



GUIDE

The ultimate feature experimentation buyer's guide

How to choose the right platform for your business

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Introduction

So you're shopping for a feature experimentation platform. Let us know what's driving this decision:

- ☐ You're tired of shipping features into the void, crossing your fingers they don't break everything.
 - ☐ You can't access your own data quickly enough to make competitive product decisions.
- You're sick of watching your team spend weeks building something users completely ignore.

If that sounds familiar, that's exactly why teams are going all-in on progressive delivery and experimentation platforms.

We're talking feature flags that let you test with real users before going full send. Gradual rollouts that don't give you panic attacks. And yes, those beautiful one-click rollbacks for when things go sideways.

We're not here to pitch you on why you need this stuff; you already know that. What we want to do is help you not screw up the buying decision.

We've talked to hundreds of teams going through this exact process, and honestly, a lot of them make the same mistakes. They get dazzled by feature lists, ignore day-to-day stuff that matters, or choose based on price alone and regret it six months later.

This guide breaks down what matters when you're evaluating platforms. The stuff that'll make or break your experience once you're actually using it.

(And yeah, we'd love for you to pick Optimizely when all's said and done, but mostly we want you to pick the right platform for your team.)

A decorative teal line graphic in the bottom right corner of the page. It consists of a vertical line segment that starts from the bottom and extends upwards, intersecting with a horizontal line segment that extends from the left. From this intersection, a curved line arches upwards and to the right, following the outer edge of the page.

01

So... what is feature experimentation? And what can it do for you?

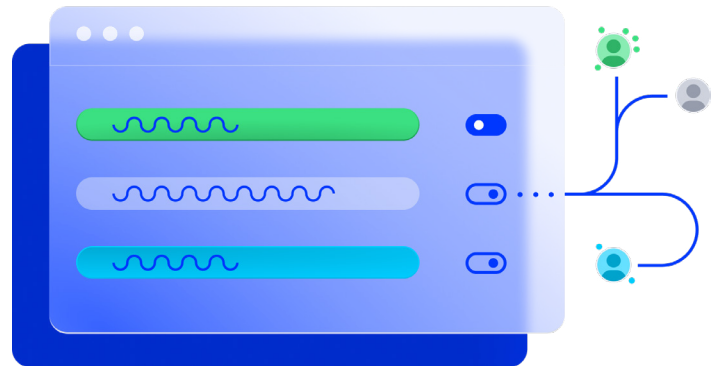
To put it succinctly, feature experimentation is the bee's knees. The eel's eyebrows. The llama's pajamas. The kipper's knickers. The caterpillar's kimono. The...

<I think we get it now, thanks>

Why? Because it's such a powerfully effective way of testing and validating new features before you fully roll them out. **Here's how it works.**

- Create a controlled experiment
- Expose a subset of users the new feature
- The rest continue using the existing version
- Compare the behavior and feedback of the two groups
- Gain high value insights into the impact on user engagement, satisfaction, and overall performance

In other words, you get to mitigate the risks associated with new feature launches. So forget releasing a feature to your entire user base based on a feeling in your stomach that might actually be the jelly donut you munched earlier. Because the days of shutting your eyes, crossing your fingers, wearing your lucky socks, and hoping for the best... they're over.



With feature experimentation, you access the data you need to make an informed decision. If the feature works, great. Roll it out. If not, you've avoided an expensive failure **and** you've learnt a few things you can use to refine the next iteration.

In other words, you make sure you introduce only the most effective and most user-friendly features to the wider audience.

Let's take a whistlestop tour through the non-negotiables of your dream feature experimentation platform — and then take a look at some of the benefits they'll deliver.

The 10 essential features your new platform needs to offer...

01 Omnichannel experimentation

What? Set your own user IDs to create consistent personalized experiences across all your customer channels.

Why? Deliver winning experience wherever your customers are — on your website, mobile apps, TV apps, and IoT apps.

02 Behavioral targeting and segmentation

What? Rulesets allow you to target features at locations, demographics or any attributes you define.

Why? Quickly QA experiments by accelerating specific users into variations.

03 Data tools

What? Easily export event data and connect to BI and analytics platforms.

Why? Easily analyze experiment data with other sources, add metrics post-rollout or experiment, and build reports.

04 Targeted rollouts

What? Use advanced filters and attributes to define your audiences for optimal results..

Why? Control which users see a variation of a feature with feature flags and targeted rollouts.

05 Custom configuration

What? Easily swap out your own components for logging, error handling, event dispatching, integrations, and more.

Why? Tailor the platform to your business requirements for a smooth integration into your existing processes

06 No-latency SDKs

What? Conduct experiments in performance-critical codepaths

Why? SDKs bucket users in memory so experiments have near-zero impact on latency.

