

SIMPLY SANSU

HELPING BUSINESSES BUILD VISIBILITY AND AUTHORITY

EXECUTIVE SURVEY REPORT **2026**

INSIGHTS | TRENDS | OPPORTUNITIES

AI IN MARKETING 2026

What **C-level decision makers** had to say about AI integration

65.5%
have AI integrated across multiple functions

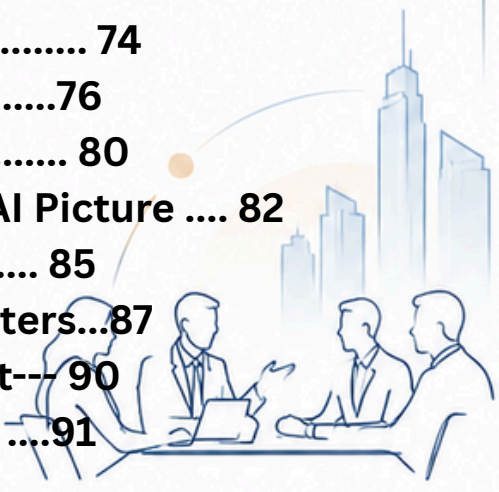
86.2%
invest for productivity & efficiency

75.9%
say accuracy and reliability are a major challenge

93.1%
expect AI investment to increase

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AI IN MARKETING 2026

Executive Survey Report

Real-World Adoption, Benefits, Challenges & the Road Ahead

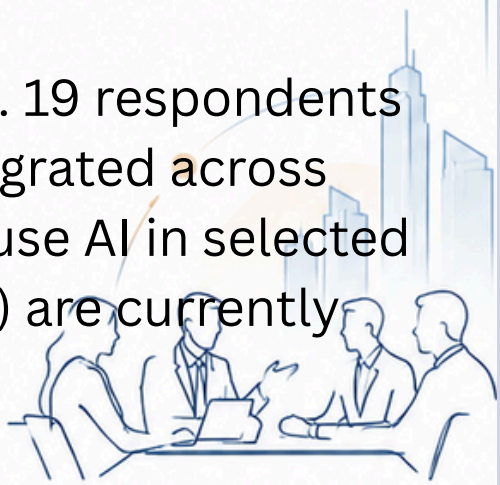
Simply Sansu | 29 survey responses | 2026

Executive Summary

Drawing on responses from 29 business leaders across 11 countries and territories spanning four continents, this report explores how organizations are adopting AI in marketing, where they are seeing measurable value, and what challenges are shaping their next phase of investment.

The respondent group is strongly leadership-oriented, with 21 respondents identifying as founders or CEOs. The findings describe this survey group and are not intended to represent the entire marketing industry.

AI adoption is already substantial. 19 respondents (65.5%) reported that AI is integrated across multiple functions, seven (24.1%) use AI in selected departments, and three (10.3%) are currently piloting AI.



Productivity is the clearest reported benefit. 16 respondents (55.2%) reported significant improvement in marketing-team productivity and seven (24.1%) reported moderate improvement.

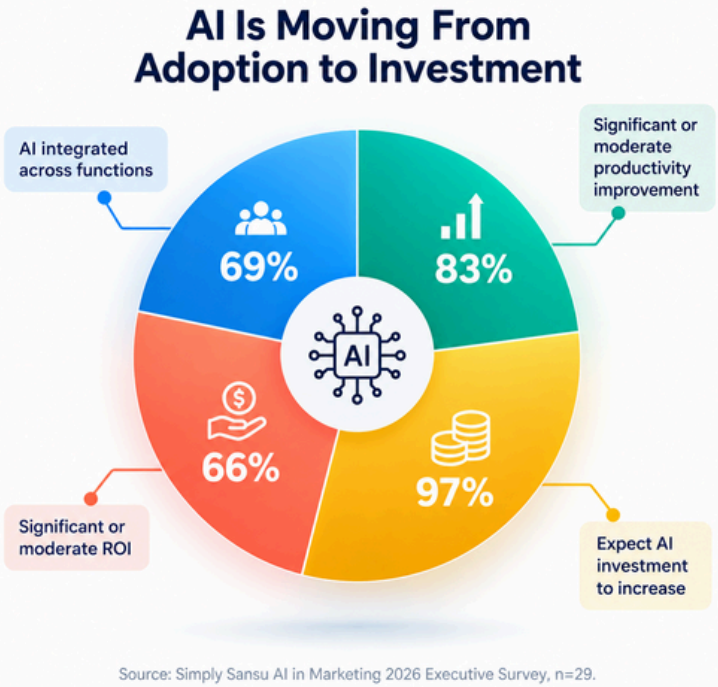
The leading investment reasons were improving employee productivity and efficiency, selected by 25 respondents (86.2%), and automating repetitive and time-consuming tasks, selected by 23 (79.3%).

Accuracy and reliability of AI-generated outputs is the leading implementation challenge, selected by 22 respondents (75.9%).



The investment outlook is strongly expansionary: 29 respondents expect AI investment to increase over the next 12 months, with 14 (48.3%) expecting a significant increase and 13 (44.8%) expecting a moderate increase. Two (6.9%) expect investment to remain the same. No respondent selected a decrease.

Thus, 27 respondents (93.1%) expect AI investment to increase over the next 12 months.

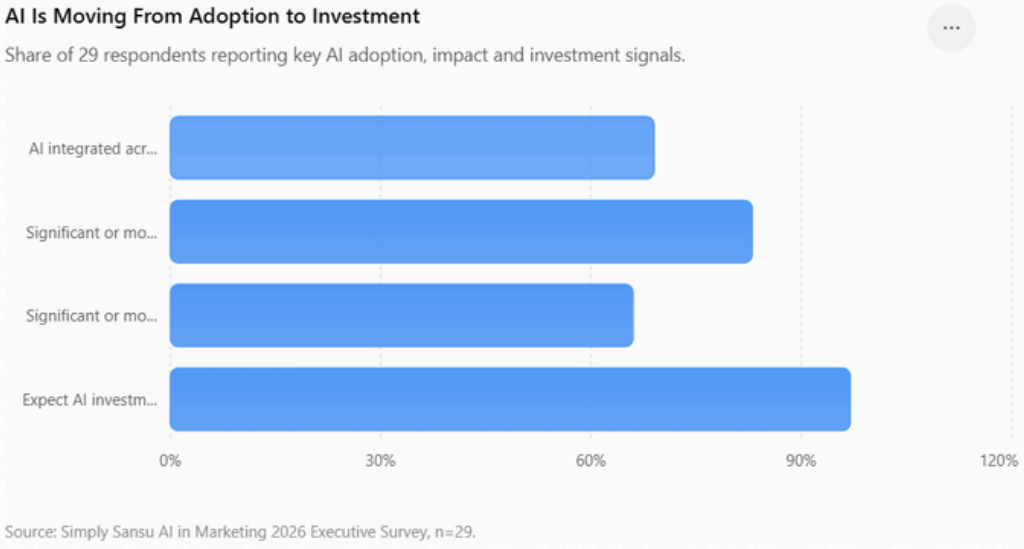


Source: Simply Sansu AI in Marketing 2026 Executive Survey, n=29.



"AI Is Moving From Adoption to Investment"

Share of 29 respondents reporting key AI adoption, impact and investment signals.



Source: Simply Sansu AI in Marketing 2026 Executive Survey, n=29.

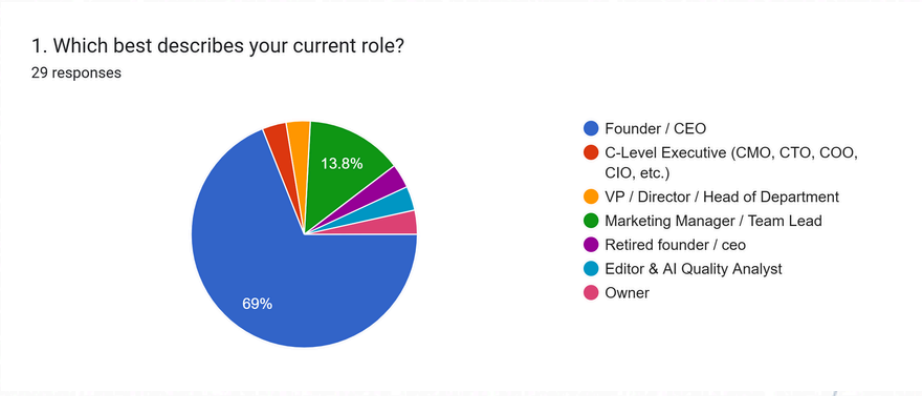


Survey at a Glance

Metric Result

Responses analyzed 29

Founders / CEOs 21 (72.4%)
SMBs 15 (51.7%)
Professional Services 15 (51.7%)
Technology / SaaS 11 (37.9%)
AI integrated across multiple functions 19 (65.5%)
Significant productivity improvement 16 (55.2%)
Significant or moderate ROI 18 (64.0%)
AI investment expected to increase: 27 (93.1%)





Respondent Profile

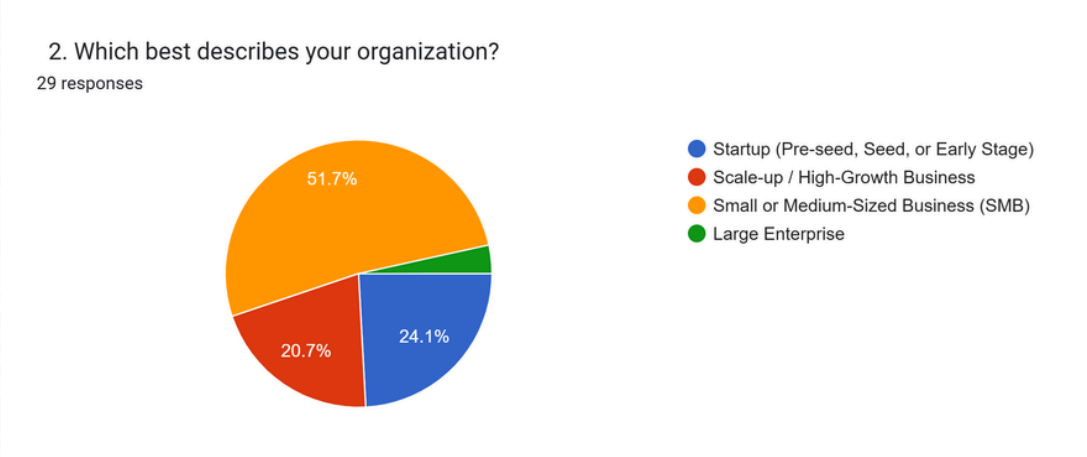
The sample is weighted toward decision-makers.

