

Gartner®

Gartner for Marketing

# **3 Change Management Actions to Support Marketing's AI Adoption**

Traditional change management approaches do not account for marketers' fears and the pace of AI transformation. CMOs can lead their teams through AI changes by building AI change communications, setting effective generative AI (GenAI) use parameters, and helping employees integrate AI into their roles.

**Nicholas Mortensen**  
Senior Specialist, Research

**Devon Weidemann**  
Director, Research



## Overview

### Key Findings

- AI adoption within marketing is poised to fundamentally alter marketers' jobs, but CMOs need to win support from their organization even when AI's full capabilities and implications are still unclear.
- Employees are ready to step up on AI, but they have deep-seated anxiety about what it will eventually mean for their jobs. The majority of employees use or would prefer to use AI at work, but almost half of marketers are still afraid AI will replace them both within the organization and in the labor market.
- Top-down management of AI-related change is neither completely possible nor desirable. It is effectively impossible for CMOs to set access controls to AI — particularly GenAI — because marketers have various routes to it through free and low-cost tools. Marketers will discover new use cases, but they will need guardrails and guidance to make the most of their experiments.

### Recommendations

- Ensure marketer support for broader AI adoption by using iterative change messaging that explains why marketing is adopting AI, what will change within the function, and what workflows/processes will support the plan. Tailor this messaging to each AI adoption initiative.
- Create an environment that encourages marketers to engage fully with AI — particularly GenAI — by frequently and transparently communicating the goals of AI pilots, which employees will be affected and the progress of initiatives.
- Define GenAI reflection questions and documentation requirements that cover multiple use cases to ensure that marketers productively use GenAI tools outside of formal adoption initiatives. Build a bottom-up sharing mechanism to take advantage of informal GenAI experiments.

## Introduction

CMOs are now making GenAI a fixture within their functions. Sixty-one percent of marketing functions have implemented or plan on implementing GenAI in the next six months, and more than 75% of CMOs believe AI broadly is having a positive impact on marketing. Moving from pilots to full implementation will require CMOs to embed AI into their marketing teams' workflows (see [How to Pilot Generative AI to Support Marketing Strategy](#)). The pace of AI-related change means that change management will be critical, and CMOs who design effective change management will have an easier time taking quick advantage of emerging AI use cases (see [Use-Case Prism: Generative AI for Marketing](#)).

However, AI adoption is not like other changes, and CMOs leveraging traditional change management practices will struggle to meet three AI-specific challenges:

1. While traditional change management emphasizes the importance of clearly describing an end state, uncertainty around the future of AI innovation makes this practically impossible.
2. Helping employees understand what they should and should not do is key to traditional change management. But the high accessibility of AI, and in particular of GenAI, means employees are likely to engage with AI in ways that are difficult for leaders to predict or proactively guide.
3. Every change creates some level of anxiety, but marketers are both excited to use AI in their jobs and worried that it will replace their roles.

CMOs must build and communicate a flexible AI change plan, define GenAI parameters that cover multiple use cases and ease marketer anxieties with change transparency.

## Analysis

### **Build Iterative AI Change Communications Grounded in Clear Business Value**

While no one can predict how businesses will leverage AI in the long-term, in-depth interviews with marketing leaders make clear that many marketing organizations don't have clear guiding principles behind their AI adoption efforts. This means that marketing leadership lacks a consistent framework to assess and prioritize AI use cases that can support the business. The lack of such a framework complicates CMOs' ability to lead change effectively because it makes it harder to lay out a roadmap for employees.

However, if CMOs cannot share a perfectly defined roadmap, they can compensate by doubling down on a clear explanation of the nearer-term decisions they are taking. For each change, craft simple and specific messages designed to communicate why marketing is investing resources into AI, what specific business outcomes they hope to achieve with these investments, and how AI will be used to deliver those objectives.

