



The skills premium: how AI became essential for marketers

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For marketing executives, the professional landscape changed dramatically when generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI) emerged. AI has rapidly evolved from an esoteric skill confined to data science and digital media teams into a technology marketers can access directly. Gen AI tools that answer queries from simple text or voice prompts have enabled a new wave of automation.

The consequences have been twofold. Most visible has been the explosion of AI used by individual marketers to accelerate routine tasks such as crafting emails and social media posts. Less remarked upon—but carrying more significance—is that marketing executives have begun to recruit specialists to develop AI solutions within their departments. This has increased AI uptake in the function and jumpstarted marketing-relevant applications: the pace of AI tool adoption for marketers [accelerated threefold](#) in 2023 compared with 2022.

The rise of the AI specialist in marketing teams

Not long ago, marketing executives with AI-based ideas were often left waiting. Companies' limited number of machine learning (ML) specialists typically prioritized projects for teams such as product and sales. Today, with Gen AI tools readily available, marketing teams no longer require dedicated servers or proprietary algorithms from corporate IT and data science functions to execute AI-driven initiatives.

As a result, AI has pushed data-driven decision-making deeper into marketing operations. If a marketing department can successfully isolate a dataset and move it into cloud storage, they can put AI tools to work on it themselves. Armed with data management skills, specialists can use public or proprietary AI tools to train a customer-facing chatbot or automate A/B testing for websites and adverts. Take the marketing team at [FC Barcelona](#), which has used AI to curate individualized content recommendations, including news articles, videos and social media posts.

This has triggered a hiring shift. Even before the rise of Gen AI, the probability of encountering ML as a requirement in a marketing job post had [more than doubled](#) over the previous five years. AI-related hiring has only intensified since 2022. Data from Indeed Hiring Lab shows that marketing managers are looking for a bigger variety of skills, essentially meaning that demand for individual skills has lowered. Despite this trend, demand for AI skills nearly tripled between 2022 and 2023 (Fig. 1). This outpaced the rate of demand growth for almost all other marketing skills.

While AI remains a niche skill for individual marketers compared with core competencies such as social media management and project management, it has become indispensable at the

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team level. No longer a mere curiosity, it is now a capability that executives expect to cultivate. A [survey](#) of marketing leaders found that nearly two-thirds plan to recruit for AI-related roles this year.

The lesson for marketing leaders is clear: waiting in line for the corporate technology team to develop your AI applications is outdated. Instead, the future belongs to those who embed AI expertise directly in their teams, harnessing available tools to extract maximum value from available data.

Marketing executives: conducting the AI orchestra

The power and variety of AI applications is also reshaping how marketing executives themselves spend their time. AI-powered tools have long been available for automatic discrete tasks such

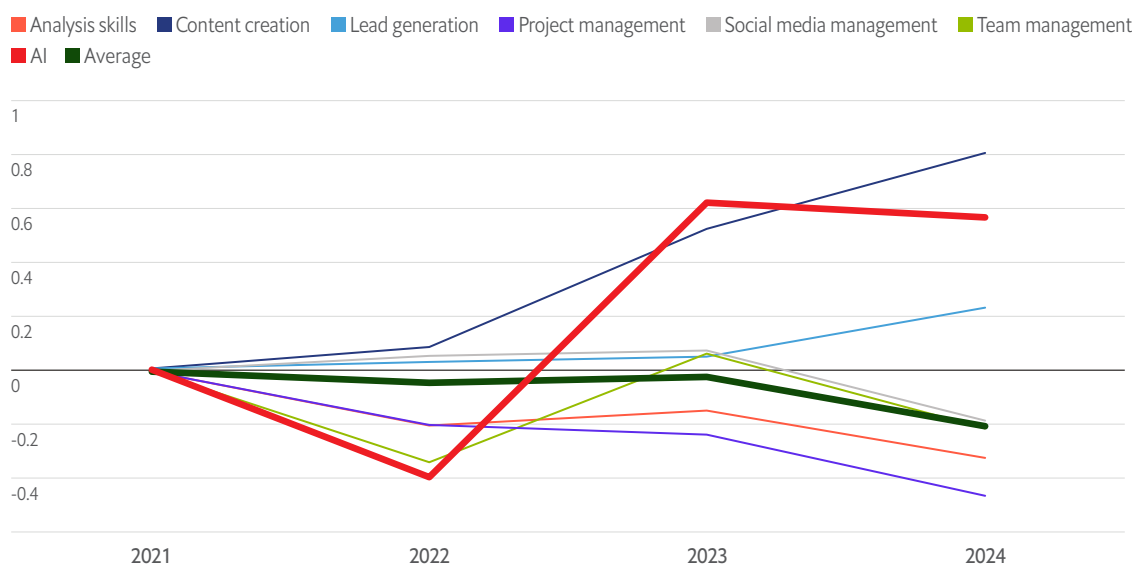
as [buyer intent analysis](#) and [content creation](#). However, the rise of Gen AI and natural language text prompts in 2022 made such tools vastly more accessible, driving widespread adoption across all levels of seniority.

