

UNVARNISHED REVIEWS

Salesforce Marketing Cloud vs. Adobe Experience Platform vs. Braze: The Product-Identity Problem

Market Position: Big Picture

Salesforce Marketing Cloud, Adobe Experience Platform, and Braze are the three most-compared enterprise marketing orchestration platforms, systems that coordinate campaigns, messaging, and personalization across channels and touchpoints at scale. All three are credible, well-reviewed platforms serving distinctly different technical approaches: Braze leads with real-time, mobile-first engagement built for digital-native products; Salesforce leads with the deepest CRM-native integration for organizations already running Salesforce; Adobe leads with the broadest data-and-content ecosystem for organizations with complex, multi-product digital operations.

The finding that should change how any buyer researches this category before requesting a quote: Two of the three platforms have a real product-identity problem that produces wildly inconsistent public pricing claims, not because sources are unreliable, but because they're frequently describing different products under a shared or confusingly similar name. Confirm exactly which product a quote, review, or comparison refers to before treating any price as comparable.

Platform Ratings at a Glance

Platform	Rating	Reviews	Note
Braze	4.7 / 5 (G2/Capterra)	~168+	Highest-rated of the three; no free tier at any deployment size
Salesforce Marketing Cloud Engagement	4.2 / 5 (Capterra)	~530	Distinct product and rating from Marketing Cloud Account Engagement (Pardot), rated separately at 4.0/5
Adobe Experience Platform	4.0 / 5 (Gartner Peer Insights)	Limited sample	Rated as infrastructure; component applications (Journey Optimizer, Real-Time CDP) carry separate ratings

Braze rates highest of the three. Both Salesforce and Adobe carry a real rating-attribution risk worth flagging: because each vendor sells multiple, similarly named products in this space, confirm which specific product any cited rating actually describes before treating it as representative of the platform being quoted.

Salesforce Marketing Cloud: Two Products, One Name, Different Prices

Salesforce publishes official pricing for Marketing Cloud Engagement, the B2C multi-channel journey and email platform most buyers mean by "Salesforce Marketing Cloud": Pro+ at \$2,000/org/month, Corporate+ at \$5,500/org/month, and Enterprise+ at \$30,000/org/month. Advanced capabilities, including Data Cloud integration, real-time behavioral triggers, and Einstein Personalization (cited independently at up to \$96,000/year), require additional licensing beyond these base tiers.

The real confusion: Salesforce also sells Marketing Cloud Account Engagement, the product formerly known as Pardot, a B2B lead-nurturing tool with its own separate tier structure, Growth+ at \$1,250/org/month up to Premium+ at \$15,000/org/month, and its own separate user rating (4.0/5, distinct from Marketing Cloud Engagement's 4.2/5). Multiple independent comparison sources cite Account Engagement's \$1,250/month entry price while describing Marketing Cloud Engagement's B2C feature set, an apples-to-oranges error that shows up repeatedly across third-party research, not just in casual buyer confusion. Users separately flag total cost of ownership as extremely high once required add-ons, professional implementation services (commonly \$10,000+), and dedicated specialized administrators are included, consistent regardless of which specific Marketing Cloud product is being evaluated.

Adobe Experience Platform: Mandatory Infrastructure, Sold Separately From Anything That Does Marketing

Adobe Experience Platform (AEP) itself is not a marketing tool, it's the underlying real-time customer data infrastructure: data ingestion, identity resolution, segmentation, and governance. AEP alone doesn't send a message or build a journey. To do that, an organization also needs Adobe Journey Optimizer (messaging and orchestration), Adobe Real-Time CDP (audience activation, priced per 1,000 managed profiles across B2C, B2B, and B2P editions), and typically Customer Journey Analytics (measurement), each sold and quoted as a distinct, additional line item on top of the mandatory AEP foundation.

None of these components publish pricing. An independent modeled enterprise scenario for a full Real-Time CDP deployment, AEP foundation plus RT-CDP plus the typical additional applications, puts licensing at \$600,000+ in year one, with systems-integrator implementation fees commonly adding another \$300,000 on top, a combined \$900,000 first-year figure driven as much by the number of separate products required as by any single component's list price. Reviewers rate AEP's core data and integration capabilities highly (4.7-4.8/5 on integration and feature depth per independent benchmarking) but flag customer support quality as a consistent weak point, with repeated complaints about slow issue resolution on G2 specifically.

Braze: The Simplest Pricing Story, and the Most Expensive Entry Point

Braze publishes no pricing; every deployment is quote-based, priced on platform edition, monthly active users (MAUs), and flexible message credits covering channel volume and AI features. Independent estimates converge on a real, if wide, range: entry-level enterprise deployments commonly start around \$60,000/year, with mid-size deployments (a few hundred thousand MAUs) running \$100,000-\$250,000/year, and larger implementations higher still. There is no free tier at any scale, a real structural difference from Salesforce's published entry pricing and Adobe's component-based model, both of which at least have a defined (if complex) starting price.