**Why, What, How**

Effective AI change communications must include three components: “why,” “what” and “how” (see Table 1):

Table 1: Components of Effective Change Communication

	Why	What	How
<b>Description</b>	Explains why leadership is pursuing AI (the rationale for the change).	Explains what marketing leadership is going to change through adopting AI.	Explains the specific AI workflows/processes (including talent and technology changes) that are planned or underway to support this change.
<b>Example</b>	Currently, our team spends 20% of our time on collecting, analyzing and reporting on email performance data.	We will halve the time employees spend on routine channel reporting work.	We will use an enterprise version of ChatGPT to automate email data analysis and propose first drafts of reporting documents/slide decks.
<b>Tips</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include a quantifiable measure of barriers leadership is trying to overcome.</li> <li>• Where data isn't possible, give specific narrative examples of current barriers. For example, “we currently have to visit three different internal sites to get the data needed for an email campaign.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objectives should be simple and immediately recognizable as desirable.</li> <li>• CMOs may have several objectives in their AI communications that align to different aspects, such as productivity, customer experience, brand differentiation, and so on. However, in order to be succinct and accessible, CMOs should focus on no more than five objectives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This can be linked to a single high-impact use case, or can incorporate multiple use cases that are aiming to serve the same goal.</li> <li>• Clearly indicate how each initiative will help achieve the goal identified.</li> </ul>

Marketers are more likely to support AI adoption if they can understand their leaders' business rationale, success metrics, and the specific steps required to accomplish the change. Use this communications formula for each new AI use case, and iterate the communication as marketing's AI adoption plans evolve.

**Ease Marketer Fear With Change Transparency**

While all organizational change is likely to induce employee anxiety, AI-related change is particularly nuanced — and difficult. Leadership and employees alike see AI and GenAI as an opportunity: CMOs expect to see a 27% rise in productivity in the next 12 to 18 months and the vast majority of employees prefer to use AI in their roles. However, just under half of marketing and public relations employees are afraid that AI can already replace their job. This matches the highest level of anxiety across functions (see Figure 1). Marketers and CMOs want to use AI, but marketers are afraid of losing their jobs if they can't properly harness AI.

Figure 1: Employee Anxiety That AI Will Replace Their Job by Function



Employees are afraid that they could have their role changed, but they also see an opportunity to enhance their skill set with AI. CMOs need to meet this change anxiety and build a learning environment by redoubling their transparency when communicating about AI change initiatives.

#### **Adapt Open-Source Change Management to Maximize Transparency**


Open-source change management is an approach that engages employees as active participants in change planning and execution (see Ignition Guide to Successful Change Management). This approach helps marketers shift the conversation from “will AI replace me?” to “how can AI make me more productive?”

- Reinforce the explicit business goals of individual AI pilot projects by referencing the overarching AI change communications.
- Clarify what teams and marketers are involved and affected by AI use-case investigations, pilots and adoption initiatives.
- Keep marketers who are not direct participants of ongoing initiatives informed about AI adoption progress.
- Clarify what skills and roles are most likely to be impacted by the organization's AI pilots and adoption initiatives.

Offering greater transparency into AI change initiatives will help address marketers' anxiety and help them become supporters of change rather than detractors. But this kind of transparency depends on marketing leaders understanding their employees more deeply than is the norm.

Vizient, a healthcare services company, won employee support for its GenAI change initiatives by investing time in understanding how GenAI would affect employees, which better allowed them to co-design GenAI-enhanced roles.

#### **Vizient Works With Employees to Redesign Their Roles With GenAI**

 Vizient has aggressively experimented with GenAI since 2023. However, the business needed to ensure that employees trusted GenAI enough to support and participate in these experiments. Vizient's leadership earned this trust by building “empathy maps” for five employee segments within its data and digital business segment. These empathy maps outlined how GenAI would change a specific role and captured three dimensions:

- Work: effect on a person's job
- Identity: effect on a person's responsibility or ownership
- Life: effect on a person's work schedule

These empathy maps allowed Vizient’s leadership to understand how GenAI would affect certain employee segments and support those that were likely to experience strong productivity improvements or major disruptions. Vizient’s leadership also worked directly with employees to assess GenAI’s impact on their roles. The organization tasked a digital employee experience (DEX) researcher, a design thinking expert, to facilitate conversations with GenAI champions, early adopters within relevant employee segments and their managers. These conversations were open-ended interviews that helped determine how Vizient could integrate GenAI into employees’ roles and how those roles would need to change (see Figure 2).

Empathy maps and conversations with Vizient’s DEX forced the organization’s leadership to seek out employees’ input and gave employees visibility and input into how the business planned to integrate GenAI. These tools, alongside Vizient’s other tactics, allowed the organization to find new, high-adoption GenAI use cases that — among targeted roles — reduced employee effort, increased their speed and improved the quality of their outputs (see Case Study: Human-Centric Generative AI Strategy).

