RESULTS **MADE** REAL

The Modern marketing revenue impact report 2026

Exploring the **realities of reporting** on your real-world ROI

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MARKETING
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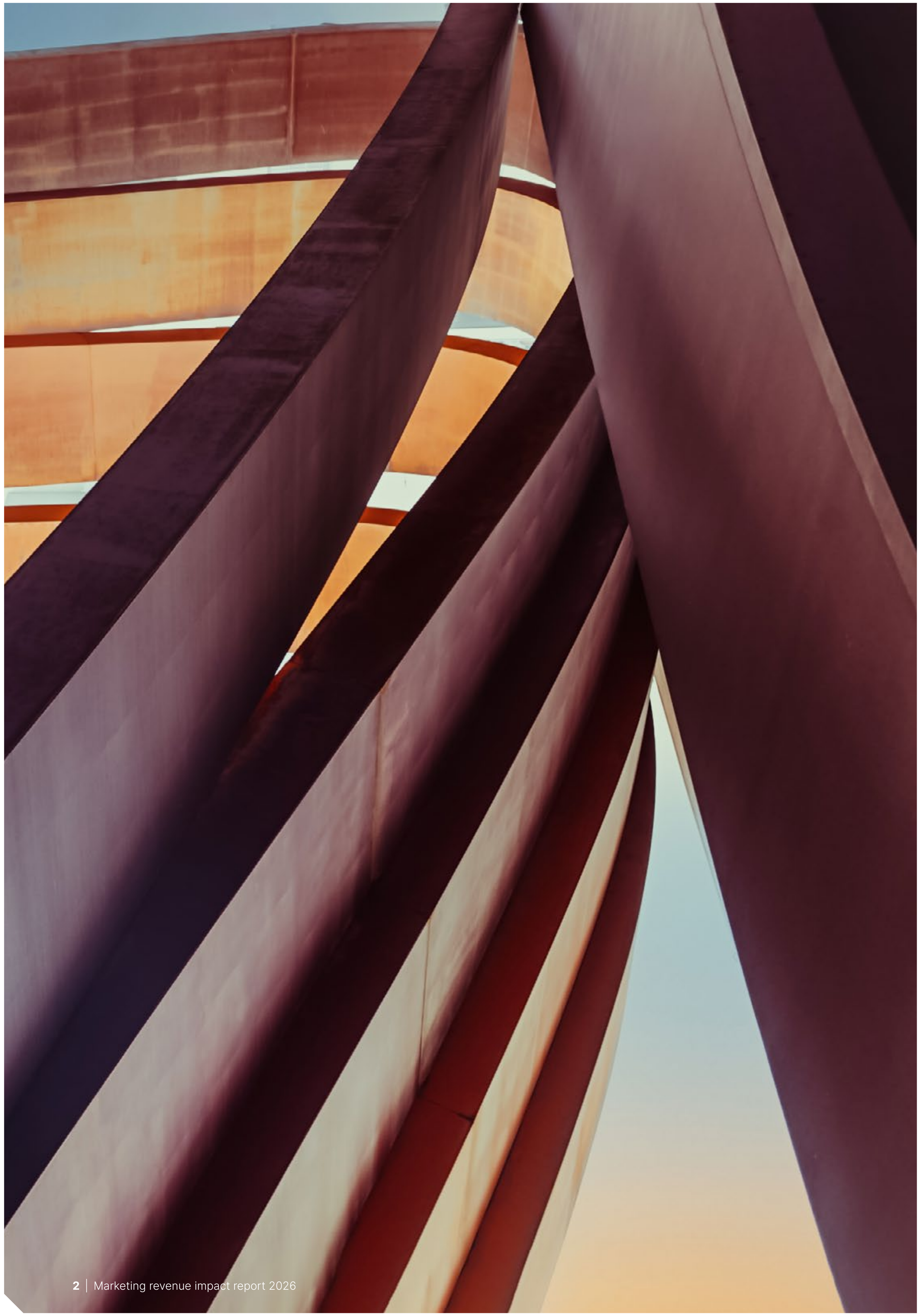


Today's B2B marketing leaders are driving real revenue impact across their organisations.

But behind the scenes, that impact is failing to land where it matters most: with senior leadership.

While marketing plays an undeniable role in shaping demand and influencing pipeline – for many, the challenge comes in showcasing value clearly and credibly to the business.

Without effective storytelling, boards become disengaged as performance confidence becomes harder to sustain.

Marketing's ability to demonstrate its impact on revenue translates into an ongoing struggle to attribute clear ROI for the business – a struggle that uncovers a contradiction at the heart of complex B2B marketing.

From dashboards to boardrooms, almost every marketer knows the pain of linking activity to impact; a constant friction between internal department confidence and external performance credibility that results in an ROI paradox for today's modern marketer: reporting is everywhere – but belief in the data is not.

Revealing the reality

To understand why this paradox exists, **we commissioned a survey of 600 CMOs, VPs, Directors and Heads of Marketing at B2B companies with 1000+ employees in each market across the UK and USA.**

This data was presented to an expert panel of four marketing leaders to gain critical insight from their lived experiences, to which we thank them for their contributions.

Throughout the research, we explored:

- How confident marketing leaders feel about their reporting
- How much they trust the data behind it
- How boards and senior stakeholders respond
- What blocks clearer attribution of revenue impact
- The business consequences when marketing ROI can't be proven

Read the full methodology here

The hypothesis: Enterprise organisations are still failing to get a clear ROI for marketing.

What the data revealed was more confronting than expected.

Read on to discover the four key themes perpetuating the paradox, and why marketing reporting continues to 'feel good' internally – yet increasingly falls short where it matters most: **maintaining credibility as a revenue engine with demonstrable ROI.**

THEME 1:

Trust deficit

Theme 1: The trust deficit

Despite perceptions of comprehensive reporting, there's a fundamental trust problem with marketing data that undermines ROI conversations.

Marketing data lacks credibility

Attribution models are tracking, real-time reports are crunching and performance updates are coming through crisp and clear. Yet while **99.8%** of marketing leaders feel their current reporting helps them tell a comprehensive story of their impact on business outcomes, 73% only trust their data to *some extent*.

