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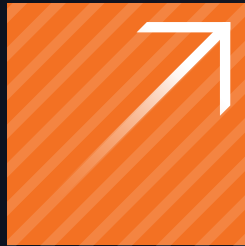
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The Confidence Code

Inside the mindset, investment priorities
and pressures shaping tech marketing



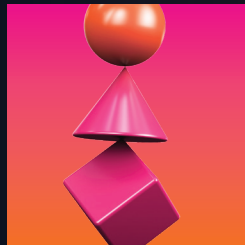
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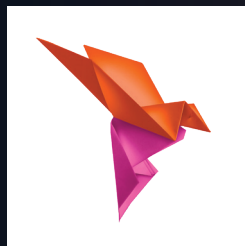
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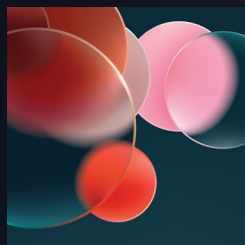
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Confidence is high - but AI, talent and attribution are testing its limits

The pace of change in marketing has accelerated rapidly over the last couple of years and expectations of the function are growing at a similar rate. And as we mark 25 years of Outsourced Events, we felt this was the right moment to capture a comprehensive barometer of tech marketing leadership and explore how those leaders are really feeling.

To do that, we surveyed 100 senior marketing decision makers across tech businesses operating in EMEA and spoke in depth with leaders from IBoomi, Mimecast, Recorded Future and Medidata. We asked them about performance, investment priorities, AI adoption, talent challenges and what is shaping their confidence in the short-term.

What we found is encouraging. Marketing leaders are confident and that confidence is grounded in results. Almost all those we surveyed report improved ROI over the past year and every leader expects to hit the targets in front of them.

Budgets are keeping pace with expectations and investment is set to increase across content, PR, marketing technology, paid channels and events. There is a clear sense that the function is delivering and that its contribution to growth is recognised.

Yet at the same time, there are pressures that can't be ignored. AI is now embedded in everyday workflows, but many leaders remain uncertain about how to measure its value and manage the associated risks. Talent, particularly in areas such as AI and other marketing technology, is difficult to access and increasingly expensive. Buying journeys are more complex and attribution remains a challenge, even for data-driven organisations.

The overall picture is one of earned confidence combined with structural constraint. Leaders are not pulling back, but they are thinking carefully about capability, partnerships and where human connection adds the greatest value. And in a market that is becoming more automated and more crowded, the importance of bringing people together and building trust remains critical.

We hope these insights provide a useful perspective as you plan ahead.

Enjoy the read.

Denise

CEO and Co-founder
Outsourced Events



Marketing leaders are confident and that confidence is grounded in results."

Performance and *momentum*

Leaders are delivering results and planning from a position of strength

Every marketing leader we surveyed expects to hit their targets in the current year. And in any climate, that level of assurance is notable.

Our research shows that four in ten describe themselves as extremely confident in their ability to do so, with a further 51% saying they are very confident.

When asked how their performance compares with peers, 83% believe they are ahead, either slightly or significantly - responses that reflect a group of leaders who feel in control of their plans and clear on what they need to deliver.

Importantly, our data suggests this position is grounded in results rather than sentiment. Almost all of our respondents reported improved ROI over the past 12 months, with around one in six seeing significant improvements.

We know this level of progress builds credibility within organisations and creates a stronger platform for future planning. When marketing teams can demonstrate measurable returns, conversations with boards and finance teams can shift from justification to acceleration.

In the conversations we held with senior marketing leaders, they were clear about what underpins this performance. Robust planning processes, clear objectives and strong alignment with sales and senior leadership were all cited as essential.

Historical data has played an important role, too. By empowering teams to understand the pipeline impact of specific activities over time, they have been able to model future outcomes with greater certainty. And as a result, they're finding that marketing is becoming less about projection and more about evidence to support better decision making and enabling leaders to commit to targets with greater conviction.