Founders and CEOs account for 21 of the 29 respondents.

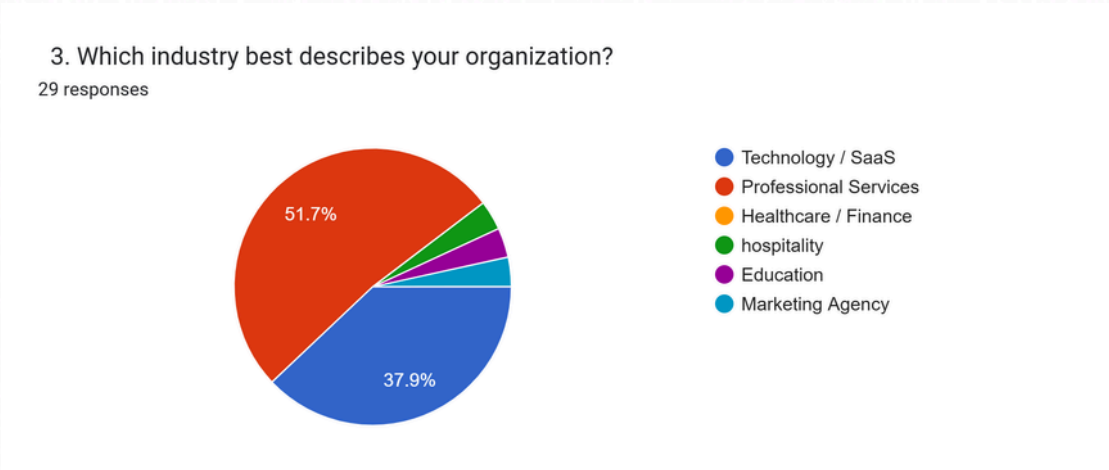
Other roles include marketing managers/team leads, a C-level executive, a VP/director/head, an owner, a retired founder/CEO, and an editor/AI quality analyst.

By **organization size**, 15 respondents (51.7%) represented SMBs, seven (24.1%) startups, six (20.7%) scale-ups/high-growth businesses, and one (3.4%) large enterprise.



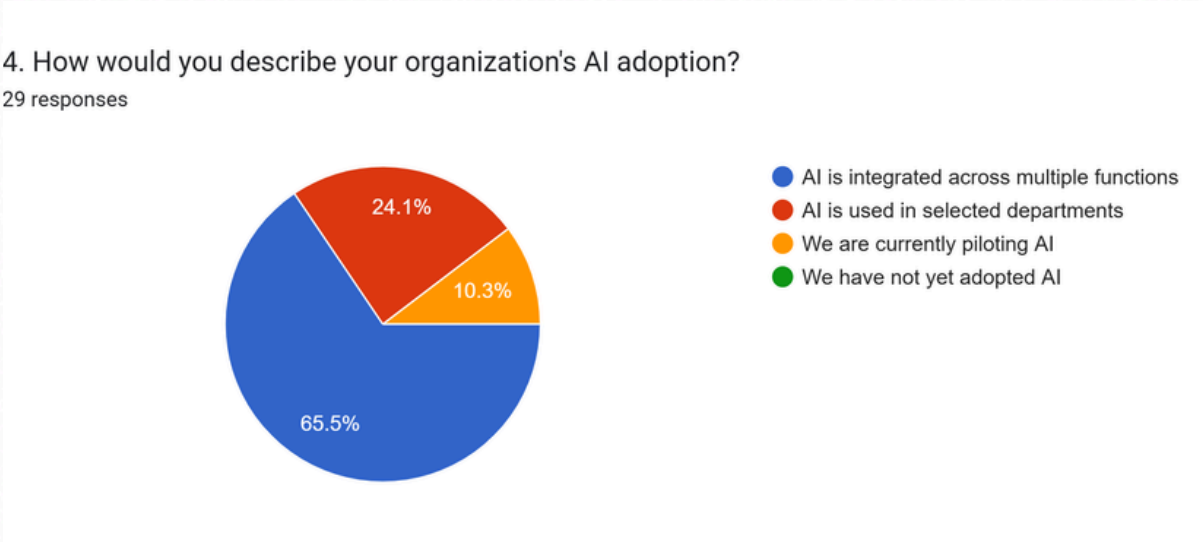


By **industry**, Professional Services accounted for 15 respondents (51.7%) and Technology/SaaS for 11 (37.9%), with the remaining responses from other industries.





Current AI Adoption



19 respondents (65.5%) reported AI integrated across multiple functions.

Seven (24.1%) use AI in selected departments and three (10.3%) are currently piloting AI.

On strategy maturity, nine respondents (31.0%) reported AI integrated across the organization with a formal AI strategy.

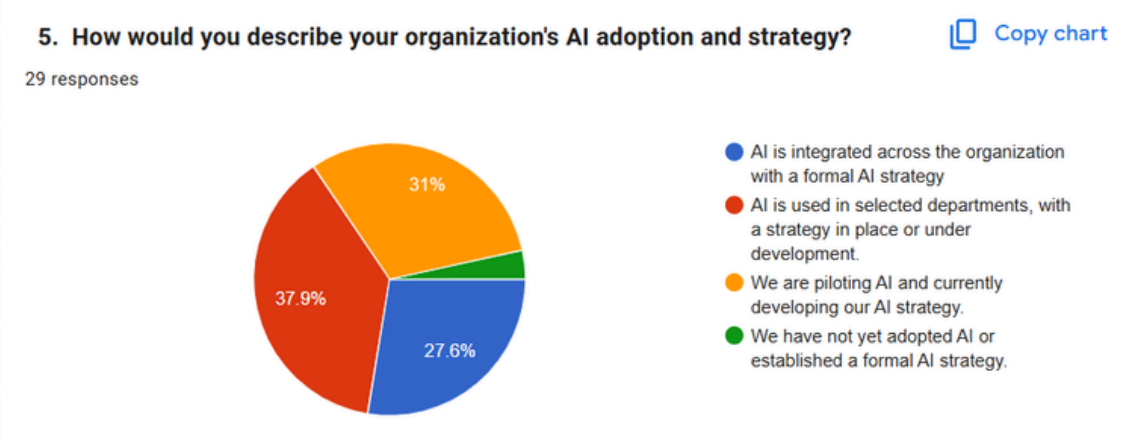


What the Data Shows

AI adoption is already widespread, with 65.5% of respondents reporting AI integrated across multiple functions. Another 24.1% use AI in selected departments, while 10.3% are still piloting it. 31% have also established a formal AI strategy alongside organization-wide integration.



AI Adoption & Strategy



11 (37.9%) reported AI is used in selected departments with a strategy in place or under development.

Nine (31%) reported piloting AI and currently developing AI strategy.

Eight (27.6%) reported AI is integrated across the organization and with a formal AI strategy,



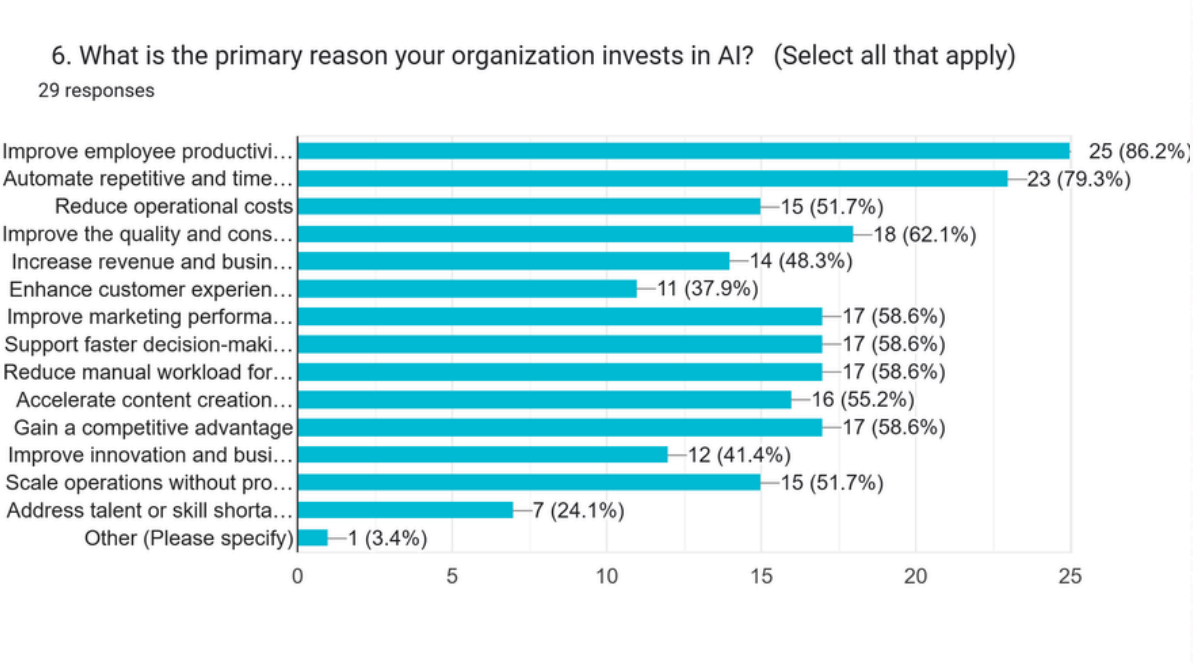
and one (3.4%) had not adopted AI or established a formal AI strategy.

