

A woman in a dark blue blazer and a white polka-dot shirt is speaking and gesturing with her hands. She is seated at a table with two other people, a man and a woman, who are listening. The man is holding a tablet. In the background, there is a blue wall with a white flowchart consisting of several rectangular boxes connected by arrows. The flowchart starts with a box on the left, which branches into two boxes, one above and one below. The top box connects to another box on the right, which then connects to a box below it. The bottom box from the first branch connects to a box on the right, which then connects to a box below it. The bottom box from the first branch also connects to a box on the right, which then connects to a box below it. The bottom box from the first branch also connects to a box on the right, which then connects to a box below it.

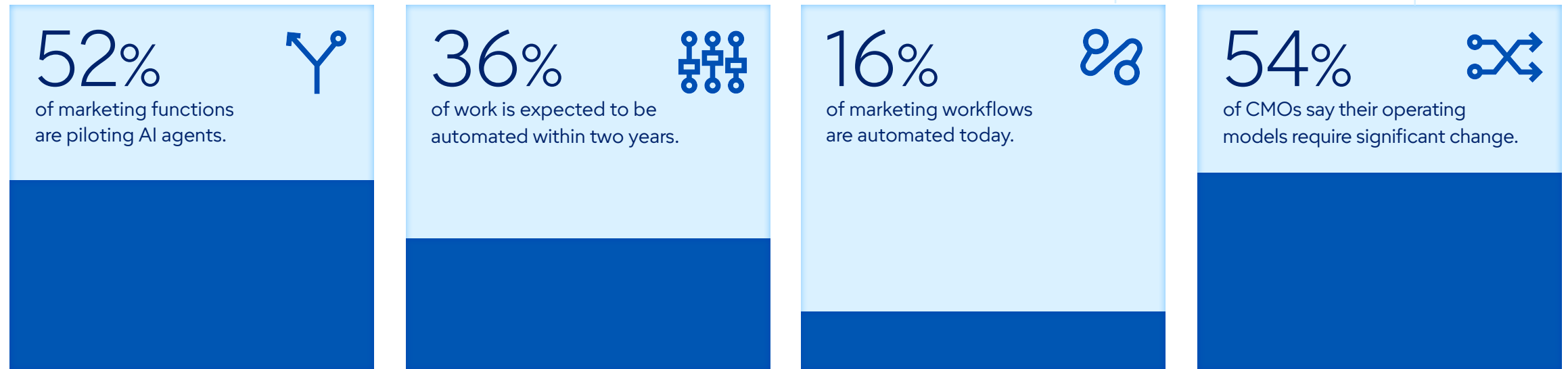
Time Saved Is Not Growth

The CMO's Operating Model
Playbook for Agentic AI

Gartner®

Marketing is automating faster than it is reorganizing

AI adoption is accelerating across marketing organizations, but most CMOs have not yet redesigned the operating models required to support it.



Yet most AI investments remain focused on productivity rather than growth. CMOs most commonly evaluate AI based on time saved, even as CEOs increasingly view AI as a driver of growth and resilience.

3 key competitive risks of waiting

AI-driven change fatigue is a real risk, but only 13% of CMOs agree that there's no point in keeping track of AI advances. It's difficult to imagine a future in which AI-driven automation stops advancing.

Waiting to plan for marketing's future AI operating model introduces three competitive risks:

- 1 **Speed:** Competitors will execute campaigns, content and experiments faster.
- 2 **Cost:** Customer acquisition costs will diverge as AI lowers other cost curves.
- 3 **Intelligence:** Agentic systems will outperform manual optimization efforts through better decision making.

49%

of CMOs say GenAI adoption has shifted roles and responsibilities faster than expected.



Evolution or revolution?

