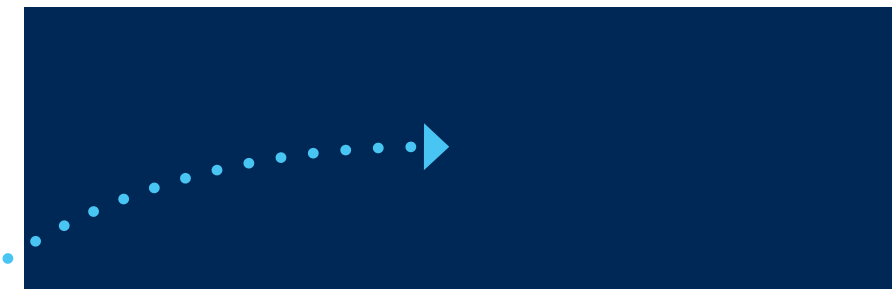




Gartner[®]

How CMOs Win Confidence From the C-Suite

A new Gartner survey reveals that only 34% of CEOs and CFOs are aligned with their CMO about how marketing supports growth. This research provides a unique window into where CMOs should focus to rise to executive expectations, perform successfully in their roles and drive marketing-led growth.



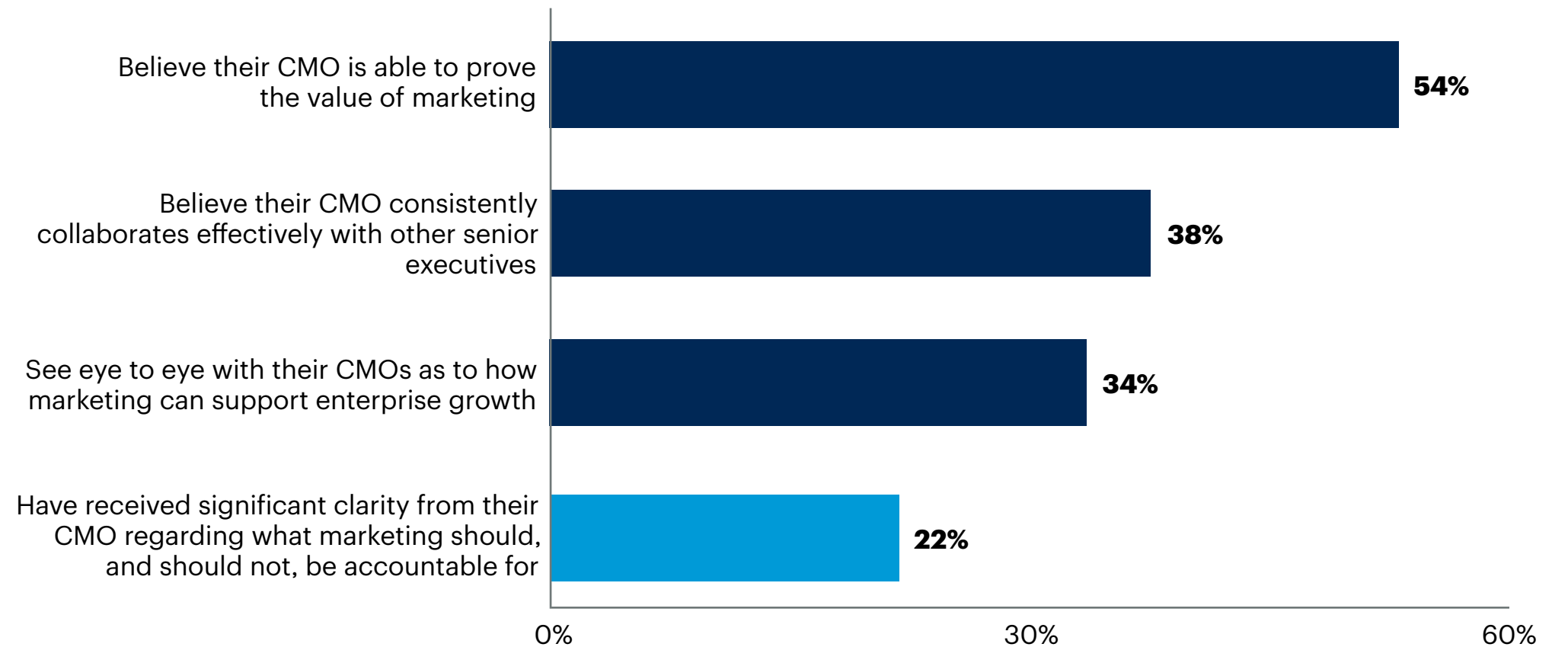
CMO success or failure is largely driven by performance relative to the expectations of senior executives, especially the CEO and CFO. Failure to understand and influence those expectations can lead to misdirected priorities, wasted resources and missed business objectives. CMOs need a clear, detailed understanding of what their leaders want from marketing and what CMOs must deliver to survive and thrive in their roles. The 2024 Gartner Senior Executive Views of CMO Leadership Survey highlights opportunities for CMOs to strengthen their relationships in the C-suite.