What the Data Shows

Most respondents are still building toward mature AI adoption, with 37.9% using AI in selected departments while developing or implementing a strategy. 31% are piloting AI and developing a strategy, while 27.6% have organization-wide AI integration with a formal strategy. Only 3.4% have neither adopted AI nor established a formal strategy.

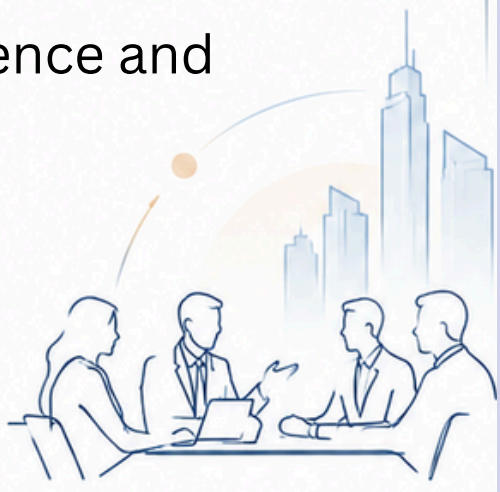


Why Organizations Are Investing in AI





- Improving employee productivity and efficiency was selected by 25 respondents (86.2%).
- Automating repetitive and time-consuming tasks was selected by 23 (79.3%).
- Reducing operational costs was selected by 15 (51.7%)
- Improving the quality and consistency of work was selected by 18 (62.1%).
- Increasing revenue and business growth 14 (48.3%)
- Enhancing customer experience and engagement: 11 (37.8%)



- Improving marketing experience and ROI was selected by 17 respondents (58.6%).
- Support faster decision making with data and insights was selected by 17 respondents (58.6%).
- Reducing manual workload for employees was selected by 17 respondents (58.6%).
- Accelerating content creation and campaign execution was selected by 16 respondents (55.2%).
- Gaining a competitive advantage was selected by 17 respondents (58.6%).



- Improving innovation and business agility was selected by 12 respondents (41.4%).
- Scale operations without proportionally increasing headcount was selected by 15 respondents (51.7%).
- Addressing talent or skill shortages was selected by 7 respondents (24.1%).
- Other by 1 respondent.



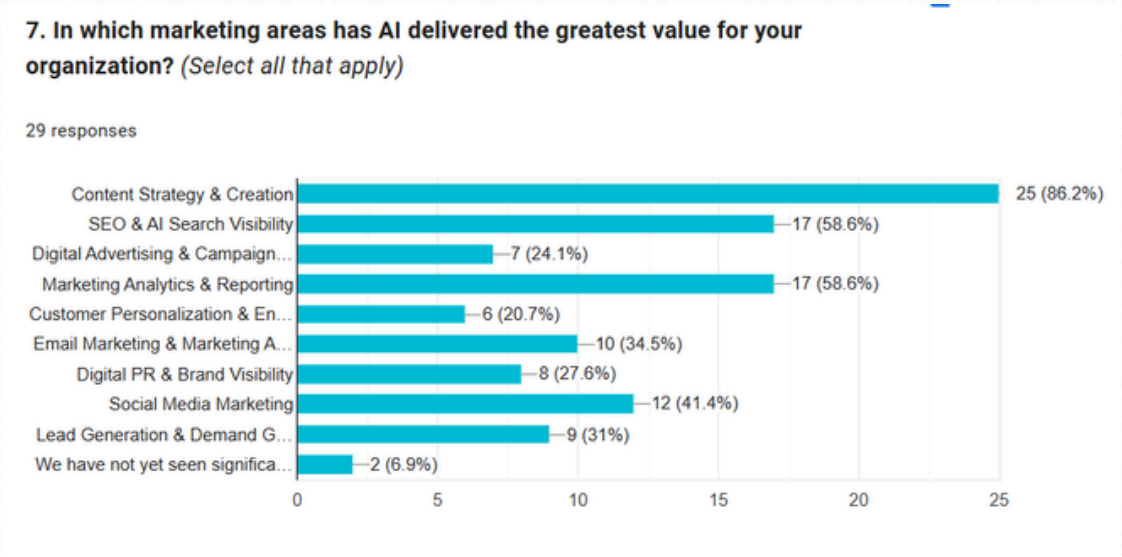
- **Other motivations** included reducing operational costs, increasing revenue and growth, improving customer experience, faster decision-making, accelerating content and campaign execution, competitive advantage, innovation, scaling operations, reducing manual

What the Data Shows

AI investment is driven primarily by productivity and efficiency, with 86.2% citing employee productivity and 79.3% citing automation of repetitive tasks. Other major motivations include work quality, marketing ROI, faster decision-making, competitive advantage, and reducing manual workload, while revenue growth, cost reduction, scalability, and customer experience also feature strongly.



Where AI Is Delivering Marketing Value



- Content Strategy & Creation was selected by 25 respondents (86.2%).
- SEO & AI Search Visibility and Marketing Analytics & Reporting were each selected by 17 (58.6%).



Digital Advertising & Campaign was selected by 7 (24.1%),

Marketing Analytics & Reporting was selected by 17 (58.6%),

Customer Personalization & Engagement was selected by 6 (20.7%),

Email Marketing & Marketing Automation by 10 (34.5%),

Digital PR & Brand Visibility by 8 (27.6%),

Social Media Marketing was selected by 12 (41.4%),



Lead Generation & Demand Generation were selected by 8 (31%)

There were two who have not yet seen any significant value (6.9%)

What the Data Shows

AI is delivering the most value in Content Strategy & Creation (86.2%), followed by SEO & AI Search Visibility and Marketing Analytics & Reporting (58.6% each). Social Media Marketing (41.4%) and Email Marketing & Automation (34.5%) also show strong value, while other areas recorded lower adoption. Only 6.9% reported seeing no significant value from AI in marketing.



Productivity and ROI



16 respondents (55.2%) reported significant improvement in marketing-team productivity

Seven (24.1%) reported moderate improvement

Three (11.3%) reported slight improvement

Three (10.3%) were evaluating or had not yet implemented AI.

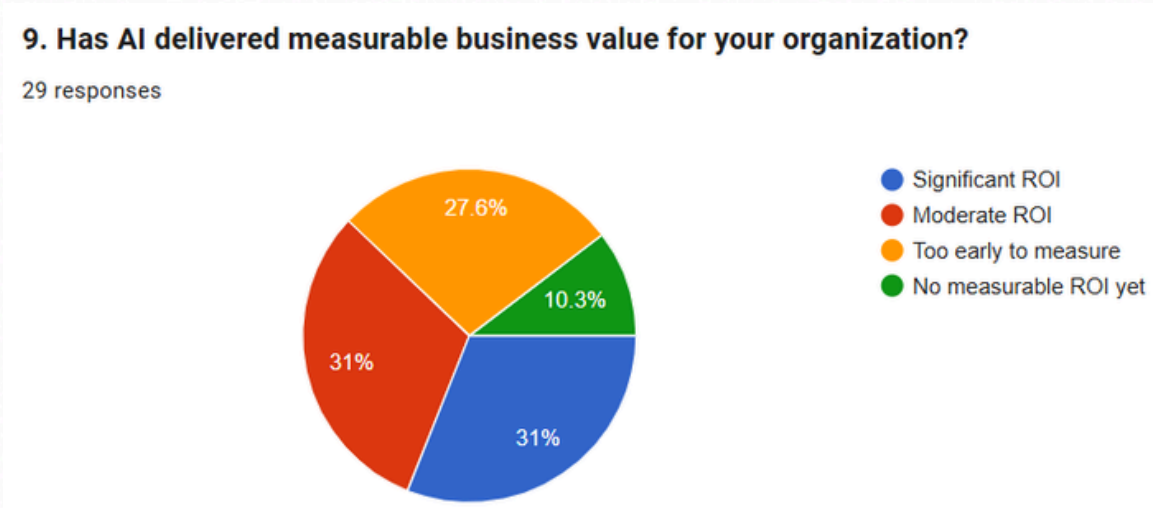


What the Data Shows

AI is having a clear positive impact on marketing productivity, with 55.2% reporting significant improvement and 24.1% reporting moderate improvement. Only 11.3% saw slight improvement, while 10.3% were still evaluating or had not yet implemented AI.



Measurable Business Value



For measurable business value,
9 respondents (31.0%) reported significant ROI,

Nine (31.0%) moderate ROI,

Eight (27.8%) said it was too early to measure,

and three (10.3%) reported no measurable ROI yet.



What the Data Shows

AI is showing measurable business value, with 62% reporting significant or moderate ROI. However, 27.8% said it is still too early to measure, while 10.3% reported no measurable ROI yet.

The data indicates that productivity benefits are more established than formal financial measurement.



Implementation Challenges



Accuracy and reliability of AI-generated outputs was selected by 22 respondents (75.9%), making it the leading challenge.

