

# It's Time To Get Serious About AI's Business Value

How Effective Data Strategies Help Build A  
Solid Foundation For AI Adoption That Returns  
Demonstrable Value For Marketing Leaders

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## Marketers Must Overcome The AI Adoption Curve To Recognize Practical Value

Marketers are under pressure to demonstrate and optimize marketing's value to their business, but they must contend with a turbulent economy, data management and regulatory challenges, changing customer expectations, and a fast-evolving technology ecosystem.<sup>1</sup>

AI holds great promise as a powerful enabling tool for marketing leaders, but effective, scaled AI adoption requires significant investments in data, technology, and process changes. The cost and difficulty acquiring skills will also be a significant challenge to overcome.

Most organizations will need support to deliver effective AI strategies. They should start by reinforcing data management, then identify the first, next, and long-term practical use cases that will drive demonstrable value back to the business.

## Key Findings



**Marketing must see practical value from AI investments.** Leaders are turning to AI to drive revenue, customer, and operational improvements but need these investments to start paying off.



**Most organizations are still in the earlier stages of AI deployment.** Most (62%) respondents describe their AI implementation as “limited” or “moderate” today.



**Data and skills gaps jeopardize return on AI investment.** More than 60% of respondents struggle with data and skills gaps that are holding back fuller AI adoption and value realization.

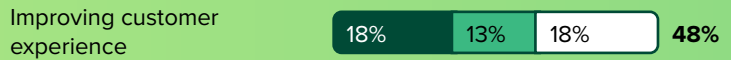
## Shorten The Path To Delivering Great Customer Experiences

Marketers never stand still, constantly rising to expanding customer touchpoints, managing multiple ongoing campaigns and tactics, and contending with a data and technology landscape that is forever shifting beneath their feet.<sup>2</sup>

Squeezed between constant change and demand for results, leaders are looking to drive improvements in operational efficiency while delivering relevant, valuable customer experiences (CX). To do so, they must optimize revenue and organizational processes and tighten alignment and collaboration between marketing and other departments. They must also remain focused on improving CX and their ability to realize value from AI investments, thereby shortening the distance between operational improvements and CX outcomes.

## “What are your marketing organization’s key priorities for the next 12 months?”

● Rank 1   ● Rank 2   ● Rank 3



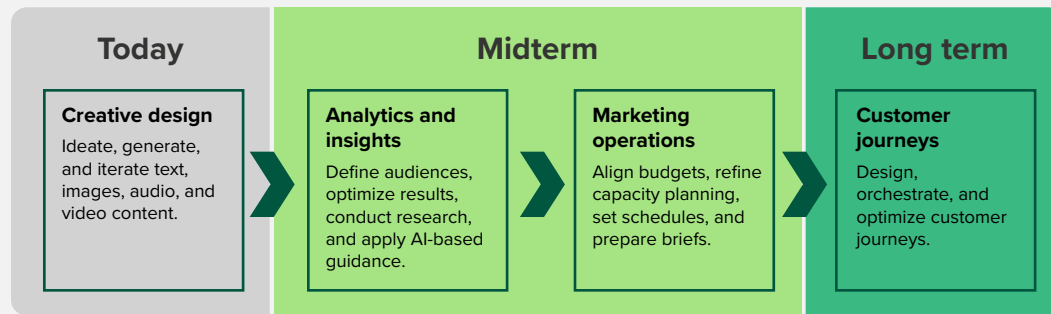
Base: 300 martech decision-makers and knowledge workers in North America  
 Note: Showing top four responses; individual percentage values may not sum to totals due to rounding.  
 Source: Forrester's Q1 2025 AI And Personalization Survey [E-62533]

# AI Can Be A Powerful Enabler, But Most Organizations Face An Adoption Curve

Marketers are awash in vendor messaging about the transformative power of AI, though most will remain focused in the near-term to midterm on use cases that build on existing internal processes and experiment with features available in marketing technology (martech) applications they already use. Of course, AI adoption isn't a one-size-fits-all proposition; there are multiple approaches depending on the particular context of a given organization.<sup>3</sup>

Most study respondents are still in the earlier stages of deploying AI with 62% of respondents describing their current AI implementation as "limited" or "moderate" today. As they move into the mid- and long-term adoption use cases, the availability and applicability of data and insights will become a critical definer of success or failure — so respondents have an opportunity now to lay a foundation for truly transformative capabilities.

