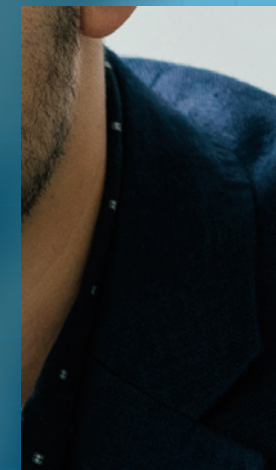


CMO Quarterly

Fourth Quarter 2025



Beyond 2025:

STRATEGIZE

with purpose, precision and personalization

Gartner®



Letter From the Editor

If 2025 has taught us anything, it's this: in a world of relentless disruption, the difference between excellence and inertia is clarity of intent, sharp execution, and the courage to innovate and adapt. Gartner research reveals only 32% of CEOs and CFOs have received significant clarity from their CMOs about what the marketing function is capable of doing while only 34% agree with their CMO on how marketing can support growth. The gap between aspiration and achievement has never been more visible or more urgent to close.

As AI upends discovery, privacy redefines engagement, and every investment is scrutinized, the mandate for CMOs is clear: strategize with purpose and precision, and direct your resources toward high-impact areas like personalization, where marketing can have visible impact. This 4Q edition of The Chief Marketing Officer is designed to help you meet these challenges head-on, with six articles that cut through the clutter and offer practical guidance for CMOs to drive value and elevate leadership.

Notably, only 26% of CFOs strongly support brand strategy, despite 76% being involved in defining it. This makes it critical for marketing to prove the value of its brand investments, which is especially challenging today as performance marketing takes precedence over brand in

this cost-constrained environment. With CFOs increasingly skeptical of marketing, 'Measure the Commercial Impact of Branding for CFO Buy-In' provides measurement frameworks that speak the CFO's language by leveraging techniques such as marketing mix modeling, geographic tests and conjoint analysis to clearly demonstrate brand's commercial value. Then, '3 Key Lessons From Executive Coaches' provides insights from executive coaches to help you clarify marketing's role in enterprise growth, lead with courage, and drive change with empathy.

Along with navigating rising expectations, CMOs are also faced with rapid digital disruption. Digital channels are constantly evolving, and martech is complex to navigate—and yet the key to achieving goals. To maintain multichannel performance in the face of such disruptions, it is essential for CMOs to quickly adapt strategies and reallocate resources. 'Strategic Action Plan to Prepare for the Future of Digital Marketing Channels' offers a pragmatic roadmap for CMOs who are feeling the pressure to adapt their digital marketing strategy for the long haul.

As AI-driven channel experiences transform traditional customer acquisition, optimizing for both traditional search engines and AI-powered answer engines has become crucial. 'AEO and SEO Tactics To Boost Online Search

Visibility’ demystifies SEO and AEO, offering tactics to ensure your content is discoverable and trusted, whether your audience is searching on Google or querying ChatGPT.

As you adapt your channel strategies, also rethink how you engage with customers through personalization — more isn’t always better. ‘Revamp Personalization Strategy to Drive Confidence, Not Just Progression’ highlights that a majority of customers encounter “pitfalls” that remain unresolved with conventional tactics. Instead, embracing “course-changing personalization” enables reflection, and empowers customers to confidently progress. Purposeful personalization also starts with segmentation that is as multidimensional as your customers. In, ‘Case Study: Adapt Personalization Strategies to Customer Journeys’, discover how CoreQuartz* mapped a flexible framework for one-to-one and one-to-many personalization, aligning segmentation methods to customer journey stages and engagement signals.

As you read, I challenge you to ask: Where can you bring greater clarity to your strategy? How will you harness data and technology to deliver truly personal experiences? And what bold moves will you make to ensure marketing is at the center of enterprise growth? As you navigate the realities of the coming year, remember that the key to thriving is not just reacting to change but anticipating and preparing for it.

Akanksha Borawake

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Authors

Akanksha Borawake
Audrey Brosnan
Sharon Cantor Ceurvorst
Ross Cosner
Noam Dorros
Kate Fridley
Janine Kanters
Matt Moorut
Nicholas Mortensen
Anja Naski
Michael Ro
Rachel Smith
Kassi Socha
Anna Maria Virzi
Matt Wakeman
Devon Weidemann

Design

Katelyn Chiedi
Nicole Daniels

Writing and Editorial

Grant McGalliard

Project Managers

Lauren Abel
Lindsay Kumpf

Measure the Commercial Impact of Branding For CFO Buy-In

by Rachel Smith, Matt Wakeman

Today's CFOs demand increased financial accountability, putting pressure on CMOs to prove brand impact in order to secure increased investment. Explore and adapt measurement approaches that clearly show the commercial impact of brand investments.



While brand investments are foundational to marketing differentiation and long-term business growth, their commercial impact is often difficult to quantify. But CFOs still want marketing to produce the same robust and defensible return on marketing investment (ROMI) for brand spend as they have for their performance marketing.

Gartner research has found that while 76% of CFOs are involved in defining brand strategy, only 26% strongly support their organization's brand strategy.¹ Further, over half (52%) of CFOs maintain a neutral or skeptical view of marketing.²

The urgency to address this challenge is compounded as marketing budgets remain low, while short-termism — focusing on immediate results at the expense of long-term brand building — is on the rise. Short-termism often erodes brand equity and hinders long-term growth.

Additionally, in practice, many brand activities are difficult to measure with standard methods such as digital holdout testing or multitouch attribution. As a result, organizations planning to make significant investments in their brand should also adopt effective methods of measurement that adequately quantify the impact of brand measurements.

Commit to a Brand Measurement Method That Meets Your (and Your CFO's) Needs

CMOs should dedicate a proportional part of their measurement budget to measuring brand expenditures. The methods introduced below can measure the commercial impact of brand activities:

- **Geographic tests** compare differences across locations — such as stores, postal codes or media markets — by treating some locations with marketing and using others as controls. This method offers the strongest evidence for incremental impact from brand over the short term and midterm, with potential ability to segment results for further insight.
- **Marketing mix modeling (MMM)**, most applicable for B2C organizations, applies statistical time-series techniques to estimate the aggregated impact of both brand and performance marketing activities on desired outcomes. This method measures short-term and midterm brand impacts as part of a holistic approach. It allows for quantification of halo effects and enables comparisons by channel and sometimes tactic.
- **Brand awareness, trial/consideration and usage (ATU)** surveys identify measurable changes in upper-funnel metrics (e.g., increasing trial/consideration by 2%) and then carry that change through the conversion funnel to estimate incremental impact on the bottom line. This method is useful to measure dramatic shifts in brand spend that create comparably large changes in consumer perception.
- **Conjoint analysis** is a choice-based survey methodology used in market research to understand how customers value different components or features of a product or service.³ This is the preferred method for measuring price premium and elasticity relative to competitors. Although this method measures overall brand impact, it has very limited ability to measure specific marketing actions and it can be challenging to identify the ideal sample to survey.

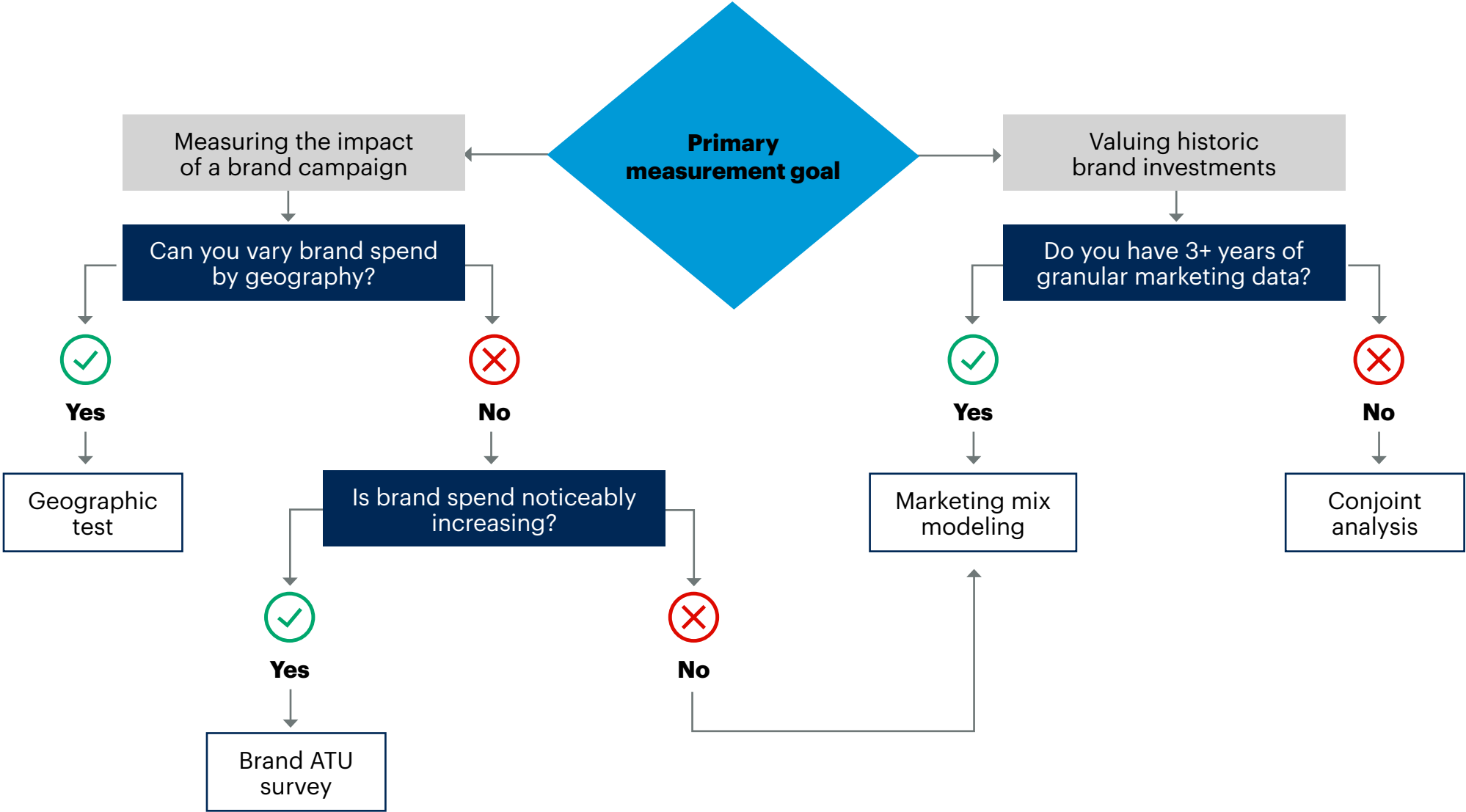
Since each method is distinct, some brands deploy multiple methods over the course of the year depending on their most urgent questions. For example, a brand may use MMM for overall measurement while simultaneously managing a testing agenda consisting of several geographic tests.

CMOs can work with their team to determine an initial method for evaluating their brand’s commercial impact by assessing the following factors:

- **The measurement goal:** Is the primary measurement goal to demonstrate the impact of an existing or planned brand campaign, or is it to quantify the benefit provided by historic branding efforts?
- **Data availability:** Is there three years of marketing and sales data available?
- **Potential for geographic variability:** Can branding be varied across different geographies?
- **Changes to brand spend:** Is an increase in brand spend prompting the need for measurement?

Figure 1 includes a decision tree to help CMOs and marketing analytics leaders narrow down which method may be the best fit for a specific situation.

