

Strengthen Your Brand Strategy to Boost Enterprise Growth



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Strategic planning assumption

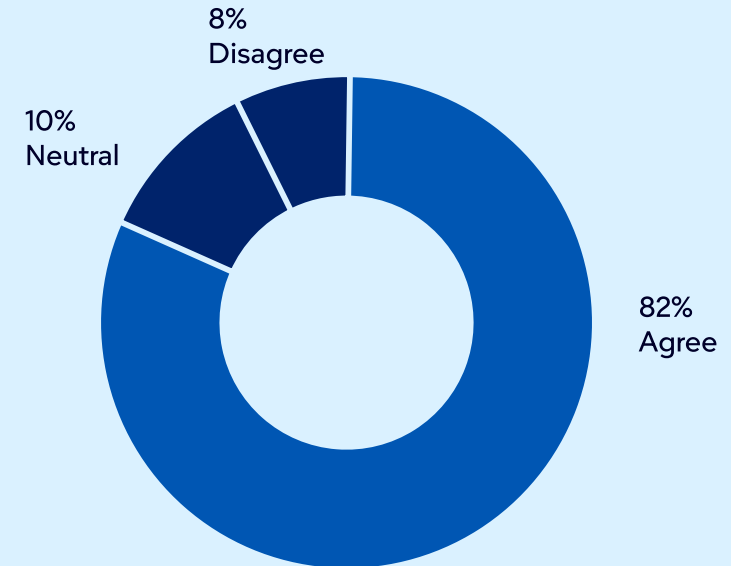
By 2028, over **80%** of companies will make significant changes to their company's identity (for example, mission, brand, culture) to keep pace with the impact of AI on markets.

Brand strategy is shifting in the age of AI

Over the past few years, rapid technological advancements, evolving consumer expectations and market transformations have compelled organizations to rethink their brands. According to the 2026 Gartner Brand and Business Strategy Survey, 73% of companies have refreshed their brand in the last two years. The vast majority of business leaders (82%) anticipate the need to make further significant changes to their company identity, including their brand, due to the impact of AI (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Business leaders' perceptions of AI impact

Q: My company's identity (e.g., mission, brand, culture) will need to significantly change to keep pace with the impact of AI on markets.



n = 425 CMOs and CxO brand partners
Source: Gartner

Survey context

We conducted the 2026 Gartner Brand and Business Strategy Survey to understand best practices related to brand strategy and its impact on business strategy development and performance. Adopting best practices in strategy and decision making explained in this research will give you a competitive edge as you navigate today's high levels of disruption and economic uncertainty.

Key findings in detail

A strong brand strategy fuels organizational growth

Brand isn't just a marketing asset; it's a strategic lever for navigating disruption, guiding innovation, and sustaining differentiation and long-term growth. Companies with a strong brand strategy are twice as likely to exceed their growth goals.

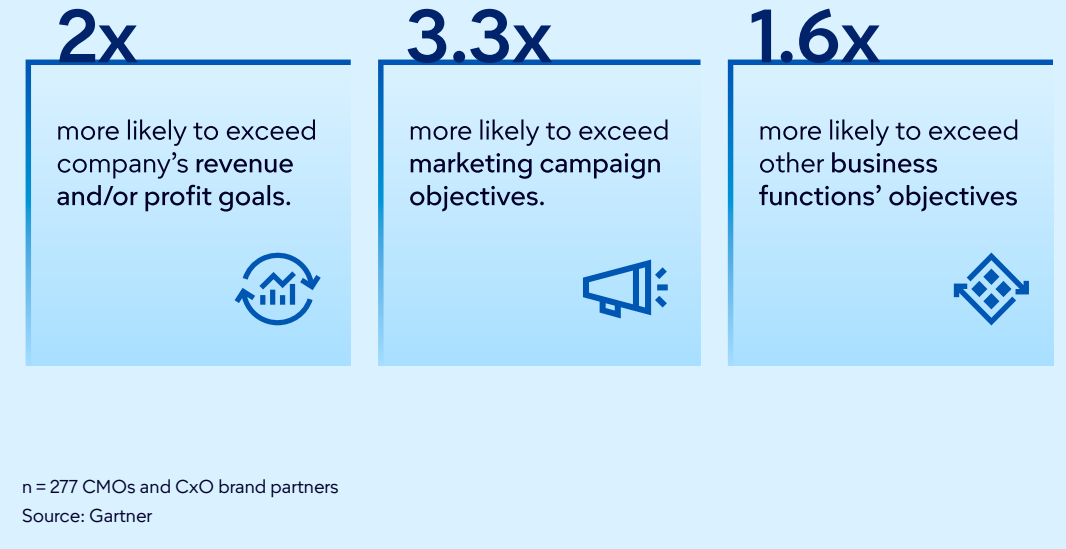
Moreover, when a brand thrives, so do individual parts of the business. Our findings show that brand strategy has a strong direct effect on the performance of marketing campaigns. It also radiates outward to affect the goal achievement of many other functions across the enterprise, from product management and customer service to back-office functions like HR and IT (see Figure 2).