07 Analytics

What? Automatically analyze the outcomes of experiments with statistically valid results.

Why? Gain insight into the impact of your experiments — with no complex statistical analysis required.

08 Real-time segments

What? Centralize your audiences in one place.

Why? Target them to tailor experiences depending on their behaviors and preferences.

09 Progressive delivery

What? Ship code faster and with more control. Empower your team with feature control levers and kill switches.

Why? Continuously improve the customer experience.

10 Stats engine

What? See the impact of your experiments in real-time, with sequential error control and machine learning.

Why? Gain instant, up-to-date and highly accurate results of every experiment.



...and who they benefit.

→ Product Owners and Product Managers

Using feature flags and rollouts to gradually control the blast radius of their feature releases, product owners and managers gain the insight to see what works and what doesn't before committing to a full scale rollout.

→ Data Scientists

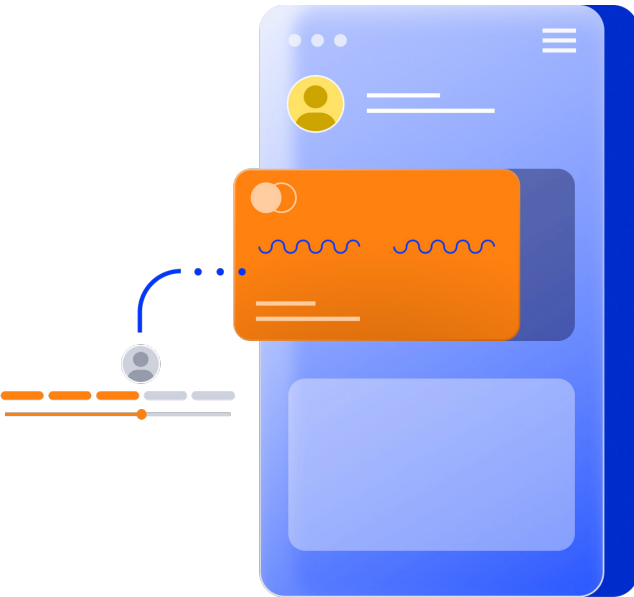
Responsible for designing, developing and supporting data pipelines and applications, data scientists can rely on rigorous statistical analysis to deliver accurate and reliable insights.

→ Engineers

Aiming to code and deploy as quickly and confidently as possible, engineers have traditionally built feature flagging and A/B/n testing tools in-house to enable experimentation directly within the codebase.

→ Marketing teams

Often looking for a platform that makes it fast and simple to make changes to the frontend of a website with JavaScript, marketing teams can also run A/B/n tests without any need for a developer.



02

Boom! How feature experimentation helps you achieve your goals.

The next step is to understand how a feature experimentation platform aligns with your business goals. Let's quickly go through some of the most common aims and see how FX makes the magic happen.

I want to... improve experiences for my users.

FX makes the magic happen by... A/B testing different designs, layouts, navigation flows... the works. These all make it possible to identify which version resonates best with your target users. That in turn results in a higher level of engagement and satisfaction. And on and on it goes as you keep testing, refining, and improving in a virtuous circle of continuous improvement. Sweet.

I want to... optimize the way my products perform.

FX makes the magic happen by... empowering you to experiment with different feature variations. That allows teams to measure improvements in performance such as increased speed, reduced load times, or enhanced usability.

I want to... personalize — and I want to personalize at scale.

FX makes the magic happen by... tailoring experiences based on user segments so you can test different approaches for various audiences. Then just go ahead, scale the best-performing variations, and unleash the true power of personalization.

I want to... test everything, everywhere.

FX makes the magic happen by... providing the capability to run experiments across your entire stack, from content and algorithms to websites, apps and OTT. Test everything. Win everywhere.

I want to... minimize risk and make smart, data-driven decisions.

FX makes the magic happen by... testing new ideas and features to a subset of users before committing to any full-scale rollout. That way you test the performance of any change and only launch if the results give you the green light. By making informed choices based on actual user behavior and preferences, you significantly reduce the risk of failure. Now that's smart.

I want to... drive innovation.

FX makes the magic happen by... supporting a dynamic culture of experimentation that encourages the ever more imaginative experiments that lead to innovative and customer-centric product improvements. Welcome to "ahead of the game."

A recent McKinsey & Company report showed that 71% of consumers expect your brand to offer personalized interactions. And 76% get frustrated when this doesn't happen.

03

So...what are you actually looking for?

We've outlined feature experimentation, the benefits it offers, and how it can help you achieve your goals. Next step is to dive into the details. This comprehensive checklist will take you through all the factors you need to consider to make sure your new FX platform makes the perfect fit for your business today — and your strategy for the future.