» Figure 1. Decision Tree for Brand Commercial Measurement



Source: Gartner

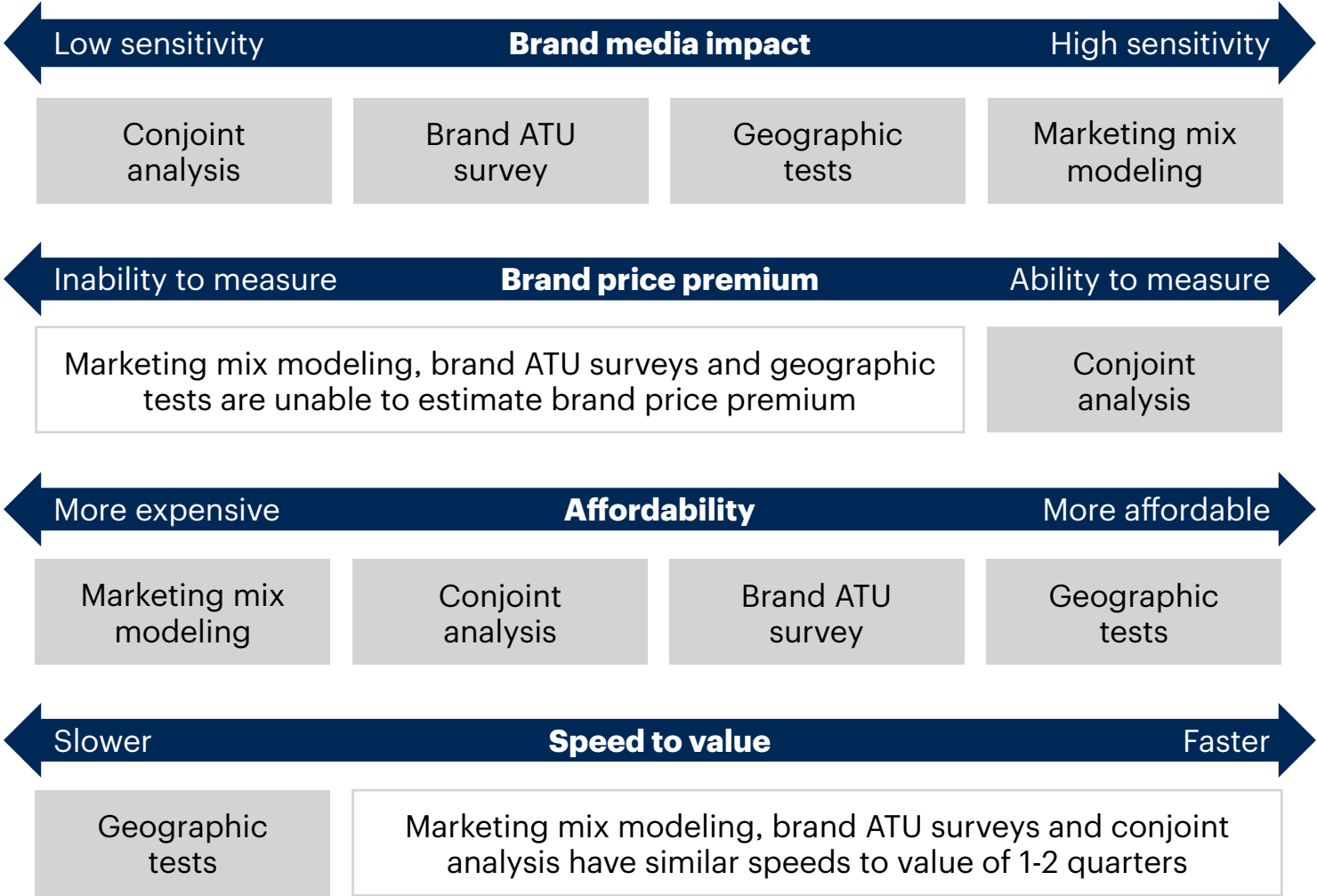
Select Method That Aligns With Your Desired Quantitative Output and Measurement Resources

When selecting measurement methods, it is important to work with internal analytic resources to understand the viability of using each method at the organization (see Figure 2). Consider the following key factors to determine which method best fits your organization’s needs:

• **Brand media impact:** Some methods have a higher degree of sensitivity in distinguishing brand media’s impact. MMM has the highest degree of sensitivity, as it is able to distinguish between tens of thousands of dollars of brand spend. Geographic tests and brand awareness, trial and usage (ATU) surveys are better suited to assess impact between hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars of spend.

- **Brand price premium:** Conjoint analysis is the only method that is highly relevant for assessing a brand’s price premium, using varying configurations of survey questions to analyze consumer preferences and willingness to pay.
- **Affordability:** Geographic tests tend to have relatively low outsourcing costs, or may be run with internal measurement specialists — though there is complexity in rolling out multiple concurrent tests. Brand ATU surveys and conjoint analysis are typically more resource intensive as they require working with survey providers. MMM comes at a significant cost, typically a six- or seven-figure investment.
- **Speed to value:** All of the methods require at least one to two quarters to run the media in market and/or to set up the test or survey. Geographic tests may require additional time to identify viable matched stores for measurement.

» Figure 2. Comparing Brand Measurement Methods



Source: Gartner

Not All Activities Use Financial Measures

Small or infrequent brand investments are difficult to measure financially unless they prompt a specific, trackable customer action (e.g., “How did you hear about us?”). For brands with limited budgets, it’s important to be transparent about these limitations and use a return on objectives framework to demonstrate accountability. As brand activities scale and reach more consumers, measurement becomes easier and more robust methods can be applied.

Near-Term Actions

CMOs need to guide their marketing analytic resources to build a trusted commercial brand measurement capability over time. To start, ask the team responsible for brand measurement to do the following:

- **Share the decision tree and proposed methodology with finance.** Gain social agreement on the measurement goal, the method selected and potential actions to take depending on results.

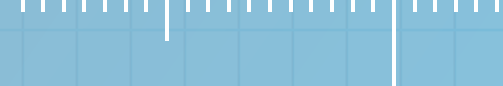
- **Track the percentage of brand investments that are measurable as a complementary metric.** This enables CMOs to demonstrate accumulated progress over time alongside improved effectiveness. This promotes transparency while encouraging analytic progress.
- **Align brand commercial measurement to budget decisions.** Match decision frequency and decision type to the measurement method.
- **Distinguish brand commercial measurement from other indicators of brand health.** Many brands use simpler measurement methods for tactical metrics to adjust brand campaign executional elements. Commercial metrics are less frequent and disproportionately used for scenario planning and budget building.

CMOs who invest in building robust brand measurement capabilities will be better positioned to justify brand spend and foster stronger alignment with their CFOs. A disciplined, transparent approach ensures marketing’s impact is both visible and defensible.

¹ **2023 Gartner Brand Leaders Survey.** This survey was conducted to explore brand leaders’ and teams’ strategies, abilities and performance outcomes. The research was conducted online from October through November 2022 among 411 respondents from North America (n = 228), Western Europe (n = 153) and the Nordics (n = 30). Respondents were required to have responsibility for setting brand strategy and orchestrating its activation. Forty-six percent of the respondents came from organizations with at least \$2 billion or the equivalent in annual revenue. Respondents came from a wide variety of industries, including financial services (n = 53), healthcare (n = 48), consumer products (n = 49), retail (n = 55), manufacturing and natural resources (n = 45), IT and business services (n = 32), media (n = 45), technology products (n = 51), and travel and hospitality (n = 27).Disclaimer: The results of this survey do not represent global findings or the market as a whole, but reflect the sentiments of the respondents and companies surveyed.

² **2024 Gartner Senior Executive Views of CMO Leadership Survey.** This survey was conducted to explore how chief marketing officers are perceived by key C-suite leaders (i.e., CEOs and CFOs), and what distinguishes effective CMOs under different behavioral and company circumstances. The survey was administered online from August through September 2024 and includes data from 125 senior executives in North America (n = 84) and Europe (n = 41). Respondents were CEOs and CFOs at organizations with at least \$50 million in annual revenue, with 36% coming from organizations with at least \$1 billion in annual revenue. Respondents came from a wide variety of industries, including manufacturing and natural resources (n = 21); banking and financial services (n = 6); retail (n = 8); healthcare (n = 23); consumer products (n = 17); pharmaceuticals, biotechnology and life sciences (n = 6); insurance (n = 2); technology products (n = 14); travel and hospitality (n = 8); IT and business services (n = 16); and media (n = 4). Disclaimer: The results of this survey do not represent global findings or the market as a whole, but reflect the sentiments of the respondents and companies surveyed.

³ [What is Conjoint Analysis, and How Can it Be Used?](#), Harvard Business School.



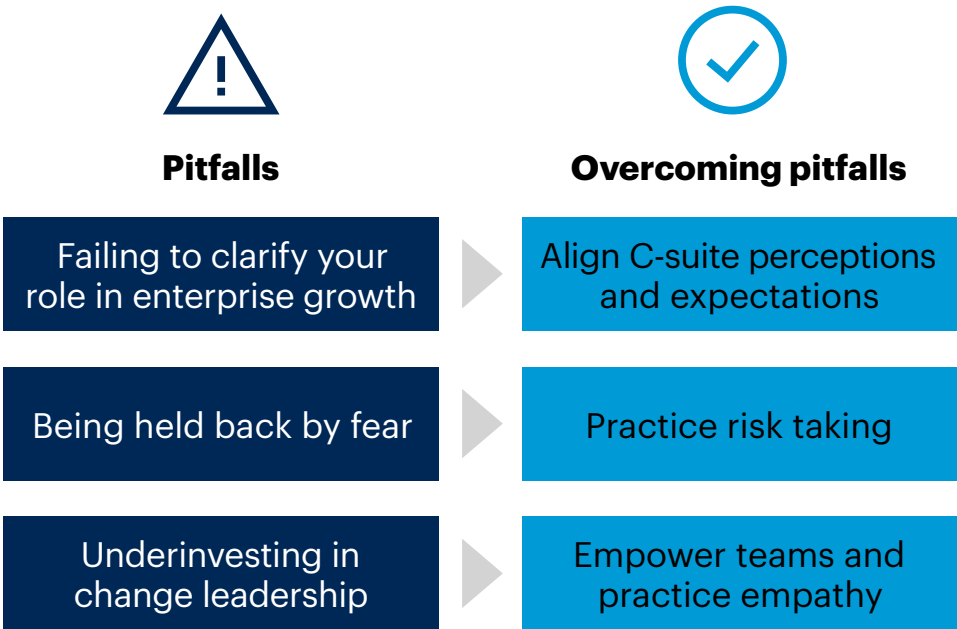
3 Key Lessons From Executive Coaches

by Anja Naski, Devon Weidemann, Kate Fridley

Improving leadership skills is critical for CMO success in today's disruptive business world. Here, executive coaches offer a real-life perspective on leadership challenges and CMO best practices, based on their work with marketing executives across industries and business models.

This research explores the lessons gathered by certified, leading executive coaches and recruiters with expertise in marketing across business models and industries, based on their time spent with CMOs (see Figure 1).¹ Additionally, we provide guidance on how to effectively leverage these lessons and what skills CMOs can build to ensure success.

» **Figure 1. Overcoming Pitfalls to CMO Leadership Effectiveness**



Source: Gartner

Lesson 1: Clarify Marketing’s Role in Enterprise Growth

Executive coach
When bringing a new CMO on board, CEOs don’t know who to hire or the right questions to ask. A strong CEO-CMO relationship is imperative, but it’s often hard for them to understand each other and their priorities.

Executive coaches, recruiters and Gartner research indicate that CMOs face increasing pressure to meet higher C-suite expectations and deliver tangible results. But many CMOs still struggle to achieve measurable outcomes and establish themselves as strategic leaders within the C-suite.

Executive coaches often talk of the need for greater clarity about marketing’s role in the business. They call it a “self-inflicted demise” when CMOs work on an initiative that the organization doesn’t deem important. According to a recent

Gartner survey, only 32% of CEOs and CFOs believe their CMO has significantly clarified what the marketing function is capable of doing, and only 34% agree with their CMO on how marketing can support enterprise growth.²

This perception problem hinders CMOs’ ability to contribute effectively to business objectives, as they struggle to get necessary resources or buy-in for marketing initiatives. Effective CMOs clearly define marketing’s role and contributions to the business. To build consensus and demonstrate marketing’s strategic value, CMOs should have focused conversations through formal and informal channels with the CEO and their C-suite peers.

Build Financial Acumen

Executive coach
The investors don’t care about your marketing stuff if it doesn’t translate into financials.

Financial acumen is the ability to understand, interpret and apply financial information and principles to make

informed business decisions. According to Gartner’s survey of CEOs and CFOs, over half of CMOs are viewed as having weaker financial acumen than other senior executives.² Our conversations with executive coaches and recruiters reinforced this challenge, noting that it inhibits CMOs’ ability to speak with the C-suite in terms that resonate with them. In addition to the CEO, executive coaches also highlighted the importance of the CMO-CFO relationship in clarifying marketing’s contribution to the business. CMOs who want their C-suite partners to have clarity on what the marketing function is capable of need to improve and demonstrate their financial acumen.

To demonstrate strong financial acumen, CMOs should:

- **Develop a measurement mindset** — Use financial metrics to assess the effectiveness of marketing campaigns. This tactic involves making data-driven adjustments to improve ROI and ensuring that marketing efforts are directly linked to financial outcomes.

- **Align strategies with financial goals** — Strategically design marketing initiatives that directly support the organization’s financial objectives, focusing on driving revenue growth, enhancing profitability and managing costs effectively.
- **Evaluate potential investments** — Conduct cost-benefit analyses to evaluate potential marketing investments and make informed decisions about where to allocate resources.

CMOs can build financial acumen by:

- Studying balance sheets, profit-and-loss statements and cash-flow analysis.
- Reviewing performance metrics and key financial indicators regularly.
- Doing workshops or courses focused on financial decision making and strategic budgeting

Lesson 2: Don’t Let Fear Hold You Back

Executive recruiter

CEOs often feel like CMOs don’t speak up, and conversely, CMOs don’t feel empowered to speak up. The courage to speak up and address difficult issues, topics and say what needs to be said at the right time is imperative.

Fear can keep CMOs from reaching their full leadership potential. Executive coaches observe that fear often prevents CMOs from challenging the status quo and driving innovation. Change, collaboration and innovation are critical for CMOs, but they require a willingness to experiment and take risks.

Build Courage and Risk-Taking Tolerance

Executive coach

[Good CMOs] understand risks and challenges while also not being afraid to innovate and shift.

Courage is the ability to make bold decisions, take calculated risks, and stand by one’s values and convictions, even in the face of uncertainty, adversity or opposition. In other words: Courage is being afraid and taking action anyway. To excel at demonstrating courage, CMOs should:

- **Tackle difficult decisions** — Take decisive action in challenging situations, such as reallocating resources, pivoting strategies or addressing performance issues.
- **Practice risk taking** — Explore new ideas and strategies through insights teams, innovation or strategy hubs, or growth marketing teams, even when they involve potential risks or uncharted territories.
- **Master the art of saying “no”** — CMOs must prioritize the initiatives that will make the biggest impact on their businesses and say no to low-value requests.

