

The Gartner logo is displayed in white text in the top left corner. The background features a dark blue gradient with several light blue rectangular shapes of varying sizes and orientations, some appearing as if they are floating or overlapping.

How High-Performing CMOs Master Their Marketing Channel Strategy

Insights From Gartner's Channels and Campaign Management Survey

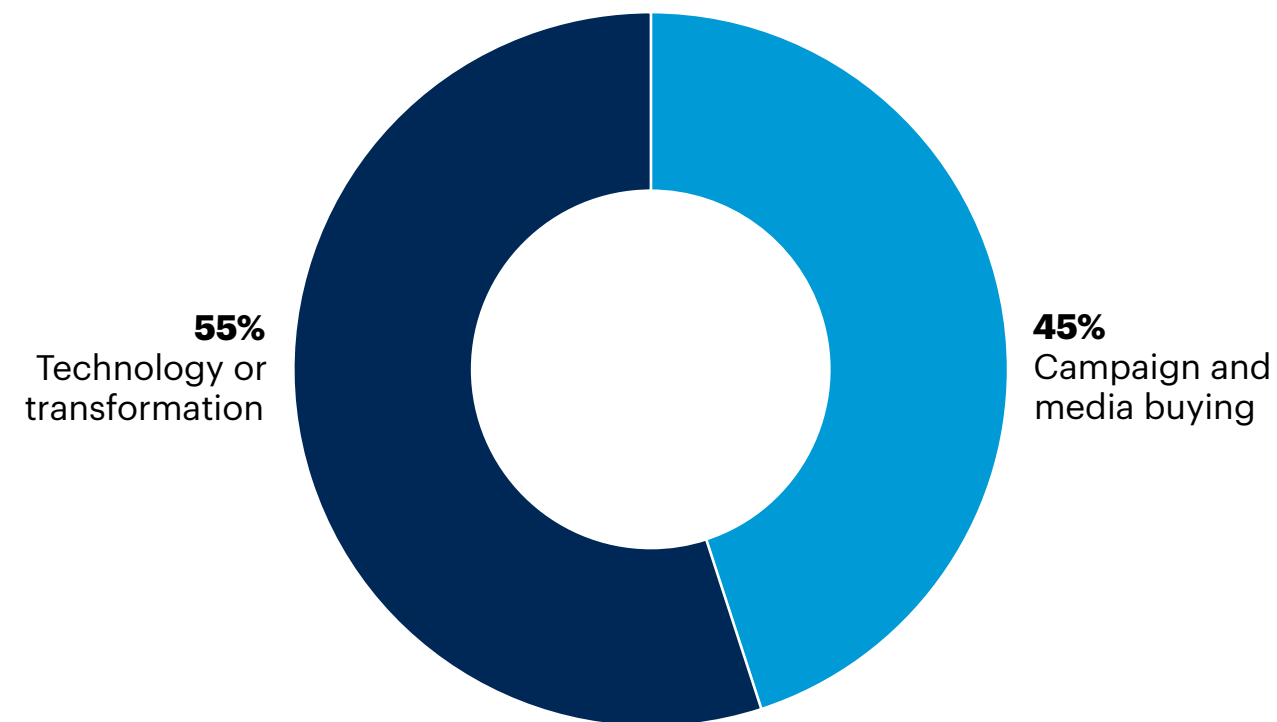
CMOs are ramping up campaign activity but facing challenges in managing budgets, capabilities and stakeholders. Learn how high-performing teams overcome these challenges by taking an integrated approach to campaign management and closing capability gaps.

Marketing activity on campaigns increases despite budget challenges

Doing more with less has become something of a business cliché — a euphemism that masks challenging realities. 2024 saw marketing budgets decline 15% year-over-year while CEOs' growth expectations grew.¹ In the face of these challenges, marketing is literally doing more with less — protecting campaign spending and increasing activity despite budget austerity.