Overall business requirements

- **Do more. More easily.**

Does the platform feature all the advanced features, functions, and integrations that allow everyone to easily manage features, run more experiments, and collaborate more closely?

These will likely include things like feature flagging, test types, audience targeting, event tracking, and data analysis/statistical modeling.

The FOMO factor

- **Adopt. Scale. Succeed.**

Does the technology offer the kind of support and processes that will allow it to gain traction and scale up across your organization? Will it make people think they're missing out if they don't get onboard?

- **All the science. Without the scientists.**

Does the experimentation platform produce rigorous, accurate results and real-world insights that anyone can easily understand without sucking up to a data scientist?

Secure. Compliant. Relax.

- **Compliance standards... as standard.**

Does the platform meet internal security and privacy requirements as well as external standards such as PCI and SOC 2?

Tip



This big picture perspective ideally takes a big picture approach. Can you form a working group of stakeholders representing each relevant area of the business? (Needless to say, you're in charge.)

- **Privacy. Protected.**

Does it protect PII and other sensitive information?

- **Every change, logged.**

Can you audit every change you make to features and experiments for total transparency and complete control?

- **Control access. All areas.**

Does the platform offer enterprise security measures such as single sign-on and two-factor authentication, so you can control who gains access to what?

Speed with stability

- **The need for speed.**

The load speed of web pages and apps is essential for a great user experience. How does the feature experimentation platform affect this?

- **Can you keep up?**

Will you be able to continuously monitor performance?

- **Uptime and availability**

How stable is the platform? Is uptime guaranteed?

Capability with scalability

- **Big data.**

Is your potential new toy capable of collecting, processing, and reporting on large (and even massive) data sets? Can it speak multiple languages? And does it support various implementation options, like a microservices environment for example?

- **Cutting edge capability.**

Is the technology specifically designed for advanced experimentation programs and large, multi-team organizations?

- **Everywhere enabled.**

Will the platform offer full functionality to support experimentation across multiple digital channels — those you use now, and those you may move onto in the future?



The bottom line

- **Experimentation by number**

What is the total cost of ownership (TCO) for buying or building and then maintaining the platform over time?

Feature experimentation. Future-proofed.

- **Vive la evolution**

You never know what the future holds. Does the platform exist within a wider ecosystem in which developer networks and third-party marketplaces offer extensions and add-ons that allow you to boost your capabilities over time?

- **Social skills**

How easily and how seamlessly will the platform integrate third party extensions?



04

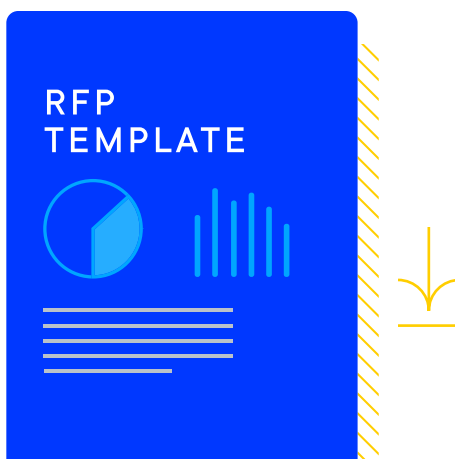
What you should expect from your provider

Buying the right experimentation platform isn't just about buying the right experimentation platform. It's also about buying into the right experimentation provider.

Your choice of provider can make or break the success of your new platform. You want to find a partner who is responsive. Reliable. Future-facing and future-proofed. Here are a few of the things you might want to factor into the final decision.

Want to start putting together your RFP?

[Make life easy and download our RFP Template.](#)



1 Vendor reputation

They say reputation is everything, so does your prospective provider enjoy a strong, trustworthy reputation in the market? Can they point to a long track record of reliability and performance? Ask around for recommendations and check out analyst reports, case studies, customer testimonials, and industry awards to decide if you swipe left or swipe right.

2 Customer support

You're way too busy to waste a morning arguing with chatbots and waiting to speak to "a real person". You want to know that, if you need help, you won't be left hanging. So, evaluate the level of customer support and service provided by any potential vendor in terms of response times, support channels (e.g., phone, email, chat), and the expertise of the support team.

3 Documentation & communities

If you have an issue, sometimes it's just quicker to solve it yourself rather than contact customer support, wait a reply, then wait longer for a fix — assuming you have access to thorough documentation. Life is going to be much easier if your vendor's ecosystem includes a dedicated developer community, where they can troubleshoot issues and gain insights from peers that will enable them to work more efficiently.

4 Pricing

Not every vendor follows the same pricing model. Some are based on user activity. Others on traffic volumes or performance levels. That can make it hard to compare different options, so you need to understand which fits best for you.