What gives me the most confidence about delivering our targets in the coming year, is that we've always been a very data-driven organisation. We know from historical trends that if we deliver XYZ in any given timeline, we can expect ABC pipeline to come out of it and we know how the different components are contributing to that."

Senior Director | EMEA North Marketing
Large Technology Organisation



I'm confident because we have a robust planning process and the data to fall back on. We know what we've done, we know what that generated. Having clear business objectives and clear alignment with stakeholders means we can create a marketing plan that will meet those objectives."

Fiona Giles | Global VP
Field & Regional Marketing | Boomi

The measurement challenge beneath strong performance

But despite the success, measurement remains complex with attribution an enduring challenge for even the most data-driven organisations.

More than one in five (22%) of our respondents identified the complexity of multi-touch buying journeys as their primary barrier to measuring ROI effectively, and the same proportion highlighted insufficient data integration across platforms.

In B2B environments, purchasing decisions are rarely influenced by a single touchpoint. Prospects engage with content, events, paid media, sales outreach and peer recommendations over extended periods, which means that isolating the impact of one element within that journey is difficult and often imprecise.

Rather than seeking a single answer, leaders are broadening their approach. Our research found that 74% are now tracking revenue generated versus spend, 65% are using lead quality and conversion rates and 62% are monitoring customer acquisition cost, with approximately one in three assessing pipeline contribution or influenced revenue.

This layered model reflects a recognition that no single metric can capture the full picture. By combining financial, behavioural and pipeline measures, our research shows that teams are building a more rounded understanding of performance, even if some uncertainty remains.

Thinking bigger picture

Several leaders we spoke to talked about the importance of time in assessing value.

The return on certain activities, particularly events, does not always show immediately. An event may appear modest when measured over a short period but later prove to have sourced significant opportunities or strengthened relationships that accelerate deals.

Overall, our findings show that marketing leaders in UK tech are operating from a position of demonstrated performance. Results have strengthened their standing within the business and provided a basis for continued investment.

At the same time, the ongoing challenge of attribution and measurement reminds us that even strong performance requires careful interpretation and sustained discipline.

Almost all of our respondents reported improved ROI over the past 12 months.

100%

are confident in hitting targets

99%

report improved ROI over past 12 months

83%

believe they're ahead of peers

Investment priorities

Leaders are backing what works across multiple channels

It's clear from our findings that senior marketing leaders share the same level of confidence in their budget allocations.

Every respondent in our research sample is confident that their current financial year budget is sufficient to meet objectives, with 84% saying they are very or extremely confident.

Similarly, almost all (99%) believe marketing budgets are keeping up with the demands placed on the function by the wider business.

And that level of confidence is translating directly into how leaders are choosing to invest.

Increased spending across channels

Rather than making trade-offs between channels, our respondents are set to increase budgets across the board.

Almost nine in ten (88%) are expecting to boost their spending on content creation, followed by PR and earned media (79%), marketing technology and tools (78%) and account-based marketing (74%). Similar proportions are increasing investments in paid channels, with 71% enhancing spend on paid search and 70% boosting resources in paid social.

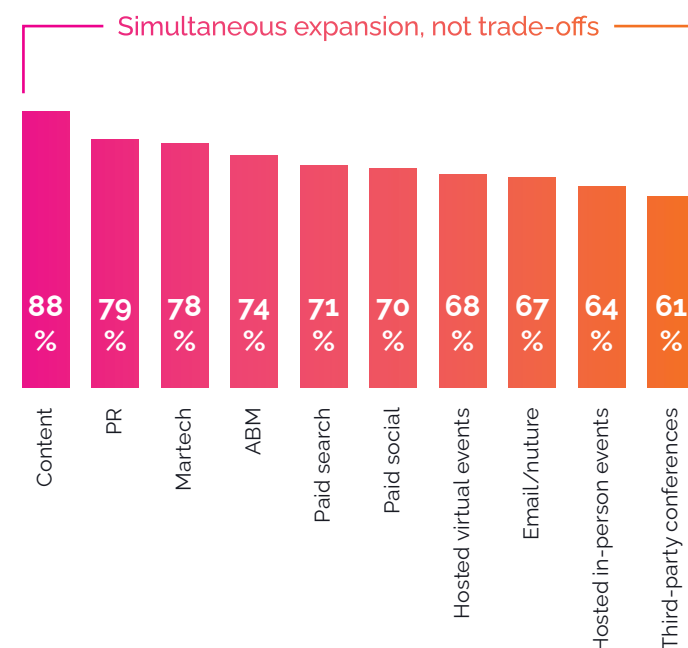
There is also set to be increased spending on events, too. More than two thirds (64%) of the respondents are planning to boost budgets for hosted in-person events, while 68% and 61% are putting more resources into hosted virtual events and third-party conference budgets respectively.

