2025 STATE OF MARKETING AI REPORT

Presented by Marketing AI Institute and SmarterX

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Saying the Quiet Part Out Loud

A Letter from Paul Roetzer | Founder & CEO, Marketing AI Institute

Last year, we stated that the marketing industry was at a crossroads.

Our data from 2024 made it clear that, while marketers were racing ahead to adopt AI, their companies were failing to support them with adequate training and education.

We noted that every company leader faced two clear paths: Either commit to AI literacy for all in order to build a competitive advantage with AI, or become obsolete. This year, we're seeing the consequences of taking these paths play out—and our data shows that it's never been more important to pay attention.

We are now seeing increasing signals that widescale job disruption from AI is on the horizon.

My personal observation based on working with dozens of executives on AI transformation this year alone is that we've already been seeing "quiet AI layoffs" for the past 6-12 months. This is where companies replace staff with AI or, at minimum, refrain from hiring new staff due to AI. In either event, they have masked these moves under things like return-to-work policies to avoid bad PR.

But now, likely driven by worsening macro-economic factors, business leaders have started to say the quiet part out loud.

In April 2025, *The Information* found that executives at more than half a dozen companies said AI has affected their hiring plans. A principal at EY even said: "I expect, and our customers expect, a slowdown in their hiring or reduction in net new demand for labor across the vast majority of their business functions, if not an actual reduction in head count."

Shopify CEO Tobi Lütke has made waves for a leaked memo mandating that staff prove that AI can't do a job before hiring for it, a perspective you can bet every single AI-forward executive will follow from now on. And in my own conversations with executives at some of the world's top firms, the topic of AI's impending impact on the current workforce and future hiring needs has been a recurring theme.

Marketers are starting to realize something's up, too. The 2025 State of Marketing AI Report, our fifth-annual, is our largest report yet, collecting data from almost 1,900 marketing and business leaders on how they use AI.

It shows that, while AI adoption and literacy are at all-time highs, so are the levels of pessimism and uncertainty about AI's impact on jobs.

In fact, it makes clear that it's never been more important to work for an AI-forward company.

The uncertainty and anxiety surrounding AI's impact on jobs will be felt by everyone.

The people who choose to embrace AI, experiment with it, and continually expand their understanding of it have the greatest opportunity to thrive moving forward. The easiest way to do that is by working for a company that takes a responsible, human-centered approach to scaling AI throughout the organization.

Paul Roetzer

PAUL ROETZER
Founder & CEO, Marketing AI Institute and SmarterX

Executive Summary

1 Marketers are racing ahead with AI.

This year, 40% of respondents (the highest proportion) say they're in the Experimentation phase of AI, where they're actively testing AI tools. Another 26% are in the Integration phase, where they're embedding AI into their workflows and processes. And 17% say they're in the most mature phase, Transformation, where they're actively reimagining their jobs with AI. (By contrast, just 17% say they're in the earliest Curiosity or Understanding phases of AI.)

When asked about their marketing team's AI usage, 46% say they're in the Piloting phase, or prioritizing and running AI pilot projects. Fourteen percent say they're in the Scaling phase, or achieving wide-scale adoption of AI.

That means 60% of respondents are now either Piloting or Scaling AI. That's an 18-percentage-point jump since 2023, when only 42% were in either phase.

2 AI is more important than ever to marketing.

Marketers are racing ahead with AI for good reason: More of them than ever think AI is important to the success of their marketing in the next 12 months. This year, 74% said that AI is either "critically important" or "very important" to their marketing in the next year, a jump of 8 percentage points from 2024.

Additionally, the number of respondents saying AI is specifically "critically important" has jumped a whopping 20 percentage points since 2021, the first year this report was published.

3 Saving time with AI is more important than ever to marketers.

When asked what outcome they're trying to achieve with AI, marketers are more likely than ever to say they're trying to save time. This year, 82% said that reducing the time they spend on repetitive, data-driven tasks was the primary outcome they're trying to achieve with AI. This was the top answer, and the highest percentage of responses for this question that we've recorded so far.

Additionally, when asked to write in answers about what excites them most about AI, respondents overwhelmingly said efficiency/time savings (37% of responses).

4 ChatGPT is still the undisputed leader of AI tools, but a lot depends on company size.

When asked if they have a favorite AI tool, respondents overwhelmingly said ChatGPT (or OpenAI's models) was their favorite (57% of responses).

Respondents were also asked if their organization provided a license to ChatGPT Team or Enterprise, Microsoft Copilot, or Google Gemini. ChatGPT was also a leader here: Respondents overwhelmingly said that their company provided them with a ChatGPT license (61%).

However, the tools that companies are most likely to provide change dramatically based on their size. As companies get bigger, ChatGPT steadily declines in popularity as an answer. It peaks at firms with $1 - $10M in annual revenue, where 70% of respondents say they're provided with a ChatGPT license. But then it fell significantly to 37% of respondents saying the same thing at firms with $1B+.

The number of respondents saying they have a Gemini license also steadily declines as companies increase in size.

That gap is filled by Microsoft Copilot. The number of people saying their companies provide Copilot licenses steadily increases as firms get bigger. Just 25% of people at firms with $0 - $1M in revenue say they are provided with a license, compared to 63% at firms with $1B+.

5 Lack of training and the pace of change are enormous barriers to AI adoption.

Despite the industry racing ahead, it's abundantly clear that a lack of training—and the pace of change—are preventing marketers from reaching their full potential.

Marketers once again cite a lack of education and training as the top barrier they face to AI adoption, as has been the case every single year we've published this report. This year, 62% said this was a top barrier to AI adoption in their marketing, followed by a lack of awareness or understanding within their organization (52%).

Sixty-eight percent of respondents also functionally have no AI training being provided by their companies, with 44% saying they don't have it, 21% saying it's in development, and 3% unsure if it exists. While this number has improved slightly from past years, it's still dire.

Additionally, when asked to write in answers related to their biggest struggles and concerns with AI, respondents heavily cite a lack of knowledge and training, a lack of time to learn or experiment, and a fear of getting left behind as major issues they're trying to navigate.

6 There may be a disconnect between leaders and employees on training.

We know that overall, respondents cite a lack of education and training as their top barrier to AI adoption. But when you break down this response by role, a disconnect appears.

CEOs/Founders/Presidents are much less likely to say that a lack of education and training is a barrier. Just 49% say it's a barrier, which is 13 percentage points lower than average and at least 10 percentage points less than any other role. This gap, plus the fact that the majority of respondents say their company doesn't offer training, could indicate a serious disconnect between how leaders and staff view AI education.

7 Prompting is an obvious and addressable gap in AI education.

This year, we asked specifically whether respondents' companies provided training for marketing staff on prompt engineering or other skills to achieve optimal AI-generated outputs. Sixty-two percent said no. Given that effective prompting leads to better results with AI—and that prompting best practices are known—this appears to be an obvious, addressable gap in corporate AI education.

Larger companies have plenty to learn from the smallest firms here. Respondents at firms with $0 - $1M in annual revenue are most likely to say their company trains them on prompting (49%). However, firms with $500M - $1B are least likely to say the same thing (24%).

8 Marketers are more pessimistic than ever about AI's impact on marketing jobs.

This year, 53% of respondents say they believe more marketing jobs will be eliminated by AI than will be created by AI. This is the highest number on record since we started asking the question in 2023. In that year, only 40% of marketers said they believed more jobs would be eliminated than created, which means pessimism has increased by 13 points in just two years.

However, marketers are more nuanced when asked about AI's impact on their jobs specifically, which we started asking about this year. The highest proportion of respondents (33%) say they are neutral in their concern about AI's impact on their job, seeing both risks and opportunities with AI in their roles. Only 21% say they are either somewhat concerned (12%) or very concerned (9%) about AI's impact on their role.

9 AI roadmaps are the unlock, and there's never been more of a need for them.

Overall, companies still lack the internal governance necessary to truly scale AI.

Seventy-five percent lack an AI roadmap or strategy for the next 1-2 years (with either 64% saying they don't have one or 11% not sure they have one). Sixty-three percent don't have generative AI policies or don't know if they exist. Sixty percent say the same thing about AI ethics policies. And 67% don't have an AI council or don't know if one exists.

While these numbers have improved over the last year, they are still highly problematic. Based on the data, one solution does present itself: Developing a marketing AI roadmap that prioritizes AI use cases and projects for the next 1-2 years.

