

The Forrester Wave™: Sales Social Engagement Solutions, Q1 2021

The Eight Providers That Matter Most And How They Stack Up

by Caroline Robertson and Mary Shea, PhD

March 10, 2021

Why Read This Report

In our 38-criterion evaluation of sales social engagement solution providers, we identified the eight most significant ones — EveryoneSocial, Hearsay Systems, Hootsuite, PostBeyond, Seismic, Sociabble, Sprinklr, and Sprout Social — and researched, analyzed, and scored them. This report shows how each provider measures up and helps B2B sales and marketing leaders select the right one for their comprehensive needs.

Key Takeaways

Sprinklr And Seismic Lead The Pack

Forrester's research uncovered a market in which Sprinklr and Seismic are Leaders; EveryoneSocial, Hearsay Systems, Hootsuite, and Sociabble are Strong Performers; and PostBeyond and Sprout Social are Contenders.

Personalization, Seller Orientation, And A Platform Approach Are Key Differentiators

Providers that embed AI into their solution to enable more personalization for both buyers and sellers and that have features to engage and keep sellers coming back will rise to top. As business buyers move away from point solutions, sales social engagement features will increasingly become part of social suites or sales enablement platforms.

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Related Research Documents

[The Democratization Of B2B Sales](#)
[The Forrester Wave™: Social Suites, Q4 2019](#)
[The State Of Digitized Selling](#)



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Sales Social Engagement Solutions Yield To Full Platform Plays

Since publishing “[The Forrester New Wave™: Sales Social Engagement Tools, Q2 2019](#),” B2B sellers can no longer walk the halls at prospect and customer headquarters; the category has received [\\$358 million in venture investment](#), and the sales enablement unicorn Seismic acquired Grapevine6. Now more than ever, sellers need access to the best tools and technologies. But in Forrester’s Q4 2020 Global Sales Enablement Survey, only 38% of B2B companies had rolled out a sales social engagement solution. As companies look to better mesh their social media programs with their enterprises’ broader activities, sales social engagement customers should look for providers that:

- **Bring sales social engagement into a unified platform.** Social technology microecosystems — called “[social suites](#)” — support listening, advertising, word of mouth, and other marketing activities and have features to support the sales use case. Sales content providers have traditionally focused on helping sellers quickly access, modify, and share internal digital content with buyers across channels. Look for sales content providers that marry internal and third-party content delivery across a range of channels and networks. Whether it’s through social suites or sales content solutions, customers will benefit from bringing marketing and selling activities together on one platform.
- **Leverage AI to enhance experiences for sellers and buyers.** The best sales social engagement solutions use AI to help sellers establish their professional presence across networks, refine personalized content streams, and suggest the most pertinent excerpts from content to fuel shares. Top solutions enhance experiences for buyers too. By analyzing buyer profile data captured in the CRM, web presence, or other social activity, solutions with embedded AI help sellers share personalized content that matches each buyer’s unique interests. With this kind of recommendation engine, sellers can deliver the B2C-like experiences that buyers expect from the very first interaction.
- **Have a user experience that gets and keeps sellers engaged.** Before the pandemic, sales social engagement providers struggled to gain meaningful traction outside of large financial services, professional services, and technology companies. But with digital being a necessary requirement for initiating, maintaining, and extending business relationships, all types of sellers must have access to a solution to support social engagement. Intuitive and easy-to-use functionality as well as other features such as leaderboards and gamification will ensure high initial and post-rollout engagement. Additionally, look for a provider that can bring to bear subject matter expertise with the sales use case and help with seller best practice training, measurements, and industry benchmarks.

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 [sales social engagement](#).

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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.