On average, our research found that events account for 27% of total marketing budgets - a significant share and reflects the strategic role they play rather than treating them as a tactical add-on.

When asked what they would prioritise if additional budget were available, 36% of our respondents said marketing technology and tools, followed by training and skills development (15%), paid media (14%) and events (10%) - a pattern that tells us leaders want to invest in the infrastructure that enables execution, not just the execution itself.

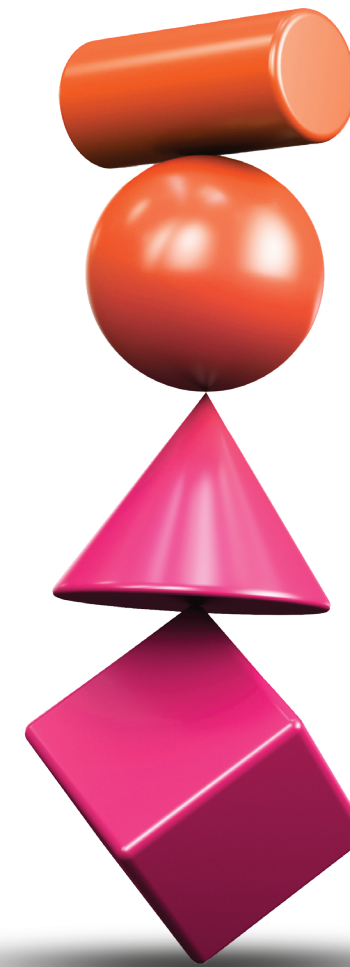
Rather than making trade-offs between channels, our respondents are set to increase budgets across the board.

Where leaders are boosting their investment Data: Q11



One thing that's been key over the last 12 months and moving forward is tech alliances. Combine with other businesses to create solutions that work for customers. There's power in numbers."

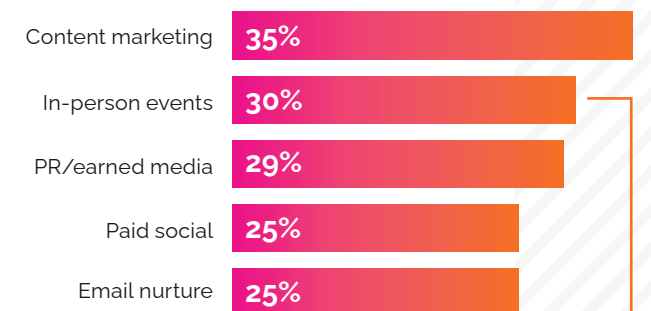
Laura Garrido | Vice President
Global Partner Marketing & Strategic Partnerships | Mimecast



Both in-person events and digital are essential parts of the mix. It's not about choosing one over the other, it's about knowing what each channel delivers and investing accordingly."

Leigh Quigg | Senior Director
Growth Marketing (NAM/EMEA) | Medidata

The most effective tactics for moving prospects through the funnel Data: Q25



In-person events ranks second for conversion effectiveness

How channels are delivering at different stages

Following on from this, the research explored the deliberate choices marketing leaders are making in the roles different channels are playing at each stage of the funnel.

Digital inbound marketing is considered central to early engagement and is leading the way for generating demand at the top of funnel, with 23% of our respondents saying it's driving the strongest demand for their organisation. Paid media follows at 18%, with in-person events close behind at 16%.

