

Gartner for Marketing

Your Must-Have Toolkit for Functional Strategic Planning

A decorative graphic on the right side of the slide. It features a glowing blue path that starts from the bottom left and curves upwards and to the right, ending in a white arrow pointing upwards. The path is composed of several parallel, wavy lines that create a sense of depth and movement. Two vertical blue bars are positioned on either side of the main text, framing it.

Make sure your strategic plan clearly defines how your marketing function will drive enterprise success.

Strategic planning can be an arduous process, but certain activities will differentiate your marketing plan as one that really drives impact.

These five steps are especially important — and think now about the tools you will use at each stage to capture and share key data and information with stakeholders:

- 1 Verify the business context.** Confirm the enterprise mission and goals and make sure your marketing function's employees know how they apply to their everyday work. Align your function's goals for impact.
- 2 Assess your function's ability** to deliver on your goals and create a plan to fill the capability gaps that will slow your impact.
- 3 Strategically manage functional budgets** to prioritize cost, budget and investment decisions to favor initiatives that will drive impact — and demote those that won't.
- 4 Decide how to measure your progress.** Select measures and metrics that will demonstrate the progress you're making against the commitments you've made.
- 5 Document your strategy** — ideally on just one page — to simply and clearly state where the functional organization is, where it is going and how it will get to the future state.

45%
of CMOs say **aligning on shared business goals** is the most important activity for driving business outcomes.

Yet, **less than half of CMOs** were personally involved in the past year.

Source: Gartner 2023 Marketing Cross-Functional Collaboration Survey



Tools and frameworks you'll need

1

Align with business strategy

- Strategic alignment tool
- Trendspotting
- Prepare for scenario planning
- Build a productive CFO relationship

2

Assess your function

- Capabilities assessment tool

3

Strategically manage functional budgets

- Budget efficiency benchmarking tool
- Cost optimization framework
- Gartner BuySmart™

4

Measures and metrics

- Guide to cascading metrics

5

Document your strategy

- Strategic planning templates

1. Align with business strategy

Surface and verify the priorities of the enterprise and your business partners.

First make sure you understand enterprise business goals well enough to craft a strategic plan for your marketing function that will support enterprise ambitions.

Document both the business context and the likely impact on your function of factors:

- **Within** your function
- **Internal** to the enterprise
- **External** to the enterprise

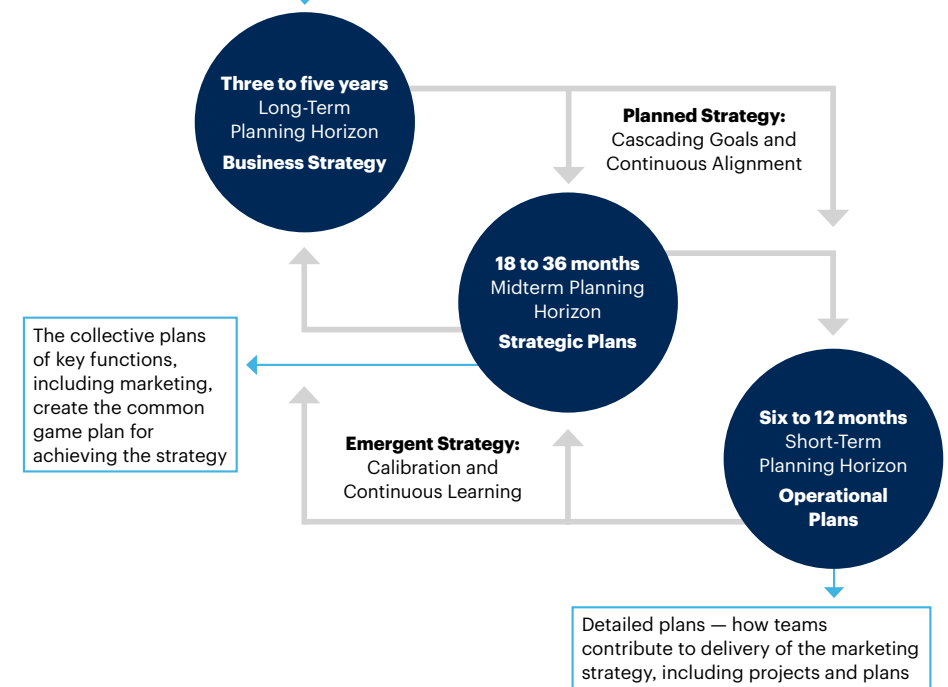
Key tools for this may include:

