

Better Customer Journeys and Business Growth with Meeting Automation Platforms

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Topic: Meeting Automation Platforms

Summary

Organizing strategic meetings with B2B customers and prospects has traditionally been more of an art than a science with processes and critical data locked inside of calendars, spreadsheets, and other collaboration offerings. Meeting automation platforms (MAPs) offer a more focused alternative that automates pre- and post-meeting tasks while monitoring in-meeting data-gathering and integration with existing applications for data and analysis. The new generation of MAPs promises to guide executives to measurably better business outcomes.

The MAP category is poised to grow from \$US 500M in 2018 to approximately \$US 3B by 2023. MAPs represent a new business automation category that takes traditional manual meeting processes to a new level.

Issue: How will meeting automation platforms make meetings more efficient and effective to improve customer journeys and B2B interactions?

KEY PREDICTIONS

- Currently a \$500 million market, MAP will grow to \$3 billion by YE 2023.
- 50% of large enterprises will have a MAP initiative underway or fully implemented by YE 2021.

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Introduction

The modern enterprise shares many attributes with its 19th and 20th-century counterparts (e.g., communicating with customers, partners, suppliers, and regulators) but it does so in a hyper-connected environment where workers and members of the ecosystem are mobile, lines between work and play are blurred, and attention is an increasingly scarce commodity. Executives in all industries know that strategic meetings are still essential to business growth. The ability to schedule more of these meetings and manage them effectively can be the difference between success and failure. As business communication channels and practices evolve, products and processes that seemed adequate decades ago (email) or even years ago (mobile apps) need to be reconsidered.

Over the years, a variety of enterprise applications have emerged to serve many of the common enterprise requirements. Supply chain management (SCM), customer relationship management (CRM), enterprise content management (ECM), human capital management (HCM), marketing automation, and personal productivity suites abound. And now, with the ascendance of the cloud as a model for development and delivery, virtually every application is available in an as-a-service model. One might wonder, what's left?

While much attention has been paid to mobile collaboration, which leverages AI and chatbots and is poised to take on a majority of the communication workload, the missing component is technology that can automate and augment tasks associated with scheduling strategic B2B face-to-face meetings. Buying a commodity online based on price is one thing, but enterprise relationships still begin with human relationships. Successfully managing, scheduling, conducting, and evaluating these strategic meetings is often the first hurdle in advancing the sales process or improving the customer journey.

The opportunity for business leaders is to increase the number of strategic meetings that directly impact business outcomes, especially growth. This is crucial for large enterprises where executives and SMEs find it difficult to engage with customers, partners, and suppliers due to the limitations of a manual process. The priority for large enterprises is to significantly increase strategic meetings at trade shows, briefing centers, and events to hundreds and thousands of B2B meetings that drive pipeline advancement.

The emerging category of meeting automation platforms (MAPs) offers applications designed to automate and augment these meeting management processes (see Note 1). The MAP market will grow significantly as these applications evolve from scheduling aids to intelligent meeting planners and managers and become an indispensable component in the modern intelligent enterprise.

Meeting Automation Platforms Defined

A meeting automation platform (MAP) is an application that automates the workflow associated with pre-meeting planning and logistics, in-meeting management, and post-meeting analysis and follow-up. MAPs can leverage cloud-based deployment, enabling them to scale to keep up with the needs of the most demanding enterprises that schedule thousands to millions of meetings every year.

MAPs deal with the numerous types of meetings that occur in an enterprise. These include, but are not limited to, meetings at events/conferences and briefing centers.

Note 1: Meeting automation platform definition: A meeting automation platform (MAP) is an application that automates the management of quantifiable activities associated with pre-meeting planning and logistics, in-meeting monitoring, and post-meeting analysis and follow-up.