Build risk tolerance by starting with manageable risks based on the organization’s risk appetite and using failures as learning opportunities.

To build their risk tolerance, CMOs should:

- Develop a system to understand and assess risks, looking at attributes like likelihood of occurrence, degree of impact and nature of the risk (e.g., strategic, operational, customer).
- Adapt new campaign formats or channels (even in the face of imperfect data), testing new messages based on new audience insights or targeting new audiences.³
- Build an experimentation portfolio with varying risk-reward profiles.

Courage is the ability to make bold decisions, take calculated risks, and stand by one’s values and convictions, even in the face of uncertainty, adversity or opposition.

Lesson 3: Embrace Employee Change Leadership

Executive recruiter

CEOs right now are looking for growth, and they’re looking for CMOs that will do things differently. ... CMOs have got to “do different” in a way that also brings the team along with them.

Most CMOs (89%) expect moderate to very high levels of change over the next three to five years to support enterprise growth strategies.⁴ While CMOs often focus on collaborating with the C-suite and securing buy-in for change initiatives, executive coaches noted that CMOs often underinvest in leading their teams through the change process. Effective change leadership is essential for driving sustainable behavioral change within the organization.

CMOs should create comprehensive change management plans that incorporate empathy and address their teams’ needs by understanding the effect of change on different employee segments and their workflows. By involving employees as active partners in every stage of change management, CMOs can foster greater buy-in and openness to change across their teams.

Build Empathy

Executive recruiter

Empathy in a CMO is particularly important when you think about really being attuned to others’ feelings, motivations and concerns.

Executive coaches believe empathy is a critical skill that supports change leadership. Empathy is understanding and valuing the perspectives and emotions of others (including team members, the C-suite and customers).

CMOs must actively listen to their teams, solicit feedback and anticipate potential objections. To excel at demonstrating empathy, CMOs should:

- **Practice active listening** — Pay close attention to what others are saying to fully understand their messages and emotions.
- **Develop teams** — Recognize team members’ individual strengths and challenges, providing support and opportunities for growth.
- **Give feedback** — Deliver messages (e.g., feedback) in a way that is considerate and constructive (e.g., by providing actionable next steps).

Ultimately, CMOs who invest in building financial expertise, champion bold decisions and lead their teams through change with empathy are best positioned to meet the evolving demands of the business and drive real impact. More importantly, these traits will help CMOs position themselves as trusted strategic leaders and equal partners alongside their C-suite peers.

¹ This research draws from an analysis of in-depth interviews Gartner conducted with 15 executive coaches and recruiters from August through October 2024.

² **2024 Gartner Senior Executive Views of CMO Leadership Survey.** This survey was conducted to explore how chief marketing officers are perceived by key C-suite leaders (i.e., CEOs and CFOs), and what distinguishes effective CMOs under different behavioral and company circumstances. The survey was administered online from August through September 2024 and includes data from 125 senior executives in North America (n = 84) and Europe (n = 41). Respondents were CEOs and CFOs at organizations with at least \$50 million in annual revenue, with 36% coming from organizations with at least \$1 billion in annual revenue. Respondents came from a wide variety of industries, including manufacturing and natural resources (n = 21); banking and financial services (n = 6); retail (n = 8); healthcare (n = 23); consumer products (n = 17); pharmaceuticals, biotechnology and life sciences (n = 6); insurance (n = 2); technology products (n = 14); travel and hospitality (n = 8); IT and business services (n = 16); and media (n = 4). Disclaimer: The results of this survey do not represent global findings or the market as a whole, but reflect the sentiments of the respondents and companies surveyed.

³ For example, [The Art of Taking Marketing Risks](#), CMSWire.

⁴ **2025 Gartner CMO Strategy Survey.** This survey provides a comprehensive look at how chief marketing officers (CMOs) are shaping and implementing marketing strategies across various industries in North America (n = 211) and Europe (n = 192). The survey was conducted online from October through November 2024. It involved 403 respondents who play a significant role in marketing decision making and strategy alignment within their organizations. Eighty percent of these respondents represented companies with annual revenue exceeding \$1 billion. The survey included respondents from a diverse range of industries: tech services and products (n = 60), financial services (n = 50), consumer products (n = 42), retail (n = 39), healthcare (n = 38), pharma (n = 36), manufacturing (n = 36), media (n = 35), insurance (n = 34), and travel and hospitality (n = 33). Disclaimer: The results of this survey do not represent global findings or the market as a whole, but reflect the sentiments of the respondents and companies surveyed.

Why CMOs rely on Gartner Executive FastStart™:

- ## Get Started



Strategic Action Plan to Prepare for the Future of Digital Marketing Channels

by Matt Moorut, Kassi Socha

Amid a volatile environment, sustainable multichannel performance growth is tough. Gartner's latest predictions and insights for the future of digital marketing, along with actionable recommendations, will help you create a robust, long-term channel and digital marketing strategy.

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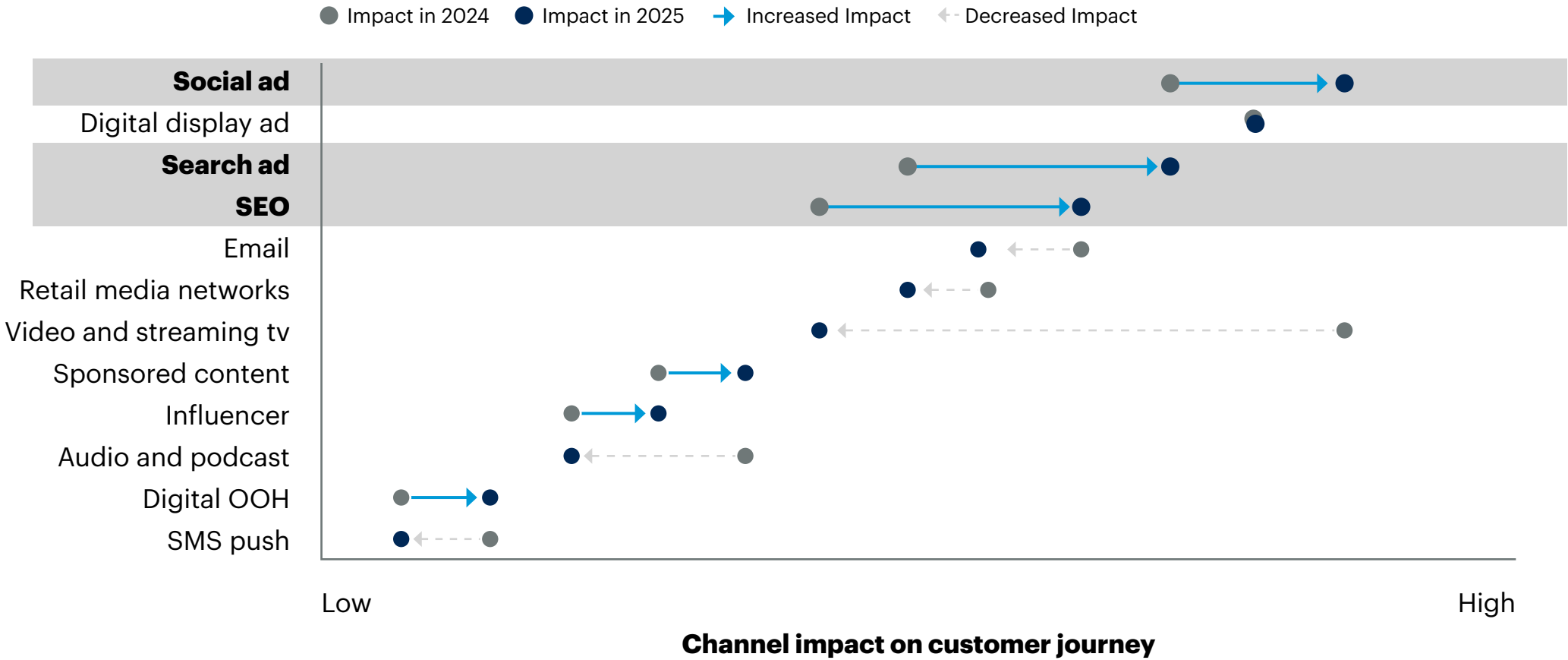
Digital marketing is rife with volatility. CMOs now have to adapt to evolving technologies, AI-driven channel experiences, regulatory changes and tighter budgets, all of which can stymie long-term planning. For greater functional resilience, CMOs should assess known patterns to inform their long-term planning. The better CMOs and their teams can predict where digital marketing is headed, the more efficiently they can engage in scenario planning and the more effectively they can prepare their functions for further disruptions.

Adapt to Shifts in the Most-Critical Channels

To prioritize channel investment and balance short-term ROI with long-term strategic impact, evaluate each channels’ impact on individual customer journey stages against the amount you spend on that channel. Your measures will evolve over time, providing signals that aid resource planning. Today, CMOs view social and search marketing as having the highest increased impact on key customer stages (Figure 1).¹

In both of these channels, we can predict significant changes based on observable trends.

» Figure 1. YoY Change in Digital Channels, Impact Across Customer Journey (2024-2025)
Digital channels shown by highest-impact 2025 ranks



n = 402 (2025); 395 (2024) CMOs
Q: Which channels have been most effective at driving brand awareness/consideration/conversation to sales/customer loyalty and advocacy over the past 12 months?
Source: Annual Gartner CMO Spend Survey (2024-2025)
Note: Chart only shows the digital channels ranks assessed across the four phases of customer journey. Digital display ad impact has consistently ranked second
YoY = Year-over-year, OOH = Out of home

Adapt to AI's Disruption of Search Marketing

Current state: The increased adoption of AI engines (e.g., SearchGPT, Perplexity AI) and AI overviews (i.e., Gemini results) is having a profound effect on acquisition pathways. As of June 2025, 27% of nearly 6,000 branded and nonbranded keywords generated an AI overview above organic results on the search engine results page (SERP).² In industries with a higher share of SERPs showing AI overviews (like Pharma, where 83% of searches present an AI overview),² site traffic has fallen by 7% year-over-year.³

Gartner predicts: By 2026, more than one-third of web content will be developed exclusively for AI and search engine consumption.⁴ This means that CMOs must prepare their teams to optimize for AI-driven search experiences, and not just traditional keyword-based SEO.

How to Prepare for the Future of Search Marketing:

- **Build upon SEO fundamentals.** Pursue SEO tactics that enhance the readability of your content by bots, such as implementing structured data like schema markup. This also requires focus on developing content that answers relevant, common customer queries.
- **Adjust content strategy for AI summaries.** Explore tools that increase your content's visibility among AI assistants and surface content opportunities. Encourage copywriters to develop bite-sized content that includes the wider context provided and high-level summaries to better align with AI answer formats. Use generative AI to assist in the production of multimodal content, including text, videos and imagery.
- **Revisit your measurement strategy.** Search traffic will become less valuable as a measure of overall brand health as more visibility occurs outside brand sites. Explore a wider set of brand health metrics that help you benchmark your performance.

The increased adoption of AI engines (e.g., SearchGPT, Perplexity AI) and AI overviews (i.e., Gemini results) is having a profound effect on acquisition pathways.

Shift Social Spend Based on Customer Behavior

Current state: CMOs perceive social media as the most impactful channel across the customer journey. But rising competition, declining consumer engagement with organic brand content, inflation in ad unit costs and shifting platform preferences challenge CMOs to seek new and emerging platforms and opportunities.

Gartner predicts: By 2028, 30% of paid social budgets will shift to subscription-based channels (e.g., Reddit, Discord, Substack).⁴ Success will depend on the ability to diversify spend, test new platforms and measure real business impact — not just vanity metrics.

How to Prepare for the Future of Social Marketing:

- **Assess performance using enterprise metrics.** As costs rise and consumer attention wanes, ensure your social investments provide greater ROI than other options. Use metrics comparable to alternative channels to evaluate both awareness and commercial performance.
- **Develop a testing engine.** Drive focus on continuous evaluation of existing social options against emerging ones. Trial use of emerging platforms to reach new and younger audiences without abandoning current platforms that provide broader visibility.
- **Scale social content production using AI.** With GenAI streamlining production, brands now produce more social campaigns than ever before. Explore AI-powered social ad tools, such as Meta’s Advantage+, but be careful to ensure AI-generated content meaningfully drives brand differentiation rather than just adding to the noise.

Build Resilience by Adopting a Holistic Channel Strategy

Current state: High-performing teams are moving away from siloed channel management toward integrated, holistic strategies. Demand for channel strategists — who can operate throughout the customer journey stages and work across channels — is rising, while demand for channel-specific skills is declining.

Gartner finds: 41% of marketing channel jobs posted in 2024 were strategist roles, up 10.8% year-over-year.⁵ Strategic, agile teams will be better equipped to pivot and thrive as channels and consumer behaviors evolve in the near future.

