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Global Centre for AI in Marketing



2026 U.S. AI IN MARKETING BENCHMARK · EXECUTIVE SNAPSHOT REPORT

Confidence Outpaces Accountability.

What U.S. marketing leaders told us about AI maturity, and what CMOs should do next.

U.S. marketing leaders are confident about AI and are already putting it to work. What most have not yet built is the accountability that turns that confidence into dependable business value: a documented plan, and measures that connect AI to commercial results. The first U.S. benchmark from the Global Centre for AI in Marketing (GCAM), in partnership with The CMO Syndicate, gives this U.S. sample a maturity score of **2.77**, placing it at **Level 3 (Early Emerging)** of six, just ahead of Australia's 2.67, also Level 3.

48% feel fully ready to lead AI change

vs

7% have a clearly documented AI roadmap (50% in part)

74% measure time saved from AI

vs

14% measure revenue or conversion lift

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Confidence is ahead of accountability

More than half of respondents (52%) sit at Level 3. Only 1% have reached Level 5, and none have reached Level 6. The mood in U.S. marketing is optimistic. Leadership and Culture is the strongest of the seven maturity drivers, and almost half of leaders (48%) feel fully ready to take their teams through AI change. Practical barriers are reported more often than cultural resistance, and most leaders describe their teams as excited but cautious, not fearful.

The weakness sits at the other end of the chart. Roadmap, Planning and Investment scores lowest at 2.02, just inside Level 2. Only 7% of leaders have a clearly documented deployment roadmap. Roadmaps are not absent: half have one that is partly documented. But for most, the plan is still a work in progress.

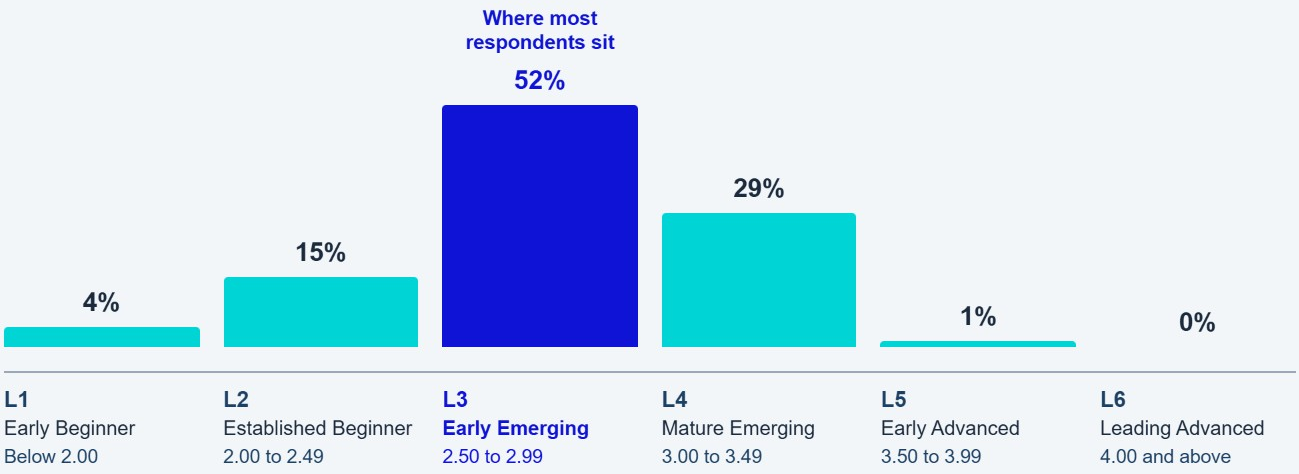
In short, the gap is structural, not attitudinal: the confidence is there, the accountability is still being built.

Maturity score by driver, U.S. vs Australia



Scores run from 1.00 to 4.50, and each maturity level is a band of that score: L1 below 2.00, L2 2.00 to 2.49, L3 2.50 to 2.99, L4 3.00 to 3.49, L5 3.50 to 3.99, L6 4.00 and above. Overall: U.S. 2.77, Level 3 (95% confidence interval 2.70 to 2.83); Australia 2.67, Level 3.

Where U.S. teams sit on the six levels of AI marketing maturity



SECTION 2

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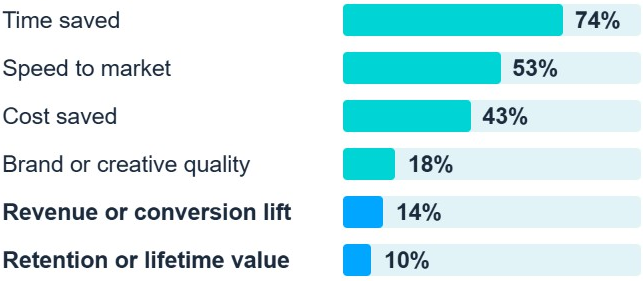
What sits behind it

Productivity measurement leads; revenue measurement lags. Teams know where they want AI to help: analytics and insights (83%), process automation (78%) and research (74%) top the list of priorities. But teams measure what is easy to see. Almost 3 in 4 track time saved, while only 14% measure revenue or conversion lift. One possible explanation is access rather than willingness: linking AI to commercial outcomes often relies on sales, finance and CRM data that marketing teams do not own.

