



2026 STATE OF AI AND B2B MARKETING

A Sense of Hesitancy Emerges

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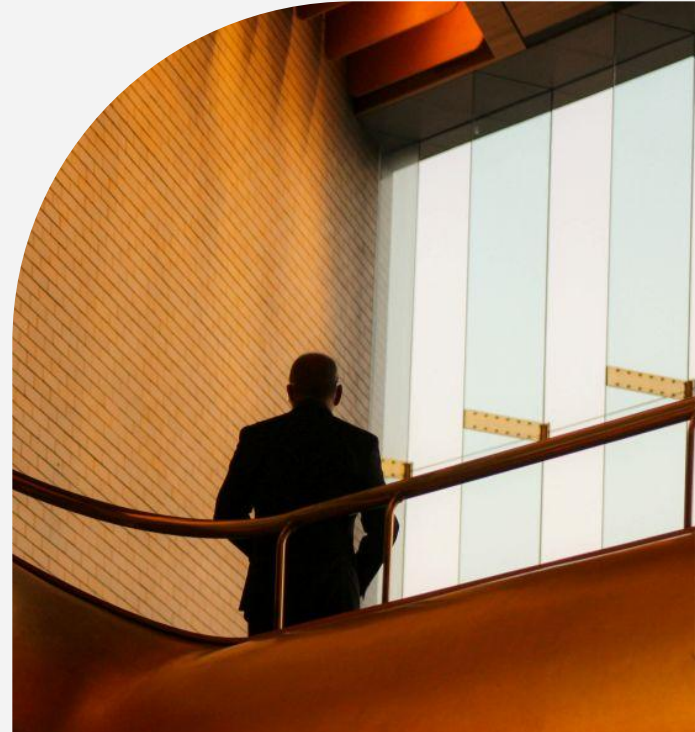
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Introduction



Across every area of business, we are seeing the huge impact that AI is having. The narrative around AI is that companies must adopt it or risk being left behind. While there is undoubtedly a certain truth to this narrative in areas where automation and efficiency are key, there are some outstanding questions about the role of AI in B2B marketing - specifically around adoption, limitations, and more strategic use cases.

To try and get some answers to these questions, we conducted a survey of 277 B2B marketing leaders in the UK and Ireland. At a time when there is something of an AI arms race developing, our goal was to get a clearer picture of the role that AI is playing in B2B marketing today. The 3 key themes which we sought clarification around were:

- How AI is being adopted by B2B marketing teams
- The role of AI in B2B marketing strategy
- B2B marketing AI challenges

The survey data confirmed many of our assumptions around increasing AI budget and widespread adoption but also uncovered some surprising results on AI limitations as well as a certain hesitancy around the use of AI for strategic tasks. All in all, we hope you find something of value in our research and it gives you some insight into the latest trends at a time of rapid transformation.

Executive Summary



Our first port of call was to try and learn more about the ways AI is currently being used by B2B marketing teams. This part of our research put some quantifiable data on many existing trends.

- **Marketing Evolution:** B2B marketing is an evolving landscape with 63% of B2B marketing leaders believing that AI has significantly impacted marketing and 71% citing an increase in investment in AI for marketing over the next year.
- **AI Content Fears:** 71% of companies are using AI in their content creation efforts giving rise to fears of sameness and AI slop.
- **AI Benefits:** Efficiency is the most-cited AI benefit by marketing leaders at 68% followed by personalization at 63%, faster execution at 55%, and cost reduction at 47%. ChatGPT is the most popular AI tool among B2B marketing leaders leading the way with 34%.

Secondly, we wanted to learn more about AI's role in B2B marketing strategy. Here a sense of hesitancy emerged around the more strategic use cases.

- **AI for Execution:** 56% of B2B marketing leaders see the most value in AI in terms of tactical execution.
- **AI for Productivity:** 78% of B2B marketing leaders describe the role of AI in their marketing organization as either a productivity assistant or tactical execution engine.
- **Lack of Trust:** There are certain areas of B2B marketing strategy that are still considered out of bounds for AI with only 6% of respondents trusting AI to contribute to positioning.
- **AI and Strategy:** Doubts remain about the role of AI in B2B marketing strategy with only 44% of respondents expressing confidence in AI for supporting strategic decisions.

Finally, we delved into the AI challenges B2B marketing teams are facing today with questionable AI output and strategic limitations emerging as recurring themes.

- **AI Errors:** In a surprise to absolutely nobody, 88% of respondents stated that AI output still requires significant human correction.
- **Strategic Limitations:** The most-cited AI limitation by B2B marketing leaders is strategic thinking at 57% followed by creativity at 44% and accuracy at 39%.