CMOs Fall Short of Senior Executive Expectations

The current state of CMO delivery against senior executive expectations is bleak. Just over half of CMOs can prove the value of marketing. Few senior executives believe their CMO consistently collaborates well with others. Worst of all, CMOs routinely fail to provide clarity about accountabilities and how marketing can support growth (see Figure 1).¹ These collective failures cast a shadow over the CMO role in the eyes of senior executives.

» Figure 1. CEO and CFO Perceptions of CMOs

Percentage agreement



n = 125 CEOs and CFOs

Q. Please rate your agreement with each of the following statements.

Source: 2024 Gartner Senior Executive Views of CMO Leadership Survey

The consequences of these shortfalls are serious:

- CMOs who fail to clarify what they're accountable for set themselves up for disconnects between executive expectations and available resources.
- The lack of alignment on growth initiatives, which are consistently a top priority for CEOs, sparks skepticism about the relevance and value of marketing investments.
- CMOs who aren't viewed as effective collaborators struggle to gain the support they need from other senior executives and functional leaders, and suffer damage to their reputation within the business.
- The inability to communicate the value and impact of marketing makes it more difficult to secure budget and resources.

Executive Expectations of Marketing Are Wide, Deep and Expanding

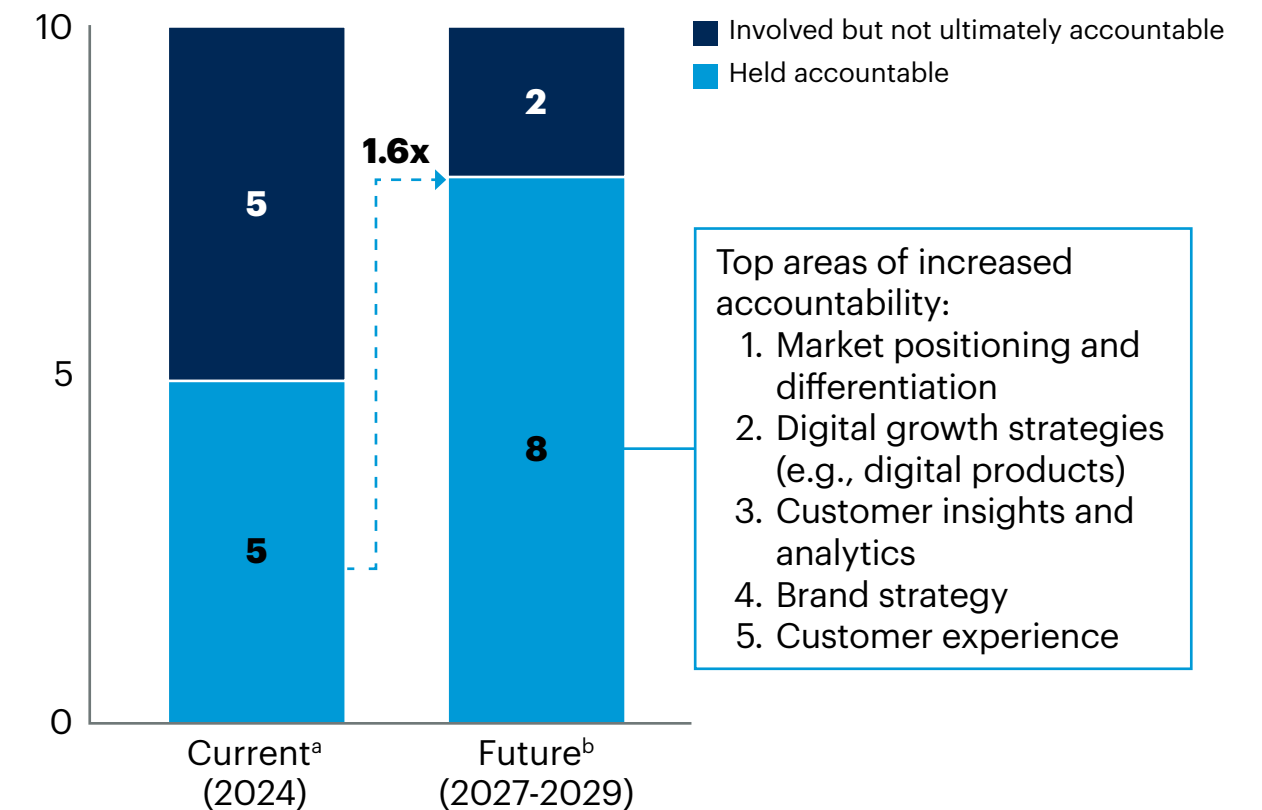
Despite their lack of confidence in their CMO, CEOs and CFOs have high expectations of marketing, and they anticipate an ever-widening scope of marketing responsibilities. Marketing functions are already involved in or ultimately accountable for a wide array of areas, from advertising and promotions to sales and distribution channels.

