



Structure for Scale

The 2026 Marketing Growth
Blueprint for B2B Leaders

People. Programs. Platforms.

Build the marketing function your business
actually needs—without guesswork, over-hiring,
or underperforming results.

Growth Starts with Structure

Most executive teams don't need to be convinced that marketing matters. But many are still unclear about how to structure it effectively.

As planning season approaches, the same questions tend to surface: Should we hire? Should we outsource? Should we cut programs or expand our tech stack?

What often gets lost in these conversations is that marketing isn't just a budget line item. It's a business function. And if that function isn't designed to align with your goals, stage of growth, and market realities, no amount of spend or talent will produce sustainable results.

This guide is designed to help executive leaders make informed marketing decisions by providing a clear framework for evaluating three critical dimensions:



People



Programs



Platforms

The goal isn't to provide a one-size-fits-all model—it's to help you build the right structure for your business.

Whether you're looking to reassess your team model, recalibrate spend, or bring stronger alignment between marketing and revenue, this guide provides the strategic context and practical tools to support more confident planning for 2026.

What's Changed in Marketing (and What Hasn't)

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The pace of change in marketing has accelerated, but if you aren't getting the fundamentals right, you won't reap the benefits. Leaders are navigating the complexities of zig-zagging buyer behaviors, evolving sales cycles, and the impact of AI on team structure, skills requirements, and marketing efficiencies. **You want to move faster and do more, but speed without the right strategy will not pay off.**

The AI landscape is a frenzy of new tools. A few improve productivity, but all require experienced oversight. The promise of AI is real, but it does not replace the need for great positioning, messaging, or campaign strategy, for example. **The most effective use of AI comes from teams that know how to apply it in context.**

To make matters more complex, FTE salaries continue to rise. The average salary for a senior-level marketer has increased significantly over the past two years, and full-time hires now represent a substantial long-term commitment. **Yet, many companies continue to treat marketing as a single-hire problem rather than a cross-functional investment.**

Marketing Still Requires Clarity

It still depends on alignment with sales, products/services, and buyers. It still needs the right balance between planning and execution. These principles matter more than ever in an environment where budgets get scrutinized and results are expected quickly.

The remainder of this guide is designed to help you assess your current structure, identify gaps, and develop a model that is well-equipped to support your growth strategy in the coming year (and beyond).

AI answers in search

(e.g., Google AI Overviews) are siphoning clicks, compressing referral traffic, and raising the bar for being cited/linked in AI answers. The traffic shift also affects B2B discovery and content strategy.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Buying is a complex and consensus-driven process

(involving 5–11 stakeholders and multiple functions). Value framing and value affirmation content significantly increase the likelihood of high-quality deals.

GARTNER

Marketing budgets hold at **7.7% of revenue in 2025**, forcing sharper capability trade-offs.

GARTNER CMO SPEND SURVEY

39% of existing skill sets will become outdated between 2025 and 2030.

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM



THE PAST



THE PRESENT



THE FUTURE

AI in B2B GTM

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|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AI primarily utilized point tools; adoption was uneven, and ROI was challenging to track. • Content was largely human-produced; personalization was a pipe dream or expensive to achieve. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ROI from AI is still extremely difficult to track. • AI is increasing the 'noise' factor in digital channels, making it harder to stand out. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat AI as an R&D investment, not a tool checklist. • Prioritize use cases and owners. • Align on where human expertise must stay in the loop. |
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Buyer Behavior

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buyers had a well-documented and trackable 'journey' to decisions with sellers as primary educators. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zero-click search behaviors are increasing. • Buyer expectations of readily available information vs. 'form fills' are becoming the norm. • Generational behaviors are influencing expectations for digital interactions. • Peer or authority reviews/referrals are rising in importance. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modification of traditional approaches is mandated. • Agentic AI may completely transform journeys. |
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Skill Sets in B2B Marketing Teams

