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The 2026 B2B Marketing Impact Report:

From Cost Center to Growth Engine

MX B2B MARKETING

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The Impact Imperative: Redefining Marketing for a Results-Driven Era

Economic uncertainty, longer sales cycles and changing buyer behavior are redefining marketing's role across sectors and regions. The C-suite expects marketing to align with financial planning, speak the language of revenue, and deliver results in the metrics that business leaders care about most.

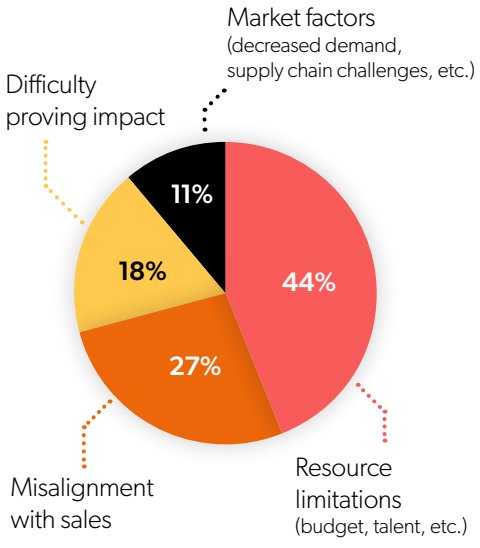
Propolis' recent guide **Realize Your Potential: Your Guide to Becoming the Commercial Marketer Your Business Needs, and Your Future Demands** taps into an AI-powered analysis of hundreds of conversations within Propolis' global community of senior marketers. According to this analysis, the shared challenge is clear:

> *"Proving and communicating the commercial impact of marketing to non-marketing stakeholders – especially in large or complex organizations."*

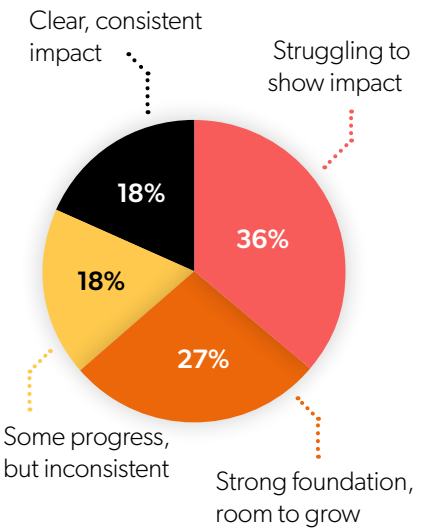
Polling a broader community of B2B marketers reinforced the central tension: leaders know they must prove commercial impact, but many still struggle to communicate that value in terms the C-suite cares about.

- While resource constraints (44%) and sales misalignment (27%) are significant hurdles, the deeper issue is translating marketing's contribution into language of revenue, growth and business value.
- Over a third of marketers (36%) admit they cannot yet show impact consistently, leaving a credibility gap at the leadership table. Data transparency and consistent ROI tracking are critical, but data alone isn't enough. The challenge lies in connecting metrics to strategic narratives that resonate beyond the marketing function.

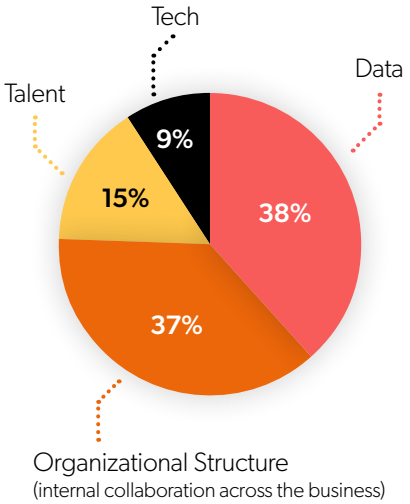
What's the biggest challenge preventing your marketing team from achieving its goals right now?



How confident are you in your marketing team's ability to demonstrate real business impact to the C-suite?



If you could change one thing to make marketing more effective in your organization, what would it be?



Our goal now is to explore how leading B2B marketers are responding. This report reveals marketing's evolving role in business growth, showcasing how leading B2B organizations in manufacturing, technology and energy sectors are shifting their marketing structures and strategies to align with business outcomes

To bring these themes to life, we spoke with the following marketing leaders:



Bobby White
Global Marketing Director
Blue Yonder

Judit Szabo
Global Head of Marketing Demand & Operations
Endava





Sue-Ann Prentice
CMO
Fluke Corporation

Michael Byrne
Head of Marketing
npower Business Solutions





Federico Sammarco
Digital Marketing & Communication Officer MEA
Socomec Group

Foreword



Tony Riley
President & CEO
The MX Group

Growth is imperative for the health of any organization. Sustainable growth includes not just new customer acquisition, but retention and account expansion, entering new markets, attracting new investors and partners, and attracting and retaining employees.

In today's complex B2B landscape, growth depends on marketing's ability to navigate change, not just measure it. The organizations thriving now aren't chasing metrics; they're architecting experiences that connect purpose, performance and impact.