- A simple **conversation guide** to focus your conversations with business partners
- **Trendspotting** frameworks to look at drivers of change, including those in the more distant future
- **Scenario planning** activities to align business partners around your hypothetical futures

⚠ Don't forget: A productive relationship between function leaders and the CFO will also be critical for effective strategic planning (see page 8 for more).

Business Strategy

How the business will compete and succeed in the long term, including a description of how business functions including marketing will contribute to business success



Source: Gartner



1. Align with business strategy: Strategic alignment tool

Use this tool to guide your conversations with business partners:

Questions about the business partner's domain	Notes of your business partner's answer
What are your key business objectives and resultant goals for the next two to five years?	
What are your primary strategies? How do you plan to execute on these strategies?	
What is the direction of the key product line, supply chain, service offerings, etc.?	
How will you know if your unit is successful? What will you measure?	
What are the key success factors that will make or break your unit's success long-term?	
What major obstacles will the business unit face in reaching these objectives?	

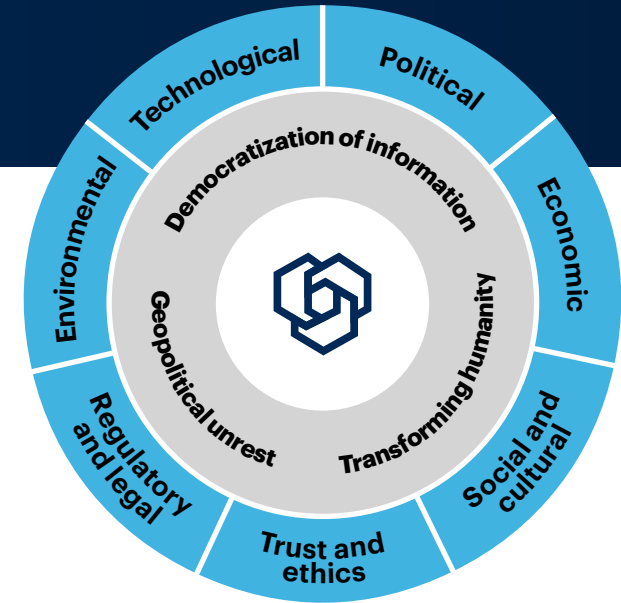


1. Align with business strategy: Trendspotting

Preparing for nascent trends is key to navigating disruption and capturing opportunity

No executive leader can predict the future, but you can adopt a deliberate approach to sensing and responding to trends.

Use a construct like the Gartner TPESTRE of trends to prepare to respond to disruptions and plausible futures. Key considerations are your organization's footprint (existing presence within a market or industry) and foothold (strategic opportunities to expand).



Footprint includes your:



- **Customer base:** established group of loyal customers
- **Operational facilities:** manufacturing plants, distribution centers, infrastructure or supply chains
- **Brand reputation:** market perception of your organization

Foothold includes:



- **Innovation and pilot projects:** testing new offerings with new emerging technologies
- **Partnerships** to gain market insights
- **Acquisitions** to establish a larger presence
- **Targeted marketing campaigns:** gauging interest in a new product or service in new markets

Forces and trends impacting your organization's future

Technological: Evolution, impact and disruption of technology change

Political: Political attitudes, institutions and legislation shifting the political environment

Economic: Factors in the economic environment locally and globally that influence businesses and governments

Social and cultural: Attitudes, behaviors and lifestyles of individuals and groups in a society

Trust and ethics: Ethical expectations, behaviors, duties and biases of people and companies toward one another and society

Regulatory and legal: Changes in laws and governmental policies and regulations to reward or punish a particular behavior

Environmental: Technical, political, economic, cultural, ethical and legal changes supporting environmental protection and sustainability

Source: Gartner



1. Align with business strategy: Prepare for scenario planning

Scenario planning can help business partners to align on their hypothetical futures

Good scenario planning requires you to first identify trends likely to create significant risks or opportunities.