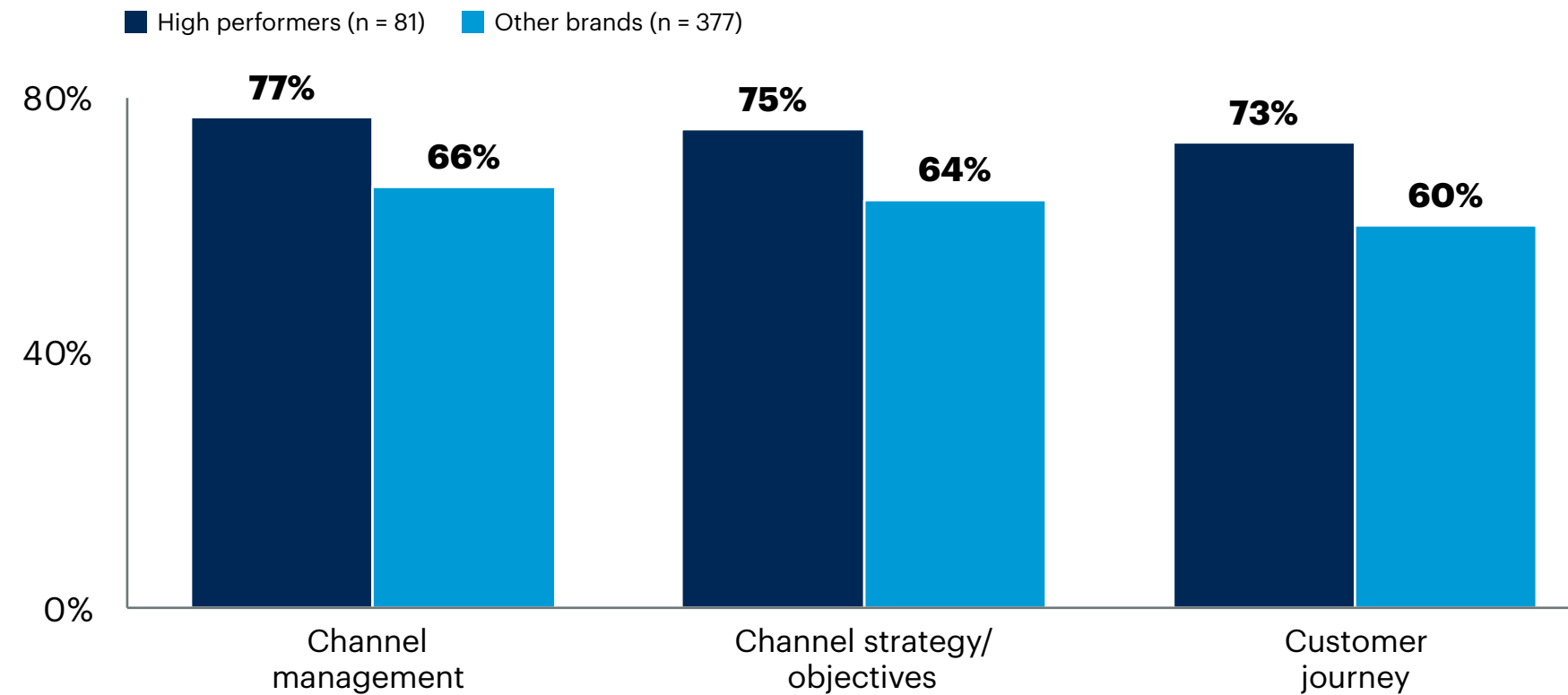
How to Develop a Future-Proof Channel Marketing Strategy:

Pursue a holistic approach to channel strategy. Teams who outperform commercial objectives are more likely than lower performers to:

- Integrate management of campaigns and journeys across channels
- Tie goals to business performance versus channels
- Pursue centralized processes as much as possible

A holistic approach to channel marketing makes it easier to flex resources between channels, improving adaptability that will be critical as the value of channels fluctuates over time (Figure 2).⁶ The optimum org design can vary, from forming a channel COE to channel “fusion” teams focused on specific customer journey stages.

» Figure 2. High Performers Take a Holistic Approach to Channel Marketing



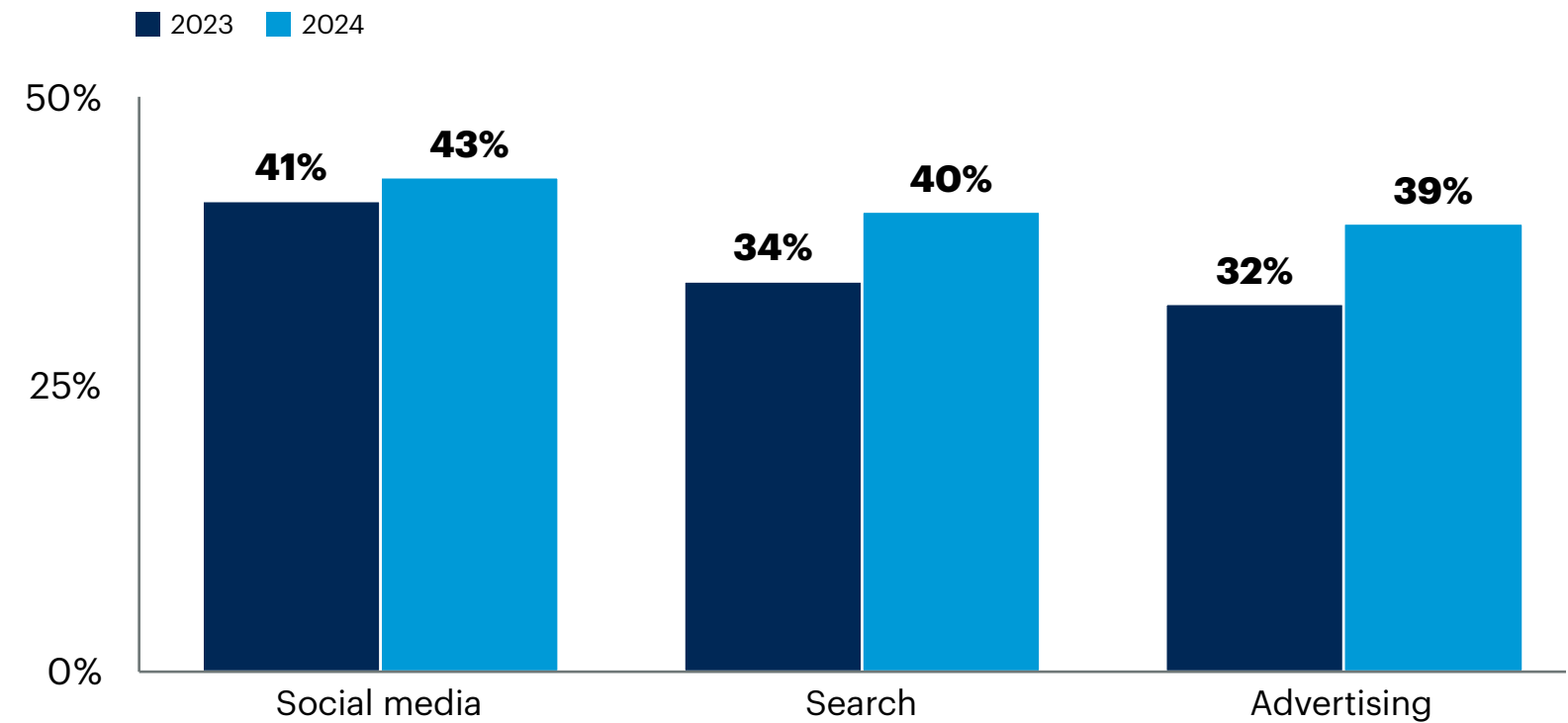
n = 418 marketing leaders, bases vary by performance
Q: Which statement represents your organization's approach the most for marketing campaigns?
Source: 2024 Gartner Channel and Campaign Management Survey

Build strategic, adaptive teams. Within a holistic structure, the skillset required of marketers is different to what is needed within a channel-specific or siloed approach. Prioritize developing your team’s strategic skills — including business acumen, analytical ability and systems thinking — to ensure they can effectively balance activities across multiple channels and maximize results.

Specialist skills for channels, meanwhile, are diminishing in importance because channels are becoming simpler to use. This is already leading to a shift in the type of marketing roles being hired. In 2024, across channels, the demand for strategists specifically increased (see Figure 3).⁵ As channel marketing becomes increasingly algorithmic and centralized, ensure your talent strategy supports cross-channel work.

» **Figure 3. Demand for Channel Strategy Roles Is Rising Across Channels**

January 2023 - December 2024



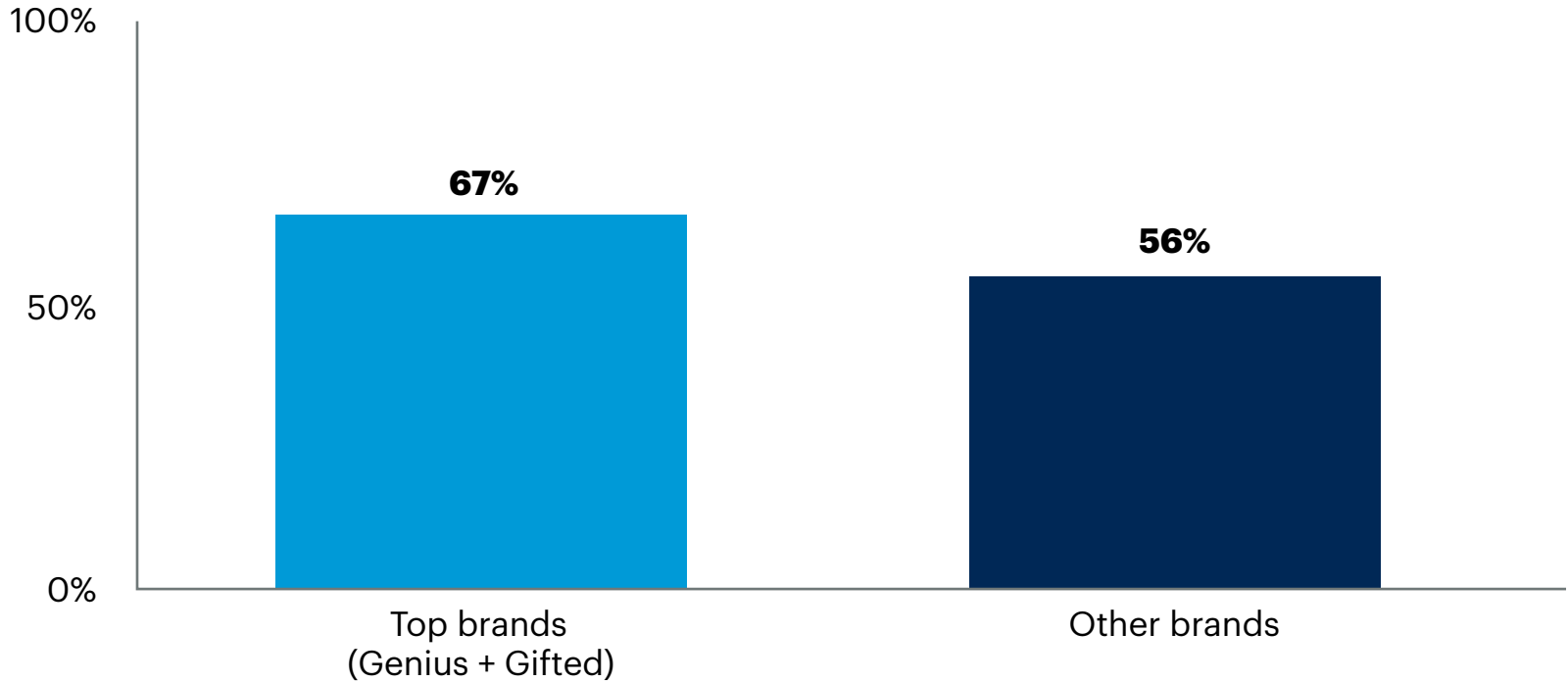
n = 6,345 job posts from 584 companies
Source: Gartner analysis of Coresignal data (1 January 2023 to 31 December 2024)

Establish a Martech Architecture That Supports Multichannel Marketing

Current state: With many platforms developing overlapping martech capabilities, utilization levels are at an all-time low, forcing CMOs to take difficult decisions over the technologies they use. AI advances are also driving martech vendors to rapidly develop new capabilities for scalable cross-channel marketing.

Gartner finds: Top-ranked digital marketing brands are more likely to use an integrated suite in support of their channel marketing efforts than peers (Figure 4).⁷ CMOs that fail to strategically manage their martech, risk inefficiency, duplication, and falling behind competitors.

» **Figure 4. Top Brands Deploy Integrated Suites**
Share of brands deploying an integrated suite for channel marketing



n = 886 brands with 1+ channel tech products
Source: Gartner analysis of BuiltWith data, July 2025

Simply adopting a tech suite doesn't guarantee future-proof channel performance. It is also paramount to a long-term vision, including consideration of staff upskilling, to maximize the integrated suite's benefits.

How to Future-Proof Your Use of an Integrated Suite and Achieve Overall Channel Martech Maturity:

- **Evaluate your martech strategy.** Determine whether to transform or iterate your martech strategy in the face of potentially game-changing technologies, such as generative AI.
- **Advance agentic AI utilization.** Almost two-thirds of high performers leverage GenAI for technology and implementation (i.e., channel optimization and tool automation), compared to 51% of the others.⁶

Adopt AI capabilities that streamline channel orchestration and execution, and advance toward using agentic AI for comprehensive channel management.

