Salesforce takes aim at a bigger user audience with Einstein Analytics Plus
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Ovum view

Summary
Analytics continues to be one of the hottest enterprise technology topics of this year and will remain so into the foreseeable future. Why? As the technology continues to develop – most recently with machine learning-based artificial intelligence capabilities – and the ability to bake those technologies into apps and the business processes they run improves, the user audience of potential beneficiaries of data-driven insight grows ever larger. Salesforce is keenly aware of this trend, and its own analytics story continues to develop at a good clip, most recently with the launch of Einstein Analytics Plus, a suite of capabilities that power data discovery, bring more predictive analytics, enhance the user experience, and speed time to result. The goal is to help every user of Salesforce's Sales, Marketing, and Service clouds make smarter day-to-day decisions. The long-established challenge of measuring return on investment for analytics remains, and while Salesforce Einstein Analytics (including Plus) may be a natural complement to customer engagement activities, enterprises must continue to work hard to measure and demonstrate the benefits of investing.

Analytics at Salesforce continues a principled evolution
Analytics in the Salesforce portfolio continues to evolve, from the early days of Wave Analytics through recent announcements at the vendor's annual user conference, Dreamforce, which included Einstein Analytics Plus. Delivering value atop the mountains of data created and stored in Salesforce's Sales, Marketing, and Service clouds by means of analytics was – and continues to be – a significant opportunity for both the vendor and its customers. That data is interesting in its own right for building operational insights into the three pillars of customer relationship management (CRM) – for example, understanding the sales pipeline, the success of marketing campaigns, or the status of service requests. Having the means to work with the data to produce insights within the solution itself is powerful too. Why undertake the time-consuming and potentially complex task of extracting data from the app to analyze elsewhere?

The development of analytics within Salesforce has been powered by this rationale, and the principles behind it have also developed. Salesforce characterizes this as "intelligent experience," which comes with six broad categories: AI built in, outcomes focused, complete, actionable, simple, and trusted and transparent. Here are a couple of highlights:

- "Simple" for Salesforce means no-code AI and a natural language interface – two capabilities that significantly grow the potential user audience for more advanced analytical capabilities.
- "Outcomes focused" means the solution delivers recommendations and explanations – again, user-friendly features that deliver insight in a way that grows understanding and trust in the solution's output.

The sum of these principles is a simple one: to provide AI-augmented analytic output based on Salesforce data to potentially every user of Salesforce's products. This ambition is fairly grand in and of itself; however, Salesforce's plan appears to extend beyond this as it aims to have users grow connectivity between different Salesforce apps and bring in data from outside sources. The ability to bring in more data sources puts Einstein Analytics in greater competition with other analytics products likely used in conjunction with Salesforce – for example, Microsoft Power BI, Tableau, and Qlik.
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Salesforce's relatively recent acquisition of MuleSoft, adding further integration chops to the Salesforce portfolio, seems to add weight as well as capability to this view.

Einstein Analytics Plus should put more advanced capabilities in the hands of a bigger audience

Four key areas of capability have been expanded in the Einstein Analytics Plus launch: data discovery, predictive, user interface, and speed to result.

- **Data discovery** – Einstein Data Insights is a new capability that allows just about any user to explore patterns in existing reports and dashboards. A click of the "Explore with Einstein" button will have the solution bring back insights of interest automatically, highlighting patterns, enabling tracking of trends, and – importantly – helping identify issues with data quality. This is additional functionality in the Einstein Discovery product that provides users with automated data discovery capabilities and is no longer sold as a separate SKU but is included in Einstein Analytics Plus – adding weight to the automated data discovery capabilities of Einstein Data Insights.

- **Predictive** – In beta is Einstein Prediction Builder (general availability in the spring 19 release), which can offer users predictive insights on any object in Salesforce and can be embedded in apps and workflow – a critical capability to push more data-driven insight into the day-to-day work of employees. Predictive capabilities have typically been the preserve of a power user minority, but the value of their output could benefit many. Predictive capabilities are already available in the Einstein Discovery product, further highlighting their importance to the wider Salesforce portfolio.

- **User interface** – In pilot and expected to GA in the second half of 2019, Einstein Voice for Analytics is new functionality that builds on Conversational Queries already in the solution. Voice interaction is an interesting capability in some cases, possibly for sales reps on the road or during in-person meetings with a group looking at a data set.

- **Speed to result** – Salesforce also announced intelligent Analytics Templates, some 50+ prebuilt templates around common analytic requirements such as pipeline, field service, and pricing analytics. They are available across industries with functionality designed to cut across lines of business. Speeding the creation of analytic capabilities with ready-made options not only helps decrease time to result but also helps embed good practice with KPIs built into the process.

Each of the areas sums neatly to the intelligent experience concept that Salesforce sets out, putting more data-driven insight in front of a larger user audience in a nontechnical way, and doing so more quickly and automatically than has traditionally been possible.

There are multiple Salesforce Einstein Analytics pricing options for enterprises to explore. Needless to say, Einstein Analytics Plus comes at a premium, justified by its new and beta, coming-soon features. The cost of buying analytical capability for a larger audience is always a tricky business, the calculation necessitating a considered view on the value returned for the price paid – especially difficult when considering a larger user group unused to having those tools. Salesforce is clearly mindful of this calculation and has a growing cadre of case studies that demonstrate the value of its analytics approach. Ovum strongly suggests that for all analytics deployment use cases, careful
monitoring of agreed-upon KPIs is essential to continuously drive value from the solution and demonstrate the success of any investments.

Salesforce Einstein Analytics is a natural complement to sales, marketing, and service efforts

Few larger enterprises do not have multiple analytics solutions, from business intelligence for regular reporting and regulatory purposes through self-service analytics for business analysts and data science capabilities emerging at the cutting edge. Salesforce’s early start in analytics placed it firmly in the realm of application-specific analytics, a useful and very context-aware solution that delivered insight on data created and stored in Salesforce itself. As Salesforce’s solution has evolved, so has its reach. That opens the possibility to bring data that is held in, for example, Oracle or SAP solutions, or for that matter – with some API-based integration effort – from just about any source (data management know-how still definitely required for both data structure and quality). This capability grows the appeal of Salesforce's analytics solution to other applications outside its established use cases.

Foremost, if your enterprise is invested in one or more of the Salesforce clouds – Sales, Marketing, or Service – then it is probably a strong contender for adopting Salesforce analytical capability based on that data. Designed for and highly aware of the Salesforce data and process environment, it is likely to deliver results more quickly and more natively in the apps than other options. Use cases outside this “core” are certainly possible given the ability to bring data from other enterprise applications into the solution and the solution's analytic functionality. It is important to note, however, that there will be requirements that are better served by other solutions that have their own data, process, and analysis advantages. Enterprises should view the Salesforce solution as a natural complement to their sales, marketing, and services efforts; consider it when building for requirements beyond the Salesforce platform; and be sensitive to the fact that existing BI and analytics solutions that serve other business requirements are core to many enterprises' data and analytics capabilities. Ensuring compatibility and comparability between the outputs of both will be essential to generating the enterprise-wide picture.

Appendix

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Ovum Consulting
We hope that this analysis will help you make informed and imaginative business decisions. If you have further requirements, Ovum’s consulting team may be able to help you. For more information about Ovum’s consulting capabilities, please contact us directly at consulting@ovum.com.
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