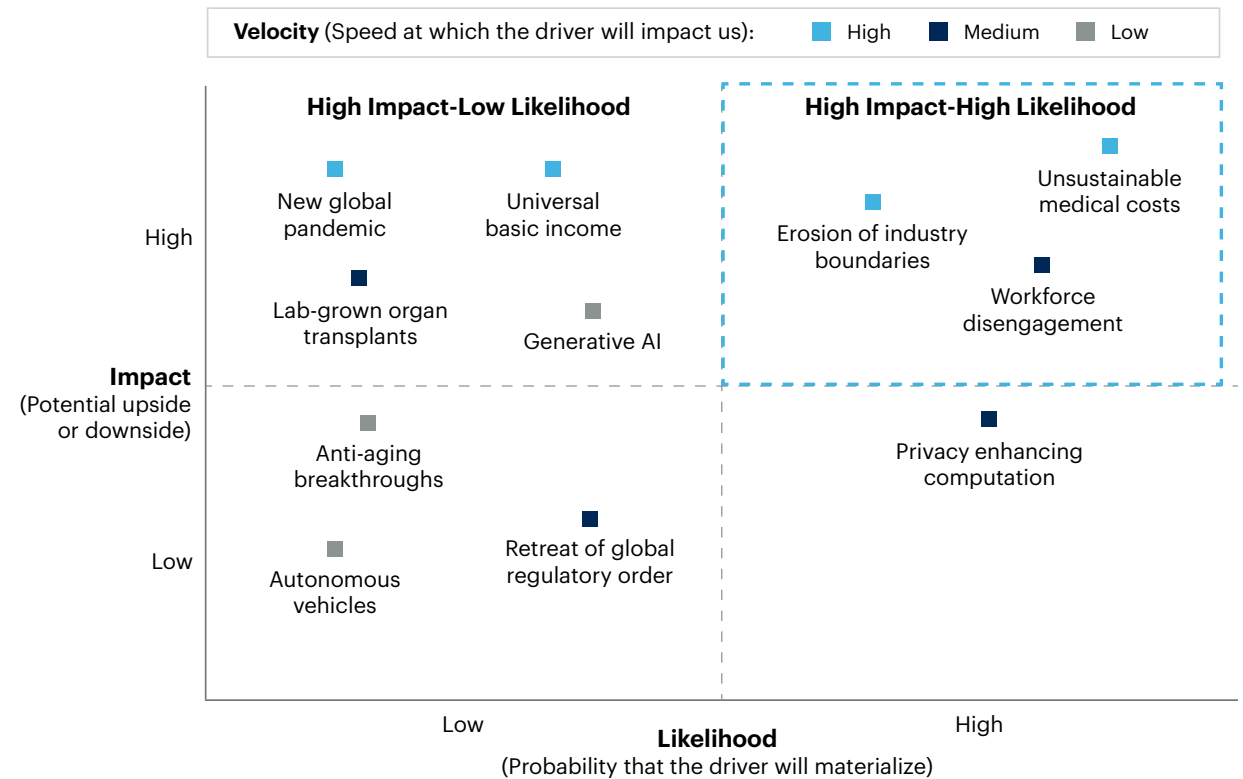
Make sure to:

- **Align** with a diverse set of business partners on the trends
- **Prioritize** the trends based on their relative importance (use a tool like this simple 2x2)

From here, categorize and relate trends together to develop scenarios. Develop a storyline for each scenario to test if it seems credible and feasible.

Strategic plans should include actions aligned to whichever scenarios you deem most pressing.

