PROPOLIS
FROM B2B MARKETING



The State of B2B Marketing for Tech Providers:

Benchmark your marketing.
Understand your peers.
Make better decisions.

Executive Summary

Tech marketing leaders are navigating a period of sustained pressure. The Propolis Community Index shows budgets as a percentage of revenue have fallen sharply, from 9% of revenue target in 2024/25 to 6% in 2025/26, while demands for demonstrable ROI have never been higher. The data is clear: doing more with less is no longer a short-term ask, it's the new baseline.

Our analysis of real-time data from B2B marketing leaders across the US and UK reveals three defining trends shaping tech marketing right now:

Budgets are tightening while technology investment accelerates, ROI expectations are climbing across every major channel, and team structures are becoming increasingly distributed despite steady headcount growth.

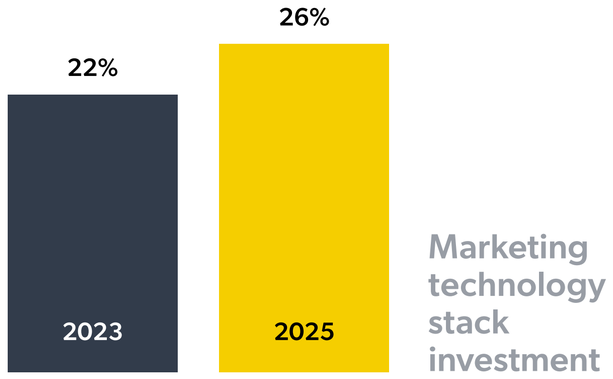
The organizations that act on this data now will be better positioned to prove their commercial impact at board level, protect their marketing budgets, and build the kind of marketing function that earns a permanent seat at the leadership table.



The Current State: Data-Driven Reality Check

Budget Pressures and Where the Money Is Going

Marketing budgets dropped from **9%** of revenue target in 2024/25 to **6%** in 2025/26



Tech marketing budgets are under sustained pressure. The Propolis Community Index shows **marketing budgets as a percentage of revenue targets have dropped for the third consecutive year, falling from 9% in 2024/25 to 6% in 2025/26.** This three-year decline demands a strategic response rather than tactical adjustment – and for marketing leaders making the case at board level, it makes a rigorous, evidence-based approach to budget allocation essential.

Yet within these tighter constraints, a clear priority is emerging. **Marketing technology stack investment has grown from 22% of budget in 2023/24 to 26% in 2025/26**, while third-party spend has decreased from 19% to 17% over the same period. organizations are building internal capabilities rather than outsourcing expertise – a shift that reflects both cost discipline and a growing recognition that the tools and data to drive performance need to be owned, not rented.

Within the marketing activity budget itself, social media marketing now commands 16% of activity spend, up from 14% in 2024/25, while events and conferences have dropped from 13% to 10%. Digital and web activities, along with content creation, each maintain 15% of activity spend – a reminder that in tech, always-on digital presence remains foundational to commercial growth.

Where the Pressure Is Sharpest

ROI expectations in tech are rising fast, and the data reveals a clear performance hierarchy. **Social media marketing ROI increased from 4:1 in 2024/25 to 6:1 in 2025/26**, with content creation and digital/web activities now delivering 5:1 returns – up from 3:1 the previous year. Email marketing has seen similar improvement, rising from 2:1 to 5:1. For marketing leaders building a board-level investment case, these are the numbers that make the argument.

This performance improvement coincides with increased selective outsourcing. **Digital advertising agency support jumped from 54% to 70% of organizations**, while market research and analysis outsourcing grew from 46% to 65%. The data suggests a strategic pattern: while overall third-party spend decreases, organizations are concentrating external investment in the specialist capabilities most directly tied to commercial outcomes.

At the bottom of the table, non-digital advertising sits at 2:1 – the weakest return across all measured activities. Any channel that can't be measured should be scrutinized, and any activity consistently delivering under 4:1 should be under active review.

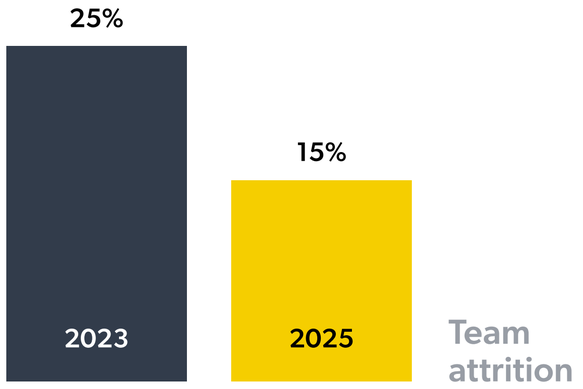


Social media marketing now delivers 6:1 ROI – the strongest performing channel for tech marketers. Content creation and digital/web both deliver 5:1 returns.