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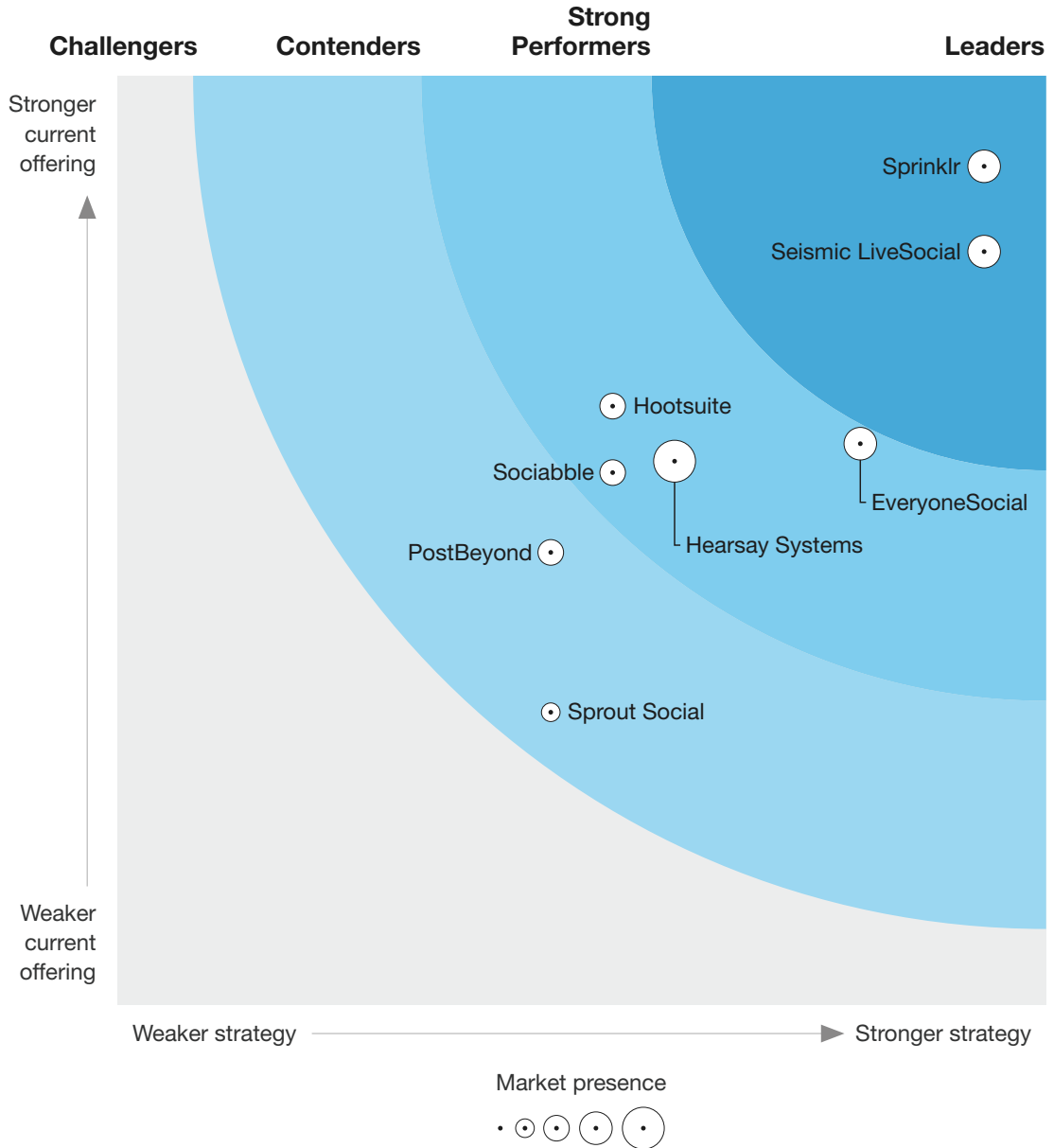
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FIGURE 1 Forrester Wave™: Sales Social Engagement Solutions, Q1 2021

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Sales Social Engagement Solutions

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FIGURE 2 Forrester Wave™: Sales Social Engagement Solutions Scorecard, Q1 2021

	Forrester's weighting	EveryoneSocial	Hearsay Systems	Hootsuite	PostBeyond	Seismic	Sociabble	Sprinklr	Sprout Social
Current offering	50%	3.02	2.92	3.22	2.43	4.05	2.86	4.51	1.57
Technology integration	11%	1.57	3.86	3.86	1.57	4.14	1.57	4.14	1.43
Channels/blogs/messaging	11%	3.00	1.67	3.67	2.33	3.67	4.33	5.00	1.67
Content	11%	2.20	2.20	2.80	3.00	4.20	2.40	4.80	1.20
AI/machine learning	11%	3.00	3.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	1.00	5.00	1.00
Reporting and analytics	11%	3.00	3.00	3.00	1.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
Measurement and ROI	11%	2.20	3.60	2.40	4.20	3.60	2.20	5.00	0.60
User experience	11%	4.20	3.00	3.60	2.80	4.20	4.60	5.00	3.60
Security and privacy	11%	3.00	3.00	3.67	1.00	3.67	3.67	3.67	0.67
Services	11%	5.00	3.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	3.00	5.00	1.00
Strategy	50%	4.00	3.00	2.67	2.33	4.67	2.67	4.67	2.33
Product vision	17%	3.00	3.00	3.00	1.00	5.00	1.00	5.00	1.00
Execution and product roadmap	17%	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	5.00	1.00	3.00	1.00
Performance	17%	5.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	5.00	3.00	5.00	3.00
Customer support and global deployment	17%	5.00	3.00	3.00	5.00	3.00	3.00	5.00	3.00
Commercial model	17%	5.00	3.00	1.00	1.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	3.00
Category vision	17%	3.00	3.00	3.00	1.00	5.00	3.00	5.00	3.00
Market presence	0%	3.50	4.50	3.00	3.00	4.00	3.00	4.00	2.00
Revenue	50%	3.00	5.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	3.00	4.00	2.00
Customers	50%	4.00	4.00	2.00	5.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	2.00

