

How marketing leaders are using AI today

Our second annual survey of leaders in marketing about their use of AI shows that **they are currently most often using it for creating content today**. Looking just two years ahead, they expect the top three uses to be revenue planning, customer value analysis, and recruitment. In addition, notably fewer marketing leaders this year said that AI talent was too hard to find.



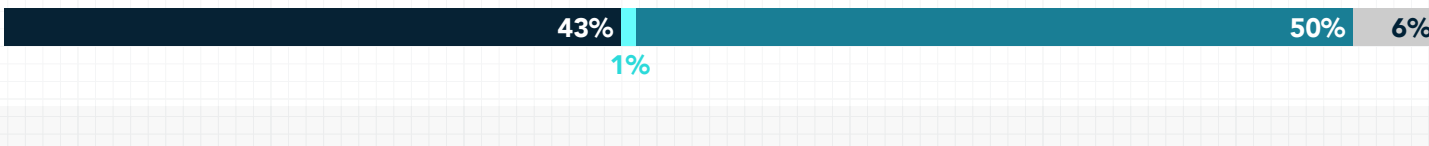
Separate surveys explored the perspectives of chief people officers; chief legal officers; chief sales officers; chief strategy officers; chief supply chain and operating officers; chief digital, technology, or information officers; and chief AI officers. Other survey reports and other insights on leadership and AI can be found on heidrick.com.

Usage is widespread—but most leaders want to move even faster

Only 6% of marketing leaders say their companies are not yet using AI, and 10% say their company is using it across most or all of the organization—the highest share across functions, and tied with HR leaders.

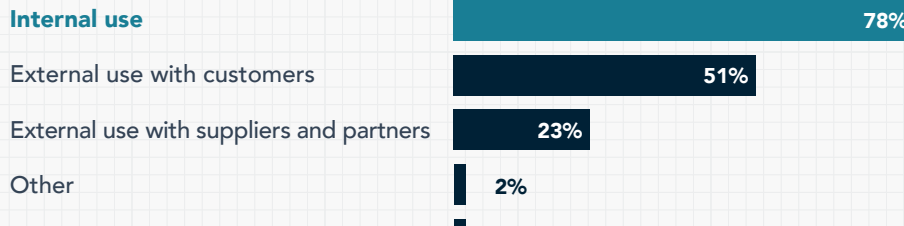


However, half of marketing leaders say their companies are adopting AI too slowly, which is similar to what most of their C-suite peers say.



