

REPORT

Maximizing AI's Potential in Marketing: Move from Reluctance to Results

THE WORK INNOVATION LAB

BY  asana



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The Work Innovation Lab team

Rebecca Hinds, PhD
Head of The Work Innovation Lab

DATA AND CONTENT STRATEGY:

Steph Hess
Eliane Mitchell
Whitney Vige
Anna James
Connor Grossman
Caeleigh MacNeil
Kira Conte

Marketing AI Institute

SECTION 1

Introduction

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With the right resources and mindset, marketers can overcome their fear, embrace AI, and drive better business outcomes.

In the high-stakes world of marketing, AI is the game-changer for marketing leaders. According to a 2023 [Gartner](#) survey of 410 CMOs, “seventy-five percent of CMOs are facing increased pressure to “do more with less” to deliver profitable growth in 2023. Because of this, 86% of marketers said they must make significant changes to how the marketing function works to achieve sustainable results.”¹

Yet, despite typically being early adopters of technology—embracing innovations like social media platforms for brand promotion, CRM systems for customer relationship management, and data analytics tools for market research—marketers are slower to adopt AI. This hesitation is holding them back from leveraging AI’s potential to drive efficiency and innovation. New research at [The Work Innovation Lab](#), a think tank by Asana, offers ways to move forward: with the right resources and mindset, marketers can transform their reluctance into engagement, unlocking AI’s potential to drive superior business outcomes.

¹<https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2023-05-22-gartner-survey-reveals-71-percent-of-cmos-believe-they-lack-sufficient-budget-to-fully-execute-their-strategy-in-2023>

SECTION 2

Marketing's AI paradox: AI is amplifying marketers, but fear is holding them back

The Work Innovation Lab's research reveals a startling paradox: while AI promises to revolutionize marketing, uncertainty is holding marketers back.

Our research paints a stark picture of this emotional response to AI. Research from The Work Innovation Lab shows that while marketers might be a bit more skeptical about AI than their peers, they're still curiously exploring it. 44% of marketers use AI at least weekly, and over half (52%) of marketers believe AI will have a positive impact on their work.

Despite this opportunity, fear is holding many marketers back. Almost half (44%) of marketers have felt afraid as a result of AI at least once a month. Often stemming from a lack of understanding or uncertainty about the implications of AI, this unsettled feeling is a major roadblock to its adoption.

Moreover, our research reveals a lack of enthusiasm about AI among marketers. Over the past three months, 22% of marketers haven't felt any excitement about AI. This lack of excitement could be attributed

to several factors, such as the perceived complexity of AI, concerns about job security, or a lack of visible success stories in their industry.

Adding to this, there's a lack of confidence when it comes to using AI to achieve marketing-related objectives. **Only 6% of marketers are completely confident in their organization's ability to use AI effectively in the next year.** This could be due to a lack of training in AI, limited exposure to its practical applications in marketing, or a lack of leadership support for AI initiatives in many organizations.

This data underscores a significant challenge: many marketers aren't just hesitant about using AI—they're also uncertain about whether the technology can actually help them perform better and achieve business goals. To unlock the full potential of AI, leaders need to address these fears and uncertainties, creating an environment where marketers feel supported and empowered to experiment with AI.

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AI's potential is vast but marketers will need to conquer fear to harness it.

More than 1 in 5 (22%) marketers haven't felt any excitement about AI over the past 3 months.

66%

of marketers believe the use of AI should be democratized at their organization.

30%

of marketers are open to AI assessing their performance at work.

61%

of marketers approve of AI being used for professional development and skills training.

SECTION 3

AI: The untapped creative companion in marketing

At first glance, it seems a bit hard to digest how marketing—a field deeply rooted in human creativity, empathy, and intuition—can benefit from AI. However, this need not be the case. AI can be a powerful ally, enabling marketers to work more creatively by taking over mundane tasks, analyzing vast amounts of data, and surfacing key insights.