CEOs and CFOs expect marketing to take on even more in the next three to five years. All this extra accountability comes at a time when marketing budgets have steadily declined for the last several years.² The current expectation placed on CMOs to “do more with less” is rapidly shifting to doing “even more with less” (see Figure 2).

These survey findings present a disconnect between senior executive perspectives on marketing's potential versus the CMO's actual performance. CEOs and CFOs see a large and growing role for marketing, but may question whether their CMO is up to the challenge. More accountabilities can provide CMOs more authority, control and related resources, but may also thin already stretched marketing resources and fragment focus.

» Figure 2. Marketing's Current and Expected Accountabilities

Number of areas for the average function



n = 125 CEOs and CFOs

Q^a. Which statement best describes your marketing function's current level of involvement and/or accountability for each of the following?

Q^b. For each of the following, how will you advise or direct the marketing function's accountability to change over the next 3-5 years?

Source: 2024 Gartner Senior Executive Views of CMO Leadership Survey

Note: Marketing currently viewed as and expected to remain uninvolved in 1 area (of the 11 surveyed).

New Customer Acquisition Should Be Every CMO's Primary Focus

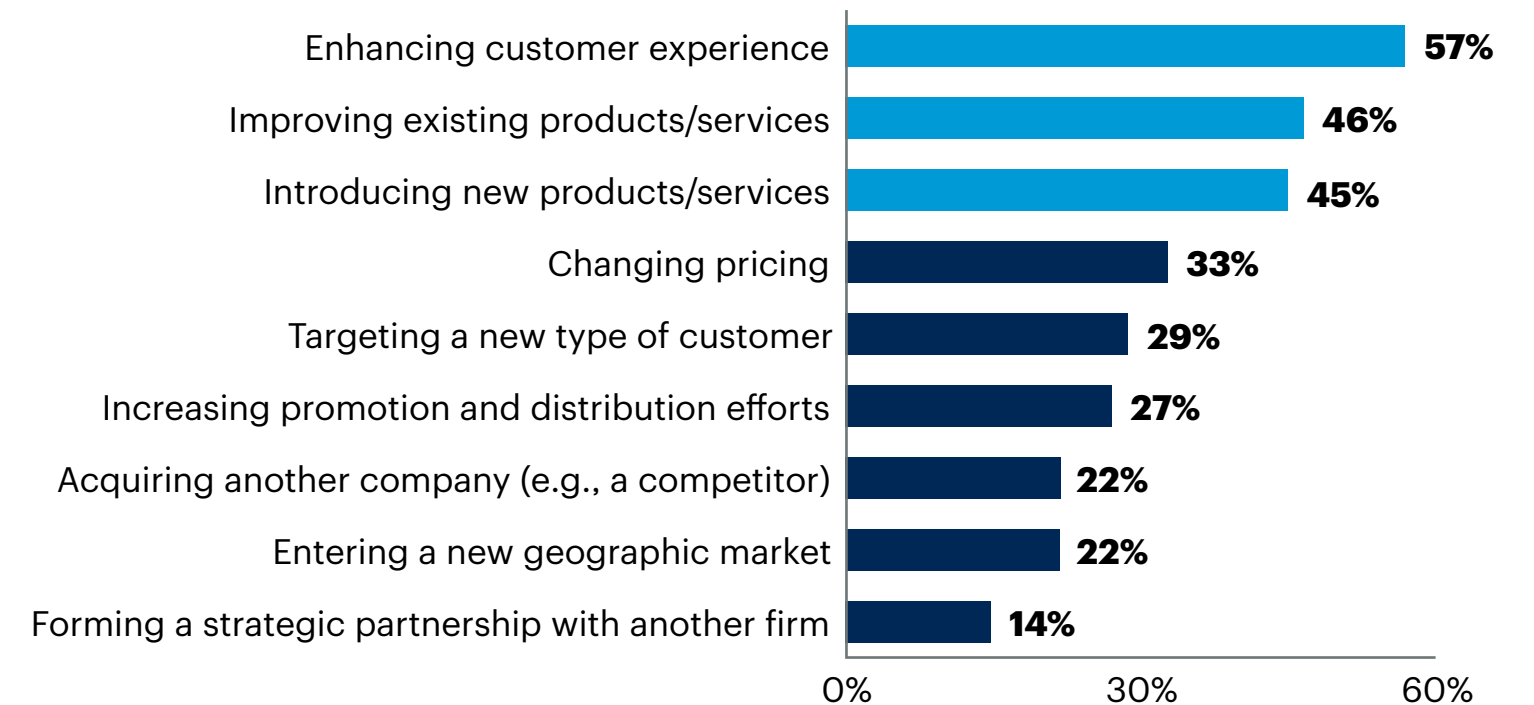
"Growth" is consistently the top priority for most CEOs and CFOs.³ CMOs tasked with driving growth need to go beyond a vague growth mandate and understand more specifically where and how senior executives expect marketing to drive growth.

It's no surprise that nearly all CMOs (91%) are held accountable for customer acquisition. However, most CMOs and their teams are also accountable for retaining existing customers (68%) and growing revenue from existing customers (77%), forcing marketing to navigate prioritizing and balancing investments in each area.¹

Balancing investments across multiple objectives can be complicated given the competing — and often convoluted — direction from senior executives. Senior executives prioritize enhancing customer experience as their top strategy for growth in the next three to five years, followed by product-oriented strategies (see Figure 3). Adding to the challenge, 68% of CMOs are accountable for retaining existing customers, yet only 36% have ultimate accountability for CX.¹ When strategic directives are inconsistent or poorly communicated, CMOs must push to clarify marketing's charter and resolve gaps between expectations, accountabilities and resourcing.

