

# How to become a CMO

The complete career,  
skills and tools guide.



**Funnel**

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# What it really takes to become a CMO today

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For senior marketing leaders already running teams and shaping strategy, the lure of the CMO seat is powerful. It's the role that lets you define a company's story, connect brand to revenue and influence decisions that set the course for the business. The CMO sits at the junction where creativity, commercial acumen and leadership meet.

For marketing leaders, the CMO role represents influence at the highest level. Boards value it because the right CMO can spark transformation across the company. The expectations are high, but for leaders who can rise to the challenge, the prize is the ability to make a lasting impact and shape the future of the company you believe in. For those with vision, it's an opportunity worth pursuing.

However, it's well known that becoming a CMO is not for the faint-hearted. CMOs in Fortune 500 companies last an average of 4.2 years less than almost any other executive. <sup>1</sup> Why is this? Well, boards want growth, fan-building brands, digital transformation and measurable ROI all at once. That's a tall order, and pulling it off requires a strategic mind, as well as reliable intelligence to power smart decisions.

The CMOs who succeed embrace the challenge by broadening their influence, learning the language of finance and showing accountability before the title arrives. Credibility with CEOs and boards is the dividing line between those who thrive and those who burn out.

This guide is for heads of marketing, VPs of growth and senior professionals ready to step into that arena. In the chapters ahead, you'll see what changes when you move from leading a function to leading at the highest level. We'll explore the skills that matter most, how to show impact in the boardroom and the technology that can set you up to succeed long before you're handed the title.

You already know how to run marketing. The next step is proving you can help steer the business. This guide walks through the evolution of the CMO role, the skills that get you noticed, the marketing intelligence technology that keeps you credible and the mindset that turns today's senior marketers into tomorrow's enterprise leaders.

**CMOs in Fortune 500 companies last an average of 4.2 years — less than any other executive.**



How to become a CMO:  
the complete career,  
skills and tools guide

# 1. The state of the CMO role today

From the outside, the CMO chair looks like one of the most exciting jobs in business leadership. CMOs shape strategy, drive growth across the company and influence how millions of customers see and experience a brand. With today's technology and the need to communicate brand, the scope has never been broader, and the potential impact has never been bigger.

## The numbers behind the role

About two-thirds of Fortune 500 companies still have a dedicated CMO.<sup>1</sup> While that number has dipped as some firms fold marketing into broader growth roles, it highlights just how critical the position remains. Companies that keep the title are making a statement: **they want marketing leaders who can steer growth, not just run campaigns.**

Boards often expect brand reinvention, digital transformation and measurable growth simultaneously.<sup>2</sup> That sounds daunting, but it's also what makes the role so powerful. If you thrive on variety and impact, few jobs put you in the center of so many decisions.

## The importance of alignment

Aligning with the CEO and CFO is another piece of the puzzle. A CMO who connects with the CEO's vision and the CFO's goals isn't just safer in the role; they're positioned to become one of the most trusted voices in the boardroom. In fact, when the CMO and CFO team up, revenue grows faster and profits rise by increments of 20% to 40%.<sup>3</sup>

Yes, accountability is more critical than ever, with CEOs asking for ROI proof sooner. But that plays to the strengths of modern marketing leaders. If you already know how to track performance, translate results and show impact, you're speaking the language every board wants to hear. Marketers who prove ROI consistently are already making themselves recession-proof.

## The mandate: Drive veritable growth or disappear

The modern board has an expanded, non-negotiable set of expectations.



### Spark transformation

Drive brand reinventions and enterprise-wide digital adoption.



### Deliver growth

Own measurable revenue contribution and prove ROI.



### Build the brand

Create a fan-building brand that deepens marketing penetration.

The CMOs who thrive are those who embrace this pressure, learn the language of finance, and demonstrate accountability long before they get the title.

## The expanded scope of the CMO role

The scope of today's CMO role has expanded well beyond brand and advertising. CMOs are now expected to drive company-wide growth strategy, lead digital transformation across the full customer journey, champion customer experience from first impression to loyalty and embody company culture inside and outside the organization. This breadth is both the challenge and the thrill of the job. For leaders who love solving big problems and connecting across departments, it's a once-in-a-career opportunity.

## Why this matters for senior leaders

The CMO role is expanding to include greater scope, giving you more ability to influence the strategic direction of the company. Marketing execution isn't the hurdle anymore. The next step is proving you can connect marketing to revenue, partner across the C-suite and transform the digital direction of your company.



Spotlight:

**Asmita Dubey, L'Oréal**

Reinvention. She is using a \$15B+ budget to transform a heritage advertiser into a technology-driven "beauty tech" platform. Integrating AI diagnostics and virtual try-ons, turning marketing from broadcasting into co-designing customer journeys.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. The skills that will put you in the CMO seat

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Mindset matters, but skills make boards take notice. These aren't boxes to tick. They're the abilities that let you run bigger plays, create bigger wins and prove you're already operating at the leadership level.

### Blending marketing fundamentals with data-driven thinking

It starts with mastery of the fundamentals. Modern CMOs blend storytelling with performance discipline and an understanding of target market wants and needs. They can launch a brand campaign that hits TV, print and TikTok, while the analytics team tracks how search and paid media amplify it as it happens. When traditional storytelling meets digital precision, brand building becomes a growth engine.

### Pricing strategy that moves markets

Pricing signals value, shapes perception and protects margin. The best marketing leaders know how to test elasticity, read market signals and adjust fast. A small price change that lifts revenue by 10% is a deliberate part of the strategy rather than a lucky boost. CMOs who collaborate with CFOs to connect these choices to customer insight show they can steer growth, not just advertise it.

