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How Salesforce powers AI-enabled marketing: Insights from Salesforce Chief Customer Officer for Agentforce Marketing Kevin Siminski

Host: Alan Hart, leader in marketing and customer strategy, Deloitte Consulting LLP

Guests: Kevin Siminski, Chief Customer Officer, Agentforce Marketing, Salesforce

Alan Hart: We're recording today at Salesforce Connections in beautiful Chicago, Illinois. And today, I have Kevin Siminski, chief customer officer for Agentforce Marketing at Salesforce. Kevin rejoined Salesforce in the fall of 2025, and he has spent 15 years immersed in the martech world and works extensively with customers executing complex digital transformation initiatives. His new role is focused on driving the adoption, go-to-market, and customer enablement of Agentforce Marketing product portfolio.

Previously, Kevin served as the senior vice president of Marketing Cloud Platform Product Team and four Salesforce roles. He had roles at the Basement, the boutique adtech agency; AT&T; and Indiana

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University. Today on the show, we talk about the ever-evolving names of Salesforce products, the recently announced acquisition of Contentful, and what the future of AI plus Salesforce looks like.

That and much more with Kevin Siminski.

Alan Hart [voice-over]: Are you ready to go beyond the basics of marketing? I'm Alan Hart and this is Marketing Beyond, where I chat with the world's leading chief marketing officers and business innovators to share ideas that spark change and inspire you to challenge the status quo. Join us as we explore the future of marketing and its endless potential.

Alan Hart: Well, Kevin, welcome to the show.

Kevin Siminski: Thank you Alan. Appreciate it.

Alan Hart: Yeah. Well, I know when we previously chatted, you took a gap year. And I wanted to ask about what happened during your gap year?

Kevin Siminski: Yeah. Gap year was a very interesting time of life. I left Salesforce in 2023, having been at Salesforce for 14 years. It was time for a break. I went to a small startup. Things didn't work the way I expected. And I decided, at that time, it was important to take a gap year. My family was going through some very significant personal challenges. My youngest daughter at the time was 10 years old, was diagnosed with Stage 3 cancer. And it was it was an important time for me to be very present with the family, help her navigate her health challenges. Thankfully, she's made a full recovery, full remission. So we're grateful. But—

Alan Hart: It's amazing.

Kevin Siminski: But for the year, right? It was just... you hear the topic of just being present. How do you be present? How do you show up? For my family, it was emotional support. It was being there, helping my daughter through the treatments, the after-effects of treatment. So, it was a great time. It brought our entire family closer together. And we came out of it really, really strong. Came out of it stronger.

Alan Hart: Yeah.

Kevin Siminski: You never think about, like, what that does to you. But it made our family stronger and thankfully, it was all resolved. So, the gap year was a great year for us.

Alan Hart: I'm happy that she's doing great. And that you guys got to be stronger. And what a privilege to be able to do that. That's amazing. Thank you for sharing.

Kevin Siminski: Yeah. Of course. It's an important part of who I am today.

Alan Hart: Yeah.

Kevin Siminski: And it's... you always talk about the separation between your personal life and your work life. You try and do that, right? But the reality is, the nature of life, it's so interconnected. You've got to take that for what it's worth, you know.

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I think about, like, agentic capability, agentic transformation. It was part of our journey. How to leverage all that data and bring it together and understand what's happening from a personal perspective—and all those platforms helped me.

Alan Hart: Yeah. Yeah, for sure. I mean, thinking about that and just the knowledge that you can extract using those tools today.

Kevin Siminski: Yes. Hundred percent, hundred percent.

Alan Hart: Especially going with something so complex. Making sense of even what the specialists are telling you.

Kevin Siminski: Yes.

Alan Hart: I mean, I can only imagine. That's awesome. Well, you are back at Salesforce.

Kevin Siminski: I am.

Alan Hart: You were at Salesforce for many years. What brought you back to Salesforce?

Kevin Siminski: So what brought me back? Over the 14 years at Salesforce before I left, I was part of the ExactTarget. So, I literally was here from day one of the acquisition, and one of the very first things that I was asked 30 days after we were acquired by Salesforce was when is ExactTarget going to replatform on top of the Salesforce platform?

