
PROPOLIS
FROM B2B MARKETING
The restructure to end all restructures:
The B2B marketing team in the era of AI
B2BMARKETING.NET/PROPOLIS

# The hype is over. The work isn't



David Rowlands
*Head of Product*
**B2B Marketing and Propolis**

I remember speaking to a marketing leader a few years ago about this hot new thing: ChatGPT.

"Oh, it's pretty incredible if you haven't checked it out. It answers your questions or finds things for you just like a human being. It draws on stuff you can access on Google, and answers in seconds!" Or so the conversation broadly went.

Simpler times.

AI felt like a novelty – an exciting new technology that had obvious potential for business purposes, but few seemed to know what or how. It felt like something to worry about later.

In fact, we ran a roundtable for B2B marketing leaders around that time to understand how they were using it. The answer? A resounding: "We're not really. We're waiting to see what everyone else is doing first!"

With each passing week, AI came up in conversation more and more, with the hype tangibly building. "I can't believe how fast it is!" "It sounds so human!"

It wasn't long, of course, until it was on the lips of every marketer on every conference floor and in every board meeting. The 'wait and see' game was over, and now things were getting serious. The question that demanded answering immediately was: "how can we use this miracle machine to make our business more efficient and effective?" Since then, conversations have extended into 'tokenmaxxing' and how we should deal with the rising costs of using LLMs.

Against a backdrop of lumbering economic performance, businesses weren't just looking at individual tasks they could replace with AI. They were starting to map out deep organisational transformations that put AI at the centre, guaranteeing those promises around efficiency and effectiveness, and leading to businesses that deliver predictable growth.

Those transformations are still underway now, but, in 2026, the tone has changed. Say something has been AI generated, and you're almost guaranteed to be accused of producing 'slop', or, even worse, feeding a technology that is destroying the fundamental human value of potentially billions of Earth's citizens.

Where was once excitement, there is now – well, still excitement – but also a heavy dose of realism, scepticism and often fear. We're no longer looking at AI with starry-eyed, detached wonder. We're looking at it altogether more seriously. We know its potential is immeasurable, but that potential is a double-edged sword, sheathed in ethical dilemmas that may better be tackled by philosophers than the tech bros.

For better or for worse, though, the AI-generated cat is out of the bag, and it's not going back in.

The question for B2B marketers, therefore, is not "should we use AI?". If we avoid it altogether, we'll be at a competitive disadvantage and are unlikely to be fit for the new era of work. Rather, the question is: "How can B2B marketers redesign their operating model, combining AI and human talent to better fulfil their fundamental purpose of delivering customer value and driving business impact, without sacrificing the strategic thinking, creativity and judgement that only people can provide?"

This is the question we sought to answer when we brought together B2B marketing leaders in Propolis for our recent workshop and roundtable.

This report breaks down those findings.

Since the workshop, we have taken those findings further. First, through a panel discussion that brought together the client side, the agency side and the expert view – featuring Scott Stockwell, founder of Workmatik and Propolis Strategy & Engagement Expert, alongside Claire Ellis, Managing Director of B2B sales and marketing experience agency JPC, and James Houselander, Director, Global ABM at HPE. And second, through a best practice briefing in which Scott distilled everything we learned into a practical seven-step model for change: RESHAPE. The perspectives and recommendations from both sessions are woven throughout this report.

This workshop was created by **Propolis** *Strategy & Engagement Expert*, Scott Stockwell, and delivered alongside *ABM & Demand Strategy Expert*, Robert Norum. Without their work, the findings of this report would not have been possible.

The findings were subsequently pressure-tested in a panel discussion featuring Claire Ellis, *Managing Director*, **JPC,** and James Houselander, *Director, Global ABM*, **HPE**, and translated into practical guidance in a best practice briefing delivered by Scott Stockwell. Their contributions appear throughout this report.