The 2024 Gartner Channels and Campaign Management Survey found that marketing spent almost half (44.5%) of its total expense budget on campaigns and media buys over the last twelve months (see Figure 1). This goes way beyond the cost of paid media — it includes total costs of planning, executing and optimizing campaigns. Campaign activity soared with this boosted budget: Marketing teams reported an average of 209 campaigns deployed over the last twelve months, a 30% increase in prior year activity. B2B respondents reported an average of 62 campaigns in 2024, while B2C teams were accountable for a massive 541 campaigns.²

» **Figure 1. Marketing budget allocation over the last 12 months**
Mean percentage



n = 414 marketing leaders, excluding "don't know"

Q. What percentage of your overall 2024 marketing expense budget is allocated to marketing campaigns and media plans?

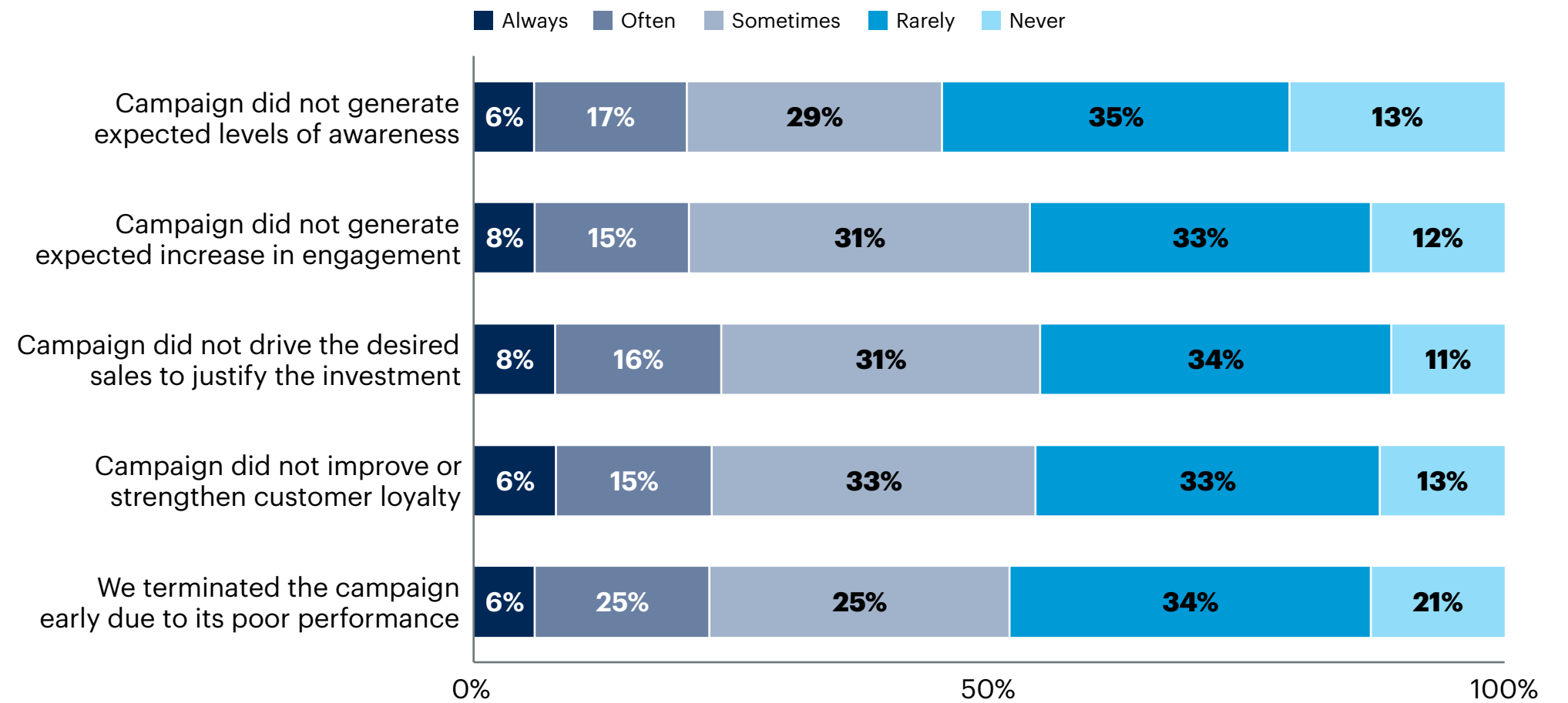
Source: 2024 Gartner Channels and Campaign Management Survey

Allocating budgets amid cost constraints requires trade-offs. With almost half the available budget allocated to campaigns, inevitably, less is available for investments in technology or transformation. So, how did marketing leaders define the right level to spend on campaigns and media buys in 2024? The majority (65%) reported their decisions were based on the estimated costs of achieving the objectives, with 49% stating that affordability was a key consideration. A significantly lower number of CMOs employed more advanced techniques, such as zero-based budgeting, that link activities to value.²

