

WAVE REPORT

The Forrester Wave™: Channel Incentive Management, Q1 2022

The 11 Providers That Matter Most And How They
Stack Up

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Summary

In our 23-criterion evaluation of channel incentive management providers, we identified the 11 most significant ones — 360insights, Ansira, Capillary Technologies, ChannelAssist, Channel Fusion, E2open, HMI Performance Incentives, Incentive Solutions, ITA Group, Partnerize, and Vistex — and researched, analyzed, and scored them. This report shows how each provider measures up and helps channel professionals select the right one for their needs.

Additional resources are available in the [online version](#) of this report.

New Partner Roles And Complex Ecosystems Demand New Channel Incentives

As suppliers increasingly use different types of partners to reach, influence, transact, co-innovate with, and retain customers, channel incentive management (CIM) solutions need to serve the growing partner ecosystem at a new level of scale and personalization. For decades, channel professionals have used channel incentives to drive behavior, whether it's establishing new behaviors, suppressing old ones, or repositioning partners for a new opportunity. Incentives have also been effective in masking deficiencies in business value propositions. Several converging trends have challenged traditional thinking in channel incentive programs, and the resulting complexity and vast permutations are causing channel leaders to rethink how they motivate and drive loyalty with partners. Gaining a partner's mindshare is increasingly difficult, and suppliers overwhelm channel partners with too many ad hoc incentive programs. The unfortunate, and too frequent, result is partners that ignore or even game incentive programs.

As a result, CIM customers should look for providers that support:

- **Optimizing performance-based incentives.** Improve the yield, reach, or mix of a group of partners by deploying a strategic combination of volume rebates, new customer bonuses, sales performance incentive funds (SPIFs), market development funds (MDFs), embedded headcount, and activity-based and value-creation rewards. Modern incentive programs are also experimenting with nonmonetary rewards, micropayments, and gamification. Optimizing channel incentives around changes in behavior mapped to redefined performance goals (e.g., customer retention, revenue, and partner-initiated deals) as opposed to rewarding existing habits is important to drive channel loyalty.
- **Expanding the breadth and depth of partnerships.** Investing in co-selling and co-marketing initiatives rewards companies that take the long approach to aligning the customer buying and partner selling journeys. Examples include investing in a partner's branding initiatives with MDFs, incentivizing behaviors throughout the entire buying process, and offering customer retention and renewal bonuses. Partners also reported that short approaches like SPIFs and upfront/volume discounts are their least useful programs.
- **Taking a holistic view of partner behavior and roles.** Effectively managing today's partner ecosystem requires balancing tactics across the entire partner journey. This ranges from driving short-term revenue targets, establishing midterm growth initiatives, and building long-term trust. Remaining visible and building loyalty

among current partners while targeting and recruiting next-generation partners takes careful budgeting and finesse. Technology, strategic, and business alliances are critical partners in the rise of the subscription/consumption-based platform economy.