Prioritize actions based on the most material scenarios



Source: Gartner

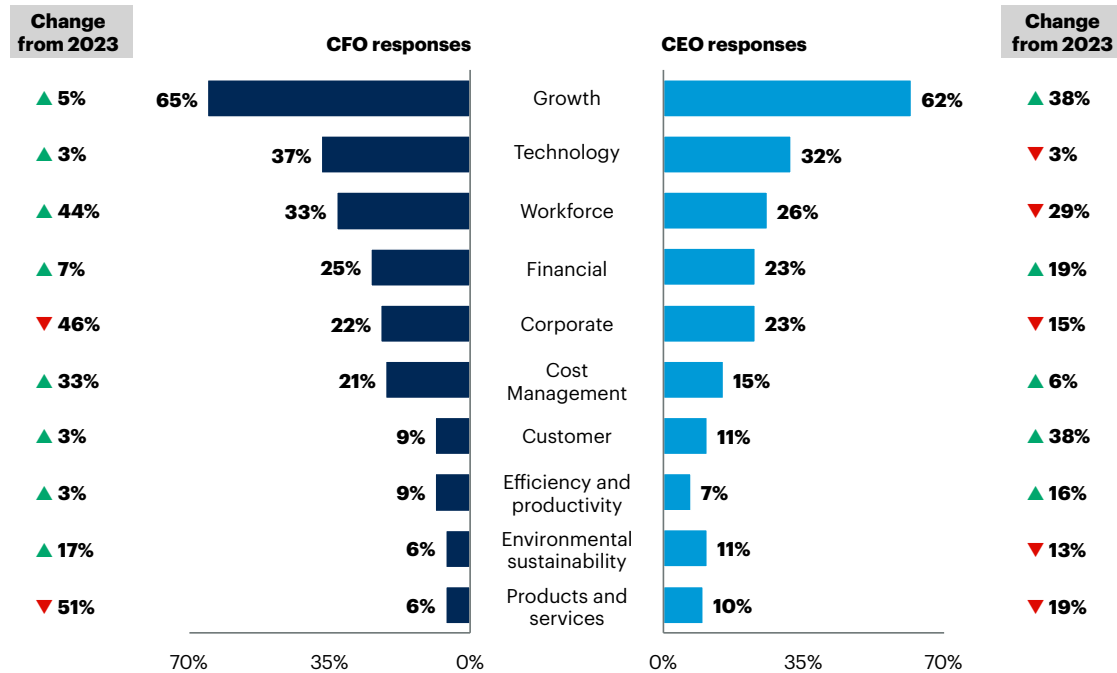


1. Align with business strategy: Build a productive CFO relationship

Think like a CFO so you can appeal to them for funding and investment in terms they understand

CFOs' and CEOs' Top Strategic Business Priorities for 2024-2025

Summary top three mentions, coded responses — showing top 10



n = 81 CFOs; 282 CEOs

Q: To start, please tell us about your organization's top 5 strategic business priorities for the next 2 years (2024/2025).

Source: 2024 Gartner CEO and Senior Business Executive Survey

47% of CMOs report marketing being seen as a cost center for the business.

Step No. 1 for CMOs wanting to build a productive conversation with their CFO is to better understand their key priorities and perception of marketing. This understanding will help you build your value story and make it CFO-ready when seeking funding and investments.



CFO perspective on marketing

- Marketing's scope is complex and varied ranging making it hard to define value.
- Marketing has a complex path to value creation as indirect activities don't have a direct correlation to investment payback.
- Marketing's value is intangible and ephemeral, as many indirect activities are to drive engagement and perception.

2. Assess your function

Assess capabilities to determine how well-positioned your marketing function is to deliver on strategy.

To ensure optimal results from strategic efforts, it's critical to assess the role of your marketing function in the enterprise and how well it performs that role. As the enterprise strategy evolves, so will this assessment.

In your strategic planning cycle, make sure to undertake a capabilities assessment soon after verifying the business strategy so you can build a roadmap to improve your effectiveness.

It's important to assess both the availability and maturity of existing capabilities. Take a rigorous approach using a methodology like that taken by the Gartner Score tool.

Measure:

- **Existing performance** across key objectives and activities typically within scope for your marketing function
- Your **maturity** in different activities on a simple-to-understand scale so you can easily compare maturity in different activities and against best-practice levels
- The **criticality of activities** on a simple scale so you can focus on requisites for your marketing function to deliver its contribution to enterprise strategy

The objective of this assessment is to plot a path to maturity for each critical activity.



Did you know?

Gartner clients can customize Score assessment tools for either B2B or B2C marketing functions and expert partners are available to walk you through your results and action plans.



