexts.

SmartCommerce

The company's distinctive technology lets digital ads bypass the typical brand page (or other decision-slowing URL) to let consumers click right through to the shopping cart of a partnering retailer. For the holidays, Del Monte, Campbell's and French's teamed to promote a green bean casserole that conveniently put all the necessary ingredients right into the cart.

Selerant

"Selerant has a complete range of capabilities for product development that we are excited to leverage as we move forward with any future product roadmaps," said Rick Drummond, vice president of R&D at B&G Foods, which went live with the vendor's PLM DevEx software last December. Other blue-chip

clients for this NPDI/PLM list staple (SMB Market Leader in 2016) include Nestle, Barilla and Bacardi.

Symphony Retail

The newly renamed analytics company (formerly the distinct Symphony Gold and EYC operations) has put together a menu of solutions to drive personalized marketing, merchandising, category management, retail operations, and supply chain planning and replenishment. Launched last fall, "CINDE" (for "conversational insights and decision engine") is a CPG-specific digital analytics assistant incorporating AI, machine learning, natural-language speech technology and immersive visualization.

Tata Consultancy Services

A near-constant on the Readers' Choice Consultant list over the past decade, Tata helps consumer goods companies such as Microsoft and American Greetings develop strategies for supply chain, analytics and sales & marketing. In January, Tata announced plans to open a global development center for Shure, Inc. to help the audio equipment manufacturer build cutting-edge product lines.

Wipro

Typically a common name on the Readers' Choice lists for Consulting, Outsourcing and TPM, Wipro was busy at January's NRF Show showcasing (among other solutions) a partnership with Harte Hanks in which the marketing services shop's consumer database will fuel Global Dataview, a new tool that uses 1,600 prescriptive attributes to create deeply personalized shopping experiences. **CGT**

For more Editor's Picks selections, visit consumergoods.com.