Having an AI roadmap is a powerful signal. Organizations with an AI roadmap are roughly *twice as likely* to also have training available, provide prompt training, have an AI council, and have generative AI and AI ethics policies.

10 Working for an AI-forward company is a competitive career advantage.

Marketers are making progress with AI despite a lack of formal education and support from their companies. That's admirable. But they shouldn't have to go at it alone—and doing so is a dangerous career blindspot.

Marketers have never been more aware of the critical role AI plays in their success. They've also never been more overwhelmed trying to keep up with AI. And the rate of change is only accelerating.

AI literacy is quickly becoming the single most important skill for marketers to remain competitive in their careers. And AI literacy is much easier to attain when the company you work at provides training, policies, tools, and a roadmap.

The data proves it. There is a clear correlation between a company having an AI roadmap, education, policies, and an AI council and the overall AI literacy of marketing teams. The most advanced teams, those in the Scaling phase, are also most likely to say their companies provide these things. Teams that are still far behind in the Understanding phase overwhelmingly lack them.

This means that, in 2025, one of the best things you can do for your marketing career when it comes to AI literacy *is to actually work at a company that provides it.*

Methodology

The 2025 State of Marketing AI Report uses data collected from a survey that asked 23 questions about AI and its role in marketing and business, as well as several questions about the demographics of respondents.

The survey was in the field from February - April 2025. Respondents were not required to answer all of the questions in order to submit their responses.

A total of 1,882 respondents completed at least some part of the survey, with the vast majority (80%) completing the full survey. As a result, some questions may not have a full 1,882 responses. Throughout the report, we clearly indicate the sample size of respondents for each question asked.

In some places, percentages of respondents may add up to more than 100%, either due to respondents being allowed to select multiple responses or because we've rounded up to whole-number percentages for easier reading.

The survey was primarily promoted via the Marketing AI Institute website, newsletter, podcast, and webinars. Our audience has shown a predisposition to AI education, so respondents may display higher levels of understanding and adoption of AI than the broader industry.

Frequently in this report, we reference increases or decreases in percentages when comparing data. “Percentage points” is the language we use when describing the arithmetic difference between two percentages. For example, going from 40% to 44% is an increase of 4 percentage points. Meanwhile, “percent” or “%” is used to describe the relative change from the initial value. For example, going from 40% to 44% is a 10% increase, because the 4 percentage point increase (44% - 40% = 4%) represents 10% of the initial 40% value (4% ÷ 40% = 10%).

How AI Powered This Year's Report

AI played a large part in producing this year's State of Marketing AI Report.

Historically, we've used AI for data analysis and content generation to save time. This year, the power and possibilities unlocked by AI have been immense, serving as a real-life testament to how far the technology has progressed in the last 12 months.

For 2025's report, AI was used in the following ways:

- **Data analysis.** OpenAI's 4o and full o3 reasoning model within **ChatGPT** were used for in-depth, near-instantaneous data analysis, as were **Google Gemini 2.5 Pro** and **Google NotebookLM**. These models/tools were also used to extract insights and ideas that were non-obvious to human analysis or tedious to extract manually.

- **Data visualization and creative ideation.** ChatGPT was used to create data visualizations that informed the final design and representation of data within the report. **4o Image Generation** within ChatGPT was used to generate visual mockups that informed the final cover and design of the report. Frontier models were also used to generate creative ideas for headlines and hooks throughout the report.

- **Strategic support.** Frontier models were used to provide strategic support by making intelligent recommendations on how to represent data and which questions to ask of it.

- **Content generation.** Previously mentioned frontier models and **Claude from Anthropic** were used to generate copy variations and phrasing for creative inspiration. However, all final copy was heavily edited, rewritten, or originally written by a human.

All AI-generated outputs were created with significant human supervision and review of final outputs. All survey data used with AI tools was anonymized, with personally identifiable information removed before using them.

It can't be emphasized enough: The capabilities listed above in their current form would have been impossible just a year ago. Back then, basic data analysis, ideation, and content generation were possible—and both saved considerable time and produced superior results. But these capabilities have improved dramatically since then, making advanced analysis, creativity, and strategic use cases possible this year.

THE RESPONDENTS

Survey respondents represent a diverse set of roles, marketing disciplines, and company sizes.

Roles

Sixty-three percent of respondents identify their role as director-level or higher, which includes Directors (20%), Vice Presidents (7%), Chief Marketing Officers (10%), Other C-Level Executives (4%), and CEOs/ Presidents/Founders (22%). That last group has the most respondents out of all roles.

What's your role?	Percentage of Respondents
CEO/President/Founder	22%
Director	20%
Manager	16%
Consultant/Agency Professional	11%
Chief Marketing Officer	10%
Vice President	7%
Specialist/Coordinator/Entry-Level	6%
Other	5%
Other C-Level Executive	4%

n = 1,882

63%

OF RESPONDENTS ARE DIRECTOR-LEVEL OR HIGHER.

Areas of Marketing

Respondents were asked to identify the marketing areas they are involved in, and could choose multiple answers. They were most involved in Content Marketing (79%), followed by Social Media Marketing (65%), Email Marketing (64%), Analytics (62%), and Advertising (58%). The fewest respondents were involved in Sales (41%) and Ecommerce (21%).

In which areas are you involved? Choose all that apply.	Percentage of Respondents
Content Marketing	79%
Social Media Marketing	65%
Email Marketing	64%
Analytics	62%
Advertising	58%
Comms and PR	57%
SEO	51%
Customer Experience/ Customer Service	44%
Sales	41%
Ecommerce	21%
Other	18%

n = 1,853

RESPONDENTS ARE MOST OFTEN INVOLVED IN CONTENT MARKETING, SOCIAL MEDIA, EMAIL, ANALYTICS, AND ADVERTISING.

Industry

Twenty-eight percent of respondents, the highest percentage, say they work in Professional Services: Marketing (28%). They're followed at a distant second by 11% who say they work in Professional Services: Other. After these two industries, respondents are also highly represented in Software (10%), Education (7%), Health Care (6%), and Manufacturing (6%).

Which industry is your business in?	Percentage of Respondents
Professional Services: Marketing	28%
Professional Services: Other	11%
Software	10%
Other	7%
Education	7%
Health Care	6%
Manufacturing	6%
Finance	4%
Media & Entertainment	3%
Construction	2%
Consumer Packaged Goods (CPG)	2%
Consumer Services	2%
Retail	2%
Real Estate	2%
Publishing	1%
Travel	1%
Telecommunications	1%
Transportation	1%
Government	1%
Arts	1%
Insurance	1%
Restaurants	<1%
Recreation	<1%
Hotels	<1%

n = 1,860

MARKETING PROFESSIONAL SERVICES IS THE HIGHEST-REPRESENTED INDUSTRY AMONG RESPONDENTS.

B2B vs. B2C

The vast majority of respondents (87%) say they either work in B2B or in both B2B and B2C. That compares to 45% who say they work exclusively in B2C or both B2B and B2C.

Is your company business-to-business (B2B), business-to-consumer (B2C), or both?	Percentage of Respondents
B2B	52%
B2C	10%
Both	35%
N/A	2%

n = 1,812

87% WORK IN B2B

45% WORK IN B2C

Revenue

Forty-seven percent of respondents work at companies with more than $10 million in annual revenue, all the way to firms with $1 billion or more. However, the highest percentage of respondents from a single cohort come from very small companies, with 29% at companies with $0 to $1 million in revenue.

Companies with more than $1 billion in annual revenue comprise 11% of all respondents.

How large is your company in terms of annual revenue?	Percentage of Respondents
$0 - $1M	29%
$1 - $10M	23%
$10 - $50M	15%
$50 - $100M	6%
$100 - $250M	5%
$250 - $500M	5%
$500M - $1	5%
$1B+	11%

n = 1,804

47% WORK AT COMPANIES WITH MORE THAN $10M IN ANNUAL REVENUE.

Employees

Nearly half of respondents work at companies with 50 or more employees, all the way up to firms with 20,000 or more employees.

How many employees are in your organization?	Percentage of Respondents
1 - 9	31%
10 - 49	19%
50 - 99	8%
100 - 249	10%
250 - 499	6%
500 - 999	5%
1,000 - 2,499	6%
2,500 - 4,999	3%
5,000 - 9,999	3%
10,000 - 19,999	3%
20,000+	5%

n = 1,841

49%

WORK AT COMPANIES WITH 50+ EMPLOYEES.

