



Strategies for a changing world

Six scenarios for marketing leaders

Introduction

AI has become a strategic shift, redefining how businesses operate, how customers behave, and how marketing creates value. CMOs today sit at the intersection of this transformation, accountable not just for awareness and engagement but for orchestrating growth in a landscape that's changing faster than most teams or tech stacks can adapt.

This FutureScape Field Manual is your curated guide to navigating that shift. Grounded in a selection of IDC's most urgent and actionable FutureScape predictions, it focuses on one question: **How can marketing leaders capitalize on the AI technology shift?**

We've chosen six (6) predictions that demand your attention now, because they affect budgets, team structures, buyer journeys, tech investments, and brand trust. While they are presented as forecasts for the future, you can treat them as signposts for what's already unfolding.

This manual is designed to help decision-makers under pressure act with confidence, align cross-functionally, and build marketing strategies that deliver relevance, speed, and measurable impact in the AI era.

How to Use This Manual

- Start with the prediction most relevant to your current initiative or planning cycle.
- Use the "Strategic Readiness" and "Critical Questions" sections to spark team workshops.
- Collaborate across the organization using the "Stakeholders to Engage" and "Readiness Signal Check."
- Revisit each section quarterly to track progress and adjust priorities.

Whether you're recalibrating strategy or accelerating execution, this manual helps you turn insight into momentum.



Our 2025 predictions

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Mastering the shift to LLM optimization

Prediction at a glance

By 2029, GenAI systems, not traditional search engines, will be the dominant interface through which buyers discover brands, evaluate options, and make decisions. Marketing will pivot from SEO to LLM optimization, influencing how AI systems rank and recommend products and content.

Why this matters

This shift changes the fundamental rules of brand visibility. Traditional SEO tactics won't surface your brand in GenAI systems. Instead, training data, factual consistency, and semantic credibility will determine what an AI model recommends. If you're not being "trained into" the LLMs your buyers use, you're invisible.

Strategic readiness: What CMOs must be ready to navigate

When this prediction becomes reality, marketing leaders need to:

- **Reframe content optimization priorities:** SEO is no longer the sole game. You must optimize for ingestion and relevance within GenAI models.
- **Audit AI visibility:** Understand how your brand appears in GenAI outputs and identify gaps or risks in how you're portrayed.
- **Coordinate messaging inputs across functions:** Ensure factual consistency between brand, product, customer success, and support documentation.
- **Secure budget and ownership:** Allocate resources to LLM optimization and assign functional leadership over this emerging discipline.

Critical questions to ask your team

- **What AI-generated content currently exists about our brand?** Are we aware of how LLMs present us, and are we shaping that narrative?
- **Who owns our AI visibility strategy?** Is this part of content ops, product marketing, or an emerging role?
- **How consistent is our product data across digital touchpoints?** Inconsistency can lead to hallucinated or misleading responses from GenAI.
- **What partnerships are in place with LLM providers?** Are we actively feeding data or relying passively on scraped web content?

Stakeholders to engage

- **CIO/CTO:** Ensure secure integration with LLM APIs and platforms and support infrastructure for structured content.
- **Product Marketing:** Owns accurate positioning, benefit statements, and differentiators across content assets.
- **Legal & Compliance:** Monitors risk exposure from GenAI outputs and mitigates reputational risk.
- **Content Ops/Communications:** Orchestrates the publishing of consistent, structured, metadata-rich content across channels.



Readiness signal check

This interactive tool helps you assess your organization's readiness on four key indicators. Use this to self-assess and spark internal discussion:

Area	Red Light Not Yet Addressed	Yellow Light In Progress	Green Light Operational
LLM search visibility audit conducted	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Budget line for LLM optimization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Product content fact-checking system	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
GenAI partner engagement strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Quick win play

Launch a discovery sprint to test how your brand and products are described by top GenAI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude). Identify inconsistencies or inaccuracies and feed corrections through owned channels or partner integrations.