Data privacy, security, and regulatory compliance was selected by 9 respondents (31%)



Choosing the right AI tools and solutions was selected by 17 respondents (58.6%);

Employee adoption, training, and change management was selected by 8 respondents (27.6%)(17.2%);

Lack of internal AI skills or expertise by 5 (17.2%);

Integrating AI with existing systems and workflows by 9 (31%);

Risk of AI errors or hallucinations affecting business decisions by 12 (41.4%);

Maintaining human oversight to identify mistakes AI may overlook by 13 (44.8%);



Concerns about over-reliance on AI reducing employee critical thinking and confidence by 10 (34.5%);

Measuring AI's return on investment by 6 (20.7%);

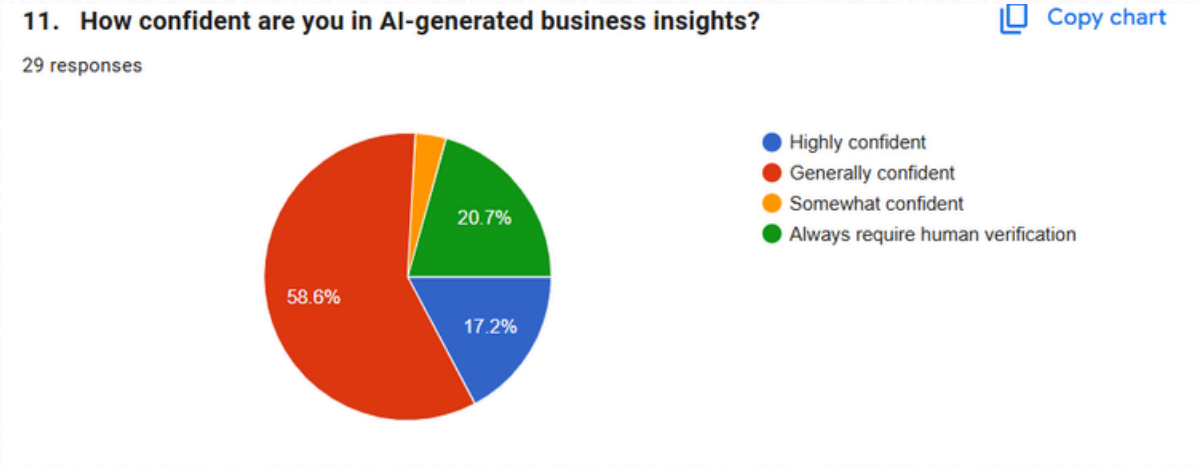
and budget or resource constraints by 3 (19.3%).

What the Data Shows

Accuracy and reliability are the biggest implementation challenges, cited by 75.9% of respondents, followed by choosing the right AI tools (58.6%). Human oversight, AI errors and hallucinations, and concerns about over-reliance on AI also remain significant, while privacy, integration, employee adoption, skills, ROI measurement, and resource constraints present additional barriers.



Confidence in AI-Generated Business Insights



17 respondents (58.6%) said they are generally confident in AI-generated business insights,

Five (17.2%) were highly confident,

Six (20.7%) always require human verification,



and one (3.4%) was somewhat confident.

75.8% of respondents were either generally or highly confident in AI-generated business insights.

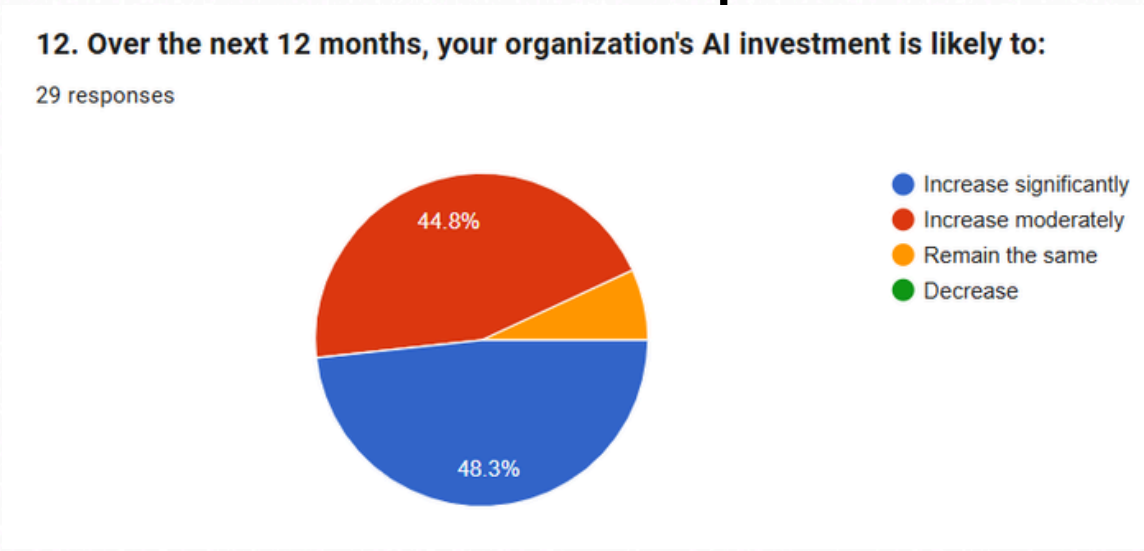
What the Data Shows

Most respondents are confident in AI-generated business insights, with 58.6% generally confident and 17.2% highly confident. However, 20.7% still require human verification, highlighting the continued importance of human oversight.

Confidence is generally conditional on review, context and the importance of the decision being supported.



Where AI Investment Is Expected to Grow



Marketing & Communications is expected to receive the greatest AI investment, with 8 respondents (27.8%) anticipating significant investment growth in this area.

Operations & Process Automation 7 (24.1%)

Sales & Business development 3 (10.3%)

IT, Data & Cybersecurity and Sales & Business Development each received three selections (10.3%)

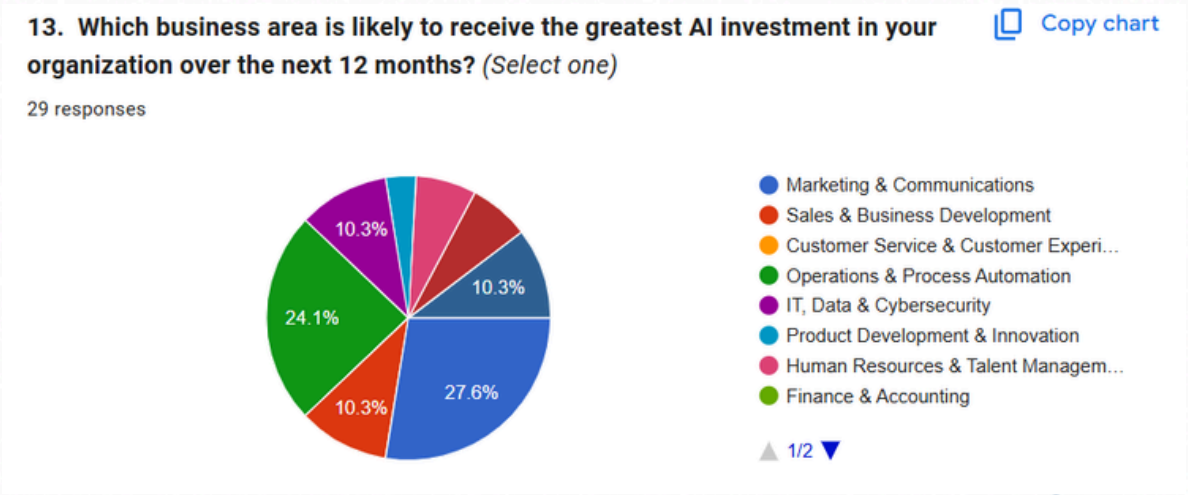


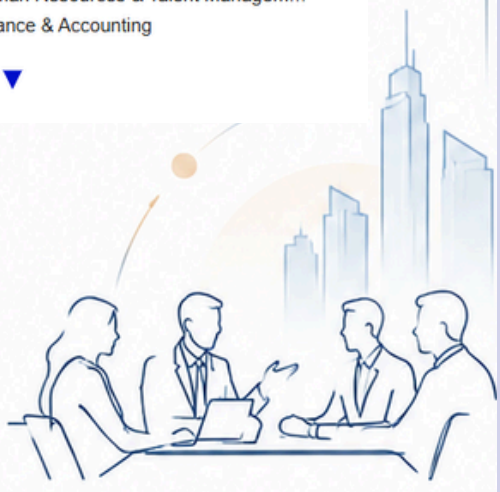
Three respondents (10.3%) had not finalized their priorities;

two (6.9%) expected multiple areas to receive equal investment;

two (6.9%) selected Human Resources & Talent Management;

and one (3.4%) selected Product Development & Innovation.