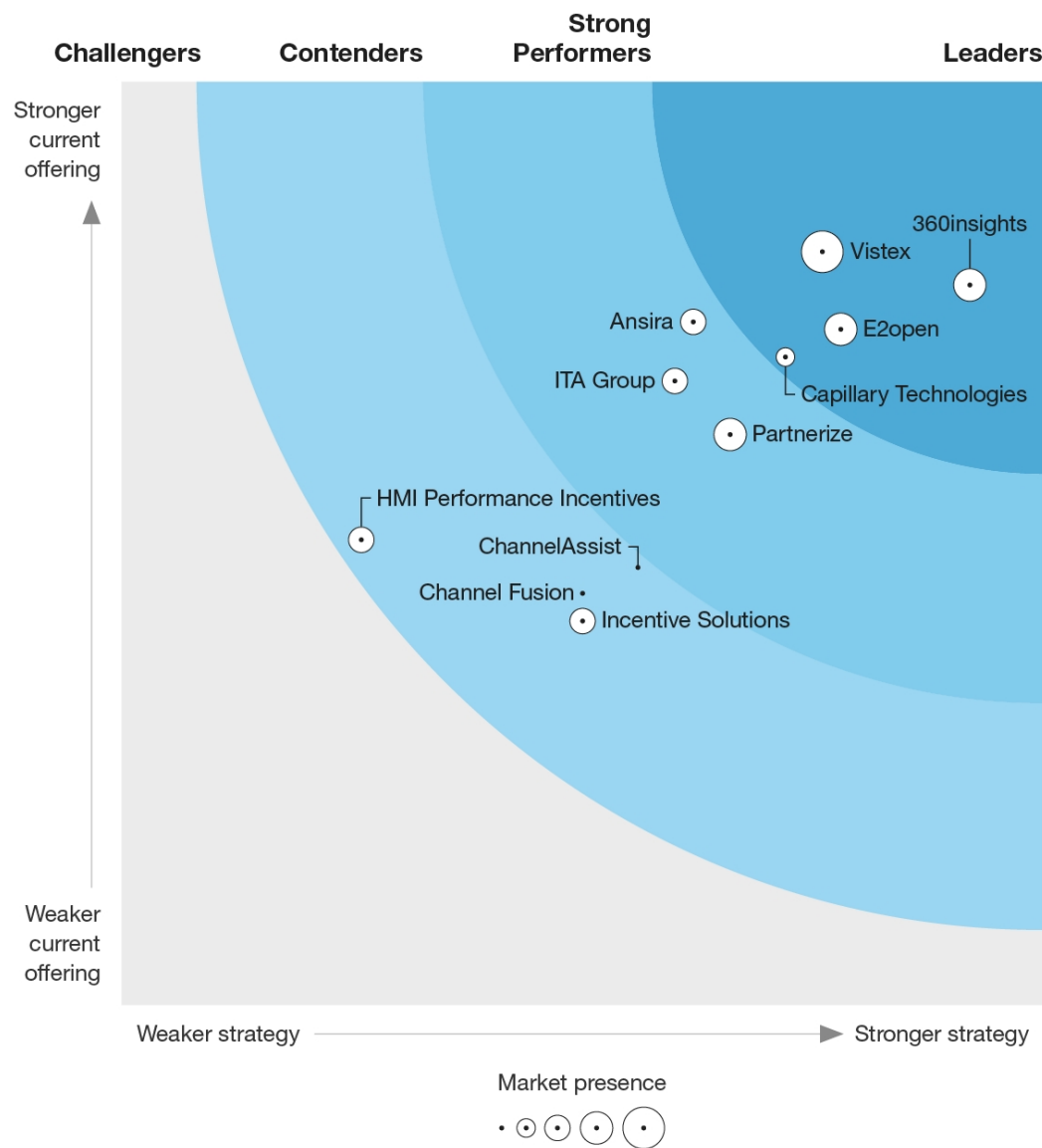
Evaluation Summary

The Forrester Wave™ evaluation highlights Leaders, Strong Performers, Contenders, and Challengers. It's an assessment of the top vendors in the market and does not represent the entire vendor landscape. You'll find more information about this market in our reports on [channel incentive programs and strategy](#).

We intend this evaluation to be a starting point only and encourage clients to view product evaluations and adapt criteria weightings using the Excel-based vendor comparison tool (see Figure 1 and see Figure 2). Click the link at the beginning of this report on Forrester.com to download the tool.

Figure 1
Forrester Wave™: Channel Incentive Management, Q1 2022

THE FORRESTER WAVE™
Channel Incentive Management
Q1 2022



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Figure 2

Forrester Wave™: Channel Incentive Management Scorecard, Q1 2022

		Forrester's weighting	360insights	Ansira	Capillary Technologies	ChannelAssist	Channel Fusion	E2open
Current offering	50%	3.90	3.70	3.51	2.37	2.23	3.66	
Channel performance and incentives types	20%	5.00	5.00	3.00	3.00	2.30	5.00	
Capabilities and personalization	30%	4.00	4.00	3.20	2.60	2.60	3.20	
Automation, insights, and analytics	30%	3.00	3.00	3.70	1.70	1.70	3.00	
Compliance and security	20%	4.00	3.00	4.20	2.40	2.40	4.00	
Strategy	50%	4.60	3.10	3.60	2.80	2.50	3.90	
Product vision	25%	5.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	
Execution roadmap	15%	5.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	5.00	
Performance	20%	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	
Innovation roadmap	15%	5.00	3.00	5.00	3.00	3.00	5.00	
Supporting products and services	15%	5.00	5.00	5.00	3.00	1.00	5.00	
Partner ecosystem	10%	5.00	1.00	3.00	1.00	1.00	3.00	
Market presence	0%	3.40	3.00	1.40	1.00	1.00	3.40	
Revenue	40%	4.00	3.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	4.00	
Number of customers	40%	3.00	3.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	3.00	
Number of employees/engineers	20%	3.00	3.00	3.00	1.00	1.00	3.00	

All scores are based on a scale of 0 (weak) to 5 (strong).