- **Audit your martech suite regularly.** Thoughtfully plug gaps in your integrated suite with strategic point solutions. Eighty-three percent of top performing Index brands (i.e., those classified as "Genius" or "Gifted") with an integrated suite in their channel tech also adopt point solutions.⁷ For example, beauty brand Maybelline uses an integrated digital experience platform to power its direct-to-consumer experience, along with sophisticated ad tech point solutions to purchase media and activate influencers, which is vital for its business context.

Eighty-three percent of top performing Index brands (i.e., those classified as "Genius" or "Gifted") with an integrated suite in their channel tech also adopt strategic point solutions.⁷

Final Thoughts

Taken together, these actions build organizational resilience, which is critical given the volatility amongst all digital marketing channels. An ability to flex from one channel to another, rather than a dependence on any one channel, will mitigate the impact of any large, sudden fluctuations. Center your efforts on a long-term vision to provide stability to your teams, and establish a monitoring function to quickly surface any announcements that could cause significant impact to your plans.

¹ **2025 Gartner CMO Spend Survey.** This survey explored top-line marketing budgets with the goal of understanding how changing customer journeys, pressures from the C-suite and cost challenges affect marketing’s spending priorities and channel effectiveness. Conducted online from January through March 2025, the research included 402 respondents from North America (n = 202), the United Kingdom (n = 97) and Europe (n = 103; including France, Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden). Participants were required to be involved in decisions related to setting or influencing marketing strategies/planning, aligning marketing budgets/resources, or leading cross-functional programs and strategies with marketing. Seventy-seven percent of the respondents represented organizations with annual revenue of \$1 billion or more. The respondents came from a diverse range of industries: manufacturing (n = 52), financial services (n = 50), insurance (n = 43), consumer products (n = 43), healthcare (n = 42), travel and hospitality (n = 37), IT and business services (n = 36), retail (n = 36), pharma (n = 32), and media (n = 31). Disclaimer: Results of this survey do not represent global findings or the market as a whole, but reflect the sentiments of the respondents and companies surveyed.

² **Gartner analysis of Google Search data (n = 5,996 keywords, June 2025).** This research uses data from Google search engine result pages (SERPs) collected from the New York City area by a proprietary Gartner-developed crawler. The keywords selected align to the retail, healthcare, consumer goods, financial services, manufacturing and natural resources, and travel and hospitality sectors, accounting for more than 4 billion queries a month. These results should be taken directionally because they do not wholly reflect the targeting parameters that are available to search marketers.

³ **Gartner analysis of Similarweb data (n = 1,235 brands, 1 January 2024 through 31 May 2025).** Similarweb is a third-party data source that captures website traffic and engagement, email referral traffic, and LinkedIn traffic. Similarweb gathers data from a panel of hundreds of millions of monitored desktop and mobile devices, local internet service providers, and public data sources, as well as directly from sites’ first-party analytics.

⁴ **Gartner Predicts 2025: Marketers Must Prepare to Serve Human and Machine Customers**

⁵ **Gartner analysis of Coresignal data (n = 6,345 posts from 584 companies, 01 January 2023 to 31 December 2024).** Coresignal is Gartner’s data partner for employee and job postings data from LinkedIn, Glassdoor, and Indeed. Gartner uses a combination of machine learning modeling and keyword fuzzy-matching to analyze word embeddings and text in the title and contents of job descriptions. From these models, Gartner produces skills, qualifications, and responsibilities sought within job posts. These samples may not be representative of the general hiring trends and the data should only be used for directional insights

⁶ **2024 Gartner Channel and Campaign Management Survey.** This survey aimed to understand how marketing organizations should organize internal resources to manage effective campaigns, efficient channels and impactful content. It was conducted online from the end of July through mid-September 2024. In total, 418 respondents were surveyed in their native languages across North America (n = 194) and Europe (n = 224). Qualifying organizations reported enterprisewide annual revenue for fiscal 2023 of at least \$100 million, with 80% of the respondents coming from organizations with \$1 billion or more in annual revenue. The respondents came from a variety of industries: financial services (n = 67), insurance (n = 32), manufacturing (n = 43), consumer products (n = 38), retail (n = 40), travel and hospitality (n = 37), healthcare (n = 33), pharmaceuticals (n = 21), media (n = 29), tech products (n = 40), and IT and business services (n = 38). All the respondents were required to be senior decision makers in the marketing function, where they held significant responsibilities in setting or influencing overall marketing strategy and planning. They were also required to be involved in decisions pertaining to managing multiple marketing campaigns and/or advertising channels, as well as creating, managing and executing digital marketing strategy. Disclaimer: The results of this survey do not represent global findings or the market as a whole, but reflect the sentiments of the respondents and companies surveyed.

⁷ **Gartner analysis of BuiltWith data (n = 1,154 brands, July 2025).** BuiltWith is a third-party web domain profiler that focuses on tracking technologies that underpin customer-facing web domains. BuiltWith indexes over 673 million websites, covering technologies related to advertising, e-commerce, web hosting and web content management.

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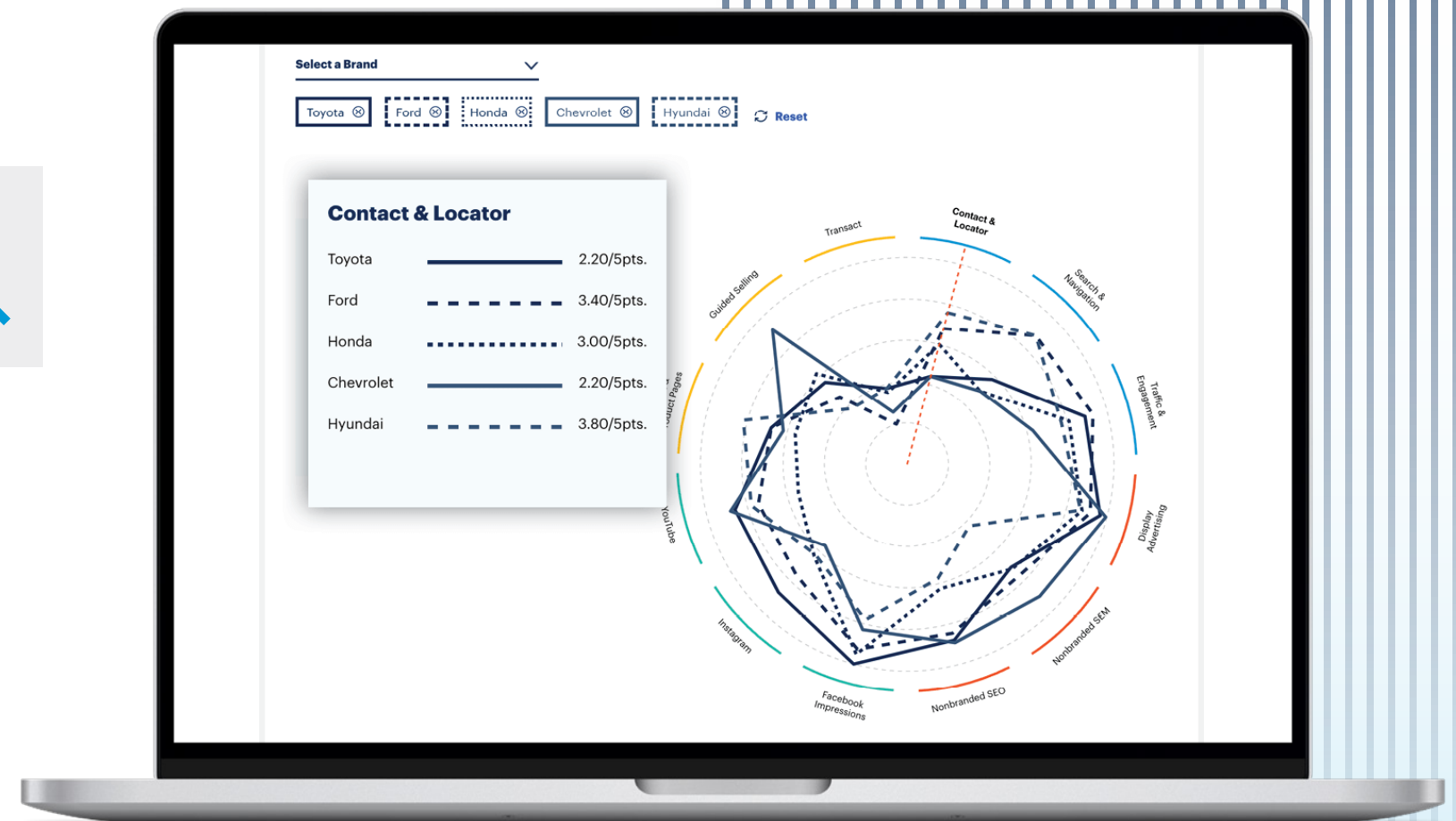
Identify
opportunities



Contextualize
your brand's
digital health



Get Started



AEO and SEO Tactics to Boost Online Search Visibility

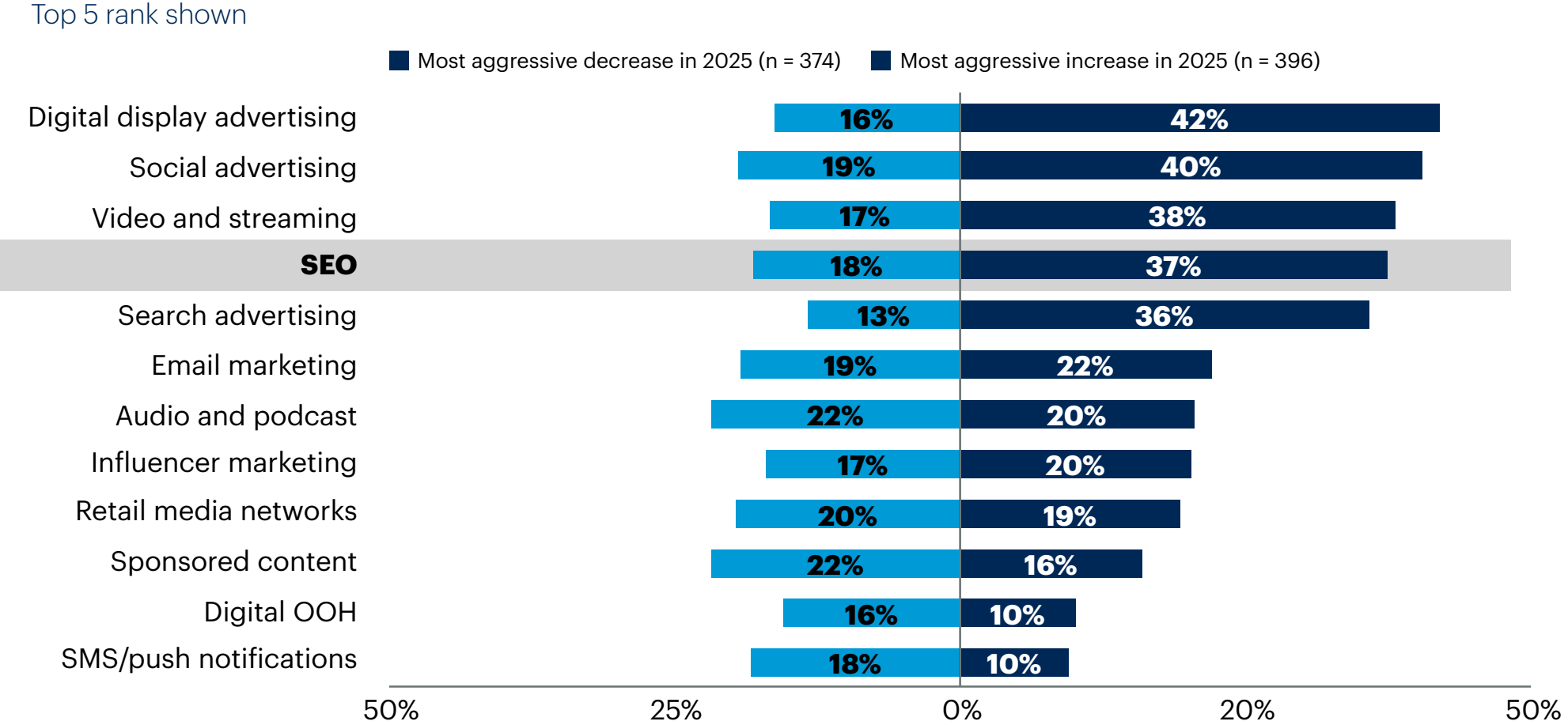
by Noam Dorros, Ross Cosner

SEO, and now AEO, are critical components of the digital marketing mix and require consistent attention to stay aligned with consumer, digital and industry evolutions. CMOs can use the tactics explored in this research to improve their AEO and SEO performance.

In a rapidly evolving search landscape, both search engine optimization (SEO) and answer engine optimization (AEO) play crucial roles in ensuring content discoverability and relevance. SEO helps websites rank higher in traditional search results, driving organic traffic and building long-term visibility. AEO focuses on structuring content for consumption by AI-powered answer engines (e.g., Google AI Mode, OpenAI’s ChatGPT) to easily extract and present information. By focusing on both SEO and AEO in an increasingly AI-driven world, brands can position their content as a trusted source and ensure it reaches the right audience at the right time within their journey.