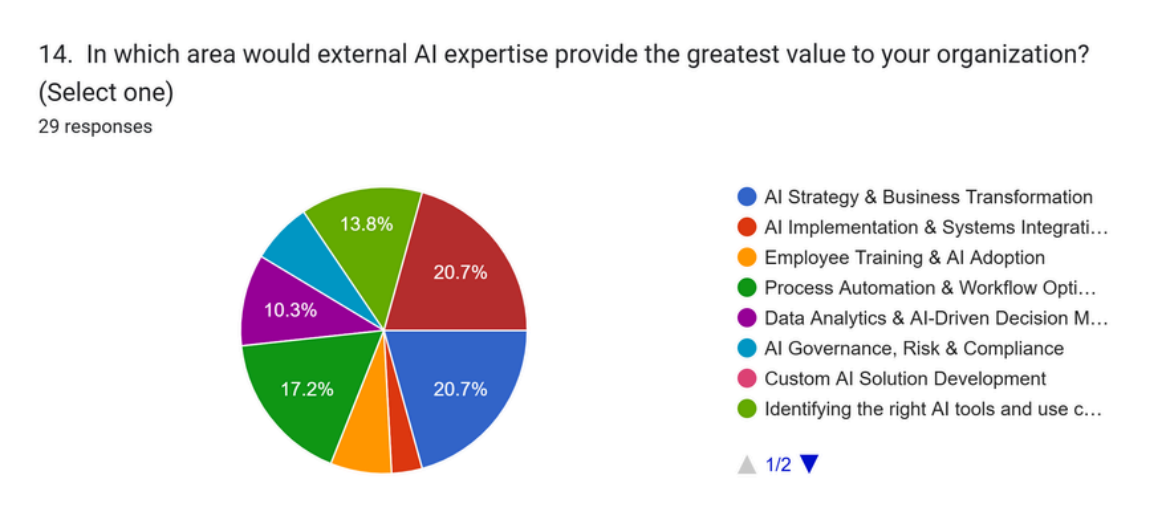


What the Data Shows

AI investment priorities are spread across multiple business functions, with Marketing & Communications (27.8%) and Operations & Process Automation (24.1%) emerging as the leading areas. Other priorities include Sales & Business Development, IT, Data & Cybersecurity, HR & Talent Management, and Product Development, while some organizations are still finalizing their investment priorities.



External AI Expertise

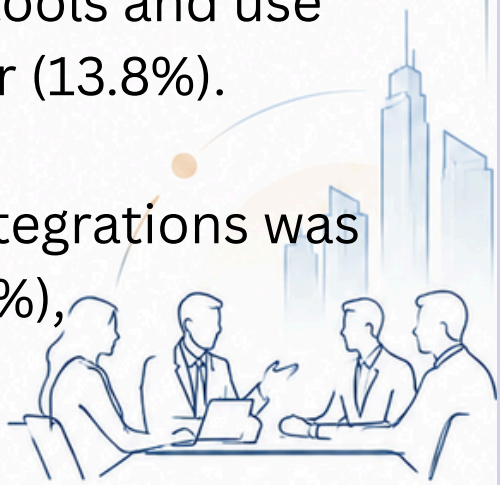


AI Strategy & Business Transformation was each selected by six respondents (20.7%).

Process Automation & Workflow Optimization was selected by five (17.2%),

While identifying the right AI tools and use cases was selected by four (13.8%).

AI Implementation & System Integrations was selected by one (3.4%),



Employee Training and AI Adoption were selected by two respondents (6.9%).

Data Analytics & Data-driven decision-making was selected by three (10.3%),

AI Governance, Risk & Compliance was selected by two (6.9%)

Six respondents (20.7%) said they did not currently require external AI expertise.

What the Data Shows

External AI expertise needs are varied, with AI Strategy & Business Transformation and no current need for external support each selected by 20.7%. Process Automation & Workflow Optimization followed at 17.2%, while other needs included AI tools and use-case selection, data analytics, governance, employee training, and AI implementation.



Biggest Business Benefits From AI

Respondents highlighted a wide range of benefits, with productivity, efficiency, time savings, automation, increased output, faster delivery, and the ability to scale without proportionally increasing headcount emerging as the strongest recurring themes. Several also pointed to improved research, analysis, content creation, decision-making, and the ability to shift teams toward higher-value strategic and creative work.

What the Data Shows

AI is creating leverage by reducing repetitive work, accelerating execution, and enabling teams to accomplish more without proportionally increasing workload or headcount. While many respondents reported immediate productivity gains, some noted that deeper automation requires human expertise, sustained investment, and time to deliver its full efficiency benefits.



Recurring Themes in Open-Ended Responses

Productivity and efficiency: Respondents frequently highlighted increased output, reduced workloads, automation of repetitive tasks, and improved operational efficiency.

Speed and execution: Faster research, content creation, app development, decision-making, and delivery emerged as recurring benefits.

Scale and leverage: AI is helping organizations expand their capabilities and expertise without proportionally increasing headcount, enabling smaller teams to accomplish more.

Higher-value work: By reducing mundane and administrative tasks, AI is allowing teams to spend more time on strategy, creativity, analysis, and decision-making.



Human oversight: Human review, editing, expertise, and judgment remain important, particularly for validating and refining AI-generated work.

Workflow integration: Organizations are moving from individual AI use toward repeatable and automated workflows, although respondents noted that building robust AI systems can require significant time and investment.



Respondent Voices

“Reducing workload in terms of repetitive administration tasks.”

“Increased work output.”

“Better productivity.”

“Content creation, reduced mundane tasks, operational cost reduction.”

“The timeframe from ideation to production has been cut down to a quarter of the time.”

“Within my sole proprietorship, more can get done.”

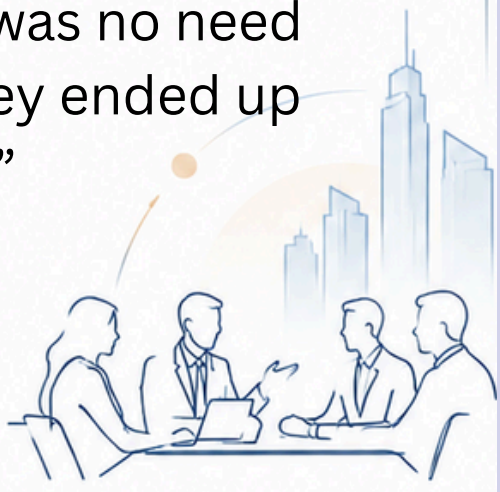


“The biggest benefit has been removing the mechanical drag from our work. A lot of our team’s output now gets touched by AI and then reviewed by a human, which means people who might have spent hours formatting, researching, or rewriting can spend that time actually thinking.”

“Empowering high-performing talent to do more.”

“Improve individual awareness and consciousness overall.”

“My team has been able to produce more work, more accurate work, and they feel less burnt out. Because of this, we naturally grew as a business and there was no need for me to hire more, hence they ended up getting paid more!”



“AI has improved efficiency by automating repetitive tasks and helping us make faster, data-driven decisions.”

“The biggest benefit has been leverage. AI has allowed us to move much faster across research, analysis, content, and internal workflows without needing to increase headcount at the same rate.”

“From an ROI perspective, the biggest advantage is independence: tasks that previously required a dedicated programmer or specialist, such as building internal automation tools, can now be done in-house. While this doesn't produce a full-fledged final product, it allows me to independently build drafts, mockups, and functional MVPs.”



“We are currently piloting our own AI tool, Rankseer. This tool helped us oversee the whole picture of our AI visibility strategy and Search Engine Optimization.”

“Thanks to AI, my team spends less time on basic research and drafting, and more time on deep analysis and editing.”

“Smart work ethics.”

“We basically automate everything. We are high-tech people, so every process that we can either code using AI or delegate to our agents, we strive to do that. The less manual work there is, the better for us.”

“Saving time.”



“AI has allowed us to scale expertise instead of simply scaling effort. We've transformed founder conversations, client knowledge, and business strategy into reusable AI systems that create content, improve visibility, qualify buyer intent, and support customer engagement without proportionally increasing headcount.”

“In the digital marketing team, the biggest business benefit has been speed and efficiency, particularly with repetitive tasks and reporting. In other areas we are finding it easier to upskill or develop new lines of work internally. However, this does present its own challenges without a human expert in-house.”

“Delivery speed is one of the biggest business benefits we are experiencing. AI has taken up a lot of our manual typing.”



“AI has allowed me to build and operate GetMarketing with a much smaller team than would traditionally be needed. I use AI almost like a partner or peer reviewer. I can challenge ideas, get a second perspective and iterate much faster than I could working completely on my own.”

“AI has dramatically increased our operational efficiency, allowing our team to analyze data, conduct research, develop strategies, and execute client work faster without sacrificing quality. It has helped us scale our capabilities and output without needing to scale headcount at the same rate.”

“AI has removed repetitive and mundane tasks and allowed our team to focus on strategy and creativity. This blend has driven better performance across the board for top KPIs.”



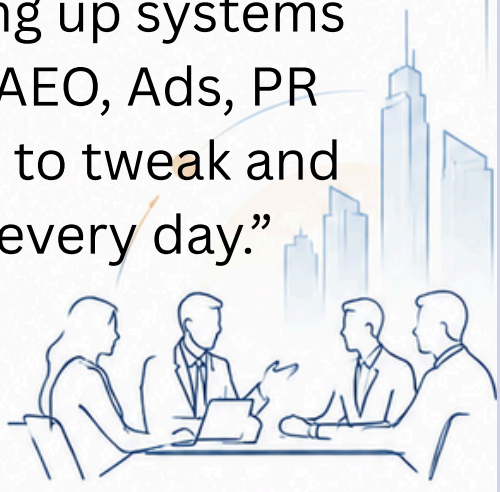
“It's changed the time it takes to create apps and content.”

“Customers today are looking for more AI-native solutions. Being one of them has increased the number of conversations we have had with potential customers.”

“The biggest benefit has been leverage. AI allows us to automate repetitive work, accelerate content and marketing workflows, and give our team more capacity to focus on higher-value decisions and business growth.”

“Process acceleration and more data collected.”

“Speed and consistency. Setting up systems and letting them run. AI SEO, AEO, Ads, PR have all been built. Now trying to tweak and improve them but they run every day.”



Biggest Challenges in Adopting AI

Respondents highlighted challenges around accuracy, quality control, employee adoption, tool selection, workflow integration, human oversight, and the rapidly changing AI landscape. Several responses also pointed to the difficulty of moving from experimentation to reliable, organization-wide AI systems.

What the Data Shows

The biggest challenge is turning AI experimentation into reliable, consistent and well-governed workflows. Respondents repeatedly emphasized the need for human judgment, quality control, employee adoption, appropriate tools, and continuous refinement as AI becomes more deeply integrated into their organizations.