» **Figure 3. Top Company Growth Strategies**

Percentage ranked



n = 125 CEOs and CFOs

Q. What are your company's top 3 most important strategies to fuel growth for the next 3-5 years?

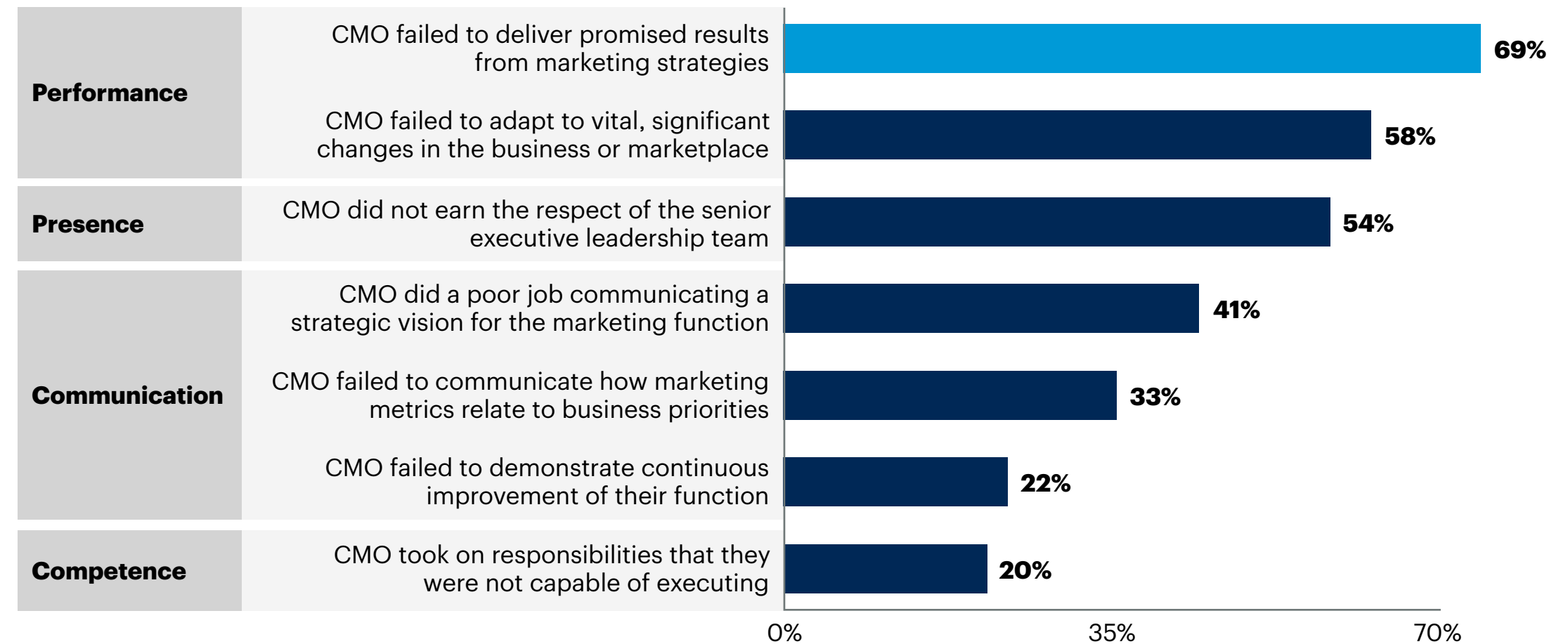
Source: 2024 Gartner Senior Executive Views of CMO Leadership Survey

Delivering Results Is the Minimum Performance Threshold

To survive and thrive, CMOs need to understand their CEO and CFOs' baseline expectations, as well as what determines high performance in the CMO role. Gartner's survey asked CEOs and CFOs what factors would lead to their CMO's removal. Amid the ever-widening number of responsibilities and expectations of CMOs, hitting performance metrics and delivering results remains the baseline expectation. Earning other executives' respect also ranks high as a requirement for CMOs, as does clear communication (see Figure 4).¹

» Figure 4. Scenarios Most Likely to Lead to CMO's Removal

Percentage ranked



n = 123 CEOs and CFOs

Q. Which scenario would most likely lead to the removal of your company's CMO from their role? Rank up to 3.

Source: 2024 Gartner Senior Executive Views of CMO Leadership Survey

All of these factors represent the floor of CMO performance: the minimum expectations required to keep your job. Our discussions with Gartner clients make clear connections among the ability to deliver results, adapt to change and earn the respect of others.

The survey revealed that the most successful CMOs maintain an outward focus on customers and markets, harnessing marketing’s distinctive strengths to drive corporate growth (see *How Market-Shaper CMOs Exceed C-Suite Expectations*, p. 15).

Understand and Address Organizational Resistance

A CMO title is no guarantee of senior executive-level clout. Factors like reporting structure and stakeholder skepticism have real, quantifiable impact on a CMO’s role and how their performance is viewed (see Table 1).¹

» Table 1. Organizational Factors That Affect CMO Performance and Recommended Action Steps

Category	Barriers to CMO performance	Recommended CMO actions
CMO-senior executive relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CMO does not report directly to the CEO • CMO has infrequent interaction with the CEO or CFO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earn more frequent access by understanding executive team priorities and how to best support them.
Perceptions of marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CFO is neutral or skeptical toward marketing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell a consistent value story, with a longer-term, holistic view of marketing.
CMO role in enterprise strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CMO not involved in strategic planning and execution of corporate growth initiatives • CMO not invited to participate in board discussions of enterprise growth strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closely link marketing strategy to business strategy. • Demonstrate broader insight and understanding of the business.
Enterprise performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company is missing corporate revenue or profit targets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactively recommend how marketing should best contribute to growth.

