REPORT REPRINT

# AI and machine learning are at the heart of Syntasa's customer intelligence platform

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The Syntasa platform provides elements to aggregate and connect insights to deliver a consistent, dynamic experience across the customer journey. But it's difficult to meet increasing customer demands at scale; with such a large volume of data, identifying and acting on true signals from the 'noise' of all the available data is a major challenge.



## Summary

The abundant growth of data, maturation of machine algorithms and increased pressure for risk mitigation and compliance have shifted the landscape for creating a single source of truth for customer data. The new requirement will be investment in customer intelligence platforms (CIPs) that do more than consolidate a single view of the customer; they add a layer of data governance, synthesis and identity, which power a dynamic customer graph to fulfill the vision of contextual experiences. Syntasa's platform is focused on helping businesses move away from simply managing transactional data toward ensuring that systems of engagement are more intelligent. The goal is to improve the orchestration and execution of contextual experiences that focus on ensuring a positive ongoing relationship with customers.

## 451 TAKE

While Syntasa does not refer to itself as a CIP today, it clearly qualifies with advanced machine learning intelligence that synthesizes data for a variety of use cases including the use of customer behavior data and enterprise data to extract intelligence for understanding customer intent. The platform provides context from raw data for relationship discovery, with graphs, columnar data stores and in-memory high-performance indexes to create a single source of the data for use cases across the customer journey. It is not a black-box SaaS offering. Instead, it's enterprise software that sits natively within an organization's private cloud and extends existing Hadoop initiatives. This is an important differentiator because many of the customer data platform (CDP) offerings are public SaaS. Larger enterprises would prefer flexible deployment options of private or hybrid cloud. However, while new architectures and tools are finally making the 360-degree customer view a reality, incumbent CRM and enterprise business applications are becoming more intelligent and will fight to maintain control of the customer data.

## Context

Founded in 2014 in McLean, Virginia, Syntasa is a private, self-funded business with 52 employees. The company's current offering consolidates and transforms fragmented data into an intelligent 360-degree customer view that is used by marketing, sales and customer service, as well as for analytical use cases. Syntasa has several marquee enterprise customers that purchase annual subscriptions of $250,000-1m. All customers are taking advantage of AI and machine learning within multiple use cases across the customer journey to leverage digital data to optimize the customer experience.

Businesses have made investments in transactional systems and master data management (MDM) from 10-15 years ago to create a complete customer profile, but they have failed to deliver a complete 'single source of truth.' There are continually new sources of data and applications that add complexity and aren't easily understood or analyzed. This creates billions of data points – much of it held in silos across various lines of business – that must be synthesized and made actionable. IT has tried to consolidate and manage all the customer data with existing systems but struggles to keep up, which has led to business users acquiring fragments of the 360-degree customer view through shadow IT initiatives. The market also has newer customer data platform vendors that provide no-code or low-code SaaS offerings that aggregate customer data scattered in dozens of silos into one centralized hub, then create richer customer profiles that dynamically build over time.

## Products

Syntasa's customers want to harness the power of data to improve the customer experience. The pressure to deliver differentiated and consistent customer experiences is essential as many industries face considerable competitive pressure and market disruption. There is a seismic shift in growth strategies for businesses and consumers to subscribe to services rather than buy products. The result will be a stronger focus on loyalty and relationships that build upon consistent, positive interactions with customers.

Improving customer experience demands an approach that considers all the tools, processes and data across the customer journey. This complex process usually involves dynamically maintaining a single source of truth about each customer to drive personalized experiences based on individual preferences and behaviors. Businesses to date have primarily invested in systems of record, such as legacy CRM and ERP, to serve this purpose. While these systems are critical for managing internal operational processes, they are typically not effective for consolidating customer information at the pace of business change today. Structured data from operational data stores now provides only a small slice of the overall data needed to improve customer experience.

The Syntasa platform provides essential elements to aggregate and connect insights to deliver a consistent and dynamic experience across the customer journey. However, it's difficult to meet increasing customer demands at scale. With such a large volume of data, insights can be hidden, making it challenging to target and serve micro-segments effectively. Identifying and acting on true signals from the 'noise' of all the available data is an enormous challenge.

The platform uses advanced machine learning algorithms and artificial intelligence to improve the ability to capture, analyze, understand and act upon information, including the ability to recognize patterns, comprehend ideas, plan, predict, problem solve, identify actions and make decisions as needed. Syntasa offers three products. Synthesizer is all about data engineering. It processes behavioral events in batch and real time. The module consolidates data schemas, blends disparate sources and unifies data into a flexible ID graph. Synthesis and reasoning are essential elements of a CIP.

Composer allows users to leverage templates to quickly build AI-based models for multiple customer analytic use-case applications. Automated reasoning helps to make inferences and enrichments on each customer profile, and helps line-of-business users predict customers' actions – such as churn, their propensity to buy, and product affinity. Syntasa also provides templates for insight on contact center deflection, multi-channel attribution and purchase path friction to provide a deeper understanding of individual customer journeys.

Orchestrator leverages the data processing accomplished by Composer and Synthesizer into an intelligence hub that stores model results. It can push intelligence into any application such as a personalization platform, commerce engine, CRM or marketing system, etc. It's all about focusing the lens on the data to make it more useful for line-of-business users.

## Competition

There are scores of firms that have latched onto the CDP as a catch-all for data management in marketing contexts. In this space, Syntasa competes directly with AgilOne, Amplero, Amperity, BlueConic, BlueVenn, Lytics, RedPoint, Quaero, Tealium, Treasure Data and Zaius. However, Syntasa is one of only a handful of native CIP products available in the market. Other companies that also provide CIP technologies include AllSight, NGDATA, Reltio and Evergage.

Even as the market evolves into customer intelligence platforms, Syntasa faces the squeeze from systems of record in the form of the next generation of CRM and marketing tools, like those from Salesforce, Oracle, Adobe, SAP and Microsoft.

Major MDM players with expertise in customer management – including Informatica, Oracle, SAP and IBM – are first an IT tool used for primarily managing structured data for known customers. However, many MDM vendors still don't factor in all unstructured customer data, resulting in less-than-ideal applicability for critical line-of-business customer experience use cases.

There are other MDM providers – such as Pitney Bowes, Semarchy, Stibo Systems and Riversand Technologies – that offer more in-depth expertise for creating a 360-degree view of the customer, usually using a combination of modern data processing and analytics technologies such as Apache Cassandra, Apache Spark, Apache Hadoop and elements of in-memory data processing engines. Even with the advent of data lakes, it is still an IT strategy that doesn't necessarily contain the proper tools for synthesizing customer data and providing the necessary customer matching, resulting in lower effectiveness rates for a broad range of customer experience use cases.

## SWOT Analysis

### STRENGTHS

Syntasa's heritage is in unstructured behavioral data to help deliver line-of-business value by extending existing IT strategies such as data lakes and data warehouses into a more modern 360-degree view of the customer within weeks, compared to a build project that could take months.

### WEAKNESSES

The platform today is more appropriate for line-of-business data scientists than non-technical marketing users.

### OPPORTUNITIES

Businesses need to continue to evolve their 'single source of truth' customer data strategies for non-technical marketing and customer service. Lack of skilled users and adequate data and content are already huge barriers to effective customer-facing use cases. There is a need for customer-insight discovery tools for users beyond data scientists.

### THREATS

CDP vendors are popular with line-of-business users since many times it's a shadow IT project with easy-to-use integration capabilities and modern user interface for cross-channel marketing use cases.