Scott Stockwell
*Strategy & Engagement Expert*
**Propolis**



Robert Norum
*ABM & Demand Strategy Expert*
**Propolis**



Claire Ellis
*Managing Director*
**JPC**



James Houselander
*Director, Global ABM*
**HPE**

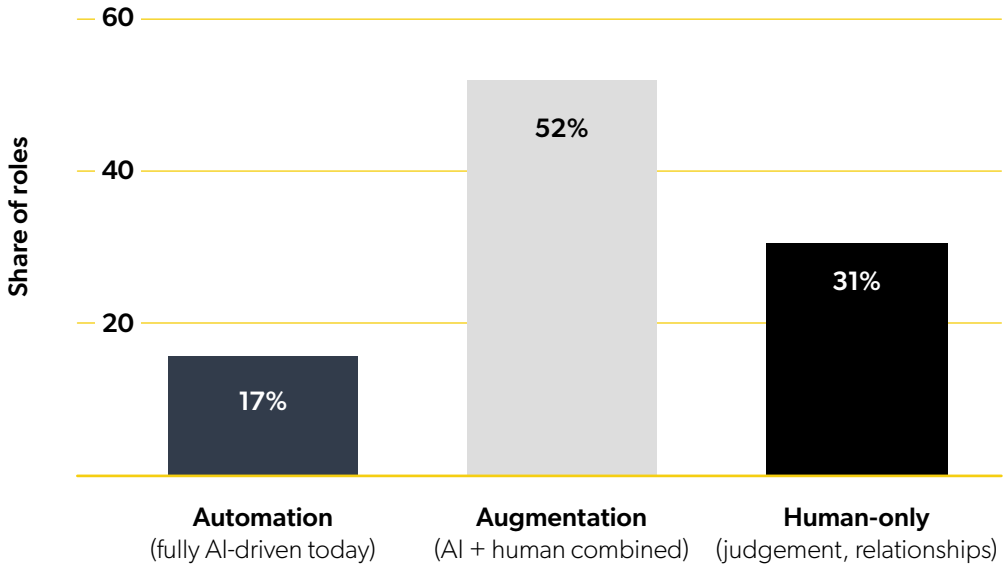
# What we learned

In our first exercise, we asked B2B marketing leaders to transpose the roles in their existing org charts into a spectrum of 'fully automated', through 'augmented' into 'human only'.

To be clear, at this stage, we were looking at roles in their entirety. In practicality, any one role is likely to have responsibilities and activities that fall across the three categories.

Leaders then placed these on a spectrum from 'fully automated' on the left, through to 'fully human' on the right, with 'augmented' (i.e. AI/human hybrid) sitting in the middle. As we can see in the chart below, averaging across all the workshop participants, a mere 17% of roles sat closest to 'automation'. The story is clear. There are few entire roles that B2B marketing leaders see as being ripe for automation.

Percentage of roles that will be automated, augmented with AI or human-only, according to B2B marketing leaders.




The question, of course, is which roles fall into each category. Unsurprisingly, leaders identified roles involving repetitive, production-heavy work (i.e. first-draft copywriting, campaign reporting, SEO optimisation, paid media operations, etc) as sitting closest to automation. Roles built on judgement, relationships and strategic accountability stayed firmly in the human-led category. Of course, this isn't to say strategic leaders aren't using AI whatsoever, but there is a difference between an individual using AI, and a role being heavily divided into human and AI-led tasks.

## Roles identified in each category

(aggregated and cleaned up to provide examples. No exact titles used)

| Automation | Augmentation | Human-only |
|---|---|---|
| Assistant / junior marketing support | Brand management | ABM leadership |
| Bids and pitch support | Campaign management | CMO / Marketing director |
| Marketing operations | Comms management (incl. internal comms) | Exec engagement |
| Paid media / PPC | Content and copy | Customer experience |
| Reporting and analytics | Social media | Customer strategist |
| SEO / Search | CRM / Marketing technology | Industry and partner marketing |
| Web development and design | Customer advocacy | Marketing leadership team |
| | Data and analytics | Partnerships and client relationship management |
| | Demand generation | PR and corporate comms |
| | Design and creative production (incl. video) | Process and enablement |
| | Digital marketing and social | Programmes and projects ownership |
| | Events / event marketing | Strategy and commercial leadership |
| | Marketing automation and martech | |
| | Product marketing | |
| | Regional and field marketing | |
| | Sales support | |
| | Web and digital ops | |

# How roles are expected to evolve

In the next exercise, participants placed each role in a 3x3 grid, identifying how much they expect each to change (if at all) against how AI-driven it becomes (automation / augmentation / human-only). The single busiest cell across every board was evolve x augmentation. In other words, B2B marketing leaders believe that the majority of existing roles are expected to stay in place but be reshaped by AI, not replaced by it.