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

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Vendor Offerings

Forrester included eight vendors in this assessment: EveryoneSocial, Hearsay Systems, Hootsuite, PostBeyond, Seismic, Sociabble, Sprinklr, and Sprout Social (see Figure 3).

FIGURE 3 Evaluated Vendors And Product Information

Vendor	Product evaluated
EveryoneSocial	EveryoneSocial
Hearsay Systems	Hearsay Social
Hootsuite	Hootsuite Amplify
PostBeyond	PostBeyond
Seismic	Seismic LiveSocial
Sociabble	Sociabble
Sprinklr	Sprinklr Distributed
Sprout Social	Bambu

Vendor Profiles

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

Leaders

- **Sprinklr leads by unifying marketing and sales activities on one platform.** With capabilities that support listening, publishing, advertising, and embedded AI functionality to help users create network-appropriate profiles, Sprinklr meets the comprehensive needs of both marketers and sellers. The platform facilitates user collaboration across notes, queues, and tasks, and industry-specific workflows can be customized across channels, regions, and account groups.

The vendor has made significant R&D investments in its technology architecture to support more than 10 messaging apps, giving global sellers the flexibility to communicate in relevant regional formats. Reference customers praise the vendor for its ability to dynamically scale and deploy the platform as well as its deep functionality that serves a wide range of users and use cases. With the bulk of its customers in finance, automotive, and hospitality industries, Sprinklr is an ideal fit for companies with large globally distributed sales forces.

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- **Seismic leads by creating a singular intelligent content experience for sellers.** Integrated with Seismic's sales content solution, the LiveSocial product allows sellers to access internal and third-party content from a single repository, creating a unified seller experience. The product synchronizes assets into new content streams that can be shared across various social networks and then matches the content to an AI-generated interest profile for each seller to ensure the authenticity and uniqueness of their shares.

Seismic's acquisition of Grapevine6 was a natural fit due to their shared vision that the best way for sellers to engage buyers is with personalized digital content and go-to-market sweet spots in the financial services industry. Reference customers appreciate the scope of external content but want the vendor to support more than LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook. Existing Seismic customers, as well as any company that wants to digitally activate its sellers with a top-tier enablement solution, will find Seismic LiveSocial to be an appealing match.

Strong Performers

- **EveryoneSocial outperforms with its UI and customer experience.** The EveryoneSocial platform is intended to be so intuitive that individual users can successfully onboard themselves with little to no training. Gamification and leader boards drive initial adoption and keep users coming back. The native app is available on iOS and Android devices and has 100% feature parity between desktop and mobile devices.

With some of the world's best-known global technology and professional services firms as its customers, the vendor delivers white-glove service through its dedicated implementation and customer success teams. While the reference customers we heard from want more integrations with their other market-facing systems, they also told us they value the platform's ease of use and the vendor's "incredible customer service." EveryoneSocial is a good fit for companies with a large global footprint that want to activate hundreds of users with ease.

- **Hearsay Systems bets on financial services companies to propel it forward.** Hearsay specializes in and tailors its capabilities to wealth management, life insurance, and property and casualty insurance providers. The vendor has an enterprise-grade product that cleanly integrates into customers' training and workflows. Its professional services team also provides custom and turnkey integrations with CRM and archiving systems — all with a focus on compliance — to meet the needs and regulatory requirements for these sophisticated customers.

Hearsay publishes an annual social selling study that benchmarks variables across the industries it serves. Reference customers were enthusiastic about the platform's UI and ease of use for their advisors but wanted better reporting and analytics and hope to derive more value from AI functionality in the future. Hearsay is a good fit for enterprise financial services companies that value a vendor that deeply understands their industry and social use cases.