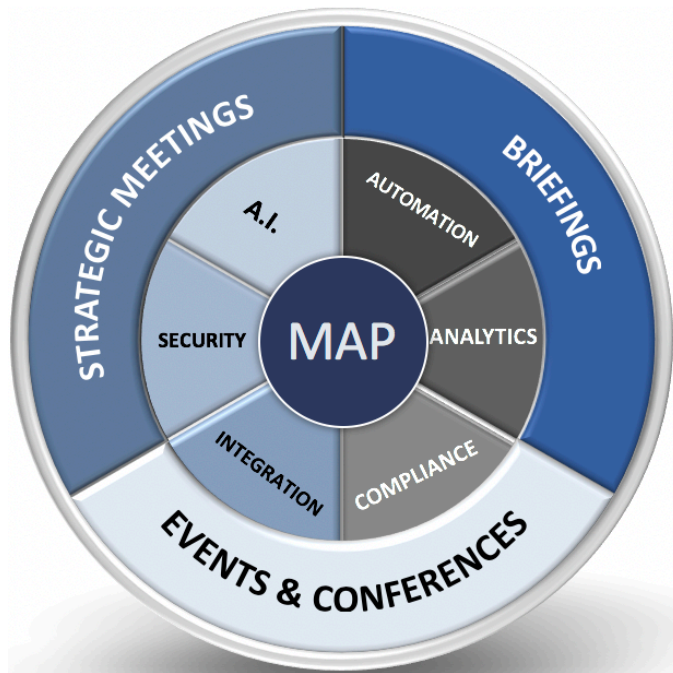


Figure 1: The Meeting Automation Platform architecture.

Meeting automation platforms help with every aspect of enabling and automating meetings. They provide the following key capabilities:

- Automated scheduling
- Automated management
- Automated analytics
- Integrations via APIs
- Mobile-first apps for ease of use
- Role-based security that even internal users can see on a need-to-know basis
- Compliance to ensure that regulations such as GDPR are supported
- Enterprise scale to thousands and millions of meetings
- Digitize meeting data for tracking from marketing and sales management software
- Additionally, the ability to recommend meetings that need to take place to drive a particular outcome is one of the predictive meeting capabilities that Aragon sees on the horizon.

Although many of these tasks are common regardless of the meeting type, most of the product development focus in this area is on strategic B2B meetings organized to accelerate the pre-sales and ongoing customer satisfaction elements of the modern customer journey. With that in mind, we will focus on this market, and make note of use cases for which a generalized MAP would be appropriate.



Figure 2: Three stages of strategic meeting management.

As shown in *Figure 1*, MAPs have a role before, during, and following a B2B meeting. Through automating communications between all parties, monitoring commitments made during the meeting, analyzing the outcome, and managing follow-up activities, a modern MAP can automate many tasks and augment the performance of the humans involved. MAPs should also help enterprises mitigate certain risks by ensuring compliance with regulations relevant to the industry, individuals, and geographies involved (e.g., GDPR).

Aragon feels that MAPs will become a common way of conducting B2B meetings in the enterprise.

Prediction: *By YE 2021, 50% of large enterprises will have deployed a meeting automation platform.*

Benefits of MAPs

The ultimate goal—and demonstrable benefit—of a meeting automation platform is to *accelerate business growth* by improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the strategic B2B meeting process, from planning and

Note 2: JiffleNow at a Glance

JiffleNow offers a meeting automation platform that supports strategic B2B meeting planning, scheduling, management, and analysis. The JiffleNow platform integrates with major enterprise solutions, ranging from Google G Suite to Microsoft Office 365 to Marketo to Salesforce.

Location: San Jose, CA

CEO: Hari Shetty

Key Offerings:

JiffleNow Event Meetings

JiffleNow Briefing Centers

JiffleNow Staff Scheduler

JiffleNow Meetings Insight

JiffleNow Mobile App

Overview: JiffleNow is an emerging provider of a meeting automation platform that supports strategic B2B meeting planners by automating key tasks and providing analytics to monitor progress toward the attainment of specified business objectives.

Availability: Available now

Website: www.jiffleNow.com

scheduling through post-meeting analysis and next-action identification.

Tactical benefits of MAPs include:

Efficiency:

- Increased volume of B2B meetings (up to 200% based on studies of enterprise adoption of MAPs)
- Reduced human error due to automation of some scheduling, rescheduling, and ongoing communications tasks
- Seamless integration with existing tools to leverage existing data and update data and workflows in complementary applications

Effectiveness:

- More qualified meetings per event, based on the automation of candidate selection and personalized content matching
- Increased customer satisfaction, based on monitoring and responding to customer/partner behavior before, during, and after meetings
- Improved compliance by automating the processes and providing a visible audit trail

Adding a modern meeting automation platform to an enterprise application portfolio allows new value to be derived from existing data in customer relationships and marketing automation applications, improves the quality of data in personal calendars and throughout the ecosystem, and eliminates costly errors associated with meeting management that relies on spreadsheets.