Recurring Themes in Open-Ended Responses

Accuracy and quality: Maintaining accurate, useful, original, and consistent AI output remains a major concern, with human fact-checking and review still required.

Employee adoption and learning: Hesitation, learning curves, resistance, and uncertainty about AI's impact on jobs were identified as barriers to adoption.

Human judgment and oversight: Respondents emphasized that AI-generated work still requires experienced people to evaluate context, logic, facts, quality, and business relevance.

Workflow integration: Moving AI from individual experimentation into reliable, organization-wide processes and systems remains challenging.



Tool selection and experimentation: Finding the right tools, models, prompts, and workflows can require significant experimentation, particularly as AI capabilities evolve rapidly.

Rapidly changing technology: Constant changes in AI platforms, policies, capabilities, and what works effectively make it difficult to establish stable long-term processes.

Over-reliance on AI: Some respondents expressed concern that excessive reliance on AI can affect human judgment, confidence, strategic consistency, and critical thinking.



Respondent Voices

“Initial hiccups faced by staff.”

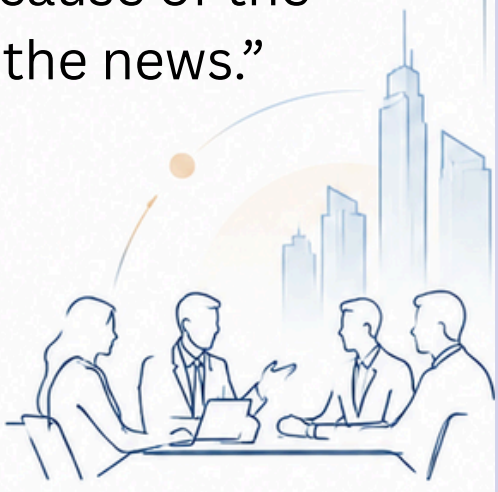
“The biggest challenge has been honing in on the best and most worthwhile opportunities. There are so many areas in which AI can support and help, but it is understanding where to actually focus that is the true gift.”

“AI accuracy.”

“Already answered in the multiple answers.”

“People has to rightly evaluate AI outcomes.”

“At first, I would say 50% of my team was hesitant about AI adoption because of the fearmongering of job loss in the news.”



“Time to learn how to do it the best way. So many things you just have to ignore.”

“Running through tokens really fast.”

“The quality of AI output and still having to fact-check by a human.”

“Finding tools that offer advanced features while remaining simple for the whole team to use.”

“The biggest challenge is maintaining quality and human judgment while increasing the amount of work AI can produce. It's easy to create more output with AI, but making sure that output is accurate, useful and aligned with the business still requires experienced people.”



“The biggest challenge is to streamline the use of AI tools into our current process. We did not go back to square one instead, we adapt to the change by experimenting with processes that eventually worked and helped us to be more effective and efficient.”

“Making sure the AI produces original results.”

“The technology has advanced faster than most businesses' ability to redesign their processes. The biggest challenge has not been selecting AI tools, but integrating them into reliable workflows with human oversight, governance, and measurable business outcomes.”



“Our biggest challenge has been moving from individual AI use to consistent, organization-wide systems. The technology evolves incredibly quickly, so establishing standardized workflows, quality controls, and team training while maintaining human oversight has been an ongoing process.”

“Finding the right tools through each tools marketing.”

“Adoption.”

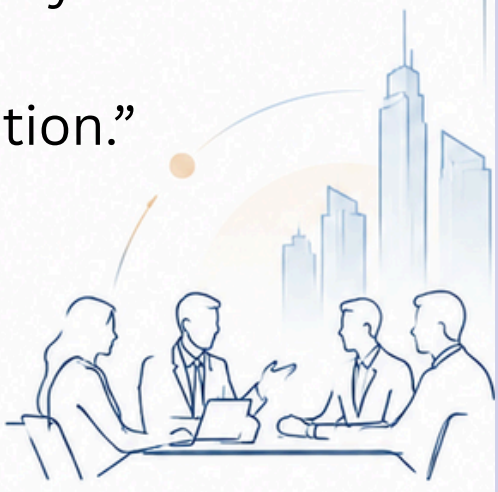
“The biggest challenge has been building reliable processes around it. AI can produce a lot very quickly, but maintaining accuracy, context, and consistent quality still requires strong human review and well-defined workflows.”



“There is too much reliance on AI especially among the top management. This has led to constantly changing marketing positioning and strategy. Additionally, all work is verified/cross-checked with AI, team members are losing confidence in the organization's goal altogether.”

“The biggest challenge has been figuring out how to continuously increase the quality of the output and knowing which ‘button to push’ to get the result I actually want. There is a lot of experimentation involved in finding the right models, prompts, context and workflows. And, somewhat funny, even token spend becomes a practical challenge when you start using AI heavily.”

“Learning curve & adoption.”



“The tendency of AI to be a sycophant and to pander to the user instead of reasoning well and architecting good systems is problematic. It always tries to satisfy the user in whatever way we prompt it and whatever guardrails we introduce. So the results, especially the logic behind them, always need a lot of manual review and debugging.”

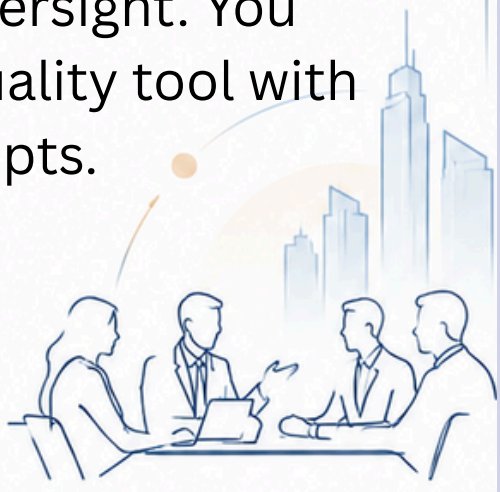
“Constant pull of platforms banning AI or constant moving targets on what actually works. By the time the system is mature it needs to be rebuilt, so tracking what is actually working feels almost impossible.”

“The biggest challenge has been integrating AI effectively into existing workflows while maintaining accuracy and quality.”



The hardest part is teaching people when not to trust it. I've watched AI produce something that looked completely finished, and that's actually the dangerous part. The writing is clean enough that you can forget to ask whether the idea is good, whether the facts are right, or whether it sounds like a human being who actually believes what they're saying."

"The initial challenge is the shift from early euphoria, when everything seems seamlessly automatable, to realizing the true scale and effort required. You quickly learn that AI rarely generates the exact intended output on the first try; it demands significant refinement and hands-on oversight. You cannot build a reliable, high-quality tool with just a couple of prompts.



You cannot build a reliable, high-quality tool with just a couple of prompts. The system requires continuous tweaking, optimization, and stabilization, as complex setups tend to degrade or break the more you iterate on them."

"Acceptance and adoption by employees has been and still remains the biggest challenge. Creative minds aren't very keen on working along with AI. The trust issues are understandable and it feels like the challenge will eventually settle once they understand how to use AI to their benefit."

"The biggest challenge has been consistency, both in terms of AI output and employee usage. We encourage all team members to contribute real human insight to any AI generated output, but it is difficult to monitor across a large team."



These perspectives come directly from senior decision-makers sharing their own experiences with AI adoption. Their responses have been kept original in substance and meaning, with only the language cleaned up for clarity, grammar and publication readiness.

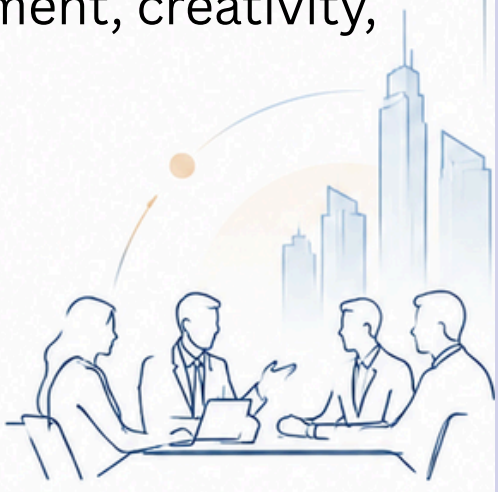


The Role of AI Over the Next 2–3 Years

Respondents generally expect AI to move from an individual productivity tool to a more deeply embedded part of business operations. They anticipate greater automation across marketing, research, SEO, customer service, data analysis, content, sales, and internal workflows, while human judgment, relationships, creativity, and strategic decision-making remain important.

What the Data Shows

AI is expected to become increasingly embedded in everyday business operations, moving from a supporting tool to an operating layer across functions. Respondents also emphasized that the future will involve combining AI's speed and scale with human expertise, judgment, creativity, and relationships.



Recurring Themes in Open-Ended Responses

Deeper automation: Respondents expect AI to automate a growing share of repetitive and operational tasks, with some anticipating that a significant portion of business processes will become AI-driven.

AI embedded across functions: AI is expected to become part of marketing, SEO, research, customer service, sales, data analysis, reporting, content production, and decision-making rather than operating as a standalone tool.

Greater scalability: Several respondents expect AI to help businesses increase output and expand operations without proportionally increasing headcount.



Human-AI collaboration: Respondents repeatedly described a future where AI handles automation and production while people focus on strategy, creativity, relationships, expertise, and judgment.

AI-first business models: Some respondents expect AI to influence how businesses are designed from the ground up, rather than being added to existing processes later.
A changing nature of work: Some responses anticipate employees managing AI agents and using AI as a continuous research, training, editing, and decision-support partner.



Respondent Voices

“Exponential.”

