Deloitte.

Together makes progress

Lead the marketing renaissance: **Restoring the human advantage in a machine-led era**

A practice perspective

By Alexander Curry, Perrine Masset, and Becky Galea

Consumer products companies are entering a decisive moment for marketing. Advances in AI, automation, and data have changed how teams execute work, but they have not, on their own, changed how companies create value. As these technologies spread, organizations are finding that incremental efficiency gains no longer translate into sustained competitive advantage.

Like the historical Renaissance, this crossroads is a time of rediscovery of forgotten crafts, learning and skills—enabled by technology and a bringing together of heart and head.

Future advantage will come from rebalancing analytical capability (head) with human creativity, judgment, and cultural relevance (heart). This rebalancing marks a shift in how marketing is organized, talent is developed, and technology and partners are deployed.

> ***"To drive growth, CPG enterprises need a marketing Renaissance."***

A journey through marketing time

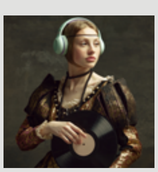
In its classical era (pre-2000), marketing was largely one-to-mass, driven by above-the-line advertising and original, creative ideas. Data and technology played a limited role, and career paths were linear, from brand or category leader to, ultimately, Chief Marketing Officer (CMO). Consumer Packaged Goods (CPG) companies thrived in this period.

As digital channels multiplied, marketing grew more complex. This ushered in the era of technocratic marketing (2000-2025), swamped by technology and data. The orthodoxy became that mastery of these new tools was the royal road to competitive advantage. Yet mastery was elusive. Few, if any, complex multinationals achieved it, given the unrelenting pace of change, complex legacy environments, and uneven adoption.

In this race, creativity often took a backseat and was outsourced to agencies. Without realizing it, marketers became technocrats, spending their days on projects and P&L management in service of the technology.

Now comes the age of AI. Global spending on AI in marketing—measured as vendor market revenue—is projected to exceed $82 billion by 2030,[1] with 75% of marketing organizations already using it.[2]

How can organizations stand apart in an AI-enabled world? For CPG companies, competitive advantage cannot come solely from more data and technology. They will merely allow companies to keep pace. Instead, differentiation will emerge from a rediscovery of the human element—the heart that once was at the core of marketing.



About the cover

Imagery on the cover and throughout is photography of real people, by real people.

Capturing the heart in your marketing renaissance

The heart in this renaissance is about deep human connection and engagement that can ultimately transform stagecraft:

- **Culture will be the stage.** Marketers will create and tap into cultural contexts. The best brands create and amplify culture.
- **Communities and consumers will be the actors.** The communities that inspire, use, adapt, and review products are a force to heed and listen to, providing legitimacy, inspiration, and advocacy.
- **Brand, product and experience will be the script.** The marketer will see brands and products as starting points to shape and respond to communities and culture.
- **Creators and influencers will be the critics.** They will harness, co-opt and enhance brands, products and experiences to suit the communities they serve and influence, whether independent or sponsored.

Heeding the head in your marketing renaissance

The head will consist of an increasingly AI-enabled toolkit that supports constant optimization of decision-making, resource allocation and experience delivery.

The head represents analytical and technological prowess. For the marketer, this involves:

- **Insight and foresight:** Conducting social listening and synthesizing vast amounts of data to enhance consumer insight and anticipate trends
- **Brand, campaign and ROI performance:** Gaining a detailed understanding of brand sentiment, product, and campaign performance across channels, including spend attribution
- **Content automation and adaptation:** Utilizing automated content generation and versioning
- **Automated execution:** Implementing automated marketing operations across channels for real-time response and engagement, such as agentic and AI-enabled customer services
- **Experience enhancement:** Developing category-specific and broader technology services and tools to enhance consumer engagement
- **Commercial decision-making:** Employing front-office and TPO/RGM technology to accelerate and enable tactical commercial decisions

---

“CPG companies can be the place where technology- and process-obsessed orthodoxies are put in their place, and where people once again become the source of competitive advantage.”