We're already seeing better outcomes among clients that mandate AI adoption. But incremental approaches to AI adoption will drive incremental results. CMOs are making a choice, whether they are conscious of it or not:

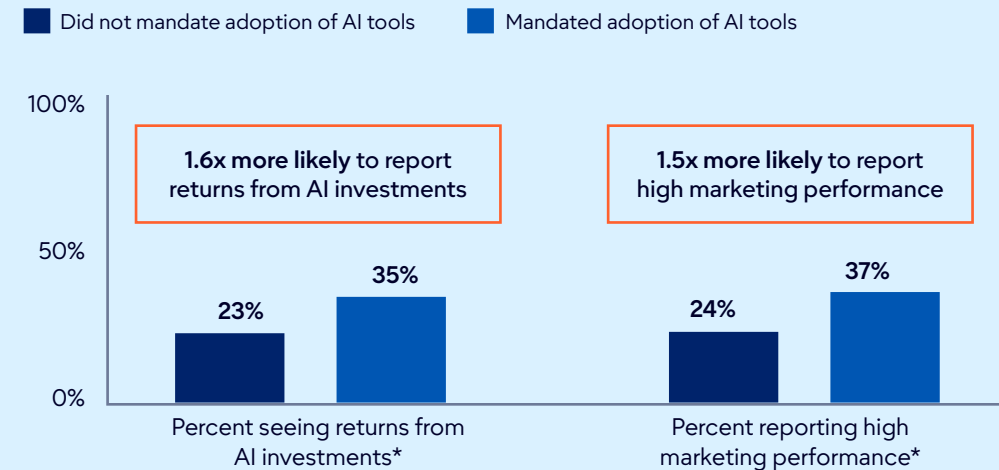
- **Evolution:** Assessing workflows, processes, talent and martech for AI optimization
- **Revolution:** Imagining marketing's future state from zero, then evaluating necessary capabilities and designing the operating model

Right now, CMOs are largely taking an evolutionary path. Most AI in marketing is aimed at improving productivity, not driving growth. CMOs most commonly evaluate AI based on time saved. Even if they aren't ready for a revolutionary approach, CMOs should prioritize AI use cases that drive growth beyond short-term productivity gains.

By the end of 2028, marketing organizations with more than two years of mandated AI experimentation will be able to produce twice the work at twice the speed.

Impact of mandating adoption of AI tools by current staff

Mandating adoption increases the likelihood of ROI on AI investments and high marketing performance



n = 402 senior marketing leaders

Q03: Which of the following changes to your marketing function are you considering making over the next 2 years to get value from emerging technologies (including AI)?

Source: 2025 Gartner Marketing Transformation Survey, conducted August through October, 2025, among 402 North American and European senior marketing executives. Fielded by Gartner using an external panel.

Note: High marketing performance is defined as scoring in the top quartile of the marketing performance index.

* denotes statistically significant difference

5 shifts CMOs must make to succeed with agentic AI

Marketing's current operating model is optimized for a slower, more predictable world of manual execution, limited data and slow feedback loops. Agentic AI rewards the opposite: speed, adaptability and system-level thinking. CMOs who recognize this early will outpace competitors who are trying to bolt AI onto a broken model.

From traditional marketing operations to an agentic marketing model

From —————> To		Why it matters
Campaign-driven execution	Continuous, always-on optimization	 Agentic AI delivers value through real-time sensing, decision making and iteration.
Channel silos	Journey orchestration	 Agents operate across the customer journey, not within individual channels.
Output-focused AI metrics	Outcome-focused AI metrics	 Agentic systems optimize for business impact, not activity.
Human approvals for most decisions	Guardrails with delegated autonomy	 Speed and scale come from agents acting within defined boundaries.
Static plans and fixed budgets	Adaptive strategy and resource allocation	 Agentic AI continuously reallocates effort and investment based on changing conditions.