Organizational Transformation

Tech marketing teams are growing, but growth is coming with complexity. The Propolis Community Index shows **64% of marketing teams increased headcount in 2025/26, with average growth of 10%.** Yet these teams are simultaneously navigating multi-dimensional structures: 46% are organized by function, 44% by sector/industry, and 36% by geography, with significant overlap indicating widespread matrix arrangements.

64% of marketing teams increased headcount in 2025/26, with average growth of 10%



Attrition is a genuine good news story. **Team attrition has decreased from 25% in 2023/24 to 15% in 2025/26** – a significant reduction that points to improved retention, greater role stability, and teams finding their footing after years of post-pandemic volatility. The centralization versus decentralization debate continues, with 43% of marketing headcount centralized and 40% distributed across regional, product, or sector teams.

Customers: Harder to Win, More Valuable to Keep

Growth ambitions in tech marketing are high. **83% of marketing leaders plan to acquire more or significantly more customers in 2025/26** compared to last year – a significant uplift in acquisition intent. Retention targets have dipped to 67%, down from 92% in 2024/25, suggesting a deliberate shift toward net new growth. For CMOs making the case for budget, this aggressive growth mandate is precisely the argument that should be landing in the boardroom.

Customer tenure has declined slightly to six years, from seven years in previous periods, **while fee increases have accelerated sharply to 50% in 2025/26, up from 27% in 2024/25.**

This combination of aggressive acquisition ambition and significant price increases defines the current growth playbook for the sector – and it places real commercial responsibility on marketing to deliver.

For tech marketing leaders, the strategic implication is clear: the business expects growth, and marketing is expected to drive it. The organizations that build rigorous measurement frameworks connecting marketing activity to revenue and customer lifetime value will be the ones that protect their budgets when the pressure inevitably increases.



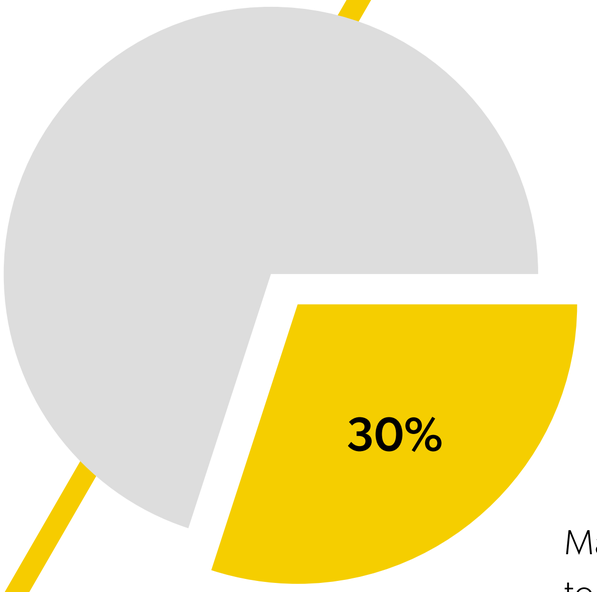
83% of tech marketing leaders are targeting more or significantly more customers in 2025/26, with fee increases accelerating to 50%

What the Data Means

The Technology-First Marketing Organization Is Not Optional

Marketing technology stack investment is already at 26% of budget and forecast to reach 30% – organizations completing the shift to technology-enabled operations will be the ones that pull ahead

The data tells a consistent story: tech marketing organizations are committing more budget to technology and less to traditional, hard-to-measure methods. What will separate the leaders from the rest is not whether they invest in technology, but how well they integrate it. organizations with disconnected tools, siloed data, and fragmented reporting will struggle to demonstrate the ROI that leadership teams are now demanding. The ones that build joined-up measurement from the ground up will be the ones that protect and grow their marketing budgets.



Marketing technology budget

Marketing technology is no longer a nice-to-have. With digital advertising and market research both topping the outsourcing table (70% and 65% respectively), tech marketing leaders are increasingly recognizing that specialist external expertise is needed to get the most from their digital infrastructure – while ABM and strategic capability stays in-house.