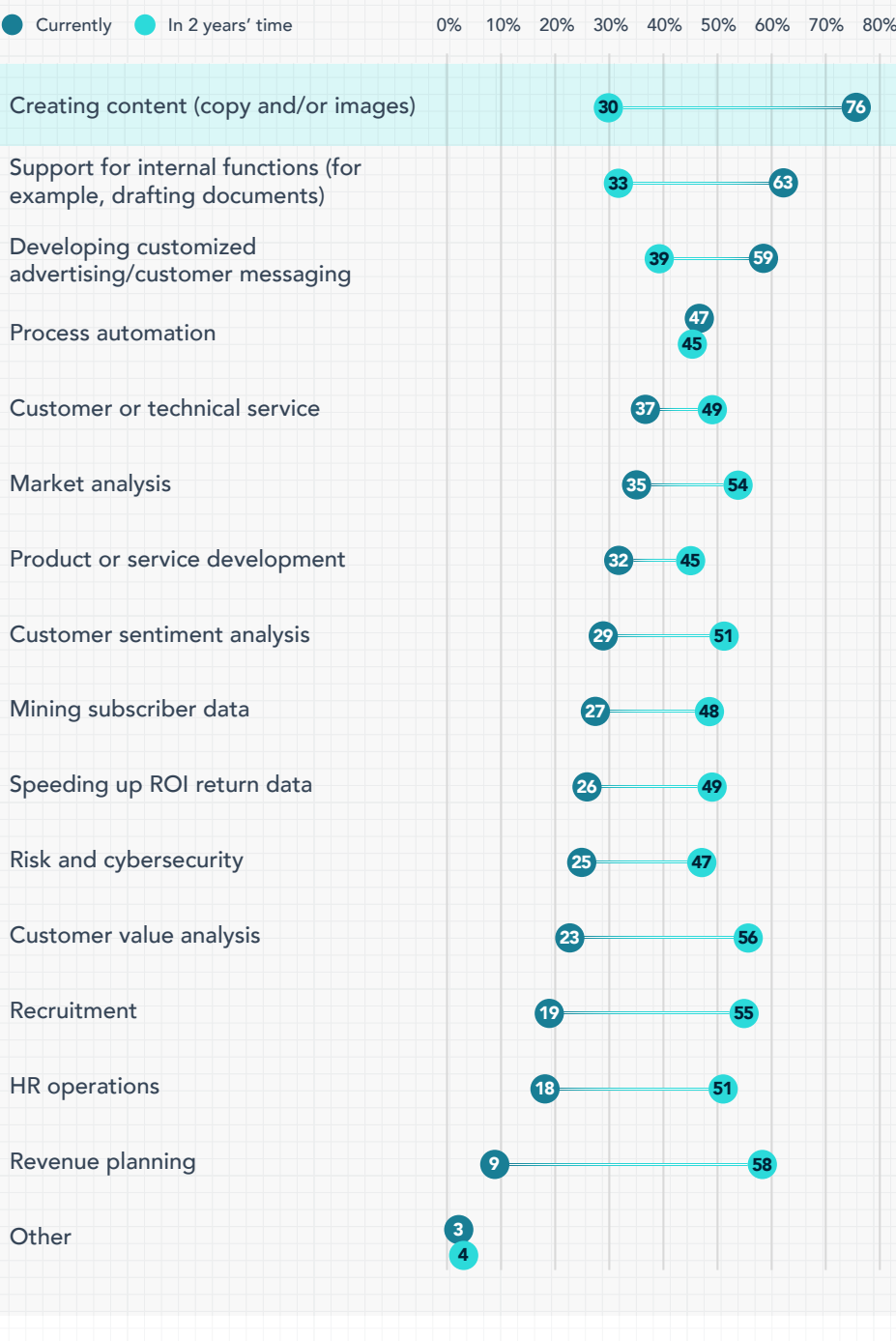
A focus on internal use and productivity gains

A strong majority of marketing leaders say **they are focused on AI for internal use**, though over half are also using it externally, with customers—the highest share to say so among their C-suite peers, and tied with sales leaders.



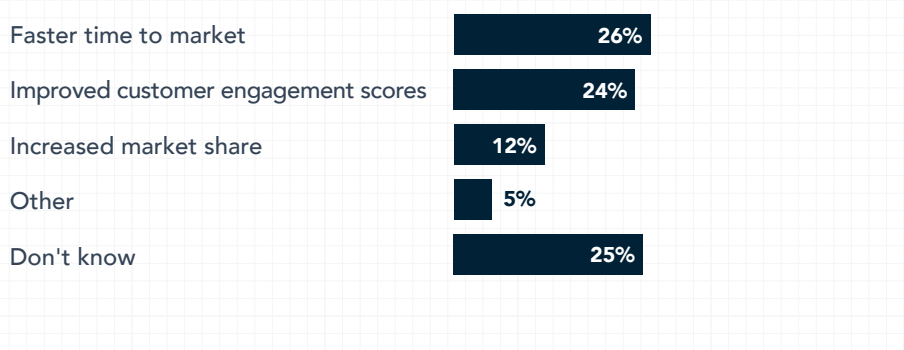
They are currently most often using AI for creating content, such as copy or images. Looking just two years ahead, the shares of marketing leaders who expect to be using AI for all tasks are notably higher.

In two years, the top three uses for AI marketing leaders most often name are revenue planning, customer value analysis, and recruitment.