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teams (and agencies) were organized around specific channels, such as brand, paid, martech/analytics, content, events, etc. • Upskilling was generally organic. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AI literacy (and advanced mastery) is becoming a 'must-have'. • Strategy and human direction of AI is required to put AI to work. • Execution is still largely unautomated. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment must be made in upskilling around AI. • Well-rounded generalists will become powerhouses. • Junior marketers will still need expert guidance. |
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Marketing Investment: People & Tech

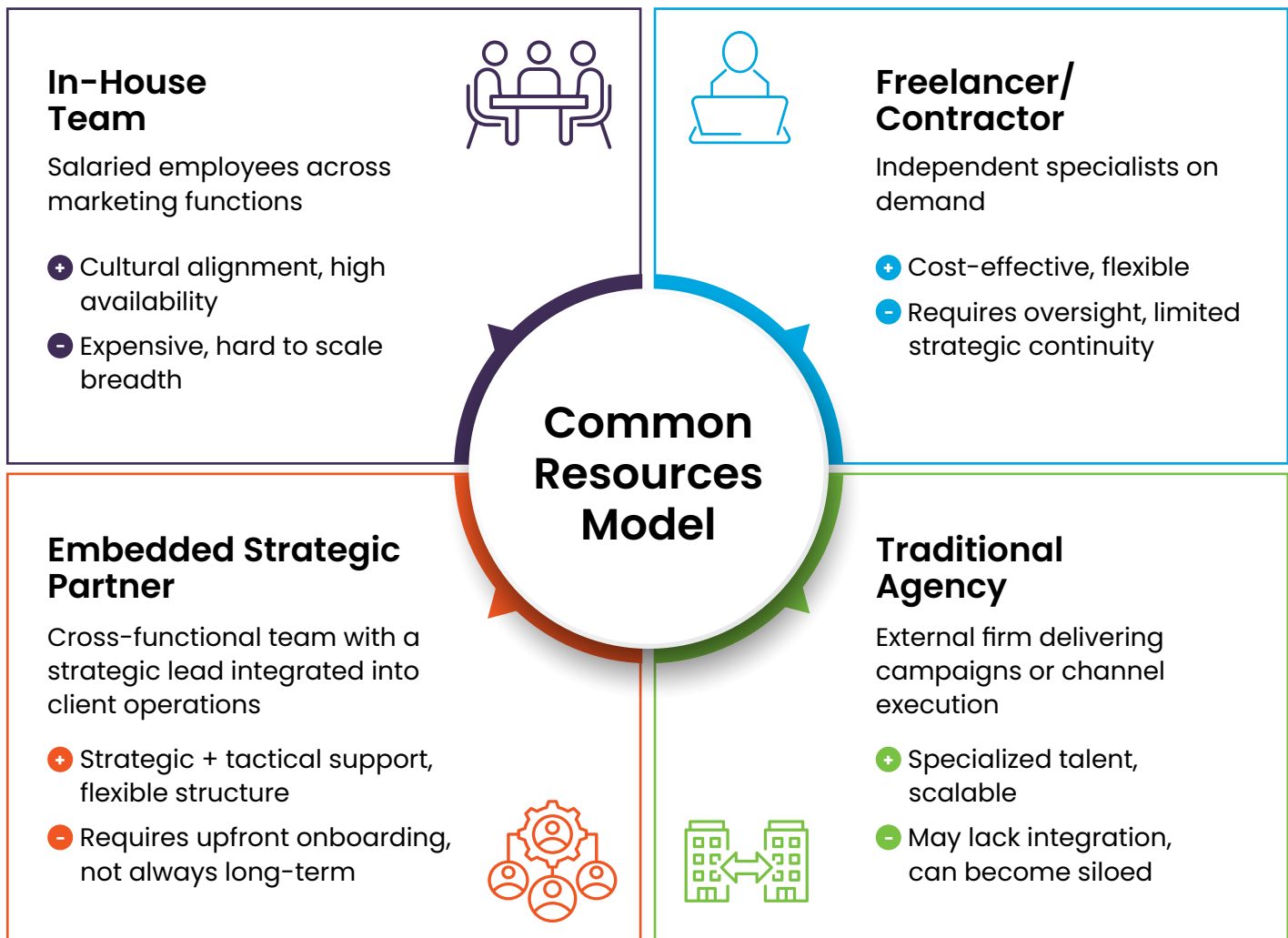
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-house FTEs were the norm, with only select expertise being utilized from outside. • Basic tech investments only (for SMB). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizations are reevaluating their hiring models to optimize returns and profitability. • Companies are treading lightly around new tech investments as the pace of change accelerates. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment in marketing may need to INCREASE as the digital landscape becomes more competitive. • Limited FTEs may be needed, given the time allocation to specific channels. |
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Team Models and the Structure Behind Growth