Country

Almost three-fourths of respondents are located in the United States (74%). The next most common countries of origin are the United Kingdom (4%), Canada (3%), and Australia (2%).

Country	Percentage of Respondents
United States	74%
United Kingdom	4%
Canada	3%
Australia	2%
Germany	1%
Spain	1%
India	1%
Portugal	1%
Netherlands	1%
France	1%
Other	10%

n = 1,772

74%

OF RESPONDENTS ARE LOCATED IN THE UNITED STATES.

KEY FINDINGS

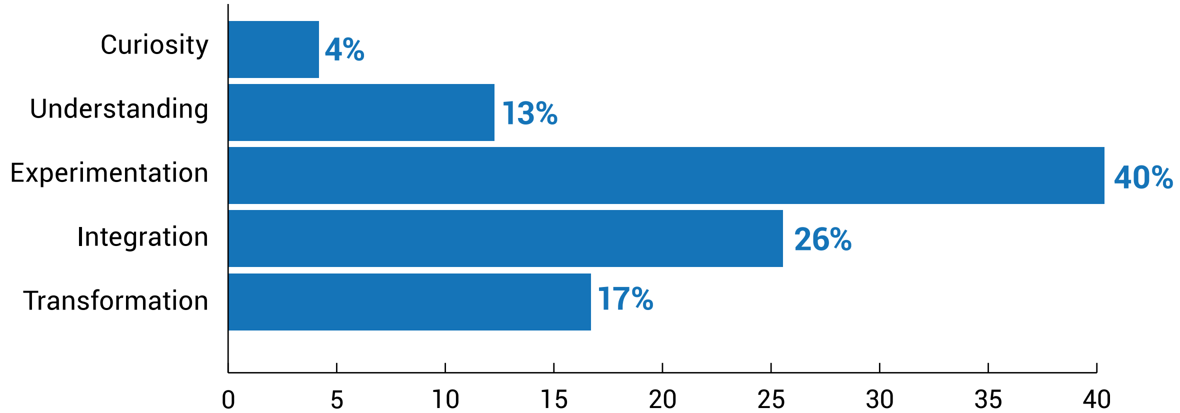
As part of the State of Marketing AI Report, respondents were asked to answer 23 questions about their understanding and usage of AI.

Here are their responses.

How Do Marketers Understand and Adopt AI?

Most respondents are in the experimentation phase of AI.

Q: "How would you classify your understanding and adoption of AI today?"



n = 1,852

In past years, we have asked this question of survey respondents and given them three options to choose from: Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced. But, as the AI market and the marketing industry mature, we saw the need to offer more nuanced answer options to reflect the different stages of the AI journey that marketers find themselves in.

This year, we found that the highest percentage of respondents (40%) say they are in the Experimentation phase, or actively testing AI tools, applications, and platforms to enhance their efficiency, productivity, creativity, innovation, and decision-making.

The next-highest percentage of respondents (26%) say they're in the Integration phase, or embedding AI into workflows and processes, leveraging it to optimize daily tasks and strategic initiatives.

And 17% say they're at the most mature phase provided, Transformation, where they're reimagining their jobs and reshaping how they work with AI.

This trend isn't surprising. While not a one-to-one comparison, past years of the report saw the number of people identifying as Beginners drop steadily from 50% in 2021 to 23% by 2024. There was a similar rise in those who said they were Intermediate, with 37% saying so in 2021, then rising every year to reach 61% in 2024.

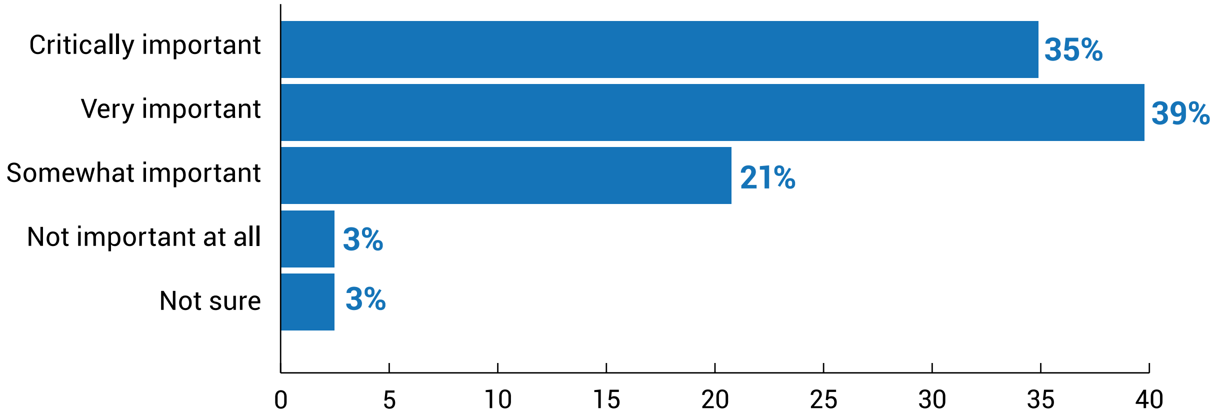
This year's new breakdown of response options displays exactly the granularity we hoped it would and appears to remain on-trend. The vast majority of marketers in our sample have moved out of the beginner phases of AI and well into what we would consider intermediate and advanced phases of understanding and adoption.

CEOs/Presidents/Founders are overwhelmingly ahead. Thirty percent of CEOs/Presidents/Founders say they're in the Transformation phase, the highest proportion of all roles by double digits. Conversely, Specialists/Coordinators are twice as likely than average to be in the initial Curiosity phase (8%) and are the role with the highest proportion of respondents in this phase.

How Important Is AI to Their Marketing in the Next Year?

Most say AI is “critically” or “very” important to the success of their marketing.

Q: “How important is AI to the success of your marketing over the next 12 months?”



n = 1,836

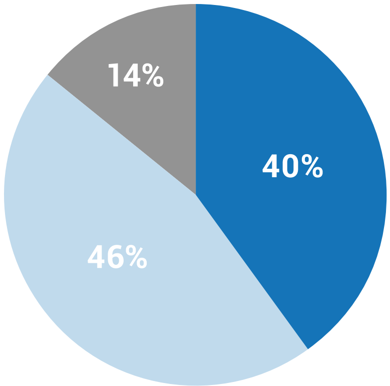
When asked how important AI is to the success of their marketing in the next 12 months, 74% of respondents said either “critically important” (35%) or “very important” (39%). That’s a sizable jump from 2024, when 66% said the same thing (28% said it was critically important; 38% said very important).

Notably, the number of people answering “critically important” to this question has risen a whopping 20 percentage points since 2021 (when it was 15%).

Which Stage of AI Transformation Are They In?

Most respondents are piloting AI.

Q: "Which stage of AI transformation best describes your marketing team?"



- **Understanding:** Learning how AI works, and exploring use cases and technologies.
- **Piloting:** Prioritizing—and starting to run—a limited number of pilot projects with narrowly defined use cases.
- **Scaling:** Achieving wide-scale adoption of AI, while consistently increasing efficiency and performance.

n = 1,865

Given how important AI is to respondents' marketing in the next year, where are their teams at when it comes to AI transformation? Pretty far along it turns out, and moving further along fast.

When asked which stage of AI transformation best describes their marketing team, 46% of respondents (the highest percentage) said Piloting, or prioritizing—and starting to run—a limited number of pilot projects with narrowly defined use cases. Another 14% said they were already Scaling, or achieving wide-scale adoption of AI, while constantly increasing efficiency and performance.

Those are the best numbers we've seen in the history of the report. The number who say they're in the Piloting stage is up 5 percentage points from 2024 (when 41% said they were at this stage) and the number who say they're in the Scaling stage is up 4 percentage points from the same period.

In total, 60% of respondents say they're either Piloting or Scaling, which is a rise of 9 percentage points from 2024 and a rise of 18 percentage points since 2023.

The smallest companies are scaling AI the most right now. The smallest companies ($0 - $1M in annual revenue) have the highest percentage of respondents who say their team is Scaling (20%).

Conversely, companies with $100M - $250M in annual revenue have the lowest percentage, with just 7% saying they're in the Scaling phase. Other larger enterprises also rank lower in Scaling. Only 8% of companies with $500M - $1B in revenue say they're in this phase; only 9% of $1B+ firms say they are.