Source: 2024 Gartner Senior Executive Views of CMO Leadership Survey; Gartner analysis

Acknowledging and accounting for these dynamics is material to your success. If you face these challenges, realize that you are not necessarily going to have the influence, authority or access to power that many other CMOs may have, which requires a different approach.

Earn More Frequent Access to Senior Executives

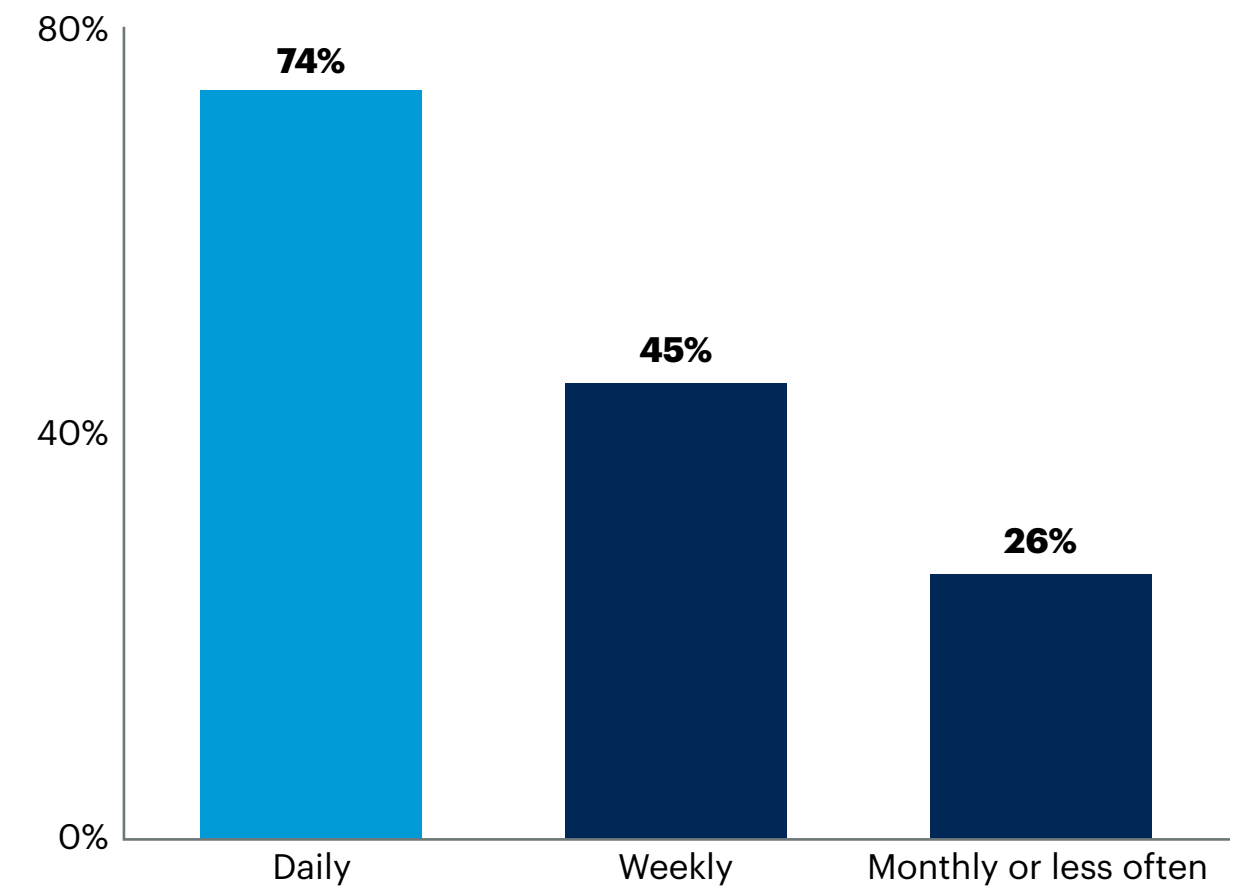
Frequent interactions can indicate a strong underlying relationship between executives and the CMO, enhancing collaboration and benefiting both parties. Daily interactions with the CEO or CFO are associated with positive perceptions about marketing's contribution to growth. In fact, 74% of senior executives who meet with their CMO daily agree that marketing makes major positive contributions to enterprise growth (see Figure 5).¹