Team Models and the Structure Behind Growth

Most marketing underperformance issues are not tactical in nature, but instead are structural. Companies invest in content, websites, or campaigns without first considering whether they have the right roles and capabilities to execute consistently.

There are several common models for marketing resourcing. Each has trade-offs in terms of cost, control, flexibility, and alignment with leadership:

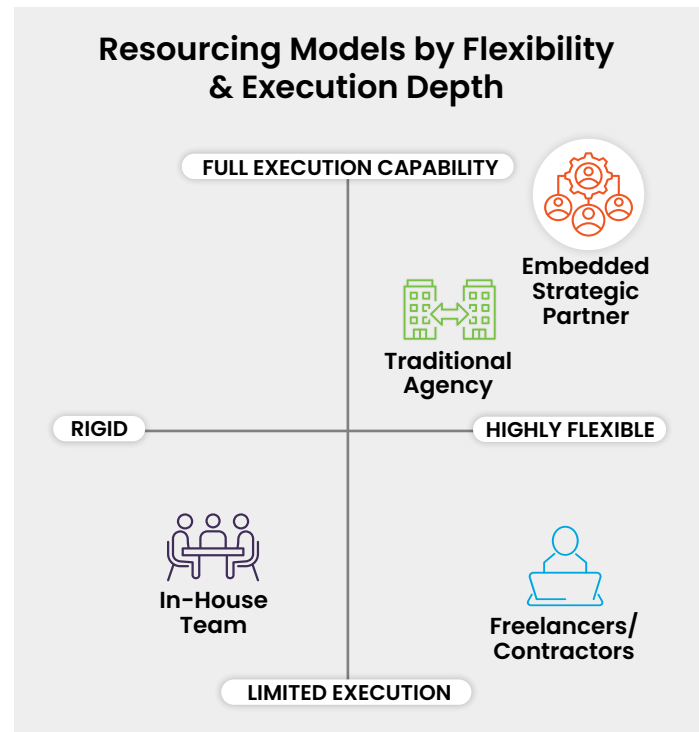


Choosing the Right Resourcing Model for Growth

The right marketing team structure isn't about choosing between "in-house" or "outsourced." It's about understanding what each model enables—and where its limitations lie. Every option offers trade-offs in terms of flexibility, depth of execution, strategic continuity, and long-term scalability. This quadrant visual maps four common team models across two critical dimensions: execution focus and structural flexibility.

Use this model to determine where your current approach fits—and whether it aligns with your 2026 goals.

The biggest mistake? Hiring one marketing generalist and expecting full-funnel performance.



Structure Over Label

Rather than fixating on resourcing labels, leaders should ask:

Do we have strategic oversight?

Are roles clearly defined, or blended by necessity?

Are execution resources aligned and available?

Can our current structure support growth without burning out key people?

The most effective companies build their marketing function like a system—with defined roles, feedback loops, and accountability across teams.

[> Get the Team Structure Planning Worksheet](#)

The Right Team for Your Stage and Goals

The Right Team for Your Stage and Goals

Once you've selected a team model, the next question is: what roles do you actually need? The answer depends on where your company is in its growth journey—and where it's headed.