For marketing leaders, selecting and managing such tools in concert has become a strategic function in its own right. The best leaders, in fact, see AI software selection, training and management as a way to improve their department's performance against key benchmarks like new business generation.

Survey data underscores this shift. Since late 2022 marketing directors have been more involved in technology management. According to year-on-year survey results from MarTech, an industry news platform, 84% of senior marketing leaders are responsible for researching and recommending

Figure 1: The AI skills leap

Cumulative change in marketing skill demand 2021 - 2024
% of respondents



Source: Indeed Hiring Lab, Economist Impact analysis, 2025

new marketing technology products, up from 70% in 2022 (Fig. 2). Senior positions that once required expertise in activities such as campaign execution or content strategy increasingly revolve around managing a portfolio of AI-enabled tools.

Yet for executives operating within rigid, centralized technology procurement structures, this shift presents a challenge. Persuading board members and fellow executives to decentralize technology decision-making and allocate marketing a sufficient software budget is becoming a crucial task for such leaders.

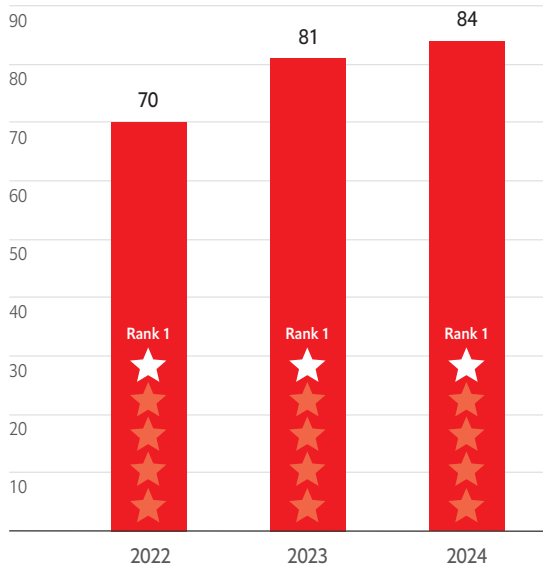
Toward the future of AI marketing skills

The rise of Gen AI has upended marketing, altering not just job descriptions but the very nature of decision-making. No longer can marketing leaders rely on distant technology teams to dictate the pace of innovation. Instead, they must embed AI expertise within their ranks, mastering the art of tool selection and integration while ensuring that automation enhances rather than supplants human judgment. The winners will be those who wield AI not as a novelty, but as a disciplined force multiplier—seamlessly woven into strategy, operations and the broader marketing ecosystem.

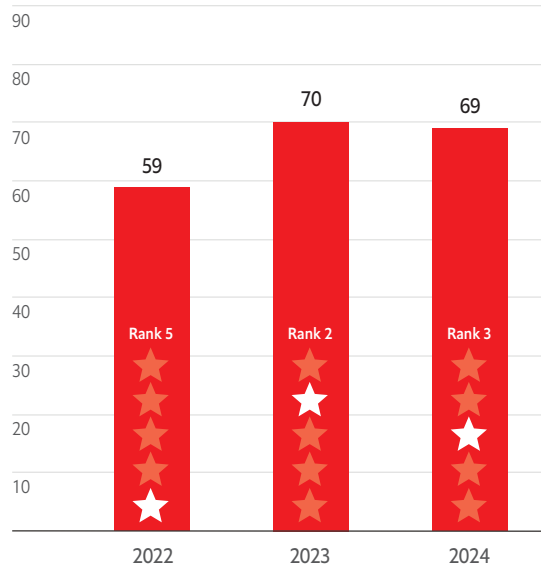
Figure 2: Strategy meets software

Responsibilities of marketing managers, director or above
% of respondents

Research and recommend new marketing technology products



Train and support staff on using marketing technology products



Source: MarTech Salary and Career Survey [2024](#), [2023](#) and [2022](#)

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