

# Strategic C-Suite Collaboration:

## CIO-CMO Alignment for AI-Era Martech Success



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# Strategic C-Suite collaboration: CIO-CMO alignment for AI-era martech success

On the surface, the relationship between the chief information officer (CIO) and chief marketing officer (CMO) appears healthy. But beneath that veneer, persistent challenges in communication, priority alignment, and decision-making expose deep and potentially destabilizing cracks.

The escalating complexity of building and operationalizing AI capabilities compels CMOs and CIOs to return to the table, not as adversaries, but as co-architects of transformation.

As IT assumes the mantle of orchestrating enterprise AI strategy, friction with marketing leadership will emerge, raising critical questions about who truly owns accountability for business outcomes, technology investments, and strategic prioritization.

This study examines these evolving dynamics and uncovers actionable opportunities for CMOs and CIOs to forge a new model of collaboration that accelerates AI-driven growth while managing risk and unlocking the full potential of agentic marketing.

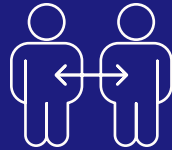
All data from IDC's *CIO-CMO Survey*, November 2025; n = 205; except where noted.  
Note: All numbers in this document may not be exact due to rounding.

# Executive summary



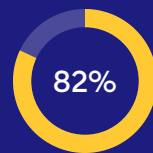
## Misaligned mandates undermine unified AI and martech decision-making

Marketing roles are measured on growth, speed, and customer impact, while IT is rewarded for stability, risk mitigation, scalability, and resilience. This misalignment intensifies with AI due to higher stakes for faster growth, data quality, and security.



## The dual reality: AI necessitates greater CIO-CMO collaboration, and ongoing friction points pull them apart

The outlook is optimistic:

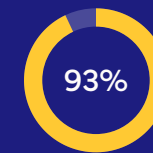


of respondents believe AI will increase collaboration between the CIO and CMO,

yet AI expands shared dependencies (i.e., data readiness), and agentic AI introduces new requirements around security, governance, and orchestration.



## Budget authority = power struggle



of respondents say the person leading AI tech strategy is the same person leading AI transformation across the business.

The CIO's rise to lead AI transformation potentially exacerbates the disagreement over who controls the martech budget, increasing tension and slowing progress.

## Executive summary (continued)



### Value creation requires evolved roles and more integrated and strategic collaboration

Leading organizations recognize that neither marketing nor IT can own AI value creation alone, but together, they can fuel sustainable growth for the business. CMOs must become the chief experience and growth technologists, and CIOs must shift from gatekeepers to enterprise AI orchestrators to succeed in the fiercely competitive AI era.



### AI is not just a technology shift; it's a relationship and operating model transformation

With new players, including chief AI officers, CISOs, and CDOs, joining the martech decision-making journey and agentic AI on the horizon, changing dynamics warrant a RACI framework, shared governance, and a unified road map, which are essential for aligning technology decisions with business outcomes.



### Importance of a modern data architecture

Agentic marketing requires a unified, governed customer data foundation that brings together structured and unstructured customer data across channels, journeys, and business functions. The CIO and CMO must come together to inventory existing data assets, implement the necessary guardrails for quality, privacy, security, governance, and align on a common set of metrics to measure success.

# Methodology overview

IDC used a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods for this study.

The quantitative survey included 205 respondents from organizations that have 1,000 or more employees. The respondents represented a mix of industries, with none from the education or government sectors. There were 52% of respondents from marketing and 48% from IT, with no roles below vice president. Respondents from the U.S. and Canada were included as part of the survey, with 164 and 41 respondents, respectively.

The qualitative research included insights from 13 executives based in either the U.S. or Canada, with six executives from marketing and seven executives from IT. This exclusive group took part in a three-day discussion board, referred to as a Qualboard, exploring the evolving relationship between the CIO and CMO and the broader C-Suite decision-making dynamics.

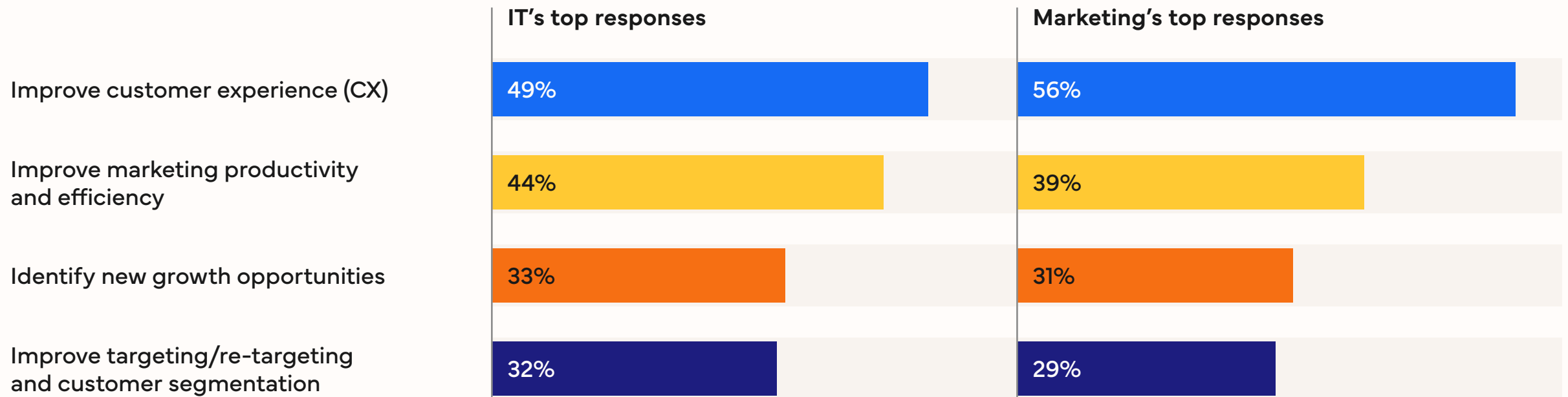
Both research instruments were used to learn about executive decision-making around marketing and customer experience technology, particularly in areas such as generative AI (GenAI), agentic AI, and enterprise data initiatives.

**Agentic AI** refers to AI systems capable of initiating and executing tasks autonomously across workflows.

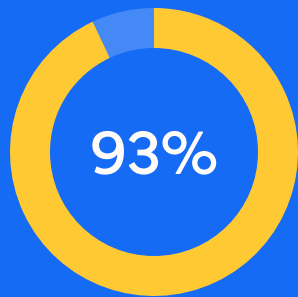
# Improving customer experience, efficiency, and competitive pressure are driving the urgent push for AI

## Top benefits of utilizing AI tools within the marketing stack

See the figure data in an [accessible table format](#).