Hiring a whole in-house team too early leads to bloat. Expecting one person to “own marketing” at \$20M in revenue is unrealistic. Instead of hiring reactively, structure your team around the core functions needed to deliver on your growth strategy.

This chapter outlines how team requirements evolve by stage and how to assess the capabilities your organization truly needs.



EARLY-STAGE

(Under \$10M)
Strategy Before Volume



MID-MARKET

(\$10M–\$50M)
Scale the Engine



GROWTH-STAGE

(\$50M+)
Specialize and Optimize



EARLY-STAGE

Under \$10M: Strategy Before Volume

At this stage, marketing is often a light-touch approach encompassing content, basic campaigns, and sales enablement materials. Execution is reactive and disconnected from a larger growth strategy.

WHAT MATTERS MOST

- Clear positioning and value proposition
- Light demand generation to support sales
- Senior guidance on go-to-market strategy

TYPICAL ROLES

- Fractional Marketing Director or VP
- Content Writer (freelance or shared)
- Digital Specialist (outsourced)

COMMON GAPS

- No ownership of the full marketing function
- Tactics disconnected from revenue goals
- Underinvestment in brand development



MID-MARKET

\$10M–\$50M: Scale the Engine

At this stage, companies need to move from founder-led messaging to structured campaigns. Marketing supports sales velocity, fuels the pipeline, and drives channel performance. Programs are running—but not always integrated.

WHAT MATTERS MOST	TYPICAL ROLES	COMMON GAPS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated demand generation • Consistent content creation and measurement • Alignment between marketing, sales, and product 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing Director (internal or embedded) • Demand Gen Manager • Content Strategist / Writer • Marketing Operations Specialist • Digital campaign support (in-house or agency) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Execution bottlenecks on limited headcount • Undefined or misaligned roles • No operations infrastructure for reporting or automation



GROWTH-STAGE

\$50M+: Specialize and Optimize

As marketing complexity increases, so does the need for specialized skills. Channel-specific execution, operations, and analytics become essential. Marketing leaders at this stage must focus on scale, optimization, and data visibility.

WHAT MATTERS MOST	TYPICAL ROLES	COMMON GAPS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Channel expertise and execution consistency • Full marketing operations ownership • Real-time visibility into program performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Marketing Leader (VP or CMO) • Demand Gen Lead • Content Manager + Designer • Marketing Ops + Analytics • Digital channel owners (SEO, paid media, web) • Agency or embedded partner for experimentation and scale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lagging analytics/reporting • Burnout from overextension • Incomplete cross-functional collaboration

Budgeting Across People, Programs, and Platforms

Budgeting Across People, Programs, and Platforms

Once you've outlined the structure and roles you need, the next question becomes: How do we fund them?

Effective marketing isn't about a single budget number—it's about knowing where that number needs to go. The most successful plans align spend across three core areas:



People: Your internal team, external partners, and execution support



Programs: Campaigns, content, events, and demand generation



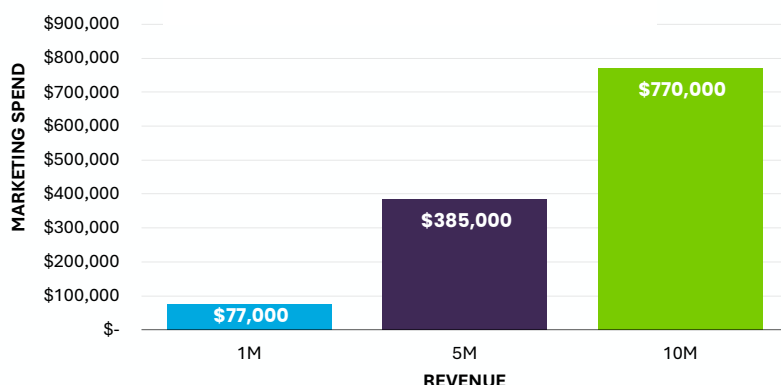
Platforms: Martech and analytics tools that enable scale and visibility

Too often, companies overcommit in one area and underfund the others. A full-time hire without a program budget won't deliver results. A tech stack without execution resources sits unused. A strong program without strategic leadership leads to inefficiency.