SEO currently accounts for 8.9% of total digital channel allocation, and 37% of CMOs are expected to aggressively increase investment in it (see Figure 1).¹ CMOs recognize engine optimization — SEO and AEO — as paramount to future digital success and continue to invest in them accordingly. But an increased spend commitment does not guarantee results without a clear vision and solid channel strategy.

» **Figure 1. Changes in Investments for Digital Marketing Channels in 2025**



Q: Which of the following channels do you plan to most aggressively increase/decrease in spending 2025 compared to 2024 levels?
Source: 2025 Gartner CMO Spend Survey
Note: SEO = search engine optimization; OOH = out of home

AEO Tactics

To stay visible and relevant for AI engines, focus on delivering high-quality, structured content that showcases trust and expertise, allowing AI-powered search to push your content as the authoritative answer.

Design Content for Answer Engine Extraction

AI engine results (e.g., Google AI mode, Perplexity AI) focus on concise summations that provide quick insights in response to user queries. Focus on creating distinguished content that offers value and provides human perspectives. Such content is typically optimized for high-level takeaways, uses natural language, is well structured and up-to-date, and leverages diverse formats — such as blogs, infographics, videos or affiliate content.

Implement Structured Data

Leverage structured data by making content easy to understand and classify by these systems, thus maximizing visibility in AI-powered answer engines. AI engines rely on structured data to process and present content, so it's essential to ensure data accuracy, completeness and regular monitoring for updating.

Follow Google's EEAT Principles

EEAT principles (experience, expertise, authority, trustworthiness) are a core part of Google's search quality rating guidelines. AI engines prioritize content that demonstrates EEAT when generating results and recommendations.² Ensure your content demonstrates these principles by highlighting real-world examples, showcasing credentials, building a strong brand presence and maintaining transparency.

Boost Brand Presence and Reputation

Increase authority and trust with AI engines by incorporating positive reviews and testimonials on brand websites. Ratings and reviews are strong signals of trust, experience and social proof. These elements add fresh and unique content, increasing topical relevance and diverse perspectives that AI engines value.

Amplify Social Media Presence

AI engines increasingly incorporate social media content into their results by detecting emerging trends, public sentiment and authoritative voices through analysis of posts, comments and engagement metrics.

The conversational nature of social media content aligns with AI engines' need to understand natural language and user intent to deliver contextually relevant answers. For CMOs, this means that it's critical to drive alignment across social and content teams, maintain a high-quality content cadence, optimize social profiles and video content, and leverage influencer partnerships.

Rethink Your Search Performance Measurement Strategy

Decreased organic traffic resulting from algorithm updates and zero-click search behavior has shifted key metrics from results page engagement (like click-through rate) to visibility (AI placement rankings) and customer experience (conversions). Prioritize conversion-focused KPIs over impressions, update performance baselines, and carefully select AI search metrics and measurement tools, ensuring these align with evolving platform capabilities and market trends.

On-Page SEO Tactics

To optimize outcomes from on-page SEO tactics, prioritize customer-centric content, targeted keywords, optimized metadata, strong site structure and mobile-optimized design.

Diversify Content Strategies

Along with clicks resulting in more website traffic, take a customer-centric approach by developing content that aligns with audience needs, preferences and search intent, using both hard and soft content to drive engagement and relevancy. As Google's algorithm comprehension now extends beyond the written word, content forms must be diverse (image, text, video, audio) to offer a breadth of educational pieces that satiate consumer demand. Regularly benchmarking content performance against key metrics will help identify gaps and optimize for greater impact.

Cultivate Keyword Strategies

The relevance of keywords to the user's search query (i.e., the natural language typed into the search box) drives visibility. For this, identify which keyword categories are most important for the business's visibility, while also

understanding and prioritizing the keywords customers use in search. Additionally, content must also align to query intent. Showcase brand relevance to the search query by incorporating natural language within content.

Optimize Site Metadata

CMOs must optimize structured metadata (e.g., title tags, HTML header tags, last-modified-by time stamp) to ensure that whenever site pages are viewed on Google's SERP or shared via social media, they display all associated information for a richer result. Structured metadata is a standardized format for providing information about a page and classifying the page content (e.g., the ingredients, the calories on a recipe page).³ Your teams should craft unique, keyword-rich titles and descriptions with clear calls to action. Additionally, prioritize proper formatting and accessibility by using HTML tags for headers and image alt tags.

Fortify Information Architecture

An effective SEO strategy relies on a strong information architecture, which provides the blueprint for site structure, menu navigation and site search; without it,

both search engines and customers struggle to find and engage with your content. Ensure your teams implement a clear, well-structured taxonomy, use consistent and simple URLs, and maintain robust internal linking and navigation frameworks to improve site performance.

Maximize Page Speed

The amount of time a page takes to load is a clear indicator of quality to the search engine algorithm, as organic rankings are affected by the pace at which websites load. Several issues, ranging from unnecessary code to unoptimized images, can negatively affect page speed. Create a formal plan and work with technology partners to ensure site speed is a priority. The plan should consist of agreed-upon performance measures, tools to monitor performance, a testing cadence, key stakeholders involved in different layers of the technology stack and mechanisms used to implement improvements.

Design for Mobile

Because Google primarily uses the mobile version of a website's content for ranking and indexing, CMOs must ensure they have a fully mobile-optimized website.

Off-Page SEO Tactics

Build site authority and trustworthiness by actively managing backlink building, brand mentions, social media engagement, influencer outreach and guest blogging.

Improve Trust Through Link Building

Invest in appropriate link-building strategies to gain favor with the algorithm. The quantity and type of link and the quality of backlinks (different domains that refer back to your website) influence your website’s dependability with the search algorithm and improves rankings on the SERP. The more domains that link back to your website (quantity) and the higher their web authority score (quality), the more trustworthy your site is considered.

Local SEO Tactics

Local SEO aims to improve visibility for location-based searches (e.g., “coffee shop near me”). It includes optimizing Google Business Profiles, managing local citations and reviews, and ensuring consistency of name, address and phone (NAP) data across the web.

Enhance Local Visibility

Targeting consumers in specified areas (regions, states, cities) is an integral part of any brick-and-mortar SEO strategy. Optimize your site for local search results through local content, on-page optimization and even link building to allow consumers to quickly find local business information, getting them that much closer to conversion.

As search and answer engine algorithms rapidly evolve, integrating AEO and SEO tactics is essential for sustained online visibility. By consistently optimizing content, structure, and measurement strategies, you can ensure your brands remain discoverable and relevant in an increasingly AI-driven landscape.

resources, or leading cross-functional programs and strategies with marketing. Seventy-seven percent of the respondents represented organizations with annual revenue of \$1 billion or more. The respondents came from a diverse range of industries: manufacturing (n = 52), financial services (n = 50), insurance (n = 43), consumer products (n = 43), healthcare (n = 42), travel and hospitality (n = 37), IT and business services (n = 36), retail (n = 36), pharma (n = 32), and media (n = 31). Disclaimer: Results of this survey do not represent global findings or the market as a whole, but reflect the sentiments of the respondents and companies surveyed.

- ² [The Role Of E-E-A-T In AI Narratives: Building Brand Authority for Search Success](#), Search Engine Journal.
- ³ [Introduction to Structured Data Markup in Google Search](#), Google Search Central.
- ⁴ **Gartner analysis of Google search data (n = 5,996 keywords, June 2025).** This research uses data from Google search engine result pages (SERPs) collected from the New York City area by a proprietary Gartner-developed crawler. The keywords selected align to the retail, healthcare, consumer goods, financial services, manufacturing and natural resources, and travel and hospitality sectors, accounting for more than four billion queries a month. These results should be taken directionally because they do not wholly reflect the targeting parameters that are available to search marketers.



Revamp Personalization Strategy to Drive Confidence, Not Just Progression

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by Janine Kanters, Sharon Cantor Ceurvorst, Audrey Brosnan, Michael Ro, Nicholas Mortensen

Misapplied personalization can increase purchase regret and prolong purchase decisions. Maximize ROI by going beyond conventional personalization tactics to actively changing customers' paths and building their confidence.

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Personalization Has Commercial Benefits, But Can Inhibit Journey Progression

Customers who experienced personalization were 1.8 times more likely to pay a premium and 3.7 times more likely to purchase more than intended.¹ But these commercial benefits also hide negative consequences: Customers who experienced personalization were also more likely to delay or put off important decisions, regret their purchase and feel overwhelmed by the volume of information they received (see Figure 1).

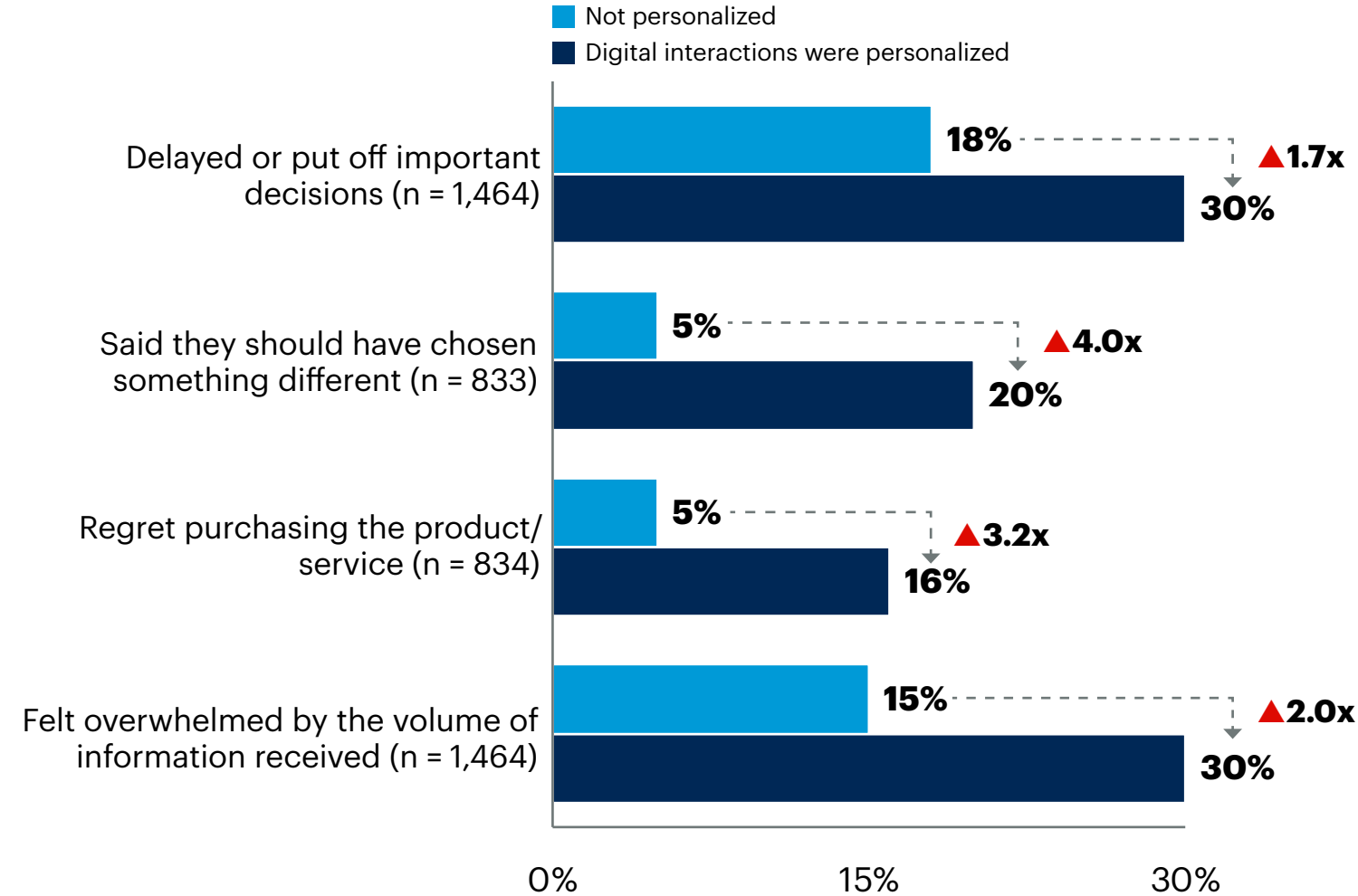
CMOs face a dilemma: How can they scale the number of personalized interactions without the negative consequences? To maximize ROI, CMOs must understand why personalization isn't resonating for some people and what tactics enable future success — such as personalization during journey transition points, catalyzing changes and personalizing experiences that require active participation.

Recommendation 1: Personalization Should Support Journey Transitions

Customers have key transition points in their purchase journey where they go from one stage to the next. At these points, they have to switch to different types of tasks, making them more susceptible to abandoning or delaying a purchase. Common transition points include moving from:

- **Identifying needs** to progressing to the next step
- **Searching for options** to progressing to the next step
- **Evaluating options** to progressing to the next step

» Figure 1. The Underappreciated Impacts of Personalization
Percentage of respondents



n varies; consumers and B2B buyers
Source: 2025 Gartner Marketing Personalization Survey

Over 53% of customers encounter decision-making pitfalls during at least one transition point.¹ They describe four key types of pitfalls: Feeling **rushed, in conflict, overwhelmed and doubtful** (see Table 1).