What Is Their Role in Buying Marketing Technology?

Most are decision makers who have the authority and budget to buy marketing technology.

Q: "Which best describes your involvement in evaluating and purchasing marketing technology?"

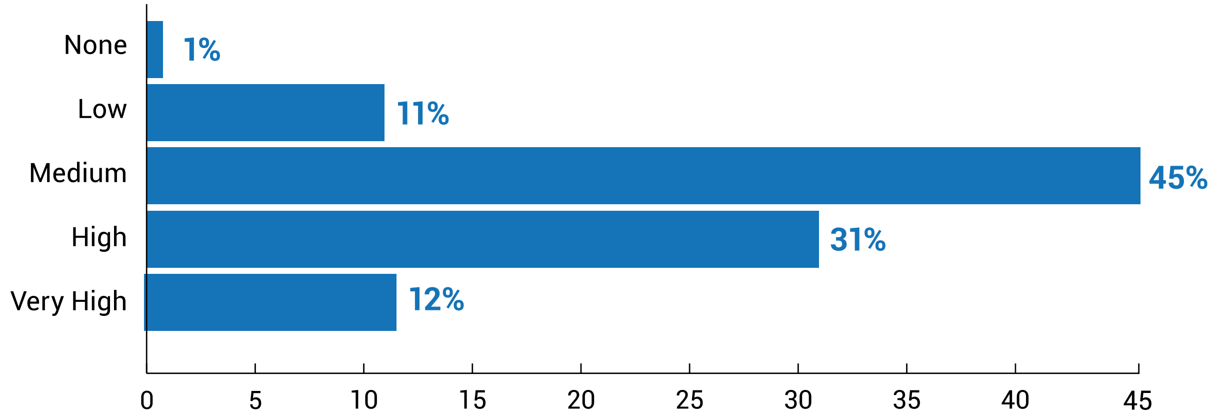
The highest percentage of respondents (39%) say they are decision makers when it comes to evaluating and purchasing marketing technology, with the authority and budget to make purchases. Next-highest (26%) are respondents who say they are champions who advocate internally for the best solutions. They are followed by influencers who research and recommend solutions (20%). This means the vast majority of respondents (85%) are people who are influencing, driving, or spearheading the buying of technology within their organizations.

This year represents the highest percentage of decision makers to date. In 2023 and 2024, 38% of the survey respondents identified in this category. In 2021 and 2022, 32% did. The number of people who say they're not at all involved in the decision-making process has also dropped steadily over the years, from 13% of respondents in 2021 and 15% in 2022 to just 3% today.

What Is Their Confidence in Evaluating AI?

Almost half say they have medium confidence when evaluating AI.

Q: "How would you rank your confidence evaluating AI-powered marketing technology?"



n = 1,859

The highest proportion of our respondents this year (45%) say they have a Medium level of confidence when evaluating AI-powered marketing technology. And a combined 43% rate their confidence as either High or Very High.

Confidence has risen considerably since last year. In 2024, 26% said they had High confidence compared to 31% this year (a 5-point increase). And 9% said they had Very High confidence compared to 12% this year (a 3-point increase).

Those who reported low confidence also decreased from 16% in 2024 to 11% in 2025. Medium confidence ratings dropped from 48% to 45% as well.

Marketing tech decision makers say they're well-equipped to evaluate AI. Respondents who identify as decision makers in charge of evaluating and purchasing marketing technology have higher-than-average confidence rankings (36% rank themselves as High; 18% rank as Very High).

What Are They Trying to Achieve with AI?

The top outcome they're trying to achieve with AI is saving time on repetitive tasks.

Q: "What are the primary outcomes that your organization is interested in achieving with AI?"

What are the primary outcomes that your organization is interested in achieving with AI?	Percentage of Respondents
Reduce time spent on repetitive, data-driven tasks	82%
Get more actionable insights from marketing data	65%
Accelerate revenue growth	63%
Unlock greater value from marketing technologies	59%
Generate greater ROI on campaigns	58%
Create personalized consumer experiences at scale	56%
Drive costs down	52%
Increase qualified pipeline	43%
Predict consumer needs and behaviors with greater accuracy	43%
Shorten the sales cycle	32%
Other	6%
None of the above	1%

n = 1,847

It's clear that individuals and teams are maturing in their AI adoption and transformation. This begs the question: What outcomes are they actually trying to achieve with AI as they experiment, pilot, and scale?

The top outcome that respondents say their organization is trying to achieve with AI is: reducing time spent on repetitive, data-driven tasks (82%). This has been the top answer since we began asking this question in its current format, with 77% of respondents citing it in 2023 and 80% in 2024. That also means that the number of people citing this as an outcome is rising year by year, up 5 percentage points since 2023.

The second most-cited response was getting more actionable insights from marketing data (65%). The third most-cited was accelerating revenue growth (63%). Both were also the second and third most-cited answers in 2024.

CEOs/Founders/Presidents are outliers when it comes to wanting to accelerate revenue. Seventy-six percent of this group, versus 63% on average, say that accelerating revenue growth with AI is a primary outcome they want to achieve. However, reducing time spent on repetitive tasks remains their top priority (79%), albeit by a much smaller margin than the average.

What Barriers to AI Adoption Do They Face?

A lack of education and training remains the top barrier for the fifth consecutive year.

Q: "Which of the following do you consider barriers to the adoption of AI in your marketing? Choose all that apply."

Which of the following do you consider barriers to the adoption of AI in your marketing? Choose all that apply.	Percentage of Respondents
Lack of education and training	62%
Lack of awareness or understanding	52%
Lack of resources	41%
Lack of strategy	40%
Lack of talent with the right skill sets	36%
Fear or mistrust of AI	35%
Lack of executive support or vision	28%
Lack of technology infrastructure	27%
Lack of ownership or governance	26%
Unknown risks	22%
Lack of the right data	22%
Unrealistic expectations	22%
Other	7%
None of the above	5%

n = 1,756

The top barrier to AI adoption this year is a "lack of education and training," cited by 62% of respondents. This is now the fifth year that this response has been cited as the top barrier—and it has claimed the top spot since the report began.

However, this year's percentage of respondents citing a lack of education and training is the lowest it's ever been, a 5 percentage point drop from last year's 67% and 1 percentage point below the previous low of 63% in 2022.

"Lack of awareness or understanding" came in second again this year at 52% of respondents, though it saw a 4 percentage point drop from last year's 56%.

"Lack of resources" leapfrogged to third place this year (41%), from the number five spot last year (38%). It now overtakes "lack of strategy" (40%) and "lack of talent with the right skill sets" (36%), which were both ahead of it in 2024.

CEOs/Founders/Presidents are much less likely to see a lack of education and training as a barrier. Just 49% say it's a barrier, the lowest of any role and well below average. This is at least 10 percentage points lower than other roles within the company, possibly indicating a disconnect between how top company leaders view AI barriers compared to the rest of their firm.

CEOs/Founders/Presidents are also much less likely to see lack of executive support or vision as a barrier. Similarly, only 13% of this cohort says "lack of executive support or vision" is a barrier, which is 12 points less than Chief Marketing Officers and 17 points less than Vice Presidents, indicating another possible disconnect.

The smallest firms are least likely to cite a lack of education and training as a barrier. Only 50% of firms with $0 - $1M in annual revenue say they're struggling with this, the lowest percentage among company sizes and at least 6 points lower than the next lowest ($1 - $10M).

Larger firms are more likely to struggle with a lack of education and training. Sixty-eight percent with $100 - $250M in annual revenue, the largest proportion, say it's a barrier—6 percentage points higher than the average. Firms with $500M - $1B are next-highest, citing this barrier at 65%, and $1B+ firms are third-highest at 64%.

Who Owns Marketing AI in Their Company?

Overall, CEOs own AI for marketing, but ownership changes dramatically depending on company size.

Q: "Who in your organization owns the adoption and integration of AI technology for marketing? Choose all that apply."

Who in your organization owns the adoption and integration of AI technology for marketing? Choose all that apply.	Percentage of Respondents
CEO	35%
Chief Marketing Officer	28%
No one owns it	17%
IT Department	14%
Chief Technology Officer	13%
Other C-Level Executive	13%
Other	11%
Chief Information Officer	8%
Not sure	7%
Chief Digital Officer	5%
Chief Data Officer	3%

n = 1,842

The CEO is most likely to be cited as one of the people who owns AI for marketing, with 35% of respondents selecting this answer. The Chief Marketing Officer is the second most likely to be cited as an owner at 28%. Worryingly, "no one owns it" is the third most common answer at 17%.