Build In-House. Buy the Specialist Skills.

Tech marketing organizations are becoming more selective about what they outsource and more deliberate about what they keep in-house. The data shows clear outsourcing concentration in digital advertising (70%) and market research and analysis (65%), while account-based marketing is moving in the opposite direction.

The most significant counter-trend is in ABM. **Agency usage for account-based marketing has declined from 35% to 31%**, suggesting that as ABM matures as a discipline, leading tech marketing functions are choosing to embed it as a core internal capability rather than rely on external delivery. organizations that haven't yet started this transition risk capability gaps as ABM becomes table stakes.

For tech marketing leaders, the practical implication is straightforward: **identify which activities require deep specialist knowledge** (and buy it externally), and which represent genuine strategic capabilities that should be owned internally. Clarity on this distinction will help protect budgets, sharpen the investment case, and ensure your team is building the right skills for the long term.



ABM agency usage has declined from 35% to 31% as tech marketing leaders build account-based marketing as a core internal competency

Prove It or Lose It

ROI accountability is no longer a future concern – it's the present reality for tech marketing leaders. With social media now delivering 6:1 returns and email climbing to 5:1, the sector has a clear performance hierarchy to work with. **Marketing leaders should plan for average ROI targets of 7:1 by the time this current trajectory plays out.** Marketers who can show exactly which channels are driving commercial impact will be in the strongest position to defend their budgets and have genuinely strategic conversations at board level.

Non-digital advertising sits at the bottom of the ROI table at 2:1. That's not necessarily a reason to abandon it – brand-building investment plays a long game and its value isn't always captured in direct attribution. But any channel that can't demonstrate clear returns should be scrutinized, and the data suggests **any activity delivering less than 4:1 ROI will likely disappear from marketing portfolios** as performance expectations continue to rise.

The organizations doing this well are building attribution models that capture both direct revenue and influenced pipeline. They're creating dashboards that translate marketing metrics into language that resonates with finance and the wider leadership team. That's the real competitive advantage available to any tech marketing leader right now. The data is there. The question is whether you're using it.

Organize for Clarity, Not Complexity

The multi-dimensional team structure – simultaneously organized by function, geography, and sector – is one of the defining complexity challenges for tech marketing leaders right now. With 46% of teams organized by function, 44% by sector/industry, and 36% by geography, most organizations are running genuine matrix structures. These can enable both specialization and collaboration, but only when accountability is crystal clear.

The distribution trend is set to continue. **By 2026, only 35% of marketing headcount is predicted to be centralized**, with the majority embedded in regional and product teams. This requires new operating models that balance local responsiveness with global efficiency – and leaders who design for this now will be ahead of the curve rather than reacting to it.

The attrition picture reinforces this as a moment to act with intent. With team attrition down to 15%, marketing functions are more stable than they have been in years. **Leaders who invest in clear roles, defined accountability models, and purposeful team structures now will benefit from compounding returns** in capability and culture over time.



By 2026, only 35% of marketing headcount is predicted to be centralized – leaders who design for distributed excellence now will be ahead of this shift

Acquisition Is Back. Retention Is the Real Game.

Tech marketing leaders are going for growth. 83% are targeting more or significantly more new customers in 2025/26, a substantial jump on previous years. With fee increases accelerating to 50% and acquisition firmly front of mind, the board-level expectation is clear: marketing should be a primary driver of commercial growth.

But the organizations that will sustain this growth are the ones that treat retention as a strategic priority, not a byproduct of acquisition success. Retention targets sitting at 67% – down from 92% the previous year – suggest a sector-wide shift toward net new business that creates risk if customer lifetime value isn't being actively managed. Customer tenure has already declined slightly to six years from seven – a signal worth watching.

Marketers who can demonstrate their contribution to customer lifetime value – through content that supports onboarding, thought leadership that deepens relationships, and data that tracks customer engagement over time – will be the ones who build the strongest internal case for investment. The customer relationship is the asset. Marketing should be building it, not just winning it.



With fee increases running at 50% and acquisition ambitions at a multi-year high, tech marketing leaders have a clear commercial mandate. The question is whether marketing can demonstrate its contribution to delivering it.

How to Use This Data

Immediate Priorities (Next 3 Months)



Audit your channel ROI, today

The data shows clear performance gaps between channels – social media at 6:1, email now at 5:1, and non-digital advertising at the bottom at 2:1. If you're not tracking ROI by activity with a consistent methodology, start now. Map your current spend against the Community Index benchmarks and identify where your investment is underperforming relative to your tech sector peers. This is the foundation of every board-level budget conversation you'll have in the next 12 months.