That was 13 years ago. And we had a lot of discussion about it, and it took us a long time. We finally have that today.

Alan Hart: Right.

Kevin Siminski: That's one of the reasons I came back was, you know, I want to help our customers with this transformation—this digital transformation. I'm a firm believer in convergence.

I'm a firm believer in how do we bring all these complex processes together, and what a better place to do that at Salesforce. I get the privilege of sitting in front of some of the world's largest organizations, as well as some of the world's most agile organizations. Helping them navigate this transformation? That's honestly why I came back. I missed it. It was so exciting, and I couldn't be happier to be here today.

Alan Hart: So you are the chief customer officer for Agentforce Marketing?

Kevin Siminski: Correct.

Alan Hart: So, Agentforce Marketing. Salesforce Marketing Cloud. Help me with the names.

Kevin Siminski: Yeah. Agentforce Marketing. That is our portfolio name. Just really, hopefully put an end to that discussion. Agentforce Marketing is the portfolio name.

Alan Hart: OK.

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Kevin Siminski: Underneath the portfolio, we obviously have our products. We have our products called Marketing Cloud Engagement, Marketing Cloud Account Engagement. We have Marketing Cloud Next, which is our new platform built on top of the Salesforce Core platform.

So if you walk away with two things from here, Agentforce Marketing is the portfolio umbrella, and inside it we have Marketing Cloud Next.

Alan Hart: OK. All right. Thank you for clearing that up.

Kevin Siminski: Absolutely.

Alan Hart: So you have a new or increased focus on adopting products. And that's kind of a core part of your role. Like, how do I get people to adopt these products and use them? What's the catalyst for that being a big part of your role?

Kevin Siminski: Yeah. So, obviously as Salesforce innovates, as we release new capabilities into the market, the first and most important thing we want to think about—not six months after we release something—we literally want to think about how do we help customers approach adoption on day zero? Literally, from the very first moment, from the moment we release our software, how do we create those incentives, those catalysts to help customers realize the value of the platform? And over the years, we have built the cornerstones of our foundation. Probably one of the most important pillars or cornerstones of this foundation is data. How do we think about data? Data is the... Data 360.

It is the foundation of where Salesforce is built. So, we purposely have to get our customers thinking about data strategy. Once you have your data strategy, the fact that we have the common platform, now we have the ability to see all of our products—whether it's sales, service, marketing, loyalty, commerce—they all have access to that common data foundation. And that in itself creates a very powerful adoption motion for our customers, because for many years, our customers have lived in two very different systems. We've had the Salesforce Core platform—incredibly powerful. Sales, service, all the pieces. And then we have our B2C platform or B2B platform, which was Marketing Cloud.

And we had a lot of interconnectors built to try and kind of wrangle data from system A to system B. Now with it inherently being built on the same platform, that process becomes much easier. And it creates this almost frictionless path for our customers to aggressively adopt all of the features. And that's really where my role, my team's role is really out there to help be that catalyst for change for our customers.

Alan Hart: Right. So making the switch or moving into the new platform, because of that combination, is it—it sounds like it's a little easier. Still work to be done, but a little easier.

Kevin Siminski: There's still work to be done. I would say there are pieces of it that are much easier.

Alan Hart: Right.

Kevin Siminski: There are pieces that are a little bit different. And I think that's the piece that we want to help customers with. We want to help our customers navigate that path that creates the least amount of resistance for our customers.

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So, yes, we have intentionally tried to make this as easy as possible for our customers. And hopefully, you see that with our products.

Alan Hart: Right. Yeah. All right. Well, with new introductions of tools, there's always myths that exist in the ether. What myths should we bust today?

Kevin Siminski: So the myths: One, is Marketing Cloud Engagement, our current platforms—are they going away?

Alan Hart: Right.

Kevin Siminski: Absolutely not. Having been back at Salesforce for seven months now, it's one of the common questions I'm literally asked all the time: What's happening with our platforms? Absolutely nothing. We are still innovating on our existing platforms. When you think about some of the exciting capabilities that we're talking about here at Connections. One of them is we're bringing MCP support to Marketing Cloud Engagement.