Of course, many CMOs don't have an option for daily access to CEOs or CFOs, based on distance in the reporting structure or lack of senior executive interest in more frequent interactions. In fact, proximity to CEO and CFO — and the opportunity that affords to shape the perception of marketing — have a large effect on CMO performance:

- CMOs who report directly to their CEOs are almost twice as likely to exceed performance expectations as CMOs one or two layers away. Likewise, CMOs further away from the CEO fall short of expectations at almost double the rate of those reporting directly to the CEO.¹ CMOs further removed from CEOs may struggle with being seen as executives rather than functional leaders, which can significantly impact internal influence, decision-making authority and resource control.
- Compared to CEOs, CFOs hold less positive views of marketing in general, with just over half indicating they are neutral or skeptical toward marketing.¹ CFOs view marketing relative to other investment opportunities, many of which have more precise abilities to forecast and demonstrate impact. Sixty percent of C-suite members surveyed by Gartner report their CEO is most likely to listen to the CFO.⁴ So a skeptical, or even neutral, CFO can block marketing budgets and resources, making it harder for CMOs to successfully deliver on their expanding remit.

» Figure 5. Percentage of Marketing Functions Viewed as Major Growth Contributors

By frequency of senior executive interactions with their CMO



n = 125 CEOs and CFOs

Q. Which best describes your marketing function's level of contribution to enterprise growth? On average, how often do you interact with your CMO?

Source: 2024 Gartner Senior Executive Views of CMO Leadership Survey

Earn the right to more frequent access by understanding the priorities of senior executives and how to best support their efforts by taking the following steps:

- Begin with a self-assessment of your leadership profile and how you are perceived by your CEO and CFO.
- Engage each leader you need to influence by seeking to understand what they care about, what you can influence and what you can contribute.
- Partner to solve problems or create value; then develop the relationship by demonstrating how marketing influences business results.

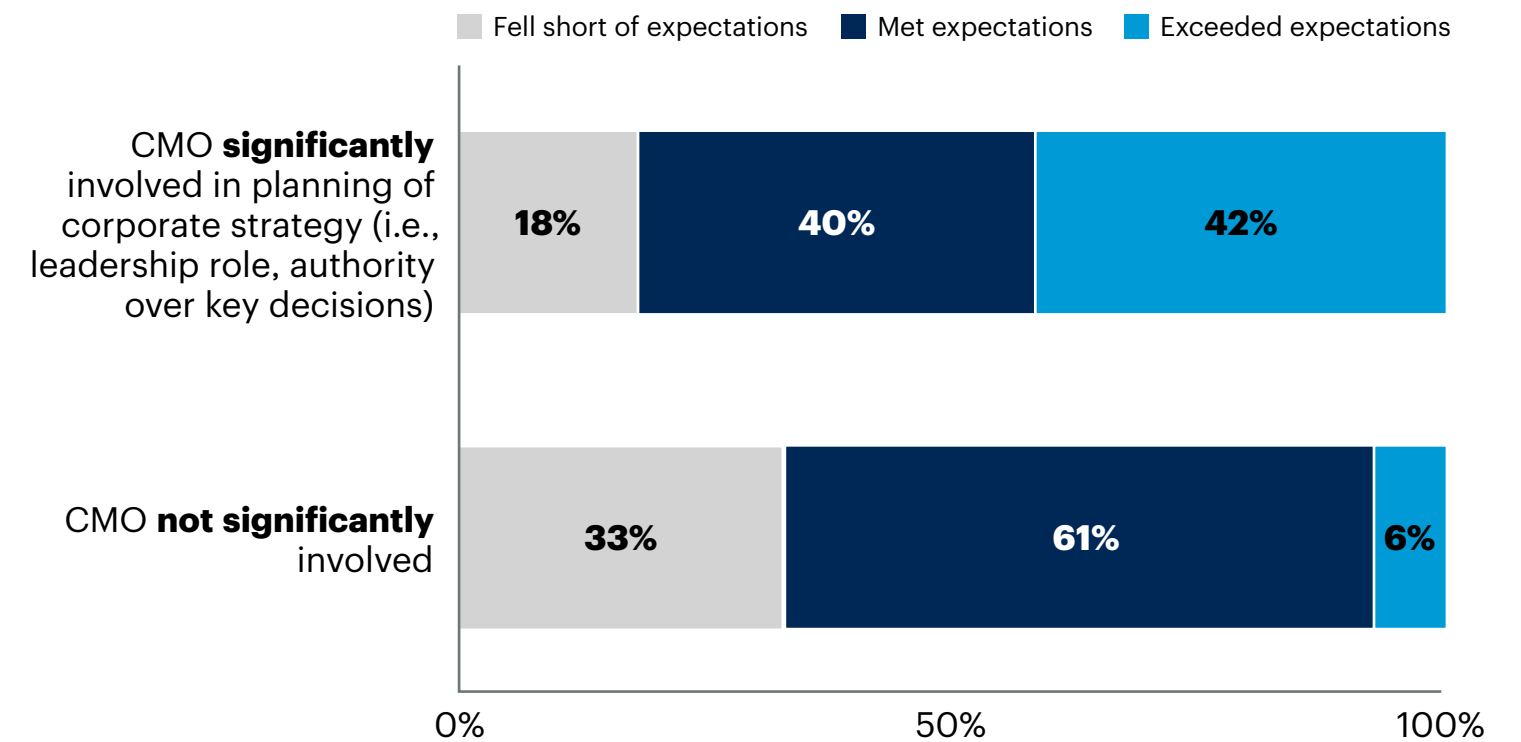
Access alone isn't the full story. CMOs must actively use their newly-won access to executives to guide corporate strategy. In turn, this improves the likelihood that marketing is seen as a growth catalyst.