The goal isn't to replace jobs or make marketing stiff and robotic. Instead teams can use AI for the tasks it excels at, like synthesizing large amounts of data, surfacing key insights, and helping to organize and kick off work. By positioning AI as a partner rather than a replacement, marketers can free up time to focus on their unique human skills, such as strategy, empathy, and creativity.

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AI is not the enemy, but a creative partner that can supercharge marketing strategies.

SECTION 4

The power of experimentation

Convincing marketers of AI's potential is a challenge, particularly as they are often less familiar with AI than their more technically-oriented peers. The Work Innovation Lab's research found that **marketers with a background in computer programming are more enthusiastic about AI, suggesting that familiarity with the technology and algorithms underlying AI breeds comfort.**

Notably, the research also found that learning and development around AI are likely to help marketers feel more excited and more confident in the technology. All of this points

to one conclusion: Gaining experience in AI is table stakes to help marketers become excited about AI.

However, most marketers aren't being equipped by their organizations to experiment and learn how to use AI. According to our research, **only 15% of marketers say their organization offers any formal AI training or learning and development initiatives.** This gap needs to be addressed if marketing leaders want to fully leverage AI.

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Knowledge is power: learning and development in AI can turn fear into excitement and confidence.

ONLY

15%

of marketers say their organization offers any formal training or learning and development initiatives in AI.

71%

of marketers with computer programming experience have felt excitement about AI in the past three months (compared to 48% of marketers without computer programming experience). This suggests that, with more understanding of the technology, marketers can gain more confidence around AI.

MARKETERS WITH COMPUTER PROGRAMMING EXPERIENCE

71%

MARKETERS WITHOUT COMPUTER PROGRAMMING EXPERIENCE

48%

55%

of marketers whose organizations offer AI training or learning and development initiatives are confident in their organization's ability to use AI to achieve their marketing-related objectives over the next 12 months (compared to 23% of marketers whose organizations don't offer learning and development initiatives). This underscores the importance of organizations investing in training and learning and development programs and initiatives focused on AI.

MARKETERS WHOSE ORGANIZATIONS OFFER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

55%

MARKETERS WHOSE ORGANIZATIONS DON'T OFFER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

23%

Case study: Embracing AI experimentation at Asana

The Work Innovation Lab, in collaboration with the Marketing AI Institute, conducted an experiment dubbed the “AI Brain Boost”. The initiative encouraged Asana’s marketing team to propose and implement daily uses of AI in their roles, putting them in the driver’s seat of AI adoption.

Participants were tasked with using AI at least once every day. Importantly, we instructed the volunteer participants to think about use cases wherein AI would “boost” their capabilities as marketers, rather than any old use case. We wanted to prime them to think about how AI can amplify their skills—rather than replace them.

This approach put marketers in the driver’s seat and allowed them to think creatively about how to use AI.

The result? After the experiment, participants said they expected to save 25 minutes per workday moving forward. They also expressed more willingness to integrate AI into their daily work after the study was over.

However, another significant finding from the study was that participants frequently noted that AI-generated recommendations and content didn’t always hit the mark perfectly and weren’t always accurate. They recognized the necessity of human intervention to rectify inaccuracies and guarantee the quality of the final output. Acknowledging AI’s fallibility is crucial to address misplaced confidence in its outputs and suggestions. Understanding these limitations can reduce fear and foster more positive attitudes.

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This was really fun and enlightening! I am not sure I would have made the leap into using generative AI as part of my work without this experiment.

- AI BRAIN BOOST PARTICIPANT

INSIGHT

Research shows that providing people with a realistic view of AI's current abilities and constraints through literacy and educational interventions seems to be an effective way to reduce misconceptions, fear, and anxiety toward AI.

SECTION 5

Content production: The gateway to broader AI adoption in marketing

The Marketing AI Institute, an organization that we deeply admire for its commitment to making AI more digestible, has come up with a framework for how AI can enhance every aspect of marketing, from planning to performance measurement.