Watchlist signals

- **Growth of GenAI optimization tools:** The emergence of tools and agencies specializing in GenAI visibility indicates mainstream traction.
- **Shifts in search behavior:** Increases in buyers using LLMs as discovery tools rather than search engines signal the urgency to act.
- **Regulatory attention:** Policies around GenAI transparency and source attribution may create new obligations or opportunities.
- **Platform updates from LLM vendors:** Pay attention to changes in how they ingest, rank, and display brand or product content.



Elevating customer experience with AI investment

Prediction at a glance

By 2027, companies will spend more than \$150 billion on AI-related infrastructure, platforms, software, and services to support their ability to compete on highly personalized customer experiences (CX).

Why this matters

Customer data is now the heartbeat of brand experience. Most marketing organizations still struggle to deliver on the promise of personalization because their data is fragmented, siloed, or outdated. As AI becomes the fabric of customer engagement, data architecture will define a brand's ability to deliver relevance, speed, and continuity across the journey.

Strategic readiness: What CMOs must be ready to navigate

To realize value from this investment wave, CMOs should:

- **Prioritize unified customer profiles:** Build or evolve your Customer Data Infrastructure (CDI) to enable identity resolution and real-time interaction management.
- **Modernize MarTech from the data layer up:** Avoid layering AI on top of fragmented systems; consolidate and redesign stacks with AI-native tools.
- **Partner across the enterprise:** Align with Sales, Service, IT, and Finance to unlock full customer context and coordinate data sharing protocols.

- **Treat data as a strategic brand asset:**

Measure and elevate data utilization across functions, not just acquisition or volume.

Critical questions to ask your team

Spark the right conversations internally:

- **Where are we underutilizing customer data?** Are there gaps in how marketing, sales, and service access and activate it?
- **Do we have a unified customer profile?** Or are we duplicating effort and missing context across the journey?
- **What's our AI readiness posture?** Are our AI models using proprietary data tailored to real-time journey context?
- **Do we treat CDI as infrastructure or a marketing tool?** How well is it governed, funded, and integrated with enterprise systems?

Stakeholders to engage

This prediction touches every function with customer-facing data. Engage:

- **CIO/CDO:** Lead infrastructure build-out, data integration, and compliance.
- **Customer Success and Service Leaders:** Help define key moments where AI-powered personalization can reduce friction and deepen loyalty.
- **Finance:** Support business case modeling around data platform investments and utilization ROI.
- **Sales and RevOps:** Ensure customer intelligence flows across pre- and post-sale.



Readiness signal check

This table helps assess how prepared your organization is to compete through AI-powered CX. Use this to foster team alignment:

Area	Red Light Not Yet Addressed	Yellow Light In Progress	Green Light Operational
Unified customer profile in place	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Modern MarTech stack with AI capabilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cross-functional data-sharing protocols	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
AI trained on proprietary customer data	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Quick win play

Convene a cross-functional data gap workshop. Use one key customer journey (e.g., onboarding or renewal) as a case study to identify data sources, bottlenecks, and alignment gaps. Follow up with a focused pilot around journey-based personalization using AI.

Watchlist signals

- **Stay alert to ecosystem shifts that may accelerate or challenge your CX investments:** New AI-native Customer Data Platforms (CDP): Watch for tools that streamline identity resolution and activation.
- **Customer data regulations tightening:** Factor in consent, usage, and compliance mandates.
- **Increased buyer expectations for immediacy and relevance:** Benchmarked through abandonment rates and loyalty drops.
- **Competitor moves in data platform maturity:** Monitor peer investments in proprietary data and AI tool integration.



Building digital trust before you lose it

Prediction at a glance

By 2026, marketers who fail to implement digital trust practices, including AI/GenAI transparency and ethical data handling, risk losing over 79% of customer loyalty and significantly damaging their brand reputation.

Why this matters

Trust is now a marketing competency. Buyers expect clarity about how their data is collected, used, and secured, especially in AI interactions. CMOs must lead not only customer engagement but also the ethical boundaries and transparency standards that define it. In a trust-driven economy, mishandling this can cost customers, reputation, and long-term viability

Strategic readiness: What CMOs must be ready to navigate

To proactively safeguard and grow trust:

- **Operationalize digital trust principles:** Integrate transparency, ethical AI use, and customer data rights into marketing processes.
- **Develop a clear AI ethics and transparency policy:** Communicate your use of AI clearly, what's automated, why, and with what safeguards.
- **Implement cross-functional governance:** Ensure legal, IT, and marketing collaboration on standards, audits, and customer consent practices.
- **Educate internal teams:** Equip marketers with the tools to explain and defend your trust posture to skeptical or curious customers.