That 'reshaped, not replaced' conclusion is already visible in practice. In our follow-up panel discussion, James Houselander described how HPE brought its marketing and comms functions together under one umbrella 18 months ago to drive collaboration and integration across the marketing organisation. Since then, the business has implemented a dedicated team within its performance and analytics function to develop the company's AI tools, driving consistency, productivity and governance at scale. Tellingly, he framed none of this as a one-off restructure: *"Change is constant... I wouldn't see this as a reorg, I'd actually see it as an evolution."*

## How B2B marketing leaders expect roles to evolve

| | Automation | Augmentation | Human-only |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Stay as is** | | • Reporting and analytics<br>• SEO / Search | • Brand management<br>• CMO / Marketing director<br>• Exec engagement<br>• Industry and partner marketing<br>• Partnership and client relationship management |
| **Evolve** | • Marketing operations<br>• SEO / search<br>• Paid media / PPC<br>• Web and digital ops | • Campaign management<br>• Content and copy<br>• Digital marketing and social<br>• Data and analytics (performance/optimisation)<br>• Design and creative production<br>• Events / event marketing<br>• Marketing operations<br>• Product marketing<br>• Programmes and projects ownership<br>• Regional and field marketing<br>• Social media<br>• Strategy and commercial leadership<br>• Web and digital ops | • ABM leadership<br>• Creative leadership (new tier)<br>• Customer advocacy<br>• Demand generation and events leadership<br>• Marketing leadership team<br>• Partnership and client relationship management<br>• Strategy and commercial leadership |
| **Net new** | • AI / LLM engineering<br>• AI-native finance ops<br>• AI-native sales development | • AI orchestration and enablement (incl. workflow / skill specialists)<br>• Client care<br>• Content and copy (content librarian)<br>• Data and analytics<br>• Demand generation (new model)<br>• Martech<br>• Reporting<br>• Research and insights | • Mentoring and advisory (new tier)<br>• Partnership and client relationship management<br>• Process and enablement |

There are two things to note when comparing this table with the on page 5. Firstly, a role can appear in more than one box. Where its underlying activities split across categories (such as SEO / search), leaders placed it in each that applied. Secondly, not every role from the first table is shown here. On the day, leaders focused on the roles where the change was most significant, rather than re-plotting all of them.

One important caveat on this grid you can see above: because the exercise asked leaders to map their own existing roles, it reflects internal headcount only. It doesn't capture how organisations already supplement that work through other parts of their organisation (for participants working in global organisations), agencies and channel partners, all of whom face exactly the same automate/augment/human choices for their own people. That wasn't a deliberate exclusion so much as a function of time on the day, but it shouldn't be left out of how leaders think about future team design.

The ecosystem point matters just as much from the agency side. On the panel, Claire Ellis was candid that AI forces agencies through exactly the same reckoning as their clients: "Agency value just absolutely has to move up the chain. Clients are not short of more content – they're struggling for clarity, for that competitive cut-through." JPC, she explained, already operates as a consultative growth partner with a long track record of connecting its work directly to revenue. She admitted to being 'quite scared' by the number of client-side leaders at the workshop who were removing functions such as media planning from their plans altogether – particularly for agencies and marketing roles whose value is not clearly tied to commercial impact.