Creating the conditions for your marketing renaissance

The Renaissance wasn't just about art. It arose amid the circulation of ideas made possible by systems and cultural forces. The printing press spread knowledge, humanism reshaped values, and art and science advanced in step. These forces were in turn catalyzed by the system of patronage.

Likewise, the marketing renaissance is not about a handful of masters, but about the democratization of tools, and the fusion of creativity and data. Creating it will also require a mutually reinforcing system, starting with patronage (in today's terms, leadership) that supports:

- Technology strategy reimagined to fully leverage AI's potential and genuinely empower marketing
- The marketing workforce and talent model of the future
- A recalibrated agency and partner ecosystem

This is much more than a marketing initiative. It's an enterprise-wide endeavor. Specific responsibilities fall to key leaders:

- **The CMO:** Driving the vision and defining future capabilities
- **The CHRO:** Creating human/AI value propositions and talent models
- **The CTO:** Continuing to drive technological tooling and resetting partner relationships
- **The business unit/category leaders:** Ensuring execution and driving change

To truly excel, leaders of this renaissance need to engender a bold investor narrative, confidently challenge orthodoxies, sponsor change and adoption, and focus relentlessly on execution.

Technology strategy

Many organizations have suffered from the siloing of marketing and technology capabilities, a relic of the technocratic ethos. Three things need to change.

1. **Marketing needs to play a much bigger role in technology strategy and management—**and build the skills to do it. It must take technology experience briefs as seriously as it takes creative briefs.
2. **Marketers must become product owners.** At the risk of generalizing, up until now, the technology experience was done to marketers. As the human and technological become increasingly intertwined, it will be critical to own the experience, and marketing will need to have a cadre of product owners who can work with technologists to craft and help implement use-case-based experiences.
3. **Organizations must standardize and streamline.** Many organizations retain strong biases for customization and exceptionalism (how much time is spent developing exquisite "owned" tools?). If technology can't be a source of competitive advantage, there is an opportunity to standardize and simplify platforms or pass technology and development risk onto partners.

AI's impact on the marketing process

AI makes the strongest case for rethinking marketing strategy. It's embedding intelligence across the full lifecycle—from category and brand strategy to activation and performance management—across occasional, cyclical, and always-on timeframes. AI accelerates insight generation, strategy development, creative deployment and cross-channel orchestration at both global and local levels. The result is that teams sense and respond faster, with tighter alignment between central plans and market execution.

AI's real impact is freeing up human capacity at scale across marketing work. Strategic control will remain human-led. Creative and category work will shift to a hybrid model—the majority from human effort but with significant AI enablement. Machines will accelerate synthesis and iteration while humans own original ideas and platforms.

Meanwhile, the biggest shift will occur in execution and measurement, where the majority of work in activities such as localization, activation, and performance learning will be machine-led with human-in-the-loop oversight. This redistribution releases substantial capacity from repetitive tasks, fundamentally changing how marketing teams deploy time, talent and attention.[3]

How you use that released capacity matters most. AI enables speed and precision, but competitive advantage depends on where that liberated human effort is redeployed. Companies that redirect time toward better judgment, stronger creative direction, and continuous optimization will compound their returns. Those that simply absorb efficiency gains without changing how decisions are made will see limited impact. In an AI-enabled model, advantage comes from using liberated capacity to elevate decision quality, responsiveness and creative ambition—not from automation alone.

The Renaissance marketing workforce of the future

Just as AI is transforming marketing, the renaissance marketer will grow into a number of new roles:

- Expert in **marketing disciplines**
- Highly original **creator**, and a lateral and conceptual thinker
- **Empathic community participant** and **owner of the human experience**
- **Machine psychologist** who understands the decision heuristics of AI and filters information effectively
- Confident and decisive **decision-maker and leader,** accountable for leading both people and machines to deliver fast results
- Deep practitioner of **judgment**
- Fluent in **technology and product**

The **marketing organization of the future** will thrive through harmonizing the heart and head—the art and the science of its craft—which will only be possible through well-balanced and integrated teams, as described below.