A strong, high-performing brand strategy is one that is fully aligned with business strategy, consistently executed across functions, and recognized by executive leadership as critical to both past and future growth.

2026 Gartner Brand and Business Strategy Survey

Figure 2: Impact of brand strategy performance on business outcomes

Outcomes of companies with strong versus weak brand strategy performance

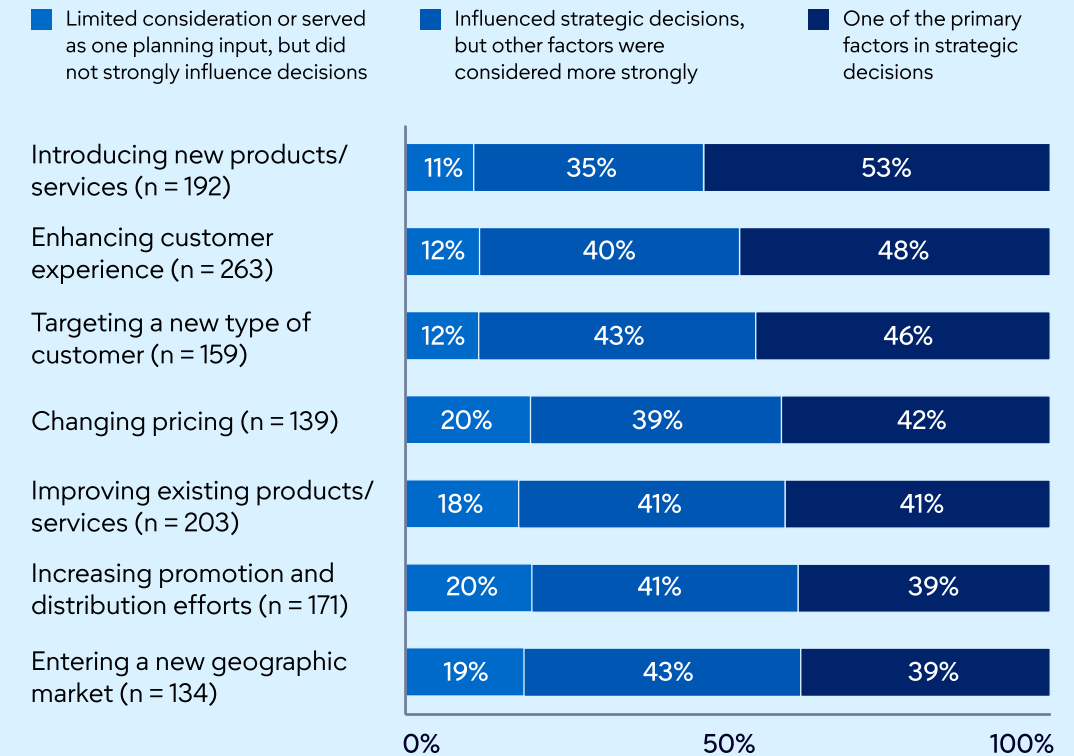


Brand’s importance is only increasing. As AI accelerates commoditization and fuels disinformation, brand is one of the few remaining levers companies can use to claim a distinctive and trustworthy position in their markets. When brand strategy is included in the development of a growth strategy, the brand – and ultimately the business – is more successful.

But despite brand strategy’s connection to business performance, only two in five business leaders give it prominent consideration in their decision making when setting growth strategies (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Consideration of brand strategy when developing company growth strategies

Percent of business leaders selecting each response



n varies; CMOs and CxO brand partners

Q: To what extent was your company’s brand strategy considered in the development of each of these growth strategies?