What was notably absent was consensus on what net-new roles are called, where they sit, or what skills they require. Very few organisations had a designated 'AI' role at all. More commonly, AI responsibility was simply absorbed by someone already stretched on other priorities. In order to help leaders think about how we understand these new roles (whatever they may be called), Scott introduced a framework of three broad archetypes, shown in the table below. Unlike the grid above, this isn't about where a role sits on an automate/augment/human spectrum. It's a description of what each type of role owns, regardless of whether a person, an AI system, or some mix of the two is doing the work day to day.




| Archetype | What it owns |
|---|---|
| Strategist | Owns outcomes, commercial accountability and customer value. Decides when AI output is good enough and when it needs human intervention. |
| Orchestrator | Designs and supervises AI-driven workflows. Catches failure modes and improves workflow design as capability matures. |
| Governor | Owns the human decision gates (brand safety, compliance, quality assurance, and escalation when AI output falls outside acceptable limits). |
| Practitioner | Owns delivery. Teams with AI agents day to day to run campaigns, build relationships and drive impact, turning strategy, workflows and standards into work customers actually experience. |

Scott illustrated the four archetypes with an orchestral analogy: the strategist is the composer, the orchestrator the conductor, the governor the promoter making sure the performance fills seats – and, without practitioners, there are no musicians. Crucially, these are archetypes rather than job titles or rungs on a ladder. As Scott put it on the panel: *"They're not a job role, and you wouldn't necessarily go from one to another... this is very much more climbing a wall than a ladder."* The framework is already recognisable in the wild, with James Houselander noting that strategist, orchestrator, governor and practitioner is *"exactly how we set up our PMO, our centre of excellence, from an ABM perspective"* at HPE.

Several participants found the framework useful in principle, but were candid in their view that translating it into an actual org chart, and identifying who on their existing team has the right instincts for each archetype, is genuinely hard.

It's also worth being honest about how far ahead of practice this framework sits: when asked directly, no one in the room said they were yet running agents, orchestration or agentic commerce in any real sense. The vocabulary is ahead of the implementation, which is exactly why getting the language right now matters. Scott pointed out that changing roles has HR implications, so this was the perfect time to start engaging with the organisations' HR functions ahead of any (likely) changes.

There was also a strong view that some marketing capability will increasingly sit embedded within business units as specialist practitioners, rather than remaining centralised — with the central marketing function becoming less a production team and more a centre of excellence for AI use, brand consistency and customer experience.

One board went further than naming new roles: several delegates used the exercise to flag outright capability gaps rather than existing or planned roles. For instance, brand governance, customer marketing ownership, and defining quality standards and training were each named explicitly as work nobody currently owns. That is arguably a more candid signal than any new job title: some organisations are not yet sure who is meant to be doing this work at all, AI-assisted or otherwise.

That uncertainty is exactly why several leaders raised the need for a formalised change manager or programme to see this transformation through properly. CHROs and CIOs will inevitably be central to that effort — a reminder that marketing leaders don't need to, and shouldn't try to, tackle this in isolation!



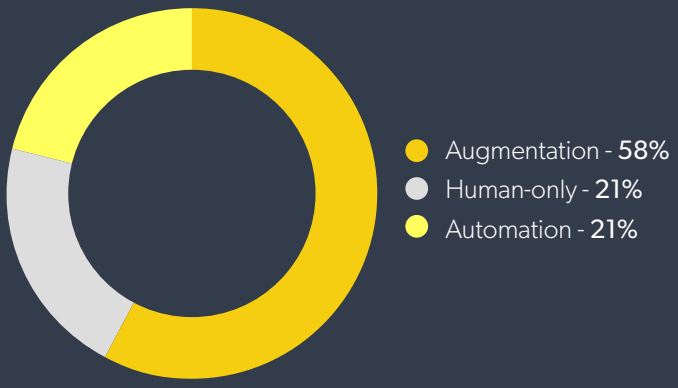
*"Marketing's business impact will depend on a sensitively managed change programme, not another IT efficiency project. Thoughtful team and AI design gives us the chance to release our previously constrained potential from the complex tooling, woeful workflows and siloed teams we've all been far too familiar with.*

Scott Stockwell,
*Strategy & Engagement Expert,*
**Propolis**

# How delegates self-assessed their own split

Delegates then each created a small pie chart summarising their own team's overall AI split. Of course, this varied by organisation, but the pie chart to the right represents a typical representation of what was put down. The key theme here is that that augmentation forms the majority of the pie chart, whilst, automation and human-only roles were seen as generally equal. What was consistent across all the pie charts was that 'augmentation' was the largest proportion and there were always 'automation' and 'human only' components.