### Data leadership that scales

Good CMOs don't just read dashboards; they build a team that designs them and a tech stack that empowers marketers with self-service analytics. Marketing leaders focus on the important metrics that drive decisions and build systems that surface them instantly. Insights are accessible without a data engineering background, so decisions are made faster and processes are repeatable. The CMO who designs a team and stack that deliver consistent results earns trust as a business architect, not just a functional head.



Spotlight:

#### Chris Davis, New Balance

Repositioning with purpose. Chris Davis transformed New Balance from an underdog into a global challenger, doubling revenue between 2020 and 2024.

He fused sport and style through high-impact partnerships, from Shohei Ohtani and Coco Gauff to luxury houses like Loro Piana and Prada.<sup>3</sup>

Davis's philosophy rejects hype in favor of depth: every collaboration expands reach while reinforcing the brand's core authenticity. A masterclass in strategy meeting creativity.<sup>3</sup>

# 3. What is it like to sit in the CMO chair in 2025?

The CMO role in 2025 is both exhilarating and demanding. It's not about steering campaigns from a distance. It's about being at the center of business decisions that shape the company's future.

## A day as CMO

A typical day starts with data. The first hours are often spent reviewing dashboards that track customer acquisition cost, lifetime value, campaign ROI and pipeline velocity. These are the proof points boards expect and the signals that tell you where to shift budget and focus.

By midmorning, many CMOs are already deep in discussions with finance, aligning forecasts, justifying spend and planning scenarios. The partnership with the CFO has become one of the most critical relationships in the C-suite.

The rest of the day pulls you across the company. One meeting is with product to align a new launch with market positioning. Another is with HR to ensure the employer brand is attracting the right talent. Later comes a call with sales leaders, checking how marketing is fueling pipeline and whether messaging is resonating with prospects. In between, you're syncing with the CEO to ensure your vision supports broader strategy.

Customer focus runs through everything. Today's CMO is expected to champion the entire journey, not just the top of the funnel. That means working with customer success on retention programs, with operations on seamless delivery and with digital teams on optimizing every touchpoint. When there's a gap in the experience, it often lands on the CMO's desk to fix.

The pace is relentless, but so is the variety. In the afternoon, you might shift from planning a global brand campaign to reviewing AI-driven

personalization pilots. You could spend an hour with your analytics team refining attribution models, then pivot to external meetings with agencies or technology partners. By the end of the day, you might prepare board materials that link all of this activity to growth targets for the quarter.

Influential CMOs aren't just shaping company culture either. They're shaping society as well.



### Spotlight: **Marian Lee, Netflix**

Marketing built for cultural moments. When Marian Lee became Netflix's CMO in 2022, she stepped into a \$2B+ marketing operation spanning 190 countries<sup>3</sup>.

One of her boldest moves was creating a "heat chaser" fund, reserving roughly 25% of the budget to fuel breakout hits as they emerge.<sup>4</sup>

Under her leadership, Netflix shifted from platform-centric promotion to content-first storytelling. Her team transformed *Bridgerton* into a global cultural phenomenon through pop-up balls, consumer product collaborations and deep fandom activation.

Lee's philosophy: great marketing doesn't just amplify culture — it creates movements.

# 4. Practical career advice to make the move to the CMO role

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The CMOs who thrive aren't luckier. They just prepare differently.

## What successful CMOs do differently

The best CMOs aren't the busiest people in the room. They're the clearest thinkers. They know what to delegate, when to make a decision and how to make their strategy visible so others can execute it with confidence.

### 1. They build teams that run without them

A CMO's job is to design systems that keep moving when they're not in the room. That starts with defining clear goals, assigning ownership and setting measurable standards for delivery. They hire strong leads, give them decision rights and step in only when structure or priorities break. The outcome is a marketing function that operates like an engine. CMOs trust their teams to deliver on operational goals while they keep their eye on the horizon.

### 2. They rebuild what isn't working

Many CMOs start by restructuring their team. They remove redundant layers, set clear expectations around output and rebuild the operating model to match business goals. They conduct skills gap audits to find weak points in the team and act to strengthen them, whether that involves hiring more resources or upskilling existing individuals. This proactive approach signals accountability to the board and clarity to the team.

### 3. They make strategy tangible

The most effective CMOs turn strategy into action that people can follow. They start by translating the company vision into a small set of measurable priorities such as market share growth, retention improvement or margin expansion. Each priority links to clear marketing outcomes and has an accountable owner.

They build operating frameworks that connect those priorities. For example, they show how brand work fuels pipeline, how demand generation supports revenue targets and how customer marketing improves lifetime value. Every campaign and budget line maps back to one of those goals.

When conditions change, they make the trade-offs clear. If spend shifts from awareness to retention, they explain how the move supports long-term value instead of short-term visibility. This keeps every team focused on the same definition of success rather than chasing disconnected metrics.

The result is a strategy that people can see, measure and act on every day.

## 4. They align with what the CFO needs

CMOs who align closely with CFOs build trust and collaborate better, which helps drive sustainable growth. Alignment starts by tying marketing metrics to financial outcomes.

In 2025, only 43% of marketers feel aligned with finance, while 61% of finance leaders think they are aligned. Closing that gap is what makes marketing credible in the boardroom.

That means showing how spend affects margin, how marketing activity moves customer lifetime value and how forecast accuracy improves decision-making. Translating marketing impact into financial terms earns freedom to invest and protects the role when cuts are discussed.

Alignment also involves giving the CFO a clear window into customers. This is key to building a successful, customer-centric business. One CFO of a major consumer goods company told McKinsey, “I need the CMO to tell me what customers want. They know them best, and I can’t make decisions without their input.”

