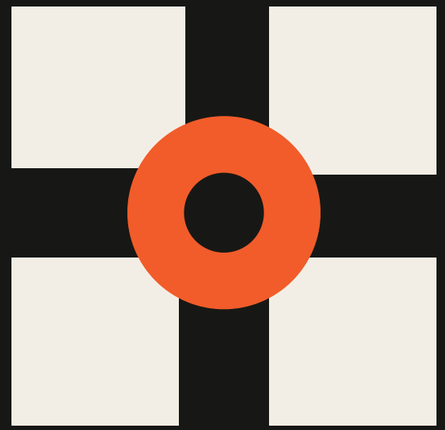
The changing shape of *marketing*

Data, AI and technology are reshaping marketing operations. Explore the structures emerging, the capabilities they need and the changing relationships between people, platforms, agencies and markets.



Future-ready marketing operations

Explore the *changing operation*

The current evidence, my working position and the structures emerging across marketing.

01 Where things stand — SLIDE 03

02 Structures and capabilities — SLIDE 08

03 Agencies and markets — SLIDE 11

04 Governance and success — SLIDE 13

05 Following the evidence — SLIDE 15

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Where things *stand now*

The early evidence points to technical capability taking a wider role in marketing, with different structures emerging.

Wider leadership remits

Woolworths has a Customer AI leader with a marketing background. Sainsbury's combines technology, marketing and data under one executive.

Technical capability inside marketing

Thoughtworks places AI & Data in the CMO office. Chime describes a dedicated team owning marketing AI initiatives.

Search crossing functions

HubSpot describes a dedicated AEO team working across marketing. Databricks advertises a combined brand-content and AI-search role.

The evidence supports changing responsibilities. Greater authority and sustained outcomes remain to be established.

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My current *position*

As AI reshapes engagement, production and operations, data, engineering and optimisation become strategic capabilities across marketing.

A wider strategic role

Marketers with these skills can shape customer engagement and the marketing operation alongside brand and communications.

Capability across the function

Discovery, production and activation depend on accurate data, connected systems and continual optimisation.

What would change my view

The hypothesis weakens if technical requirements grow while authority stays unchanged, or the capability develops elsewhere without a wider marketing role.

Test whether these capabilities and the people developing them gain strategic authority.

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AI across *future-ready marketing*

Engagement, production and operations describe where AI changes the marketing function.



Engagement

Discover, evaluate, engage



Production

Create and adapt assets



Operations

Activate, measure, decide

CAPABILITIES ACROSS ALL THREE

Data **Engineering** **Optimisation**

Data, engineering and optimisation support all three pillars.

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Discoverability at *every layer*

Future-ready marketing makes brand, product and experience discoverable in an AI-first landscape.



Discovery can begin anywhere

A person may encounter the brand, a specific product or an experience first. Each needs to be understood and represented accurately.

A relationship model

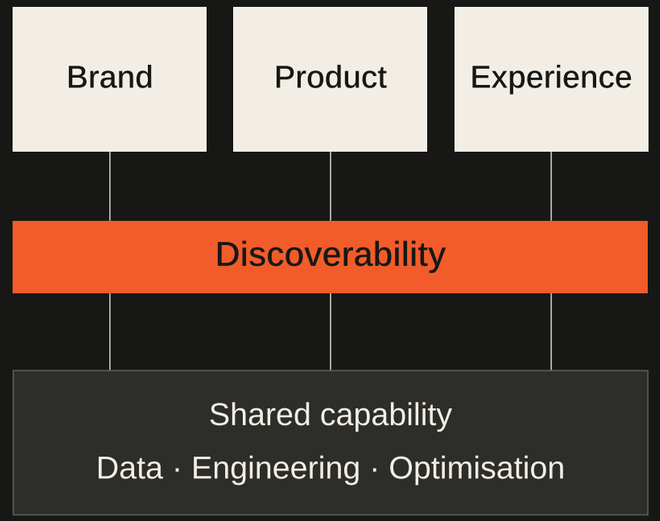
The orange layers show discoverability as a requirement throughout. The circles do not prescribe a customer journey or reporting lines.