**How B2B marketers expect their own marketing team structure to evolve**




# Leadership is shifting from managing people to orchestrating a mixed workforce

A recurring theme was the change in what leadership itself now involves. In the new model, leaders felt that their role is moving towards orchestrating a mixed workforce of humans and AI agents.

Not only that, but they felt that the role of the leader was to represent that combined force credibly to the rest of the business, demonstrating the commercial impact they're having, and protecting their brand and trustworthiness as a business in a high-pressure environment.

Several participants were candid that this is where they feel least prepared – not in using the tools themselves, but in leading a team that increasingly includes both people and agents, and in building the change-management muscle that a shift of this scale requires.

# The gap between expectation and reality



*"I don't ultimately think AI is going to replace those roles. What AI is enabling us to do is free up an ABMer's or a field marketer's time to go out and build those relationships."*

James Houselander,
*Director, Global ABM*, **HPE**

However, the leaders we spoke to don't feel it's that straight forward. These are the people with the real-world knowledge around what a team actually requires to drive growth and deliver customer value, and they do not believe AI agents will lead to redundancies en masse. Roles will evolve, of course, and some will be replaced with agents, but, at the same time, new roles will be created.

James Houselander's experience at HPE illustrates the point. In his view, AI has done three things at once: replaced some of the tasks that field marketers and ABMers (and, in some cases, agencies) used to do; sped up many of the tasks that remain; and made teams more effective as a result. Account insights that once took months (and significant agency spend) to assemble can now realistically be produced in days or weeks, which keeps sales engaged and gets campaigns into market faster. The time freed up isn't disappearing; it's being reinvested in the relationship-building work only humans can do, allowing ABMers to manage more accounts and deliver more value back to the business.

As we know, any given role is comprised of different responsibilities, activities, inputs and outputs – all of which fit across the spectrum. For B2B marketers looking to evolve their team, a granular audit is needed to find economies of scale and rebalance the workforce between AI agents and employees.

The challenge is that expectations are not aligned with reality. With the 'do more with less' mantra in mind, Scott and Robert ran modules asking the attendees to think about their stakeholders expectations, and what their 'to be' organisations from the previous exercises might deliver. As the summary chart on page 11 demonstrates, although boards may expect greater productivity with a reduced headcount, the reality today is mixed. Some leaders claim they will be there, but others feel they may become less productive in the near-term transition phase.

It's also important to acknowledge that reduced headcounts are not always entirely due to AI. The reality is that in a weak economy, marketers that cannot prove the impact they are having on growth tend to be the ones that see their budgets and headcount cut. They may be expected to be more productive with the headcount they have because AI is available, but AI is not necessarily the cause of the issue, and those headcounts may return in a stronger economy.

A cautionary tale James shared on the panel underlines why expectation-setting matters. He had heard of one organisation that flipped its technical resource wholesale into AI, burned through its credits so quickly that full adoption became more expensive than the people it had replaced, and is now reinvesting in people complemented by AI agents. The story may be second-hand, but the lesson isn't: the economics of AI only work when the balance between people and agents is designed deliberately.

**Expectation versus reality, plotted by delegates on the headcount/productivity matrix**




# Brand, trust and governance are becoming the harder problem

As AI tools spread beyond marketing into the wider business, participants described a growing flood of AI-generated brochures, decks and web content produced by non-marketers, with no consistent quality bar or brand oversight. This is placing marketing in a new and less comfortable position: not just the producer of brand content, but the governor of brand and quality standards across a much wider, less controlled set of contributors.

Claire Ellis added an important framing for those guardrails: they should "create confidence, not just control", helping people understand where they can be braver as well as where human judgement is required.

Several participants pointed to a related risk sitting just behind this one: if every organisation in a category is using AI against similar prompts and similar data, brands risk converging on the same strategy, the same audiences and the same message, at precisely the moment differentiation matters most.

Trust emerged repeatedly as the word leaders felt they needed to use more, and more deliberately, including with audiences (boards, chief executives and finance functions) who care about brand, but rarely use that language themselves. Participants also raised a less comfortable governance question: junior marketers risk losing the hands-on 'apprenticeship' work that has traditionally built their expertise, even as the wider organisation expects everyone to become AI-literate almost overnight. As if that wasn't enough of a problem in its own right, senior (more expensive) marketers are leaving the workplace, and taking with them the deep undewrstanding of what is valuable to customers.

