

The AI Reality Check



5 Questions Marketing Leaders Should Be Asking Now

AI is rapidly becoming embedded in marketing workflows, yet clear visibility into what's actually driving results remains limited. While adoption and investment continue to rise, many organizations are still working to translate early momentum into sustained impact.

Together with MediaLink, TransUnion® surveyed 100 senior marketing leaders at leading US brands* to understand what separates AI experimentation from enterprise-scale AI. The findings led to five questions every marketing leader should be asking now. **And the answer to every one of them is bigger than AI.**



Are my AI investments outpacing my organization's readiness?

Surveyed executives reported a nearly 90% increase in AI investment year over year, yet only 13% have scaled it across their organizations – highlighting a clear gap between investment and execution. Closing that gap will require coordinated investment across talent, data and workflows, not just increased spend.

Can I trust AI's decisions if I can't see the data behind them?

AI is taking on a larger role in decisioning, but many marketers still can't see the data feeding those decisions: 69% cited walled-garden gaps, and only 48% were confident in platform transparency. The risk isn't that AI is making the calls – it's that it delivers answers without showing its work, turning speed into uncertainty.

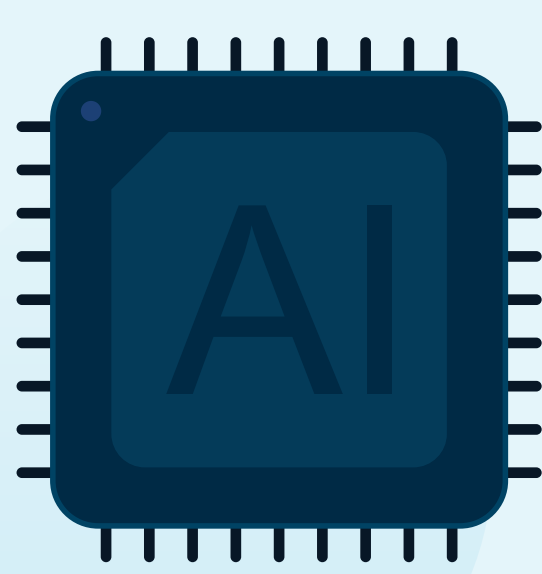


Am I measuring AI by what's easy or what actually matters?

More than half of marketers reported positive AI ROI, but 65% measured that return on the easiest thing to count: time and cost savings. Efficiency is a fair place to start, but as investment grows, leadership will expect proof of real bottom-line growth.

Am I treating AI like a new tool or a new way of working?

Nearly 70% of respondents named limited AI knowledge on their teams as a barrier to scaling, and 59% said practical training and upskilling would lift confidence more than any other investment. But AI isn't just a tool – it's a new way of working. When it's treated like software, its impact stays superficial.



Is my data infrastructure built to scale AI or just to pilot it?

The majority of marketers still lack a connected cross-channel view, weakening the data foundation AI depends on. That fragmentation makes it harder to translate data into clear insight. But when it disappears, AI finally has something to solid to stand on – transforming simple outputs into real outcomes.

The truth is none of these questions are really about AI. Instead, they're about the foundational marketing work that has always mattered. The difference now – in the AI era – is this work just can't wait anymore.



Ready to turn AI adoption into measurable marketing performance? Explore [TransUnion's identity-driven marketing and measurement solutions](#).

*TransUnion, in collaboration with MediaLink, surveyed 100 director-level and above marketing and technology leaders at large US brands. All respondents are directly involved in AI decision-making and actively using, or planning to use, AI in core marketing workflows. Findings are directional. A full report with deeper insights and expanded analysis will be released soon.