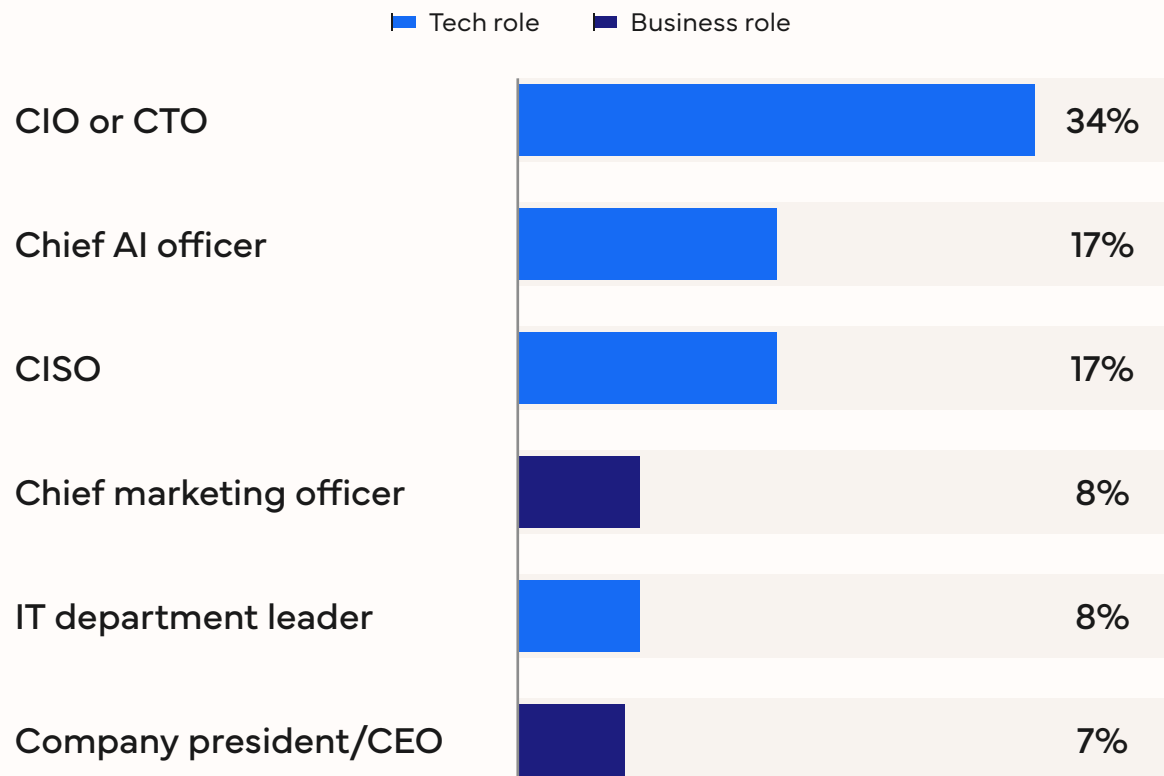


# CIOs and other tech leaders are in the driver's seat for AI transformation across the organization



say the person who is leading their AI tech strategy is also leading AI transformation across the business.

Who is primarily leading the AI transformation across your organization? (Top 6 responses)



→ Seeing CIOs as the top response for AI transformation leader requires a fundamental shift in their role from managing technology to managing business strategy.

# CMOs emerge as “growth technologists,” aligning marketing, data, and creative content

Even when IT controls the marketing technology budget, the CMO still heavily shapes IT’s strategy and spending decisions for marketing and customer experience. Within marketing, the CMO is the primary influencer on IT strategy and CX, far more than any other role. However, neither marketing nor IT can own AI value creation alone.



Many CMOs are becoming chief customer officers and are leading cross-functional teams and partnering with CIOs to deliver seamless digital experiences across organizations. They are now driving growth through data, technology, and CX strategy, not just ads, making technology central to business transformation.”

CIO, U.S. manufacturing organization

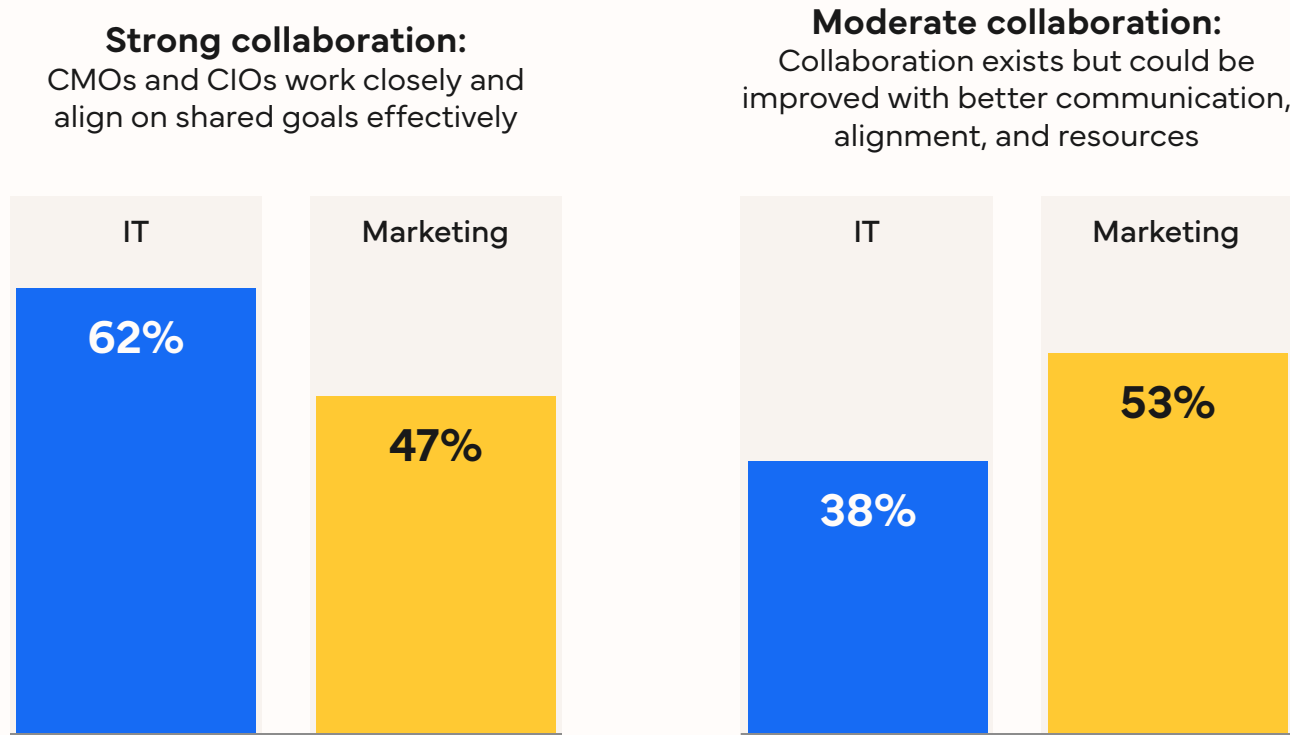


Speed is the game in the marketing team, and implementing AI in martech/CX stack allows for more targeted promotions and doing them more frequently. We have projected that if we get the digital marketing right, it will increase the revenue by a significant percentage. We have tied ROI with AI implementation, and we are seeing some promising results.”