In Table 1, we outline the major tasks for MAPs in each phase.

<p>Pre-Meeting Activities</p> <p><i>Strategy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify issues that require meetings • Create agenda • Identify appropriate meeting participants • Develop/select compelling invitation message personalized for the invitee <p><i>Management and Logistics:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Automated meeting scheduling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Confirm availability for participants ○ Reserve/book meeting space ○ Track changes <p><i>Communications:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite all participants • Provide sufficient context to entice invitees to attend • Send reminders as appropriate • Send any change notifications <p>In-Meeting Activities</p> <p><i>Manage:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record/log check-in/out of participants • Document and display any commitments for follow-up activities <p><i>Manage and Measure:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Automated analytics management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Collect data for any required analysis, including behavioral notes and surveys • Track individual contributions, questions, and commitments <p>Post-Meeting Activities</p> <p><i>Analyze:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use descriptive analytics to evaluate the meeting • Use predictive analytics and/or machine learning to identify next best actions <p><i>Follow-up:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send any requested/promised materials • Schedule any activities required for commitments • Send appropriate thank you notes • Update institutional memory (integrated enterprise applications)

Table 1: Strategic meeting activities by phase.

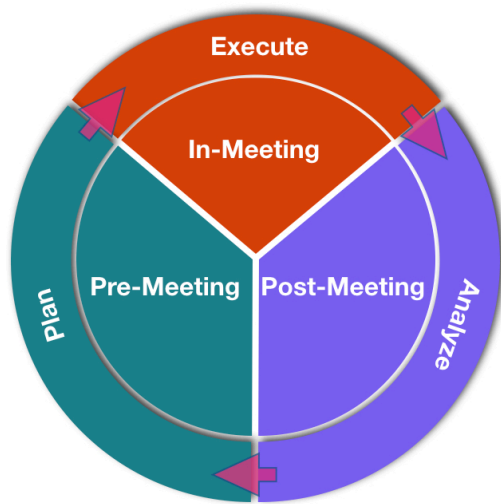


Figure 3: Continuous learning from meetings.

Although we often think of the strategic B2B meeting management process as linear with three phases, which is appropriate for a specific event or briefing, the reality is that engaging with prospects, customers, and other ecosystem participants is usually an ongoing process. In *Figure 3*, we depict the cyclical nature of these meetings, showing that the analytics from one meeting may direct the agenda for the next meeting.

The Manual Calendar Issue That Limits Outcomes

One of the biggest issues that limits the speed of meeting outcomes is the current calendaring process tied to office suites. It doesn't matter which platform is used; enterprises cannot schedule the meetings using a legacy approach.

A MAP is the next step beyond the traditional isolated calendar process. When calendaring software was first introduced in 1994, it was a big step forward. Today, however, it is not providing the necessary integrations into business processes.

Meeting automation platforms are the new way forward and represent a critical step in automating a crucial part of how business is conducted. As such, calendars become a notification tool.

What Is Driving the Demand for MAPs?

No successful enterprise is an island, autonomous and adrift. To survive, an enterprise must interact with customers and suppliers, and those interactions often require face-to-face meetings. To thrive, individuals within the enterprise must effectively communicate with their existing ecosystem and expand their interactions to include potential new partners and customers.

Despite advances in collaboration tools and video conferencing, growing a business inevitably includes personal meetings at corporate events, conferences, and briefing centers.

Today, the problem is that the process of identifying the right people to receive the right message at the right time is fraught with uncertainty. Managing and measuring strategic B2B meetings today is similar to advertising a century ago.

Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted: the trouble is I don't know which half.

John Wanamaker

MAPs are very helpful for large enterprises that manage multiple briefing centers, many events, and roadshows to reach customers, partners, suppliers, and others. When the number of scheduled strategic meetings requires managing thousands of meetings across multiple events, the need for MAPs becomes critical.

Sales, marketing, and functional executives all know that getting more B2B meetings is likely to improve the *number* of positive outcomes, but improving the quality of the meetings will improve the *percentage* of positive outcomes. In competitive markets, where just getting the

attention of the right people can be difficult, these two objectives stand out for meeting planners concerned with sales advancement.