This chapter offers a framework for aligning your investment intentionally—not equally—across people, programs, and platforms. It also includes current benchmarks, sample budget splits, and common planning pitfalls to avoid.

The goal is to help you build a 2026 budget that fuels growth, not just activity.

Average Marketing Budget is 7.7% of Revenue



GARTNER

The average marketing spend across industries in 2025 remained at 7.7% of revenue, encompassing people, technology, and advertising. Yet budgets in both the “IT and business services” and “Tech services and products companies with over \$250M revenue” industries decreased, according to Gartner.

With a constant need to spend wisely—whether budgets are decreasing, remaining flat, or increasing—breaking down spending by people, programs, and platforms will help leaders understand and more clearly assess their needs.

Of the estimated 7.7% of revenue used for marketing spend:



~43% is typically put toward team hiring,
including in-house employees, agencies, and contractors/vendors.






~35–40% is typically put toward programs,
such as campaigns, content creation, demand generation, and events.



~22% is typically allocated toward martech and other platforms

Budget Allocation by Revenue

		COMPANY SIZE		
		EARLY-STAGE	MID-MARKET	GROWTH-STAGE
COMPANY REVENUE		Under \$10M	\$10M–\$50M	\$50M+
People Budget ~43% of Marketing 		\$165,550	\$1,655,500	\$16,555,000
Program Budget ~35% of Marketing 		\$134,750	\$1,347,500	\$13,475,000
Platform Budget ~22% of Marketing 		\$84,700	\$847,000	\$8,470,000
Total Marketing Budget 7.7% of Revenue		\$385,000	\$3,850,000	\$38,500,000



People

When it comes to setting marketing budgets, it's more important to be deliberate with your spend than it is to have the highest budget possible. Oftentimes, smaller marketing budgets can even lead to greater intention, since leaders will feel like they can't simply throw money at a "problem." In fact, that problem may be solved by reallocating resources from one category to another.

To land on the right budget for your team, you must first consider your company's current stage and size.

A common pitfall we see is early-stage companies hiring larger in-house staff before it is truly necessary—wasting budget and (onboarding) time that could be spent elsewhere.

We recommend that you consider the following key aspects to better understand who and when to hire:

CONSIDERATION	EARLY-STAGE	MID-MARKET	GROWTH-STAGE
Company Stage & Scale	Rely on agencies/contractors for flexibility, breadth of skills	Core in-house team with targeted agency/contractor partnerships	Majority in-house; agencies for scale, niche expertise
Core vs. Specialized Capabilities	Outsource specialized skills; bring on in-house generalist(s)	Build an in-house team for core roles (brand, demand gen when ready with Sales)	Most core, some specialized roles in-house; agencies for innovation, overflow
Flexibility vs. Control	Maximum flexibility working with agencies/contractors	Balanced, with in-house and agency resources	Control via large in-house teams; agencies provide scalability when needed
Speed & Expertise	Faster ramp, access to proven playbooks via agencies	Combination (build institutional knowledge in-house, with speed and expertise from agencies)	Agencies to inject fresh thinking when needed
Budget Efficiency	Avoid salary overhead through external partners	Optimize between in-house for budget efficiency, agencies for high-skill/more expensive projects	In-house lowers long-term cost per output; agencies used selectively
Integration with Tech & Programs	Agencies can provide executional support for martech	In-house team ensures martech is used; agencies plug gaps	Large in-house teams fully leverage martech; agencies for campaign spikes/advanced specialties

Of course, the decision to bring on an external agency or contractors for marketing support does not always fit neatly into the buckets above. Many early-stage companies will outsource to meet their marketing needs until their day-to-day requirements are sufficiently fleshed out to hire select in-house resources, while mid-market and enterprise companies sometimes opt to maintain consistent agency support in larger capacities.