Campaign performance issues plague majority of marketing teams

Eighty-seven percent of marketing leaders report that they experienced campaign performance issues in the last 12 months. More than half reported that they sometimes, often or always experience campaign problems across all areas of the customer journey, be it awareness, engagement, sales and loyalty (see Figure 2).² Meanwhile, 45% reported that they sometimes, often or always had occasion to terminate campaigns early in the last year due to poor performance.²

» **Figure 2. Frequency of marketing campaign problems in the last 12 months**
Percentage of respondents



n = 414 to 418 marketing leaders. Bases vary by scenario.
Q. Looking across all the marketing campaigns executed in the last 12 months, how often did they encounter the following scenarios?
Source: 2024 Gartner Channels and Campaign Management Survey
Note: Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Challenges span across fundamental campaign planning, execution and measurement activities

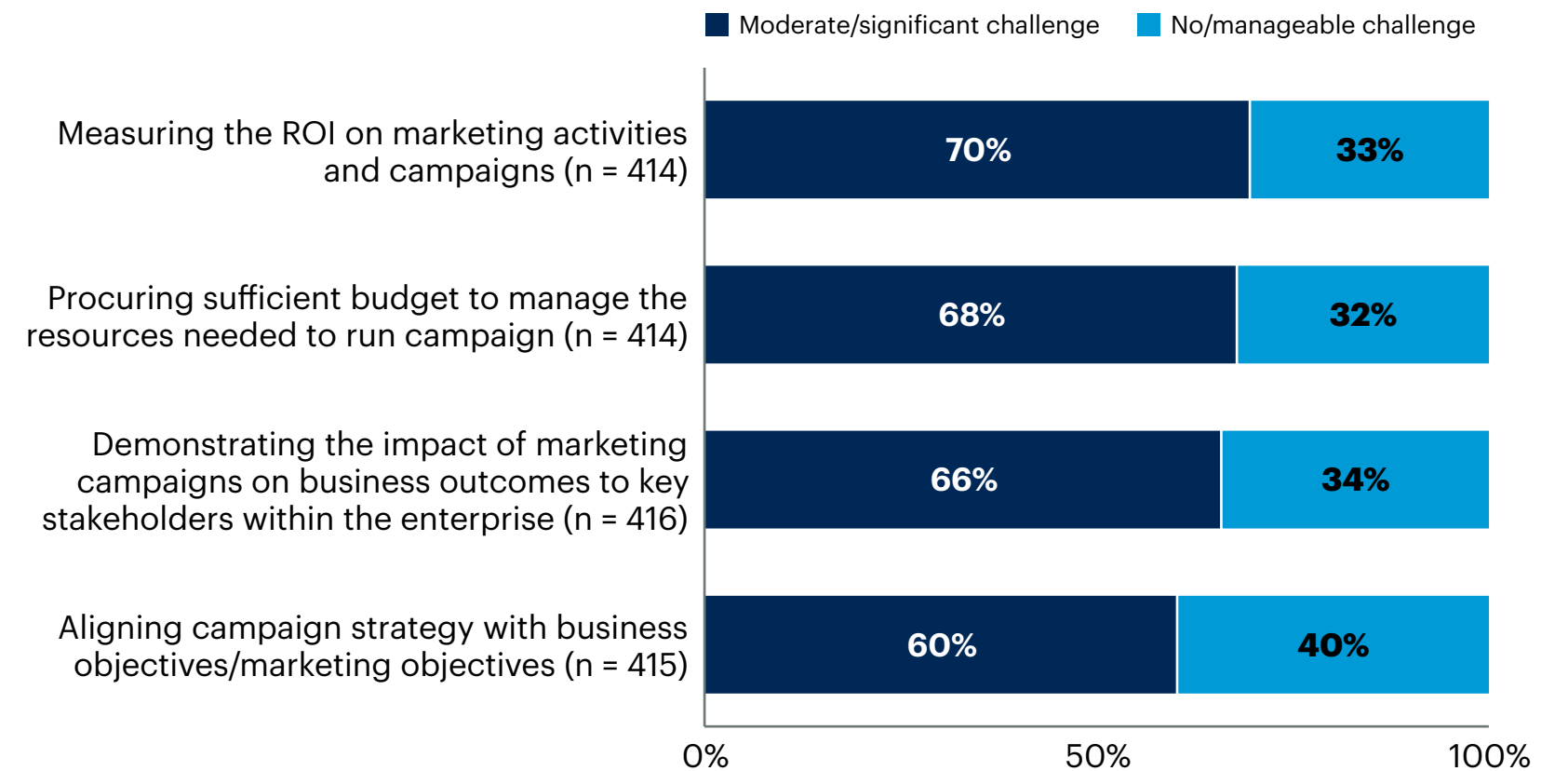
Our survey found troubling gaps across some of the most fundamental and consequential campaign planning, execution and measurement capabilities. More than two-thirds of CMOs report they face moderate to significant challenges measuring the ROI of campaigns or demonstrating the impact of campaigns to stakeholders (see Figure 3). Meanwhile, a worrying 60% faced challenges aligning their campaign strategy to business objectives,² indicating that campaigns' performance is stymied from the outset, cut adrift from business goals.