These pitfalls hinder customers’ ability to confidently progress towards a purchase. This lack of confidence erodes future growth, as customers with low confidence are 50% less likely to prefer a given brand and 44% less likely to purchase from this brand in the future.¹

In other words — while personalization can help customers navigate journey transitions, CMOs who focus solely on tactics like next best actions (NBAs) end up putting brand outcomes at risk and undermine their own personalization investments.

» Table 1. Types of Pitfalls Customers Encounter on the Path to Purchase

			
Rushed	In conflict	Overwhelmed	Doubtful
“I felt pressured to move forward before I was ready.”	“I disagreed with someone about the purchase.”	“I was overwhelmed by the volume of information I had to consider.”	“I second guessed, rehashed or put off decisions.”

Source: Gartner

Recommendation 2: Personalize Course Changes Over NBAs

There are two key personalization tactics aimed at helping customers on their path to purchase:

- 1. **Next best actions (NBAs)** demonstrate that a brand understands customers’ needs and recommends a best-fit next step. An example NBA is suggesting additional content based on an inferred persona. Most brands concentrate their efforts in this area, with 40% of customers in high-consideration categories saying they experienced an NBA personalization.¹
- 2. **Course changes** enable customers to change perspectives and build their confidence and agency. Examples include quizzes, assessments or chat interactions that encourage customers to share information about themselves to determine personal goals or best path. Far fewer — only 11% — of customers have had this type of personalized experience.¹

Next best actions deliver clear benefits for customers already poised to purchase. They make it easy to progress by clarifying where to go next, recommending highly relevant content and reminding customers where they left off. However, when customers experience decision-making pitfalls, personalized course changes significantly outperform NBAs.

For customers navigating pitfalls, increasingly personalizing NBAs does not increase commercial impact (e.g., purchase decisions, future purchase intent). However, highly personalized course changes display a profound ability to help customers reflect, resume and even accelerate their path to purchase (see Figure 2).

Why do NBAs suffer against course changes? Next best actions — even highly personalized ones — tend to focus on brand priorities instead of customer priorities. As such, they are likely to:

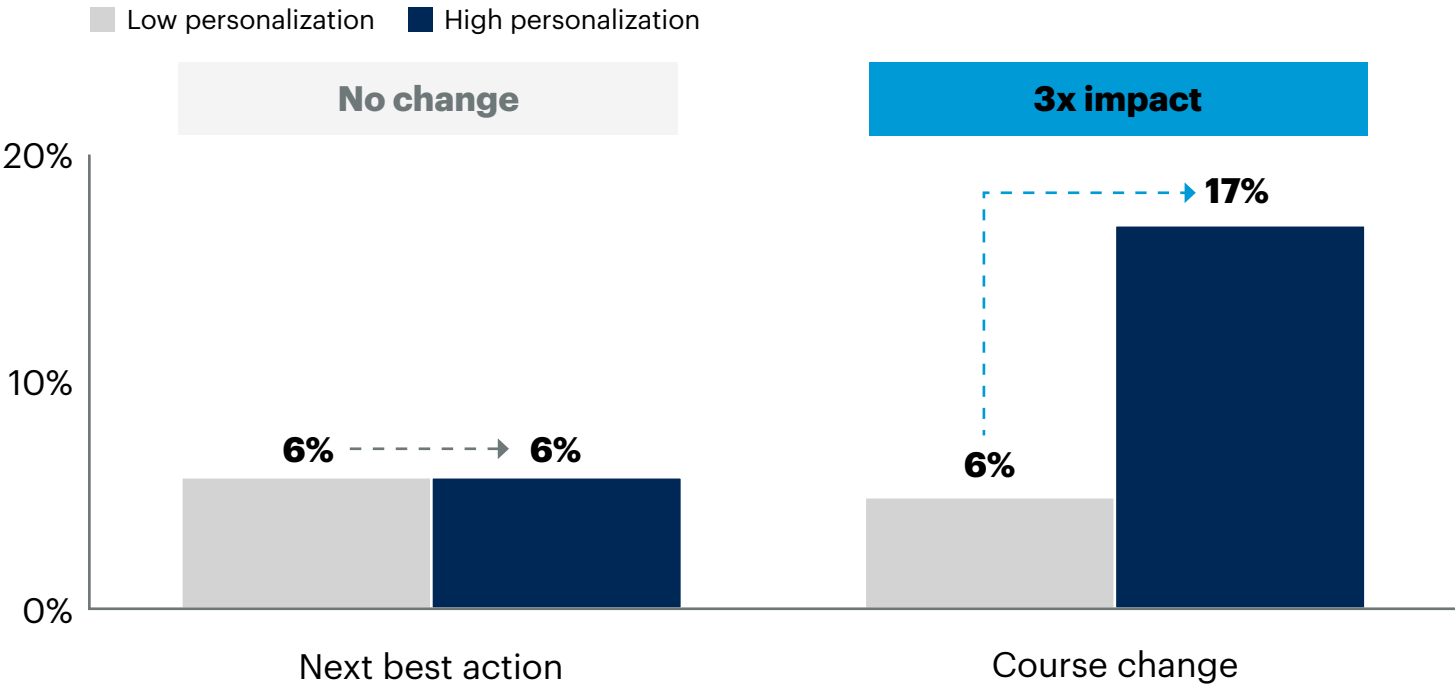
- Prompt customers to move forward, regardless of readiness.
- Encourage individuals to progress without agreement from others.
- Provide more information, even if customers can't process it or are overwhelmed.
- Recommend taking next steps, despite feelings of self-doubt.

More reminders of abandoned carts or missed webinars don't help customers resolve their challenges; in fact, they may trigger negative emotions.

Personalized course changes, on the other hand, help customers because they can:

- Embed “positive friction” — intentional moments of reflection — that encourage customers to consider and experiment with how their decisions may impact their outcomes at each stage.
- Prompt thinking about what different stakeholders value and why.
- Frame complex decisions by proposing decision-making parameters and trade-offs.
- Validate customer efforts to make well-considered decisions.

» **Figure 2. Personalized Course Changes Maximize Impact on Commercial Outcomes**
Percent change in commercial outcomes by level of personalization



n = 759 consumers and B2B buyers
Source: 2025 Gartner Marketing Personalization Survey
Note: Results based on regression model. Outcome based on 7-item index of commercial benefits (e.g., purchase decision, future purchase intent). Percent impact calculated as the percent increase from -1SD to +1SD from the mean on each respective driver (x-axis variables). Model controls for respondent type (B2B vs. consumer), country, age, gender, education, employment type, number of brands/suppliers considered, buying group size, product/service cost, whether discount/exclusive terms offered, product/service category, repurchase of past product/service vs. new, new vs. existing supplier/brand, amount of information consumed across brand interactions, perceived consistency of interactions across channels, amount of content perceived as AI-based.

To see how course changes are different from NBAs, let's look at Edward Jones' My Priorities Quiz. The interactive quiz forces customers to repeatedly choose between two attractive financial goals.² It frames challenging questions in a gamified way, prompting customers to make hard choices. The results reveal unexpected prioritization of personal financial goals. The experience changes customers' perceptions of what they truly need. And it's a notably different result than would occur had the brand sought to infer customer preferences and prescribe a path forward without customer active input. Additional guidance helps customers choose a path that they might not have selected for themselves if they had simply been presented with all the options or if only a single option had been prescribed (see Figure 3).

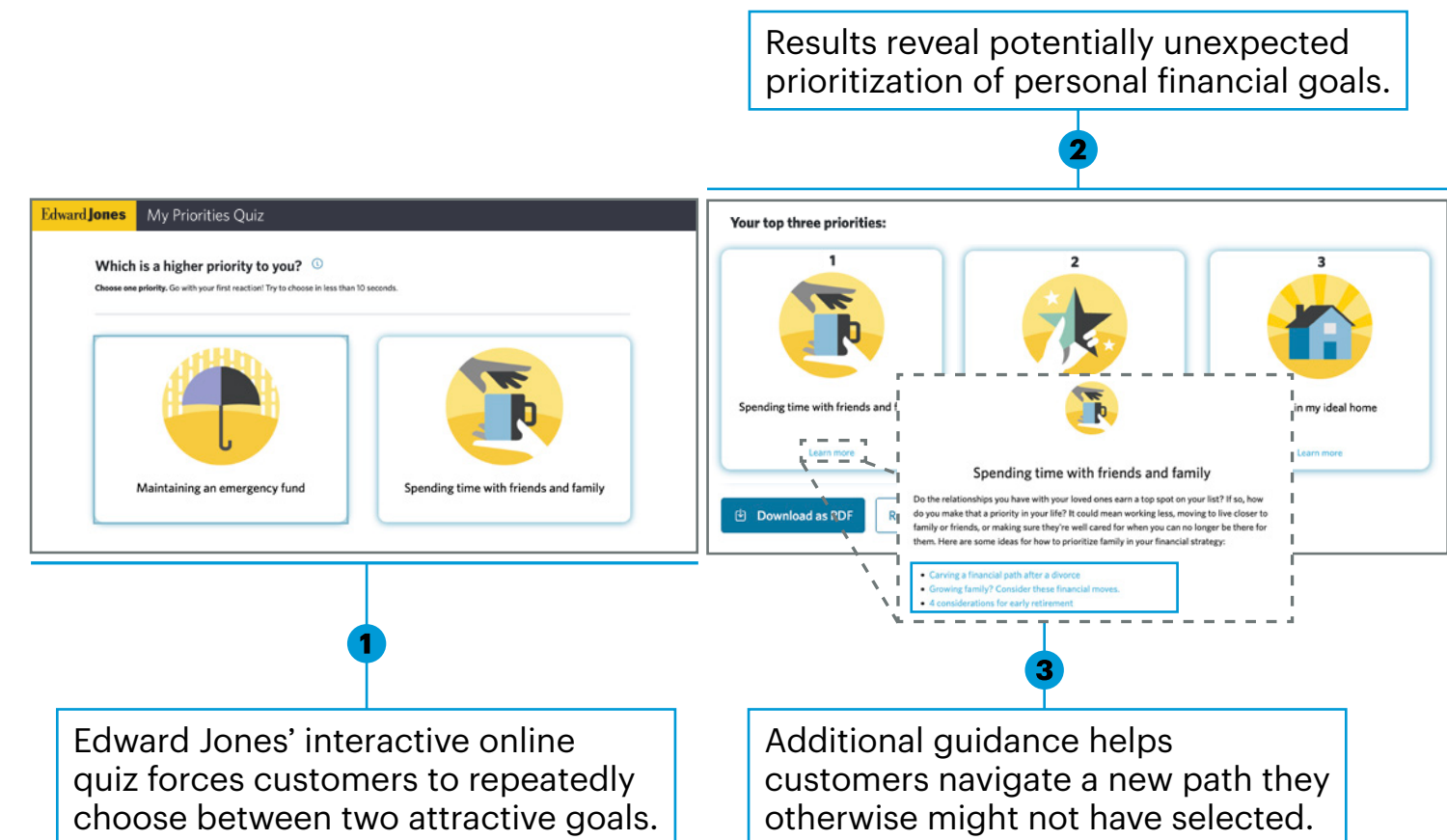
While next best actions are an essential component of marketing, course changes represent an emerging opportunity to increase the strategic value of personalization, particularly for customers who aren't receptive to NBAs. The good news is that enacting course changes requires less data than NBAs.

Recommendation 3: Changing Customers' Course Requires Their Active Participation

Personalization can be generated:

- **Passively** through inferences about a customer's context, gained using cookies, digital browsing behaviors or third-party sources.
- **Actively** through a direct exchange of information with the customer, such as through polls, quizzes, games, assessments or, increasingly, through chatbots.

» Figure 3. Personalized Course Change: Edward Jones



Source: Adapted from Edward Jones (<https://mypriorities.edwardjones.com/customize>)

Next best actions are primarily generated using passive personalization whereas course changes are best delivered using active personalization. Prompting someone to change course based on passive inferences is risky — customers may not feel confident about the change or could encounter additional pitfalls.

Changing perspectives and paths is inherently challenging, but actively involving customers in the process through interactive experiences (e.g., quizzes, chatbots) enables them to co-create the change. This builds their agency, helping them feel confident and in control. Customers who encountered active personalization were 2.3 times more likely to experience a course change during their purchase journey.¹

How to Get Started

Set out to decide what type of personalized course changes will be most impactful for your customers and how to design them.

First, clarify when to personalize. Identify your customers' journey transition points. What are they transitioning from (e.g., what do they need to slow down and reflect on) and what are they transitioning to (e.g., where do they need to move fast after making a decision)?

Next, determine what might stop customers from making progress and how personalization can help. Identify what pitfalls they might encounter at these transition points and what support they might need. What would prevent them from confidently making progress and how can you help them navigate the transition?

Finally, look for opportunities to actively personalize. Identify how you can co-create experiences by helping customers shape decisions. What are critical choices customers must make at these points, and how can you dynamically engage them to work through those?

Gartner advice: Start with a single personalized course change experience that is easily accessible on your website, then expand by creating multiple experiences tailored to specific segments or personas. Integrate passive and active personalization by identifying behavioral indicators of pitfalls and orchestrating personalized course change experiences aligned to segment-specific pitfalls.