These numbers remain relatively consistent over the past several years, with CEOs typically leading the charge, followed by CMOs

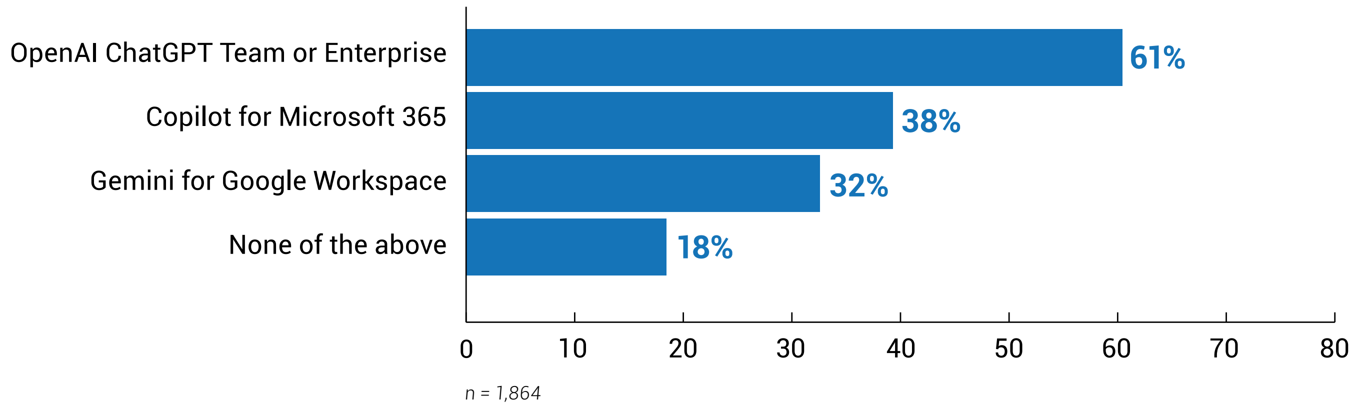
However, AI ownership changes dramatically depending on company size. The CEO is much more likely to be an owner in smaller firms, with 53% citing the CEO in firms with $0 - $1M in annual revenue and 46% in firms with $1 - $10M. That number understandably plummets the larger the company is, with CEOs being cited as an owner in the low double digits at firms between $50 - $500M and at only 7% at firms from $500M - $1B.

As the CEO's ownership declines with company size, CMO ownership rises. The highest proportion of respondents saying the CMO is an owner is at firms with $500M - $1B in revenue (47%, well above the average). Firms between $50M - $1B+ in revenue overall have above-average rates of CMO ownership. Larger companies also show higher than average rates of ownership by IT departments and Chief Technology Officers.

Which Generative AI Tools Does Their Company Provide?

Overall, ChatGPT is the most popular tool provided to employees in companies, but it heavily depends on company size.

Q: "Which of the following generative AI productivity platforms does your organization provide you a license to use? Select all that apply."



When asked to choose which of the most popular generative AI platforms their company provides, respondents overwhelmingly chose ChatGPT Team or Enterprise (61%). Thirty-eight percent said their company provided licenses to Copilot for Microsoft 365. And 32% said their company provides Gemini for Google Workspace.

That last one is notable: This is a 15-percentage-point jump from 2024, when just 17% said their company provided Gemini. While ChatGPT and Copilot numbers also rose, they did so far less, indicating some serious gains for Gemini this past year.

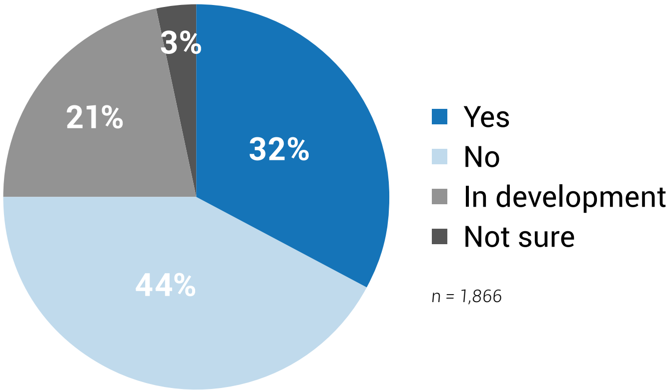
The other big winner was simply having a license to a tool in the first place. Last year, 29% of people answered "none of the above" when asked this question. This year, just 18% did, an 11-point drop, indicating significant strides in company AI procurement.

However, there are huge swings in popularity based on company size. The larger the company, the less likely a respondent is to be provided with ChatGPT Team or Enterprise. It peaks at 70% of respondents at firms with $1 - $10M in revenue, but then craters to only 37% of respondents at firms with $1B+. Gemini also steadily declines, getting lower response rates as companies increase in size, resulting in just 19% of respondents at firms with $1B+ saying they have licenses. The gap is filled by Microsoft Copilot. It steadily increases in popularity as firms get bigger. Just 25% of people at firms with $0 - $1M in revenue say they are provided with a license compared to 63% at firms with $1B+.

Does Their Company Offer Any AI Education and Training?

The vast majority of companies still lack AI education and training, but numbers are (very slowly) improving.

Q: "Does your organization offer any AI-focused education and training for the marketing team?"



Only 32% of respondents say their companies offer AI-focused education and training for the marketing team. Forty-four percent say they do not provide training. Another 21% say it is still in development. And 3% say they're not sure if their company provides training.

When you combine those with no training, those with training still being developed, and those unsure training exists, 68% of respondents have no AI training being provided by their companies. In 2025, this is a dire state of affairs given how essential AI literacy is to company and career success.

However, despite being bleak, believe it or not, the picture is actually improving. The number of people who said their company does not offer training dropped 3 percentage points from last year, from 47% to 44%. The number who said they did offer training rose 6 percentage points, from 26% to 32%.

This means that, overall, the number of people who functionally didn't have training last year (answering "No," "In development," or "Not sure") was 75%. Now it is 68%, a 7-point drop. It's little comfort, but it's something.

Firms with $1B+ in annual revenue are most likely to offer education and training. Thirty-six percent of respondents at these firms say their company offers it, above average. $1B+ firms are also least likely to offer no training, with just 34% of these respondents saying they don't have it (also well below average). They are also the most likely to say training is in development (24%).

Firms with $50 - $100M in annual revenue are falling behind the most in this area. This cohort is least likely to say their company offers education and training by a wide margin—just 17% say "Yes" they offer it, which is 12 points lower than the next lowest cohort ($10 - $50M).

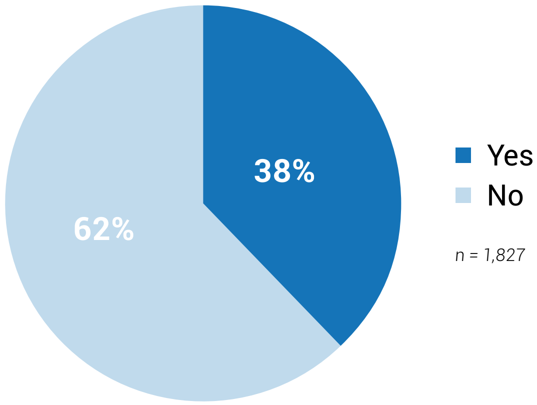
Understanding and adoption are clearly correlated with the availability of training. Respondents who say they're in earlier stages of AI understanding and adoption, like Curiosity and Understanding, are least likely to say their company offers training (67% of people in the Curiosity stage say their company doesn't offer it; 56% of people in the Understanding phase say the same thing).

These numbers increase dramatically as respondents report later stages of understanding and adoption: 40% of those in the Integration phase say their company offers training; 51% in the Transformation phase say the same. Still, the lack of education and training being provided at later phases of direct AI implementation and scaling is worrying.

Does Their Company Train Them on Prompting?

The majority of companies do not provide any training on prompting.

Q: "Does your organization train marketing staff on prompt engineering or other AI-specific skills to optimize AI-generated outputs?"



This year, we also asked if companies specifically trained marketing staff on prompt engineering or any other type of skills designed to achieve better AI outputs.

This question was motivated by an observation we've seen in the field at literally dozens of companies: Too many companies ignore prompting best practices or don't invest enough time in teaching them, even though effective prompting can quickly and easily improve AI outcomes.