2. Assess your function: Capabilities assessment tool

Benchmark your marketing function against your peers

Gartner for Marketing Score

Generate Marketing Insights	Attract and Engage Customers	Activate Content and Channel Strategy	Manage Brand and Reputation	Manage Operations	Lead the Function
Manage Customer Data Assets	Identify & Prioritize Marketing Opportunities	Set Advertising Strategy and Media Mix	Determine Brand Architecture	Optimize Budget, Resources & Processes	Define Marketing Strategy
Generate Customer and Market Insight	Deliver Personalized Communications	Define and Manage Content Strategy	Develop Brand Strategies and Positioning	Manage Agencies & Vendor Partners	Design Marketing Organization
Define Segments, Personas & Journeys	Build Customer Loyalty	Enable Sales and Channel Partners	Activate the Brand	Manage & Develop Talent	Guide Innovation
Conduct Marketing Analytics	Identify & Support Brand Influencers	Create and Execute Multichannel Campaigns	Manage Company Reputation	Leverage Marketing Technology	Evaluate & Communicate Marketing Performance
Conduct Customer Performance Analytics	Manage Digital Commerce		Monitor Brand Health		Champion a Customer-centric Culture

Measure, prioritize and improve your marketing function's capabilities — with support from Gartner experts.

The Gartner Marketing Score Tool helps with:

- Strategic planning
- Functional transformation
- Resource allocation
- Consensus building

[→ Learn More](#)

3. Strategically manage functional budgets

CMOs face an era of doing more with less budget

Marketing budgets have dropped from an average of 9.1% of company revenue in 2023 to 7.7% in 2024, a fall of 15% year over year. Worse, this decline represents a compounded fiscal squeeze following multiple consecutive cycles of reduced funding.

Bottom line, CMOs are being asked to achieve growth at lower cost. That means being as efficient as possible with headcount, technologies, workflows and processes — deploying resources in the most productive way possible.

CMOs will need a strategic mindset and tools to apply three best practices in cost management in this environment:

1. **Reallocate funding** from low- to high-potential investments.
2. **Fund growth investments** using costs saved in less important activities.
3. **Use unallocated funds** for as-needed growth investment support.

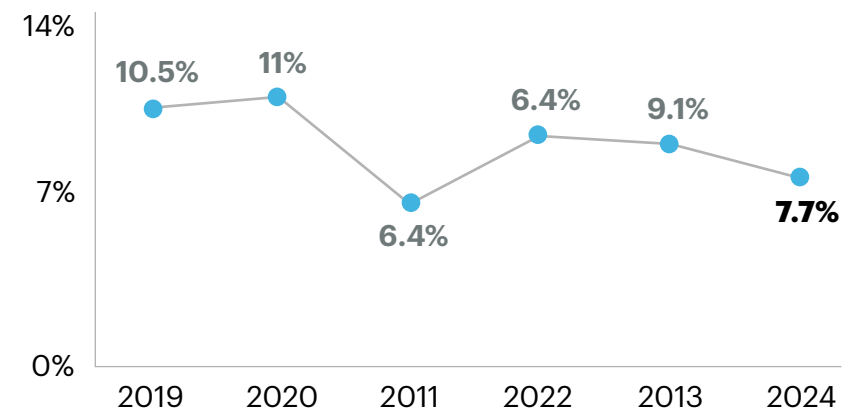


Technology is one area of spend where every functional leader will need better decision-making tools to select the right vendors and negotiate effectively to assure ROI.

Only 24% of CMOs say they have **sufficient budget** to execute their 2024 strategy.