Measuring ROI

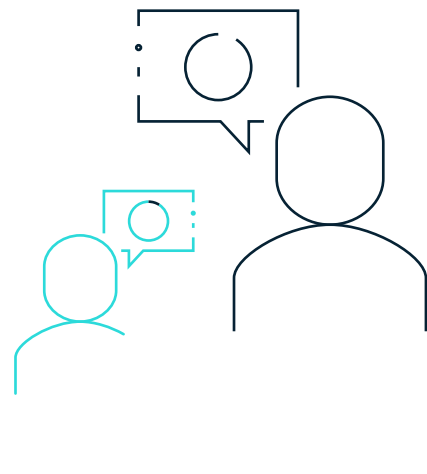
Despite the hype about AI and how quickly companies are adopting it, marketing leaders, as well as most of their peers across functions, indicate that their companies aren't investing just to keep up with peers: **they are measuring success based on their goals, as they would any other investment.**



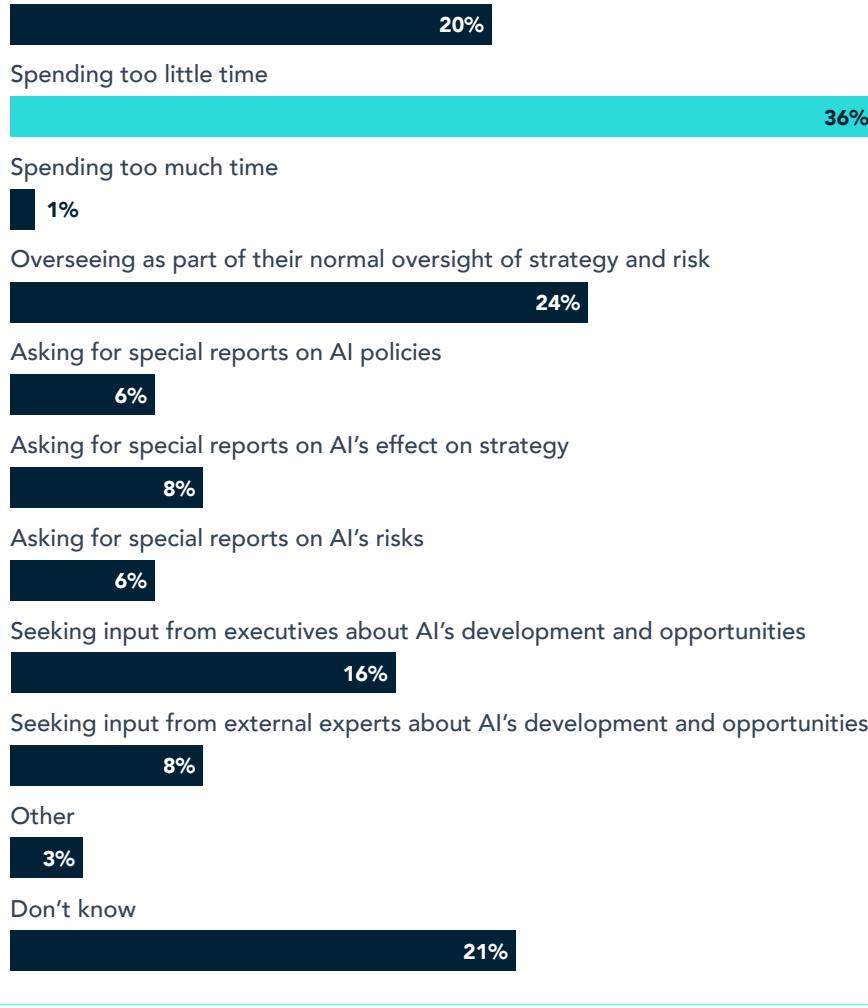
Who's taking the lead?

Across functions, the person who is most often cited as owning AI strategy is the chief information, technology, or digital officer. About 10% say it's the CEO. And just over 10% say no one.¹

Forty percent say the CEO is involved in setting AI policies, and just over 60% say the digital leader is involved. There's little consistency among survey respondents in who else is involved, though general counsels and chief information security officers are cited more often than most other leaders by leaders across functions.