What sets Braze apart technically, and what reviewers consistently credit for its highest-in-category rating, is a materially simpler single-platform architecture: no separate infrastructure-versus-application split like Adobe's, and no dual-product naming confusion like Salesforce's. The tradeoff is entry cost; Braze's lowest realistic entry point runs meaningfully above Salesforce Marketing Cloud Engagement's published Pro+ tier, positioning Braze as a premium, single-product alternative rather than a lower-cost option.

Pricing (July 2026)

Platform	Entry Tier	Mid-Tier	Top Published Tier
Salesforce Marketing Cloud Engagement	Pro+: \$2,000/org/mo	Corporate+: \$5,500/org/mo	Enterprise+: \$30,000/org/mo
Adobe Experience Platform	No published pricing (AEP + at least 1 application required)	Custom, profile-volume based	Modeled enterprise: \$600,000+ licensing, Year 1
Braze	No published pricing; ~\$60,000/year typical entry	\$100,000-\$250,000/year	Custom, higher at scale

TCO Comparison: Enterprise Deployment, Year One

This scenario models each platform's realistic year-one cost at enterprise scale, combining licensing with the implementation and integration work each platform's own reviewers and independent sources consistently flag as a real, separate cost.

Platform	Licensing (Year 1)	Implementation/SI	Year 1 Total
Salesforce Marketing Cloud Engagement (Corporate+)	\$66,000	\$10,000+	~\$76,000+
Braze (mid-size deployment)	\$100,000-\$250,000	Not separately itemized in available sources	\$100,000-\$250,000
Adobe Experience Platform (full RT-CDP stack)	\$600,000	\$300,000	\$900,000

The gap between Salesforce Marketing Cloud Engagement's Corporate+ tier and Adobe's full-stack figure is not primarily a difference in per-unit pricing, it reflects Adobe's structural requirement to license multiple separate applications on top of a mandatory data-infrastructure foundation, a cost driver Salesforce's single-product tier structure and Braze's single-platform architecture both avoid.

Costs the Pricing Table Misses

- **Confirm which Salesforce "Marketing Cloud" product any quote, review, or prior research actually refers to.** Marketing Cloud Engagement and Marketing Cloud Account Engagement (Pardot) are different products with different pricing, different ratings, and different buyer profiles; treating them as interchangeable produces a real, documented comparison error.
- **Adobe Experience Platform alone does not deliver marketing capability.** Budget for AEP plus at minimum Journey Optimizer or Real-Time CDP as a package, not AEP as a standalone line item; the modeled \$600,000+ licensing figure reflects this full requirement, not AEP in isolation.
- **Salesforce's advanced capabilities, Data Cloud, real-time triggers, Einstein Personalization, are licensed separately from the base Marketing Cloud Engagement tier.** A Corporate+ or Enterprise+ quote without these add-ons understates what a truly modern, AI-personalized deployment costs.
- **Braze's MAU and message-credit pricing model can scale unpredictably with engagement success.** A campaign that meaningfully increases user engagement increases message volume and MAU counts simultaneously, the same growth marketing teams are hired to produce can directly increase the bill.
- **Implementation partner costs at Adobe scale can equal or exceed software licensing over a multi-year term.** Get a specific, itemized systems-integrator estimate separate from Adobe's own software quote before comparing total cost across platforms.

The Decision Framework

Choose Salesforce Marketing Cloud Engagement if: Your organization already runs Salesforce CRM and wants the deepest native integration, and you've confirmed you're pricing Marketing Cloud Engagement specifically, not Account Engagement/Pardot, against your actual B2C or B2B use case.

Choose Adobe Experience Platform if: You need Adobe's broader content-and-data ecosystem (Analytics, Target, Campaign) and can budget for the full, multi-application stack, AEP plus Journey Optimizer and/or Real-Time CDP, as a single combined line item rather than assuming AEP alone covers marketing orchestration.

Choose Braze if: Real-time, mobile-first customer engagement is a core product requirement, and you want the simplest single-platform architecture of the three, in exchange for the highest realistic entry cost and no published pricing at any tier.

Everyone: Before comparing any two quotes in this category, confirm the exact product name and edition each one refers to. This category's public pricing data is unusually unreliable specifically because of product-naming overlap (Salesforce) and mandatory multi-application architecture (Adobe), not because vendors are being deliberately opaque about a single, clearly defined product.

The Bottom Line

Salesforce Marketing Cloud Engagement, Adobe Experience Platform, and Braze are all credible, well-reviewed platforms for enterprise marketing orchestration, each built on a distinctly different architecture: Salesforce's CRM-native single-product tiers (with a real, documented naming trap in its own product line), Adobe's mandatory-infrastructure-plus-applications model (with a real six-figure gap between the platform name and what it takes to actually run a campaign), and Braze's simpler, single-platform, premium-priced approach. The real finding this comparison surfaces isn't which platform costs the least, it's that two of the three require a buyer to first confirm exactly what product is being priced before any comparison is meaningful at all.