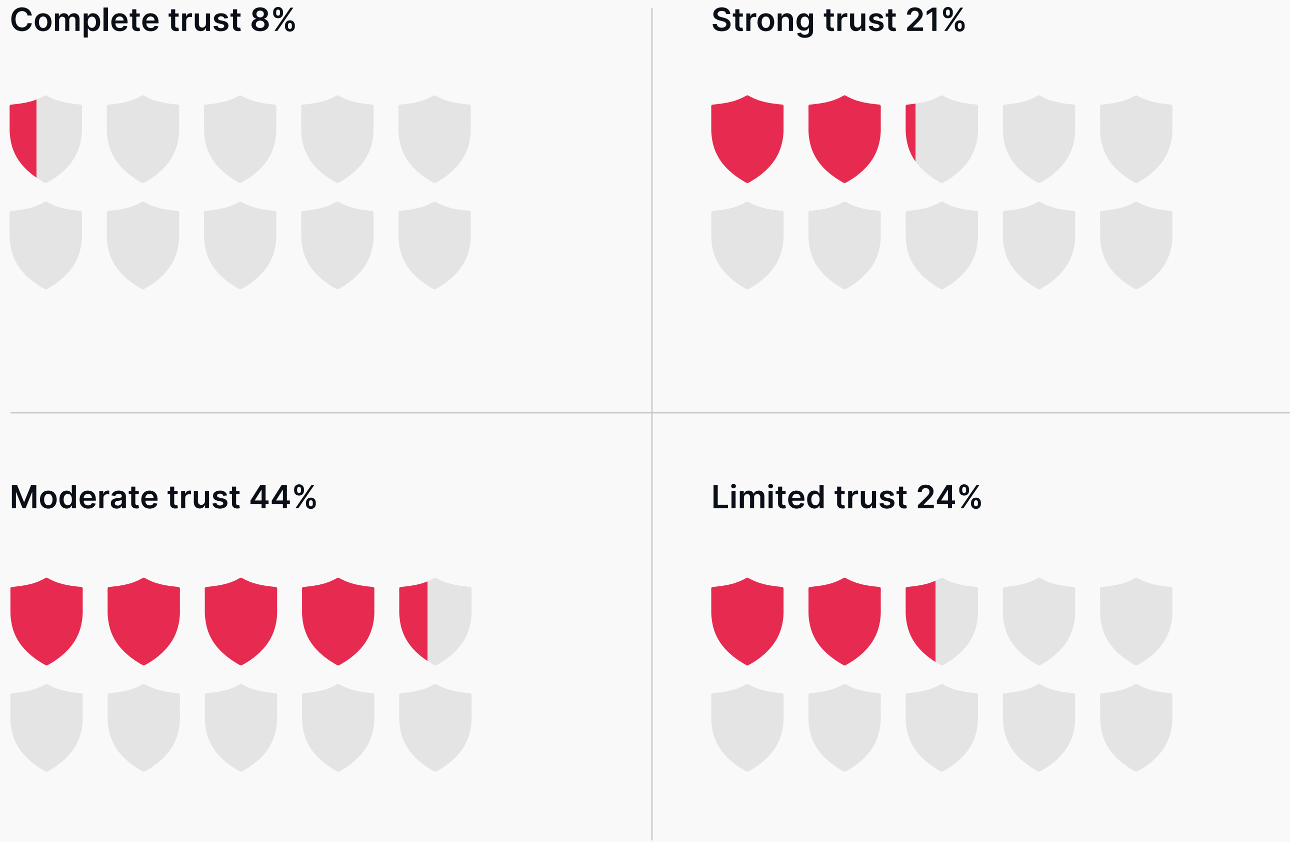
It's a distinction that matters. While data quality will always carry some variance, how it's being used to tell a compelling board story is where marketing risks getting lost in translation. Moreover, moderate data trust may be enough to operate day to day, but it falters in defending performance when results are challenged.

Lack of trust in marketing data

While marketing leaders believe their reporting shows a comprehensive view of marketing's impact on business outcomes, **only 8% have complete trust in their data.**

This gap becomes evident when 32% report that their data or insights are questioned by the board, and 25% identify poor executive understanding as a top challenge.

Do you trust the data and insights you receive in marketing reports?



Only 8% have complete trust in their data.

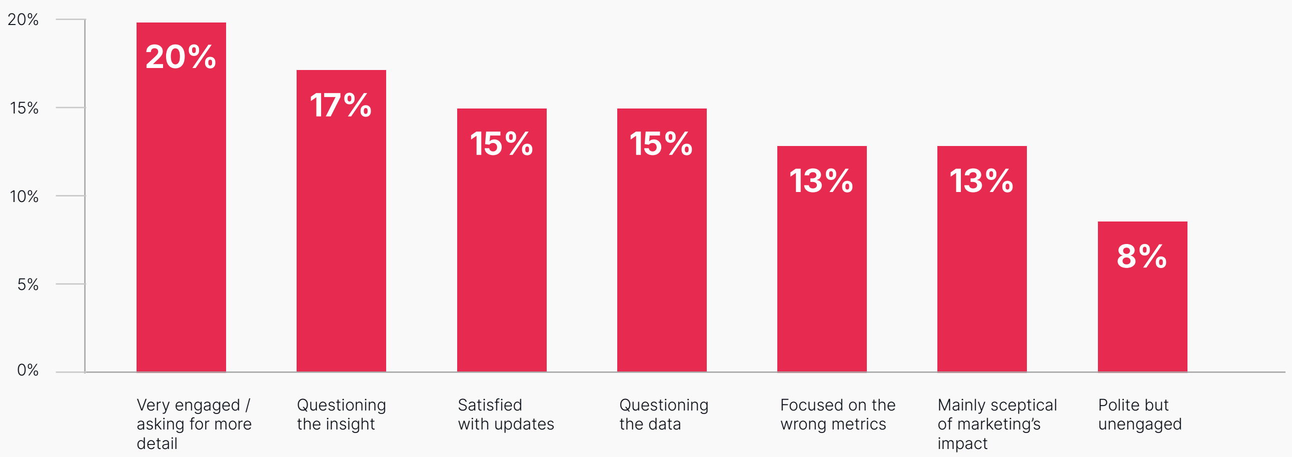
Get to the boardroom, and that faltering trust quickly translates into a lack of conviction.

Only 20% of boards are very engaged and asking for more detail from marketing performance data. For the remainder, a greater need for data storytelling is needed to close the gap.

"The most important part of reporting is the story, not a metric. You've got to give them the whole picture rather than a very bland story such as 'this customer is engaged."