Methodology



MFS conducted a survey of 277 B2B marketing leaders in the UK and Ireland across a number of different industries. The object of the survey was to measure and assess the impact AI is having on B2B marketing today - as well as highlight some emerging trends.

Marketing leader in this instance refers to employees with the title of Senior Marketing Manager upwards. Respondents work in a variety of sectors but technology is the most frequent followed by professional services, financial services, and manufacturing.

FIGURE 1



FIGURE 2 ○



Understanding AI Usage

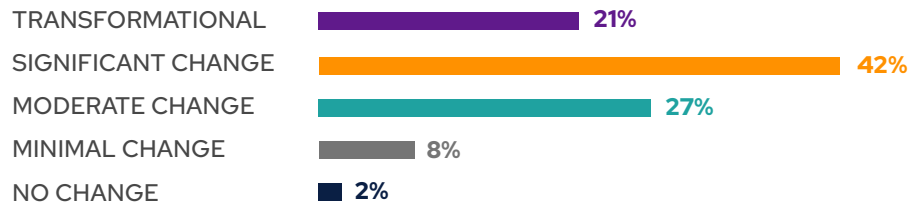


We set out to understand AI usage in the B2B marketing context by asking respondents how AI is impacting marketing at their organization today. Unsurprisingly 63% answered that AI's impact was either transformational or

significant. The low number of respondents who stated AI's impact on marketing to be minimal or unchanged is a further indication of the significant impact AI is having on B2B marketing.

FIGURE 3

How is AI impacting marketing at your organization today?

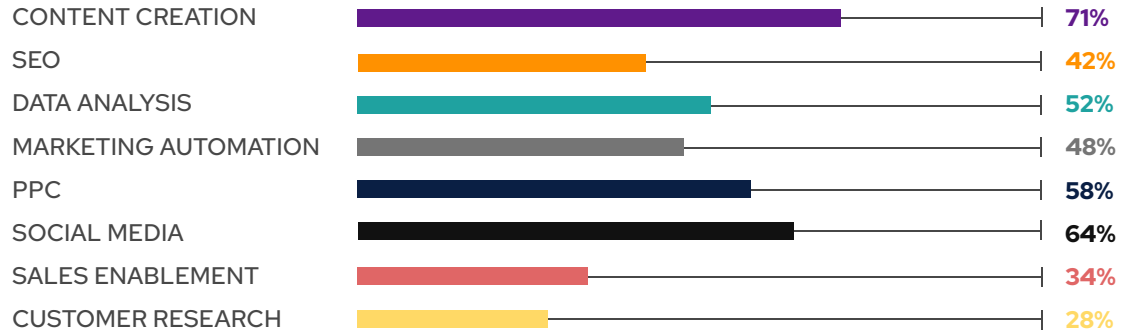


To try to get a clearer picture of AI’s role in B2B marketing, we asked respondents what tasks AI was used for in their organization. Again, it is unsurprising to see AI playing such a prominent role in content creation.

Used correctly, AI can help produce content at scale and personalize it for target accounts. The worry here however is that AI overuse or misapplication can quickly turn content output into low quality AI slop.

FIGURE 4

What marketing activities is AI used for at your company? (Select all that apply)

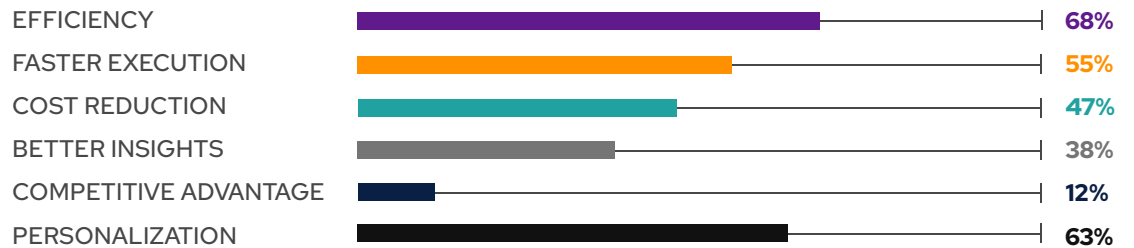


We know of a lot of potential benefits of AI for B2B marketing, but we wanted to get into some specifics on the benefits of AI being realized by marketing teams today. As expected, efficiency, execution, and cost reduction are some of the main benefits.

One interesting finding here is that only 12% of respondents list competitive advantage as an AI benefit which may open up questions around marketing homogeneity or sameness as one of the unintended consequences of increased AI usage in B2B marketing.