Marketers Who Lead Strategy Exceed Expectations

CMOs with a central role in corporate strategy perform dramatically better against executive expectations. When CMOs are significantly involved in the planning of growth strategies, they are seven times more likely to exceed expectations versus when not significantly involved (see Figure 6).¹

» **Figure 6. CMO Performance Against Senior Executive Expectations**

By CMO involvement in strategy planning



n = 125 CEOs and CFOs

Q. What level of involvement will your CMO have in the planning of each of these growth strategies?

Source: 2024 Gartner Senior Executive Views of CMO Leadership Survey

Note: Significant involvement vs. not categories based on whether CMOs were rated as significantly involved in planning of more than one growth strategy vs. not.

CMOs must display a genuine strategic expertise and a holistic perspective on strategic forces and levers beyond marketing to earn a meaningful role in developing business strategy. Clearly anchor marketing strategy in the highest-order business priorities, identifying the root drivers of business growth and related problems to be solved. Earn executive confidence and greater influence on company growth strategies by helping the business develop a strong, comprehensive strategic narrative.

CMOs who invest the time and effort to develop strategic prowess and perspective on the business are more likely to earn an invitation to contribute in a more significant way to corporate strategy.

¹ **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).

² **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).

³ **2024 Gartner CEO and Senior Business Executive Survey.** This survey was conducted to examine CEO and senior business executive views on current business issues, as well as some areas of technology agenda impact. The survey was conducted from July 2023 through December 2023, with questions about the period from 2023 through 2025. One-quarter of the survey sample was collected in July 2023, and three-quarters was collected from October through December 2023. In total, 416 actively employed CEOs and other senior executive business leaders qualified and participated. The research was collected via 356 online surveys and 60 telephone interviews. The sample mix by role was CEOs (n = 282); CFOs (n = 81); COOs or other C-level executives (n = 32); and chairs, presidents or board directors (n = 21). The sample mix by location was North America (n = 175), Europe (n = 94), Asia/Pacific (n = 93), Latin America (n = 41), the Middle East (n = 8) and South Africa (n = 5). The sample mix by size was \$50 million to less than \$250 million (n = 77), \$250 million to less than \$1 billion (n = 101), \$1 billion to less than \$10 billion (n = 166) and \$10 billion or more (n = 71).

⁴ **2024 Gartner C-Suite Dynamics Survey.** This survey was conducted online from 16 July through 16 August 2024 to discover how C-suite dynamics affect business value. Qualified respondents were direct reports to a CEO or equivalent and came from companies with at least \$1 billion in annual revenue. In all, 151 C-suite members from the Americas (n = 71), Europe (n = 45), and Asia (n = 35) participated.

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