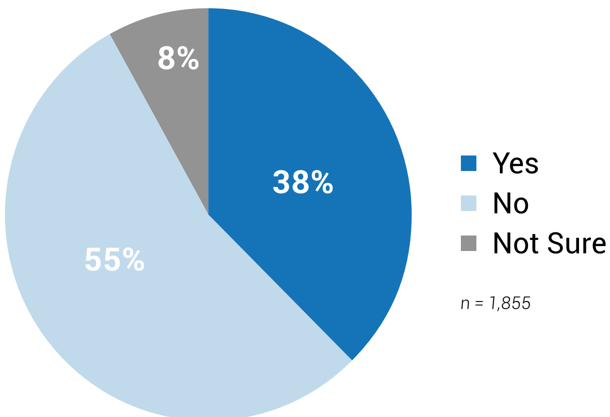
The data appears to bear out that observation. Just 38% of respondents say their company offers marketing staff training on these skills, while 62% say their company does not.

The smallest firms are the furthest ahead when it comes to training on prompting. Respondents at firms with $0 - $1M are most likely to say their organization trains marketing staff on prompt engineering (49%). Firms with $500M - $1B in revenue are least likely to say the same (24%).

Does Their Company Have Generative AI Policies?

The majority of companies still lack generative AI policies.

Q: "Does your organization have generative AI policies that guide the use of AI-generated text, images, video, audio, and/or code?"

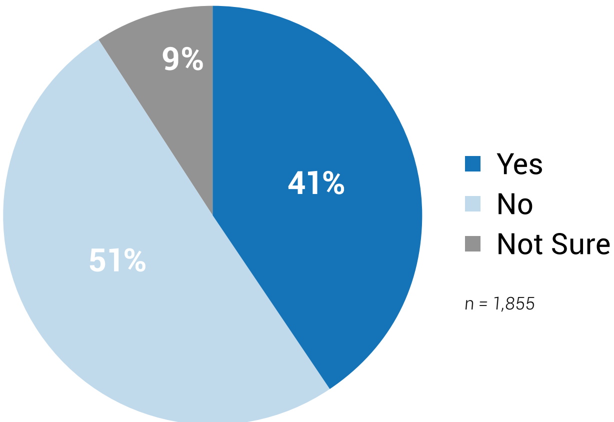


Only 38% of respondents say their company has generative AI policies that guide the use of AI. However, this number continues to rise year after year. In 2023, just 22% said their company had these policies. That number rose to 34% in 2024. Now, it has jumped another 4 percentage points in 2025, resulting in a 16-point increase since 2023.

Does Their Company Have an AI Ethics Policy?

The majority still lack AI ethics policies or responsible AI principles.

Q: "Does your organization have an AI ethics policy and/or responsible AI principles—either public-facing or for internal use?"



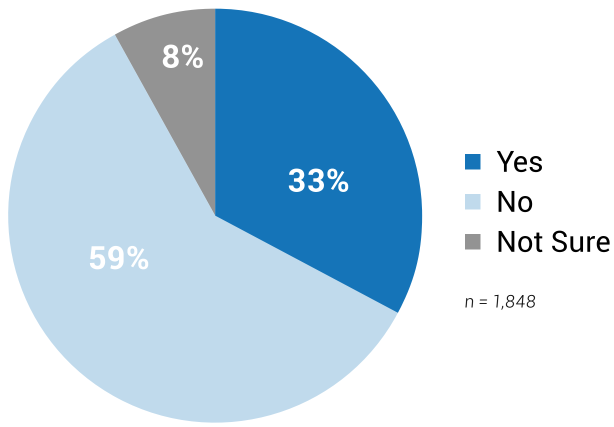
Less than half of companies (41%) report having an AI ethics policy or responsible AI principles, whether public-facing or for internal use.

While still too low, these numbers do represent significant progress over the years. In 2023, only 21% reported having these policies. That rose to 36% in 2024. This year, it rose another 5 percentage points, resulting in a 20-point increase from 2023 to 2025.

Does Their Company Have an AI Council?

The majority of companies lack AI councils.

Q: "Does your organization have an AI Council charged with developing policies and practices, and considering the impact of AI on the company?"



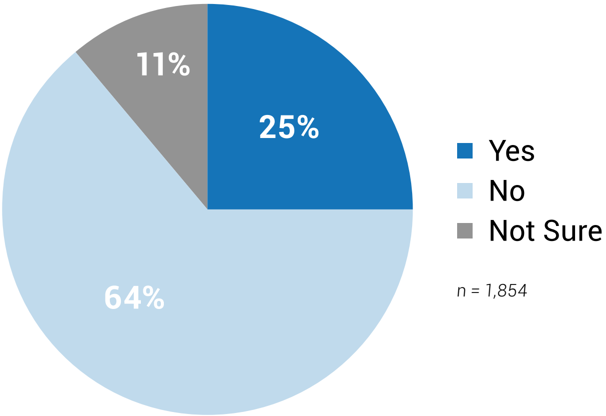
The vast majority of companies still lack AI councils charged with developing policies and practices. Fifty-nine percent of respondents stated their company does not have one, and 8% said they weren't sure if it existed. Only 33% said an AI council existed at their company.

These numbers are improving, albeit only marginally, compared to 2024. The number of people who say they don't have an AI council has dropped by 4 percentage points from 63% in 2024. The number who say they do have an AI council has risen by 4 percentage points from 29% in 2024.

Does Their Marketing Team Have an AI Roadmap or Strategy?

The vast majority of marketing teams lack AI roadmaps or strategies.

Q: “Does your marketing team have an AI roadmap or strategy that prioritizes AI use cases and projects for the next 1 - 2 years?”



The vast majority of marketing teams lack an AI roadmap or strategy that prioritizes AI use cases and projects for the next 1-2 years, with just 25% of respondents saying their team has one. Sixty-four percent of respondents say their team does not have a roadmap or strategy. And 11% are not sure if one exists.

However, there has been substantial forward progress here since last year. The number of respondents who said they do have a roadmap rose 6 percentage points from 19% last year. The number who said they don't have a roadmap dropped 7 percentage points in the same period.

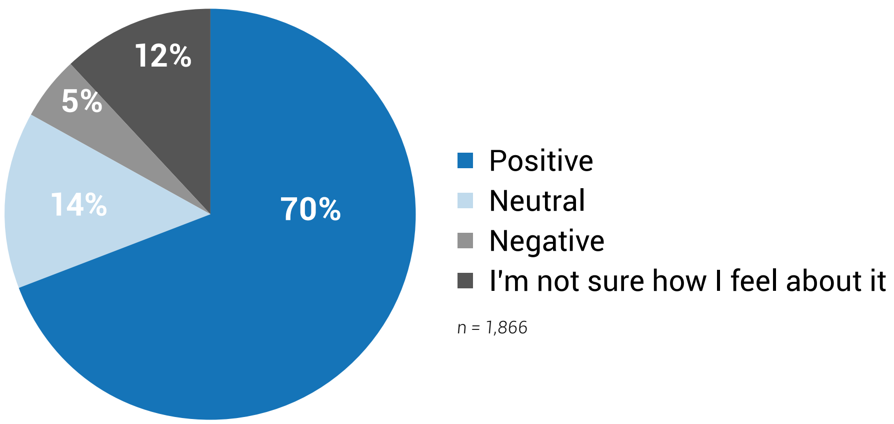
This matters because having an AI roadmap is a powerful positive signal. Organizations with an AI roadmap are roughly twice as likely to also have training available, provide prompt training, have an AI council, and have generative AI and AI ethics policies.

There is also a clear correlation between a company having AI infrastructure and the overall AI literacy of teams. Perhaps even more importantly, the data shows a direct correlation between the AI transformation stage of a marketing team and the AI infrastructure they have available at their company. Teams that say they're in the Scaling phase are also most likely to say their companies have roadmaps, education, AI councils, and policies. Teams that are Piloting are the second most likely to have these things. Teams that are still in the Understanding phase overwhelmingly lack them.

How Do They Feel About AI's Impact?

The majority feel positive about AI's impact.

Q: "How do you feel personally about AI and the impact it's having on marketing, business, and society?"



When asked how they feel personally about AI's impact on marketing, business, and society, the majority of respondents (70%) say they feel positive. Only 5% say they feel outright negative towards AI. And 14% say they have neutral feelings, while another 12% say they aren't sure how they feel about it.