Challenges are not restricted to hard skills or the technical prowess their teams require to plan and deliver campaigns. Gartner's survey also uncovered challenges with soft skills, illustrated by dysfunctional collaboration with stakeholders who are consequential to marketing's success.

Marketing has a broad range of stakeholders with varying influence over campaign decisions. Marketing leaders report that colleagues in sales are their most influential stakeholder, but 25% of survey respondents report sales teams hinder their ability to execute marketing campaigns effectively. Four of the top five functions most likely to exert the greatest influence on marketing campaigns (sales, executive leadership, finance and customer experience) are reported as being the most likely to **negatively impact campaigns.**²

» Figure 3. Magnitude of challenges faced in marketing campaigns

Percentage of respondents



n varies, marketing leaders, excluding "don't know"

Q. What level of challenge did your marketing organization face while performing the following activities for marketing campaigns in the last 12 months?

Source: 2024 Gartner Channels and Campaign Management Survey

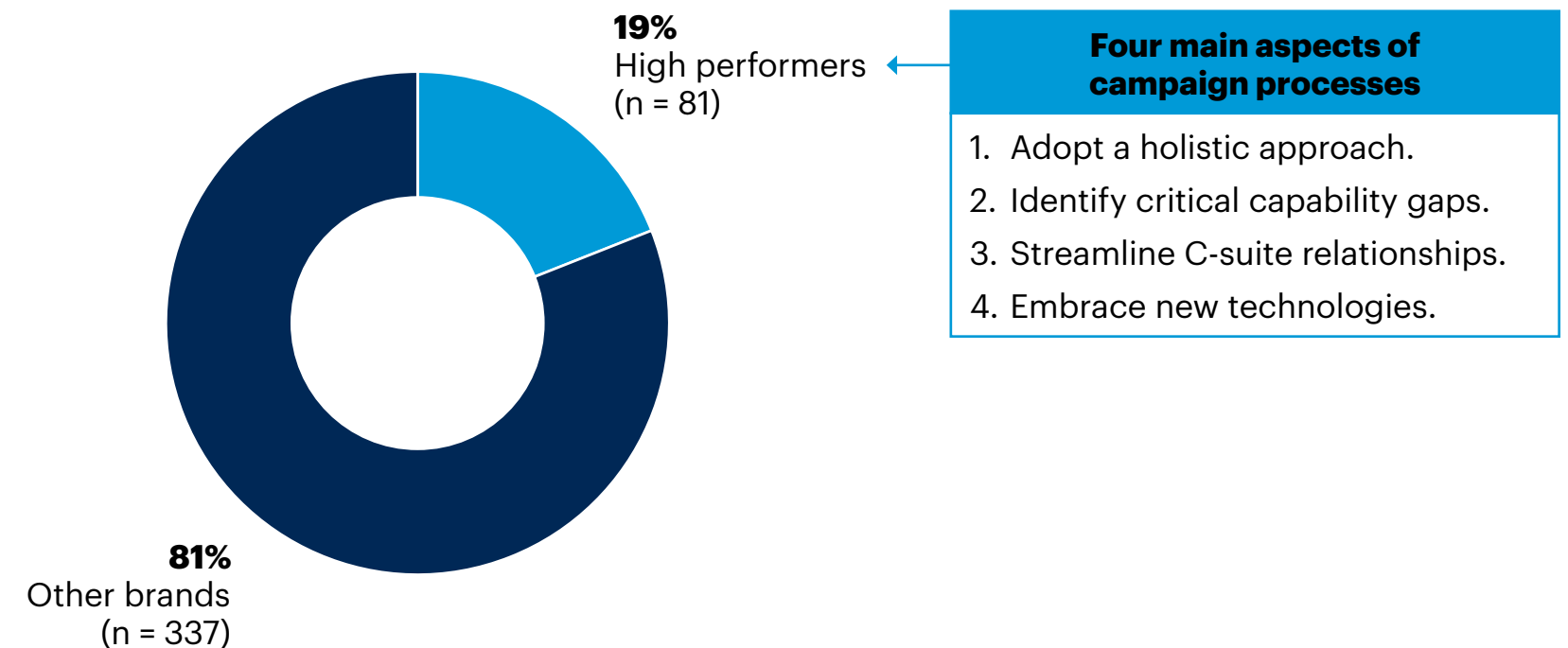
What CMOs can learn from high-performing marketing teams