CISO, Canadian energy organization

# IT-Marketing collaboration appears strong, but marketing is less convinced

How would you rate the current collaboration between CMOs (marketing leadership) and CIOs (tech leadership) in your organization?



We maintain a good partnership but operate more in silos. For example, our martech stack falls under the marketing organization (Adobe), and the financial (Oracle) and sales/IT side (Salesforce) falls under the IT organization. However, we do collaborate on things such as cybersecurity, etc., but we have the autonomy to choose our own tech packages and platforms.”

CMO, U.S. manufacturing company

# Budget authority = power

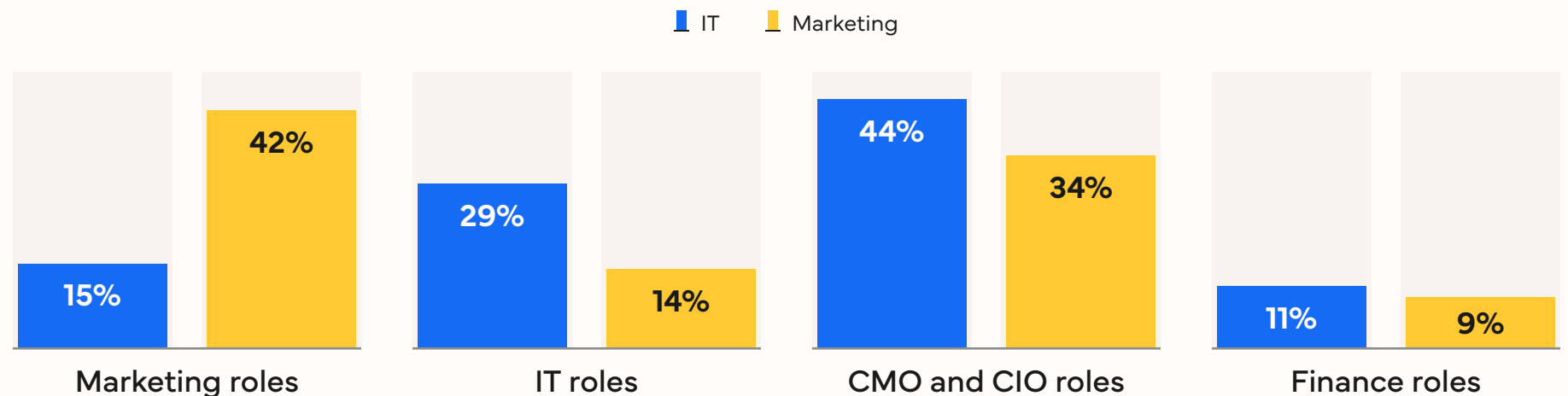
## IT and marketing don't agree on who owns the martech budget

Clear roles and funding are key to good collaboration and are necessary because AI and agentic systems demand closer integration with core infrastructure. CIOs' rise to lead AI transformation and AI tech strategy potentially exacerbates the disagreement over who controls the martech budget, increasing tension and slowing progress.

A total of 42% of marketing executives believe they own the budget for technology, but only 15% of IT leaders agree.


### Who controls the budget for marketing technology?

See the figure data in an [accessible table format](#).



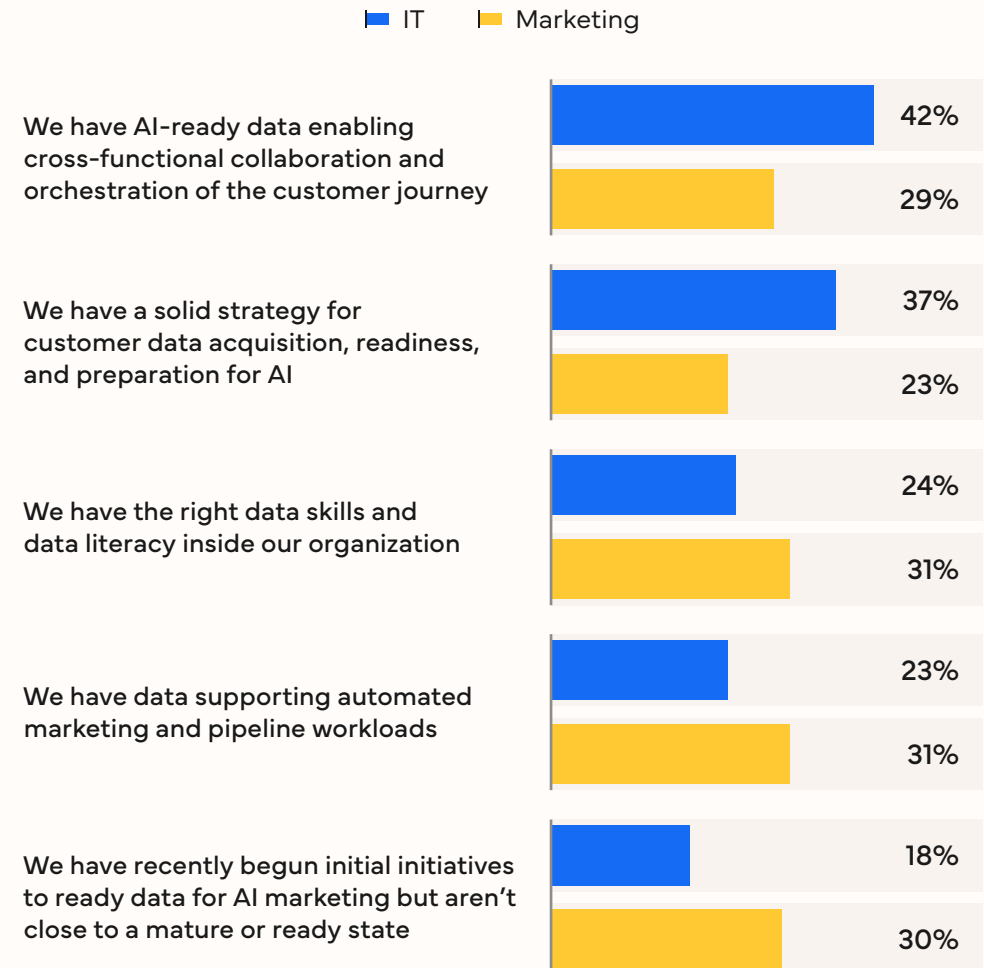
# Data is the shared **priority** and the shared **blocker** to scaling AI/agent marketing

Organizations have plenty of data, but marketing and IT often view it differently and are unclear about accountability. To succeed in the AI era, CIOs and CMOs must align on data ownership and quality management.

 Over half of IT and marketing respondents say they are the final decision-maker for customer master data.

Which of the following statements best describes your organization’s approach to ensuring data readiness for AI marketing initiatives?

See the figure data in an [accessible table format](#).



# Importance of a modern data architecture

IDC's recent marketing, CX, and customer data research indicates that agentic marketing requires a unified and governed customer data foundation that brings together structured and unstructured customer data across channels, journeys, and business functions.

When customer data remains siloed, models and agents lack the context needed to personalize experiences and take reliable action at scale.