Discoverability belongs across brand, product and experience.

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Shared capability for *future-ready marketing*

Data, engineering and optimisation support discoverability across brand, product and experience.



A common foundation

Accurate information, connected systems and feedback support the whole marketing operation.

Placement remains a research question

The model shows capability that needs to connect. It does not require every specialist to report into one central team.

Follow how technical capability gains influence across marketing.

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Different structures are *taking shape*

Two documented arrangements show how capability can sit within a marketing operation.

Chime: dedicated AI leads

A team within marketing owns AI initiatives from beginning to end, alongside in-house creative capability.

Thoughtworks: AI and Data in the CMO office

AI & Data moved from go-to-market operations into the CMO office. AI engineering graduates work alongside marketers.

These are emerging arrangements, with different contexts and limits.

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How do the functions *connect?*

Search capability is connecting more closely with the wider marketing operation.

HubSpot: a dedicated AEO team

Its CMO describes the team becoming more integrated with other marketing teams, including YouTube and Reddit activity.

Webflow: a wider search programme

The practitioner account describes contributions from brand, PR, community, content and customer marketing.

What to establish

Broader coordination does not by itself prove a new reporting line or greater strategic authority.

`Discoverability connects brand, product and experience.`

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Broader roles still need *expertise*

In a P&G experiment, AI-assisted individuals produced proposals rated similarly to those from pairs without AI.

What it tested

Product-innovation workshops involving 791 professionals, comparing individual and paired work with and without AI.

What remains open

Long-term team performance, specialist development and permanent organisational design.

What to follow

Role breadth, demonstrated skills, junior development and retained judgement.

`Task performance is one part of organisational capability.`

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Agency relationships are *part of the structure*

New technology can change how internal teams and external specialists work together.

Perk: changed agency scope

Its marketing VP describes a content-operations role managing AI processes and localisation brought in-house, with unchanged content-team headcount.

Coca-Cola: technology-led agency scope

Its agency review explicitly connects marketing change with data, technology and AI. The announced model combines global arrangements with regional partners.

Compare capability, responsibility and total cost alongside the agency fee.

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Global systems and *local expertise*

Coca-Cola's October 2026 announcement combines global creative and media arrangements with different regional media partners.

What can be shared?

Data infrastructure, asset libraries, production systems and measurement standards.

What needs market knowledge?

Language, cultural judgement, customer context, commercial relationships and local requirements.

Who can adapt the work?

Follow how global and local teams divide authority and resolve disagreements.

`Examine each capability before deciding where it sits.`

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Privacy shapes *the operation*

Connected systems require clear responsibilities across marketing, privacy, legal, security and technology.

Understand the data

Know what information flows between platforms, people and partners.

Assign responsibility

Identify who assesses a use, maintains controls and can intervene.

Maintain the arrangement

Build training, contractor controls and review into ongoing operations.

Governance is part of how the operation works.

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What would make a *restructure successful?*

The proposed assessment connects operational improvements with marketing effectiveness and sustained capability.

Commercial contribution

Demand, retention, contribution and agreed brand outcomes.

Delivery and economics

Cycle time, quality and total cost, including review and rework.

People and markets

Skills, development, retained judgement and local effectiveness.

`Record the baseline, timeframe, scope and competing explanations.`

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Keep the claim and *the evidence together*

Different sources establish different things. Follow an initiative beyond its first announcement.

Announced

Coca-Cola identifies partners and a future implementation date. Outcomes remain unknown.

Reported in operation

Chime describes an existing marketing AI team. Its performance claims remain company-reported.

Tested in a task

The P&G experiment tests an intervention. Its results have a defined setting and scope.

`A source can establish a change without proving its commercial value.`

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Building the evidence *over time*

The research will follow how marketing structures develop, what they deliver and what changes again.

Signals

Document qualifying developments and their evidence.