## 5. They create clarity and alignment

Marketing touches every part of the company, so a CMO’s real work is keeping everyone moving in the same direction. They create alignment by setting one clear narrative for what marketing is trying to achieve and how success will be measured. That story is repeated in every meeting, dashboard and presentation until it becomes the default language inside the business.

They also run structured communication rhythms. Weekly cross-functional check-ins keep priorities synchronized across product, sales and finance. Monthly reviews focus on what’s working, what needs to shift and where dependencies are blocking progress. This cadence turns alignment from an idea into a habit.

When conflict arises, they resolve it with data and transparency. If sales questions lead quality, or finance challenges spend levels, the CMO uses agreed-upon metrics to show cause and effect. That discipline prevents emotion from derailing decisions and keeps trust intact.

The outcome is a marketing organization that speaks with one voice, executes against one plan and earns confidence across the company.

## 6. They think years ahead

Forward-thinking CMOs plan in multi-year horizons instead of reacting quarter to quarter. They build long-term strategies in parallel with short-term execution so their teams know what the next three years should look like. This includes defining which markets to enter, what new capabilities marketing will need and what skills to start developing early.

They use scenario planning to model different futures using a marketing intelligence platform like [Funnel](#). This lets them test how changes in budget, audience behavior or channel performance could affect revenue before those shifts occur. When the market shifts, they already have a plan for what to scale back, what to protect and what to double down on.

They also invest in infrastructure that grows with the business. That means choosing technology that integrates easily, data systems that can handle more sources and workflows that don’t need to be rebuilt every time priorities change.

The result is marketing that stays steady while others scramble. Their foresight turns volatility into an advantage because they’ve already planned for what’s next.

## Your first 90 days as CMO

Your first 90 days as CMO are about control and clarity. You need to understand the business fast, deliver an early proof point and build trust with the people who shape decisions. Those CMOs who establish influence early shape the role on their terms.

Here's how to make those opening months count:

### Days 1-30

#### Assess and absorb

Your first month is about listening and mapping power.

- **Audit the landscape:**  
Review current strategies, campaigns and performance metrics. Identify what's working and what's waste. Examine brand positioning, customer sentiment and competitive posture.
- **Meet the stakeholders:**  
Schedule deep dives with finance, sales, product and HR. Ask how they define marketing success, what frustrates them and what outcomes they expect. Note who influences decisions, even if they lack a formal title.  
**Understand the team:**  
Meet one-on-one with your marketing leads to assess strengths, gaps and morale. Learn where execution slows and where talent is underused.
- **Gather customer insight:**  
Use data from your marketing intelligence platform, customer feedback and market research to define who buys, why they buy and what they need next.

### Days 31-60

#### Define and design

Month two is about converting insight into direction.

- **Set measurable priorities:**  
Choose three to five business outcomes that marketing will own. Frame them as financial goals such as growth, retention or margin improvement.
- **Develop your strategy:**  
Create a clear plan that outlines initiatives, required resources and success metrics. Define where marketing will lead, where it will support and where it will measure.
- **Establish metrics and accountability:**  
Build dashboards in your marketing intelligence platform to track key indicators like customer acquisition cost, pipeline contribution and conversion efficiency. Make data visibility part of the culture.



## Days 61-90

### Execute and communicate

The final month is about proving progress and reinforcing trust.

- **Deliver an early win:**  
Pick one visible metric that matters to the board, such as CAC or pipeline velocity. Improve it through targeted action and share results widely.
- **Build alignment through rhythm:**  
Set weekly cross-functional meetings to keep finance, sales and product in sync with marketing priorities. Use these sessions to surface blockers and demonstrate ownership.
- **Communicate results:**  
Report progress with transparency. Use data to tell the story of how marketing contributes to revenue and efficiency. Recognize your team's wins publicly to build confidence and momentum.

#### The takeaway:

The first 90 days set the tone for everything that follows. Listen with purpose, decide with data and show tangible results fast. The CMOs who succeed aren't just strategists. They are architects of systems, trust and results from day one.

# 5. Strategies for success that turn senior marketers into CMOs

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Use the right strategies to show impact now and position yourself as the clear choice when the board looks for its next leader. Don't wait for the promotion. Step up, lead like a CMO now, and you'll be prepared to excel in the role.

At the center of the skills required is a single theme: being relentlessly data-informed. What follows is the playbook of capabilities that turn a strong marketing leader into a credible CMO candidate.

## 1. Prove you can connect marketing to growth

Boards don't want promises; they want proof that every dollar you spend creates revenue, protects margin and builds long-term value.

Here's how to start building that proof:

### Show accountability now

Link spend to outcomes. If you can show today that your campaigns reduce CAC, improve pipeline or grow revenue, you're already sending the right signal. The challenge is that data often lives in silos, forcing marketers to rely on inconsistent or incomplete numbers. A unified marketing intelligence platform like Funnel solves that by bringing all performance data into one place so you can map it to business outcomes. That way, you can defend marketing investments with the same clarity and confidence as any other function.

### Step outside your silo

CMOs who stand out don't wait for cross-functional work to find them. They create it. Volunteering for projects with finance, sales or product shows that you think beyond campaign metrics and care about business performance.

Start by joining projects that sit on the border between functions, like pricing reviews, sales forecasting or product launches. These

opportunities expose you to the decision-making process and provide you with the chance to demonstrate how marketing data can inform decisions. It also builds credibility with peers who often become advocates when succession discussions start.

One example is former Mastercard CMO Raja Rajamannar. He worked closely with finance early in his tenure to redesign how marketing ROI was measured.<sup>8</sup> That collaboration turned marketing into a trusted investment, not a discretionary expense.

When you step into non-marketing initiatives, you learn the language and pressure points of other departments. That fluency is what boards notice because it proves you can operate as a company leader, not just a marketing leader.

