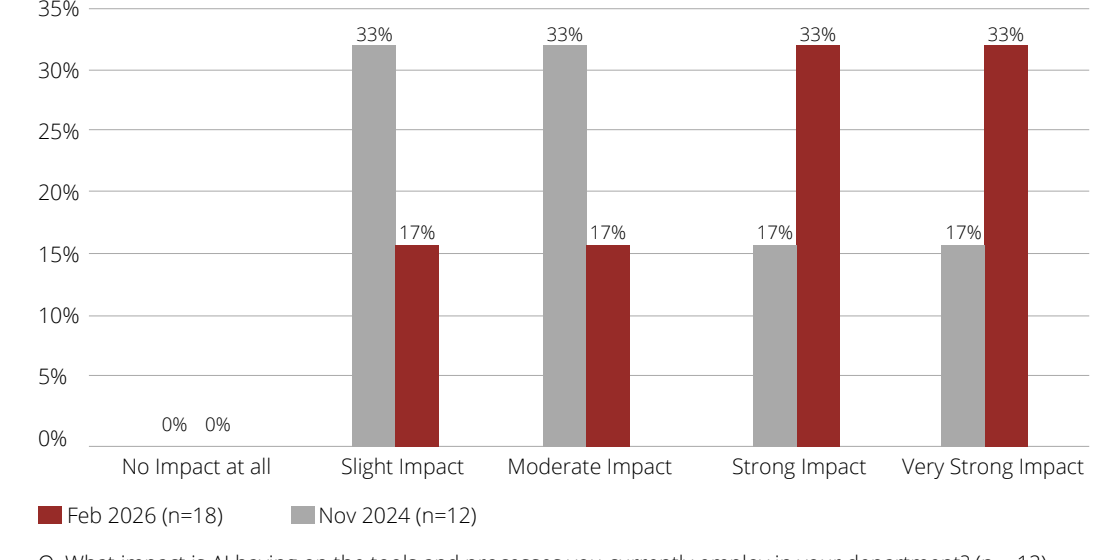


# State of AI in Technology Marketing 2026

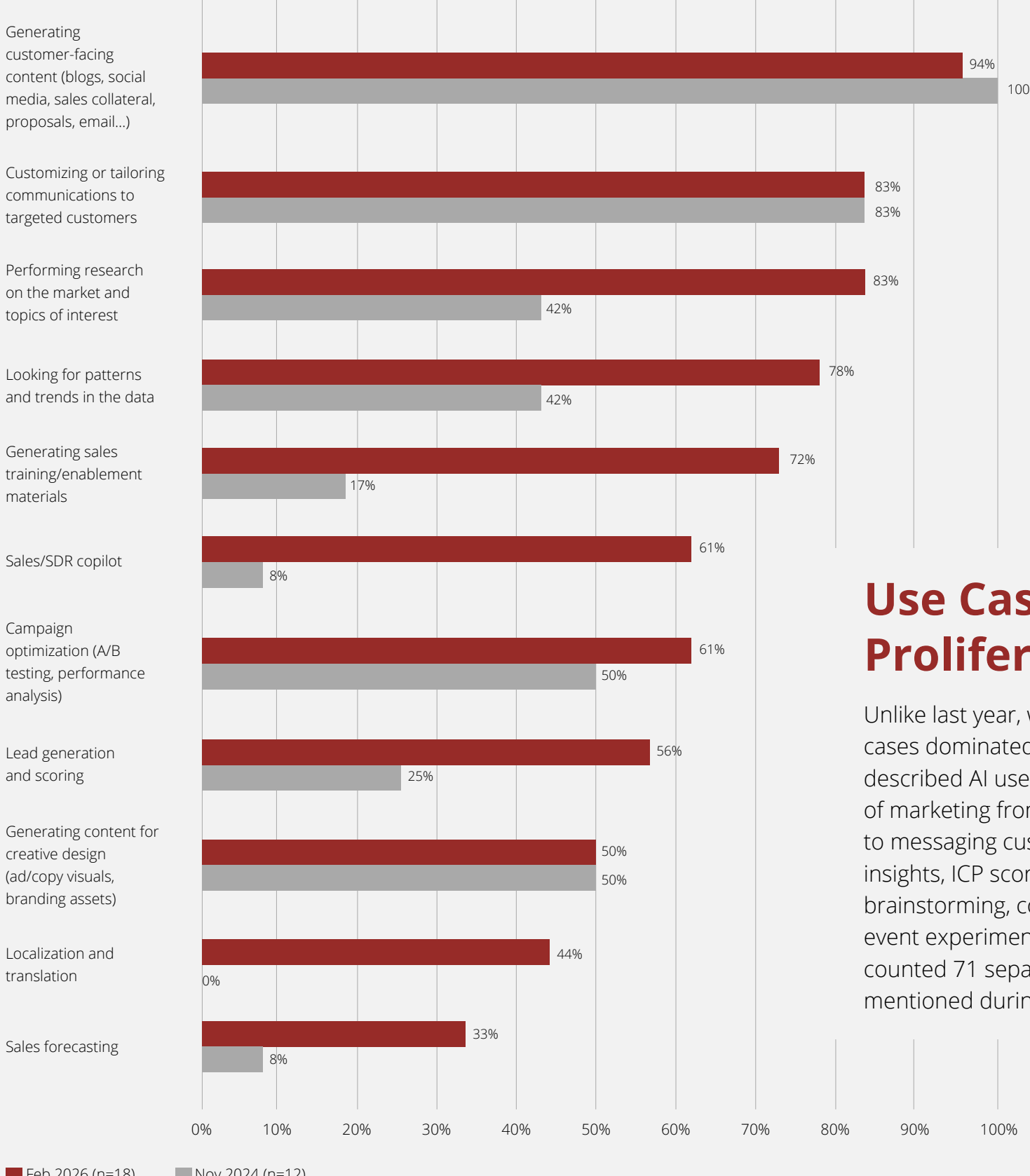
## From Experimentation to Embedded Use

AI in general, and generative AI in particular, have continued to reshape the marketing landscape, with two-thirds of respondents saying AI is having a “strong” or “very strong” impact—double the number from last year. Marketing leaders increasingly view AI as not only a productivity enhancer, but as a strategic enabler.

### Departmental AI Impact



### Marketing AI Use Cases



### Use Cases Proliferate

Unlike last year, when a handful of use cases dominated, this year respondents described AI use cases across all areas of marketing from internal productivity to messaging customization, predictive insights, ICP scoring and refinement, brainstorming, contact enrichment, and event experimentation. Callan Consulting counted 71 separate use cases mentioned during the interviews.

## Emergence of Born in AI Companies

We are now seeing companies who have been founded and/or whose marketing organizations were formed since the emergence of generative AI and who leverage it in everything they do. Born in AI companies use more AI tools, claim greater productivity gains, and use it for more customer-facing work than their counterparts.

### Born in AI Versus Legacy Companies

Dimension	Born in AI	Legacy
Overall AI stance	Built in, part of the DNA	Strategic enabler
Productivity claims	100–200% increase	20–50% increase
Tech stack	More tools, more likely to use AI-native tools	Fewer tools, more likely to use horizontal LLMs and AI capabilities in existing tech stack
Percentage of AI use that's customer-facing	72%	45%
Training/adoption strategy	No formal training; use of AI is expected	Little formal training, with AI use built into team goals

*“Marketers will still need to be successful in traditional SEO, and AEO is the expanded discipline that moves beyond rankings and into answer engines.”*

Jen Jones, CMO, Siteimprove

## Shift to GEO/AEO

While it's still early days, marketers are beginning to give Generative Engine Optimization (GEO)/Answer Engine Optimization (AEO) serious attention, with half of the leaders we spoke to having some sort of formalized activities underway. Respondents are putting tracking in place and some are seeing increases in referral traffic.

We as marketers are already overly dependent on the technology and beginning to use it as a crutch.