FIGURE 5

What are the benefits of AI in B2B marketing? (Select all that apply)



The most popular AI tools for B2B marketing teams are - for the most part - those most widely used outside of a work scenario. ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, and Google Gemini lead the way here. The one purpose built B2B AI solution that is leading the way is Salesforce Einstein with 14% of B2B marketing leaders listing it as the most

important AI tool at their company.

In terms of AI investment, 71% of companies surveyed will be increasing their investment in AI for marketing over the next 12 months - which is relatively unsurprising considering the ubiquitous focus on AI in business today.

FIGURE 6

What AI tool is the most important to marketing at your company?

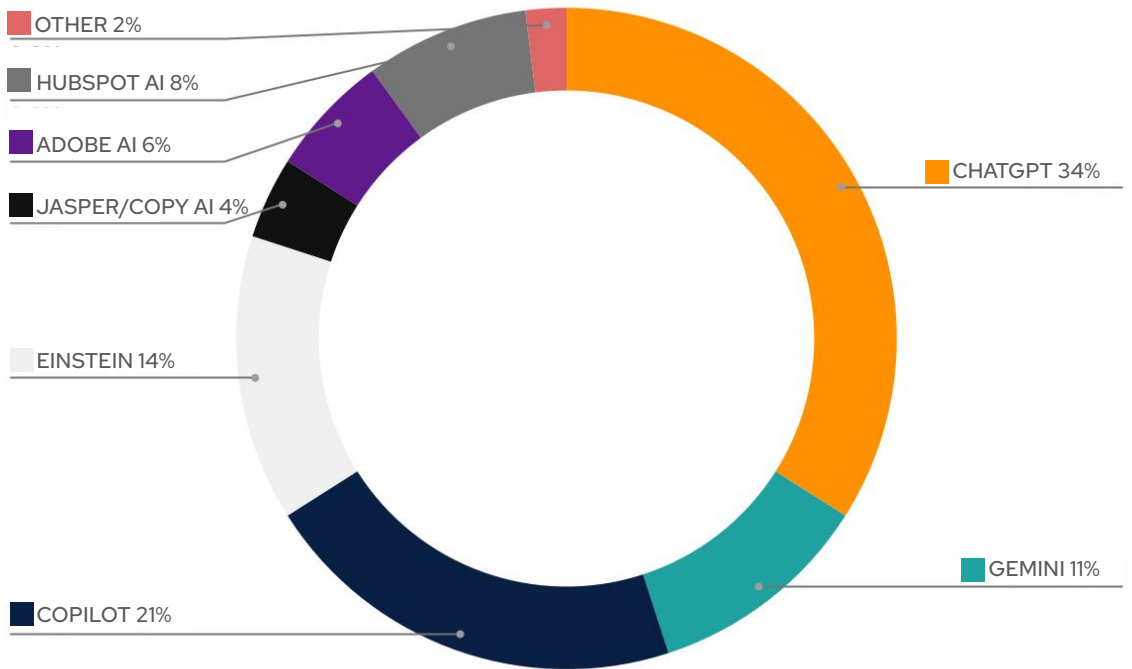
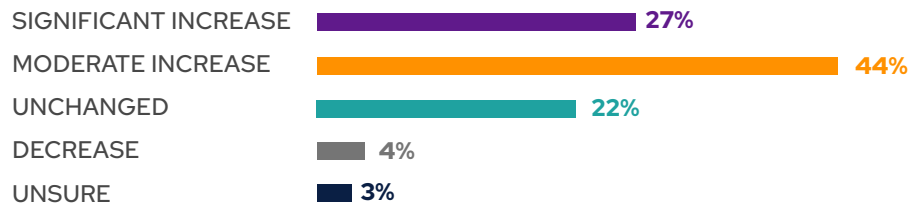


FIGURE 7

How do you expect your organization's investment in AI for marketing to change over the next 12 months?



AI and B2B Marketing Strategy

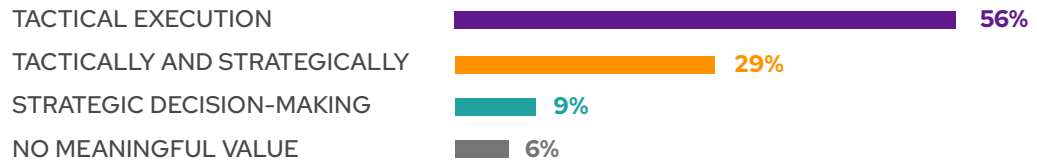


The second theme which we wanted to investigate in our research was the role of AI in B2B marketing strategy. Here we started to see something of a hesitancy towards the use of AI in a truly strategic sense.