### Get visible outside your company

Visibility outside your walls matters as much as influence inside them. Boards and recruiters look for leaders who already act like industry voices. Publishing and speaking are not vanity projects. They are proof that you can represent your company and contribute to the direction of the field.

Start by sharing what you are learning through articles, panels or podcasts. Measurement is one of the clearest ways to show leadership right now. Ana Carreira Vidal, who leads Think with Google's measurement work, built credibility by publishing



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Google's triangulation playbook.<sup>9</sup> Her work turned a technical concept into a practical framework marketers could use.

Igor Skokan, VP of Measurement at Meta, did the same by co-authoring A New Gold Standard for Digital Ad Measurement with Dr. Julian Runge.<sup>10</sup> The collaboration raised his visibility and positioned Meta at the center of the industry conversation on marketing mix modeling and triangulation.

These examples demonstrate that publishing insights on data, experimentation and measurement can strengthen both your personal brand and your company's reputation.

If you are not ready to publish research, start smaller. Share lessons from your own projects, speak at local events or contribute to an industry newsletter. The key is to be visible where meaningful conversations are taking place. Consistency builds recognition faster than perfection.

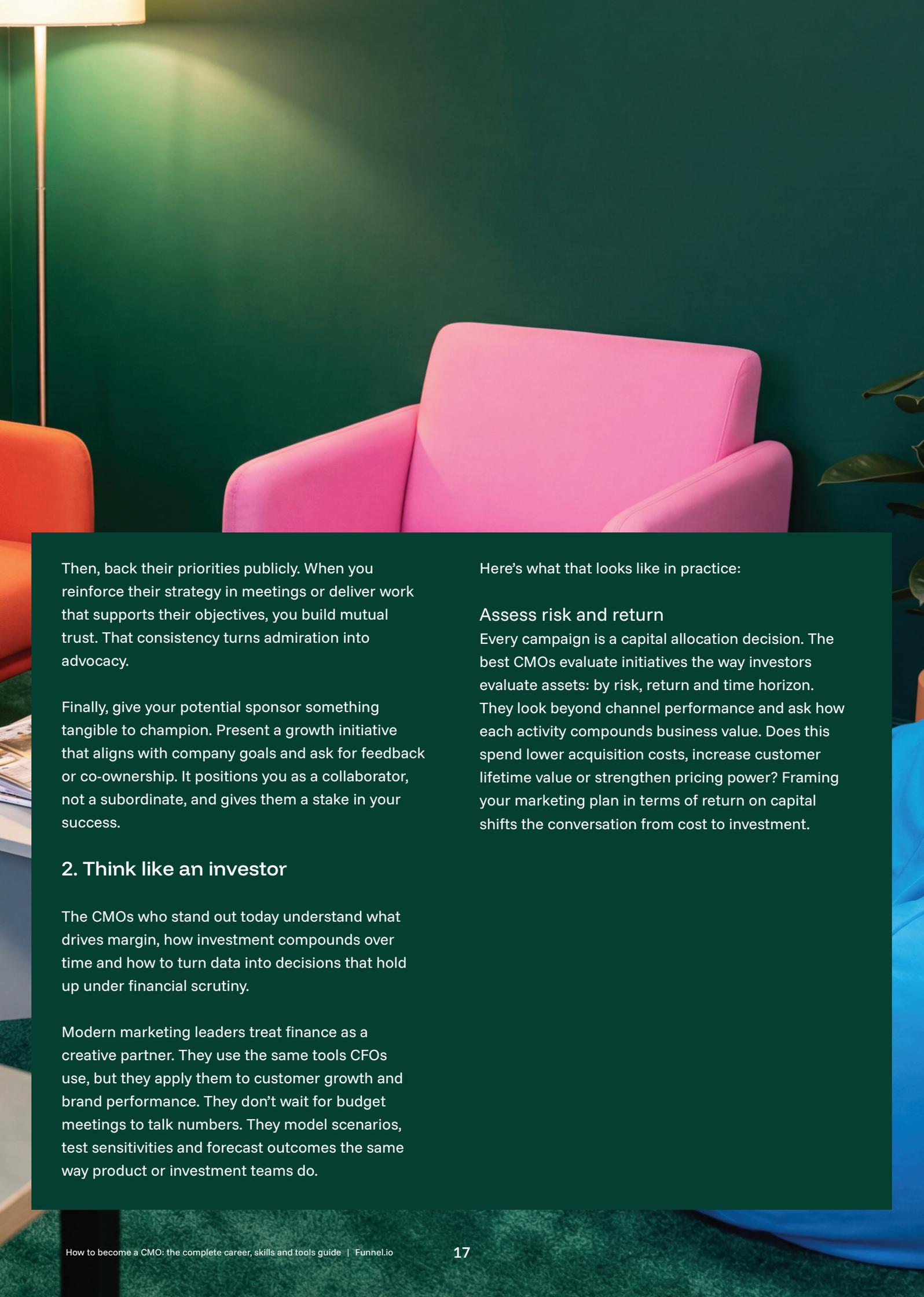
When you share ideas that move the conversation forward, people remember your name long before your next title change.

### Find a sponsor, not just a mentor

Mentors advise you. Sponsors bet on you. The Harvard Business Review draws a clear line between them.<sup>11</sup> A sponsor uses their reputation to accelerate your career. They advocate for you in rooms you cannot enter yet, push for your advancement and attach their credibility to your success.

You don't get a sponsor by asking for one. You earn it through performance and visibility. Start by identifying leaders who influence company direction, especially those who understand the connection between marketing and growth. Make their goals part of yours. When you help them hit targets that matter to the business, you prove your value without needing to sell it.