The picture changes when it comes to moving prospects through the funnel and converting interest into action.

More than a third (35%) rank content marketing highest for supporting conversion, followed by in-person events (30%) with PR and earned media at 29%, suggesting that while digital channels are highly effective at opening conversations, leaders are focused on deeper engagement to generate trust and progression.

The role of human connection in conversion

Our respondents are not choosing between digital and physical tactics, instead using both strategically, depending on where prospects sit in the buying journey.

A number of leaders emphasised that face-to-face interaction remains essential for building the trust that drives conversion. Digital channels are highly effective for reaching audiences at scale, but when it comes to progressing relationships with senior decision-makers, in-person engagement delivers something that virtual touchpoints struggle to replicate.

Partnerships are playing an increasingly important role too. Working alongside other businesses can open doors to new audiences and create opportunities for joint events where face-to-face relationships are built. Leaders described the value of combining with other businesses to create solutions that work for customers. In an increasingly crowded market, there is power in working together rather than competing for attention.

AI adoption

Universal uptake but many leaders have concerns

AI has become central to how our respondents and their teams work day-to-day.

Our research shows that 88% of marketing leaders have integrated AI tools into their regular workflows, with 40% describing that integration as extensive across most activities. Only a small minority are still experimenting or yet to adopt - what felt new a year ago is now key to how teams work.

It's clear from our conversations that the speed of this shift has been remarkable. AI has moved from something teams were testing to something they now rely on in a very short space of time for a wide range of activities, from analysing data to tailoring campaign content for multiple audiences.

The applications are broadening all the time. Some are developing their own internal AI tools trained on their tone of voice and messaging to create content more efficiently while keeping the brand consistent, with others using AI to support sales enablement by pulling together customised collateral based on customer conversations.

This is driving strong requirement for new talent, with 76% of our respondents reporting a growing demand for AI skills in their teams.

We use AI on a daily basis for making sure copy is optimised, looking at data in a smart way and running queries instead of spending time building pivot tables. AI will get you 70% of the way there, but you will always need human intelligence and human input."

Fiona Giles | Global VP
Field & Regional Marketing | Boomi

High adoption but unresolved concerns

But universal adoption and expanding applications don't come without concerns. According to our findings, 41% of those we surveyed are worried about the quality and authenticity of AI-generated content, with similar proportions (40%) concerned about demonstrating ROI from AI investment, data privacy and ethical considerations.

Almost a third (31%) are worried about how they can integrate it with their existing tech stack - just 12% say they have no concerns at all.

These apprehensions matter because they are shaping how leaders are using the technology. It was clear from our conversations that the concerns about content quality in particular tell us something important.

Leaders recognise that AI can produce output quickly, but they are not confident that output is good enough to use without significant human input. That is creating a need for ongoing oversight and quality control, which limits some of the efficiency gains AI might otherwise deliver.

The challenge of demonstrating ROI is also significant. Many leaders have invested in AI tools and embedded them into everyday workflows, yet they are still working out how to evaluate the return on that investment.

Those we spoke to are finding that measuring impact is complex when AI supports a range of activities rather than delivering a single, clearly defined outcome, and traditional performance metrics do not always capture its contribution accurately.

This is creating a disconnect between adoption and assurance. Teams are relying on AI in their daily work, but leaders remain cautious about overstating its value or depending on it without oversight.

As one leader put it, AI might get you 70% of the way, but human intelligence is still essential to interpret, refine and apply what it produces.

Human input is still vital

This view came through consistently in our conversations. AI and human intelligence need to work together, rather than one replacing the other.

Leaders described the technology as a tool that is enhancing what their teams can do, not something that operates independently. They expect the human element to remain essential, whether that is reviewing AI-generated content, interpreting data outputs, or making judgment calls that require context and experience.

The technology brings a huge amount of value in terms of process efficiency, but I don't think it replaces the human interaction."