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		Forrester's weighting	HMI Performance Incentives	Incentive Solutions	ITA Group	Partnerize	Vistex
Current offering	50%	2.52	2.08	3.38	3.09	4.08	
Channel performance and incentives types	20%	3.00	3.00	3.70	2.30	4.30	
Capabilities and personalization	30%	2.40	2.00	3.40	3.20	2.40	
Automation, insights, and analytics	30%	2.40	1.60	3.00	3.70	5.00	
Compliance and security	20%	2.40	2.00	3.60	2.80	5.00	
Strategy	50%	1.30	2.50	3.00	3.30	3.80	
Product vision	25%	1.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	5.00	
Execution roadmap	15%	3.00	1.00	3.00	5.00	3.00	
Performance	20%	1.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	
Innovation roadmap	15%	1.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	
Supporting products and services	15%	1.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	5.00	
Partner ecosystem	10%	1.00	1.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	
Market presence	0%	2.20	2.60	2.20	3.80	5.00	
Revenue	40%	2.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	5.00	
Number of customers	40%	3.00	3.00	1.00	5.00	5.00	
Number of employees/engineers	20%	1.00	1.00	3.00	3.00	5.00	

All scores are based on a scale of 0 (weak) to 5 (strong).

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Vendor Offerings

Forrester included 11 vendors in this assessment: 360insights, Ansira, Capillary Technologies, ChannelAssist, Channel Fusion, E2open, HMI Performance Incentives, Incentive Solutions, ITA Group, Partnerize, and Vistex (see Figure 3).

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Figure 3**Evaluated Vendors And Product Information**

Vendor	Product evaluated	Product version evaluated
360insights	Channel Success Platform	2
Ansira	Ansira Edge Technology Suite (Ansira Edge)	6.5
Capillary Technologies	Loyalty+, Engage+, Insight+, CDP	Version 2021
ChannelAssist	Channel Manager	
Channel Fusion	Channel Fusion	
E2open	Channel Shaping Intelligent Application Suite	21.4
HMI Performance Incentives	HMI OnDemand Engagement Platform	
Incentive Solutions	RewardTrax	2021.319
ITA Group	ITA Group Channel Engagement Platform	
Partnerize	Partnerize platform	
Vistex	Vistex Go to Market Suite	Go-to-Market Suite is 19.3 FP13
	Vistex Solution Extensions for SAP	Solutions for SAP ECC is 6.1, SAP S4 is 2020v2

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Vendor Profiles

Our analysis uncovered the following strengths and weaknesses of individual vendors.

Leaders

- **360insights distances itself from the pack.** 360insights is the fastest-growing and most acquisitive CIM vendor in the industry. This 14-year-old company benefits from market leadership across a wide array of B2B, B2B2C, and B2C customer scenarios and has successfully driven incentives, motivation, and loyalty initiatives in a broad set of industries around the world. 360insights continues to build on its market leadership with several acquisitions in 2021 to strengthen its B2B channel incentives, partner management, and partner marketing portfolio. Customers said

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that this is having a quantifiable impact on delivering a strong partner ROI and retention.

Even though 360insights has business intelligence in its name, reference customers said that reporting can be challenging and needs some focus. We also heard that, with the recent flurry of M&A activity, their lead contact had been reassigned. Additionally, there are concerns over losing functionality as tools are consolidated into a single platform. 360insights is best suited to midmarket and enterprise-class organizations with large and complex global channel organizations and extensive custom requirements.

- **Vistex builds upon its legacy strengths, delivering new client innovation.** Vistex started in 1999 with a mission to fill a void in the enterprise resource planning (ERP) market by managing pricing, trade, royalties, and incentive programs that so many businesses rely on to increase revenue. Fast-forward 23 years, and Vistex has moved from a largely SAP-led customer base to offering solutions across large enterprises around the world. With 21 global offices and experience in almost every country and industry, Vistex is the gold standard for enterprise-class CIM and revenue management solutions. Reference customers agreed that Vistex helps them build highly customized, very complex incentives scenarios in one central system that is deeply integrated with their company's tech stack.