Source: 2026 Gartner Brand and Business Strategy Survey

Business leaders may underappreciate the strategic importance of brand, because its impact is poorly measured. Unfortunately, most companies devote too little budget to measuring brand performance. CMOs feel trapped in a vicious cycle: Without sufficient enterprise investment in brand measurement, they can't show the returns they need to make the case for greater investment. This “doom loop” plagues 84% of companies (see Figure 4).

Companies stuck in the brand doom loop — defined as underinvesting in measurement, lacking confidence in results, and consequently attracting even less funding — are nearly half as likely to exceed enterprise growth targets compared with those that effectively measure and demonstrate brand value.

2026 Gartner Brand and Business Strategy Survey

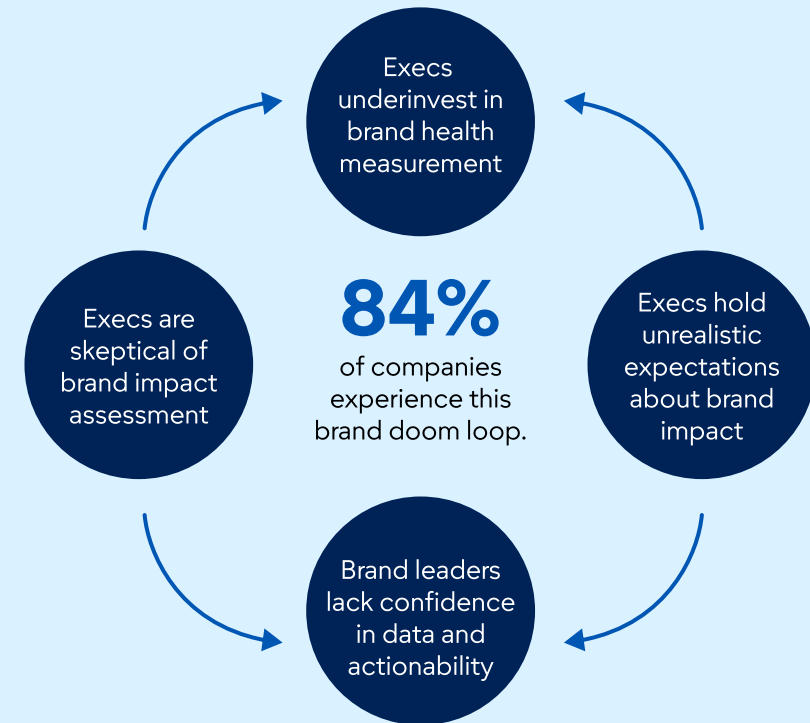
Recommended Actions

Most organizations still treat brand as a marketing asset, limiting its impact on business strategy and growth. CMOs must elevate brand concerns beyond marketing to influence the product and commercial decisions that make up the company's value proposition.

- Use the Gartner brand health framework to create a compelling storyline for senior leadership about the importance and relevance of brand metrics across the organization (see [How to Track, Measure and Communicate Brand Health](#)).
- Position brand strategy as a foundation for organizational growth by tying brand performance metrics into CxOs' top priorities (see [How to Make the Business Case for Brand Investments](#)).

Figure 4: Most companies are stuck in a brand doom loop

Percentage of business leaders agreeing with the statements below



n = 425 CMOs and CxO brand partners

Source: 2026 Gartner Brand and Business Strategy Survey

Note: Percentage refers to business leaders who did not disagree with all summarized statements.