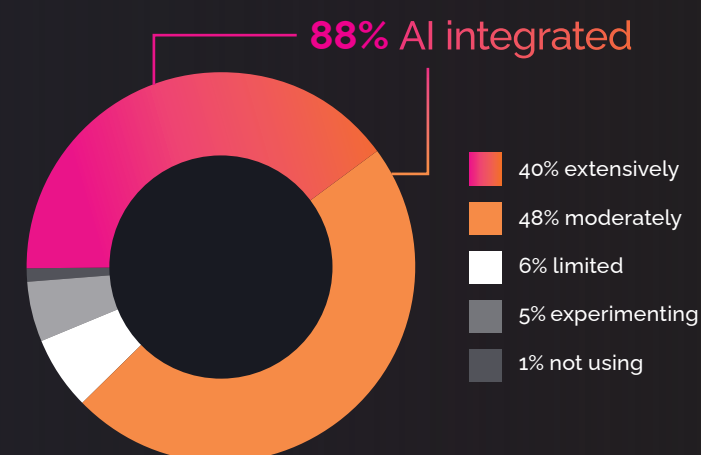
Sinéad Mooty | Head of EMEA Marketing
Recorded Future

I don't believe AI can solve everything. For me it's AI and HI: artificial intelligence and human intelligence working together."

Leigh Quigg | Senior Director
Growth Marketing (NAM/EMEA) | Medidata

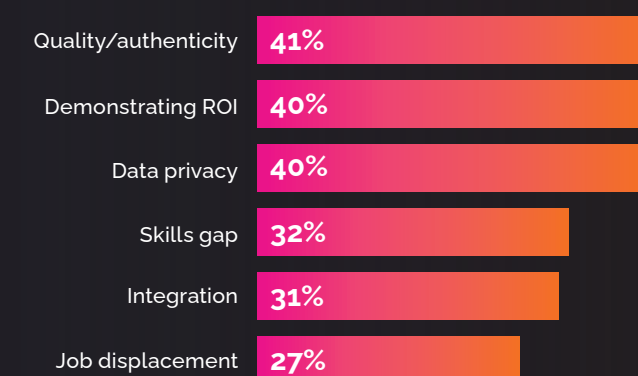
AI adoption is near-universal

Data: Q19



The concerns leaders have with AI

Data: Q21



Talent & skills

The clearest constraint on growth

Despite universal confidence in strategy and results, finding the right talent represents a significant challenge alongside the impact of AI.

Our research shows that 78% of marketing leaders face some form of talent issue, making it the clearest constraint on future growth, with just 22% saying they're having no problems in finding and accessing the right skills.

According to our findings, the most common challenge is discovering experienced candidates in emerging areas like AI and marketing technology, followed by budget constraints for competitive salaries, competition from other employers and difficulty in retention.

It's clear that leaders know what skills they need, but face problems finding the people who have them.

The skills of the future

Looking ahead across the next three years, almost half (48%) of marketing leaders selected AI literacy and prompt engineering as among the most critical skills for their teams, with strategic thinking (37%) and data analysis (37%) also ranking highly.

From our conversations, leaders understand that the talent pool in these areas needs time to develop at scale. AI literacy as a marketing skill barely existed three years ago, but from our conversations it's clear that the gap between what teams need and what is available is widening.

Those we spoke to also emphasised the enduring importance of softer skills alongside technical capability. Communication, critical thinking and the ability to absorb information and then interrogate it were highlighted as essential for high-performing teams. As one leader put it, if we do not encourage people to think critically, where does that leave us in the future?

Reshaping teams

Team structures are changing, with our findings showing that AI is already having a marked impact.

More than half (53%) of leaders are creating new roles and areas of expertise, with a third (34%) saying the technology is reducing the need for some junior positions. At the same time, 28% reported uncertainty about what future roles will look like.

In our conversations, leaders described the practical challenges this is creating. With headcount under pressure, some are finding that the capabilities they need can't easily be packaged into a single hire.

Instead, they are turning to agency partners and flexible resourcing models, dialling expertise up or down as needs arise, rather than committing to hire permanent staff.