Sharron Lloyd, Marketing Director at DHL

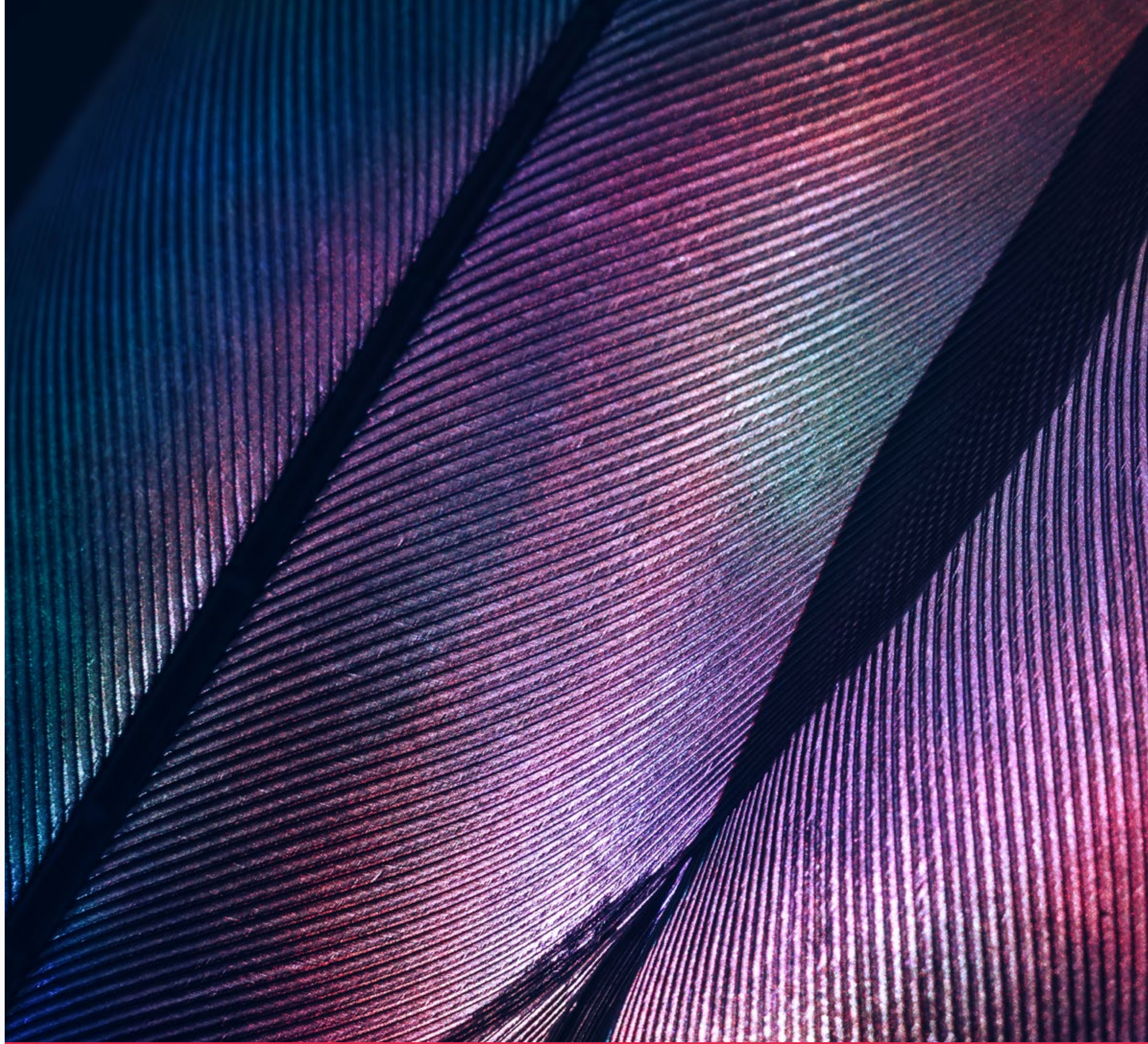
How does your board mainly respond when you present marketing performance data?



17%
of boards question the insight

15%
question the data

13%
are openly sceptical of marketing's impact



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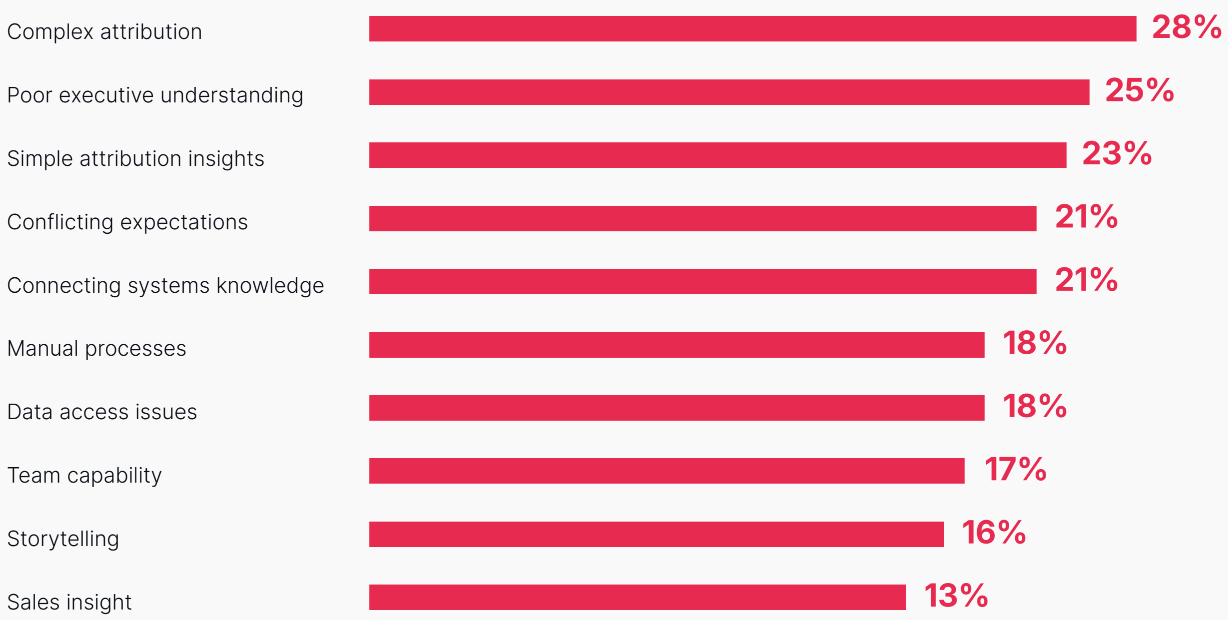
Sure, most boards ask for *some* level of detail. **Yet almost one-third actively challenge the data or insight being presented:** a challenge that turns ROI conversations from decisive to defensive.

