IDC

Executive Insights

What CMOs and CROs must do to win AI-era buyers

Based on 2026 IDC Market Perspective, Tech Marketers: Reorient Marketing Practices to Address AI Uncertainty for Buyers

The pipeline-to-revenue disconnect

What the data tells us

1. AI investments remain resilient, yet ~45% of AI projects fail to deliver measurable outcomes.
2. Most organizations cite operational efficiency (63%) and technical performance (55%) as primary focus areas.
3. Buyers are no longer in the “awareness” phase. They want proof, not more AI enthusiasm.
4. The challenge isn’t demand, it’s what happens next: conversion, trust, and measurable revenue impact.

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What buyers *actually* want and the content gap that stalls deals

Top-valued content

- → AI roadmap and future extensibility with agentic capabilities (#1 ranked)
- → Security vulnerability guidance and data privacy assurances (#2)
- → Simple, flexible, transparent pricing for AI capabilities (#3)
- → Value modeling and ROI justification tools (#4)
- → AI data readiness guidance (#5)

Implications for CMOs and CROs

- → Buyers are further along their AI journey. They no longer need to be convinced AI matters. They need vendors to prove it, quantify it, and show it working in context.
- → Feature-led messaging and high-level thought leadership are losing influence. Today's deals move when you connect your solution to the buyer's specific business case.

Most useful marketing content and interactions that inform AI investment decisions

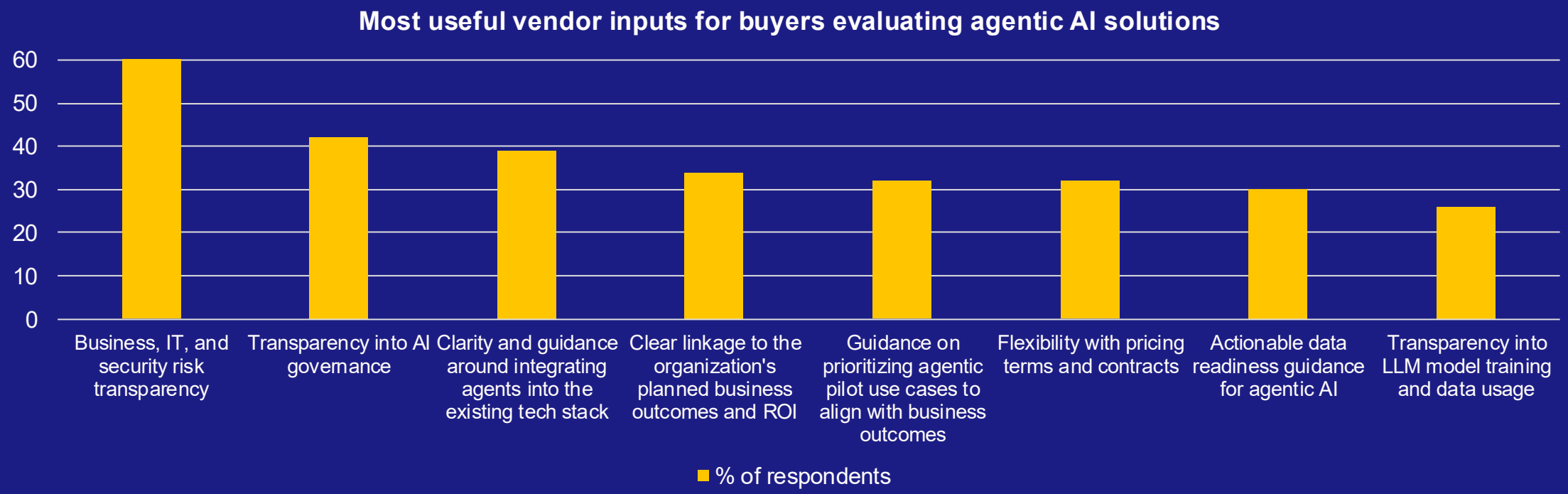


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Agentic AI: The trust problem no one is talking about

#1

When evaluating agentic AI, buyers' #1 requirement is business, IT, and security risk transparency — cited by over 60% of respondents. Governance, explainability, and audit trails come next. If your messaging leads with automation and efficiency, you are leading with the wrong thing.



Source: IDC Future Enterprise Resiliency and Spending Survey, March 2026 (n=903)

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What high-performers do differently: Four behaviors that win

Showcase operational proof points

Not which use cases are possible — which are already in production in a context similar to the buyer's industry and challenge.

Address the fear of the unknown

Connect roadmap to buyer's immediate objectives and a pragmatic path to continuing AI innovation.

Deliver peer-tested case studies

Real KPIs, governance structures that worked, challenges faced and resolved — not hypothetical calculations.

Orchestrate cross-functional GTM

Buying committees are multi-persona. Marketing, sales, product, and ecosystem teams must move as one.

> **"Technology vendors must adjust their marketing practices to treat AI and agentic innovation as a transformation mandate. Tech marketers that effectively communicate transparent governance, measurable value, and real-world operational proof points will earn the trust and confidence of technology decision-makers."**
>
> –Sudhir Rajagopal, Research Director, IDC CMO Advisory

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The revenue alignment imperative

What the research shows

- The buying process happens through a cross-functional committee. Marketers must cater to all buyer personas and AI intermediaries involved, not just the technical buyer.
- B2B technology purchases increasingly require marketing and sales to execute more like an advisory consulting firm than a product promotion engine.
- Joint GTM motions must align product marketing, solution consulting, customer value and success, and ecosystem partnerships.

Shared metrics that matter

- Move beyond volume-based pipeline reporting.
- Measure: deal velocity by content engagement, win rate by persona coverage, revenue impact tied to AI governance conversations, and customer adoption rate as a marketing KPI.
- CMOs and CROs aligned on these metrics build executive confidence in marketing's contribution to revenue — and close the conversion gap.

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Your 90-day action plan

1 CMO

Audit your content library against buyer priorities: ROI tools, governance explainers, and peer case studies with real metrics.

2 CRO

Retrain sales teams on outcome-based conversations. Equip them to speak to AI governance and risk transparency.

3 CMO & CRO

Agree on shared KPIs: deal velocity, win rate by persona coverage, and customer AI adoption rate.

4 Go-to-Market

Build a joint GTM playbook. Treat AI as a transformation mandate. Lead with trust, governance, and quantified outcomes.

Q. Which vendor-specific activities would improve AI adoption in the next 12 months?



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Are you set up to address AI uncertainty?

The gap between pipeline and revenue is widening. The marketers and sales leaders who close it fastest will be those who lead with the proof, governance, and outcome-based conversations their buyers expect today.

Work with IDC to close the gap

Most tech vendors already know they have a pipeline problem. What they lack is the evidence, the framing, and the buyer-specific proof to fix it.

IDC works with marketing and revenue leaders to turn research like this into traction.

- ✓ **Diagnose** where conversion breaks down across your buyer journey.
- ✓ **Reorient** your content and sales interactions around what AI-era buyers actually need to move.
- ✓ **Build** the cross-functional GTM motion that aligns your CMO, CRO, and RevOps teams around metrics that reflect real revenue impact.

Request a consultation →

Tell us where you are and where you need to be and we'll map a path forward.

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