Alan Hart: Right.

Kevin Siminski: So, we're bolting on this support with MCP, model context protocol, to enable essentially a headless experience with a platform that for 20-plus years has had a very complex UI.

So that's myth number one that I want to bust. Myth number two, and this is an important one, is you don't have to tackle migrations. Like migrations—that is a word that instills fear in so many chief technology officers, chief marketing officers, CIOs. Right?

Alan Hart: Yeah.

Kevin Siminski: We have created a powerful bridge that connects Marketing Cloud Engagement or Marketing Cloud Account Engagement with Marketing Cloud Advanced. So, a couple important distinctions there: One, we have one platform now. How many times in the past have I had to have the conversation with our customers: Do we use (I'll use the legacy product or our original product names) do I use ExactTarget or do I use Pardot? And as a marketer, you've had to make a very deliberate choice.

Now, with Marketing Cloud Advanced, having the capabilities for both B2C and B2B, guess what? You don't have to make that decision anymore. You have those capabilities in the same platform.

Alan Hart: OK. Well, big news this week: You guys announced you entered into an agreement to buy Contentful.

Kevin Siminski: Yes.

Alan Hart: Which is a big push in the headless CMS. We were just talking about the MCP feature to make the headless experience; now we're talking headless CMS. I know you probably can't talk about the deal specifics, but tell me what the push into headless and headless CMS might do for you?

Kevin Siminski: So content's a huge part of our portfolio, right? When you think about our customers, how do you build content? How do you how do you create? How does that whole process unfold? We have always thought about the importance of content. This acquisition is incredibly exciting, and there

will be a lot of details coming as we get closer, as we close the transaction, which is scheduled to close in Q3. So while I can't share a lot of the details, just know right now, we are incredibly excited about the addition of this product to our portfolio. We look forward to the close of the acquisition, and it's going to bring some exciting capabilities to the Marketing Cloud.

Alan Hart: Yeah, I love it. That's one investment that you're making, but you guys are also investing in Anthropic. You're adding these features with MCP being able to tie in with other providers of AI tools. What does the endgame look like in an AI universe with Salesforce at the center of it?

Kevin Siminski: Yeah. So, the data foundation that we are grounding our agents upon, it's an incredibly rich platform. We also recognize that our customers—you're investing in significant agents across your ecosystem, you might be developing your own agents, you might have your own LLMs. And in the world that we're thinking about, how do we bring all of that together?

How do we create those interconnections—agent-to-agent interconnections—that we've intentionally made this very, very open because we want to see those third-party agents interfacing with our agents. We want to see the concept of super agents proliferate. And the beautiful part about this is with the data foundations that we've established, the controls that we've established, it allows you to have that granular, really customized approach where you can bring together those third-party agents, those third-party LLMs, into the Salesforce ecosystem and really seamlessly interconnect it all. So, the possibilities are endless right now.

Alan Hart: Yeah. Well, I will say, the one thing that's exciting to me as a practitioner and somebody that advises clients as well, is that openness component, which is a big move for the company and all of the solutions that you guys have. And the fact that you talk about data cloud—or Data 360—and all of the various components, you're in an environment where you may meet—correct me if I get this wrong. You're in an environment where potentially an LLM or an agent is instructing the assembly and the fabric that you guys own to create the experiences for customers—and in a way where maybe we get to a place where humans are checking it and designing it from sitting back and watching the agents work. But that's pretty exciting to think about yourself as the fabric around all of this that kind of builds all the connection points, if that makes sense.

Kevin Siminski: Yeah, it really is—

Alan Hart: If that's the way you see it.

Kevin Siminski: Yeah, absolutely. One of the analogies I frequently use in talking to our customers is being in the role that I am, I travel a lot, I spend a lot of time on airplanes. So over the years, I'm very interested in a lot of things.