Tactical execution is the most prevalent AI use case among our respondents with 56% citing it as the area AI brings the most value to their marketing activities. A further 29% stated AI brings both tactical and strategic value.

FIGURE 8 ○

Where does AI currently add the most value in your marketing activities?

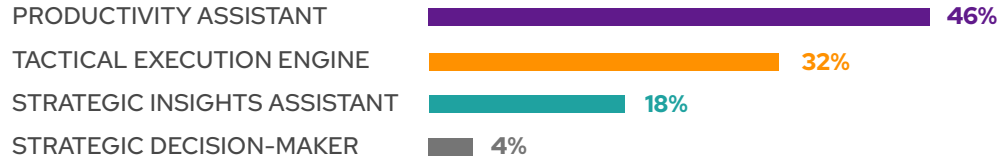


A clearer picture on the ways AI is being used by B2B marketing teams began to emerge in this section with 78% of marketing leaders answering the best

way to describe the role of AI in their marketing organization was a productivity assistant or a tactical execution engine.

FIGURE 9

Which best describes the primary role of AI in your marketing organization today?

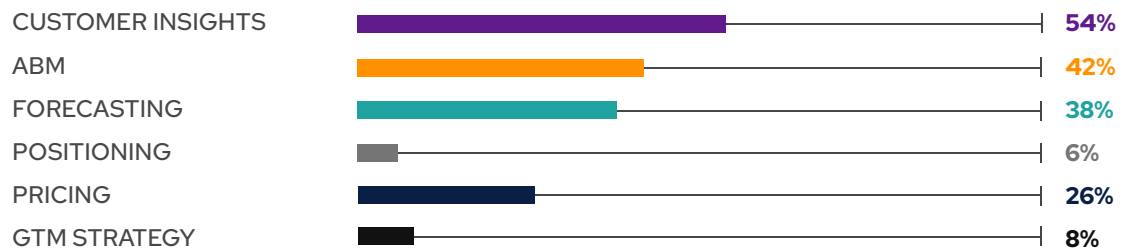


The biggest strategic contribution from AI according to our respondents is in the area of customer insights with 54% citing it as an area where AI meaningfully contributes.

Positioning at 6% and GTM strategy at 8% show that there are still certain areas of marketing strategy which the vast majority of marketing leaders do not trust AI to contribute to.

FIGURE 10

Which strategic areas do you trust AI to meaningfully contribute to? (Select all that apply)



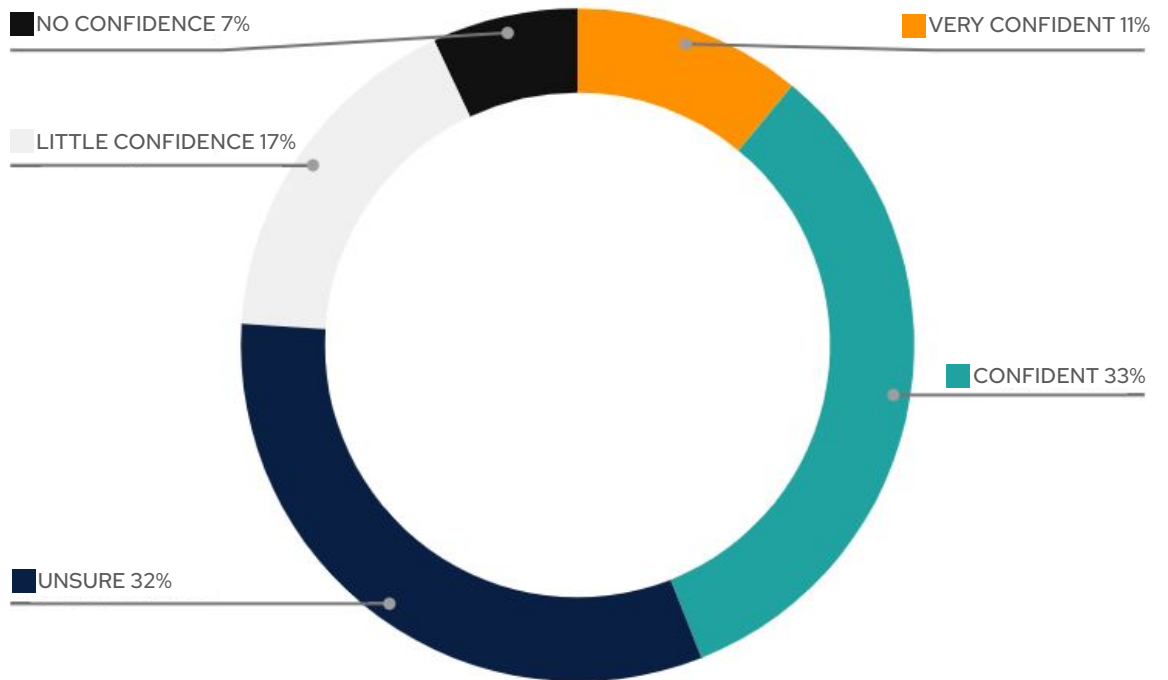
While our respondents are pretty clear that AI has significantly transformed B2B marketing, doubts remain.