This shift is only accelerating. It's time marketing transcends tactical execution and becomes a shared, organizational vision rooted in meaningful interaction across every touchpoint.

That means treating marketing not as isolated campaigns, but as narrative arcs woven across brand, demand generation, sales, product and customer success.

The leaders we spotlight in this report are rising to that challenge. They're breaking down silos, building shared agendas internally and delivering experiences that move beyond brand signals to true growth engines—where every interaction reinforces credibility, fosters demand and aligns with commercial goals.

Because marketing's future isn't measured in vanity metrics, but in how deeply and authentically it engages the buyer—and in how confidently it claims its strategic seat at the growth table.

SECTION ONE

The New Standard:
Business Impact as Marketing's Currency

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Business Impact as Marketing's Currency

B2B marketing leaders are under a new kind of spotlight. In the boardroom, they're being asked to connect campaigns directly to revenue. In the marketplace, they're navigating elongated sales cycles, economic uncertainty and buyers who expect personalized, always-on engagement across multiple channels.

It's no longer enough to drive demand—marketing must now act as a revenue engine. That shift is being felt across sectors and geographies.



Judit Szabo, *Global Head of Marketing Demand & Operations,* **Endava**

"No one in the business really cares about MQLs anymore... Instead, we highlight successful deals and growth opportunities, showing how integrated marketing and sales tactics turned them into revenue."



Bobby White, *Global Marketing Director,* **Blue Yonder**

"For the first time, our CMO is part of the conversations around financial planning and forecasting. That's a really exciting step for us."



Sue-Ann Prentice, *CMO,* **Fluke Corporation**

"Our role has always been a growth engine: pipeline generation, healthy funnel conversion, and ultimately supporting revenue growth. We track ROI against spend and review progress against target regularly with our executive team, strengthening confidence and driving smarter decision making. Those are all things we've been measured on – and will continue to be, as strategic partners within our business."



18% of respondents cite "difficulty proving impact" as their team's biggest challenge.

How to Navigate:

To rise to this challenge, marketing leaders must become fluent in the language of finance, going beyond activity metrics to understand payback models, revenue forecasting and ROI in the same depth as their CFO peers.

By narrowing their focus to a small, disciplined set of growth-linked KPIs, leaders can avoid "death by KPI" while ensuring every initiative ties back to commercial outcomes. That means measuring how entire buying groups progress together, how deal cycles accelerate, and how marketing contributes to retention and expansion—not just pipeline creation.

Success stories supported by sales and customer teams should take precedence over self-reported activity metrics, reframing marketing as a driver of revenue rather than a cost center. By balancing short-term wins with long-term brand investments, marketers can sustain credibility while fueling growth.

SECTION TWO

The New Standard:
Evolving Departmental Structures and Operating Models

Evolving Departmental Structures and Operating Models

The rising pressure on marketing to deliver measurable commercial impact isn't just changing what B2B marketers do, it's changing how they're organized. Structures and operating models are being re-engineered to break silos, speed up decision-making and align every activity with growth. If marketing is now expected to drive pipeline and revenue, its structure has to evolve in response to it.

Some centralize, some decentralize, but the principle remains: structure must follow strategy.



Sue-Ann Prentice, *CMO*, **Fluke Corporation**

"It's not about a one-off restructure; it's about continuous improvement. We're always asking: have we got people in the right places? Are we structuring ourselves correctly? Do we have the right capabilities?"



Federico Sammarco, *Digital Marketing & Communication Officer MEA*, **Socomec Group**

"We are gradually strengthening our local presence across different countries, ensuring teams remain closely connected with HQ while tailoring execution to local markets."



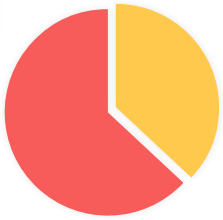
Bobby White, *Global Marketing Director*, **Blue Yonder**

"Previously, our field marketing, campaign and content teams weren't well connected, which meant inconsistent messaging and fragmented journeys. Now, content production, campaign development and execution are linked into one cohesive customer experience."



Judit Szabo, *Global Head of Marketing Demand & Operations*, **Endava**

"The business requests programs and campaigns, we review and prioritize them centrally and then decide on execution. It's a big shift from being deeply embedded by region or industry."



37% say better collaboration and organizational structure is the single biggest change needed for marketing to be more effective

How to Navigate:

Winning organizations treat structure as dynamic, adjusting roles and reporting lines in response to shifting priorities rather than relying on one-off restructures. Balancing central oversight with local agility is critical, centralization brings consistency and efficiency, while decentralized teams ensure responsiveness to market realities.

Equally important is dismantling silos by connecting marketing with sales, product and digital teams around customer journeys instead of static reporting lines. The organizations that thrive will be those that hardwire revenue accountability into their structures, ensuring every role and process directly contributes to pipeline creation, velocity and customer retention.

SECTION THREE

Program Mix and Performance

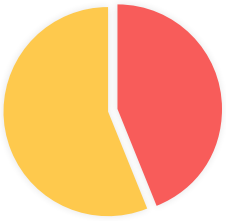
Program Mix and Performance

Marketing leaders are reallocating investment from large trade shows to high-value executive interactions. Resource limitations (44%) are the biggest barrier, making precision investment essential.