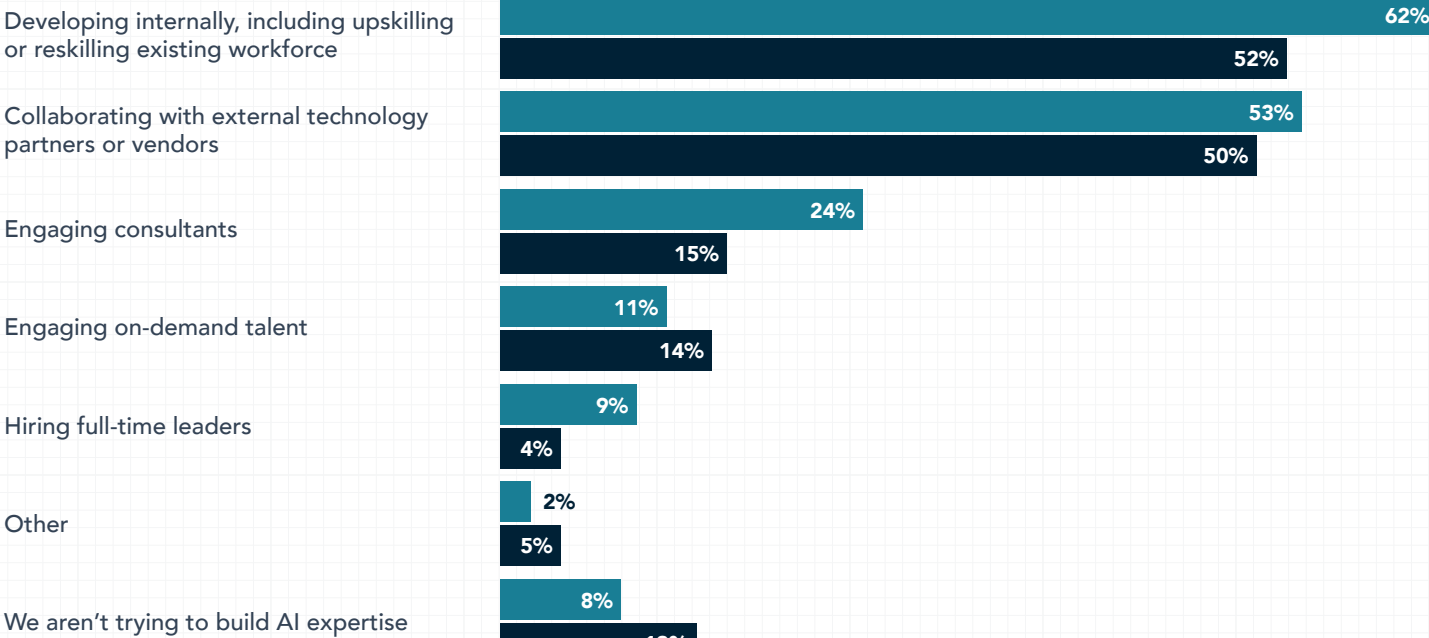


As for the board, **36% of marketing leaders do not think the board is spending enough time on AI.** This share is similar across most functions.