To make progress, the CIO and CMO must come together to inventory existing data assets; implement the necessary guardrails for quality, privacy, security, and governance; and align on a common set of metrics to measure success.

Looking ahead to your upcoming fiscal year, which marketing program areas will be the highest priorities for budget investment? (Top 3 responses)

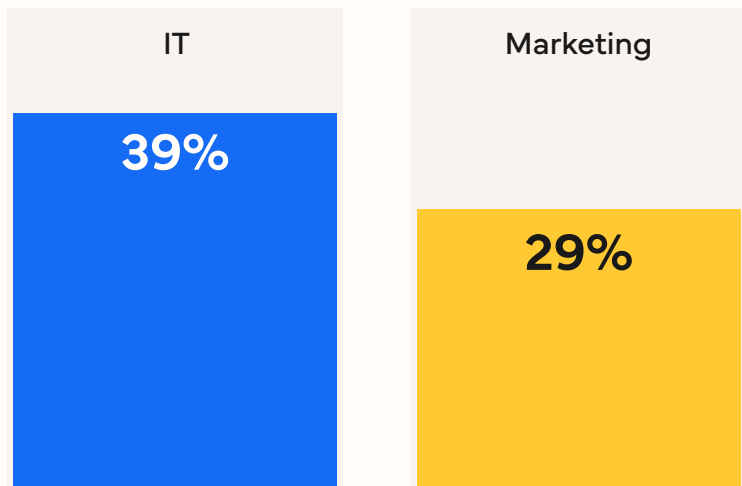


Source: IDC's AI Marketing Maturity Benchmark (CMO Priorities) Survey 2025, November 2025

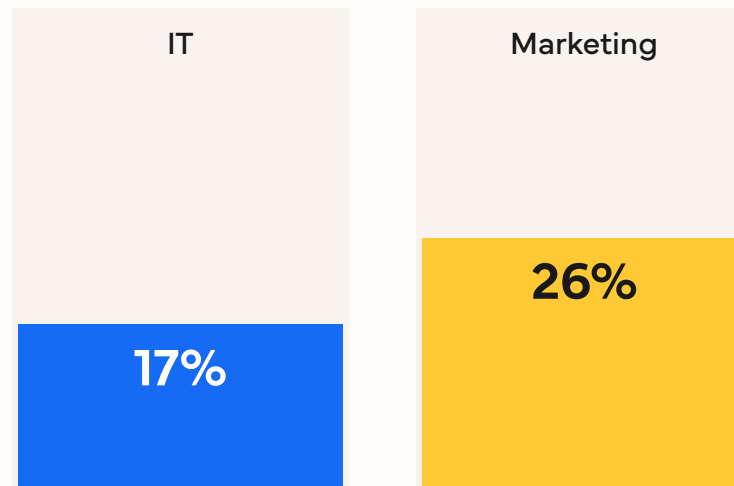
# Data security:

## The key challenge for integrating front- and back-office systems to optimize the martech stack

What are the primary challenges your organization faces in integrating front-office and back-office systems to enable marketing and optimize your martech stack?



Risks associated with **data security** during integration



Difficulty in **scaling systems** to meet growing marketing business needs



IT identified that the platform did not meet our data governance requirements ... This misalignment caused project delays, frustration between teams, and paused campaigns.”

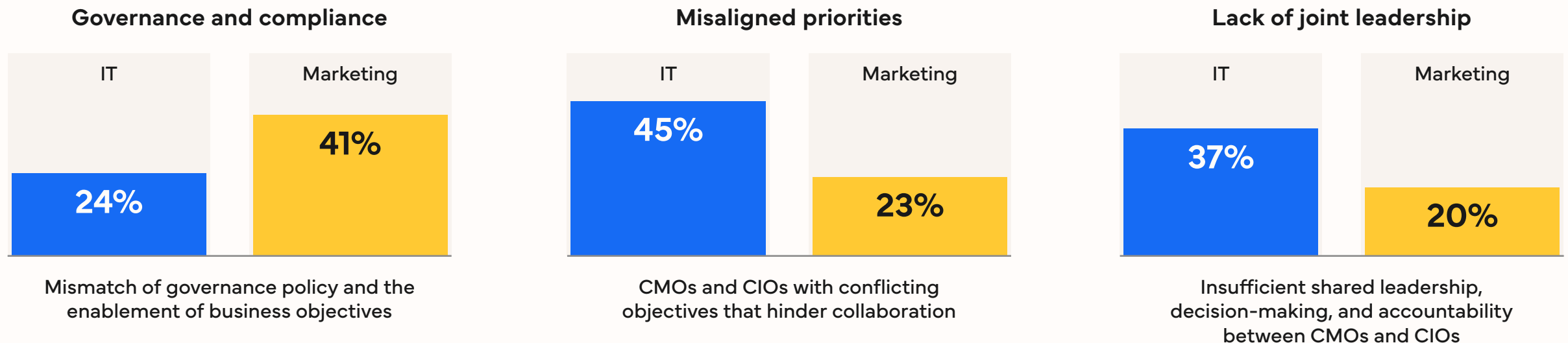
CTO, U.S. financial services organization

# Collaboration barriers:

## AI exposes CIO-CMO misalignment across data, decision rights, and risk governance, slowing execution

Marketing is rewarded for speed and growth. IT is rewarded for stability, scalability, and risk mitigation, and AI/agentive makes the trade-offs impossible to avoid.

What are the primary factors causing less-than-ideal collaboration between CMOs (marketing leadership) and CIOs (tech leadership) in your organization?



# AI is a catalyst to rejuvenate and strengthen collaboration between the CMO and CIO

A total of 82% of respondents believe AI will lead to stronger collaboration in the next 18 months. This is a pivotal moment to leverage the optimism and align CIO and CMO stakeholders.