Claire Ellis offered one of the most practical responses to the apprenticeship problem we heard across the sprint (our workshop, panel and best practice briefing series in Propolis). Drawing on the World Economic Forum's idea of multi-generational workflows, JPC is recruiting an 'AI-native' junior specifically to partner with one of its most senior sales specialists – a "SWAT team" built around a shared commercial problem, in which the junior brings speed and AI fluency and the senior brings judgement, relationships and a sense of what will actually land. The critical design principle is that the learning has to happen in the middle: the junior can't simply push the AI buttons while the senior signs things off at the other end, and leaders should routinely ask people to show their thinking. What did you ask, what context did you give, what did you reject, and what would you do differently next time?




# A pattern that keeps reasserting itself

Underlying much of the discussion was a historical pattern Scott Stockwell introduced: Fubini's Law. This wasn't something delegates raised themselves, but a framework he brought to their attention to sharpen how they read their own findings: new technology is typically used, at first, to do the same work slightly faster, before organisations work out how to do fundamentally different work with it. For example, print advertising copy was, for a period, simply read aloud for radio; early television advertising simply filmed people reading radio scripts. Participants were encouraged to expect the same pattern with AI, and to be wary of mistaking early efficiency gains for the full scale of the change still to come. The corollary is equally important: without a clear strategic 'North Star', AI does not fix a weak marketing strategy, it accelerates it, taking the organisation to a worse outcome faster and with more confidence than it deserves.

When we put Fubini's Law to the panel, Claire Ellis confirmed the pattern is exactly what she sees across JPC's client base: "Scott's bang on – that pattern is very real."

Most organisations remain in the first phase, using AI for familiar tasks such as research, summaries and campaign variants – seeing genuine productivity gains, but stopping there. Her warning was blunt: teams that stop there "haven't really transformed anything – we've just industrialised the output", and with it, the noise. The more mature organisations are asking a different question: not 'how can we do the same work faster?' but 'what can we now understand, connect or act on that we couldn't before?' She pointed to a client redesigning its BDR workflows so that linked agents assemble account context, likely pain points and possible routes into a conversation – while, quite deliberately, the relationship itself is never automated.

Scott added a stark warning: AI is shining a light on every silo, broken workflow and disconnected dataset an organisation has, and pockets of local optimisation won't be enough. "It'll take a global village, not just your own little local village… otherwise we'll get the efficiency, we won't get the effectiveness."

# What marketers need to do next

Taken together, the findings point towards a small number of practical priorities for senior marketing leaders over the next 12 to 24 months.

Since these findings were first captured, Scott Stockwell has delivered a best practice briefing that consolidates the guidance into a seven-move model: RESHAPE:

| R | E | S | H | A | P | E |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Reinforce** | **Examine** | **Set** | **Handle** | **Aggregate** | **People** | **Establish** |
| Reinforce your strategy, your 'North Star' as your guiding principle. Ensure everyone in your organisation is aligned. | Examine activities, inputs, outputs and connections. Job roles and responsiblities are too aggregated. | Set up clear ownership and partnership among strategists, orchestrators, governors and practitioners. | Manage the gap between stakeholders' expectations and the reality of what can be realised. Aim for effectiveness, not efficiency. | Establish common guardrails, best practice, skills, agents and workflows to optimise outcomes and efficiencies. | Appreciate that this is a people change programme and not an IT project rollout. Secure leadership support early. | Establish a change programme with clear owners, responsibilites and outcomes. |

Credit: Scott Stockwell, *founder of Workmatik*, and **Propolis** *Strategy & Engagement Expert*

The priorities below have been updated to reflect that model, and each maps onto one of its moves. For the underpinning evidence base, Scott also recommends the World Economic Forum white paper **'Four Futures for Jobs in the New Economy: AI and Talent in 2030'** as essential background reading.