The final determination for a “people” budget should not be made in a silo—it’s important to consider program and platform needs in conjunction, always with an understanding that **marketing is an *ongoing* investment.**

The Impact of AI

As AI tools continue to evolve, we believe core marketing teams—whether in-house or external—will decrease in size by 30-40% over the coming years, with AI assuming a significant portion of junior execution roles. Responsibilities like data analysis, analysis and campaign monitoring will be offloaded to AI tools, while the need for marketing strategists and those who can effectively manage and direct AI will increase.





Programs

When budgeting for paid programming, this particular spend should be treated as a variable growth lever—that is, you should scale the dollars spent up or down depending on revenue goals, lead gen goals, and market conditions.

As marketing initiatives scale up in both programs and platforms, you must have an onboarded Sales team to act on new leads quickly.

Paid marketing programs can take many different forms, from digital advertising via Google Ads, LinkedIn Ads, Meta Ads, or retargeting platforms, to trade show booths, event sponsorships, or sponsored content in industry outlets. Using a mix of these programs, and how you prioritize them, will often depend on several factors:

CONSIDERATION	BUDGET ALLOCATION
Business Objectives & Growth Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If pipeline creation, allocate more to demand generation campaigns • If brand building, allocate more to content creation, thought leadership placements, and PR • If retention or current customer expansion, allocate more to customer marketing programs
Sales Cycle & Industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long sales cycles (often B2B): invest more in content, thought leadership, ABM, nurture programs • Short sales cycles (often B2C): prioritize campaigns, ads, promotions, which show immediate conversion
Channel Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depends on growth urgency and available spend • Paid media, events, sponsorships: higher upfront costs, but can scale quickly • Inbound, organic channels: more cost-efficient, but take time
Measurability & ROI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand gen and associated campaigns offer more direct ROI and attribution • Content creation/thought leadership requires steady resource investment to see ROI, which can take more time

The Impact of AI

Based on what we've already seen, we expect AI to shift program and campaign planning to be exponentially more personalized and predictive, with the ability to update program assets in both messaging and creative in real-time to meet buyers along their journeys.

CASE STUDY

Leveraging a mix of marketing programs can create immediate and long-lasting impact for a brand. Take BotRx:

Problem

In a crowded cybersecurity space, BotRx needed a way to stand out as a credible SaaS cybersecurity startup.

Solution

Our team created a strong visual brand and messaging program to launch BotRx at RSA. With high urgency and smart spending, BotRx and Magnitude successfully—and rapidly—launched, optimized, and scaled marketing programs, from events to content to PR.

Result

- BotRx was named a top startup at RSA.
- The company's website launched in record time.
- The partnership enabled a rapid ramp-up in lead generation and content library development.
- BotRx garnered media coverage in industry-leading outlets (Dark Reading and Security Magazine).





Platforms

Marketing technologies are powerful tools that should complement sales platforms. With the right investment, you can have accurate visibility into all sales and marketing efforts. To determine ideal spend for martech, we've identified key considerations below:

The Impact of AI

In the realm of platforms and tools, we will likely see the biggest shift—from disparate systems (think your current CRM, CMS, social scheduler, creative suite, and more) to integrated and heavily consolidated AI-native martech. Robust asset management systems will also become more critical, for both storing AI-generated creative assets and tracking their performance.

CONSIDERATION	BUDGET ALLOCATION
Business Objectives & Growth Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead gen: invest in automation (e.g., HubSpot Marketing Hub, Pardot) and customer relationship management (CRM; e.g., Salesforce, HubSpot Sales Hub) • Customer retention: prioritize customer data platforms, loyalty tech, and customer experience (CX) tools • Market expansion: invest in scalable tech with multi-region/multi-language capabilities
Company Size & Stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early-Stage: cost-effective, flexible tools (e.g., HubSpot Starter, Mailchimp) • Mid-Market/Growth-Stage: move toward integrated ecosystems (e.g., Salesforce, Adobe)
Current Tech Stack & Integration Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize integration and consolidation when able, since a single ecosystem can reduce inefficiencies and may provide cost savings
Team Capacity & Adoption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factor in spend for timely training, onboarding, and support
Scalability & Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opt for tools that can scale with you over 3–5 years

Bringing It All Together

To create an effective—and realistic—marketing budget, consider three main components: your people, programs, and platforms. Any underutilized element (including a team member's expertise) means wasted spend.