Source: Gartner 2024 CMO Spend Survey

Marketing budget as a percent of total revenue (2019 – 2024)

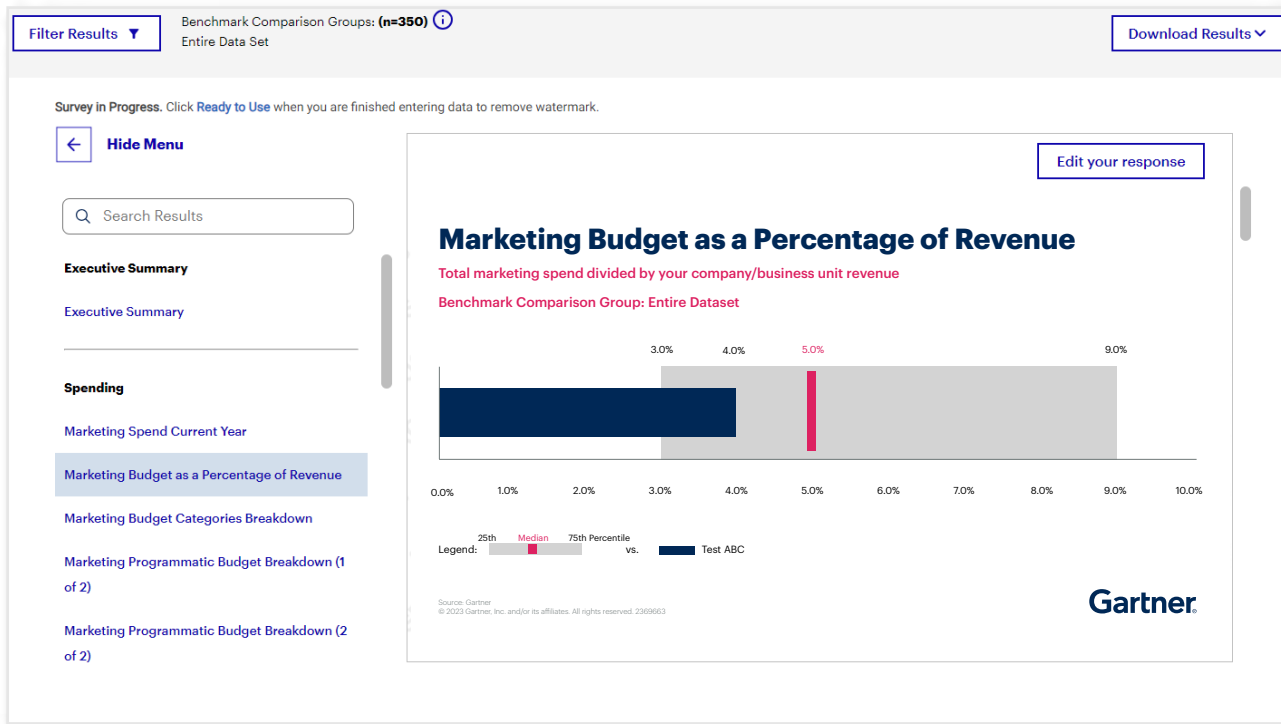


Source: Gartner



3. Strategically manage functional budgets: Budget efficiency benchmarking tool

Benchmark your marketing budget against peers



Did you know?

Gartner clients can use an **interactive tool** to benchmark their functional budget and efficiency.