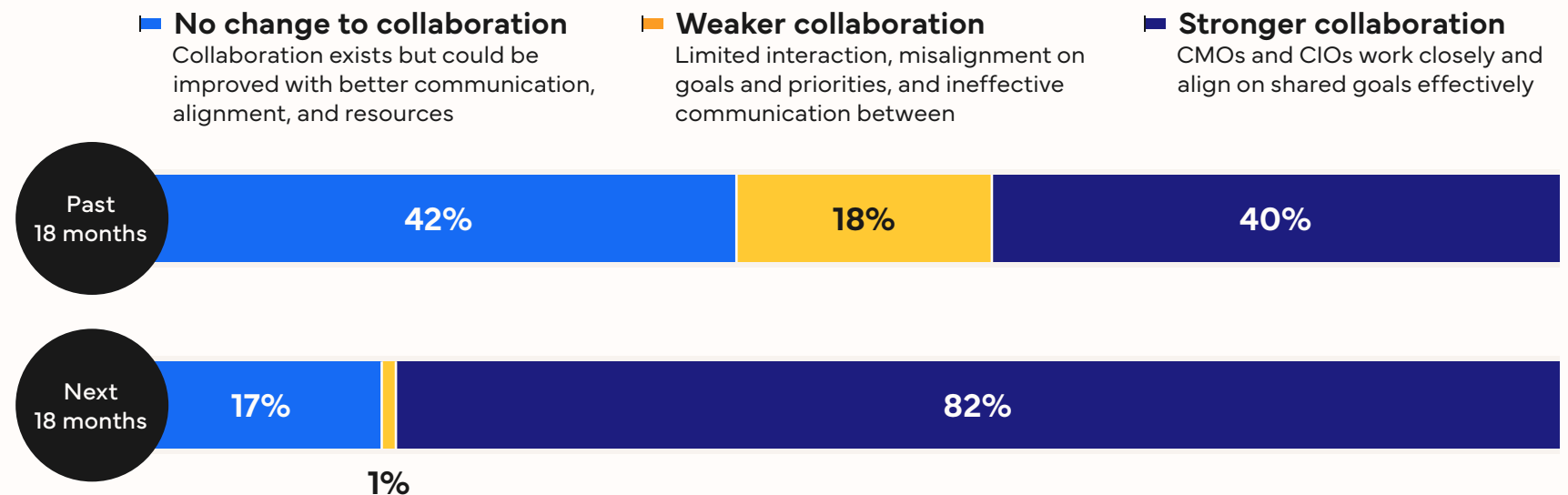
42% of respondents believe that AI hasn't changed collaboration over the last 1.5 years.

View of the next 18 months: weakness subsides.

Growth is naturally occurring, with CIOs assuming AI transformation leadership.

How has AI impacted the collaboration between CMOs (marketing leadership) and CIOs (tech leadership) in your organization in the past 18 months? How will it impact the collaboration in the next 18 months?

See the figure data in an [accessible table format](#).



# Marketing and IT align on the value of AI but not always on “why now” and “how fast”

## Top factors creating the most urgency to adopt AI in marketing

See the figure data in an [accessible table format](#).

### Competition

Competitive pressure to keep pace with AI-enabled marketing strategies

### Improve intelligence

The generation of deeper intelligence and insights into markets, customers, and trends to inform strategy

### Customer expectations

Rising customer expectations for real-time personalization

### Integrated AI capabilities

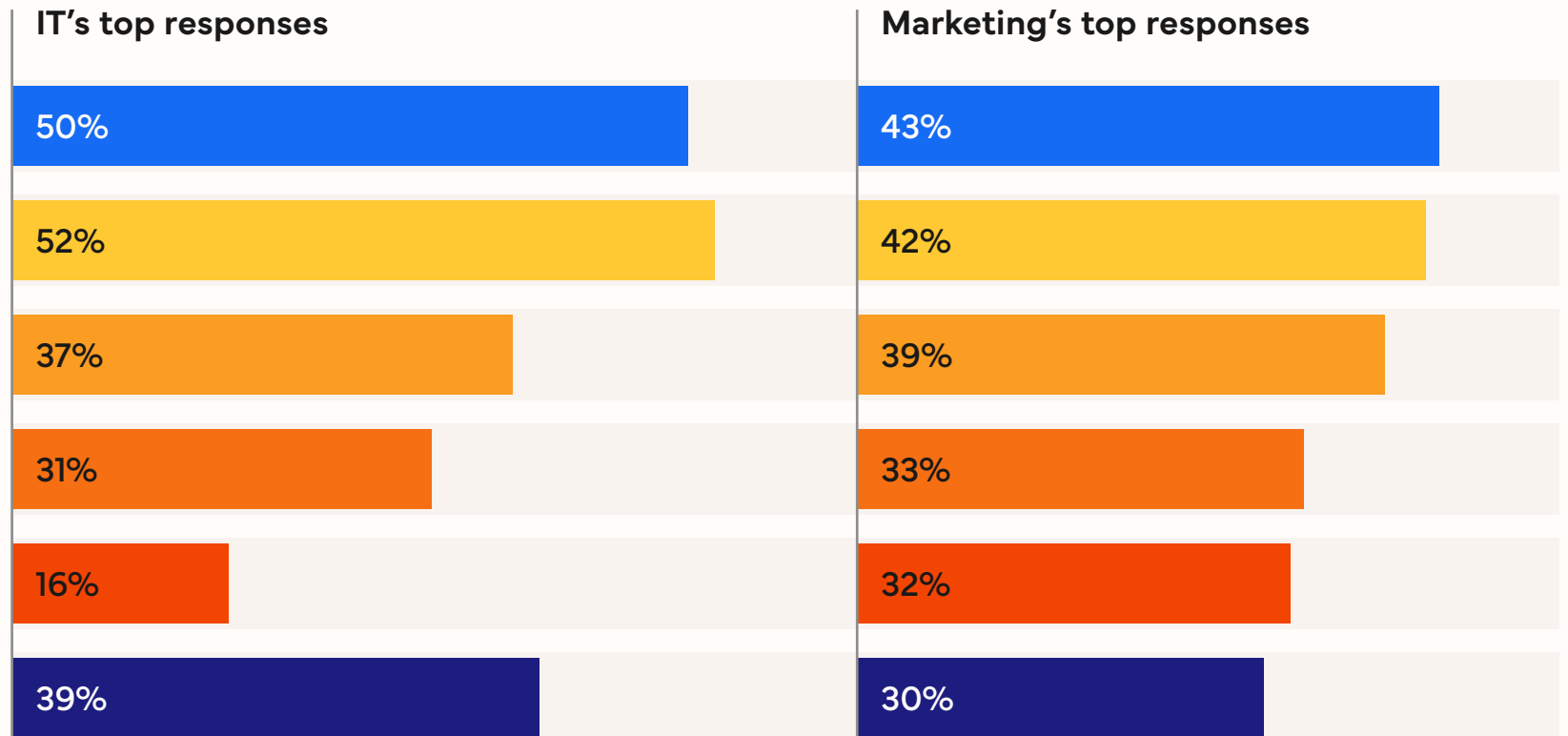
Vendor and partner ecosystems increasingly integrating AI capabilities