Challenges: Attribution and alignment

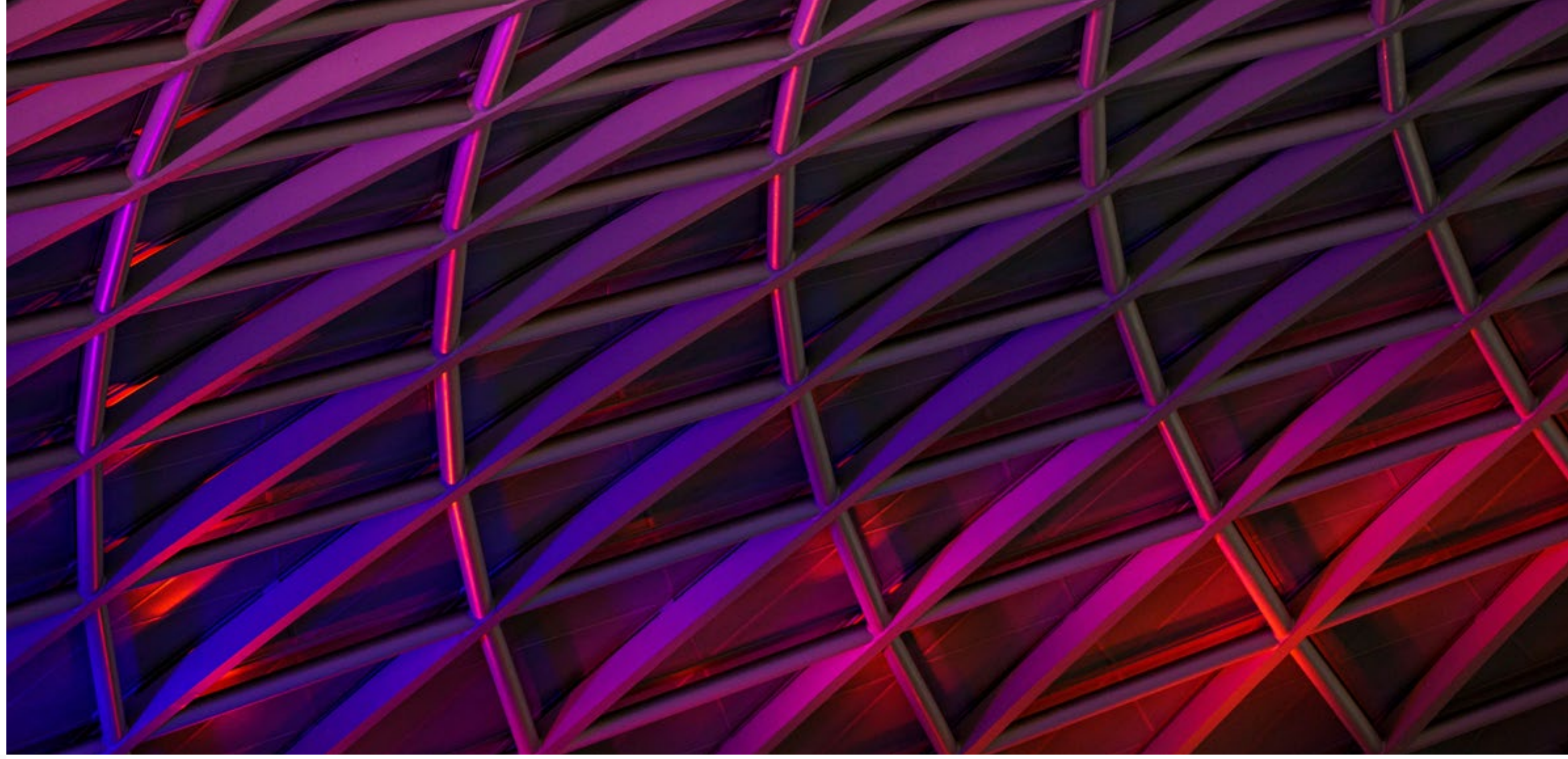
"Reporting is about understanding what's driving the best outcomes from a business perspective and how we track that with agility. It's not about claiming attribution for attribution's sake."

Paula Darvell, Group CMO, Azets

What, if any, are the main challenges faced when reporting?



32% **Of larger companies (3000-5000 employees) report the challenge of poor executive understanding.**



Without understanding, trust erodes

Deepening the defensive, 25% of marketing leaders cite poor executive understanding of marketing performance as a critical reporting challenge.

Even with data available, its relevance to commercial outcomes remains unclear to the board. Poor shared understanding diminishes trust.

And without trust, marketing's impact becomes easier to question – and harder to prove.

Only 1 in 5

marketing leaders consistently rely on pipeline (22%), brand (21%) and sales attribution (21%) reporting data for strategic planning and board reporting.

The opportunity here lies in alignment over argument.

When marketing and the board come together early to agree what ROI looks like – which measures matter, what success should demonstrate and how impact will be judged, for example – credibility skyrockets, as reporting shifts from explanation to evidence.

It's precisely why many marketing teams look to attribution models to provide clarity. However, as our next theme explores, that often creates as many problems as it solves.

THEME 2:

Attribution breakdown

Theme 2:
Attribution breakdown

Attribution modelling, the very mechanism needed to prove marketing ROI, is fundamentally broken in most organisations.

The technical and architectural barrier to ROI

Attribution *should* clarify marketing's contribution to revenue. On the surface, many leaders (99.8%, to be exact) feel their reporting does exactly that. But dig deeper, and the cracks begin to show.

While 28% of marketing leaders say attribution models are too complex to interpret, 23% say their models are too simplistic to provide meaningful insight. In other words, over half of organisations believe attribution isn't fit for purpose...just for opposite reasons.

However you cut it, attribution struggles to answer *how* marketing contributes to revenue outcomes in a way the business trusts. It's not a theoretical breakdown, either: marketing leaders recognise it all too well.

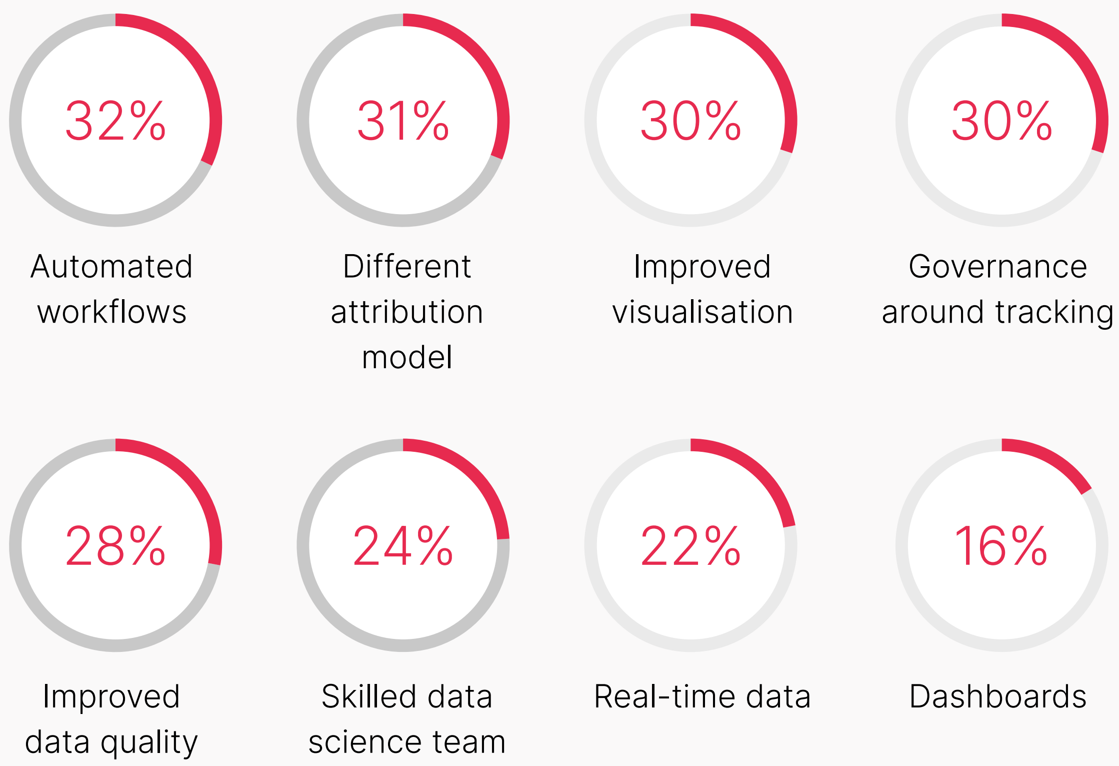
Customers don't move cleanly from campaign to conversion; they move between marketing and sales touchpoints over extended periods of time.