Critical questions to ask your team

Align your organization around these trust checkpoints:

- What is our position on the ethical use of AI in marketing? Is it documented, shared, and enforced?
- **How are we communicating AI use to customers?** Do they know when they're engaging with AI versus a human?
- Where are the gaps in our consent, data handling, or model transparency? Have we conducted a trust risk audit?
- How prepared are our marketers to speak confidently about our AI/data practices? Are we building fluency alongside technology?

Stakeholders to engage

Building digital trust is a shared responsibility.

Collaborate with:

- **Chief Legal Officer / Chief Privacy Officer:** Ensure policies align with global data protection laws and transparency standards.
- **IT and Security Leaders:** Implement real-time visibility and control into customer data and AI interactions.
- **Brand and Comms:** Craft trust-first messaging and prepare responses for trust-related customer inquiries or public questions.
- **Product & CX Teams:** Build consistent experiences that honor transparency, opt-in/opt-out flows, and user control.



Readiness signal check

Use this framework to determine if your digital trust initiatives are operational or still aspirational:

Area	Red Light Not Yet Addressed	Yellow Light In Progress	Green Light Operational
AI ethics policy published and enforced	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clear customer-facing AI disclosures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cross-functional digital trust governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Marketer education on trust policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Quick win play

Draft and publish a customer-friendly AI Use Statement. Keep it clear and simple: what tools you use, what data is touched, and how customer preferences are respected. Make this visible on your website and share with frontline teams to reinforce confidence.

Watchlist signals

Track the changing landscape to stay ahead:

- **New AI or digital trust regulations emerging:** Look for GDPR updates, U.S. state privacy laws, and global AI standards.
- **Consumer backlash or brand missteps:** Monitor how peer companies respond to data or AI misuses.
- **Rising RFP and procurement requirements around ethical AI:** Watch for trust to become a vendor selection criterion.
- **Increasing buyer requests for transparency:** Track questions coming into support, sales, or events asking about AI use.



Orchestrating the AI-led B2B demand engine

Prediction at a glance

By 2028, 62% of traditional B2B lead and demand generation efforts will transition to automated sensing, personalized engagement, content creation, and fast-pathing customers to transactional commerce.

Why this matters

AI is reshaping how B2B buyers engage across the journey. The traditional funnel is giving way to dynamic, personalized paths powered by real-time data and machine learning. CMOs must evolve their demand engines from linear, stage-based models to orchestrated systems that sense intent, tailor content, and accelerate conversion without requiring human handoffs at every step.

Strategic readiness: What CMOs must be ready to navigate

To modernize your demand engine:

- Deploy journey sensing and orchestration tools: Use AI to detect buyer intent signals and adapt engagement pathways dynamically.
- Redesign demand programs around speed and personalization: Prioritize agility, fast-pathing high-intent buyers, and delivering relevance at scale.
- Break down channel and data silos: Enable a single view of the customer journey across marketing, sales, and digital touchpoints.
- Embed responsible AI practices in content and engagement: Maintain brand integrity while scaling automation

Critical questions to ask your team

Focus your team's evolution with these prompts:

- Do we know who is in our funnel right now and what they're doing? Are our systems sensing and adapting to real-time behavior?
- Which parts of our journey are still static or disconnected? Where do buyers experience friction or misaligned content?
- Are we optimizing campaigns based on observed behaviors or pre-set stages? How often do we adjust sequences mid-journey?
- How are we managing the risks of personalization at scale? Is our AI content pipeline auditable and brand-safe?

Stakeholders to engage

Orchestrating AI-powered journeys requires tight collaboration across functions:

- Marketing Operations & RevOps: Own platform integration, analytics, and measurement.
- Sales & SDR Leadership: Define thresholds for AI-to-human handoffs and real-time engagement playbooks.
- Digital Experience & Web Teams: Enable dynamic content and journey personalization across owned channels.
- Legal/Compliance: Review use of behavioral data and personalized content through a trust and risk lens.