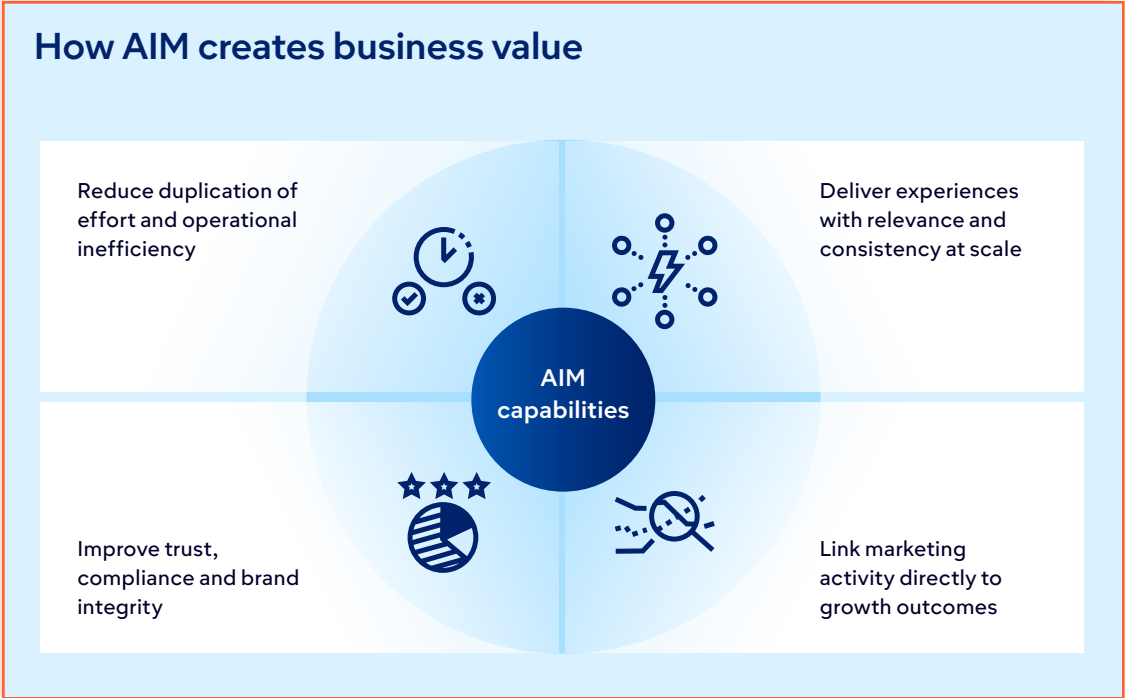
Source: Gartner

The Adaptive Intelligence Marketing (AIM) Model

AIM is built around four human-led capabilities:

AIM capability	Core purpose
Growth and learning system	Aligns outcomes and KPIs while continuously measuring, learning from and adapting to real-time signals
Decision engine	Interprets signals, predicts intent and selects next best actions within governed rules
Experience engine	Assembles and delivers governed, context-aware experiences from reusable components
Governed infrastructure	Establishes the data, governance, compliance and reusable assets required to operate the system

Source: Gartner



Is your operating model ready for agentic AI?



Use the questions below to assess whether your organization is preparing for agentic AI.



Do you measure AI primarily by productivity or business outcomes?



Are customer journeys managed across channels or within silos?



Can routine decisions be executed without repeated approvals?



Are marketing resources reallocated dynamically as conditions change?



Have roles evolved to support automated and agentic workflows?

Readiness read



Predominantly “No”

The operating model is optimized for execution; broader value from agentic AI will require changes to decision making, governance and workflows.



Mixed responses

The foundations of an adaptive marketing model are emerging, but key operating model capabilities remain uneven.



Predominantly “Yes”

The operating model exhibits many of the characteristics required to scale agentic marketing and autonomous decision making.

Actionable, objective insights

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



Tool

AI Use Case Insights

Explore, evaluate and prioritize proven AI use cases for marketing tailored to your industry for stronger, faster AI outcomes.

Explore Now



Tool

Gartner Digital IQ Index

Benchmark your brand's digital performance against industry competitors to prioritize investments and maintain relevance across channels.

Get Started



Webinar

How CMOs Can Lead AI Transformation to Adaptive Intelligence Marketing

Learn how to transform marketing into an adaptive, governed growth system powered by AI-driven decisions.

Watch Now



Webinar

Emerging Market Quadrant for AI Agents for Marketing — Established Vendors

Learn how to deploy AI agents that streamline marketing operations and accelerate business.

Watch Now



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