Field Notes

Explore the implications and test the working hypotheses.

Guide and advisory

Bring the evidence together and support particular choices as it develops.

`2027 is a restructuring hypothesis to investigate.`

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▼ Explanations and sources

01 / The changing shape of marketing

Research context: BCG CMO Survey, June 2026 (https://www.bcg.com/publications/2026/making-the-agentic-marketing-transformation-a-reality)

02 / Explore the changing operation

Research baseline: The CMO Survey 2026 (https://cmosurvey.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/The_CMO_Survey-Topline_Report-2026.pdf)

03 / Where things stand now

Evidence reviewed to 3 November 2026. These examples have different evidence stages: appointments, company accounts and hiring intent. They do not establish one standard structure or a representative industry trend. Team size, budget authority, career progression and sustained commercial outcomes remain incomplete across the cases. Experian Health’s advertised SEO/AEO role reports to the Digital Marketing Director, with no direct reports. This illustrates that broader search work need not mean a different reporting line or greater authority. Perk’s marketing VP also describes AI-managed content operations and localisation brought in-house, with unchanged content-team headcount and lower agency spending. Total cost, language quality and commercial outcomes remain unverified.

Woolworths: Customer AI appointment (https://lbbonline.com/news/woolworths-sean-barrett-chief-marketing-officer)

Sainsbury’s: combined leadership remit (https://corporate.sainsburys.co.uk/news/press-releases/sainsbury-s-announces-leadership-changes-to-drive-next-level-strategy/)

Thoughtworks: AI & Data in the CMO office (https://www.thoughtworks.com/en-gb/insights/blog/generative-ai/rethinking-go-to-market-AI)

Chime: marketing AI team (https://www.chime.com/newsroom/chime-cmo-vineet-mehra-on-ai-brand-evolving-role/)

HubSpot: CMO interview (https://agilebrandguide.com/hubspot-cmo-kipp-bodnar-on-brand-discovery-in-an-age-of-ai-search/)

Databricks: advertised brand-content and AI-search role (https://www.databricks.com/company/careers/marketing/principal-brand-content--ai-search-visibility-8860653002)

Experian Health: contrasting advertised SEO/AEO role (https://jobs.experian.com/job/aeo-and-seo-manager-remote-in-united-states-jid-4636)

Perk: content operations and agency scope (https://www.youtube.com/shorts/lgeReoBBi7o)

04 / My current position

This is my working hypothesis. I am testing whether technical capabilities become more influential, and whether the people developing them gain strategic authority. The three pillars describe where AI changes marketing; they are not a proposed organisation chart. Job advertisements and appointment announcements show intended responsibilities. Operating accounts describe what companies report putting into practice.

The Three Pillars Field Note (https://paulthinks.com/field-notes/ai-across-the-marketing-operation/)

05 / AI across future-ready marketing

Engagement covers how people use platforms and technology to discover, evaluate and engage with brands. Production covers creating, adapting and evaluating marketing assets with AI. Operations covers activation, measurement, coordination and decisions, improving quality and speed. These are areas of change, not proposed departments.

Three pillars of AI in marketing: Field Note (https://paulthinks.com/field-notes/ai-across-the-marketing-operation/)

06 / Discoverability at every layer

The concentric circles show the relationship between a brand and the products and experiences through which it is encountered. White identifies the area; orange identifies its discoverability requirement. Every orange layer is labelled. This is an authored model to test and refine, not an observed company organisation chart.

My current position: the marketing operations guide (https://paulthinks.com/guides/marketing-operations/#working-hypothesis)

07 / Shared capability for future-ready marketing

This is the capability companion to the concentric circles. Brand, product and experience share a discoverability requirement, supported by data, engineering and optimisation. The connections do not represent a prescribed hierarchy. The research compares whether capability is embedded, shared or supplied by specialist partners.

My current position: the marketing operations guide (https://paulthinks.com/guides/marketing-operations/#working-hypothesis)

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08 / Different structures are taking shape

Company accounts establish the described capabilities. They do not establish a universally best model. Thoughtworks does not establish its previous reporting hierarchy or the budget authority attached to the new position.