Next, keep them close to outcomes, not process. Instead of status updates, share results that matter to their world: how a campaign lowered acquisition cost, how brand work improved retention or how your data insights helped finance forecast more accurately. Executives notice peers who make their work easier and more credible.



Then, back their priorities publicly. When you reinforce their strategy in meetings or deliver work that supports their objectives, you build mutual trust. That consistency turns admiration into advocacy.

Finally, give your potential sponsor something tangible to champion. Present a growth initiative that aligns with company goals and ask for feedback or co-ownership. It positions you as a collaborator, not a subordinate, and gives them a stake in your success.

## 2. Think like an investor

The CMOs who stand out today understand what drives margin, how investment compounds over time and how to turn data into decisions that hold up under financial scrutiny.

Modern marketing leaders treat finance as a creative partner. They use the same tools CFOs use, but they apply them to customer growth and brand performance. They don't wait for budget meetings to talk numbers. They model scenarios, test sensitivities and forecast outcomes the same way product or investment teams do.

Here's what that looks like in practice:

### Assess risk and return

Every campaign is a capital allocation decision. The best CMOs evaluate initiatives the way investors evaluate assets: by risk, return and time horizon. They look beyond channel performance and ask how each activity compounds business value. Does this spend lower acquisition costs, increase customer lifetime value or strengthen pricing power? Framing your marketing plan in terms of return on capital shifts the conversation from cost to investment.

### Map the chain of value creation

Follow your spend from first impression to revenue impact. Understand how awareness feeds demand, how demand drives conversion and how conversion contributes to profit. This mapping builds a financial narrative around your work that finance leaders can follow. When you can trace how every marketing input produces measurable output, you move from justification to partnership.

### Translate results into financial terms rather than marketing metrics

Data only becomes powerful when it's understood. Learn to express marketing outcomes using the metrics the board already trusts. Turn ROI into payback periods, contribution margins or revenue efficiency ratios. A marketing intelligence platform like Funnel helps automate this translation by turning raw performance data into finance-ready metrics. It means you can focus on insight, not reconciliation.

### Co-create forecasts with scenario planning and finance

Invite finance into your planning early. Build shared models that test different spend scenarios and show how they affect growth, margin and risk. This collaboration removes the traditional tension between marketing optimism and financial conservatism. When the forecast is co-authored, the board sees unity, not negotiation.

### Build predictive vision

Use forecasting tools to plan forward, not backward. With a strong data foundation, AI can simulate how changes in budget allocation or media mix will influence future revenue. That kind of predictive vision earns respect fast. It positions marketing as the function that anticipates opportunity instead of reacting to performance.

Thinking like an investor also means staying steady in downturns. Many marketing leaders are proactively adjusting budgets and strategies to make themselves recession-proof. They're shifting spend toward channels tied directly to revenue, building a stronger efficiency narrative and showing CEOs they can protect growth even in a slowdown. The ability to defend spend in a crisis can make or break a CMO's tenure, particularly because marketing spend is usually the first cut made in a recession.

## 3. Master measurement

At Cannes Lions 2025, senior marketers agreed that AI will reshape how decisions are made, but only leaders who connect technology to strategy and data will capture its value.<sup>12</sup> Boards don't want CMOs who chase shiny tools. They want leaders who can separate hype from value, invest in systems that scale and use technology to show how marketing drives growth.

This skill breaks into three areas: measurement, integration and adoption.

### Master advance measurement

To prove marketing drives growth, you need more than campaign metrics. You need to show causal impact and make investment decisions with confidence. That requires fluency in the three dominant approaches and the ability to triangulate between them.

### Marketing mix modeling (MMM):

MMM gives you a big-picture view of how marketing and external factors drive results. It measures the combined impact of every channel along with variables like seasonality, pricing and economic shifts, making it invaluable for teams that use dozens of channels. It doesn't require huge datasets, just structured ones, usually a row per day or week for about 365 data points a year. Add too many variables and accuracy drops, so it's all about balance.

Use MMM as your boardroom tool. It answers the question every CMO asks: where should the next dollar go for long-term growth? It's built for strategic allocation, not daily optimization.

MMM runs on multiple regression, which isolates the effect of each factor, like TV spend, paid search or seasonality, while holding others constant. You don't need to build the model yourself, but you should understand the logic. It separates signal from noise and shows what truly drives performance.

### Multi-touch attribution (MTA):

MTA helps you see how each digital interaction contributes to a conversion. It connects the dots across channels so you understand how search, social and display work together to move customers through the journey. That makes it especially useful for performance marketers who need to optimize spend in near real time.

While privacy updates have altered how data is captured, MTA still plays an important role in giving context to digital performance. It's most powerful when paired with broader measurement approaches, such as MMM or incrementality testing for larger teams. Teams measuring on only a handful of channels might use data-driven MTA on its own, and then bring in MMM as channel complexity increases.

Use MTA as a diagnostic tool to uncover patterns, test assumptions and refine in-flight campaigns. It won't tell the whole story on its own, but it's an essential part of a measurement system that gives you a clear picture of what's working and where to invest next.

### Incrementality testing:

Incrementality testing assesses cause and effect. It answers the question every CMO asks: what would have happened without this investment?

It requires solid design and clear control groups, but when done correctly, it gives unmatched clarity.

Use it to validate assumptions, test MMM or MTA results and show where marketing truly drives growth. Even a few strong tests a year can turn data into proof the board can trust.

### Triangulation:

No single method alone is bulletproof. The strongest CMOs show they understand when to lean on each and how to cross-validate the results using different methods (measurement triangulation). For example, use MMM for annual budget setting, MTA for channel-level optimization and incrementality tests to prove causality on high-stakes bets.