An impactful personalized course change requires each of these elements:

1. Supports transitions
2. Catalyzes change
3. Actively personalizes.

Failure to account for customers facing pitfalls will result in diminishing returns on personalization investments, elongated purchase processes and stunted future growth due to customer regret.

¹ **2025 Gartner Marketing Personalization Survey.** This survey was conducted to explore which elements of marketers' personalization efforts most impact customers' journey experiences and commercial outcomes. The survey was administered online from November through December 2024. It includes data from 1,464 B2B buyers and consumers in the U.S. and Canada (n = 961), the U.K. (n = 265), and Australia and New Zealand (n = 238). B2B buyers (n = 556) came from a wide variety of industries, including manufacturing and natural resources (n = 152); technology products (n = 106); banking and financial services (n = 80); healthcare (n = 58); retail (n = 39); pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, and life sciences (n = 28); and others (n = 93). Disclaimer: The results of this survey do not represent global findings or the market as a whole, but reflect the sentiments of the respondents and companies surveyed.

² Adapted from [My Priorities Quiz](#), Edward Jones.

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Case Study: Adapt Personalization Strategies to Customer Journeys

by Michael Ro, Anna Maria Virzi, Janine Kanters

Building personalization strategies is challenging — customer behaviors keep evolving, and there are more ways than ever to tailor content and experiences throughout the customer journey. Here, we explore how CoreQuartz* developed an adaptive personalization strategy to improve digital commerce outcomes.



CoreQuartz* (pseudonym) — a global manufacturer and retailer with a wide array of product brands — faced the same challenge as many CMOs: balancing one-to-one and one-to-many personalization techniques within a single, comprehensive personalization strategy. This was especially difficult because each of the techniques comes with clear trade-offs:

- One-to-one personalization offers the advantage of responding to customer signals of engagement, but it demands significantly more customer understanding.
- One-to-many personalization offers the advantage of broad reach, but it delivers less granularly tailored messages that may not resonate with customers equally.

CMOs’ ability to define and execute a robust personalization approach is further complicated by the variety of business needs, shifting customer needs, and having to continuously reconfigure audiences for each personalization tactic.

CoreQuartz’s* customer engagement team navigated these challenges in two steps:

1. Developing a standard menu of configurable personalization methods driven from well-defined multidimensional segmentation approaches.
2. Mapping each personalization method to a corresponding customer journey stage.

CMOs’ ability to define and execute a robust personalization approach is further complicated by the variety of business needs, shifting customer needs, and having to continuously reconfigure audiences for each personalization tactic.

Create a Menu of Ways to Personalize With Predefined Segmentation Methods

To articulate a clear and consistent personalization strategy, CoreQuartz’s* customer engagement team defined one-to-one personalization as customer-intent-led initiatives designed to drive conversions and short-term engagement. This approach accommodated variations in audience size. One-to-many personalization was characterized as brand-led content, largely intended to build awareness among broad segments.

The team’s work also examined more granular aspects of personalization. This included identifying different types of customer segmentation methods that could be used to create personalized communications and experiences. The spectrum of methods ranged from strategic to tactical, and from larger audience segments to more granular segments.

The five segmentation methods (see Figure 1) used to drive CoreQuartz’s* personalization strategy are:

- Customer lifetime value (CLTV)
- Functional customer needs
- Product brand affinity
- Purchasing intent
- Microbehaviors, or signals of customer engagement, such as a customer adding an item to a wish list or cart

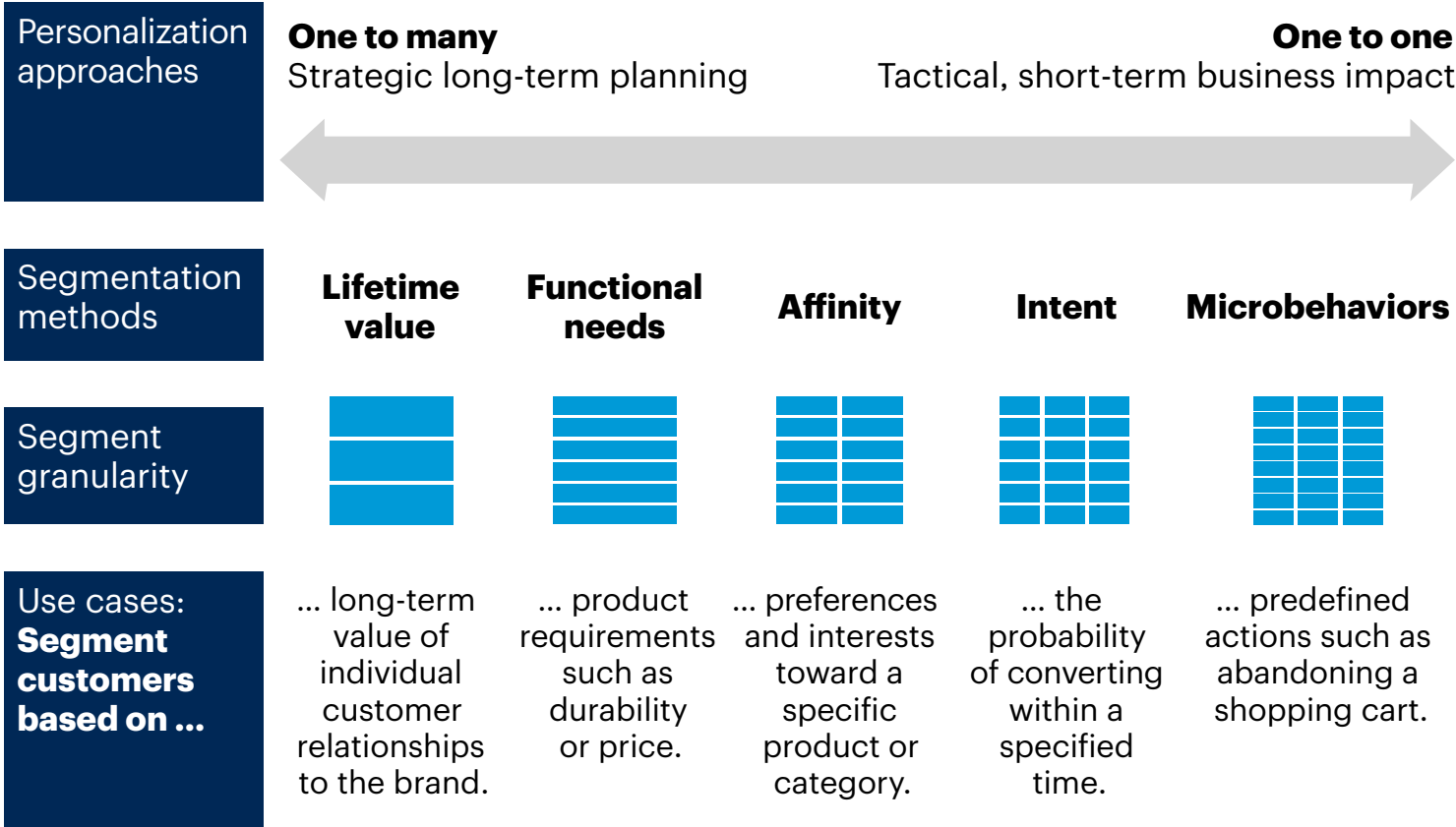
CoreQuartz* categorized each customer by segmentation method and aligned personalized content, recommendations and experiences to each method. As each segmentation method became more granular, those segments lent themselves better to one-to-one personalization.

CoreQuartz* could use these segmentation methods in a simple manner, where personalization is activated using

a single method. It could also create multidimensional segments, combining multiple methods (e.g., functional needs and intent) to enable more granular personalization. This modular approach to mapping segmentation methods not only enabled personalization but also aligned to the needs of customers by activating the most relevant online experiences and content.

For example, if a CoreQuartz* customer demonstrated high brand affinity for its nutrition supplements brand, CoreQuartz* could prioritize that brand in communications targeting that customer. In more complex use cases, if a customer demonstrated high long-term affinity for the nutritional supplements brand but more recently demonstrated purchase intent for the exercise equipment brand, CoreQuartz* could temporarily prioritize promoting the exercise equipment brand.

» Figure 1. Personalization Approaches Aligned to Segmentation Methods



Source: Adapted From CoreQuartz*
* Pseudonym

Link Each Personalization Method to a Customer Journey Stage

After mapping the spectrum of personalization approaches and segmentation methods, CoreQuartz’s* customer engagement team designed a framework that aligned the approaches with the customer buying journey. This framework aided marketers in continuously enhancing personalization efforts for segments and individuals.

The framework (see Figure 2) comprises:

- **Customer engagement level:** A score based on the frequency of engagement and other signals, serving as a crucial indicator of customers’ positions in their journey.
- **Personalization approach:** A strategy guided by the customer engagement score to decide when to implement one-to-many or one-to-one personalization during the customer journey.
- **Data dimensions:** Insights derived from customer data (e.g., demographics, purchase history and browsing behaviors) to feed segment classification.
- **Marketing activity:** Sample initiatives the brand might undertake in reaction to customer engagement signals.

CoreQuartz’s* team adjusted personalization approaches in response to shifts in customer engagement levels. Overall, the strategy adhered to the principle that one-to-many personalization is most effective during the awareness and interest phases of the customer journey, while one-to-one

» Figure 2. Map Responses to Customer Engagement Signals



Source: Adapted From CoreQuartz*
* Pseudonym

personalization is preferable when a customer exhibits buying intent and is ready to make a purchase decision. Data dimensions for less granular segmentation methods, such as total spend to feed lifetime value segmentation, were used to target customers during the early phases of the journey. In the later stages, the focus transitioned to data dimensions related to more granular segmentation methods, such as an observable action of a customer adding items to a cart to feed microbehaviors.

Using its journey-based framework, CoreQuartz* showed how identifying segmentation methods and applying them across a defined customer journey could be used to deliver personalized messaging and experiences.



We laid out the different approaches to personalization all on one page to get everyone on board. Once they saw positive results from a pilot, they were all in agreement and wanted to move forward with the customer-led approach.

Customer engagement leader
CoreQuartz*

* Pseudonym

Results

A two-month pilot showed an increase in digital commerce sales. Specific results included:

- Uplift from using personalized content at the considering/ buying intent phases of the customer journey: 321% for CTR, 42% for CVR and 46% for net sales.
- Uplift from using personalized content at the awareness/ interest phases of the customer journey: 169% for CTR, 43% for CVR and 16% for net sales.
- Uplift from a paid media campaign using personalization versus control group: 39% for CTR, 18% for return on ad spend (ROAS) and 13% for CVR.
- Earned internal stakeholder buy-in for personalization strategy by mapping out and demonstrating positive business outcomes.

Recommendations

- Map out and define segmentation methods that your organization can apply for personalization, ensuring that multiple methods can be applied, when appropriate, to an individual customer.
- Implement a flexible personalization framework that adapts the degree of personalization deployed by responding to signals of customer engagement and other attributes during the customer journey.

We developed this case study to describe CoreQuartz's* approach to creating a personalization framework. It is based on extensive interviews with the company's customer engagement leader and reviews of internal documentation provided by the company. CoreQuartz's* customer engagement team is responsible for engagement strategy and measurement frameworks at the intersection of brand, retail, CRM and digital. The team strives to drive CLTV growth through real-time, intent-led journeys for key audiences.

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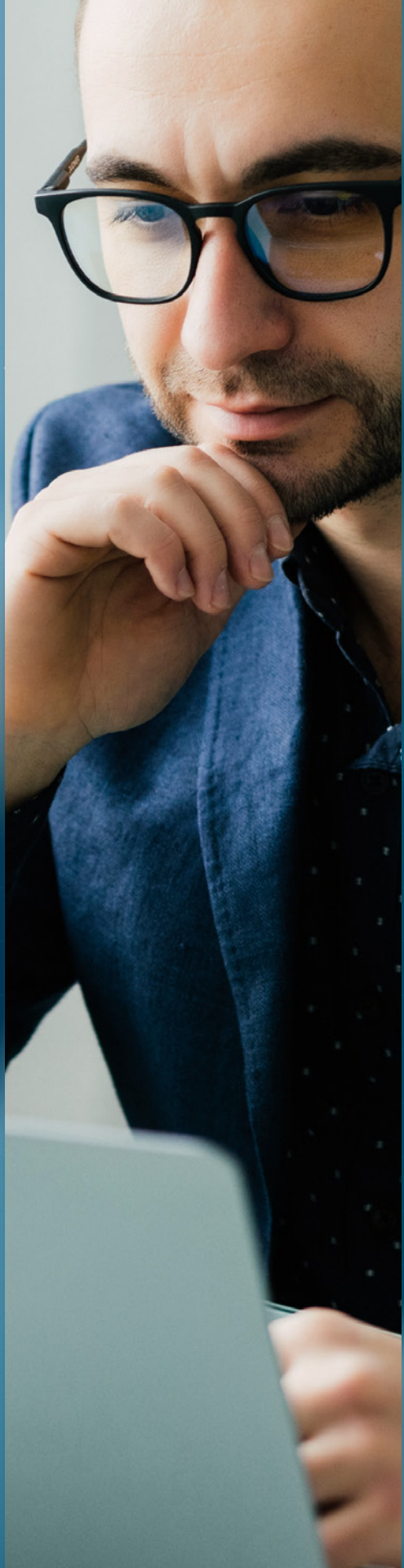
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