05

Brace for impact

Choosing the right feature experimentation platform directly impacts business outcomes. Sure, this is the part we could fill with all kinds of cool charts. Big green arrows. Colorful bars reaching higher and higher. Probably some zig zaggy lines that keep spiking ever upwards.

But we think nothing says success quite like real people using FX to deliver real results in the real world. That's why we wanted to share a few stories to help you understand just what kind of power the right platform can bring to your business.



Calendly. Adding personalization to the schedule.

Calendly has nailed personalized experiences for 20 million users. See how they are now delivering significant improvements in conversion rates, revenue conversion, and engagement.



[Watch the video here](#) (4 minutes)



News UK. Making headline figures.

News UK saw a huge 39% increase in subscriptions after A/B testing new features such as checkout flow and paywall strategies, clearly demonstrating the value of experimentation in driving business growth.



[Watch the video here](#) (4 minutes)



Channel 4. Helping viewers get with the program

Channel 4 runs experiments across web, mobile apps, smart TVs and games consoles to improve the customer experience, encourage users to watch more content, and maximize ad revenue.



[Go behind the scene](#) (Blog)



Trustradius

Powered by real users. Backed by in-house research specialists. Moderated for truth and quality. TrustRadius helps millions of buyers to evaluate software and make the right purchase decision, fast. Here are just a couple of the reviews trusted real-world users have left about Optimizely.



- *Optimizely has helped us increase our website's conversion rate by 20%. This has resulted in more revenue with the same level of traffic.*
- *Optimizely's feature flagging capability has lowered the risk associated with releasing new features, leading to a 15% decrease in development costs.*
- *The integration of Optimizely's real-time analytics has allowed us to make decisions based on data, getting rid of guesswork and errors.*



[Read the full review here](#)



To my experience, Optimizely should be used across all core software releases in platforms/apps and products that are customer facing regardless whether B2C or B2B. Even in cases of internal platforms with thousands of users, testing features or pre-releasing and monitoring functionality is key.”



[Read the full review here](#)

06

The inevitable conclusion

So that's your guide to buying the right feature experimentation platform for you. As we've seen, the impact can be huge. The benefits transformative. And the results... well, let's just say your performance review should be a good one.

But only if you make the right choice.

That means making sure...

...your next platform features the benefits your business needs today and tomorrow.

...it offers the capabilities that align with — and drive forward — your business ambitions now and in the future.

...it sits at the heart of a wider eco-system in which you can extend your capabilities, access technical support, and even gain access to independent expertise and learnings shared in user forums.

(and just as importantly)

...that it is provided by a partner with a track record in reliability, innovation, and support.

Feature Experimentation delivers the data you need to make informed decisions on the features you release and those that go back to the drawing board.

That insight leads to deeper engagement, higher conversions, and better user experiences.

Plus, you get to achieve all that with minimum risk, since you know that the changes you roll out have already been shown to work in real world conditions.



Want to see how it all works? Let's arrange your [personalized demo](#).



The little library of digital experimentation

If this guide has not only whet your appetite for the power of feature experimentation, but ignited an insatiable passion for it, we can help.

Because we're delighted to offer you free access to this specially curated collection of articles, books, and websites to help you master the subject and impress colleagues, friends, and family alike*!

- **Digital Experimentation Buyers Guide**
- [The Product Experimentation Guide](#)
- [Big Book of Experimentation](#)
- [Evolution of Experimentation — 127.000 Experiments](#)
- [Experimentation platform: Should you build or buy?](#)
- [Mastering data-driven decisions: The key to successful product experimentation](#)

And if you have any questions about anything in this guide or in the resources above, please feel free to drop us a line: <Insert email address>

*This is absolutely not got guaranteed.

Hi — we're Optimizely

We're on a mission to help people unlock their digital potential. We do that by reinventing how marketing and product teams work to create and optimize digital experiences across all channels. With Optimizely One™, our industry-first operating system for marketers, we offer teams flexibility and choice to build their stack their way with our fully SaaS, fully decoupled, and highly composable solution.

We help companies around the world orchestrate their entire content lifecycle, monetize every digital experience and experiment across all customer touchpoints — all through Optimizely One™, the leading digital experience platform that powers every phase of the marketing lifecycle through a single, AI-accelerated workflow. Optimizely has nearly 1,500 employees across our 21 global offices and has 700+ partners. We are proud to help more than 10,000 businesses, including H&M, PayPal, Zoom, and Toyota, enrich their customer lifetime value, increase revenue and grow their brands. At Optimizely, we live each day with a simple philosophy: large enough to serve, small enough to care.

Come and find out how at optimizely.com

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