### Start with strategy, not tooling (reinforce)

The organisations getting the most useful outcomes from this exercise were the ones who could state their marketing 'North Star' in a sentence, and who used that statement to decide where AI should be applied, rather than starting from the tools available and working backwards. The 'North Star' being a succinct statement showing the organisations' union between what drives value for their customers, and what they offer as products and services to meet their customers' needs. Leaders without that clarity and consistent alignment across their organisation risk optimising a strategy that was never right in the first place, and repeating inefficiencies with new tools.

Therefore, it's critical that marketing leaders start with step one: **reinforcing** their strategy. State your strategy in one sentence. If you can't, you have a strategy clarity problem, not an AI problem, and no tool will fix that. Scott's benchmark is Kennedy's moonshot – a mission everyone in the organisation could understand, remember and locate themselves within. At the workshop itself, leaders pinned their 'North Star' to the top of their whiteboards and were challenged throughout to show how every suggestion served it, because, as Scott put it on the panel, without that clarity you'll be "all the gear, no idea."

### Move from role-level thinking to activity-level thinking (examine)

Mapping whole roles onto an automation-to-human spectrum is a useful starting exercise, but it masks real variation within a single role. The next step, back in the office, is to audit each role down to its constituent activities. Scott used the example of a copywriter job role having key responsibilities of research, content creation and editing/publishing/quality control being supported by a broad set of more granular activities. Going to the granular activity level helps to surface duplication across roles and responsibilities, and then highlight the specific tasks ready for automation, augmentation or continued human ownership. As one delegate observed, it's also critical to look at the inputs and outputs to understand how different roles work together to deliver outputs and outcomes.

Scott's briefing formalised this as step two – **examine** – and extended the chain further: roles have responsibilities, responsibilities have activities, activities produce outputs, outputs drive outcomes, and outcomes create business impact. Design should start with the impact the business needs and work backwards. At its core, this impact is delivering customer value, the heart of the 'North Star' statements. This is also where AI actually lands: "AI agents live in the activity space," Scott explained. "They're not the whole job, but they are a significant component of it." And the audit shouldn't stop at your own org chart – the same activity-level examination applies to your extended workforce of other departments and regions (for multi-country organisations), agencies, channel partners and suppliers alike.

### Give the emerging roles a shared vocabulary and a real owner (set)

Whether or not the exact strategist, orchestrator, governor and practitioner framework we've included in this report is adopted, every organisation needs an explicit answer to who is setting AI quality standards, who is designing and supervising AI-driven workflows, and who holds commercial accountability for outcomes. Leaving this implicit, absorbed into someone's existing job without acknowledgement, is itself a governance risk.

This is where we get to step three – **set**. As Scott warned, a team missing any one of the four archetypes "is not going to put on a great performance". Second, this should not be a one-off exercise: set ownership both locally and centrally, and review it quarterly.

### Close the expectation gap deliberately, rather than letting it surface under pressure (handle)

Boards are likely to keep expecting more output with less headcount. Leaders are better served by proactively presenting the productivity gains they can evidence, being explicit about where headcount still needs to grow to sustain those gains, and setting a small number of specific, measurable 'exam questions' for every AI initiative, rather than allowing vague enthusiasm to substitute for a plan. This highlights the debate of efficiency (better at being 'busy') versus effectiveness (marketing driving positive customer valuer and business results).

This is the fourth step – **handle**. At this stage, Scott's strongest practical advice is to make the change programmatic. A leadership-sponsored change programme keeps stakeholders close to both the expectation and the activities designed to deliver it, so the gap is managed continuously, rather than discovered under pressure. This step too relies on a clear 'North Star' and a relentless focus on continuing to deliver customer value.

### Aggregate your guardrails, best practice, skills and agents in one place (aggregate)

Step five? **Aggregate**. Ambitious, creative individuals are already building their own GPTs, agents and prompt libraries; the job now is to harness that energy before it sprawls. Create a central, well-governed home for AI skills, context materials, guidelines, guardrails and agents. Scott's analogy is the brand police – nobody loves them, but they are how you turn up consistently, at scale, and in service of the customer. Thinking back to the early days of 'social', Twitter and YouTube accounts grew exponentially deluging customers and diluting the brand's voice. Significant effort was then needed to rationalise those accounts to a small number for greatest impact. This is the time to avoid repeating the exercise with custom GPTs, agents and skills.