3. Strategically manage functional budgets: Cost optimization framework

Align costs and investments with strategy and value

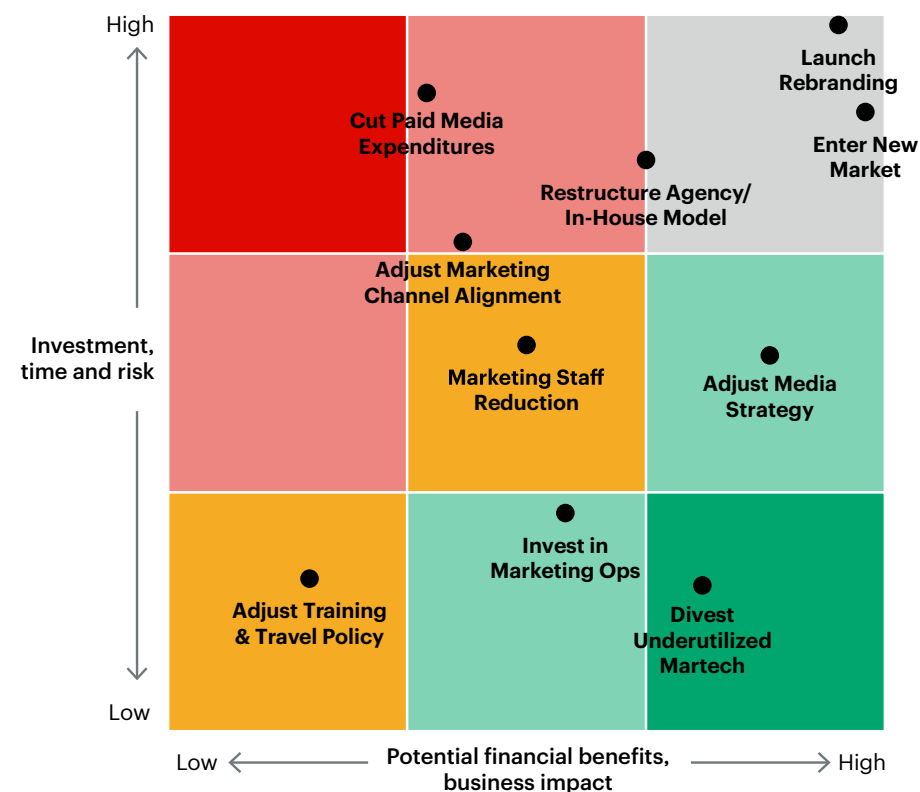
To optimize costs strategically and productively (rather than just cutting), you need to know what drives costs, which costs relate to differentiating capabilities (i.e., value drivers) and what are your returns on investment.

Strategic cost optimization rarely succeeds without three things:

1. Standardized cost management framework
2. Shared understanding of cost-to-value relationships
3. Consistent definition of success beyond cost saving

Use a structure like the Gartner Cost Optimization Framework to refine and visualize your cost optimization ideas by the level of benefit, cost, risk and viability, so stakeholders have full visibility into the relative merits of deploying spend.

Map your cost optimization initiatives and visualize trade-offs



Source: Gartner



3. Strategically manage functional budgets: Gartner BuySmart™

Confidently manage the martech evaluation process

Use Gartner BuySmart™ to get quick access to our proprietary expert and peer insights and evaluation templates for a wide range of martech vendor solutions.

- **Discover** a wide range of possible martech vendor solutions, driven by proprietary expert and peer insights and evaluation templates.
- **Evaluate** using requirements, questionnaires, scorecards and more, chosen by and visible to your whole team.
- **Select** martech vendors using your aggregated team scores to remove bias and clarify decisions.
- **Optimize** your spend and reduce risk with a Gartner expert proposal review.

→ [Learn More](#)

The screenshot displays the 'CRM for Sales Group' interface with a 'SCORECARD' tab selected. It shows a comparison of three vendors: ATTA, Cumulus, and Windmill. The scorecard includes a 'Scorecard' section with a 'Compare vendor scores for your published requirements. Need to make changes?' prompt, and a table of scores for 'Functional requirements' and 'Technical requirements'. A 'Vendor Evaluation' sidebar is overlaid on the bottom left, listing tasks: 'Finalize vendor selection' (checked), 'Negotiate contract' (pending), 'Execute contract' (pending), and 'Onboard vendor' (pending).

Vendor	ATTA	Cumulus	Windmill
Vendors (3)	Score vendor	Score vendor	Score vendor
Scorecard Compare vendor scores for your published requirements. Need to make changes?	95 / 100 Complete	88 / 100 In progress	No score Not started
Functional requirements	79	79	—
Technical requirements	91	—	—
	84	84	—
	90	—	—
	79	79	—

4. Measures and metrics

Identify metrics that will show if your plan is working.