They research independently and engage intermittently, all before a buying decision is ever formally considered. Attribution models attempting to isolate individual moments strip away this context.

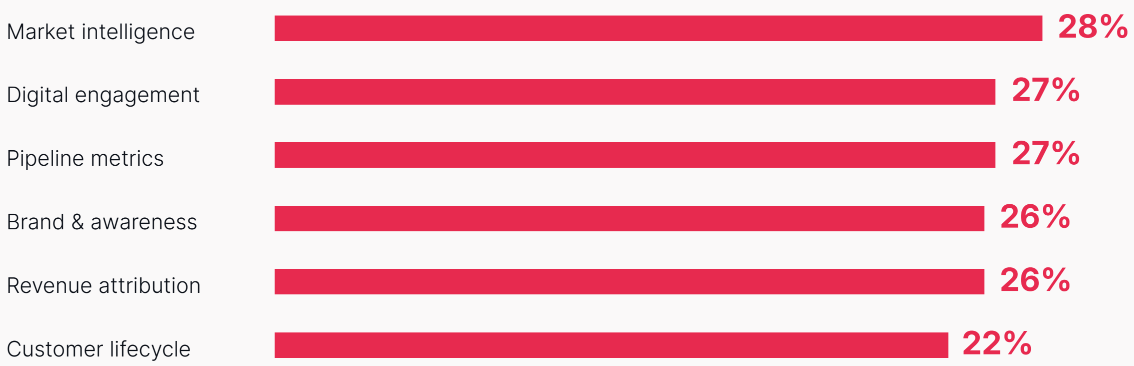
What's lost is the story of the journey: how marketing built familiarity over time, how sales accelerated or stalled momentum, and how both contributed long before revenue was realised.

As Veronica Medina, Former Head of North America Markets at HiBob, explains: *"You've got to simplify the complex. Instead of looking at every touch, ask what's the lifespan of those touches, the customer acquisition cost and the sales cycle length – and then start trying to improve the entire journey."*

What, if anything, would be the main things that would make a difference to your reporting?



Which categories, if any, are most critical when reporting to your senior leadership team?



The technical and architectural barrier to ROI

When asked what would make the most difference to their reporting, **31% said a different attribution model.**

Interestingly, revenue attribution ranks fifth on the most critical reporting categories when presenting to senior leadership.

It's a telling contradiction that highlights the disconnect between the models marketing builds, and evidence the business actually values.

More concerningly, attribution is being asked to solve a problem it can't fix on its own. With data trust already raising brows, adding additional complexity simply creates more friction.

For oversimplified models, the inverse is true: reporting fails to reflect how buying decisions are made in complex B2B environments.

Either way, without the right infrastructure, governance and shared understanding, attribution becomes another layer of reporting in a sea of swelling scrutiny.

And when that happens, the consequences extend far beyond reporting itself.

As our recent CMO-focused roundtable revealed, overcoming the attribution battle ultimately requires marketing to start removing it entirely – owning the total company pipeline and focusing on customer journeys that promote lifetime value over first-year revenue metrics.

> *"What I find most interesting in today's environment is this concept of marketing being almost coin operated: you stick a quarter in the gumball machine and out comes an opportunity or pipeline. That's not how it works. There's a lot that happens in between, many people, touchpoints, tactics and channels."*
>
> Allison Barlaz, VP Marketing, Unqork

THEME 3:

Business consequences

Theme 3:
Real business consequences

The inability to demonstrate clear ROI isn't just a reporting problem; it's actively damaging marketing's position and resources within organisations.

The cost of unclear revenue impact

Marketing's challenge in demonstrating clear ROI ripples out beyond its reporting walls, with very real business consequences.

When asked about the impact of struggling to demonstrate marketing performance, **31% of marketing leaders** said they find it hard to justify headcount or resource.

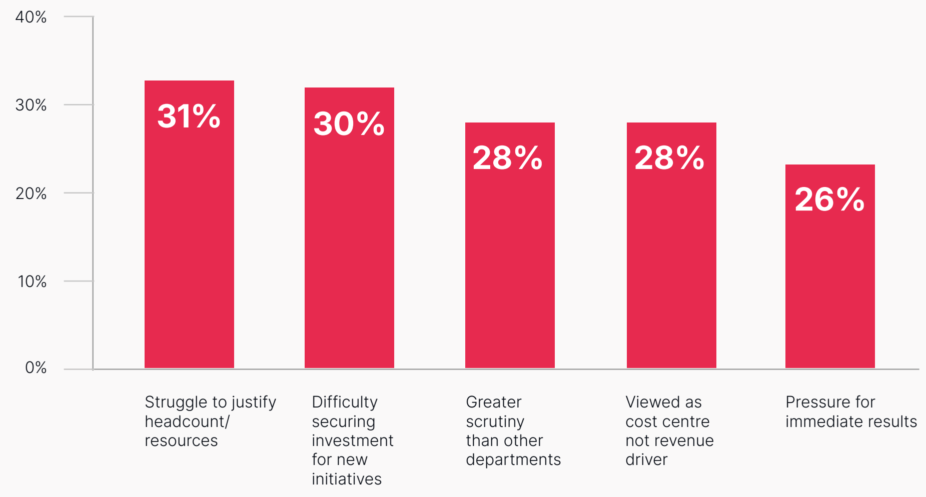
A further 30% face difficulty securing investment for new initiatives, while **28% say marketing is viewed as a cost centre rather than a revenue driver.**

Unsurprisingly, increased scrutiny is a common occurrence too, with **28% reporting being held to a higher level of examination than other departments** and **26% feeling the pressure to deliver immediate results** – regardless of the realities of complex B2B buying cycles.