### Costs and headcount reduction

Pressure to reduce operating costs and headcount

### Changing workforce

The need to augment and/or close critical skillset gaps in marketing

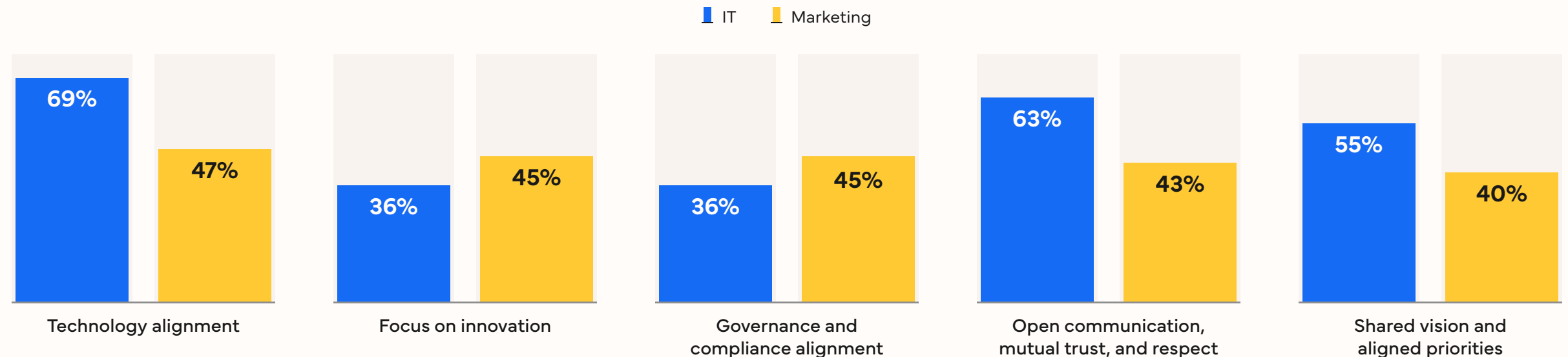


# CMO and CIO partnerships are built around alignment and trust

A total of 69% of IT executives and 47% of marketing executives believe technology alignment is the strongest enabler of a collaborative working relationship between the CMO and the CIO.

What are the primary demonstrated strengths and enablers that foster a strong, collaborative working relationship between CMOs and CIOs (tech leaders) in your organization?

See the figure data in an [accessible table format](#).



# AI adoption in marketing is viewed positively by IT

The greatest alignment emerges around content-focused activities and partner and channel programs.

**Agentic AI will reimagine workflows and control**

While GenAI could be used on top of existing processes, the value of agentic AI is only realized after serious refining of existing processes is done to optimize and standardize workflows.

Which functions within marketing has or will your organization implement AI use cases in the next 12–18 months?

See the figure data in an [accessible table format](#).



# Agentic AI increases the “no and slow” concerns: Complexity, security, governance, and compliance become design constraints

**55%**

Time required/cost/complexity  
of technology, integration,  
and implementation  
(e.g., AI model training,  
software costs)

**45%**

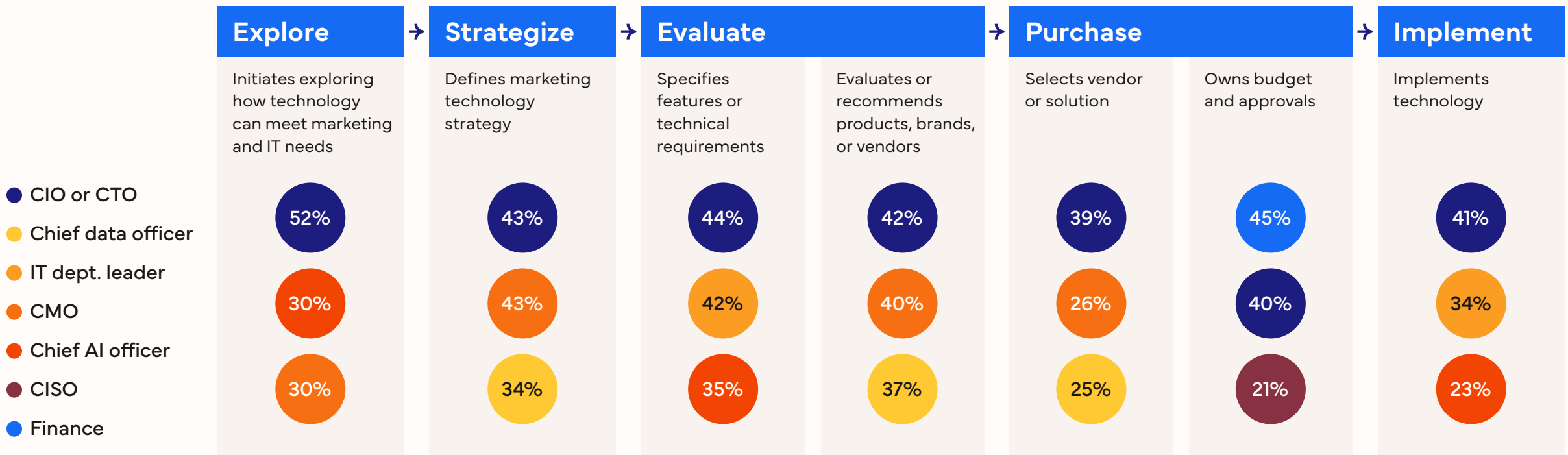
Increased security, governance,  
and regulatory risks  
(e.g., intellectual property  
protection, data privacy)

**39%**

Risk of increase if marketing  
does not define use cases,  
clear business process,  
and role changes

# AI expands the decision table across the marketing technology journey

Different roles influence different stages of the buyer's journey, with new personas — such as the chief AI officer, chief data officer, and CISO — playing a growing role in AI-driven marketing technology decisions.



# Collaboration is a leadership behavior

The strongest CIO-CMO partnerships run on communication discipline: Shared outcomes, clear decision rights, and a predictable cadence.



Where there can be a breakdown of good communication, that's where major problems can occur. So, one must safeguard against lack of communication, inconsistent communication, and inadequate communication.”

CMO, U.S. financial services organization



# When alignment fails, transformation stalls: Delays and duplicated efforts follow



The collaboration between IT and marketing was impacted when there was a misalignment of priorities, where marketing started developing the solution using their own developers, creating a shadow IT resulting in siloed systems, privacy, and security concerns.”