Vistex continues to deliver most of its customers on-premises, even as the world is quickly shifting to cloud. There is a multi-ERP cloud version available, and several Fortune-sized clients have successfully made the move to the cloud. While its reporting and analytics are among the best in this evaluation, we would like to see more predictive tools built into the platform; communication/coordination around projects could also be improved. Vistex is best suited for midsize to large organizations that have invested in ERP with complex requirements that need to be secure, compliant, and well governed.

- **E2open delivers a comprehensive technological backbone.** E2open's CIM solution continues to capture the attention (and win rate) of technology, industrial manufacturing, and consumer packaged goods (CPG) firms around the world. It's a 22-year-old company with a unique mission to enable brands to create a more connected, intelligent supply chain. With a flurry of channel technology acquisitions a few years ago — including four CIM vendors, two channel data management firms, and a through-channel marketing automation firm — E2open has built a comprehensive channel incentives platform. No other company in this evaluation has the capabilities to marry early-stage supply chain with late-stage go-to-market data and deliver revenue management end-to-end at this scale. Customers said that E2open has an excellent customer success team that helps

them build and execute robust, data-driven incentives strategies and one of the most complete sets of supporting products and services in the industry.

While E2open is a Leader in channel data management, its reporting and business intelligence tools still need some work. Several reference customers mentioned its strong user interface and user experience, but they're looking for even more self-service functionality in the platform. E2open is best suited to medium- and large-scale tech, telco, industrial manufacturing, and CPG organizations that have complex or highly customized global requirements.

- **Capillary looks to disrupt the global CIM market with AI but is missing some features.** Capillary Technologies acquires over half of its revenue in the Asia Pacific region but is quickly expanding into Europe and the Americas. This 14-year-old company claims to offer the first “no-code, low-code” CIM platform with built-in flexibility to support many transactional or non-transactional partner loyalty scenarios. The product attempts to predict customer behavior in advance and then deploy highly targeted campaigns, offers, and communications. Capillary has several layers of innovation around product flexibility, a very strong technology backbone, business intelligence features, and security.

While Capillary's technology platform is deep, it's still missing some broad features around co-marketing incentives, MDFs, and through-channel marketing. The platform lacks some of the more legacy CIM elements, such as print, warehousing, distribution, and travel in-house, limiting some of the execution options at a global level. Also, the company is growing its brand and capabilities in the Americas; most of the competitors in this evaluation are based in North America and growing in the opposite direction. Capillary Technologies is best suited for globally headquartered organizations that are looking for deep technology, self-service, and analytics to achieve their incentives strategy.

Strong Performers

- **Ansira takes a blended technology and managed services approach to incentives.** Ansira is both a marketing agency and a leading channel software technology company that has a unique method for driving B2B and B2B2C incentives, motivation, and loyalty. The 103-year-old company takes a services-led approach to help customers design, manage, and distribute a wide range of channel incentive funds to partners with a focus on local performance. It has a broad set of customers with specific success in the automotive, technology, and financial industries. Reference customers stated that Ansira focuses on collaboration and teamwork, brings strategic insights to the table, and drives a measurable and meaningful ROI.

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While Ansira claims many robust integrations across different parts of the tech stack, reference customers were mostly running as standalone or as a pairing with the company's through-channel marketing automation platform. While feedback on its managed services was excellent, we would like to see more self-service access to predictive- and prescriptive-type analytics and a broader partner ecosystem to augment its services. Ansira is best suited for midsize and larger organizations that are looking for a strong services partner to drive their incentives strategy forward.

- **Partnerize has a future-friendly approach to channel incentives but not a full CIM stack.** Partnerize automates partner recruitment and payments while providing data-driven suggestions that aid in curating a diverse network of global partners. The 12-year-old company enables marketers to easily find and recruit partners from the broader digital ecosystem and has use cases across thousands of scenarios and partners. Customers commented that its dynamic payment and commissioning functionality supports equitable partner rewards reinforced by robust spend allocation tools across the changing customer journey.

While Partnerize leads the way in new (and important) areas of mostly non-transactional B2B2C channel incentives, it does not carry the full stack of traditional rebates, MDFs, and indirect channel motivation techniques. While the feedback on B2B2C use cases was excellent, we're keenly interested to see the technology play a bigger role in the B2B space in coming years. Reference customers reported that additional growth in global capabilities plus more predictive and prescriptive analytics delivered directly to the partner would drive additional growth in their channels. Partnerize is best suited to B2B2C-focused organizations that are looking for more digital growth and automation across their partner ecosystems.