Readiness signal check

Gauge your demand gen engine’s readiness to scale with AI:

Area	Red Light Not Yet Addressed	Yellow Light In Progress	Green Light Operational
AI-based journey sensing and orchestration tools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Personalized content delivery at scale	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cross-channel buyer journey integration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ethical guardrails for AI-generated content	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Quick win play

Map one high-value journey, from awareness to conversion, and identify all current friction points. Use this map to prioritize automation and personalization efforts, focusing first on drop-off or delay zones. Launch a pilot program with AI-triggered engagement based on real-time intent data.

Watchlist signals

Monitor these external cues to anticipate acceleration or disruption:

- AI-driven personalization platforms gaining market share: Watch vendors moving from rule-based to predictive models.
- Buyer behavior shifting to self-navigation: Track use of chat, product tours, and instant demo tools over gated CTAs.
- Competitive CX investments in journey orchestration: Benchmark the sophistication of buyer experience automation in your sector.
- Concerns over AI bias or impersonal automation: Watch for buyer feedback or social sentiment about over-automation.



Optimizing for the AI-Powered Customer Interface

Prediction at a glance

By 2026, 65% of individuals will search for information and engage in dialogue with brands via GenAI, forcing marketers to build and optimize for humanized digital AI as the primary customer interface.

Why this matters

Search is evolving into a conversation. Customers are increasingly engaging with brands through GenAI interfaces instead of traditional search engines. This shifts control from clickable metadata to context-driven interactions where GenAI tools interpret, summarize, and recommend. CMOs must prepare their digital ecosystems for humanlike, AI-mediated customer interactions.

Strategic readiness: What CMOs must be ready to navigate

To meet customers where they're headed:

- Redesign content for conversational AI: Craft and structure content to be discoverable, answerable, and aligned to buyers' search prompts.
- Create a unified digital voice: Ensure your brand's tone, facts, and language are consistent across the sources GenAI systems draw from.
- Humanize your AI interface: Design chatbot and conversational experiences that are empathetic, helpful, and context-aware.
- Strengthen AI content governance: Audit for hallucinations, inconsistencies, or outdated information influencing GenAI responses.

Critical questions to ask your team

Ensure readiness with these foundational prompts:

- How is our brand represented in GenAI tools today? Have we tested queries in ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, or others?
- Are we structuring content for prompt-driven discovery? Do we understand how LLMs ingest and retrieve brand content?
- What's our approach to AI chatbot experience design? Do customers feel heard, understood, and valued?
- How are we training GenAI systems with our latest content and facts? Are we providing structured inputs vs. relying on scraped, outdated pages?

Stakeholders to engage

Creating a cohesive digital AI interface requires collaboration:

- Content & Brand Teams: Ensure your value proposition is clearly and consistently articulated across structured formats.
- Web and Digital Experience Leaders: Integrate GenAI and conversational tools across your front-end stack.
- Customer Support & CX: Enhance bots with knowledge that mirrors human support quality and intent recognition.
- IT and Data Teams: Support API integrations, LLM data flows, and model fine-tuning with proprietary data.



Readiness signal check

Evaluate your preparedness for AI-mediated customer engagement:

Area	Red Light Not Yet Addressed	Yellow Light In Progress	Green Light Operational
Brand visibility in GenAI interfaces audited	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Structured content optimized for LLM prompts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Humanlike chatbot and GenAI UX deployed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Governance in place for GenAI content output	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Quick win play

Run a GenAI audit sprint. Choose 5–7 of your top brand/product queries and test them in leading GenAI tools. Capture the answers, identify inconsistencies, and flag any gaps in your source content. Use this as a springboard for structured content updates and chatbot UX enhancements.

Watchlist signals

These indicators show the urgency and direction of GenAI interface adoption:

- Buyers skipping search for GenAI chat interfaces: Watch for declining site search and rising chatbot interactions.
- Vendors offering GenAI-enhanced search widgets and assistants: Integrate tools that improve findability and comprehension.
- Shift in content KPIs toward interaction and answer quality: Evaluate performance by how well your content answers, not just ranks.
- Regulatory or platform changes in LLM data sourcing: Ensure your content remains accessible and prioritized in model training updates.