Others told us that while AI helps teams work faster, the increased output still requires people to manage, review and refine it. So, while the need for headcount is not falling significantly, the shape of teams is shifting.

Team structures are changing, with our findings showing that AI is already having a marked impact.

Concerns for the future talent pipeline

Worries about entry level positions led several leaders to raise concerns about what lies ahead for the next generation of marketers. If entry-level roles decline, succession planning becomes increasingly challenging.

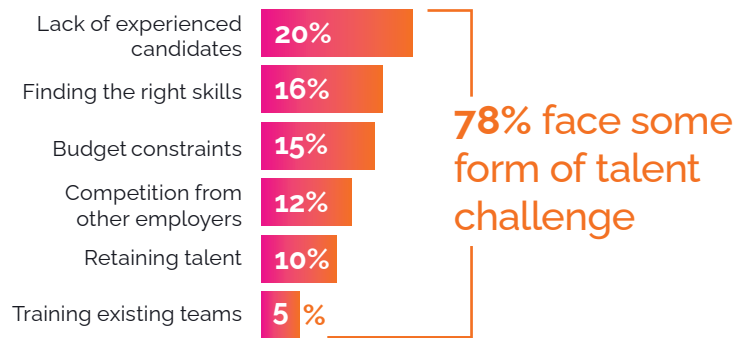
Those we spoke to who have spent decades in the industry recognise the value of working from the bottom up. The experience gained in early roles, learning processes, absorbing how things work and understanding the detail are what shape well-rounded senior employees. And as one leader noted, you need that foundational knowledge to get the best out of AI in the first place.

Without people coming up through the ranks and learning the fundamentals, the question becomes: who will be equipped to lead marketing teams in ten years' time?

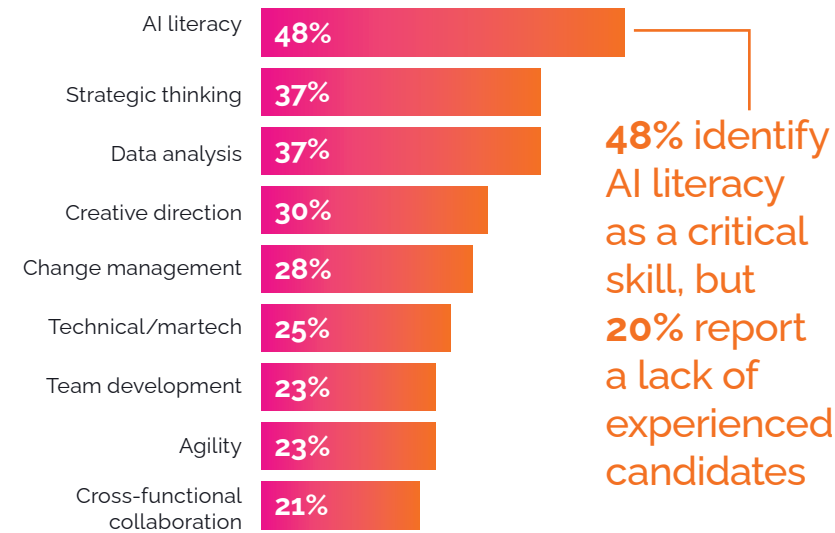
Communication and soft skills have a massive impact on team performance. I think critical thinking, the ability to absorb and then question, that's really key. If we don't encourage people to do that, then where does that leave us in the future?"