At the same time, these dimensions should always be tied into the larger company structure. If you've brought on marketing specialists who manage demand generation and events, it's just as important to have a capable sales team to field incoming leads.

It's never easy to develop a budget, let alone one that must adapt to changing objectives. You're taking steps in the right direction to better understand how to make your budget—and marketing efforts—a sustainable success.



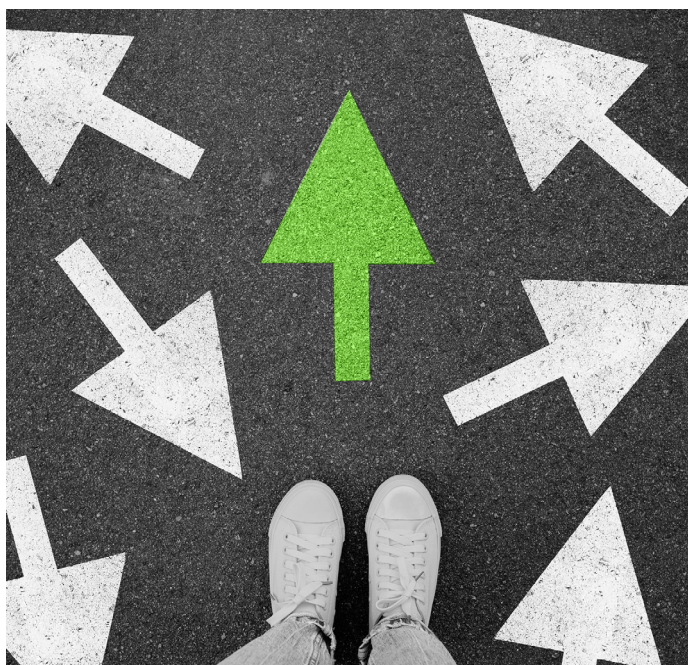
What the Right Structure Delivers

What the Right Structure Delivers

A well-designed marketing function delivers more than just campaigns—it delivers alignment, accountability, and measurable progress toward business outcomes.

When marketing underperforms, it's rarely due to a lack of effort. More often, it's a structure problem. Messaging gets inconsistent. Campaigns become reactive. Results feel disconnected from business priorities. Sales and marketing operate on different timelines. Everyone is busy, but no one is sure what's working.

Restructuring the marketing function—whether through hiring, reorganizing, or rebalancing external support—can unlock significant value. But only when it's tied to a broader understanding of what the structure is designed to accomplish.



Common Symptoms of a Misaligned Marketing Structure

⚠️ Inconsistent Messaging

Your positioning shifts depending on who's doing the talking.

⚠️ Reactive Execution

Campaigns are built in a rush, without a strategic throughline.

⚠️ Lack of Role Clarity

Overlapping responsibilities or critical gaps slow down progress.

⚠️ Unclear Metrics

You're measuring activities, not outcomes—and the numbers don't inform decisions.

⚠️ Sales/Marketing Misalignment

Efforts are not coordinated, and friction emerges between teams.

When these issues persist, growth stalls. Worse, marketing can become a cost center rather than a growth enabler.

When Structure Unlocks Growth

The right marketing structure isn't about size. It's about fit—for your goals, your team, and your stage. Done right, structure becomes a multiplier.

Here's what that structure delivers:

+ Strategic Clarity

Marketing is tied to business goals, with clear priorities and a roadmap to reach them.

+ Executional Consistency

Campaigns, content, and programs align around a common narrative—reducing noise and building brand equity.