Staff Optimization and Time to Revenue

Large enterprises invest millions in corporate trade shows and on briefing centers to promote engagement, but often do not get the full value of such investments.

Executives' and subject matter experts' time is most effectively optimized when they can meet with customers and qualified prospects. Enabling these strategic meetings means more revenue and better ROI. Meeting automation platforms have a clear impact on time to revenue: by enabling the meetings that are needed to drive the business outcomes.

Improving Effectiveness

As a general rule, business growth is a function of having more high-quality strategic meetings. Improving the processes to improve the outcomes of meetings—such as investing in sales training—is important, but from the executive point of view, it is critical to hold more meetings. While it is difficult to accurately attribute changes in traditional business financial performance metrics (e.g., return on investment, return on equity, revenue, gross margin) to specific strategic B2B meetings, increasing the volume of these meetings is critical. Indirect metrics, such as number of meetings held or qualified leads per event, are often used to evaluate the effectiveness of the meeting planning function.

While CRM and marketing automation systems already provide workflow support and visibility into where a prospect is on their customer journey, they don't focus on the significance of strategic B2B meetings. Modern MAPs can improve and measure effectiveness at all three phases: pre-, in-, and post-meeting.

Improving Efficiency

Face-to-face meetings are also expensive, from administrative time to schedule and manage the meetings, to travel costs, executive time costs, and costs associated with last-minute change requests or participant cancellations. Manual scheduling with personal productivity tools is inefficient and often requires several iterations once the right people have been identified, especially when coordinating calendars across multiple companies. Applying technology to augment the performance of human planners, and/or automate some of their processes should contribute to enterprise cost containment efforts.

Key Trends Enabling MAPs

The desire to make the strategic B2B meeting process more efficient and effective is a constant, but three trends are contributing to the ability to build modern MAPs:

1. Mobile communications

Mobile devices, including smartphones, tablets, and laptops, are replacing the personal computer as the preferred mechanism to access business application software (apps), and communicate. Users expect apps and up-to-date data to be available anytime and anywhere via the internet. Users are already becoming accustomed to meeting-oriented functions such as “take these notes,” “schedule follow-up appointment,” or “route me to the next appointment.”

2. Emerging analytics and AI technologies

The past decade has seen a tremendous uptick in research and product development in artificial intelligence and advanced analytics. Advances in natural language processing and machine learning, for example, are enabling more natural and automated interfaces for many enterprise systems. Even emotion recognition technologies are advancing rapidly and are

now mature enough to provide valuable information about employee and ecosystem participants that could be captured as business content and used to determine the next best action in a customer's journey. Eventually, these technologies could also be used in a MAP to determine who to invite to specific meetings, how to proceed in a meeting when relevant changes are detected, and how to assess progress within the sales cycle when performing a post-meeting review.

3. The rise of API-enabled enterprise applications

As businesses increasingly depend on a few critical enterprise-level applications, the trend is to enable new systems to integrate with these applications via application programming interfaces (APIs). APIs enable new applications and platforms like MAPs to exchange data and in some cases, trigger events or actions by the existing applications.

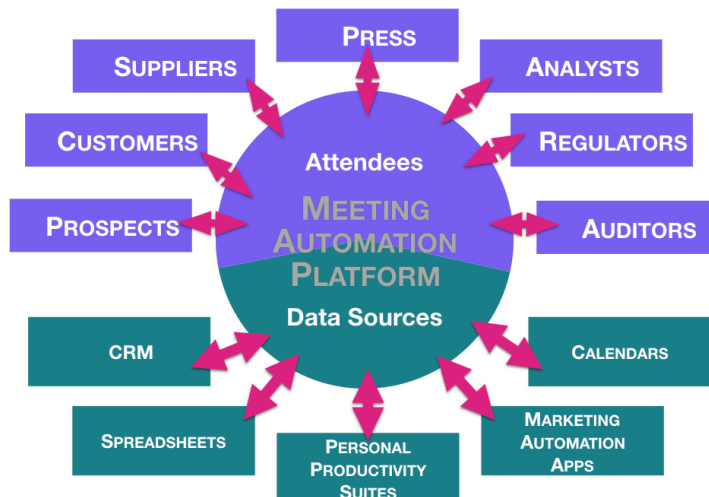


Figure 4: MAPs augment the enterprise app ecosystem.