Each of these approaches depends on clean, connected data. Marketing intelligence platforms like Funnel consolidate inputs from every channel and structure them so that analysts can run MMM, MTA and incrementality testing off a single source of truth. That means your measurement is not only sophisticated, but your data is also reliable.



## Build an integrated tech stack for better data hygiene

Most senior marketers inherit tech stacks that are bloated and fragmented. Tools get added year after year without a clear strategy. The result is wasted spend and inconsistent reporting.

Poor data quality costs organizations an average of \$12.9 million every year.<sup>13</sup> For CMOs, that cost is more than financial. It erodes trust with the CEO and the board.

Poor data hygiene creates confusion over which numbers to believe and kills momentum when leaders start questioning the basics. An integrated stack prevents that by cleaning inputs, connecting systems and delivering one accurate version of the truth.

Your tech stack is the engine of growth. Build it before you're in the driver's seat. Here's how:

- **Inventory everything and score it:**  
Start by listing every data and reporting tool in your stack. For each one, ask three questions. Does it reduce CAC? Does it speed up pipeline? Does it produce numbers finance can trust? If it does not deliver on at least one of these, challenge its value.
- **Clean up dirty data:**  
Even the best tools fail if the inputs are wrong. Standardize campaign names and UTMs, automate deduplication and add validation rules to catch errors. Run regular audits so bad data does not pile up. Each step improves the reliability of your reporting and signals to finance that you take accuracy seriously.





- **Eliminate fragmentation with a marketing intelligence platform:**  
Once the data is clean, make it accessible. A marketing intelligence platform ensures every system feeds into one source of truth instead of competing dashboards. Funnel consolidates data from every channel, cleans it and outputs analysis-ready numbers. That means less time arguing over reports and more time making decisions.
- **Push for interoperability:**  
A marketing intelligence only works if the rest of your stack connects to it. Prioritize tools with strong integrations so data flows smoothly. This prevents manual exports and ensures that everyone, from marketing to finance, is working off the same facts.
- **Tie technology to outcomes:**  
Integration is not about stack size. It is about impact. When evaluating tools, ask if they make measurement faster, more accurate or more scalable. If the answer is no, it does not belong on your roadmap.

When your systems speak the same language, your decisions do too.

#### The takeaway:

An integrated stack is not a technical luxury. It is the foundation of credibility. By cleaning up dirty data, eliminating silos and connecting tools into a central marketing intelligence platform, you build trust that every number is accurate and every decision is grounded in reality. That is the kind of discipline boards expect from a CMO.

#### Lead adoption with confidence

Choosing the right tools and cleaning your data only matters if your team uses them. Many stacks fail not because of technology but because adoption is shallow. Teams keep running manual reports, finance builds shadow models and the board gets conflicting numbers. As a future CMO, your role is to set the tone that data and technology are not optional add-ons but core to how marketing operates.

Here's how to lead adoption even before you're leading the department:

- **Translate tools into outcomes:**  
Never present a tool in terms of features. Frame it in terms of what it enables. For example: "This system cut reporting time by 40%." or "This platform reduced CAC by 12%." Outcomes build credibility, features do not.

- **Upskill your team:**  
Data and technology only deliver value if your team knows how to use them. Train managers in data literacy, experiment design and AI evaluation. A leader who can explain why a test is valid will always earn more trust than one who just reports results.
- **Model the behavior:**  
Adoption starts at the top. Use the same dashboards and reports you expect your team to use. If you revert to siloed reports or manual decks, the rest of the organization will likely follow suit.
- **Introduce AI with purpose:**  
AI is on every agenda, but hype alone does not persuade the board. Pilot one initiative — predictive analytics, media optimization or creative testing — and measure results in business terms. Document what worked and what did not, then share the lessons.
- **Embed cross-functional trust:**  
Adoption is strongest when other departments see value. Bring finance or product leaders into your reporting sessions. Show them how integrated data creates shared answers, not marketing's version of the truth.

#### The takeaway:

Technology doesn't build credibility by itself. Adoption does. The CMOs who succeed are those who create a culture where data and tools are trusted, used daily and tied directly to outcomes the business cares about.

## 4. Tie data into influence

Boards and CEOs don't make decisions on dashboards. They act when leaders frame insights in the language of risk, growth and strategy. High-performing CMOs expand their remit into company culture, digital transformation and long-term strategy, which makes them indispensable leaders rather than replaceable marketing heads. To get there, you need to translate data into stories that influence at the highest level.

#### Building influence with insights:

- **Start with the business question:**  
Lead with the decision at hand, not the metric. For example, frame the discussion as "Should we increase paid media in Q4 or will we get better ROI by investing in brand?"
- **Craft a narrative, not a report:**  
Marketing leaders earn influence when they connect with CFOs in a shared language of growth.
- **Build updates around three beats:**  
what happened, why it matters and what you recommend next.
- **Simplify without dumbing down:**  
Focus on a small set of metrics tied directly to company performance, such as CAC, LTV, margin impact and contribution to pipeline.
- **Visualize for clarity:**  
Boards respond to patterns, not tables. Use trend lines, benchmarks and scenario models. Highlight only what supports your story.
- **Connect to financial impact:**  
Recast findings in terms that finance uses. Instead of saying "this campaign generated 10,000 leads," say "this initiative delivered pipeline value of \$6M at an average CAC 15% below target."
- **Build allies across functions:**  
Influence grows when other leaders validate your story. Share your data early with finance, product and sales so their input strengthens your case before you step into the boardroom.

#### The takeaway:

Data by itself doesn't persuade. Influence comes from the story you tell and the decisions you shape. The CMOs who last are the ones who can step into a boardroom with clean data, translate it into the language of growth and risk and walk out having moved the business forward.