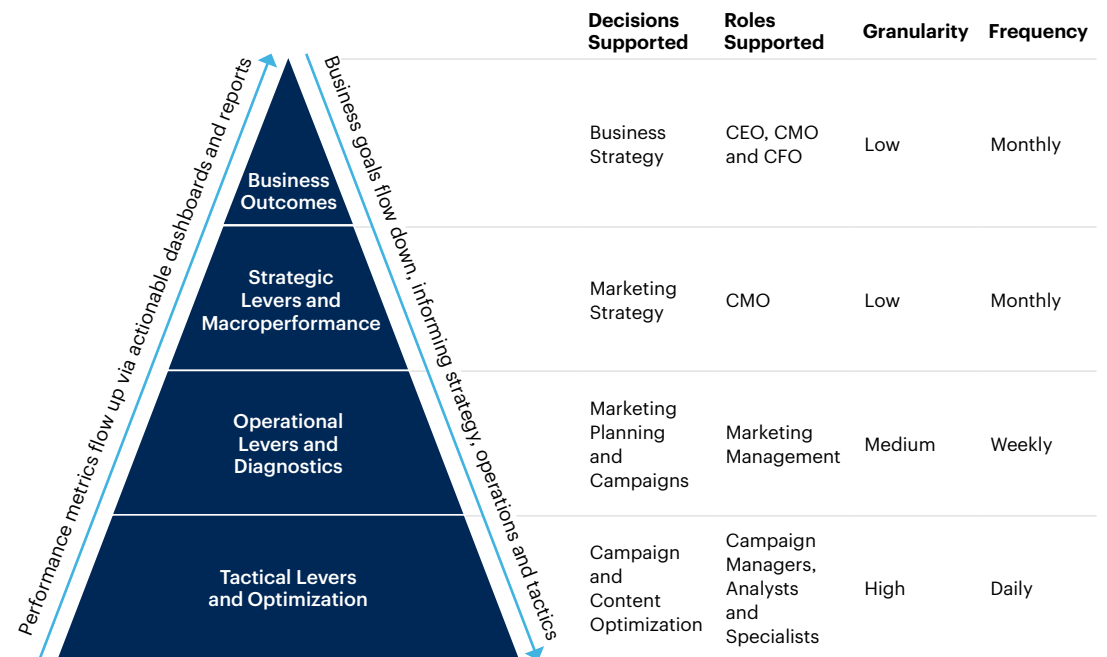
A one-size-fits-all approach will not work for marketing metrics because different levels of decisions require different insights.

Although metrics differ based on the granularity of the decisions they support, success still requires a clear and unambiguous link between the strategy, operational plans and tactical activities.

To choose meaningful metrics:

- Build consensus with senior stakeholders on marketing goals and reporting expectations.
- Form a team to define key metrics linked to operational goals and marketing strategy.
- Audit data quality and availability, start creating a metrics taxonomy.
- Identify and address gaps in data, find short and long-term solutions.
- Select and refine key metrics, regularly update dashboards to maintain relevance.

Gartner's Hierarchy of Marketing Metrics



Source: Gartner



4. Measures and metrics: Guide to cascading metrics

Metrics provide the means to show whether your actions plans are achieving your goals



→ 5. Document your strategy

Provide a one-page overview to simply and clearly communicate your strategic plan.

Successful CMOs articulate their marketing strategic plan by sharing highlights without overwhelming business stakeholders.

Putting your marketing plan on a single page makes it easier for you to share, summarize and communicate — and easier for business partners to visualize and understand.

One-page templates are meant to provide a summary of your strategic roadmap, not to serve as the overall strategic plan.

Make sure yours contains the initiatives identified as a part of the overall strategic planning process for your function.

See the next page for a simplified view of one Gartner one-page plan (and use the fillable template for your planning), but note that different functions and organizations will need to customize their view, its component parts and level of detail.



Did you know?

Gartner clients can submit documents for review by experts who can assess and provide feedback and input for your strategy template.



Strategy-on-a-page fillable template

Type in the fields below to complete the interactive form

 Vision statement		 Statement of strategy	
Current state	Plan		Future state
4 to 7 key metrics characterizing your current state	4 to 7 initiatives required to achieve the target end state		4 to 7 key metrics characterizing your target state
	4 to 7 assumptions that must be true for the plan to succeed		

Actionable, objective insight

Explore these additional complimentary resources and tools for information technology executives:



Infographic

The State of Marketing Budgets in 2024

Get actionable insights to benchmark your marketing budget.

[Download Now](#)



Webinar

How to Develop and Execute a Marketing Strategy That Meets Business Goals

Learn how to cascade plans with clear progress metrics.

[Watch Now](#)



Tool

Gartner Marketing Budget & Efficiency Benchmark

Use this tool to optimize your spends and prioritize investments.

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