CIO, U.S. manufacturing organization



# Future priorities for the C-Suite

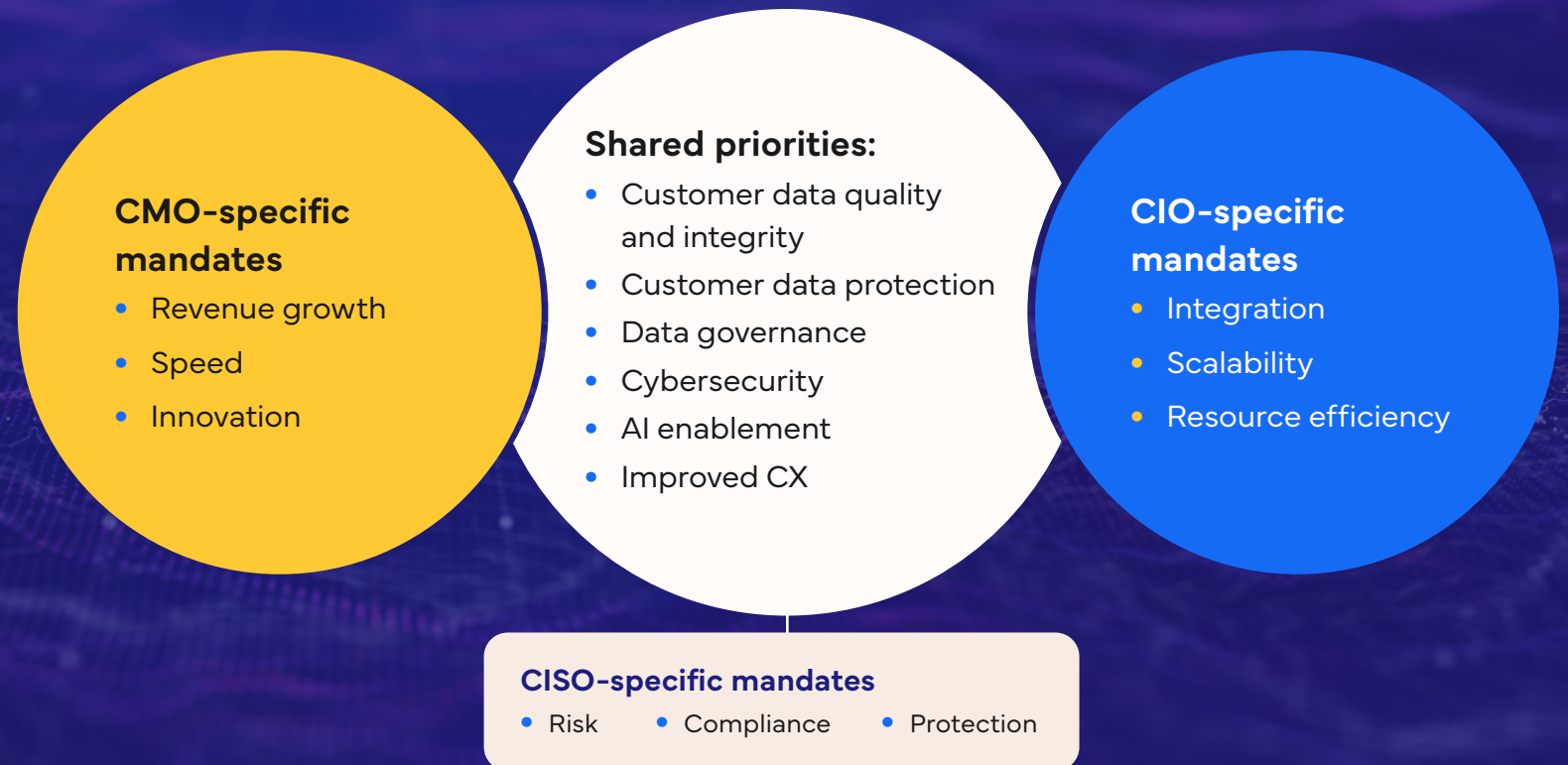
A shared agenda is emerging; AI, data, CX, and cybersecurity are now inseparable priorities.

## GenAI and agentic AI

Alignment accelerator + tension amplifier

- Increases the need for shared data foundations
- Expands the model risk surface area
- Increases the need for cross-functional governance
- Accelerates demand for real-time decisioning
- Forces joint ownership of AI outcomes

Top priorities for the CMO, CIO, and CISO in the organizations over the next 12–18 months



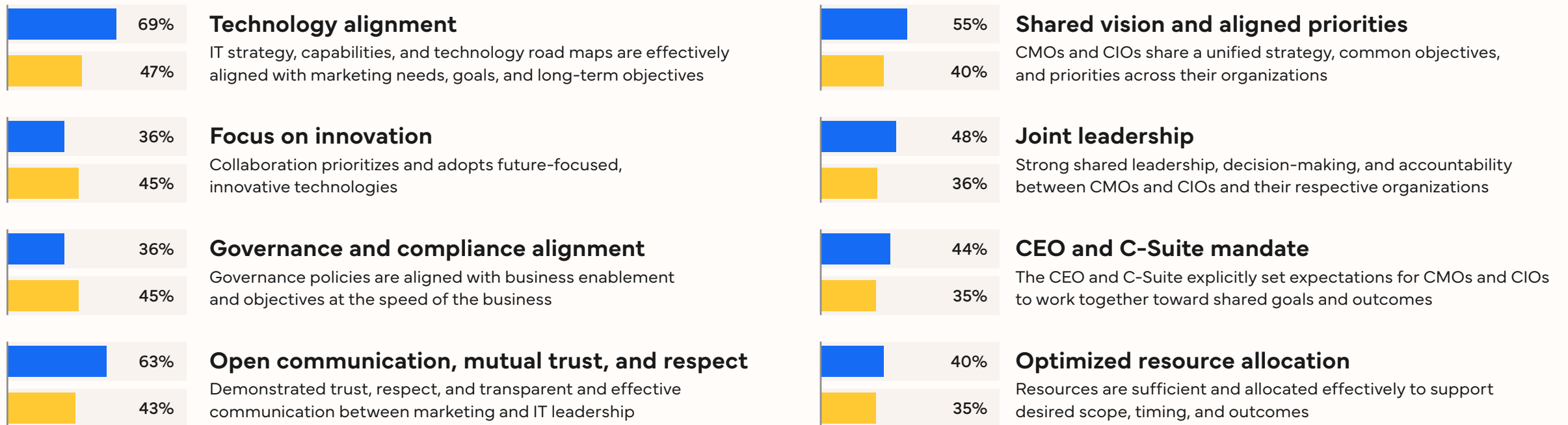
# Strengthening the CMO-CIO relationship

Collaboration grows when priorities, metrics, and governance are shared.

What are the primary demonstrated strengths and enablers that foster a strong, collaborative working relationship between CMOs and CIOs (tech leaders) in your organization?

See the figure data in an [accessible table format](#).

■ IT   ■ Marketing



n = 99; Source: IDC's CIO-CMO Survey, November 2025

# Turn AI pressure into partnership:

## Address technology, people, and process

### Integration and data readiness are foundational



CIOs and CMOs both highlight that fragmented data and poor integration are major barriers to achieving AI-driven outcomes.



### Roles and operating models must evolve



CIOs and CMOs both call for role evolution and cross-functional collaboration to meet AI-driven business objectives.



### Speed and responsiveness are critical



CIOs and CMOs both underscore the need for speed in execution to meet customer and business demands.



# Agentic workflows require operating-model redesign

Humans, agents, and controls must co-evolve because this is an organizational shift, not just a technology shift.

CIOs and CMOs, together with their C-Suite peers, must be mindful of the potential risks that agentic AI introduces across the organization.

Concerns about job displacement, skills gaps, and security can be effectively addressed through well-defined strategy, structured change-management initiatives, and transparent communication.



# A practical CIO-CMO alignment playbook for AI-era customer experience orchestration

Tackle the AI opportunity and supercharge the CIO-CMO partnership by easing friction, strengthening collaboration, and driving outcomes with the steps below.



## Align on priority use cases

Define shared outcomes and KPIs against the “jobs to be done”

Agree on CX, growth, and risk metrics. Ensure both marketing and IT are measured on joint success, not siloed objectives.



## Create joint AI governance + RACI

Explicit decision rights for data, vendor selection, and budget

Include new stakeholders (chief AI officer, CISO, chief data officer) in governance to address agentic risks and compliance.



## Establish a common taxonomy

Reduce jargon friction; align on “what data means”

Reduce jargon friction by aligning on definitions and data meaning. This is essential for cross-functional orchestration and the scaling of agentic workflows.

The letters in RACI stand for responsible, accountable, consulted, and informed.