## 5. Build and scale high-performing teams

High-performing teams are a force multiplier. High-performing marketing teams deliver 20 to 30% more than average teams, and in more than 50% of leader firings, the cause is not the individual's performance but the team failing to meet delivery expectations.<sup>14</sup> A leader's success is directly tied to their team's success.

How to go from manager to multiplier:

- **Hire for adaptability and curiosity:**  
Prioritize people who learn fast, handle ambiguity and lean into change. Potential compounds faster than pedigree.
- **Create a culture of experimentation:**  
Reward tight test loops and shared learning. Teams that treat work as experiments innovate faster and recover quicker.
- **Invest in skills that compound:**  
Build data literacy, AI fluency and analytical thinking across the organization. Teams that can read the numbers and run sound tests move faster and rely less on BI bottlenecks.

- **Delegate with outcomes in mind:**  
Assign goals, not tasks. Define what success looks like, then give people the space to figure out the path.
- **Set delivery standards together:**  
Make delivery expectations explicit, visible and owned by the team. Review them regularly so you spot risks early and protect leadership credibility.
- **Spot and stretch future leaders:**  
Give rising talent cross-functional projects that test judgment and collaboration. You are building your bench, not just filling roles.
- **Cross-pollinate experience:**  
Rotate talent across brand, product, analytics and performance so more people understand how the system fits together. That breadth pays off in tighter execution.

### The takeaway:

Your success will mirror your team's delivery. Build a team that learns fast and understands the numbers, and you multiply your impact long before you get the title.

## 6. Shape company strategy, not just marketing strategy

Companies where marketing leaders are embedded early in strategic planning and serve as the integrator of customer-centric strategies grow faster and more sustainably.

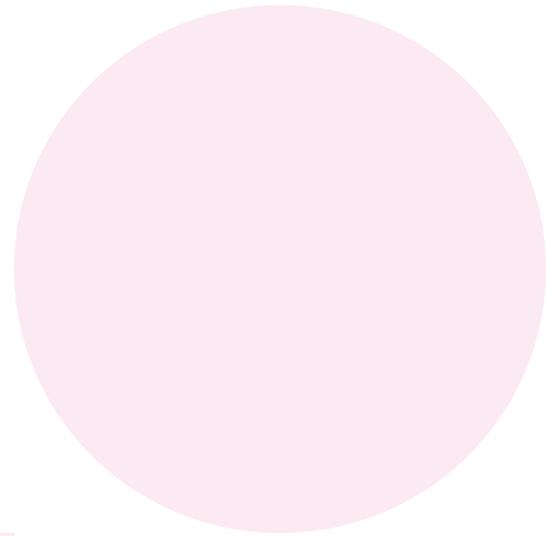
Shift from storyteller to strategist:

- **Sit at the strategy table early:**  
Volunteer for cross-functional leadership on customer journey, pricing or product strategy so marketing influences the choices that define the business.
- **Speak the language of growth levers:**  
Frame marketing moves in terms of revenue expansion, margin protection or customer lifetime value, not just campaign reach or velocity.
- **Bring customer intelligence into big bets:**  
Translate your hard-won insights about behavior, feedback or acquisition cost into implications for product, market entry and investor narratives.
- **Align with finance and operations:**  
Strategy is resource allocation. Work closely with the CFO and COO to show how marketing outcomes support scale, efficiency and profitability.
- **Think long game, not just next quarter:**  
Help steer conversations about the company's two- to three-year horizon and describe how marketing can accelerate that path.
- **Lead digital transformation from the front:**  
Champion customer-centric innovation, AI adoption and tech-driven agility across the business (not just in the marketing department) so marketing isn't a parallel track but a core driver of enterprise change.

The takeaway:

Marketing that operates in a silo is replaceable. Marketing that helps chart the company's course becomes indispensable.

Skills are what earn you the CMO role, but they don't operate in a vacuum. Even the best instincts and leadership approaches can fall flat without the right systems in place behind them. Data needs to be structured, insights need to be shared and decisions need to be backed with confidence. That's where your toolkit comes in.



# 6. The CMO toolkit: Platforms that power modern leadership

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No CMO can lead effectively without a data foundation that makes information usable, decisions faster and insights credible across the company. The goal is to build an intentional system where every layer supports growth and every tool serves a purpose.

## 1. The foundation: A marketing intelligence platform

Every strong CMO toolkit starts with a reliable foundation. Without it, everything else is just a collection of disconnected apps and spreadsheets. Marketing data is famously messy: different formats, duplicate values, missing fields, changing taxonomies.

A marketing intelligence platform provides structure by:

- Integrating every channel automatically.
- Cleaning and mapping data into consistent formats.
- Transforming it into finance-ready metrics that match how the CFO sees the business.

This foundation matters because it:

- Closes credibility gaps by aligning marketing and finance.
- Speeds up decisions by cutting manual reporting cycles.
- Supports advanced measurement, because MMM and incrementality only work when data is reliable.

Think of it as the plumbing of the CMO role: if the pipes leak, nothing else works.

## 2. The measurement and experimentation layer

Once your data foundation is solid, the next step is proving cause and effect. Boards don't just want reports. They want to know what's driving growth.

A modern measurement stack does this through three key tools:

- **Marketing mix modeling (MMM):** quantifies long-term impact across channels and external factors.
- **Multi-touch attribution (MTA):** maps individual digital journeys to show how touchpoints interact.
- **Incrementality testing:** isolates the true lift from campaigns through control-based experiments.

The most effective CMOs know when to use all three together. MMM for allocation, MTA for tactical optimization and incrementality tests for proof. The power isn't in the model but in the triangulation.