> "*As long as you boil it up to top level numbers, boards are engaged. The hard part is explaining the why. If something's working well, they want to know why and whether they should invest more – and if numbers aren't going in the right direction, what do we do about it? The problem is everyone is a buyer, so everyone thinks their view on the buying process matters, but none of us are the buyers we're selling to. Unless you can show how you got to the why, you'll just get a lot of different opinions.*"

Allison Barlaz, VP Marketing, Unqork

What, if any, business consequences have you experienced due to challenges demonstrating marketing performance?



31% struggle to defend headcount and resources when performance metrics fall short

In relation to the 20% of boards being actively engaged in performance data, these consequences are clearly compounded by limited engagement at senior levels. Belief drives behaviour, and when boards lack confidence in marketing's contribution, investment slows and tolerance for uncertainty shrinks.

Over time, marketing becomes easier to challenge and harder to defend. Naturally, these pressures are felt most acutely during budget cycles, but their root cause is consistent: an inability to make marketing's revenue impact clear and credible.

From there, it's a full circle affair back to the trust deficit.

99.83% of respondents have experienced **at least one negative business consequence** due to challenges demonstrating marketing performance.

However, even when marketing leaders know what needs to change, many lack the infrastructural capability to act. **Which brings us onto our final theme...**

THEME 4:

Infrastructure & capability

Theme 4:
Infrastructure & capability

Even when organisations know what they need to improve ROI reporting, they lack the systems, processes and resources to execute.

The execution problem

It's a given that awareness isn't the problem; marketing leaders know their reporting needs to improve.

The question is: how? For our respondents, **32% pointed to automated reporting workflows as making the biggest difference to their reporting,** while **30% cited improved data visualisation** and **30% highlighted the need for clearer governance around tracking.**

But here's the thing: while intent may be clear, execution is not.

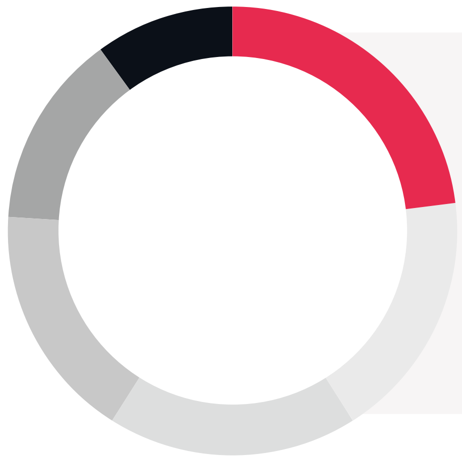
Without the right infrastructure (read: capable of tailoring to revenue impact) in place, reporting will continue to drag and fragment, stifling the delivery of trusted, decision-ready insight expected by the board.

> *"There's a gap between what dashboards show and what we actually need to know. Dashboards report outputs, but they don't capture execution difficulty, quality or the context that informs future strategy."*
>
> **Veronica Medina, Former Head of North America Markets, HiBob**

Two campaigns can look identical in a dashboard – for example, both generating 87 demos – while masking fundamental differences in effort, cost, audience quality, and long-term impact. What appears equal on paper may distinguish a sustainable pipeline from a flash-in-the-pan result.

AI may eventually help bridge this gap, but for now meaningful insight still relies on manual reporting.

Describe the marketing reporting capability in your organisation?



23% Analytics team – deep insight
18% Holistic dashboards
18% Analytics team – automated reports
17% Data science – real-time storytelling
14% Dashboards – channel level
9% Manually generated reports

Driving manual in an automated world

As it stands – and despite the complexity of today's B2B environments – many marketing teams indeed continue to rely on manual reporting; only 17% of organisations surveyed have access to real-time data through comprehensive, data science-led dashboards.

Meanwhile, 23% rely on manually-created analytics, and 9% still generate entirely manual reporting.

To get it right, as Veronica Medina continues: *"You need somebody who is skilled at data collection, retrieval and pulling insights from it with dedicated time assigned to marketing performance. Not everybody has that skill set."*

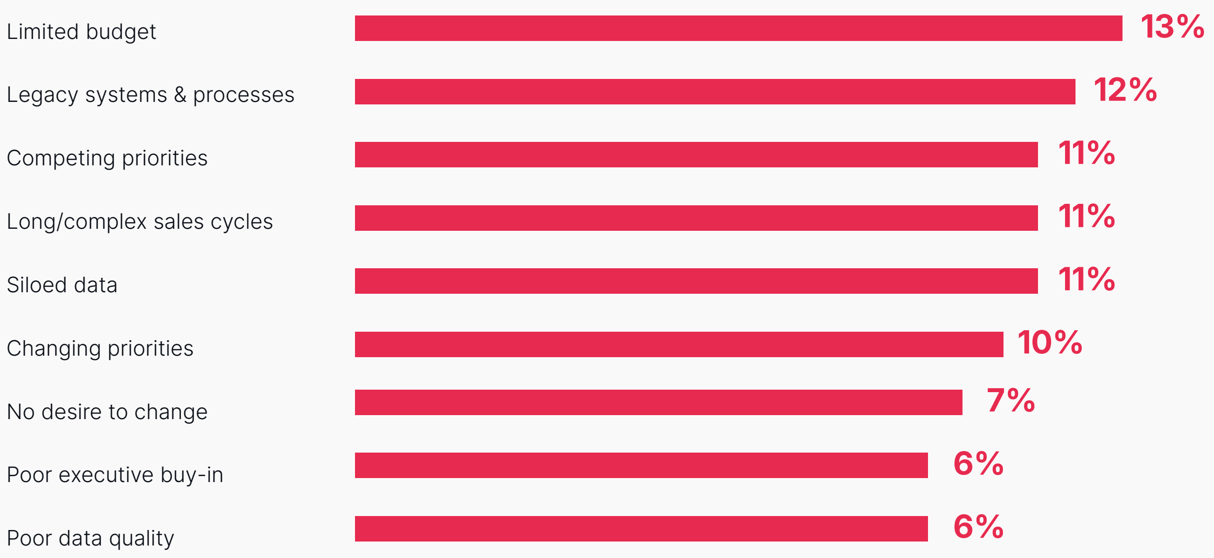
Beyond the obvious labour-intensive inefficiencies and increased risk of varying errors, continuing to bank on manual reporting keeps marketers continually reactive, stitching together insights after the fact to make sense of the demands for clarity.

But the answer here isn't a lift-and-shift away from manual reporting entirely; that's not even possible today.

1 in 3 marketers still rely on **fully manual reporting**, yet only a quarter have automated analytics in place.

Instead, it's about striking the right balance between automating analytics and ensuring skilled, strategic data hands are layering on anecdotal insights to support marketing's story. Until that happens, marketing will continue to contend with an ever-widening reporting gap.

What's the biggest barrier preventing these improvements?



What makes this gap even harder to escape is that it feeds itself. Limited infrastructure weakens reporting credibility. In turn, weak credibility makes it harder to secure marketing investment – and without investment, infrastructure never improves.

