2026 MarTech Outlook

AI investment, budget growth, and the shift to in-house enablement

Stensul

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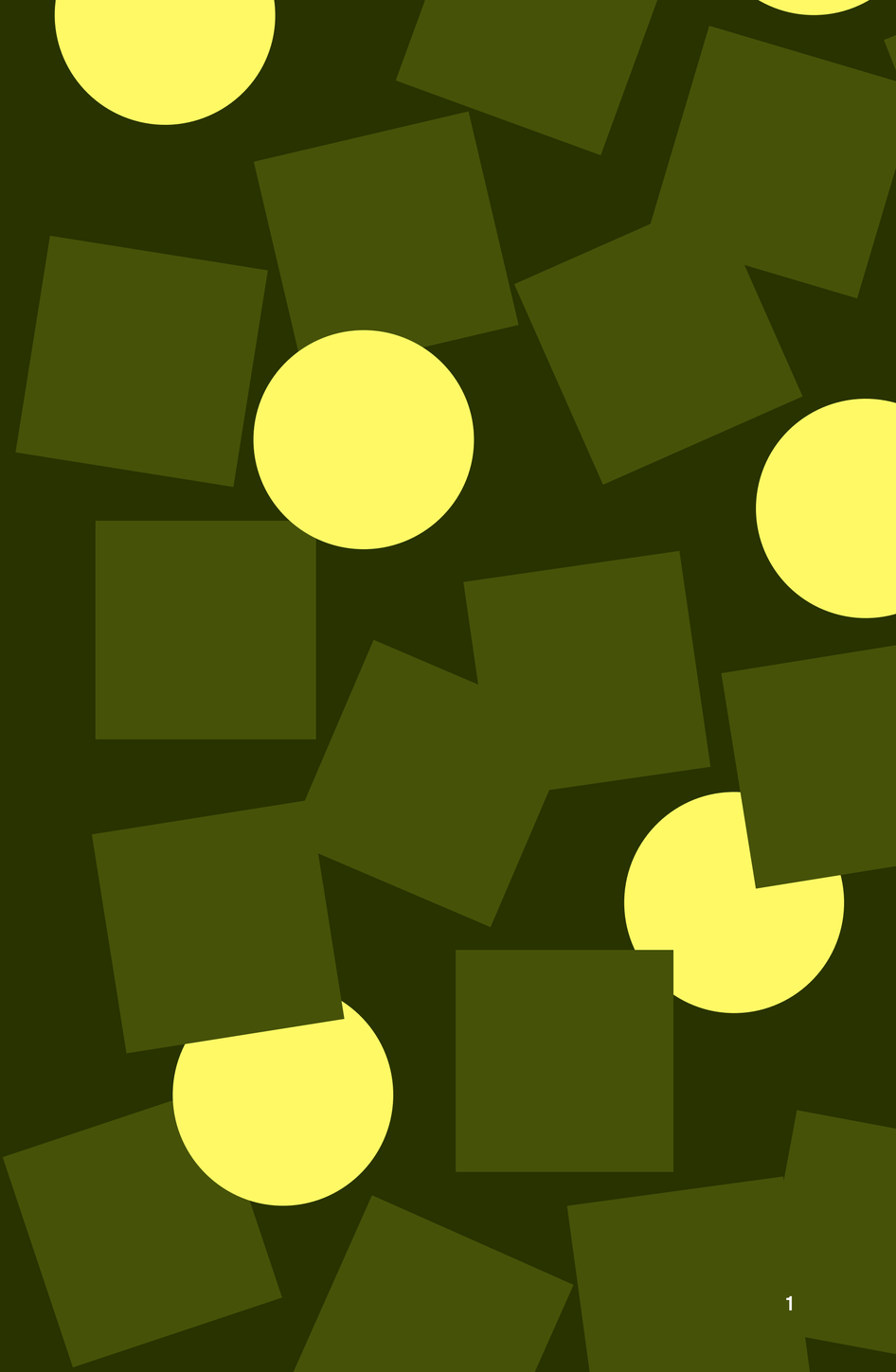
Introduction

With MarTech budgets increasing in 2026, organizations are treating AI as a core investment—not a pilot. Across priorities and planned investments, AI is becoming a central focus of marketing technology roadmaps, with teams putting emphasis on AI-powered tools and the capabilities needed to deploy them effectively.