## Overreliance on AI Is a Real Danger

It's evident that AI-generated content created by marketing teams is making its way into the market with relatively few changes. It's easy and tempting to use the tools, but overreliance on them threatens our ability to tell “what good looks like,” and flooding the market with AI-generated content runs the risk of LLMs getting fed their own content, losing fidelity with every generation, and risking ending up with pure noise.

## Key Changes from 2024

Dimension	November 2024	February 2026
Overall take	Early experimentation; AI as an emerging technology	AI normalized and widely adopted; “how work gets done”
Role of AI	“Bolt-on” to existing workflows	Baseline expectation for marketing functions
Adoption model	Bottoms-up early adopters and departmental tiger teams	Expectations-driven, built into individuals' goals and OKRs
Key use cases	Content generation, research	Initial inroads into broad set of use cases across marketing
Tech stack	Stand-alone LLMs and some capabilities built into existing tools	Permeates tech stack, including AI-native, domain-specific tools
View of AI value	Primarily increased efficiency	Increasingly strategic, as well as operational
Data security concerns	High	Low (trusting in providers' security procedures)
Agentic AI	Absent from the discussion	High awareness, early-stage experimentation
Discovery via LLMs	Awareness as future concept	Emerging as an active marketing discipline

## Key Recommendations

- Fully embrace AI across all areas of marketing
- Focus on AI-driven discovery: GEO/AEO, and machine-engine optimization (MEO)
- Invest beyond productivity gains
- Prioritize skills and judgement over tools
- Don't overuse the technology
- Get help where you need it: Look to experts like Callan Consulting to help advise you in this transition

*“We've seen campaign performance increase anywhere from 4x to 100x improvement, depending on audience and channel.”*

Gabie Boko, CMO, NetApp



## Study Methodology

The findings in this study are based on interviews conducted in December 2025/January 2026 with 19 CMOs and other marketing leaders from technology companies ranging from early-stage startups to publicly-traded companies with billions of dollars in revenue.

## About +CallanConsulting

Founded in 2000, Callan Consulting provides a wide range of marketing assistance services to B2B technology companies, with a particular emphasis on product marketing. We have helped hundreds of clients ranging from household names like DocuSign, Seismic, IDC, and SAP to early-stage startups to maximize their success in the market. With our AI Enablement Service, we work with clients to ensure they are making the best use of AI in their marketing organizations, offering services ranging from quick-start assessments and plans to AI tools market scan and selection, pilot implementation and support, skills training, and change management.