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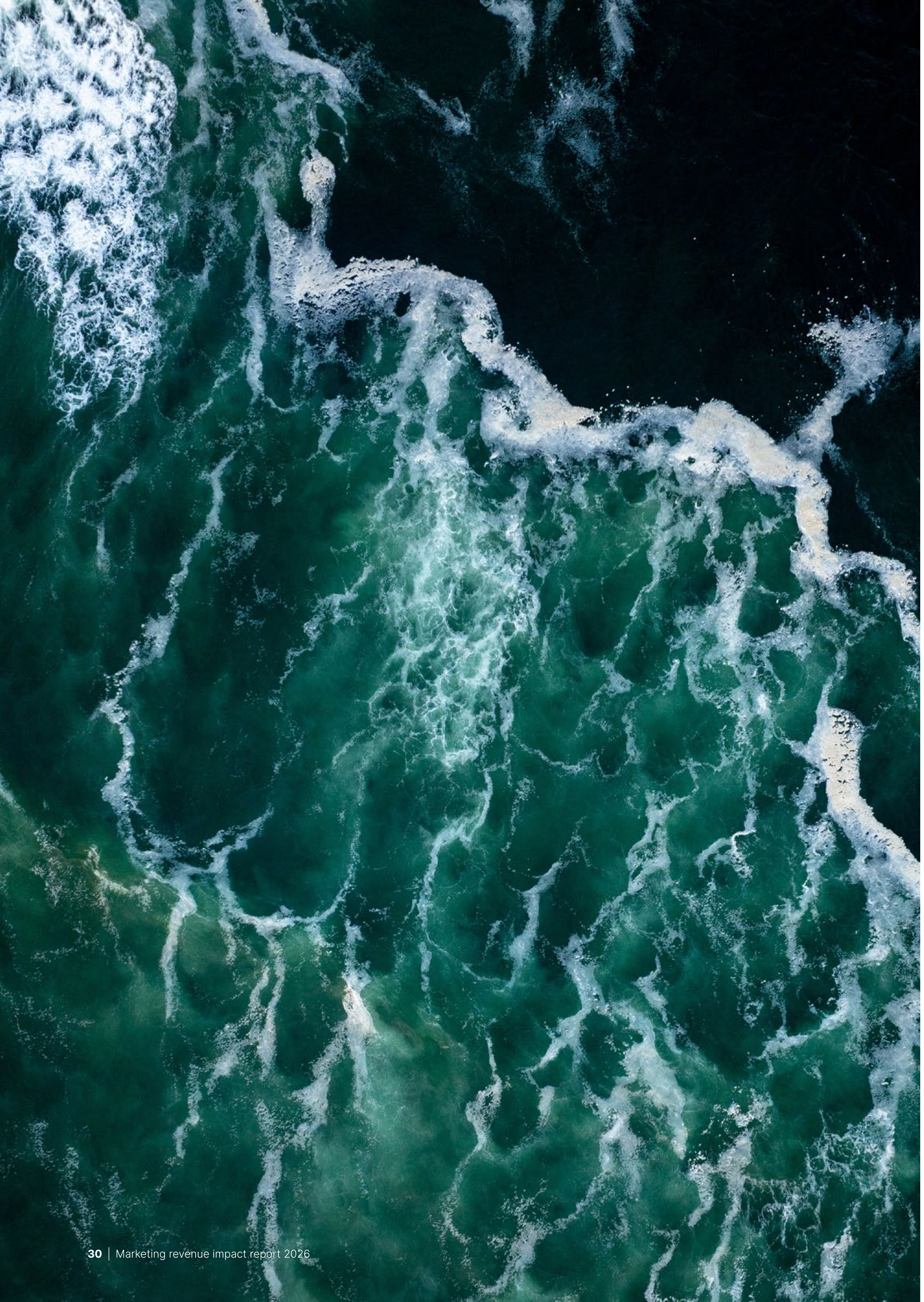
1 in 7 cited that **limited budget was the biggest barrier** with 14% in USA and 11% in UK.

While **13% of marketing leaders cite limited budget and 12% point to legacy systems as the biggest barriers to progress,** both are symptoms of the same underlying issue: a self-reinforcing loop that makes it extremely difficult for marketing to make its revenue impact clear enough to justify change.



Panel perspectives: Delving deeper with the data

Sharing our survey data with our expert marketing panel, a consistent theme prevailed: marketing is not short on effort or ambition, it's challenged by poor reporting alignment and interpretation. Across borders and businesses, here's what our panel picked up:

Perspective 1: The problem starts before reporting

For most marketing leaders, the breakdown of ROI conversations begins long before dashboards and attribution models are built. What constitutes 'proof' of marketing's value is rarely agreed upfront. Assumptions on influence and contribution become embedded into the everyday – and once set, they're extremely difficult to reverse.

It's why attribution debates never conclude; why shared agreement falters and reporting becomes a battleground.

As Unqork's VP Marketing, Allison Barlaz affirms:

"The biggest barrier is at the very start: defining the paradigm of success and agreeing on what proves marketing's value before you even get to reporting. Those underlying assumptions get incorporated into processes and systems, and that becomes your barrier."

Perspective 2: Translation matters more than metrics

In part, marketing metrics are designed to help marketers operate. Boards, however, expect reporting on their terms, in their language.

Fail to deliver, and watch as engagement drops. The key, as our panelists underlined, is in connecting activity to outcomes and finding ways to contextualise numbers within the full customer journey.

However, doing so requires first-hand experience of commercial accountability across that journey.

As Paul Darvell, Group CMO at Azets, explains:

"You can have all the data in the world, but if no one feels responsible for the outcomes, it's difficult to mobilise an organisation. If people haven't worked in an environment where commercial accountability has been the DNA of the marketing team, it's an inevitable gap. Once they understand the outcome, they understand all the changes."

Build and own that accountability – then tell the story in a way the business understands to help the board recognise themselves in the way marketing performance is presented.

Perspective 3: Attribution can't carry the weight alone

It's a given that no attribution model will ever fully reflect the complexities of B2B buying behaviour. The mistake is treating attribution as a definitive answer rather than a directional guide; easier said than done when pressure to hit short-term pipeline targets masks long-term value.

At the same time, data trust issues and an over-reliance on manual reporting (conflated by growing skill gaps) make it harder to extract meaningful insight even when the numbers look strong. The result? A constant balancing act that pits today's performance delivery with a longer-term view of credible, consistent impact on ROI.