At the same time, how marketing work gets done is shifting. Companies are placing more emphasis on internal enablement—reskilling teams and improving the workflows that support faster execution—while agency services sit at the bottom of the priority list, indicating a tilt away from outsourced campaign support and toward building in-house capacity.



MarTech Priorities in 2026

AI is the most common “north star” priority, but what teams optimize for depends on their operating reality—large enterprises prioritize collaboration workflows, mid-sized firms emphasize cost control, and smaller enterprises prioritize measurement. Business model also shapes priorities: B2B leans toward attribution and workflows, while B2C prioritizes campaign production speed.

1

Nearly half of large enterprises' top MarTech priority for 2026: improving collaboration workflows

MarTech priorities for 2026 vary by company size.

Among the largest organizations, improving collaboration workflows sits at the top of the list, underscoring how cross-team complexity, approvals, and handoffs become the biggest bottlenecks at scale.

That focus shifts as organizations get smaller. Mid-sized companies emphasize reducing costs and optimizing spend, while smaller enterprises prioritize attribution and analytics to better understand performance.

10,000+ EMPLOYEES

#1 PRIORITY

Improving collaboration workflows

5,000-9,999 EMPLOYEES

#1 PRIORITY

Improving collaboration workflows

2,500-4,999 EMPLOYEES

#1 PRIORITY

Reducing costs and optimizing spending

1,000-2,499 EMPLOYEES

#1 PRIORITY

Improving marketing attribution and analytics

2

MarTech priorities for 2026 take different shapes across B2B, B2C, and hybrid organizations

AI is the common thread, but the “why” differs—B2B prioritizes measurability and cross-team alignment (attribution + workflows), B2C prioritizes speed and efficiency in campaign creation, and hybrid B2B/B2C organizations most often anchor on implementing AI to manage multi-motion complexity.

B2B & B2C

#1 PRIORITY

Implementing AI capabilities

B2B

#1 PRIORITY

Improving marketing attribution and analytics, and improving collaboration workflows