## AI Use Cases In Martech Will Progress From Creative Design To Customer Journeys



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Base: 300 martech decision-makers and knowledge workers in North America  
Source: Forrester's Q1 2025 AI And Personalization Survey [E-62533]

## Don't Let Data Or Skill Gaps Stifle Your Organization's AI Adoption

AI use cases rely on a foundation of insights. Effectively harnessing AI requires huge amounts of data, both structured and unstructured, often across multiple different sources.<sup>4</sup> Organizations also find themselves struggling to develop skills and governance that will enable them to effectively deal with the realities of working with AI.<sup>5</sup>

Leaders in this study are acutely aware of these challenges: 72% cited a lack of skills and expertise as a barrier to deeper AI adoption, while nearly two-thirds pointed to data quality, availability, and privacy and regulatory concerns as hindering adoption. Without a solid foundation of data and skills, leaders will struggle to confidently deploy AI and deliver discernable business value.

### “What is keeping your marketing organization from investing in increased AI adoption?”



Lack of skills and expertise

**72%**

**63%**

Data quality and availability



Privacy and regulatory concerns (e.g., compliance standards)

**62%**

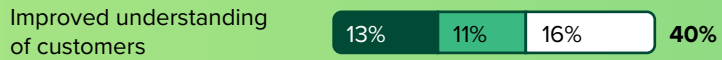
## AI Will Help Leaders Integrate And Align Personalization Efforts

Respondents in this study realized they need to bring AI capabilities online to drive organizational alignment, improve personalization, and improve their ability to deliver excellent CX at scale. Leaders told us their top anticipated benefit of AI adoption was improving coordination across business units, followed by improved personalization, deeper customer understanding, and faster speed to market.

Personalization efforts today expose a lack of organizational alignment to the customer.<sup>6</sup> Different business units interact with customers with different voices and goals based on fractured customer understanding. By giving organizations a harmonized view of the customer, AI can ensure different departments are all singing from the same song sheet.

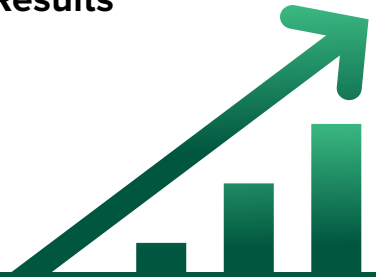
## “What are the top benefits that adopting AI will deliver to your organization?”

● Rank 1   ● Rank 2   ● Rank 3



Base: 300 martech decision-makers and knowledge workers in North America  
 Note: Showing top four responses; individual percentage values may not sum to totals due to rounding.  
 Source: Forrester's Q1 2025 AI And Personalization Survey [E-62533]

# Effective Data And Adoption Strategies Deliver Significant Results



Organizations are transitioning from an era of AI adoption to an era of AI value realization.<sup>7</sup> For marketing leaders, this means taking advantage of operational improvements, deeper customer understanding, and improved personalization to drive real business results faster.

Respondents in this study reported they expect improved AI adoption to translate to increased ROI on their marketing investments and improved customer retention, revenue, and decision-making. They also see this new era of technology as a prime opportunity to enhance how they demonstrate marketing’s role as a trusted advisor and leader for the business. However, these benefits are most likely to be recognized by those firms who have built a solid foundation and intentional adoption strategy for AI.

“What downstream business impacts would you expect the business to experience from [improving your organizations’ AI adoption]?”