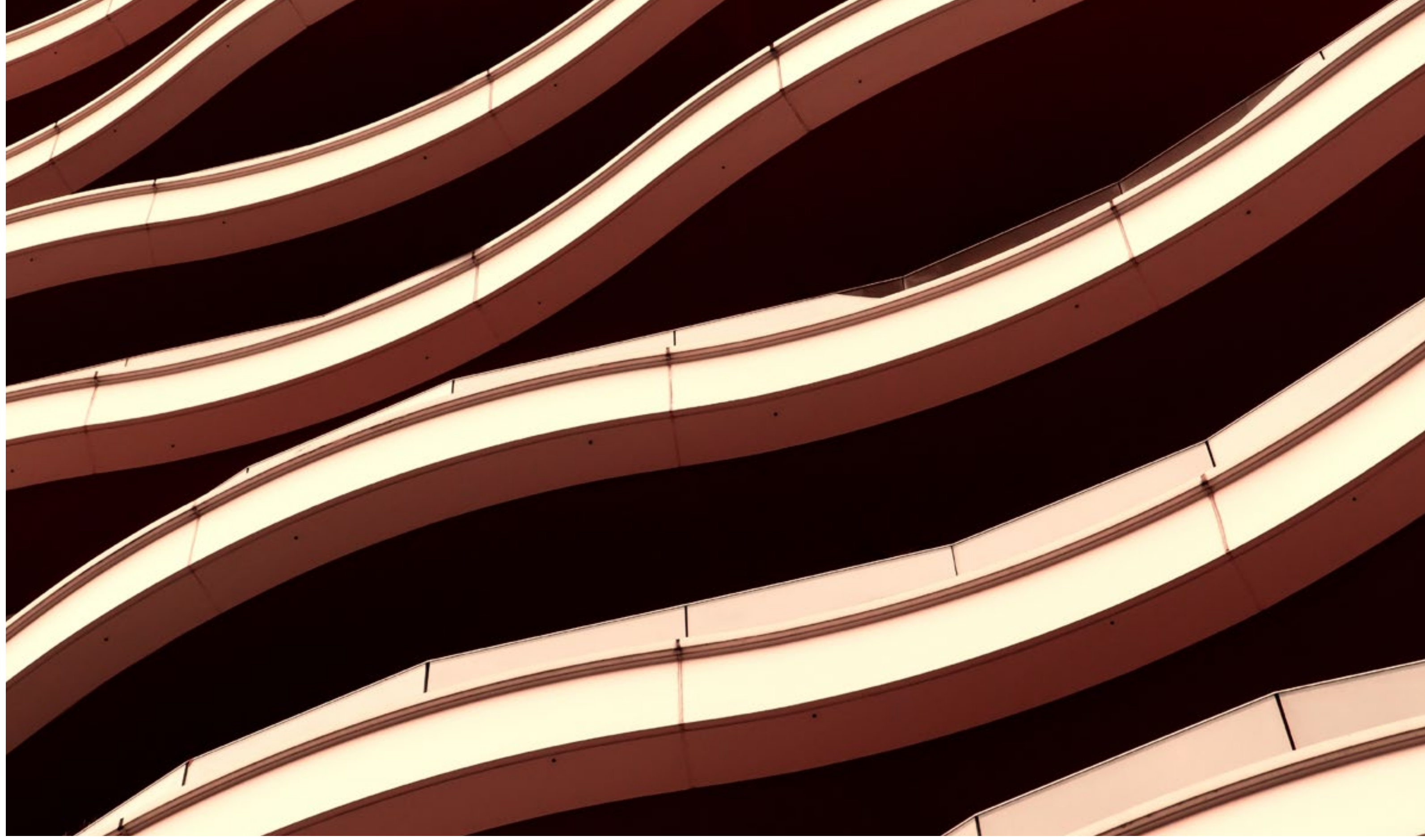
As Veronica Medina, Former Head of North America Markets at HiBob, defines it:

"Attribution is definitely a big challenge... you need to take a stance, decide on it, and then go with it...You're marketing to a broader group where only 5% are in-market right now. But you can't stop marketing to the other 95% because they're going to be in-market tomorrow. Despite this, you're only going to get a clear ROI for that 5%."

There's no denying marketing's revenue impact is real, but it's hard to read the label from inside the jar. Until organisations agree with marketing about what success looks like and stop asking attribution to do the impossible, marketing will continue to fight for belief instead of leading with it.

Final thoughts

From trust and attribution to business consequences and capability, marketing reporting isn't failing because leaders don't care about ROI. Nor is it down to a lack of data, effort or intent. It's failing because reporting confidence has outpaced credibility in outcomes.



What our survey data reveals is a conflicting state where marketing feels effective internally, yet struggles to prove its value to those expecting to see it.

It's a state that continues to undermine marketing's influence and investment in driving tangible growth.

In exploring the wider horizon here, two significant insights stand out:

The 'comprehensive reporting' delusion

Almost all marketing leaders (99.8%) say their reporting helps them tell a comprehensive story about marketing's impact, with 45% believing that story is fully comprehensive. And yet the volume and variety of consequences tell a very different story – to the tune of 99.83%. In fact, only one respondent claimed to have experienced no negative consequences as a result of their reporting.

That's not a marginal gap: it's a complete contradiction between perception and reality.

In effect, marketing has redefined 'comprehensive' to mean produced; not trusted, acted on or commercially convincing. The same leaders who believe their reporting is comprehensive are simultaneously experiencing the fallout of it not being believed.

The solution: Reporting needs to be inherently judged by – and subsequently built on – its ability to drive trust and decisions from the outside in.

The boardroom reality check

As our data reveals, the trust gap becomes clearest when marketing reporting reaches board level.

While 20% are seemingly very engaged or asking for more detail, a staggering 80% are responding with questioning, misunderstanding or, arguably worse, disengagement.

More telling still, 17% question the insights being presented, 15% question the data itself, and 13% are openly sceptical of marketing's impact on revenue.

It's a pattern that holds across regions, too, with only 20% of US boards and just 14% of UK boards showing 'high' engagement, signalling a systemic issue running far deeper than a regional anomaly.

The solution: Boards don't disengage because marketing lacks activity. Reporting needs to surface evidence that creates conviction over questions; confidence over concerns.

Ready to see your revenue impact made real?

If reporting confidence isn't translating into boardroom belief, it's time to change the model.

We help marketing leaders demonstrate clear ROI that proves trust in performance – because reporting isn't impactful until the business believes it.

Let's talk →

About the research

Modern commissioned Censuswide, a global insight-driven research company, to survey 600 CMOs, VP, Director and Head of Marketing at B2B companies with a company size of 1000+ employees in each market (18+) across the UK and USA.

Composed of 10 questions with respondents submitting answers via an online survey, the survey was conducted under ESOMAR principles between the 30th October - 6th November 2025.

The panel

Sharron Lloyd
Marketing Director, DHL Supply Chain

Veronica Medina
Former Head of North America Markets, HiBob

Allison Barlaz
VP Marketing, Unqork

Paula Darvell
Group CMO, Azets

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