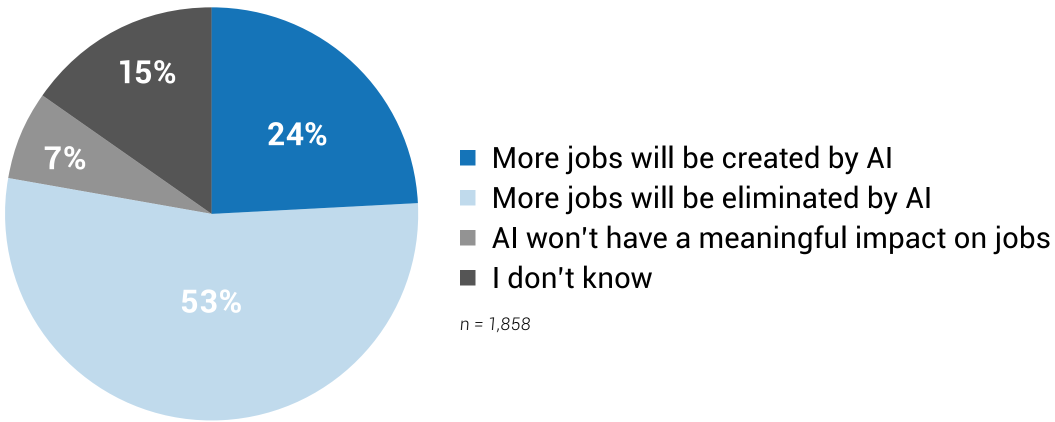
Positive feelings about AI are actually increasing year over year. In 2023, 64% reported feeling positively about it. In 2024, that number rose to 68%. In 2025, it jumped another 2 percentage points.

The number of people who feel neutral about AI has remained the same since 2023. The number of people who feel negative rose one percentage point from 2024 (4%).

How Do They Think AI Will Impact Marketing Jobs?

They largely believe more jobs will be eliminated by AI rather than created by it.

Q: "What do you believe the net effect of AI will be on marketing jobs over the next 3 years?



While respondents feel generally positive about AI's impact, they also largely believe that more marketing jobs will be eliminated by AI (53%) than will be created by AI (24%) in the next three years. That's a 6-percentage-point jump from 2024, when 47% thought the same thing. And only 40% said this in 2023, representing a 13-point swing towards pessimism since 2023.

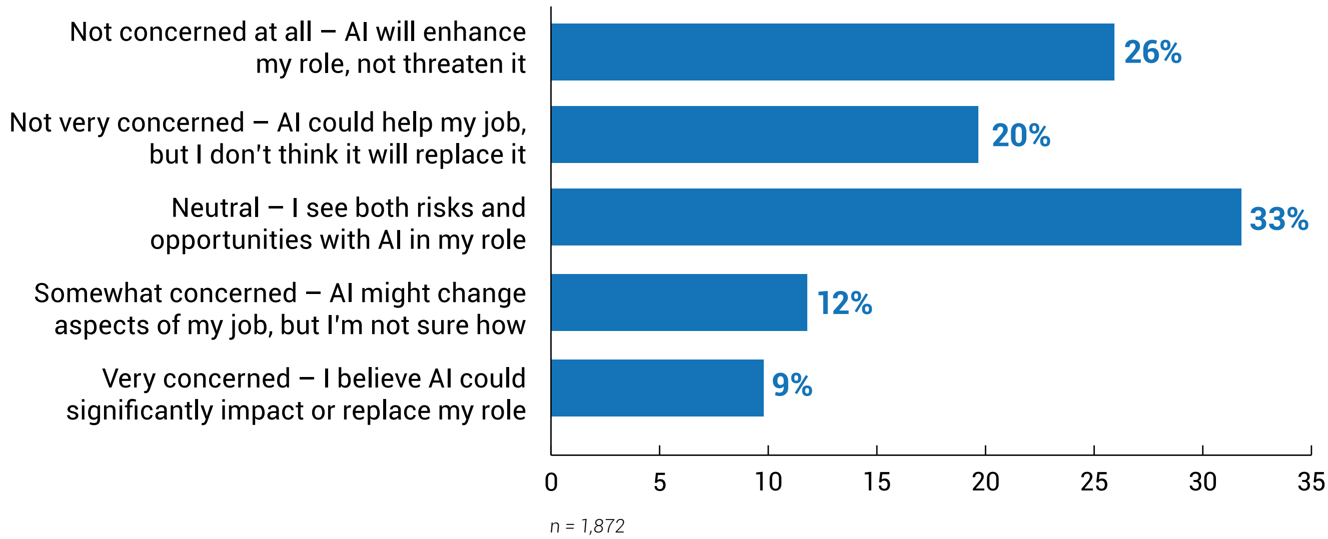
Additionally, the number of people who say more jobs will be created in the next three years is the lowest it's ever been, having dropped 7 percentage points since 2024 (31%) and 12 percentage points since 2023 (36%).

When looking at this data by role, Vice Presidents, Consultants/Agency Professionals, and CEOs/Presidents/Founders are more likely than other roles to think more jobs will be eliminated by AI. (60% for VPs; 59% for Consultants/Agency Pros; and 57% for CEOs/Presidents/Founders.) Interestingly, Chief Marketing Officers are the most likely to say more jobs will be created by AI (31%).

How Concerned Are They About AI's Impact on Their Job?

Respondents see both risks and opportunities with AI in their jobs.

Q: "How concerned are you about AI's impact on your job?"



This year, we asked how concerned respondents were about AI's impact on their own job specifically.

A third of respondents (33%) reported being neutral in their concern, the highest proportion of responses, meaning they see both risks and opportunities with AI in their roles.

Another 26% say they are not concerned at all about AI having an impact on their job, believing the technology will enhance their role rather than threaten it.

Twenty-one percent are either somewhat concerned (12%) or very concerned (9%) that AI will impact their role.

When broken down by role, some patterns emerge. People who identify their role as Specialist/Coordinator/Entry-Level, Consultant/Agency Professional, or Manager are most likely to report being very concerned (10% of each group provided this response). Specialists/Coordinators/Entry-Levels and Managers were also most likely to say they were somewhat concerned.

Conversely, CEOs/Presidents/Founders were far above average in not being concerned at all, with 41% providing this answer. They were followed by Chief Marketing Officers (31%).

What's Their Biggest Struggle with AI?

Lack of knowledge and training is the biggest struggle that respondents face.

Q: "What is your biggest struggle with AI right now?"

Primary Struggle Category	Percentage of Respondents
Lack of knowledge / training	23%
Time to learn or experiment	11%
Keeping up with the pace of change	9%
Tool selection and evaluation	7%
Implementation / integration into workflows	5%
Cost / budget constraints	3%
Data quality / privacy and security	3%
Stakeholder buy-in (leadership / client)	3%
Ethics, bias, and legal concerns	2%
Strategy / roadmap definition	2%
Accuracy and hallucinations	2%
ROI and measurement	1%
Scalability / performance	<1%
Job-security fears	<1%
Content quality / brand voice	<1%
Creativity concerns	<1%
Other / unclear	27%

n = 1,741

This year, we asked a write-in question about respondents' biggest struggles with AI. Using frontier reasoning models on anonymized survey data, we've analyzed the 1,741 natural language responses to identify common categories that respondents cited.

The top struggle (23% of responses) fell into the category "lack of knowledge / training," with respondents indicating they need more help using AI. Responses here included struggles like "Learning how to use it properly" or "So much to learn."

The next most common category of struggle was "time to learn or experiment" (11%), where respondents indicated challenges like "Not enough time to focus on it" or "Time to test different tools." Related, "keeping up with the pace of change" was the third most-cited challenge (9%).

What Are Their Top Concerns About AI?

They are most concerned about job loss and being left behind.

Q: "What concerns you most about AI?"

Primary Concern Category	Percentage of Respondents
Job loss / being left behind	15%
Ethics, bias, and bad-actor misuse	13%
Pace of change and lack of control/guardrails	9%
Security and data-privacy risks	7%
Skills / knowledge gap	6%
"None" / not concerned	6%
Accuracy, hallucination and misinformation	5%
Copyright, IP and other legal issues	2%
Implementation and adoption hurdles	2%
Existential / runaway-AI fears	2%
Cost and economic inequality	1%
Other / unclear	34%

n = 1,725

We also asked a write-in question about respondents' top concerns related to AI, then analyzed the responses using frontier models.