For example, CRM and marketing automation (MA) systems may already provide workflow support and visibility into where a prospect is on their customer journey, but they don't manage or measure strategic B2B meetings. MAPs can provide these functions and share data with CRM and MA and become part of an

integrated enterprise workflow. As shown in *Figure 3*, the emerging class of MAPs, which build on well-proven technologies, complements the applications found in most large enterprises today.

Adding a modern meeting automation platform to an enterprise application portfolio allows new value to be derived from existing data in customer relationship and marketing automation applications, improves the quality of data in personal calendars and throughout the ecosystem, and eliminates costly errors associated with meeting management that relies on spreadsheets.

Migrating to a MAP

Selecting a meeting automation platform and planning for its integration into an existing application ecosystem should be approached with the same level of care and candor required for any enterprise-level change. Three steps are essential:

1. Current state assessment

For every relevant type of B2B meeting (sales advancement, intelligence gathering, brainstorming, etc.), identify and assess current roles and responsibilities, processes, data sources, and dependencies on external applications.

For example, *who* is responsible for identifying potential candidates for meetings at an event? *How* do they decide who to invite? *How* is the agenda developed and communicated? *Who* communicates with invitees prior to the event? *Where* is the data about meetings stored, and *who* can access and update it? *Who* takes notes in meetings, and *how* are they maintained and disseminated? *Who* evaluates the success of a meeting, and *what* criteria are used? *Who* determines the next action, and *who* is responsible for further communication and additional activities, and *how* are these decisions made? Survey all roles to determine what works and what doesn't, asking for

quantified responses. For example, how often do you need to reschedule a meeting, what are the usual causes for rescheduling, and what percentage of your invitations are declined, ignored, or require further information?

The activities identified in Table 1 are a good starting point for this assessment. A thorough understanding of the current data and workflow is essential for developing the functional requirements for the new meeting automation platform.

At this stage, you should also identify quantifiable goals of your MAP acquisition initiative to be included as acceptance criteria. For example, the new system must be able to process any number of meeting requests per week and alert us if more than 15% of invitees decline within 10 days.

2. Vendor/platform assessment

All the normal vendor viability criteria apply for MAP selection, so we will focus on specific functionality that should be considered essential.

Integration: Integration with your current or planned enterprise application portfolio, as identified in the current state assessment, is critical. For example, if your sales team depends on Salesforce, your MAP must be able to seamlessly integrate with Salesforce to improve your overall workflow.

Scale: The MAP should leverage modern SaaS practices and be able to scale to handle an unlimited number of meeting requests.

Security: Automating meeting management tasks with a MAP does not absolve an enterprise from the responsibility of protecting sensitive data about individual participants, nor does it magically eliminate risks to proprietary data about the enterprise or the analyses of the meeting activities and results. Thus, the

MAP must ensure that all such data is protected, that users have specified access privileges based on their roles, and that all data access and changes can be audited throughout the meeting management process.

Analytics: Analytics range from basic descriptive analytics (e.g., how many meetings were scheduled, what percentage of invitees accepted) to predictive analytics (e.g., given a customer profile, how likely is this individual to take the next step in the sales cycle if they accept our invitation) to prescriptive analytics (e.g., take *this* action when an event or condition is detected). As the MAP category emerges, enterprises should look for vendors that can provide the analytics of most importance to their own decision-making processes.

Compliance: The MAP should automate monitoring and management of tasks relevant to compliance for your enterprise. For example, if the enterprise has operations or individuals that are covered under the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the MAP should ensure that all personally identifiable information used to invite, schedule, and otherwise communicate with individuals is handled appropriately.

Finally, for each of the tasks, roles, and data sources identified in the current state assessment, and any tasks identified in Table 1 that are not part of your current process, assign a priority and use this list to evaluate MAP offerings by phase. During this process, evaluate the MAP vendor's roadmap for future development plans to ensure that the platform will grow with you.

3. Integration and operational assessment

Once a meeting automation platform has been selected and acquired, it will be important to monitor the actual operation of the MAP and all metrics identified in the first assessment phase. If necessary, work with your

vendor to tune the system until you meet or exceed your performance targets.