1 | Planning

AI can streamline the strategic planning process in marketing. It can help in setting goals, constructing buyer personas, identifying keywords, analyzing content, predicting customer behavior, and allocating budgets effectively.

2 | Production

AI can enhance content creation by drafting social media updates, optimizing content for SEO, curating content, developing ad copy, converting voice to text and vice versa, and even designing websites.

3 | Personalization

AI can deliver personalized consumer experiences. It can recommend targeted content, personalize content and offers, engage users through chatbots, serve contextual ads, answer customer queries, and optimize email send times.

4 | Promotion

AI can optimize cross-channel promotions by adjusting ad spend in real-time, optimizing campaigns, testing creative elements, scheduling social shares, improving email deliverability, and delivering targeted ads.

5 | Performance

AI can transform data into actionable insights. It can score leads, monitor marketing activities, provide insights from analytics, forecast performance, and generate performance reports.

These 5 P's represent the key areas where AI can significantly enhance marketing efforts, from the initial planning stage to the final performance evaluation.

Many of our study participants saw AI as a valuable starting point when faced with a blank canvas. It provided suggestions to help them get their own ideas flowing, underscoring the idea that AI can be a helpful creative partner.

As you might expect, content production—the second “P” in the framework above—emerged as the primary use case that our AI Brain Boost participants selected. Participants planned to incorporate AI to produce social copy, write press releases, and help with early content drafts. This aligns with the fact that content production, with its lower learning curve and minimal data requirements, is often the first step for organizations venturing into AI. However, while it's an accessible starting point, it merely scratches the surface of AI's potential. To truly harness the power of AI, it's crucial to explore beyond content production and consider a broader range of use cases in the future.

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I used AI to suggest a status update in a project. It was a great summary and I used about 50% of the suggested text.

- AI BRAIN BOOST PARTICIPANT

The AI roadmap for future-ready marketing leaders

AI is here to stay, and marketing leaders must harness its potential or risk falling behind. Building confidence in AI should be a top priority—not just to drive efficiency, but to unlock creative potential and achieve key marketing goals.

Based on our research, here are the key steps marketing leaders can take to build their team’s confidence and fluency in AI:

<i>What to do</i>		<i>Why our research says it works</i>
Communicate the importance of AI and its role in achieving organizational goals.		Our research reveals a strong correlation between marketers’ excitement about AI and their confidence in its ability to advance their objectives. Specifically, 87% of marketers are excited about AI when they see it as beneficial to their marketing goals, and this figure rises to 91% when they trust their organization’s capacity to harness AI’s capabilities.
Reframe AI as a creative partner, not a replacement.		By positioning AI as a tool that assists rather than replaces human work, we can alleviate these fears and encourage more open adoption of AI technologies.
Invest in AI learning and development.		Our research suggests that learning and development around AI will help marketers feel more excitement about AI and gain confidence in the importance of AI for meeting their objectives.
Encourage experimentation with AI.		We found that by establishing a structured yet fun process—such as an experiment—for marketers to brainstorm AI integration into their work effectively, it helped them move from a place of fear and uncertainty to a place of fearless execution.
Explore use cases beyond content production.		While marketers will inevitably gravitate towards using AI for content production, it should serve as a springboard, propelling them towards also exploring the full spectrum of the 4 P’s: Planning, Personalization, Promotion, and Performance.

SECTION 6

Methodology

This research surveyed 306 Marketers in the UK, US, Germany, Canada, France, Australia, and New Zealand between May and June 2023. The survey was administered via Qualtrics and data collection was conducted by Prolific and did not target Asana customers or employees. Respondents were all employed full-time and identified as Marketing professionals.

Learn more at:
workinnovationlab.com

The Work Innovation Lab is a think tank by [Asana](#) that develops human-centric, cutting-edge research to help businesses evolve today to meet the growing changes and challenges of the future of work. To learn more about The Work Innovation Lab and get our other research-backed insights, visit workinnovationlab.com.

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