B2C

#1 PRIORITY

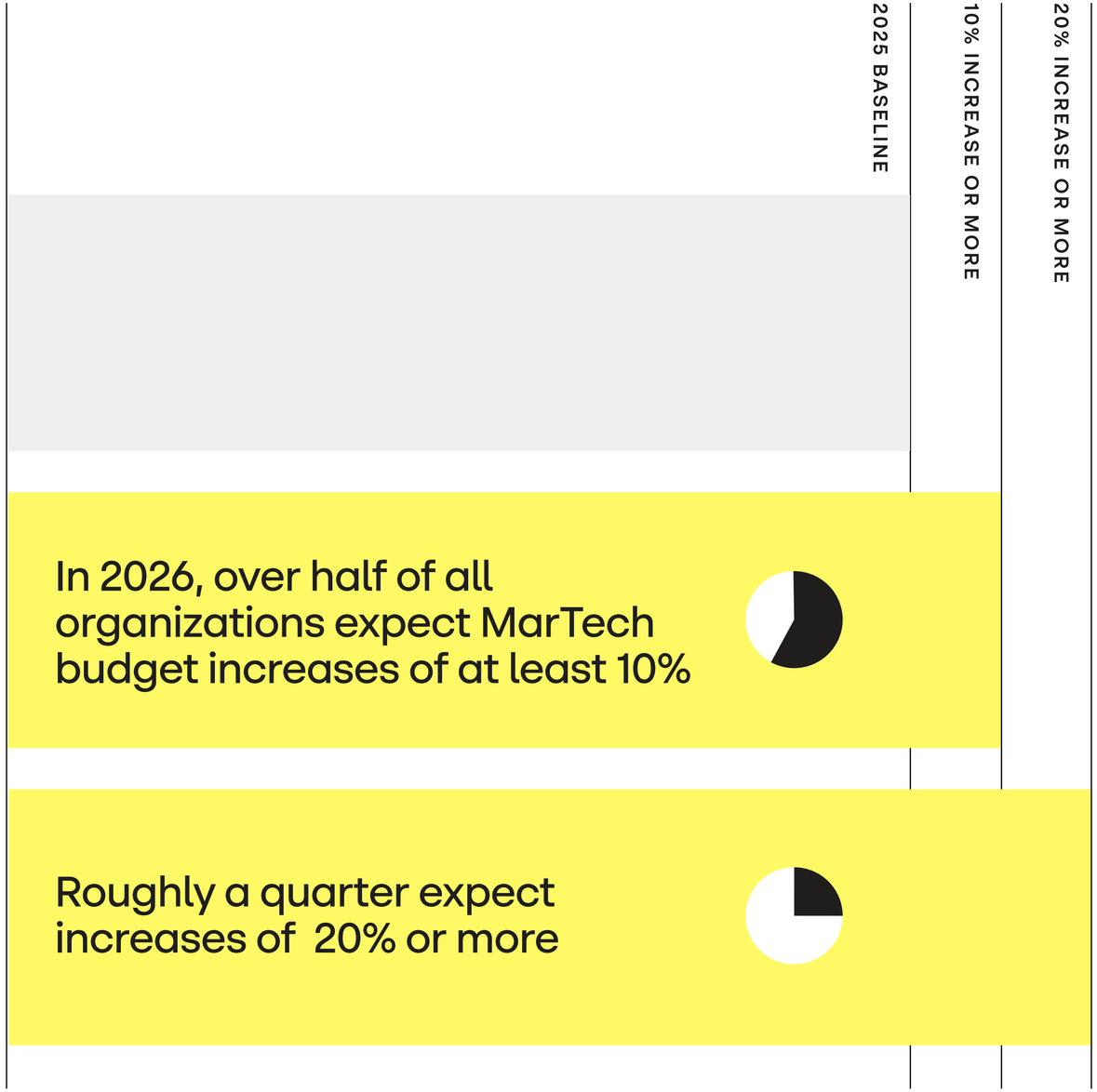
Improving campaign creation efficiency

Marketing Budgets are Rising in 2026

2026 is a growth year for MarTech budgets. The strongest expectations for major MarTech budget expansion come from the most complex environments: tech/software companies (29%) and especially heavily regulated organizations with very stringent compliance needs (35%) are most likely to anticipate 20%+ increases.

3

79% of organizations expect an increase in marketing technology budgets



MarTech Investments in 2026

The “what we’ll buy” story is clear: AI-powered tools lead the investment list, but the second-order priorities diverge. B2B invests to automate and standardize operations, while B2C invests to scale experience, content, and personalization.

4

AI-powered tools are the top priority for MarTech investments in 2026, cited by more than half of all companies.

AI is not just a capability goal—it's where budget is going. Organizations are prioritizing tools that embed AI directly into execution, optimization, and production.