Chime: marketing AI team, June 2026 (https://www.chime.com/newsroom/chime-cmo-vineet-mehra-on-ai-brand-evolving-role/)

Thoughtworks: operating model, February 2026 (https://www.thoughtworks.com/en-gb/insights/blog/generative-ai/rethinking-go-to-market-AI)

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09 / How do the functions connect?

The first two examples describe practitioner accounts. The relationship between brand, product, experience and discoverability is the author’s working model. These sources do not establish that an SEO team moved into a brand reporting line.

HubSpot: CMO interview, July 2026 (https://agilebrandguide.com/hubspot-cmo-kipp-bodnar-on-brand-discovery-in-an-age-of-ai-search/)

Webflow: Vivian Hoang interview, May 2026 (https://www.masters-of-search.com/podcast/webflow-ai-search-playbook-vivian-hoang-aeo-seo-lead-webflow)

10 / Broader roles still need expertise

The final paper reports 776 complete-data responses from 791 workshop participants. This preregistered experiment concerns a defined task in one company, not permanent team design.

The Cybernetic Teammate, Organization Science, June 2026 (https://pubsonline.informs.org/doi/10.1287/orsc.2025.20702)

11 / Agency relationships are part of the structure

Perk’s practitioner account reports lower agency spending without quantified savings; total cost, language quality and commercial outcomes remain to be established. Coca-Cola’s announcement sets out a phased implementation beginning 1 December 2026. It establishes intended partner responsibilities, not delivered outcomes at the evidence cutoff.

Perk: Jada Balster interview excerpt, October 2026 (https://www.youtube.com/shorts/lgeReoBBi7o)

Coca-Cola: agency appointments, October 2026 (https://investors.coca-colacompany.com/news-events/press-releases/detail/1175/the-coca-cola-company-selects-agency-partners-to-accelerate-the-future-of-marketing)

12 / Global systems and local expertise

The questions are a proposed comparison framework. Coca-Cola's phased implementation begins 1 December 2026; results are not yet established at this edition's cutoff.

Coca-Cola: agency appointments, October 2026 (https://investors.coca-colacompany.com/news-events/press-releases/detail/1175/the-coca-cola-company-selects-agency-partners-to-accelerate-the-future-of-marketing)

13 / Privacy shapes the operation

Existing APP 1 accountability applies now. From 10 December 2026, APP 1.7–1.9 add privacy-policy disclosures for covered entities when a computer program uses personal information to make, or directly and substantially support, decisions that could reasonably be expected to significantly affect an individual's rights or interests. The new threshold does not cover every marketing use of AI.

OAIC: APP 1 guidelines, updated September 2026 (https://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/australian-privacy-principles/australian-privacy-principles-guidelines/chapter-1-app-1-open-and-transparent-management-of-personal-information)

14 / What would make a restructure successful?

This is the guide's proposed assessment framework. Survey measures of performance provide context; they do not prove that a particular restructure caused an outcome.

The CMO Survey 2026: capabilities, jobs and performance measures (https://cmosurvey.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/The_CMO_Survey-Topline_Report-2026.pdf)

15 / Keep the claim and the evidence together

Coca-Cola: announcement (https://investors.coca-colacompany.com/news-events/press-releases/detail/1175/the-coca-cola-company-selects-agency-partners-to-accelerate-the-future-of-marketing)

Chime: company account (https://www.chime.com/newsroom/chime-cmo-vineet-mehra-on-ai-brand-evolving-role/)

P&G: field experiment (https://pubsonline.informs.org/doi/10.1287/orsc.2025.20702)

16 / Building the evidence over time

Evidence cutoff: 3 November 2026. Planned monthly research includes follow-ups, failures and reversals. The source index below is one research baseline, not the source of the 2027 hypothesis.

Continuing research baseline: CMO Survey archive (https://cmosurvey.org/results/)