Leigh Quigg | Senior Director
Growth Marketing (NAM/EMEA) | Medidata

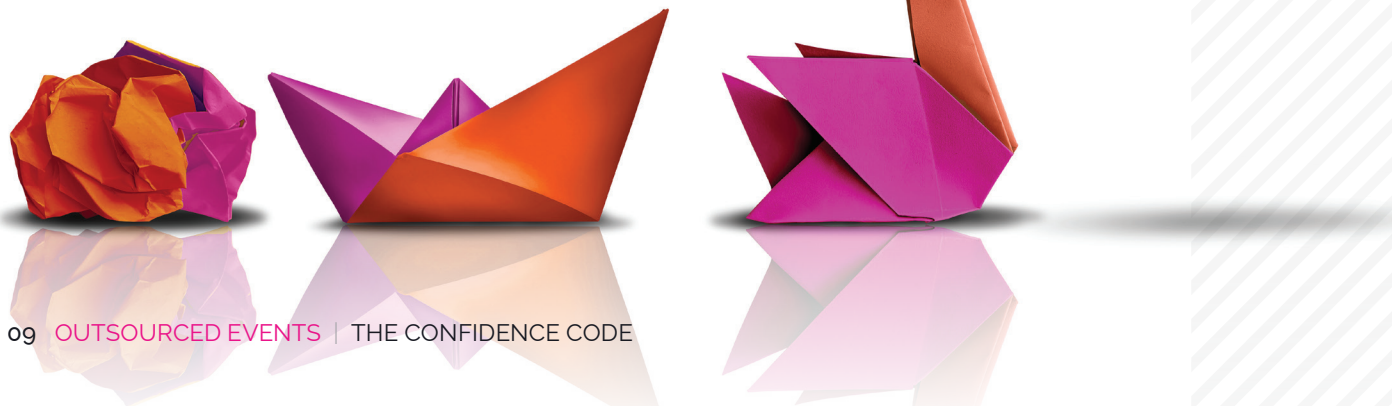
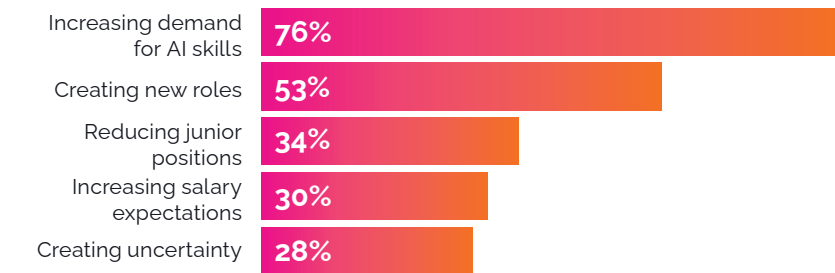
The talent challenges leaders are facing Data: Q26



The most critical skills for the next three years Data: Q23



How AI is reshaping teams Data: Q20



The future lens

What's clear from our findings is that marketing leaders across EMEA are feeling a confidence that has been earned through results.

Most are delivering stronger ROI than last year, hitting their targets and expanding investment across multiple channels because they have the data to prove it works.

But beneath that confidence, our research highlights some important questions on fundamental pressures that all marketing leaders are feeling.

Our findings show that AI is embedded in everyday marketing, yet many leaders remain uncertain about what this will mean for content quality, proving ROI and managing data privacy risks.

Most cannot access the specialist talent they need, particularly in AI and marketing technology. And as buying journeys become more complex, proving value through attribution is getting harder, not easier.

The research also highlights the challenge being felt in building teams. With the right talent hard to find and headcount under pressure, many are turning to external partners and flexible resourcing models to access the specialist expertise they need.

Yet despite much upheaval through technology, the importance of the human connection continues to shine through the enduring results that in-person events and face-to-face interactions continue to deliver.

Marketing leaders recognise that trust is built through relationships, and relationships are built most effectively when people come together.

This research shows that there is much to be positive about, despite the day-to-day challenges that are impacting every sector. Building capability, accessing specialist skills and proving value across increasingly complex buyer journeys will shape whether this confidence can be sustained through 2026 and beyond.

Marketing leaders recognise that trust is built through relationships, and relationships are built most effectively when people come together.

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About the research

The research was conducted by Censuswide in December 2025, surveying 100 senior marketing decision makers across UK tech businesses. Qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted with marketing leaders from (Boomi, Mimecast, Recorded Future and Medidata) to provide context and real-world perspective.

Get in touch

If you'd like to discuss what these findings mean for your organisation or explore how we can support your marketing and event strategy in 2026 and beyond, Get in touch with the Outsourced Events team.

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