Figure 2: Vizient’s Guide to Understand How the New Human-Machine Relationship Impacts Roles

The diagram illustrates a meeting between three individuals: a People manager, a DEX researcher, and a Champion. They are seated around a table with a computer monitor. A box above them states 'Employee capacity freed-up by GenAI for strategic reinvestment'. The meeting is part of a 'Sample discussion guide for software engineer role'.

**Employee capacity freed-up by GenAI for strategic reinvestment**

People manager Champion

People manager DEX researcher Champion

**Sample discussion guide for software engineer role**

- 1 Which tasks will you spend less time on?**  
Code development, code refactoring, documentation
- 2 What are some examples of “high-value tasks” you could spend your time on?**  
Learn new skills (e.g., AI fundamentals), improve UX, stretch opportunities (e.g., product owner responsibilities, sprint planning)
- 3 Where do you want to dedicate more time?**  
UX improvement, learning new skills, exploring new technologies, want time back for work-life balance
- 4 How can we best ensure your role continuously evolves with the evolving human-machine relationship?**  
Surveys and feedback directly from employees to understand how GenAI has affected their workload and how they are using their time

Source: Adapted from Vizient  
Note: The DEX researcher is a design thinking expert responsible for understanding and enhancing the experience of employees interacting with GenAI solutions



### Define GenAI Parameters That Cover Multiple Use Cases

Unlike other technology change management initiatives, marketers' access to GenAI isn't restricted by training or licensing requirements. And the breadth of potential GenAI applications, from newsletter headline suggestions to customer insight generation, makes "correct" usage hard to fully detail in policy. CMOs cannot control the proliferation of these tools because many vendors have begun integrating GenAI into their solutions. This creates a risk of accidental or intentional misuse: 18% of employees report using and/or seeing another employee use GenAI for unauthorized work purposes.

Marketers will use GenAI outside of formal experiments or approved adoption initiatives. However, only 42% of employees say that enterprise leadership has provided enough visibility into potential AI risks facing the enterprise. Marketers may be less willing to support AI changes if they do not have enough information to safely use it. CMOs must account for this by providing usage guidelines that help marketers safely use GenAI above and beyond applicable regulations, regardless of use case. CMOs should also take advantage of democratized access by implementing bottom-up feedback mechanisms through which marketers can share their experiments.

### Establish Guidelines to Help Employees Productively Use GenAI

While some organizations already have guidelines (such as usage guidelines or ethical principles) for GenAI, they are often vague or hard to act on consistently. For example, guidelines that require "appropriate human oversight" outline a principle but do not give marketers the tools they need to vet GenAI model outputs or prevent inaccurate, biased or misleading results. CMOs need to translate AI principles into specific reflection questions, documentation requirements and actions which marketers can refer to as they experiment with GenAI.