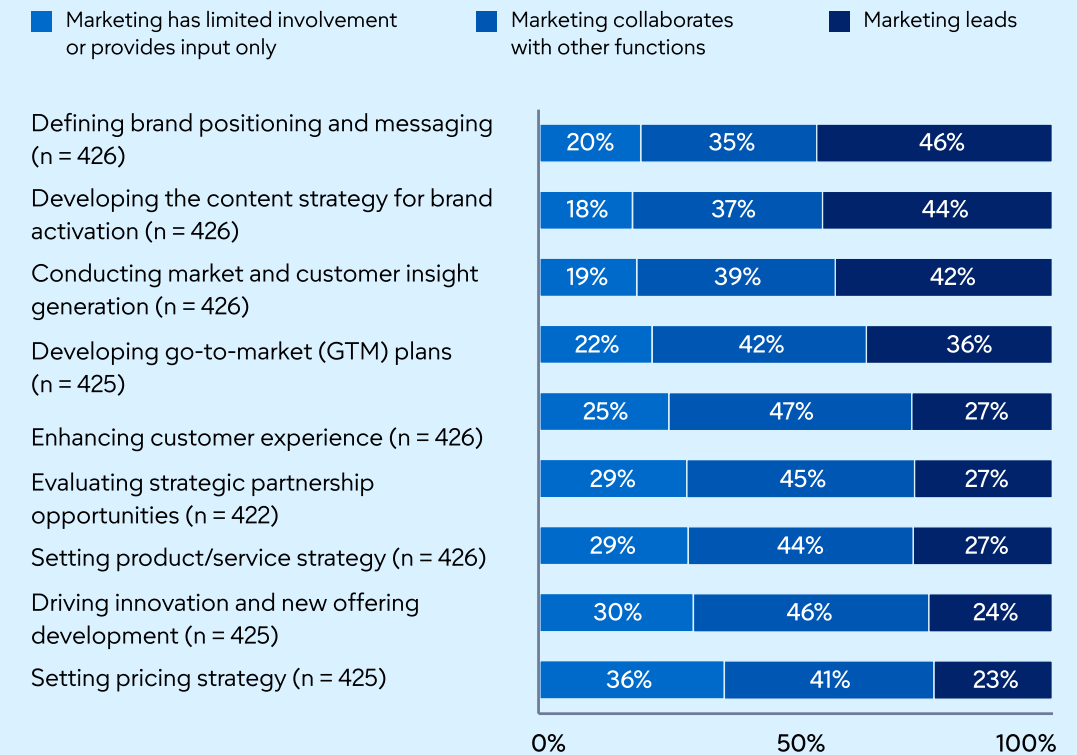
Brand Strategy Is Stronger When the CMO Leads

Developing a strong brand strategy requires strong leadership. But while functional leaders may often expect marketing to take the lead, most CMOs are not actually in the driver’s seat for critical brand responsibilities. Primary responsibility may either fall on other functional leaders, such as the chief communications officer, or be truly co-owned across members of the executive leadership team. Most CMOs don’t even lead the definition of brand positioning and messaging, which is core to brand strategy.

Further, for a strong brand strategy to truly be a foundation for growth, it must inform the product and commercial decisions that make up a company’s value proposition. That means the CMO needs to play an active role in a broader set of differentiation-related activities, such as generating customer and market insights, setting or informing product strategy, and enhancing customer experience. For example, CMOs are well-positioned to help companies navigate AI disruption in brand discovery and buying. Today, however, relatively few CMOs lead such activities (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Marketing’s role in key differentiation activities

Percent of business leaders selecting each response



n varies; CMOs and CxO brand partners

Q: To what extent was your company’s brand strategy considered in the development of each of these growth strategies?

Source: 2026 Gartner Brand and Business Strategy Survey

This is a missed opportunity for CMOs and companies. When marketing leads more of these activities, companies are more likely to see strong brand strategy success (see Figure 6). CMO leadership in certain areas also directly contributes to revenue and profit outcomes. Importantly, leaders are more likely to report exceeding their enterprise growth goals when the CMO leads in setting product and pricing strategy (see How CMOs Add Product Strategy to Their Remit Without Burning Out).

Figure 6: Percentage of companies with strong brand strategy performance

By marketing's role in each activity



n varies; CMOs and CxO brand partners

Q: To what extent was your company's brand strategy considered in the development of each of these growth strategies?

Source: 2026 Gartner Brand and Business Strategy Survey

It's time for CMOs to claim their rightful leadership role in brand differentiation activities (see CMOs: Drive Brand Differentiation That Delivers Growth Efficiently). In fact, in the 2024 Gartner Senior Executive Views of CMO Leadership Survey, CEOs and CFOs said they planned to expand marketing's remit to include, on average, three new areas of accountability in the next few years. The most common planned additions were product strategy, customer experience and commercial alignment

Other functional leaders are also anxious for CMOs to provide more strategic insights for brand and business strategy. Over half of CxOs want their CMO to clarify the relationship between brand and business strategy, and 43% want them to communicate a clear, simple story about brand health and business performance. Unfortunately, many don't feel their CMO is meeting these needs:

- Only 32% say their CMO makes compelling business strategy recommendations based on market or customer data.
- Only 34% say their CMO effectively identifies the marketing initiatives that will contribute most to company growth.

Recommended Action

Take the first step by demonstrating effective leadership of brand positioning. Because positioning is so core to brand strategy, this activity is the best launching point for generating enterprise alignment on the importance of brand and its connection to product and commercial decisions.



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