- **ITA Group has a customizable platform but needs more back-office integration and AI.** ITA Group aims to reduce the complexity of channel incentives by combining highly configurable technology with robust services supporting deep cross-industry incentives use cases. The services-led approach by this 59-year-old company is intended to deliver more partner impact and quantifiable ROI for its customers while focusing on personalization. Several reference customers said that it provided them with a one-stop shop for channel incentives and that ITA Group actively looked to help them succeed by building relationships with their dealers to drive adoption and customer experience.

Most of ITA Group's customer base resides in North America, with a strong blend of industry knowledge in automotive, manufacturing, wholesale, telecom, and financial services. Reference customers reported success with the platform and

want more integration options across their back office in the future. The company has some limitations around predictive and AI-level functionality on the roadmap and needs a stronger partner ecosystem to augment the service portfolio. ITA Group is best suited for larger enterprises in North America with a need for deep-level industry knowledge combined with a highly customizable platform supported by a superior professional services portfolio.

Contenders

- **ChannelAssist offers a highly configurable platform with limited customer use cases.** ChannelAssist understands that companies have vastly different CIM requirements and leverages its experience in optimizing different business outcomes. This 23-year-old company approaches CIM with a very thorough approach that's focused on best practices in partner sales discovery, onboarding at scale, partner program management, tax compliance, and regional governance services. ChannelAssist has strong levels of sophistication, customization options, and depth of offering, while missing some analytics capabilities, a broader partner ecosystem for client support and innovation, and SOC II security compliance that wasn't finalized.

Compared with others, ChannelAssist has limited breadth of customer use cases, and most of its geographic focus is on North America only. While reference customers were happy with the depth of their solutions and the outcomes they were driving, several expressed interest in more business intelligence functionality, future levels of gamification, and broader end-customer journey work. ChannelAssist is best suited to large enterprise-grade technology and manufacturing industry CIM implementations in North America that are demanding rich levels of customization.

- **Channel Fusion has a high-touch “human” approach but needs more personalization.** Channel Fusion looks to integrate with and become an extension of its customers' marketing and channel teams. This 19-year-old company has an array of services, including strategic consulting, program design, business intelligence, incentive fulfillment, and end-user customer service and training. In B2B and B2C channel scenarios, customers told us that they deployed the technology quickly and cost effectively, with several consuming it as a managed service. We appreciated the company's channel marketing features — such as its asset library, digital marketing functionality, program scoring, and health checks — but observed a narrow market approach and opportunities for more workflows and automation.

Channel Fusion has a strong focus on automotive, manufacturing, and retail, with most of its business in North America. While reference customers were happy with the technology platform across rebate programs, loyalty, and co-op management, there's an opportunity for additional levels of personalization, self-service automation, and digital execution. Channel Fusion is best suited to automotive subverticals, HVAC, and retail industries in North America that are looking for a high-touch, human-based approach to channel incentives.

- **Incentive Solutions has broad incentives features; channel marketing needs integration.** Incentive Solutions supports a rich portfolio of group travel, merchandise rewards, ticketed events, online travel booking, custom reward selection, lifestyle rewards, and gift cards. Focusing on industries such as manufacturing, automotive, and services, the 28-year-old company acquired OneAffiniti in 2021 to shore up its co-marketing and through-channel marketing functionality. Incentive Solutions offers a flexible incentives, motivation, and loyalty platform with a focus on different B2B incentives scenarios, combined with a reasonable pricing structure.

While Incentive Solutions mostly focuses on North America, it does support a good breath of customer segments — from small and medium-size businesses to large enterprises. Reference customers said that they're looking forward to more robust reporting and business intelligence features to augment their own programs. Other customer feedback included a desire for more personalization options and consumer-oriented (B2C) functionality. Incentive Solutions is best suited to HVAC, building products, automotive, and insurance services in North America that need a breadth of offerings and flexibility.

- **HMI offers full agency services but misses on some channel marketing and security.** HMI Performance Incentives provides a full-service platform that is globally fulfilled. The 42-year-old company offers deep agency and professional services support to its customers across program design and management, data and analytics, and reward fulfillment. Reference customers agreed that HMI always comes to the table with consistent and actionable advice based on industry knowledge and best practices learned from its platform. The company's technology is highly configurable and can support end-to-end incentives workflows in almost every country in the world — including an innovative claim module.