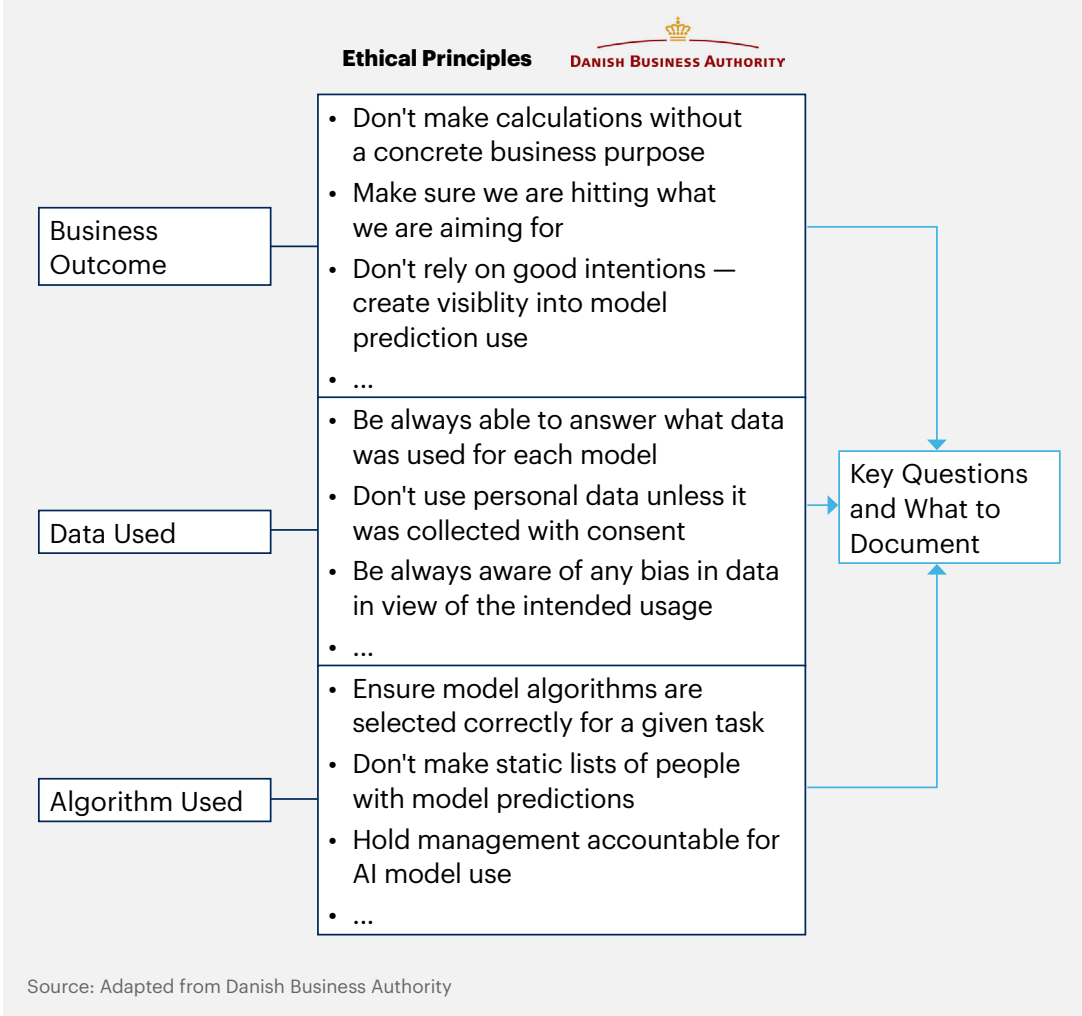
The Danish Business Authority (DBA) focused on linking its ethical principles to concrete actions and documentation requirements that its employees use to ensure appropriate and ethical AI usage. Note that DBA's principles cover AI models, but similar approaches can be taken for GenAI use cases.

### Danish Business Authority (DBA) Translates Ethical Principles Into Concrete Action



DBA is a government agency that works with sensitive business information. Given its remit, it needed proactive AI ethics. It determined that policies that could only be acted upon once problems have arisen or risk had been exposed would be insufficient. Therefore, DBA developed AI ethics as design principles for how models are developed and monitored once in production. DBA's ethical design guidelines for AI models include "always be able to answer what data was used for each model," or "don't rely on good intentions — create visibility into the use of the models' predictions." These guidelines came with documentation requirements as well: employees were required to document if they used personal data, the distribution of that data, and what privacy methods were involved (among other documentation requirements) (see Figure 3). This gave employees a clear understanding of how and when to apply DBA's ethical principles in development. This approach allowed the DBA to rapidly deploy 16 ethical AI models that tracked business transactions. DBA's Value Added Tax model contributed to preventing fraudulent activities worth €133 million, while its COVID-19 Compensation model enabled the processing of payments totaling €4.4 billion to Danish businesses (see Case Study: How to Apply Ethical Principles to AI Models (Danish Business Authority)).

Figure 3: Tying Ethical Principles to Concrete Business Outcomes, Data and Algorithms



Some organizations have already established AI ethics principles and values. In these cases, CMOs should translate these into relevant reflections or actions that marketers can use to feel safe using the technology. Focus on establishing the following guidance:

- **Unacceptable Use Cases:** Identify and share with marketers any use cases that violate marketing or the enterprise's AI ethics principles.
- **Data Considerations:** Share restrictions on what data marketers can feed into GenAI models, and ensure marketers can account for the data they use in their GenAI experiments.
- **Bias Prevention:** Give marketers the tools to identify and mitigate biased GenAI outputs, and require human review of all outputs (see Mitigate Bias in GenAI Models).