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- **Hootsuite differentiates with its sizable ecosystem of technology partners.** With more than 100 integrations into its social suite, Hootsuite has dedicated native integrations for a wide range of CRM, marketing automation, marketing analytics, and business intelligence solutions, which users can easily access from the app ecosystem within the platform. However, integrations with foundational sales enablement solutions such as sales engagement, sales readiness, and sales content are not currently available.

The vendor offers a full suite of services including strategy, product, peer-to-peer and social selling, and training that comes with a certificate upon completion of the program. While reference customers recognized the vendor for its consulting and other services, they want the platform to have a more engaging UI and were critical of the vendor's ability to support global deployments. Hootsuite is a good fit for small to medium-sized customers that want employee advocacy and seller use cases on one platform and for larger enterprises that can benefit from Hootsuite's platform scale and large ecosystem of CRM and compliance partners.

- **Sociabble rewards sellers with meaningful digital and analog experiences.** Sociabble has embedded an advanced gamification framework within the platform. Users can win badges and acquire points for various actions taken such as bringing other colleagues on to the platform. The vendor additionally offers meaningful external social incentives such as its Sociabble Trees program, which rewards engaged employees with real trees planted in reforestation projects.

With just more than half of its customers based in EMEA, the vendor has strong data security and holds extensive certifications in accordance with international conformity laws specific to the software industry. Reference customers recognized the vendor for its category and industry expertise but would like to see it increase integrations with a wider range of sales tools and improve its reporting capabilities. Sociabble is a good fit for midsized businesses and government agencies that value a partner with a strong European presence.

Contenders

- **PostBeyond delivers an easy-to-use experience for sellers and other advocates.** With its origins in employee advocacy, PostBeyond has one of the easiest-to-use platforms for sellers and nonsellers alike. While program and seller ROI remains difficult for most to pin down, the vendor has developed a PostBeyond Index Score, which aggregates data based on social usage, sharing, and engagement; enables benchmarking at the individual and organization level; and supports industry comparative analysis.

The platform can also be used for engaging and recruiting talent. Customers can track candidate content consumption and applicant form completion. Reference customers like the platform's ease of use, noting, "It takes only minutes to set up a new account." Those same reference customers would like the vendor to improve the breadth and depth of its functionality and to accelerate product innovation cycles. PostBeyond is a good fit for companies of all shapes and sizes that want to digitally activate sellers and other employees.

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- **Sprout Social provides baseline capabilities for sellers and other advocates.** Bambu customers are typically first-time users of sales social engagement software and the vendor's goal is to provide those customers' sellers and other users with a straightforward advocacy tool. While the tool minimizes friction for sellers new to social, it is missing some basic features such as the ability to provide sellers with automated and AI-generated content and timing recommendations.

The vendor believes its typical small to medium-sized business customers do not have significant compliance requirements. As such, it does not provide those capabilities natively or through external partners. While reference customers described the vendor as a great partner, they also cited the lack of integrations with other large B2B marketing technology solutions and the inability to share video content through Bambu as problematic. Bambu is a good fit for existing and new Sprout customers that want to tie in sales social engagement with traditional organic publishing and customer response features integral to the suite.

Evaluation Overview

We evaluated vendors against 38 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 technology integration; channels, blogs, and messaging; content; AI and machine learning; reporting and analytics; measurement and ROI; user experience; security and privacy; and services.
- **Strategy.** Placement on the horizontal axis indicates the strength of the vendors' strategies. We evaluated product vision, execution and product roadmap, performance, customer support and global deployment, commercial model, and category vision.
- **Market presence.** Represented by the size of the markers on the graphic, our market presence scores reflect each vendor's revenue and customers.

Vendor Inclusion Criteria

Forrester included eight vendors in the assessment: EveryoneSocial, Hearsay Systems, Hootsuite, PostBeyond, Seismic, Sociabble, Sprinklr, and Sprout Social. Each of these vendors has:

- **Revenue minimums.** Each of the vendors evaluated in this research has at least \$3 million in revenue derived from the sales social engagement product evaluated.
- **Received Forrester client interest.** Forrester clients have expressed interest in learning more about evaluated vendors, have asked questions about the category frequently, or have evaluated vendors as part of inquiry, advisory, and consulting.

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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.

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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 November 20, 2020, 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 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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