Conduct a technology stack audit

Marketing technology investment is at 26% of budget and rising toward 30%. Before the next round of spend, assess your current stack against where it needs to be. Identify integration gaps and create a phased investment plan that prioritizes platforms delivering measurable ROI improvement. The organizations that excel will be those that build seamless data flows – not those with the most tools.



Get your team structure story straight

With teams simultaneously organized by function, sector, and geography, accountability can become genuinely blurred. If your structure has grown organically rather than been designed deliberately, now is the time to review it. Clarity on how your team is organized – and why – is increasingly important when making the case for headcount and investment to senior leadership.

Medium-term Initiatives (3-9 Months)



Build your commercial impact narrative

With budgets under sustained pressure and ROI expectations rising toward 7:1, tech marketing leaders need a clear, boardroom-ready story about what marketing contributes commercially. Develop a measurement framework that connects marketing activity to revenue, pipeline, and customer lifetime value – in terms that resonate with finance and the wider leadership team. The doubling of ROI across many activities suggests leading organizations have already cracked this. The benchmark data is there to help you build the case.



Define your outsourcing model

With digital advertising outsourcing at 70% and ABM moving in-house, it's worth asking whether your agency relationships are genuinely filling capability gaps or whether you're paying for work your team could own. Build a simple capability map: what do you keep, what do you buy, and why. With the hybrid outsourcing model solidifying across the sector, the organizations with clear criteria will make faster, better decisions.



Connect marketing to customer retention

With retention targets declining sector-wide, there's a real opportunity for marketing leaders to demonstrate contribution beyond new business acquisition. Identify two or three ways marketing can actively support customer retention – account-based content programs, customer engagement tracking, onboarding support – and build the case with data. In a market where fee increases are running at 50%, demonstrable customer value is not just a marketing story. It's a commercial imperative.

Long-term Transformation (9+ Months)



Build integrated measurement from the ground up

The organizations that will win the ROI argument are those that stop measuring marketing activity and start measuring marketing outcomes. Over the next 12 months, invest in the infrastructure to connect marketing data to revenue data – CRM integration, pipeline attribution, and customer engagement scoring. This is what transforms marketing from a cost center into a commercial driver, and it's the foundation on which every board-level budget protection argument is built.



Design your resourcing model for the long term

The data points toward a future where only 35% of marketing headcount is centralized, with the majority embedded in regional and product teams. Use this as an opportunity to design a resourcing model that reflects where tech marketing is heading – clear functional ownership, deliberate agency partnerships for specialist capabilities, and a team structure built around accountability rather than legacy. With attrition at 15%, you have more stability to plan properly than you've had in years.



Position marketing as a commercial function

The data is there. The trajectory is clear. The challenge now is cultural: shifting how the rest of the organization sees marketing. The tech organizations that treat their marketing function as a genuine commercial driver – not a support function – will be the ones that attract the best talent, protect their budgets through downturns, and deliver the most consistent impact. Start building that internal narrative today. The Propolis Community Index gives you the evidence to back it up.

The Propolis Community Index: Built for This Moment

Tech marketing is at an inflection point. Budgets are tighter, expectations are higher, and the pressure to demonstrate commercial impact at board level has never been more acute. The good news is that the data to navigate this moment exists – and it's available in real time through the Propolis Community Index.

Unlike static annual benchmarks, the Community Index captures what's actually happening across B2B marketing right now – tracking budget allocation, ROI performance, team structures, and customer dynamics across sectors, including tech. Members get access to granular, up-to-date intelligence that makes it possible to benchmark performance, spot emerging trends, and make decisions based on evidence rather than instinct.

The tech marketing leaders using this data aren't just keeping pace. They're getting ahead. They're having better conversations with senior leadership, making smarter investment decisions, and building marketing functions that are genuinely respected as commercial drivers across their organizations.

Success belongs to those who act on insight rather than instinct. The Propolis Community Index transforms data into competitive advantage – enabling marketing leaders to benchmark performance, identify opportunities, and validate strategies against real market evidence.



Learn more about the Propolis Community Index

As Propolis members you and your team get access to the right strategies, frameworks, and skills to confidently drive growth, build teams, and prove a clear business impact

Contact our team to learn more:



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