Increased ROI on marketing spend



Improved customer retention



Increased revenue



Improved ability to show marketing as a trusted advisor/ leader in the business



Enhanced decision-making (data driven, predictive)

Base: 300 martech decision-makers and knowledge workers in North America  
 Note: Showing top five responses  
 Source: Forrester’s Q1 2025 AI And Personalization Survey [E-62533]

## Connect Customer Insights To AI Effectiveness To Business Value

To create a more direct path to realizing value in AI investments, leaders should prioritize three steps:

- **Identify and map AI use cases.** Examine the use cases marketing will adopt in the near and long term. Then, for each use case, catalog the people, process, implementation, and measurement improvements needed to maximize likelihood of success.
- **Build a foundation of data and insights.** Inventory your data requirements for current and planned use cases, then ensure there are processes in place for data collection, data management and hygiene, and compliance/security.
- **Develop and/or acquire the skills, capabilities, and experience needed.** Train existing employees to improve AI skills and understanding. Due to the high demand for AI expertise, consider external partners for additional support where needed.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Source: [2024 B2C Marketing Challenges And Priorities](#), Forrester Research, Inc., May 31, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Source: [It's Time For B2C Marketing Operations To Shine](#), Forrester Research, Inc., August 2, 2023.

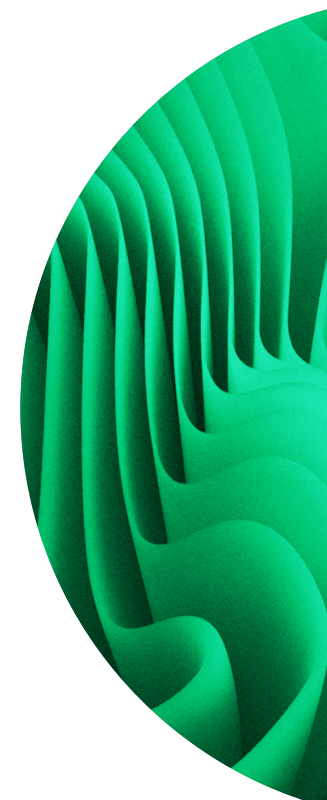
<sup>3</sup> Source: [Shift Generative AI In Martech From Theory To Reality](#), Forrester Research, Inc., November 6, 2024.

<sup>4</sup> Source: [Predictions 2025: B2C Marketing](#), Forrester Research, Inc., October 22, 2024.

<sup>5</sup> Source: [TIER: Internal Investing In GenAI](#), Forrester Research, Inc., November 29, 2023.

<sup>6</sup> Source: [The Future Of Customer Insights Will Power Next Best Experiences](#), Forrester Research, Inc., March 15, 2023.

<sup>7</sup> Source: [Scale AI Value With The Use Case Selection Framework](#), Forrester Research, Inc., August 12, 2024.



## Resources

### Related Forrester Research:

[Improve Your Organizational Health With Analytically Informed Decisions](#), Forrester Research, Inc., October 29, 2024.

[Connect Data To Decisions To Drive Business Impact](#), Forrester Research, Inc., October 29, 2024.

### Related Resources

October 29, 2024, [Predictions 2025: Artificial Intelligence](#), Webinar.

Brandon Purcell, Enza Iannopollo, and Brian Hopkins, [Trusted AI Begins And Ends With Alignment](#), Forrester Blogs.

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## Methodology

This Opportunity Snapshot was commissioned by Zeta. To create this profile, Forrester Consulting supplemented this research with custom survey questions asked of 300 martech decision-makers in North America. The custom survey began and was completed in March 2025.

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## Demographics

GEOGRAPHY	
US	<b>67%</b>
Canada	<b>33%</b>

COMPANY SIZE (USD)	
>\$5B	<b>5%</b>
\$1B to \$5B	<b>7%</b>
\$500M to \$999M	<b>17%</b>
\$400M to \$499M	<b>24%</b>
\$300M to \$399M	<b>26%</b>
\$200M to \$299M	<b>21%</b>

SENIORITY	
C-level executive	<b>12%</b>
Vice president	<b>16%</b>
Director	<b>28%</b>
Manager	<b>28%</b>
Practitioner	<b>21%</b>

INDUSTRY	
Travel/hospitality	<b>19%</b>
Retail	<b>18%</b>
Financial services	<b>17%</b>
Other	<b>46%</b>

Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.



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