There is a hard commercial edge to this too. Claire Ellis described how simply asking her business 'what are people learning, doing and using?' through an internal innovation lab allowed her to shut down three or four duplicate applications, while investing in prompt-engineering training – "honestly the best thing I ever did for my own business" – dramatically cut the credit burn from poorly constructed queries. Define the use case, put the guardrails in place, run a formal onboarding (and off-boarding) process for AI applications, and be intentional about the few tools you back.

### Invest deliberately in the people doing the work, not just the tools they use (people)

Step six? **People**. This is human change, not just IT change. To provide a perfect example, at HPE, James Houselander has made AI part of every ABMer's personal development or innovation goals this year, whether that's a course, hands-on use of the approved tools or participation in pilots – all supported by prompt guides so everyone drives a consistent output.

At JPC, Claire Ellis gives teams a simple shape for AI-assisted work: put real effort (around 20% of it) into setting up and prompting the task well, let AI do the heavy lifting in the middle, and always protect a substantial final phase of human evaluation. Scott added one further practical step: if you run employee engagement surveys, baseline them now, so you can see (and address) the human impact of the change as it happens.

> Protecting junior talent's access to the hands-on work that has traditionally built expertise, even as more of that work becomes AI-assisted, deserves explicit attention rather than being left to resolve itself.

### Formalise change management with leadership sponsorship (establish)

Transforming your entire marketing team goes beyond the remit of just the marketing leader. It requires the support of the CHRO to ensure you're hiring and developing the right skills; it requires the input of the CIO to ensure your tech is set up to ensure workflows between AI agents and human beings don't fall down. More broadly, the transformation we're talking about here isn't limited to the marketing team – it's something every team in your business needs to undergo. Therefore, the most successful AI transformations will require a fully aligned leadership team that is fully behind a formalised change management programme, not simply ad hoc role development.

This is the final step – establish. Scott is completely clear about this: make it formal, ensure ownership is shared, and treat the CHRO and CIO as active partners rather than silent ones. James Houselander described what that looks like in practice at HPE: a named team inside marketing's performance and analytics function leads AI adoption and works with HR, IT, legal and sales operations to drive a common architecture and toolset across the business – so that sales and marketing are working from the same platforms rather than diverging.



# Where to go from here

Behind every conversation in this report sits the same pair of pressures. B2B marketing leaders are being asked to prove marketing's commercial value more rigorously than ever, and to do so with teams that are already stretched. When AI first entered the picture, it promised to relieve both, but, as the leaders here have made clear, bolting generic tools onto an unchanged team doesn't prove impact or free up time. Too often, it just adds another thing to manage, absorbed by someone who was already at capacity.

What actually moves those two needles is better intelligence: knowing faster what works, what good looks like and serves customers' best, and how to show the business the commercial return. That's the problem Propolis exists to solve. Alongside workshops like the one this report was built on, we help members put proven frameworks like 'The Commercial Marketer' to work, shaping teams around them to connect activity to revenue, rather than handing over a model and leaving them to it. Expert consultants pressure-test the big decisions, and events, conferences and training raise a stretched team's output without adding headcount. Decisions get made faster and with more confidence; work gets delivered better, first time.

Propolis AI is one part of that membership, and the quickest way to experience Propolis for yourself. It's an AI advisor built on two decades of verified B2B intelligence – the benchmarks, frameworks and award-winning case studies behind reports like this one – rather than the open internet. Ask it "how do I demonstrate marketing's value to the board?" and the answer is grounded in what has genuinely worked in B2B.

In other words: the two problems this report keeps circling back to – proving impact and doing more with less – are the two things Propolis AI is built to help with, and trying it costs nothing but a few minutes. If this report has raised questions for you or your team, start by putting them to it.

**Try Propolis AI,**
our new AI-powered B2B marketing advisor, free for 5 days.

START YOUR TRIAL HERE

B2B Marketing
Westgate House
9 Holborn
London
EC1N 2LL

info@b2bmarketing.net
b2bmarketing.net



B2B MARKETING