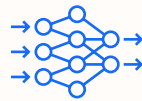
# A practical CIO-CMO alignment playbook for AI and agentic marketing (continued)



## Harden data readiness

### Quality, identity, access, and controls

Jointly invest in data quality, security, identity resolution, access controls, and real-time integration. Data is the shared priority and the main blocker to scaling AI.



## Employ pilot-to-scale discipline

### Shared road map, architecture, and change management

Develop a shared road map, architecture, and change management plan. Move from isolated pilots to scalable, standardized workflows.



## Redefine the operating model

Redesign operating models to support hybrid human-AI teams and agentic workflows, with clear roles and accountability.

# Appendix: Accessible data tables

This appendix provides an accessible version of the data for any complex figures in this document. Click “Return to figure” to get back to the data figure.

Figure from page 8

## Top benefits of utilizing AI tools within the marketing stack

Answers	IT's top responses	Marketing's top responses
Improve customer experience (CX)	49%	56%
Improve marketing productivity and efficiency	44%	39%
Identify new growth opportunities	33%	31%
Improve targeting/re-targeting and customer segmentation	32%	29%

n = 205; Source: IDC's *Adobe CIO-CMO Survey*, November 2025

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Figure from page 12

## Who controls the budget for marketing technology?

Answers	IT	Marketing
Marketing roles	15%	42%
IT roles	29%	14%
CMO and CIO roles	44%	34%
Finance roles	11%	9%

n = 205; Source: IDC's *Adobe CIO-CMO Survey*, November 2025

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## Appendix: Accessible data tables (continued)

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Which of the following statements best describes your organization’s approach to ensuring data readiness for AI marketing initiatives?

Answers	IT	Marketing
We have AI-ready data enabling cross-functional collaboration and orchestration of the customer journey	42%	29%
We have a solid strategy for customer data acquisition, readiness, and preparation for AI	37%	23%
We have the right data skills and data literacy inside our organization	24%	31%
We have data supporting automated marketing and pipeline workloads	23%	31%
We have recently begun initial initiatives to ready data for AI marketing but aren’t close to a mature or ready state	18%	30%

n = 205; Source: IDC’s *Adobe CIO-CMO Survey*, November 2025

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How has AI impacted the collaboration between CMOs (marketing leadership) and CIOs (tech leadership) in your organization in the past 18 months? How will it impact the collaboration in the next 18 months?

Impact	Past 18 months	Next 18 months
No change to collaboration: Collaboration exists but could be improved with better communication, alignment, and resources	42%	17%
Weaker collaboration: Limited interaction, misalignment on goals and priorities, and ineffective communication between	18%	1%
Stronger collaboration: CMOs and CIOs work closely and align on shared goals effectively	401%	82%

n = 205; Source: IDC’s *Adobe CIO-CMO Survey*, November 2025

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## Appendix: Accessible data tables (continued)

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### Top factors creating the most urgency to adopt AI in marketing

Answers	IT's top responses	Marketing's top responses
Competition: Competitive pressure to keep pace with AI-enabled marketing strategies	50%	43%
Improve intelligence: The generation of deeper intelligence and insights into markets, customers, and trends to inform strategy	52%	42%
Customer expectations: Rising customer expectations for real-time personalization	37%	39%
Integrated AI capabilities: Vendor and partner ecosystems increasingly integrating AI capabilities	31%	33%
Costs and headcount reduction: Pressure to reduce operating costs and headcount	16%	32%
Changing workforce: The need to augment and/or close critical skillset gaps in marketing	39%	30%

n = 205; Source: IDC's *Adobe CIO-CMO Survey*, November 2025[Return to figure](#)

Figure from page 19

### What are the primary demonstrated strengths and enablers that foster a strong, collaborative working relationship between CMOs and CIOs (tech leaders) in your organization?

Answers	IT	Marketing
Technology alignment	69%	47%
Focus on innovation	36%	45%
Governance and compliance alignment	36%	45%
Open communication, mutual trust, and respect	63%	43%
Shared vision and aligned priorities	55%	40%

n = 205; Source: IDC's *Adobe CIO-CMO Survey*, November 2025[Return to figure](#)

## Appendix: Accessible data tables (continued)

Figure from page 20

Which functions within marketing has or will your organization implement AI use cases in the next 12–18 months?

Answers	IT	Marketing
Content marketing	52%	51%
Digital marketing (e.g. web, social media)	66%	49%
Advertising and creative services	54%	46%
Campaign management	43%	40%
Event marketing	32%	35%
Partner and channels marketing	32%	31%

n = 205; Source: IDC's Adobe CIO-CMO Survey, November 2025

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Figure from page 26

What are the primary demonstrated strengths and enablers that foster a strong, collaborative working relationship between CMOs and CIOs (tech leaders) in your organization?

Answers	IT	Marketing
Technology alignment: IT strategy, capabilities, and technology road maps are effectively aligned with marketing needs, goals, and long-term objectives	69%	47%
Focus on innovation: Collaboration prioritizes and adopts future-focused, innovative technologies	36%	45%
Governance and compliance alignment: Governance policies are aligned with business enablement and objectives at the speed of the business	36%	45%
Open communication, mutual trust, and respect: Demonstrated trust, respect, and transparent and effective communication between marketing and IT leadership	63%	43%
Shared vision and aligned priorities: CMOs and CIOs share a unified strategy, common objectives, and priorities across their organizations	55%	40%
Joint leadership: Strong shared leadership, decision-making, and accountability between CMOs and CIOs and their respective organizations	48%	36%
CEO and C-Suite mandate: The CEO and C-Suite explicitly set expectations for CMOs and CIOs to work together toward shared goals and outcomes	44%	35%
Optimized resource allocation: Resources are sufficient and allocated effectively to support desired scope, timing, and outcomes	40%	35%

n = 99; Source: IDC's Adobe CIO-CMO Survey, November 2025

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# About the IDC analysts



## Laurie Buczek

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Laurie Buczek is Group Vice President of Market and Business Intelligence at IDC, leading a global team of researchers and executive advisors on AI-fueled business transformation, market dynamics, channel, ecosystem, and go-to-market strategy. She oversees the analysis of external forces — economic, regulatory, and buyer trends reshaping tech — and drives IDC’s research on AI-powered business transformation and marketing’s evolution.

[More about Laurie Buczek →](#)



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Tony Olvet is group vice president of Worldwide C-Suite and Digital Business Research at IDC. His team’s global research focuses on the connection between business transformation and digital investments across enterprises. Olvet’s analysis and insights help vendors, IT professionals, and business executives make fact-based decisions on technology strategy and digital business.

[More about Tony Olvet →](#)

## About the IDC analysts (continued)



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Teodora Snoddy is a research manager for the Worldwide C-Suite Tech Agenda program. Her responsibilities focus on creating research that assesses technology spending and buyer preferences across the C-Suite. This research covers the emerging trends around C-Suite technology objectives. Snoddy's analysis helps technology vendors, IT professionals, and business executives make informed and data-driven decisions on technology strategy.

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