I've always been fascinated by flight. The fact is not lost on me that when I'm sitting on an airplane, realize there's an autopilot system literally at the captain and the first officer's fingertips. And that instrument autopilot system literally can start the plane. It can navigate the ground at the airports. It can literally take the plane off, put it in a cruising altitude, configure the plane for landing, land the plane, and take it back to the gate, all without human interaction.

Am I suggesting that that's where we're at with marketing automation? No. But what I am suggesting is there are pieces of that system—very, very parallel similarities between what we are saying. You may be a marketer. One of the most important things marketers do every single day is they build something called a campaign brief. That campaign brief is essentially their instruction set of how to build a campaign. Who's approving it? What's the audience look like? What's the strategy look like? What's the orchestration processes look like? What's the exit criteria look like? There are elements of that campaign brief that certainly can be automated. I always love asking our clients a question: How long does it take to develop a campaign and orchestrate a campaign? Some will say, oh, it's a three-month process. Some will say it's longer; some will say, oh, it's a week. Some might say, we want to get to a place where it's a day or less.

Alan Hart: Right.

Kevin Siminski: The AI capabilities that we are building are going to help our marketers do just that. They can choose and pick. What areas do they want to really lean into? Maybe one day, they're comfortable with taking the hands off the flight controls and letting the system do what it's supposed to do—like, literally do all of it. Are we there yet? Probably not. Do we have the capabilities to do that today? Absolutely.

Alan Hart: OK. All right. Well, I want to transition gears. One of the things I love to do is get to know you a little bit better. And my favorite question I ask everyone that comes on the show is, is their experience of your past that defines or makes up who you are today?

Kevin Siminski: Yeah. No, that's a great question. When I think about it professionally, many, many years ago, when I started in the workspace, I actually started in a completely different part of the industry. I was in the telecommunications world building high-speed optical networks, working with lasers and making sure that we can we can move all of this data around the world as fast as possible.

And one of the things that struck me very early on in my career was engineers. You tend to get the stereotype of you sit behind the keyboard, you sit behind a large monitor, you have your headphones on, and you don't talk to anybody. Which, nothing wrong with that. However, as an engineer in the telecommunications world, I felt it was important to listen to my customers and spend time away from the keyboard, from out behind the monitor. So that, very early on in my career, the importance of the customer was really emphasized.

And as my career progressed, I realized that whether I was in an engineering operations role, whether I was in a product management role, whether I was in a customer role, at the intersection of those three elements is where I love to live. That's the space that I feel the most comfortable in.

I'm often asked, Kevin, you walk into very difficult conversations all of the time. Like, how do you think about that? And my true feeling is any interaction that I have with a customer, whether it's positive, whether it's neutral, whether it's negative is an opportunity.

I have dealt with many challenging conversations. And out of those conversations, I've developed some incredible personal relationships over the years that have transcended business, and they're now personal friends, because of a negative experience. And so, I just really firmly believe that the intersection of the customer or the technology, the product, is so important.

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Alan Hart: Yeah. I love that notion of coming out stronger than you went in. And I think, in some cases, that negative context and working the problem together does forge a new relationship potentially.

Kevin Siminski: It does. Absolutely does.

Alan Hart: As long as you work the problem and find a resolution.

Kevin Siminski: Absolutely.

Alan Hart: Well, what advice would you give your younger self if you were starting this journey all over again?

Kevin Siminski: Gosh, what advice would I give my younger self? One would be listening. Just be very intentional with listening to our customers. Listen with passion. The second piece would be really make sure—there's so much happening. Make sure you take those key insights that you're listening for and do something with them.

I often think about the notebooks. We still see notebooks appear in conferences. They're always sitting on the desk. And often you write those notes down, and they're just an artifact of a meeting that never really happens.

And I think the important thing is to tell your younger self, make sure you have a system to capture. Make sure you have a system to act upon those artifacts. Like, that's where I'm really excited about today, because all this technology? I can consume so much information, I can produce really meaningful insights with a couple clicks.

Alan Hart: That's very true. Well, what are you trying to learn more about yourself right now?