Key Departments and Use Cases

There are a number of areas in different parts of the enterprise that are driving the demand for MAPs. While sales and marketing are most often the first departments to deploy a MAP, the rest of the enterprise is also a candidate for them, given the criticality of meetings in those business units.

As such, the other departments where MAPs will make a difference include (see Table 2):

- Engineering
- Facilities
- Finance
- Supply Chain
- Support

Sales	HR	Finance	Engineering
Prospect Meetings	Employee Recruitment	Investor Relations Meetings	Agile Development
Strategic Meetings	Employee Onboarding	Finance Strategic Meetings	All-Hands Meeting
Pipeline Health	Performance Management	Roadshows	Virtual Machine Management
Marketing	Facilities	Support	Supply Chain
Events and Conferences	Access Verifications	Client Onboarding	Vendor Recruitment
Local Briefings	Staff Scheduling	Field Service	Vendor Onboarding
Corporate Briefing Center	Facility Utilization	Customer Complaint Management	Vendor Compliance

Table 2: Key departments for deploying MAPs.

Futures

As the MAP market grows, vendors will turn to increased use of artificial intelligence technologies to improve and differentiate their offerings.

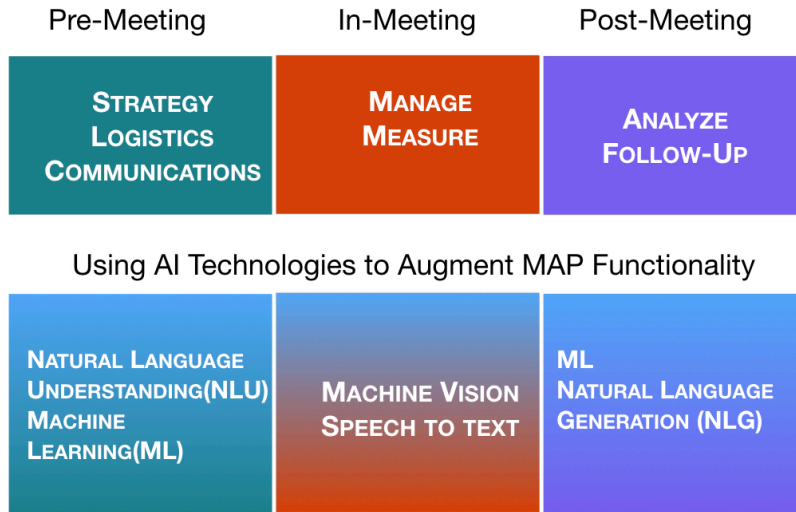


Figure 5: AI and the future MAP.

Sample Uses of AI Augmentation For:

Pre-Meeting: Machine learning can help identify the right participants for meetings and help craft a personalized message by studying previous correspondence and documents using natural language understanding.

In-Meeting: MAPs could monitor meeting progress with behavioral analysis using machine vision and speech-to-text technology and provide real-time feedback to help the organizer make progress toward the goal.

Post-Meeting: Machine learning and predictive analytics can be used to evaluate the success of the meeting and determine next actions. Natural language generation technology can be employed to develop personalized correspondence with all participants, perhaps setting the stage for the next meeting or activity.

Aragon Advisory

- Traditional approaches to meetings and briefings are not enough in today's digital world.
- Enterprises need to deploy a meeting automation platform to speed up their customer journeys.
- To manage, one must measure, and MAPs enable measurement of key meeting metrics.
- Integration with existing collaboration and CRM applications and with spreadsheets and calendars is critical to ensure that important data can be accessed and that the new workflow is more effective and efficient than current methods.

Bottom Line

Meeting automation platforms (MAPs) is a category of business application focused on automating the process of managing internal and external meetings, briefings, and events. MAPs enable enterprises to boost the quantity and quality of B2B strategic meetings that advance sales cycle, partnerships, operations, development, and all strategic engagements that contribute to business growth. The number of touchpoints required to conduct business is not well understood and for years, has been locked inside of legacy calendar, spreadsheet, and collaboration applications. MAPs will help to streamline the upfront part of a customer journey (pre-sales) and manage ongoing customer interactions. As such, MAPs will soon be on the critical path for competitive digital enterprises.