Judit Szabo, *Global Head of Marketing Demand & Operations,* **Endava**

"We allocate more resources to higher-value, strategic accounts, sometimes running hyper-personalized, one-to-one ABM campaigns with an 18-month window, while also keeping a pipeline of faster-moving opportunities alive."



44% cite limited resources as their top barrier, making precision investment essential



Bobby White, *Global Marketing Director,* **Blue Yonder**

"We've invested significantly in big events and haven't seen the ROI that other channels provide. Now we're pivoting to high-impact executive experiences..."

Fluke's ROI leaders:

- Paid digital advertising with AI personalization
- Targeted nurture campaigns
- Owned customer events

How to Navigate:

With resources under pressure, CMOs must make deliberate investment choices, shifting budget toward programs that consistently prove revenue impact. That means recalibrating spend away from underperforming trade shows and into executive roundtables, owned events and ABM programs that foster deeper account relationships.

AI should be deployed as an enabler: driving personalization, campaign optimization and efficiency; while leaders maintain human oversight to safeguard authenticity. Crucially, brand work must be reframed as fuel for demand generation and ABM rather than a standalone objective, ensuring it directly contributes to pipeline and long-term account growth.

SECTION FOUR

Case Study: Zekelman Industries

Case Study: Zekelman Industries

Zekelman Industries, North America's largest independent steel pipe and tube manufacturer, faced a stubborn adoption challenge: architects and engineers weren't using its new Jumbo Hollow Structural Steel (HSS), despite clear benefits. Partnering with The MX Group, Zekelman reframed the problem, not as an awareness gap, but as a usability barrier.

Together they launched the Connection Hub, a free digital platform enabling designers to model complex steel connections and export them directly into CAD programs. By solving a critical friction point, marketing shifted from promoting a product to enabling customer success.

Within months, the platform attracted over 1,300 registrants, generated 2,500 unique designs, and fuelled thousands of new projects. The business impact extended well beyond lead volume.

Usage data from the Hub now informs product development, while marketing gains visibility into buyer behavior and pipeline opportunities. Internally, the initiative strengthened alignment between marketing, engineering and sales, showing the C-suite how marketing could drive innovation as well as revenue.

For Zekelman, the real breakthrough wasn't just in lead volume, it was in mindset. When marketers are accountable for growth, their influence expands beyond ads and awareness. Marketing becomes a connective force that spans product, engineering, and customer experience: identifying friction, driving innovation and shaping outcomes that directly impact revenue. In uniting these disciplines around measurable progress, Zekelman proved that marketing, when led with purpose, doesn't just support growth—it engineers it.



1,330
HSS Connection Hub registrants

2,550
connection types designed

+2,500
new projects created since launch

Recommendations and Strategic Takeaways

1. Tie all of marketing's activity and programs to pipeline and revenue. Replace lead counts with deal velocity and account influence.
2. Develop financially fluent marketing leaders. Train teams in forecasting, ROI modeling and commercial acumen.
3. Tell stories in the language of business. Use sales-validated wins and revenue narratives to gain executive trust.
4. Redesign departmental structures for agility. Ensure collaboration with sales, finance, product and customer success.
5. Invest in channels where ROI is proven. Balance brand presence, demand generation and ABM with AI-driven precision and high-value executive engagement.

Bottom Line: The winners will be those who stop defending budgets and start proving marketing as a revenue multiplier. Business accountability is no longer optional—it's the new standard.

About The MX Group

The MX Group is a B2B Growth Partner that helps complex organizations accelerate growth. Our integrated approach—spanning brand, demand, digital, and content—translates marketing into measurable business outcomes. As the #2 independent B2B agency in the U.S., we collaborate with organizations navigating complex buying cycles, high-stakes decisions, and an urgent need for strategic creativity. With deep, hands-on experience driving growth for today's most ambitious B2B brands, we turn strategy into momentum.

Learn more at themxgroup.com.



About B2B Marketing

B2B MARKETING AWARDS
FROM B2B MARKETING

B2B Marketing is the world-renowned provider of insight, professional development, events and training for marketers and leaders in B2B.

Since our launch in 2004, we've amassed the largest global network of B2B marketers, giving us the unique ability to place your brand in the centre of the B2B buzz.

At the core of our business are the 85,000+ members of our website worldwide and five of the biggest and most influential annual events in the B2B calendar, alongside a host of webinars, podcasts, roundtables and training.

What can we do for you?

Our dedicated marketing and media solutions team can help you:

Build powerful brand recognition at the heart of the B2B industry.

Deliver your marketing content and proposition to the right audience at the right time through our weekly content emails.

Create compelling stories around your brand with headline-grabbing research and analysis through our reports.

Get face to face and engage with some of the industry's most influential decision-makers and buyers at our events.

Share your brand stories and content with our 160k+ subscribers, 80k+ monthly website users and 260k+ social media following.

Our products

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