Additional requirements can be added for more formally piloted use cases, but these guidelines provide marketers with a baseline for safe GenAI exploration.

If their organization doesn't yet have AI or GenAI ethical principles or values, CMOs may want to offer their brand and customer expertise to HR, legal and other leaders who are building them. See AI Ethics: Use 5 Common Principles as Your Starting Point for additional guidance.

**Learn From Marketers' Informal GenAI Usage**

While informal GenAI usage creates potential risks, marketers are likely to feel more agency and be more willing to participate in subsequent AI adoption initiatives if leadership engages with their ideas that support bottom-up culture change. Establish a system to crowdsource marketers' experiences or ideas with GenAI and discover where they're finding value. This system can include a submission form, an internally editable document, or any other format that allows marketers to freely contribute. Regardless of the format, this crowdsourcing system must:

- Identify specific GenAI solutions (Midjourney, Stable Diffusion, Jasper, etc.).
- Establish the business unit/team/workflow the GenAI solution is applicable to.
- Outline the problem the GenAI solution solves or what opportunity it provides to the business, rooted in uncontested and quantitative facts.
- Require marketers to provide evidence that the solution will solve the applicable problem (the marketers' own experience can be a valid source, but encourage them to provide metrics where possible).
- Define what success would look like if the solution is adopted.
- Articulate applicable risks, adherence to GenAI use parameters (explained in the previous sections), resource requirements and required stakeholder alignment.

Marketing leaders must review marketer submissions on a regular basis (monthly, quarterly, etc.) and prioritize by their business value and feasibility. Assign high-impact marketer submissions for research or piloting to existing AI change teams or use them to help establish new change teams among marketers. These submissions can also surface compelling use cases marketing leadership would have otherwise missed, or reveal problematic marketer attitudes or practices that existing AI guidelines do not account for.

**Disclaimer:** The organization (or organizations) profiled in this research is (or are) provided for illustrative purposes only, and does (or do) not constitute an exhaustive list of examples in this field nor an endorsement by Gartner of the organization or its offerings.

# Actionable, objective insight

Position your marketing organization for success. Explore these additional complimentary resources and tools for marketing leaders:

**Webinar** 

**Prepare Your Organization to Deliver on GenAI in 2025**

Learn about key opportunities and risks as you expand GenAI use.

[Register Now](#)

**Research** 

**Gartner Marketing Predictions for 2025 and Beyond**

Uncover actionable insights for what's next in marketing strategy and AI integration.


[Download Now](#)

**Research** 

**AI in Marketing**

Enhance creativity, productivity and customer engagement through the power of AI.

[Download Now](#)

**How We Help** 

**Gartner for Marketing Leaders**

Get expert guidance to elevate employee experience and strengthen brand reputation.

[Contact Us](#)

Already a client?  
Get access to even more resources in your client portal. [Log In](#)

# Connect With Us

Get actionable, objective insight to deliver on your mission-critical priorities. Our expert guidance and tools enable faster, smarter decisions and stronger performance. Contact us to become a client:

**U.S.:** 1 855 811 7593

**International:** +44 (0) 3330 607 044

[Become a Client](#)

## Learn more about Gartner for Marketing Leaders

[gartner.com/en/marketing](https://gartner.com/en/marketing)

Stay connected to the latest insight



Attend a Gartner conference

[View Conference](#)

© 2025 Gartner, Inc. and/or its affiliates. All rights reserved. Gartner is a registered trademark of Gartner, Inc. and its affiliates. This publication may not be reproduced or distributed in any form without Gartner's prior written permission. It consists of the opinions of Gartner's research organization, which should not be construed as statements of fact. While the information contained in this publication has been obtained from sources believed to be reliable, Gartner disclaims all warranties as to the accuracy, completeness or adequacy of such information. Although Gartner research may address legal and financial issues, Gartner does not provide legal or investment advice and its research should not be construed or used as such. Your access and use of this publication are governed by Gartner's Usage Policy. Gartner prides itself on its reputation for independence and objectivity. Its research is produced independently by its research organization without input or influence from any third party. For further information, see "Guiding Principles on Independence and Objectivity." Gartner research may not be used as input into or for the training or development of generative artificial intelligence, machine learning, algorithms, software, or related technologies. CM\_GBS\_3395753

**Gartner**<sup>®</sup>