+ Functional Accountability

Everyone knows their role. Teams move faster because ownership is defined and resourced.

+ Cross-Functional Alignment

Marketing, sales, and product operate with shared context, which reduces churn and missed handoffs.

+ Visibility into ROI

A structured function supports stronger reporting, so investments can be evaluated and optimized.

CASE STUDIES

Mid-Market SaaS Company

Problem

An internal marketing generalist was stretched across too many functions. Campaigns were inconsistent, and the sales team was generating their own collateral.

Solution

The company brought in an embedded marketing team with a strategic lead and structured responsibilities around demand gen, content, and analytics.

Result

4x increase in MQLs, 40% faster campaign cycle time, and aligned monthly reporting between sales and marketing.

Tech Services Firm in Transition

Problem

Marketing spend had increased, but visibility into performance was limited. There was no consistent strategy between paid programs and internal teams.

Solution

The firm realigned structure to include a demand gen manager and external content partner. They shifted budget from unused platforms to executional support.

Result

Increased lead quality, reduced CAC by 30%, and eliminated unused tool spend.

Signs Your Structure Is Working



You can connect marketing activity to pipeline movement and revenue growth.



Marketing can pivot quickly—whether it's a new message, product, or market.



Sales and marketing are collaborating around the same audience and timing.



You've stopped asking "who owns this?" and started asking "how do we optimize it?"

A good structure won't solve every problem, but it makes problem-solving possible.

Your 2026 Marketing Roadmap

Your 2026 Marketing Roadmap

Marketing planning isn't a single decision, it's a discipline.

The most successful companies don't just set a marketing plan once a year and hope it holds. They treat it as an ongoing process of aligning resources with outcomes. In a landscape defined by shifting buyer behavior, rising costs, and fast-moving AI disruption, the right structure isn't a luxury; it's a leadership tool. It gives executives the visibility to see what's working, and the flexibility to adapt when it's not.

This final chapter provides a clear and actionable way to assess your marketing structure, whether you're hiring, reallocating your budget, or rethinking your model altogether. By answering a set of diagnostic questions, you'll gain the clarity needed to make smart, intentional decisions that move your business forward.

The 2026 Marketing Planning Flywheel

For companies that treat planning as an iterative discipline, the flywheel represents the ongoing nature of marketing structure and budget alignment.



Why this works: The flywheel emphasizes continuous planning and structure evolution—not one-time fixes. It also reinforces the idea that structure is a leadership discipline.

Diagnostic Questions for Strategic Planning

Use these questions in quarterly planning, budgeting cycles, or at any structural inflection point.

1 Strategic Fit

- Are we structured for where we are now—or where we want to be 12 months from now?
- What is the role of marketing in achieving our 2026 goals?
- Have we defined what success looks like beyond MQLs and campaign metrics?

2 Team & Resourcing

- Do we have both strategic and executional bandwidth?
- If our team lost one person tomorrow, what would break?
- Are we getting full value from our talent and partners?
- Is our model (in-house, embedded, or hybrid) still working for us?

3 Budget & ROI

- What would we do differently if our budget were cut by 10%?
- Where are we overspending or under-investing?
- When was the last time we evaluated ROI on headcount or tech?

4 Buyer & Market Fit

- Are we aligned to current buyer behaviors—zero-click search, peer reviews, longer journeys?
- Are our programs mapped to today's buyers or legacy assumptions?
- Are we using market data or gut instinct?

5 Agility & Future-Proofing

- Are we ready to pivot—new product, vertical, or campaign?
- What skills will we need in 6–12 months that we don't have now?
- Are we structured to compete in a noisy, AI-saturated environment?

Final Thought

The companies that thrive in 2026 won't be the ones that spend the most—but the ones that structure their marketing intentionally, align it to revenue outcomes, and adapt as the environment changes.

This roadmap isn't your final plan—it's the foundation for smarter, more aligned decisions throughout the year.