Despite overall challenges, a subset of survey respondents, categorized as high performers, are surpassing their peers when it comes to campaign performance. While high performers make up only 19% of the survey sample, they were 1.3x more successful in overachieving year-over-year goals regarding growth and profitability. They were also able to meet or exceed all their marketing objectives related to customer acquisition, customer retention and revenue growth from existing customers.²

So, what do these high performers do differently? The key to their success is their focus on marginal gains — making small, incremental improvements across four main aspects of their campaign processes, which add up to significant results (see Figure 4):

- 1. Adopt a holistic approach:** Integrate marketing fundamentals of governance, routes to market, and measurement.
- 2. Identify critical capability gaps:** Close advanced capability gaps for multichannel success.
- 3. Streamline C-suite relationships:** Boost internal stakeholder alignment.
- 4. Embrace new technologies:** Leverage GenAI pilots for strategic development activities.

» **Figure 4. High performers focus on incremental improvement**
Share of survey respondents that are high performers



n = 418 marketing leaders
Source: 2024 Gartner Channels and Campaign Management Survey

Integrate marketing fundamentals of governance, routes to market and measurement

Sixty-eight percent of high performers use a holistic approach for channel and campaign management. In particular, high performers zero in on three elements: governance, routes to market and measurement.²

A holistic approach consists of integrating management of customer campaigns and journeys across channels and routes to market, measuring and setting goals tied to business performance versus channels, and centralizing brand and processes as much as possible.

This holistic approach underscores the importance of efficient and coordinated campaign strategy, customer journey development and channel orchestration.

Close advanced capability gaps for multichannel success

High-performing marketing leaders recognize the need to focus upskilling efforts on a new frontier of capabilities to continue to be successful. They identify capability gaps in areas such as:

- Media planning/buying
- Analytics
- GenAI adoption

These areas typically require more coordination between marketing teams, agencies and technology partners due to their complex nature.