Redesigning marketing teams for a blended workforce

Prediction at a glance

By 2028, three out of five marketing roles or functions will be held by AI workers. Human marketers will shift toward strategic, creative, ethical, and oversight responsibilities as organizations blend machine intelligence and human expertise.

Why this matters

Marketing team structures are about to transform. AI workers can now autonomously execute campaign tasks, optimize content, generate insights, and manage workflows. CMOs must rethink their workforce model, upskill human teams, and embed governance to ensure these AI collaborators drive value without compromising brand integrity.

Strategic readiness: What CMOs must be ready to navigate

To lead this shift with confidence:

- **Map which tasks are ripe for AI delegation:** Identify repeatable, rules-based work where AI can scale impact.
- **Restructure team roles and responsibilities:** Design job descriptions and workflows that define where humans lead and where AI executes.
- **Upskill for AI oversight and orchestration:** Invest in AI fluency, prompt engineering, model evaluation, and data ethics.
- **Institutionalize human-in-the-loop governance:** Ensure oversight over decisions, content, and insights generated by AI workers.

Critical questions to ask your team

Shape your talent, org, and operating model strategy around these:

- Which marketing tasks are already being augmented or could be replaced by AI today? Are we tracking this across functions?
- **What new roles are needed to support a blended workforce?** Do we have AI performance analysts or digital ethics leads?
- How do we ensure accountability when AI workers act autonomously? Is there clarity on validation and sign-off protocols?
- **What's our plan for team morale and change management?** Are we communicating the role of humans in this next era clearly and empathetically?

Stakeholders to engage

This transformation must be coordinated across leadership functions:

- **HR and Talent Strategy:** Define new role archetypes, training programs, and change initiatives.
- **CIO/CTO:** Select, integrate, and govern AI tools that will become part of the marketing org.
- **Legal and Risk:** Review contracts, liability structures, and oversight practices for AI-generated work.
- **Marketing Operations & Enablement:** Implement the tooling, metrics, and playbooks for AI-human collaboration.



Readiness signal check

Use this tool to assess how equipped your org is to manage a blended human + AI marketing workforce:

Area	Red Light Not Yet Addressed	Yellow Light In Progress	Green Light Operational
AI task mapping and role redesign underway	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
AI governance framework for marketing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Upskilling in AI fluency and ethical oversight	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Blended team operating model established	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Quick win play

Run an AI workload discovery workshop. Use a campaign in progress to identify tasks AI could own today and those that must remain human-led. Document gaps, define new roles, and align responsibilities across tools and talent.

Watchlist signals

Monitor trends and signals that will shape your workforce transformation:

- **Emerging AI marketing job titles:** Look for roles like AI prompt strategist, insight analyst, or synthetic content auditor.
- **AI vendor roadmaps increasing autonomy:** Track platform shifts toward agentic capabilities and rule-based workflow ownership.
- **Peer org structures in flux:** Benchmark against other CMOs to see how roles are being redefined.
- **Employee sentiment on AI in the workplace:** Survey teams on perceived threats, opportunities, and training needs.



Moving forward with confidence

Marketing's role has changed. Clarity is the advantage.

AI is already reshaping how buyers search, engage, and decide. The shifts described in this guide reflect choices you'll have to make; changes you'll have to lead through. Meeting the moment requires more than recognition. It takes alignment, speed, and credible leadership.

You don't have to solve for that alone.

Marketing leaders today are managing shifting buyer behavior, rising internal expectations, and expanding influence over growing the business. These demands require endurance, better tools, sharper insight, and stronger support.

IDC delivers the intelligence to help you move forward with confidence.

With deep buyer research, rigorous technology analysis, and experience supporting performance-driven teams, IDC equips you to:

- Make timely, informed decisions with real buyer data
- Scale AI initiatives across go-to-market programs
- Build alignment through shared, evidence-based strategy
- Communicate clearly across executive and functional teams

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