“I expect AI to continue to play a similar role to previous automation SaaS tools and softwares. AI is a tool that can accelerate production, improve creativity/iterations, and drive businesses with more clarity, but AI is a one-way conversation. It cannot facilitate the relationship that is waiting on the other end.”

“A significant role.”

“Increase the business scalability across continents.”

“I expect AI to play a significant role in my business over the next 2–3 years, mostly in customer success and human resource management.”



“Improve people awareness.”

“Increasingly.”

“AI will be running 50% of our back tech and operation of the business.”

“Automated marketing outputs. Increasing use of AI in image generation and manipulation.”

“I expect AI to move from a background tool to the core of our work. It will help us serve our audience, analyze products and tailor recommendations.”

“Data processing, automation, and marketing.”

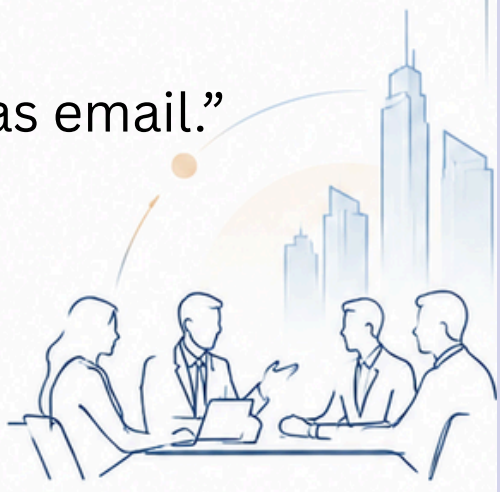


“AI will become embedded across our everyday operations rather than being treated as a separate technology initiative. I expect it to handle an increasing amount of repetitive research, content, analysis and workflow automation, while people remain responsible for strategy, creativity, relationships and important decisions.”

“AI will become the operating layer behind nearly every business function. We expect it to orchestrate research, content creation, customer engagement, sales intelligence, and decision support, while humans focus on strategy, relationships, and judgment.”

“Increased role with new technology.”

“Will become as common as email.”



“We expect AI to become embedded throughout our operations rather than functioning as a standalone tool. It will increasingly support research, SEO and search intelligence, data analysis, automation, reporting, content workflows, and decision-making.”

“I expect AI to become embedded in nearly every part of the business, from research and SEO strategy to reporting, content production, and operations. The value will increasingly come from combining AI's speed and scale with human judgment, expertise, and decision-making.”

“AI will be used more in departments like marketing and sales. Today, outreach is getting more automated than before and marketing strategy is dictated by AI. I see that this will continue further too.”



“I want GetMarketing to be AI-first from the ground up.”

“An opportunity and a threat.”

“Hopefully, we will automate almost everything… The idea is to automate everything except human-to-human conversations.”

“50% + of the business will be AI automated.”

“Over the next 2–3 years, AI will play a larger role in automation, content, SEO, data analysis, and business decision-making.”

“I think AI is going to become much less noticeable. It’ll sit inside the research, editing, training, analysis and production work we already do.”



“I feel like more processes will get automated in the future and hence, a lot of tasks will be completed faster and with accuracy.”

“We expect AI to become a much more significant area of the business, automating most, if not all, of our existing processes.”

“Significant role for content and mundane tasks.”



Advice for Business Leaders Considering Greater AI Adoption

Respondents largely encouraged business leaders to start rather than delay, focus on real business problems, begin with practical use cases, and keep people at the center of AI adoption. They also emphasized experimentation, measurement, human oversight, employee training, and avoiding automation simply for the sake of adopting AI.

What the Data Shows

Start with a real business problem, experiment with practical use cases, measure the results, and keep humans at the center of the process. Respondents emphasized that AI should enhance people and existing expertise rather than be adopted simply because it is the latest technology.



Recurring Themes in Open-Ended Responses

Start now: Several respondents encouraged leaders not to delay AI adoption and to begin experimenting rather than waiting for the technology to mature.

Start with the problem, not the technology: Respondents repeatedly advised identifying high-value business problems or repetitive workflows before selecting AI tools.

Start small and measure: Testing one workflow, measuring the results, learning from quick wins, and expanding gradually were recurring recommendations.

Keep humans involved: Human oversight, judgment, creativity, and expertise were repeatedly emphasized as essential to responsible AI adoption.



Train and involve employees: Respondents highlighted leadership, employee buy-in, culture, and training as important factors in successful adoption.

Avoid AI for AI's sake: Several respondents cautioned against adopting AI simply because it is trending or blindly automating existing processes.



Respondent Voices

“Do not delay.”

“Don't think of AI as a tool to replace humans. Think of AI as a tool to unlock what humans are truly meant to be. Lean in on creativity, experimentation, community, grit, and growth.”

“Just do it.”

“Don’t be scared and leverage it.”

“People shall keep in mind that AI do is using the know and past info, not creativity.”

“Pick one thing and get good at it.”

“Think outside the box. I’ll give you endless possibilities.”

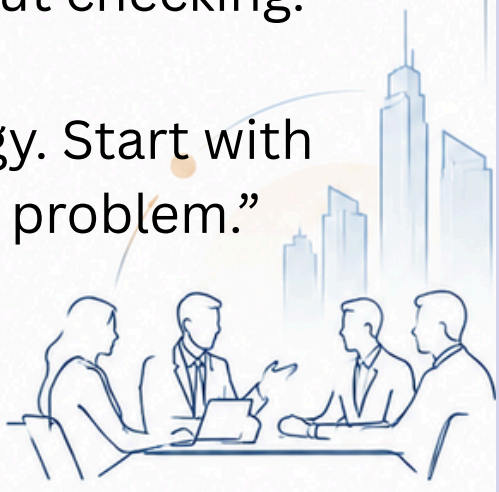


“One piece of advice I can give other business leaders is to invest in improving their leadership. Once I did this, it was much easier for me to encourage my best team members to step up, use AI to produce more work without being burnt out, and they also trust me and know that my efforts are for the betterment of the company.”

“Ensure there's still a human overseeing the outputs and checking prior to release into the wild.”

“AI saves time and boosts team confidence, but it is only as reliable as the information you give it. Always verify the results and never take the AI's word without checking.”

Don't start with the technology. Start with your highest value business problem.”



“Don't start by asking which AI tool you should buy. Start by identifying the repetitive processes that consume the most time, then test AI on one workflow, measure the result and expand from there.”

“Don’t adopt AI just because it’s AI. Start with real business problems, identify where your team is spending unnecessary time or missing opportunities, and use AI to improve those processes.”

“Culture is more important than technology.”

“Start with specific, repeatable workflows where AI can solve a real bottleneck rather than trying to implement AI everywhere at once.”

“Just start small, you'll get motivated by the quick wins.”



“Start with practical AI use cases that solve real business problems rather than adopting AI simply because it is trending.”

“Don’t start by asking what jobs AI can replace. Start by looking at what your smartest people are wasting time doing.”

“AI should be given a chance with a clear head. Define how you want to use it. Do you want it to be the brains or the hands, hit a balance and move ahead.”

“Train your team on prompt engineering.”

“Remember that it should always be human first approach.”



Key Implications

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Start with **business problems**, not tools.

Define the bottleneck, process or outcome first, then select the AI capability.

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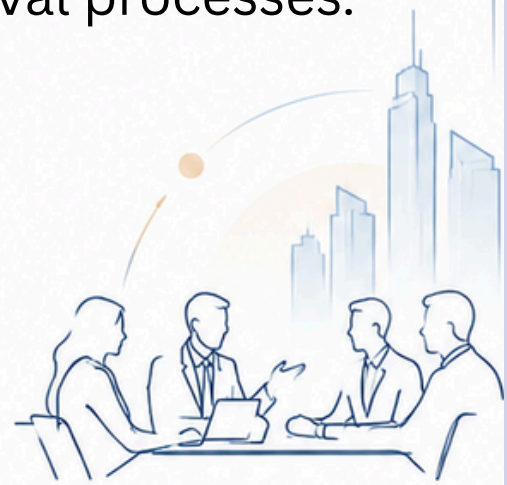
Build **human-in-the-loop** processes.

Accuracy and reliability are the strongest concerns, so review and accountability should be explicit.

· **Standardize** successful experiments.

Document repeatable workflows, quality controls, ownership and approval processes.

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· **Measure productivity** and financial value separately.

Track time and output gains alongside revenue, margin, customer outcomes or capacity where applicable.

· Invest in **training and adoption**. People need clarity about how AI changes their work and where human judgment remains essential.

· Keep the **strategy adaptable**. Focus on capabilities and outcomes rather than depending on one model or platform.



Survey Respondents

Meet the business leaders and professionals who shared their perspectives for the AI in Marketing 2026 Executive Survey.

Alex Zweydoff, CEO & Co-Founder
ClearLead Digital, United States

Andrew Antokhin, SEO Strategist & Founder
Inverox Digital, Vietnam

Andrew Murray, Owner
Wealth Ambition Marketing Inc., Portugal

Andy Cheung, Experienced Project Manager
Hong Kong

Chaitra Saxena, Marketing Manager
Gyaata, India

Darya Kablash, Founder & CEO
GetMarketing, Germany



Deepak Shukla, Founder and CEO
Pearl Lemon, United Kingdom

Ed Tsue, Global Chief Strategy Officer
Google | WPP Media, United States

eMac Media, United States

Etienne Arsenault, Etienne Arsenault
Services Immobiliers Inc.
Canada

Eugene Tartakovsky, Founder
BeRelevant.ai, Portugal

Karla Singson, Founder
Proximity Outsourcing, United States

Karen Walker
S72, United Kingdom



Mia Morin, AI Quality Analyst and Editor
Intimeros, Canada

Monica Tomasso, Founder
Monic AI Systems, United States

Natalka Antoniuk, Digital Marketing Lead
Appius, United Kingdom

Neetu Sathe, Founder
ProductMarketing101, India

Owen Rechkemmer, Founder
Rechkemmer Marketing, United States

Peter Murphy Lewis, Founder / CEO
Strategic Pete, United States

RHILLANE Ayoub, CEO
RHILLANE Marketing, Morocco



Rick E., Founder
Simply Noted, United States

Robb Fahrion, Co-Founder & CEO
Flying V Group, United States

Silvia Lupone, Owner
Stingray Villa, Mexico

Sofia Stefou, Founder & CEO
VidaCher, United States

Talal Anwar, Founder
TechFocus360, Pakistan



Conclusion

The survey shows that AI has moved from experimentation toward practical adoption among the organizations represented.