Heart

- **Creative empaths and community natives** who are at one with the communities they serve
- **Brand and experience managers**, and leaders of the future, both in the market and at category and brand level.

Head

- **Functional specialists** in marketing operations who guide and train specialist agents and provide a backstop of human experience
- **Specialist AI programmers and managers** who direct the agentic workforce
- **Tech and data product owners**
- **Marketing execution leaders** trained to filter and assess large amounts of information and make rapid decisions based on data and judgment at both a category and end-market level

Heart and head

- **Marketing leaders** who can bring the whole system together and drive meaningful change, the polymaths of this Renaissance
- **Shared business services** bringing complementary skills to help synthesize the team's capability set

Talent model implications

Renaissance marketing will require a fundamental review of the talent model, including recruiting, training, workforce value propositions and career path management.

Recruiting

CPG companies are likely to find themselves in a talent war for new types of potential, including "creative empath" and "agentic leadership." They will need to review recruiting strategies, and go from a bias toward commercial business and STEM backgrounds to reembrace the humanities, creative and social science backgrounds.

Training

CPG companies will need to identify the potential for and train the "humanist" skills: Pattern recognition, sociology, anthropology, ethics and philosophy, psychology, art and communication. This may require a new look at non-traditional training approaches. Organizations will also need to build confident decision makers, moving from an emphasis on process to professional risk-taking and exercise of judgment. Also essential will be that cadre of product managers, linking technology to the human—and machine—users.

Hybrid workforce management

The big question is to what extent should companies take this on as a core capability. Much of this should be outsourced in line with a technology simplification strategy. That said, they will need backstop skills in agentic management and prompting.

Career pathways

There will likely be multiple cross-cutting career tracks with routes to cyborg "polymathic" leader, functional leadership, business and execution leadership, agentic workforce leadership and product manager development.

The opportunity is clear. Organizations that prioritize relevance in their talent models will be more likely to become leaders in developing and attracting marketing talent.

Agency and partner ecosystem

Creative acumen drives competitive advantage. Technology needs standardization and adaptability. These principles reshape the partner ecosystem and build-vs-buy posture:

Technology

AI-enabled marketing risks complexity and fragmentation, a danger to the simplification and productivity efforts many organizations have embarked on. If, however, AI-enabled capabilities commoditize, the logic points to scale, simplicity and continuous updates. This means the bias should be to pass on development risk to partners. With rare exceptions, agentic development should not be a core competency. Product management should. Companies must also liberate partners. Micromanagement deep in the organization stifles innovation and creates complexity. Partner governance needs to evolve to enable this shift.

Creative

Conversely, creative and human capabilities need to be de-commoditized. Creative agencies still concentrate ideas and innovation. Companies need to markedly increase control and creative collaboration from the top down. CPG companies will need to rebuild creative muscle to inspire and challenge creative agencies. Some may insource creative if confident they can attract top talent. At minimum, creative parity needs to exist between companies and their agencies.

Marketing execution

While delivery can be delegated to partner agents, control and decision-making remain non-negotiable.

> *"CPG companies will need to rebuild creative muscle to inspire and challenge creative agencies."*

The renaissance required to drive growth at scale

The marketing renaissance is not a rejection of technology, nor a nostalgic return to classical marketing. It is a rebalancing. The organizations most likely to outperform their peers are those that use AI to liberate capacity and then reinvest that capacity with intent—into stronger creative ambition, deeper community engagement, better decision-making and faster learning loops between insight, action and performance.

The question is no longer whether AI will change marketing. It already has. The real question is whether leaders will use this moment to build competitive advantage that others will struggle to match.

Endnotes

1. Grand View Research, *Artificial Intelligence in Marketing Market Size, Share & Trends Analysis Report*, 2024.
2. Salesforce, *State of Marketing Report, 10th Edition*, 2026.
3. Deloitte, *2026 Consumer Products Outlook*, section 5: “Productivity is the number one outcome CPG companies expect from their AI investment.”