42%
Marketing automation

54%
AI-powered tools

44%
Training & upskilling team

34%
Analytics & reporting tools

5

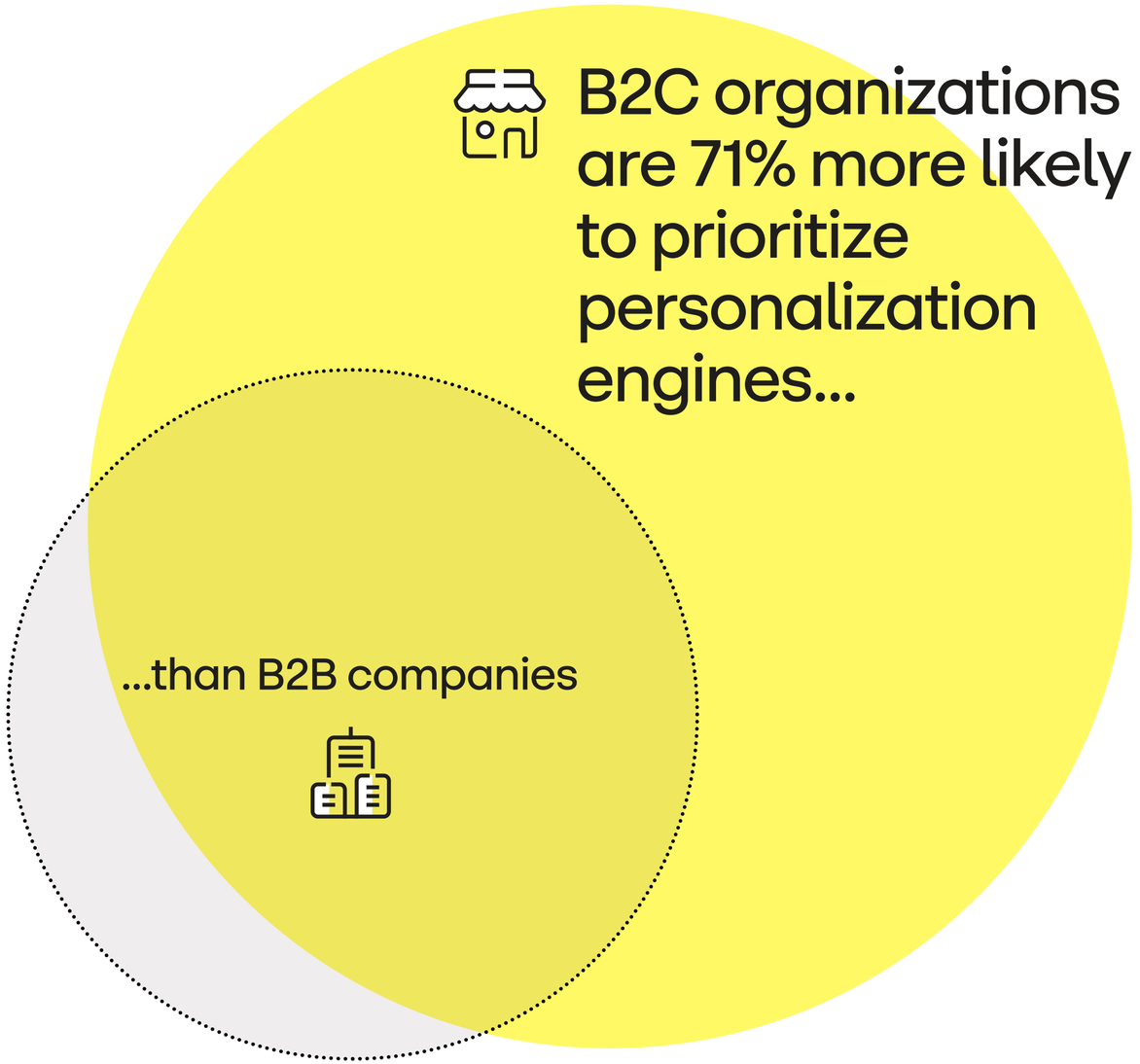
B2B is doubling down on operational leverage—automation to drive efficiency, consistency, and pipeline impact across complex buyer journeys.

B2B companies are 64% more likely to invest in marketing automation...

...than B2C companies

6

B2C is leaning into customer experience differentiation, using personalization to improve relevance, conversion, and lifetime value at scale.



Organizational Shifts in 2026

Teams are rebalancing how work gets done: reducing reliance on agencies for routine execution while investing in internal capability via AI training. This points to an operating-model change—AI-enabled in-house teams handling more day-to-day work, with agencies increasingly concentrated in specialized or high-impact needs.

7

AI investment supports workforce enablement, as outsourcing budget shrinks

Organizations are rethinking how campaign work gets done. Rather than increasing reliance on external agencies, many plan to invest in reskilling teams on AI, indicating a strong focus on workplace adaptation over reductions in staff or agency spend.

Most organizations are investing in people, not just tools—suggesting long-term adoption plans and a push to embed AI into everyday workflows.

31%

Plan to invest less on external agencies to work on campaigns

57%

Plan to invest in reskilling in-house team to support AI

37%

Plan to invest in buying new AI tools

About the research

Stensul 2026 MarTech Outlook is based on a quantitative survey of 321 economic buyers of marketing technology solutions (U.S. n=269; U.K. n=52). The research examines marketing technology priorities, budget expectations, planned investment areas, and execution-model shifts for 2026.

Stensul

About Stensul

Stensul is the Governed Creation™ Platform for enterprise marketing teams creating campaigns at scale. Built for complex, regulated, and multi-brand organizations, Stensul embeds governance directly into the creation process so teams can work faster without compromising brand or compliance. With AI-assisted creation, real-time collaboration, built-in guardrails, and seamless integrations in one, connected platform, marketers reduce campaign creation time by up to 90% and eliminate manual rework and review bottlenecks. Stensul integrates with leading ESPs, MAPs, DAMs, workflow tools, live content, link tracking, and messaging platforms. Top brands that trust Stensul include BlackRock, Cisco, Demandbase, Equifax, Greenhouse, Siemens, and Thomson Reuters.

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