In addition to global support, HMI Performance Incentives has a specific industry focus in building supplies, HVAC, and electrical, in addition to customers in several other industries. Reference customers said that they mostly run the platform standalone without deep integrations into the back office. However, the platform

could offer more self-service functionality, more streamlined reporting capabilities, and deeper marketing/MDF integrations. HMI Performance Incentives is best suited to midsize and enterprise-sized companies looking for global implementations of channel incentives and rewards catalogs.

Evaluation Overview

We evaluated vendors against 23 criteria, which we grouped into three high-level categories:

- **Current offering.** Each vendor's position on the vertical axis of the Forrester Wave graphic indicates the strength of its current offering. Key criteria for these solutions include supporting a broad set of customer and partner types, goals, and payment scenarios; depth in marketing and program capabilities; and protections around security and compliance, backed by deep automation, insights, and analytic functionality.
- **Strategy.** Placement on the horizontal axis indicates the strength of the vendors' strategies. We evaluated product vision, ability to execute, performance metrics, innovation roadmap, supporting products and services, and the partner ecosystem driving additional customer value.
- **Market presence.** Represented by the size of the markers on the graphic, our market presence scores reflect each vendor's revenue, number of customers, and number of employees.

Vendor Inclusion Criteria

Forrester included 11 vendors in the assessment: 360insights, Ansira, Capillary Technologies, ChannelAssist, Channel Fusion, E2open, HMI Performance Incentives, Incentive Solutions, ITA Group, Partnerize, and Vistex. Each of these vendors has:

- **Enterprise market traction.** Included vendors are often competing for enterprise-class deals (based on knowledge gathered from Forrester client interviews, customer reference interviews, and services and software vendor responses to anonymized surveys) and illustrate vision and thought leadership within the CIM space. The vendor has also subsequently proven that it has the ability to support the enterprise needs of Forrester customers.
- **Revenue totaling at least \$10 million.** All included vendors had a total annual revenue of approximately \$10 million or more in the CIM category. The revenue cutoff was kept low to recognize the considerable number of small players and the fragmented nature of the CIM market.

- **A best-of-breed product available for purchase.** Included vendors have a standalone CIM product that has been in general release for a substantial amount of time and is in use by at least 30 global customers. The products we included have a specific release that was generally available at the time of data collection for this evaluation, with references available for contact.
- **Forrester client interest.** Forrester clients expressed interest in learning more about the evaluated vendors, frequently asking about the evaluated vendors within the context of inquiry, advisory, and/or consulting.

Supplemental Material

Online Resource

We publish all our Forrester Wave scores and weightings in an Excel file that provides detailed product evaluations and customizable rankings; download this tool by clicking the link at the beginning of this report on Forrester.com. We intend these scores and default weightings to serve only as a starting point and encourage readers to adapt the weightings to fit their individual needs.

The Forrester Wave Methodology

A Forrester Wave is a guide for buyers considering their purchasing options in a technology marketplace. To offer an equitable process for all participants, Forrester follows [The Forrester Wave™ Methodology Guide](#) to evaluate participating vendors.

In our review, we conduct primary research to develop a list of vendors to consider for the evaluation. From that initial pool of vendors, we narrow our final list based on the inclusion criteria. We then gather details of product and strategy through a detailed questionnaire, demos/briefings, and customer reference surveys/interviews. We use those inputs, along with the analyst's experience and expertise in the marketplace, to score vendors, using a relative rating system that compares each vendor against the others in the evaluation.

We include the Forrester Wave publishing date (quarter and year) clearly in the title of each Forrester Wave report. We evaluated the vendors participating in this Forrester Wave using materials they provided to us by December 15, 2021, and did not allow additional information after that point. We encourage readers to evaluate how the market and vendor offerings change over time.

In accordance with [The Forrester Wave™ And New Wave™ Vendor Review Policy](#), Forrester asks vendors to review our findings prior to publishing to check for accuracy. Vendors marked as nonparticipating vendors in the Forrester Wave graphic met our defined inclusion criteria but declined to participate in or contributed only partially to

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the evaluation. We score these vendors in accordance with [The Forrester Wave™ And The Forrester New Wave™ Nonparticipating And Incomplete Participation Vendor Policy](#) and publish their positioning along with those of the participating vendors.

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