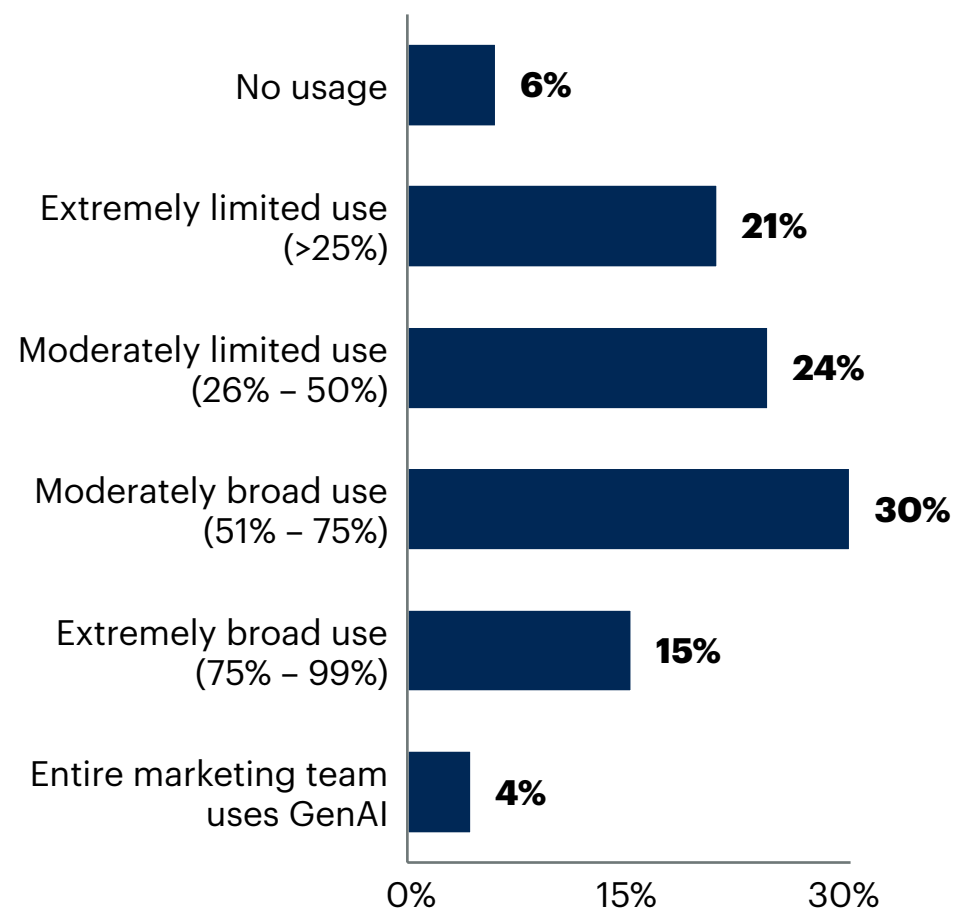
High performers have stronger content operations, performance marketing, and customer journey mapping and orchestration compared to their peers.²

Boost internal stakeholder alignment

Internal relationships can often get in the way of successfully executing campaigns. When it comes to obstacles working with internal constituents, all CMOs face challenges. Commonly, respondents see finance, executive leadership and sales as key impediments. Finance, in particular, is a critical partner for CMOs and their teams, often determining both operating and media budgets. Though 34% of other respondents view finance as a hindrance, only 24% of high performers do. High performers are better equipped to align with the CFO's priorities by speaking their language, as they're able to quantify the value of marketing campaigns through their heightened focus on data-driven decision making and customer centricity.

» **Figure 5. Extent of GenAI adoption by marketing campaign teams**

Percentage of respondents



n = 418 marketing leaders

Q. To what extent are your marketing teams currently using Generative AI to execute marketing campaign work?

Source: 2024 Gartner Channels and Campaign Management Survey

Use GenAI pilots for strategic development activities

Although 94% of CMOs claim some level of use of GenAI across their marketing teams, there are vast differences in utilization levels (see Figure 5).² Unsurprisingly, high performers deploy GenAI across a wider variety of tasks compared to their peers. For example, 84% of high performers utilize GenAI for creative development tasks, such as content creation, compared to 77% for others.²

Build a sustained plan for channel and campaign success

It's clear that marketing is challenged on a number of fronts: lacking sufficient budgets to support all its plans; missing the hard and soft skills material to delivering results; limiting success through suboptimal campaign performance. But it's also clear that there's a path to improvement. This is not a path that can be solved via a single technology acquisition, a change in agency or an organization overhaul — it's a path that's forged through incremental improvements and marginal gains. CMOs should take their cue from the highest-performing marketing teams and build a sustained plan for channel and campaign success.

¹ **2024 Gartner CMO Spend Survey.** This survey looked at top-line marketing budgets and aimed to identify how evolving customer journeys, C-suite pressures and cost challenges impact marketing's spending priorities and channel effectiveness. The research was conducted online from February through March 2024 among 395 respondents in North America (n = 200) and Europe (n = 195). Respondents were required to be involved in decisions pertaining to setting or influencing marketing strategy/planning and to aligning marketing budget/resources, and/or they were required to lead cross-functional programs and strategies with marketing. Seventy-four percent of the respondents came from organizations with \$1 billion or more in annual revenue. Respondents came from a variety of industries: financial services (n = 46), insurance (n = 35), manufacturing (n = 48), consumer products (n = 32), media (n = 35), retail (n = 38), healthcare (n = 47), pharma (n = 37), IT and business services (n = 41), and travel and hospitality (n = 36). 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 **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.

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