In fact, with only 44% of respondents

expressing confidence in AI for supporting strategic decisions, it appears that there is a slight sense of AI hesitancy creeping into the minds of strategic leadership at B2B companies.

FIGURE 11 ○

What level of confidence do you have in AI for supporting strategic marketing decisions?



B2B Marketing AI Challenges



AI hallucinations are widespread enough now that it is not at all surprising to see 88% of our respondents answered that AI output requires significant human correction at times. With only 12% of

B2B marketing leaders answering that AI output rarely or never requires human correction, it is clear that the leading AI providers still have a lot of work to do in this area.

FIGURE 12

How often do AI tools deliver outputs requiring significant human correction?



In terms of AI limitations, 57% of respondents cite strategic thinking followed by creativity at 44% and accuracy at 39%.

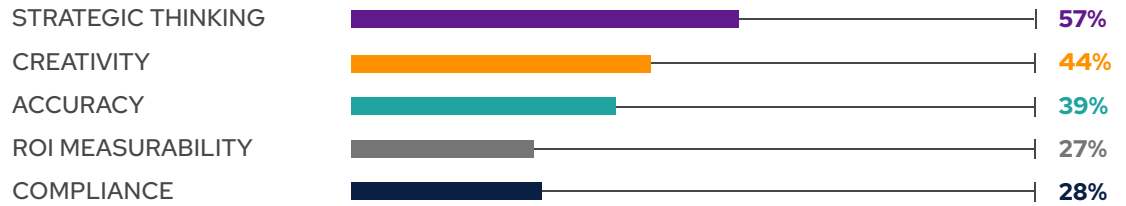
In a survey of B2B marketing leaders, it is perhaps unsurprising that strategic thinking is the most cited AI limitation. Speaking in broad terms, marketing leaders are usually a product of their experiences, skills,

expertise, and even worldviews - a unique blend creating a certain strategic disposition.

How an AI platform or LLM can be set up to mimic or even improve on the strategic decision-making capabilities of modern day B2B leaders remains to be seen, but, for now, the sense among B2B marketing leaders is that AI is not there yet.

FIGURE 13

Where does AI currently fall short in B2B marketing? (Select all that apply)



Conclusion



Such is the focus on AI today that it is unsurprising to see AI spend by B2B marketing teams rising. This trend is following a general pattern across all businesses today where AI spend is rapidly increasing.

Perhaps the biggest issue highlighted by our research is the fact that AI spend is rising at a time when a certain hesitancy, borderline scepticism is emerging around the use of AI in the more strategic B2B marketing use cases. The question then emerges that if we are in an AI race as the increased spending suggests - what does the destination look like?

Unless the strategic gaps are addressed, AI will continue to play a role that is primarily execution and productivity related. In this situation, the risk of marketing homogeneity and reduced quality output will continue to rise forcing companies to take a step back and consider their strategic direction.

Is AI itself a strategy or simply a lever to help execute a strategy? Our research suggests the latter.

For B2B marketing leaders, the challenge now becomes about harnessing AI tools in a way that makes sense for their business as opposed to rushing in a new solution that promises much but will only deliver if the strategy underpinning its implementation is solid. Managing expectations around the use of AI may also come to the fore as marketing leaders seek to balance the strengths and weaknesses of the various AI-based solutions available alongside the type of magical thinking inherent in much of the commentary around AI today.

What is clear is that at a time when B2B marketing is undergoing a significant transformation - there are some uncomfortable questions emerging around the limitations of AI that need to be addressed.

About MFS



MFS is a boutique B2B marketing agency with experience in creating and executing revenue-generating campaigns at companies ranging from rapid growth startups to F500 companies.

We believe that the most effective marketing campaigns are those that most closely align with strategy, which is why we take the time to learn everything there is to know about our clients.

We are not interested in delivering cookie cutter marketing campaigns that may or may not deliver results. Each project we take on is tailored to the company's specific needs - leveraging a unique mix of marketing tactics and channels to help turn strategic goals into reality.

For more information visit our website www.moveforwardstrategies.com