Tools added, work not redesigned. Most deployment is additive. 4 in 10 teams use AI for individual tasks only, and just 17% have redesigned core processes, roles or team structures around it. The top barriers are practical: lack of time (50%), data readiness (47%) and skills (46%).

Metrics U.S. marketers use to measure AI impact



Shows the share of respondents measuring each metric, not the size or direction of any improvement. Multiple responses allowed. 18% measure nothing yet.

Quality is held together by people, not policy.

AI slop is a top-three concern for 78% of leaders. Most (81%) rely on human review, but fewer than half (43%) have a written AI use policy and only 10% have an incident process.

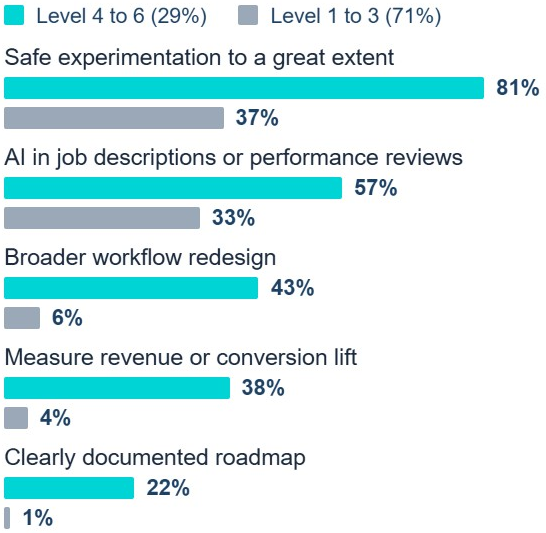
SECTION 3

What the leaders do differently

Respondents at Level 4 or above are not simply more enthusiastic. They behave differently in five ways, each closing a gap most other respondents still have open.

1. **They write the plan down,** where almost no one else has.
2. **They redesign work,** rather than adding tools to old processes.
3. **They make experimentation safe,** giving teams permission to learn.
4. **They measure commercial value,** which builds the case to keep investing.
5. **They build AI into roles,** writing AI capability into job descriptions and reviews.

High maturity leaders vs the rest



All differences are statistically significant (Fisher's exact test, $p < 0.05$, not adjusted for multiple comparisons).

> **The race isn't really about who is using the most AI, but who has the clearest path from AI activity to business value."**

Louise Cummins
Founder and CEO, Global Centre for AI in Marketing

> **If every approval, handoff and meeting stays intact, we've made the tasks faster without making the organization better. The real test of AI readiness is what we're willing to stop doing."**

JJ Kaye
CMO, Capital Bank

How the U.S. compares with Australia's 2026 benchmark

U.S. Australia

2.77 vs **2.67**
overall maturity score

29% vs **17%**
reach Level 4 or above

7% vs **6%**
have a clearly documented roadmap: just as rare in both

SECTION 4

What CMOs should do next

The next step is accountability leaders can measure, built around a few workflows that matter. Five decisions give it substance.

01
Document the roadmap.
Agree priority workflows, owners, investment, data needs and success measures.

02
Measure value, not just speed.
Track time and cost alongside customer outcomes and revenue.

03
Build capability on real work.
Train each role on a live workflow, with time to apply and evaluate.

04
Own quality and risk.
Set review standards, testing and a named escalation route.

05
Design the workforce shift.
Plan human and AI handoffs and protect pathways for junior talent.

The 90-day plan

DAYS 1 TO 30
Establish the baseline.
Baseline the seven drivers, choose a small set of priority workflows and assign owners and value measures.

DAYS 31 TO 60
Redesign and test.
Map human and AI handoffs, build capability through real tasks and pilot quality review.

DAYS 61 TO 90
Evaluate and decide.
Compare results with baselines, include full costs, then decide what to scale, change or stop.

Where does your team sit?

For the full report, to have the findings presented to your leadership team, or to get your team's own AI maturity baseline against the U.S. benchmark, get in touch.

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ABOUT THE RESEARCH

126 U.S. marketing leaders, 90% of them CMOs or other C-suite executives, with responses to October 29, 2026. In partnership with The CMO Syndicate. Answers to 18 scored inputs across seven drivers produce a maturity score from 1.00 to 4.50, and each of the six maturity levels is a band of that score, using the 2026 Australian benchmark scoring specification unchanged. Australian comparison: 126 respondents, same scoring, unweighted; the two samples differ in role, age and sector mix. The sample is not nationally representative. Significance tests are not adjusted for multiple comparisons. Percentages may not total 100% because of rounding.

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