The top category of concern was "Job loss / being left behind" (15%), with respondents citing concerns that "I'll become irrelevant if I don't become a leader," "My company doesn't get left behind," and "Not enough people are taking its advancement seriously enough, particularly as it relates to jobs and economic impact."

The next primary concern was "Ethics, bias, and bad-actor misuse" (13%), with respondents citing concerns like "Criminal applications and fake content" and "misinformation."

What Are They Most Excited About When It Comes to AI?

They are overwhelmingly excited about the efficiency and time savings that AI can create.

Q: "What are you most excited about when it comes to AI?"

Primary Excitement Category	Percentage of Respondents
Efficiency and time-savings	37%
Excitement / general potential	9%
Creativity and innovation	7%
Automation and relief from repetitive tasks	6%
Scale and business growth	5%
Learning and education	4%
Data insights and analytics	3%
Personalization and customer experience	2%
Accessibility and democratization	<1%
Cost savings	<1%
Other / unclear	27%

n = 1,752

Respondents are overwhelmingly excited first and foremost by "efficiency and time-savings," with 37% of responses falling into this category. Responses here included things like: "That outputs can be done so much more efficiently," "Saving time," and "Giving people time back to focus on bigger challenges and to spend more time analyzing our marketing efforts to make them better."

The next most-cited category was around general excitement about AI and its potential (9%), followed by excitement around the creativity and innovation that AI can unleash (7%).

Do They Have a Favorite AI Tool?

The vast majority of respondents prefer ChatGPT/OpenAI products.

Q: "Do you have a favorite AI tool or platform?"

Favorite Tool / Platform	Percentage of Respondents
ChatGPT / OpenAI Models	57%
Other / unclear	23%
Claude / Anthropic	7%
Perplexity	4%
Google Gemini	3%
None / no favorite / unsure	3%
Microsoft Copilot / Bing Chat	1%
Jasper	1%
Midjourney	<1%
HubSpot AI / ChatSpot	<1%
Grammarly	<1%
Adobe Firefly	<1%
DALL-E	<1%
Canva Magic tools	<1%
Salesforce Einstein	<1%

n = 1,731

We asked respondents if they had a favorite AI tool or platform, then analyzed and categorized the responses using AI.

Overwhelmingly, respondents cited ChatGPT or OpenAI models as their favorite AI (57%). When controlling for "Other / unclear," the next most-cited tool was Claude from Anthropic (7%), followed by Perplexity (4%) and Google Gemini (3%).

What AI Trends Do They Think Will Matter Most in the Next Year?

They expect AI agents to be the top emerging trend in the next 12 months.

Q: "What emerging AI trends or technologies do you believe will have the greatest impact on marketing in the next 12 months?"

Primary Trend Category	Percentage of Respondents
AI agents and autonomous workflows	27%
Generative content (text / image / video)	17%
Predictive analytics and data insights	7%
Search and SEO powered by AI	5%
Automation and efficiency boosters	4%
Voice, chat, and conversational AI	3%
Personalization and hyper-personalization	3%
Responsible AI, ethics, and governance	1%
Other / unclear	34%

n = 1,621

This year, we also asked respondents to identify the emerging AI trends or technologies they believed would have the greatest impact on marketing.

AI agents were the leading response at 27%, with respondents citing agents, agentic behavior, or autonomous AI-powered work across hundreds of responses.

The next most-cited trend was "generative content" (17%), or the increasing sophistication of multimodal content generated by AI. Rounding out the top three was "predictive analytics and data insights" (7%), or the trend of AI dramatically improving the ability of marketers to get more out of their data and understand their audiences, personas, and customers better.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Final Thoughts

So, what do you do with all of this data? After all, there's no point in analysis if it doesn't drive *action*. Obviously, a "Final Thoughts" section is too short to cover the entire breadth of your AI journey from here. But we do think there are some very clear initial steps you can take, starting right now, to react to the trends highlighted in this report.

1. Master the fundamentals—fast.
Fifty-three percent of marketers believe AI will eliminate more marketing jobs than it creates, yet 68% still have no formal AI training from their employers.

If you currently lack education on the fundamentals of AI, it's time to take action while your employer gets their act together. The good news is: You can master the fundamentals of AI in a relatively short time.

One great place to start is Marketing AI Institute's free Intro to AI course, which will teach you exactly how to get started with AI in just about 30 minutes. Also, like the data shows, you can get very far by simply spending a few hours mastering prompting best practices.

2. Build a personal AI roadmap and portfolio.
We know that organizations with an AI roadmap are twice as likely to have training, policies, and AI councils. But, if your company doesn't yet have a roadmap, it can take time to get one in place. While that happens, nothing is stopping you from building your own personal AI roadmap and portfolio.

To start, this can be simple. Use a tool like JobsGPT to break down your particular role into tasks and subtasks. In just a few minutes, you can build a full list of all the things you do in a day, week, month, or year that AI can help you do more intelligently.

Then, start experimenting with using AI to tackle the first 1-3 tasks that take up most of your time and/or energy. (Remember, overwhelmingly, most marketers are looking to simply save time using AI; don't overthink it.)

Treat each item as a mini-pilot. By the end of a quarter, you'll have a proof-of-concept portfolio that showcases your expertise using AI to solve real business challenges.

3. Carefully evaluate your company's AI literacy.
This last step is likely the hardest: It's time to take a hard look at the place you work. Does your company seem like it's at least on a path to AI literacy within the next 12 months? We know from the data most companies are still behind. But does yours at least appear to be making moves in the right direction towards training, policies, councils, and roadmaps?

If the answer is "no" across the board, become the catalyst who drives those changes—or seriously consider migrating to an organization that already checks those boxes.

In a world of quiet (or not-so-quiet) AI layoffs, betting on an AI-forward culture is the single best insurance policy for your career. It's precisely why SmarterX announced The AI Literacy Project, and why it's so critical for every marketer to urgently prepare for the future of work.

About SmarterX and Marketing AI Institute

SmarterX is a Cleveland-based AI transformation company. We educate and empower leaders to reimagine business models, reinvent industries, and rethink what's possible.

- We believe AI will rapidly transform businesses, industries, jobs, the economy, educational systems, and society.
- We believe you can build a smarter version of any business through a responsible, human-centered approach to AI.
- We believe the future of all business is AI native, AI emergent, or obsolete.
- We believe AI education and training is the foundation for success in every organization.

Our goal is to **Accelerate AI Literacy for All™** through education, content, and events. Consulting and speaking are also secondary solutions under the SmarterX brand.

SmarterX has three primary public-facing business units and brands:

- **Marketing AI Institute:** Media, event, and education business founded in 2016 that is designed to make AI approachable and actionable for marketers. The Institute has more than 90,000 contacts, and its flagship in-person conference, MAICON, draws 1,500+ marketers to Cleveland each year.
- **AI Academy by SmarterX:** Originally launched in 2020 under the Marketing AI Institute brand, AI Academy is being spun off as a dedicated site and brand. AI Academy is a high-growth business unit designed to prepare individuals and organizations for the future of work by making AI education accessible and personalized, primarily through our AI Mastery Memberships.
- **The Artificial Intelligence Show:** The AI Show podcast is SmarterX's fastest-growing media channel, with 65,000+ downloads per month. The podcast serves as a promotional tool and lead generator for SmarterX and its business units.

SmarterX also has an internal AI Content Studio that supports audience growth, demand generation, and customer success across all brands/business units. The AI Content Studio produces blog posts, books, blueprints, courses, newsletters, podcasts, presentations, research, videos, and webinars.

SmarterX is entering a rapid expansion and growth phase, being driven by the Academy 2.0 vision and roadmap shared as part of The AI Literacy Project.

The AI Literacy Project is designed to prepare individuals and organizations for the future of work by making AI education accessible and personalized.

We are setting out to:

1. Drive AI understanding across industries and professions through affordable education.
2. Provide a path to AI mastery through content, events, and experiences.
3. Personalize learning journeys to maximize the positive impact of AI on people's careers and lives.

The AI Literacy Project is anchored in the belief that AI literacy is not just a competitive advantage, but a career and business imperative.

Every professional has a choice to maintain the status quo or accelerate their AI literacy and capabilities. The AI Literacy Project is about empowering knowledge workers across every industry to thrive through the disruption and uncertainty ahead.

Learn more about SmarterX and The AI Literacy Project here.