Productivity, automation and content-related work are the strongest current areas of value.

At the same time, accuracy, reliability, human oversight and workflow integration remain central challenges.

The next stage of adoption is therefore less about simply adding AI tools and more about creating reliable processes around them.



With all 29 respondents expecting AI investment to increase over the next 12 months, the survey points toward continued expansion, with greater emphasis on integration, governance, measurement and business outcomes.



Beyond Our Survey: The Bigger AI Picture

How Our Findings Compare

Topic	My Survey	External Research
AI adoption	65.5% integrated across multiple functions	McKinsey 2026: organizations are continuing to scale AI across functions
Productivity	79.6% significant/moderate improvement*	McKinsey: 8 in 10 respondents say AI improved their own productivity
AI investment	93.1% expect investment to	McKinsey: 60% expect AI investment to increase over the next year (McKinsey &
Marketing AI	Content creation was your	Canva: 97% of marketing leaders use AI in daily creative work and 99% plan
Scaling challenge	Accuracy, tools, integration and	Gartner: only 30% of CMOs report mature or fully developed AI readiness

The state of AI in 2026: On the road to ROI

Canva study: AI is in. Now comes the hard part – earning consumer trust



The Bigger Picture: What Larger Surveys Are Finding

McKinsey State of AI 2026

60% expect AI investment to increase over the next year, while 8 in 10 respondents say AI has improved their own productivity. Yet only 37% report AI contributing to organizational EBIT.

https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/quantumblack/our-insights/the-state-of-ai

Deloitte State of AI in the Enterprise 2026

Deloitte reports that organizations are moving from experimentation toward enterprise scaling, with around 60% of workers now equipped with sanctioned AI tools. However, only 34% say they are using AI to deeply transform their business.

https://www.deloitte.com/us/en/about/press-room/state-of-ai-report-2026.html

Gartner 2026 CMO Spend Survey

CMOs are allocating an average of 15.3% of marketing budgets to AI initiatives, but only 30%



report mature or fully developed AI readiness capabilities.

https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2026-05-11-gartner-2026-cmo-spend-survey-finds-cmos-allocate-15-point-3-percent-of-marketing-budgets-to-ai-but-only-30-percent-are-ready-to-scale-ai-capabilities

BCG CMO Survey 2026

96% of surveyed CMOs said AI is driving end-to-end transformation of marketing, but only about one-third said they have actually done the work required to make that transformation happen.

https://www.bcg.com/publications/2026/making-the-agentic-marketing-transformation-a-reality

Salesforce State of Marketing, India 2026

81% of marketers in India reported adopting AI, while data quality and fragmented customer data remain significant barriers to AI-driven engagement.

https://www.salesforce.com/in/news/press-releases/2026/07/07/india-marketers-ai-adoption-unified-data-customer-engagement/



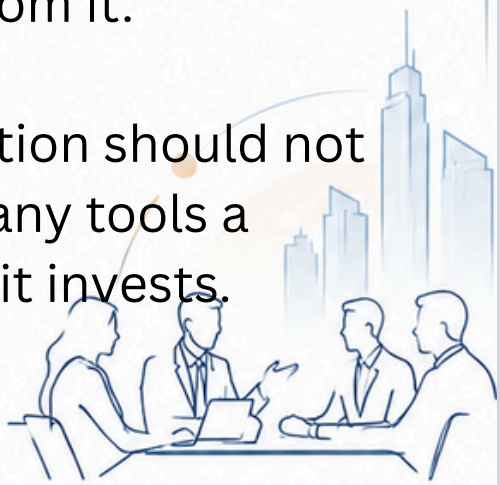
The AI Adoption Paradox

AI adoption is rising. Businesses are investing more in AI, and many are already seeing improvements in productivity.

Yet adoption does not automatically translate into business impact. Companies are still struggling with trust, accuracy, integration and measuring the actual value AI delivers. The challenge is no longer simply deciding whether to use AI. It is figuring out where AI genuinely improves the business and how that improvement can be measured.

This creates an interesting paradox: the more businesses adopt AI, the more important it becomes to understand whether they are actually gaining value from it.

For me, the lesson is that AI adoption should not be measured only by how many tools a company uses or how much it invests.



The more meaningful questions are:

Is it solving a real problem? Is it improving productivity? Is it improving outcomes? And can the business measure that improvement?

AI may be becoming mainstream, but turning AI adoption into sustainable business value is still a work in progress.

AI is powerful, but it is not foolproof, and businesses are not ready to adopt it blindly without validating its accuracy, reliability and impact.



What This Means for Marketers

AI is moving beyond experimentation. The challenge for marketers is no longer simply adopting AI, but integrating it in ways that improve performance without sacrificing accuracy, originality, trust, or human judgment.

1. Adoption is no longer the main question

The bigger question is how effectively organizations integrate AI into real marketing workflows. Using AI occasionally is different from building repeatable systems around it.

2. Productivity is arriving before transformation

AI is already helping teams research, create, analyze, and execute faster. But greater productivity does not automatically translate into deeper business transformation.

3. Human oversight is becoming more important, not less

AI can accelerate execution, but accuracy, context, originality, and judgment still require human involvement. The strongest workflows define clearly where AI can act and where a person must review, refine, or decide.



4. AI investment is moving toward workflows, not just tools

The shift is from experimenting with individual AI tools toward embedding AI into processes, automation, data, and repeatable workflows. The value increasingly comes from how systems work together, not simply how many tools a team uses.

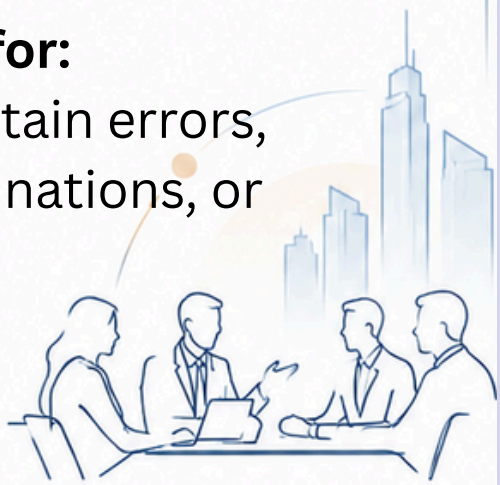
5. More AI does not automatically mean more marketing impact

AI can improve speed across research, ideation, content creation, reporting, and repetitive tasks. But faster production does not guarantee better engagement, leads, conversions, or customer relationships.

AI can make marketing faster. It does not automatically make it better.

Marketers still need to account for:

- Accuracy: AI outputs can contain errors, outdated information, hallucinations, or missing context.



- Trust: Generic or overly artificial content can weaken credibility and audience connection.
- Originality: Human experience, expertise, and perspective remain important differentiators.
- Performance: More AI-generated output does not necessarily mean more engagement, leads, or conversions.
- Judgment: The advantage comes from knowing when to use AI, how to use it, and when human expertise should take over.

The goal shouldn't be to use more AI. It should be to use AI better.

The goal shouldn't be to use more AI. It should be to use AI better.



External Research Context

To put our 29-response survey into a broader context, this report draws on research from McKinsey, Gartner, BCG, Deloitte and Salesforce India.

Each brings a different perspective on AI adoption in marketing, from investment and productivity to implementation, organisational readiness and changing customer expectations.

Our survey provides a smaller, practitioner-level snapshot, while these larger studies help show whether the patterns we observed are also reflected across wider business research.

Together, they provide a more rounded view of where AI marketing stands in 2026, what is changing, and where challenges still remain.



Methodology & Sources

Primary Research

- Simply Sansu Executive Survey, n=29
- Survey conducted using Google Forms
- Responses collected from C-level executives, senior leaders and business decision-makers
- Survey period: July ‘26 to Sept’ 26

Data Collection & Analysis

Survey responses were collected through Google Forms and exported to Google Sheets for analysis. Percentages, charts and findings presented in this report are based on the 29 survey responses.

AI Tools & Platforms Referenced

Where relevant, the report references AI tools and platforms used by marketers and



businesses, including ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Claude, Perplexity and other AI marketing technologies.

External findings are clearly attributed to their respective sources, with the publication date and url included where available.

Research Note

The Simply Sansu Executive Survey, n=29 represents an executive-level snapshot and should not be considered statistically representative of the entire marketing industry.

External research is also included to provide a broader industry context and help identify whether the patterns observed in the survey are reflected in larger studies.

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This report is based on the AI in Marketing 2026 Executive Survey conducted by Simply Sansu.
simplysansu.com



Thank You

Thank you to everyone who contributed their time, experience, and perspective to the AI in Marketing 2026 Executive Survey.

Your insights helped me understand how businesses are moving from AI experimentation toward real-world adoption, productivity gains, investment, and transformation.

AI IN MARKETING 2026

Executive Survey Report

Simply Sansu

Helping businesses build visibility and authority.

simplysansu.com



29 respondents. One snapshot of where AI in marketing stands in 2026.