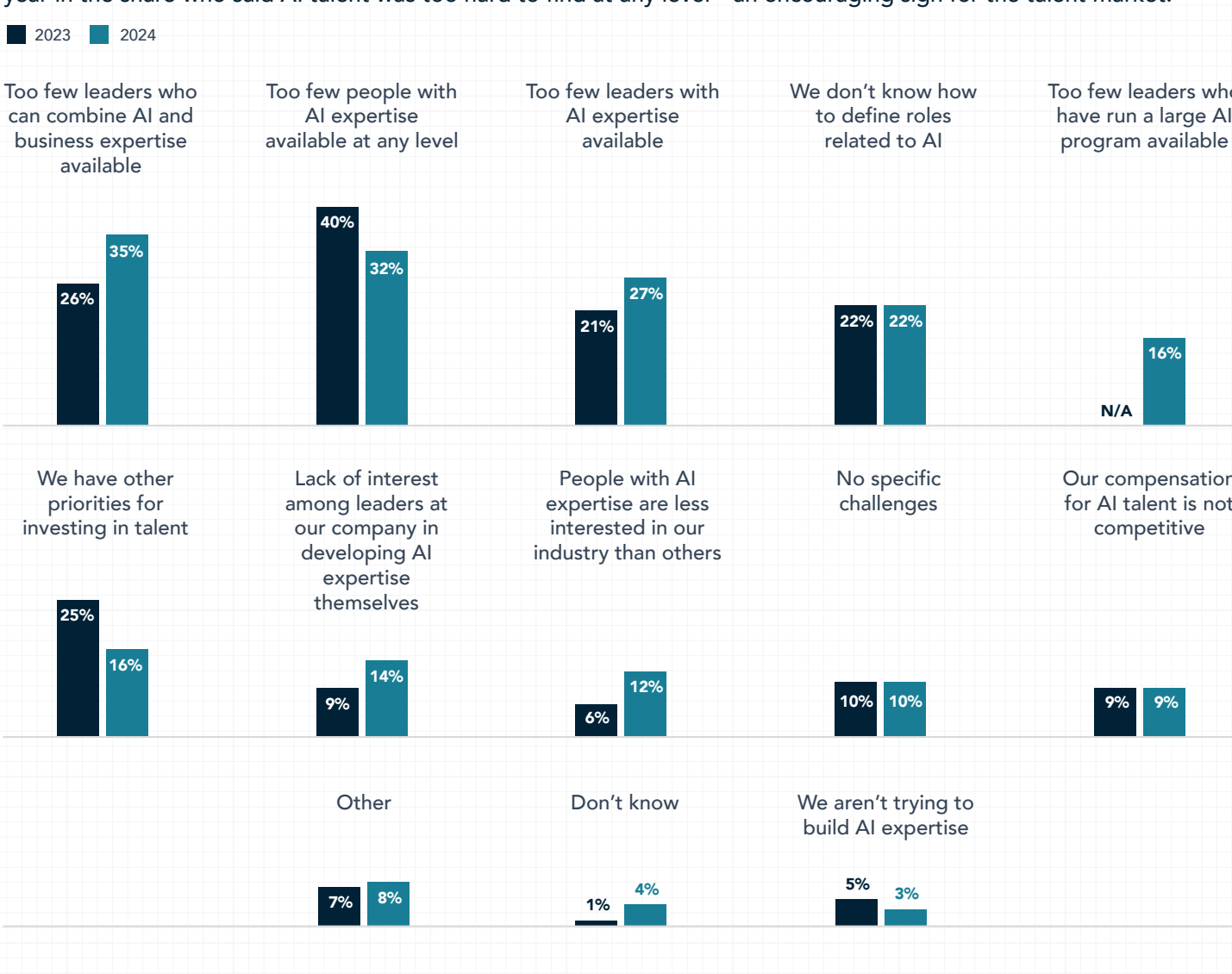


Finding AI expertise for marketing

Year over year, there was a 10-percentage-point jump in the share of marketing leaders who say they are building AI expertise for the function by developing it internally. Only 9% say they are hiring full-time leaders, the lowest share among their C-suite peers. Hiring remains less frequent mostly because expertise remains hard to find.

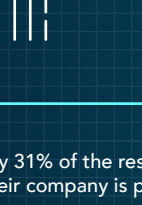


When asked about the **challenges they are experiencing in building AI expertise in their function**, an increasing share say there are too few people who can combine AI with business expertise. However, there was a notable drop year over year in the share who said AI talent was too hard to find at any level—an encouraging sign for the talent market.



Talent considerations for leaders

Across functions, it's still hard for companies to find the AI talent they need. As leaders seek to use AI for a broadening range of tasks and projects—eventually rewiring business processes across the enterprise—we expect high demand for AI-specific expertise at all levels to continue for three to six years. In the long run, it seems likely demand will follow a pattern similar to that in earlier waves of computing innovation, from personal computing to cloud, in which specific technical expertise was in high demand during the transition, but then declined as the relevant knowledge became a part of every person's role. In other words, we expect that basic working knowledge of AI will be as fundamental an expectation for senior leaders as being digitally savvy is today.



That said, we also expect every enterprise will have a senior leader responsible for the AI strategy and for AI platforms and tools. This executive may or may not have a chief AI officer title.

About the research

In spring 2024, we surveyed 1,894 executives: 518 executives in finance; 401 executives in human resources; 153 executives in legal; 335 executives in marketing; 93 executives in sales; 90 executives in strategy; and 304 executives in supply chain and operations. This survey had a global reach; respondents represent the full range of industries, company revenue levels, and various company ownership structures. In 2023, we conducted similar surveys, including a survey of 111 marketing leaders.

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