Kevin Siminski: Gosh, what am I trying to learn more? I'm fascinated by this role of where today agentic capabilities are moving. We are moving at light speed. I think about this technology transfer transformation we're on. I can't think of a moment like today that's comparable.

Probably the only thing that would be comparable to where we're at today was really when the web browser became predominant in like, let's say, 1995–96, when web was really starting to take off. That's the only comparison point that I have. I just see the rate of change literally every day. It feels very much like that time.

Alan Hart: Right, right.

Kevin Siminski: So, I'm just really immersing myself in all this technology and really trying to understand it.

Alan Hart: Well, it does feel very much like that time—with the exception that I think it might be going faster.

Kevin Siminski: I think it is.

Alan Hart: Because all that data exists—

Kevin Siminski: I think it is.

Alan Hart: Forward consumption. Well, as you look out in the world today, is there anything you're curious about? Just, like, that's interesting, what's going on over there.

Kevin Siminski: One of the things I am very interested in outside the technology is I love using my hands. I'm an artist. I love building, and I think in today's world, I think the trades, as an example, are really at an interesting inflection point.

You think about just how do you get people with experience in things like woodworking or electrical or plumbing—all those things that happen. I think there's an inevitable proliferation of kind of re-grounding in those spaces, and you're going to see a lot of just much more focus on that.

That's something that agents don't help with. They don't solve your hands-on problem. So, I love leaning into that, that part of the world, that analog part of the world, that is still very much grounded in rich tradition, rich history. And how do you make more with it?

Alan Hart: Right, right. I'm seeing that. I have an 18-year-old daughter going to college, hopefully going to study aerospace engineering this fall. And there is, as I watched many college presentations, there is a shift towards mechanical engineering in many disciplines. I mean, computer science is still there—still going to be there for decades, as far as I believe.

But that notion of getting hands-on, the things that can't be solved without a human. It's kind of interesting and a little bit exciting in the aspect of how much talent can we apply to those challenges now in new ways and different ways?

Kevin Siminski: Yeah. Absolutely. Aerospace. Complex metal forging. Like, how does technology influence that? Like CNC is a great example. CNC is not a new technology. CNC is a very simple set of linked machine languages that have been around for many, many years. How did these platforms start leveraging the advances?

Alan Hart: Yeah.

Kevin Siminski: It's fascinating. It's absolutely fascinating.

Alan Hart: Well, as you look at the marketing landscape today, what do you feel like is the largest opportunity or potential threat facing marketers right now?

Kevin Siminski: I think the largest opportunity and threat is kind of one and the same. I think it's how do we enable the workforce to leverage the technology in a safe, efficient manner to help accelerate the jobs that marketers are doing, but also in a way that is safe.

You know, organizations—AI adoption organizations—are a very, very complex topic. You have rules. You have regulations. You have so much happening that dictates how organizations can leverage this technology. We want to make sure marketers understand how to approach this in a safe manner, and we want to make sure we are providing some of those capabilities.

Alan Hart: All right. Awesome. Well, last question as I bring it a little closer. We're at Connections, if you can't hear, if you're listening to this conversation. And you're very close to the technology, you're very

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close to customers and practitioners. What do you feel like is the biggest opportunity maybe marketers are just underestimating that's right there in front of them?

Kevin Siminski: I think one is the question of how do marketers interact with technology? There's always been this notion of organizational silos that exist between the CMOs and the chief digital officers and the chief technology officers. I think the opportunity is, how do you start kind of removing those lines and those barriers in the silos to allow the organizations to work closely together?

We at Salesforce often think about how do we enable just that? And we're building some of that into our platform. How do we make it easier? So, we want to make sure marketers walked away from this event energized. We want to also make sure they walk away with the right answers. So, when they want to start talking about adopting this technology, they don't run into the roadblocks of like, oh, I can't access this because I don't have the permissions because they're in another part of the organization. We want to arm the marketers with the tools, the questions, and the ability to start asking and enabling this transformation.

Alan Hart: Well, Kevin, thanks for coming on the show.

Kevin Siminski: Yes. Thank you so much. I appreciate it. And thank you for sponsoring this opportunity for us.

Alan Hart: Awesome.

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