A marketing intelligence platform like Funnel brings all performance data into one structured view. Analysts can model faster, compare outputs and build more defensible measurement frameworks without starting from scratch.



### 3. Data governance and maturity

Measurement is only as strong as the data it relies on. Poor governance leads to duplicate metrics, mistrust and wasted budget. CMOs who want credibility need to treat data governance as a priority.

Strong data governance means:

- Defining one version of the truth across marketing, finance and product
- Setting rules for how campaigns, channels and KPIs are named and tracked
- Automating validation checks to catch anomalies before reports go live
- Assigning ownership for maintaining data quality

This structure builds maturity, moving teams from reactive reporting to proactive insight. It's also where platforms like Funnel quietly shine, standardizing and validating marketing data so teams can focus on strategy, not spreadsheets.

### 4. The analytics and visualization layer

Data only earns influence when it tells a story. Analytics tools like Tableau, Power BI and Looker turn clean data into decisions by:

- Turning numbers into narrative context
- Modeling what-if scenarios that anticipate board questions
- Highlighting only the metrics that drive outcomes

A marketing intelligence platform strengthens this layer by feeding BI tools with standardized inputs, ensuring dashboards remain consistent and credible. One set of numbers. One version of the truth.

## 5. The AI and automation layer

AI has moved from novelty to necessity. The challenge isn't whether to use it but how to use it responsibly.

Where it adds value today:

- Predictive analytics that spot churn or lifetime value changes early
- Creative optimization that scales testing cycles
- Media automation that protects margins across paid platforms
- Intelligent copilots that surface anomalies before they become problems

AI is only as good as the data it touches. Clean inputs create credible outputs. Funnel's structure ensures the foundation is trustworthy so AI can accelerate insight, not amplify error.

### The takeaway:

CMOs who overlook AI's value will get replaced by those who know how to use it. The leaders who win will be the ones who treat AI as infrastructure and who ground it in a data foundation the board can believe in.

## The system architecture mindset

Most senior marketers make the same mistake on their way to CMO: they collect tools instead of building systems. A bloated stack doesn't impress a board. It signals complexity without control.

The CMOs who last think like architects:

- Depth over breadth: A few integrated systems will beat dozens of disconnected apps every time.
- Interoperability first: Every platform must connect to the foundation so the numbers are consistent across marketing, finance and operations.

- ROI filter: If a tool doesn't cut acquisition cost, protect margin or deliver insights leaders act on, it doesn't belong.
- Adoption matters: The strongest platforms fail if teams don't use them. CMOs need to enforce adoption as much as they select features.

A marketing intelligence platform like Funnel anchors this architectural mindset by providing a single layer of clean, connected and finance-ready data. With that in place, every other system, like measurement, BI, AI and customer intelligence, works off the same truth. Instead of reconciling numbers across teams, CMOs can focus on designing a stack that scales with the business.

### The takeaway:

The role of the modern CMO isn't to buy more software. It's to design a system where every tool adds up to credibility in the boardroom. Funnel makes that possible by turning fragmented data into a foundation that everything else can stand on.

A well-designed system gives CMOs the credibility to lead today. But expectations keep rising. Boards want marketing leaders who can do more than run efficient teams; they want executives who can guide the company through disruption and growth.

# 7. The future of the CMO role

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The next challenge is not about stacking more tools; it is about proving you are ready for a role that looks very different from what the CMO once was.

## AI as infrastructure

Seventy-eight percent of companies use AI in at least one business area, yet fewer than 20% see real revenue impact. That's the new test for CMOs. The winners will scale what works, shut down what doesn't and turn AI from hype into growth.

AI is the bridge between marketing intuition and measurable impact. With clean, connected data, it transforms planning, optimization and forecasting into a continuous feedback loop. A marketing intelligence platform like Funnel provides the foundation, giving AI the clarity it needs to act with precision.

Here's the opportunity: to build an organization that learns faster than it spends. Future CMOs will shape how intelligence flows through the business, combining automation with judgment to move from reactive decisions to predictive growth.

## A broader scope, not just a louder voice

The next generation of CMOs won't just run marketing. They'll shape product decisions, customer experiences and company strategy. The title might stay the same, but the job's looking a lot more like Chief Growth Officer. Smart marketers will stop defending their silo and start proving they can help the business grow.

## Redefining credibility

Tomorrow's credibility won't come from more reports. It will come from showing how marketing drives efficiency, profit and resilience. Boards will judge CMOs by how clearly they connect marketing

to shareholder value. The ones who last will speak in the language of growth and margin, not clicks and impressions.

## The talent challenge

The future CMO will be a talent architect, building teams that are adaptable, data-literate and creative under pressure. That means developing analysts who can interpret models, creatives who can work with machine output and strategists who can connect insight to action.

## The personal career arc

For ambitious marketers, the message is clear. The CMO role will remain volatile, but it's also becoming a launchpad for bigger jobs. Boards already view it as a test for leaders who can combine customer insight, data fluency and financial discipline. Get that mix right and you're not just running marketing, you're proving you can run the business.

### The takeaway:

The CMOs who will thrive in the future know how to connect data, tech and strategy, prove financial impact and build teams that can scale with change. The job won't get easier, but it'll carry more weight than ever.

## 8. The future belongs to data-driven leaders

The CMO role is evolving into one of the most influential seats in business. Expectations are higher than ever, but so is the opportunity for leaders who can connect marketing to measurable growth. Success will belong to those who arrive with data trusted across the company and insights that shape strategy.

Funnel's Marketing Intelligence Platform gives you that edge. By turning fragmented marketing data into answers, it equips you to walk into the CMO role with confidence. The CMO of the future won't ask for a seat at the table; they'll set the agenda. What will yours be?



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