AI

From experiment to efficiency:
Making the ==switch in marketing== work

AI is just a tool.
The difference is what you do with it

Every day, around 34 million AI-generated images are created, along with countless texts and videos. Content creation has never been easier. AI is becoming the standard tool behind it. ==But success depends on how you use it.== Without a clear strategy, potential turns into cost. Quality slips. Efficiency becomes effort. Budgets disappear.

What companies need is better content. Content that's built to deliver stronger results, offer more flexibility, and reduce costs. When used effectively, AI becomes a key driver of marketing efficiency. ==Costs go down. Quality goes up. Output increases. And teams gain time for creativity and strategy.== We show you which mistakes to avoid when implementing AI and how to make it work – with a pragmatic mindset and a focus on real value.

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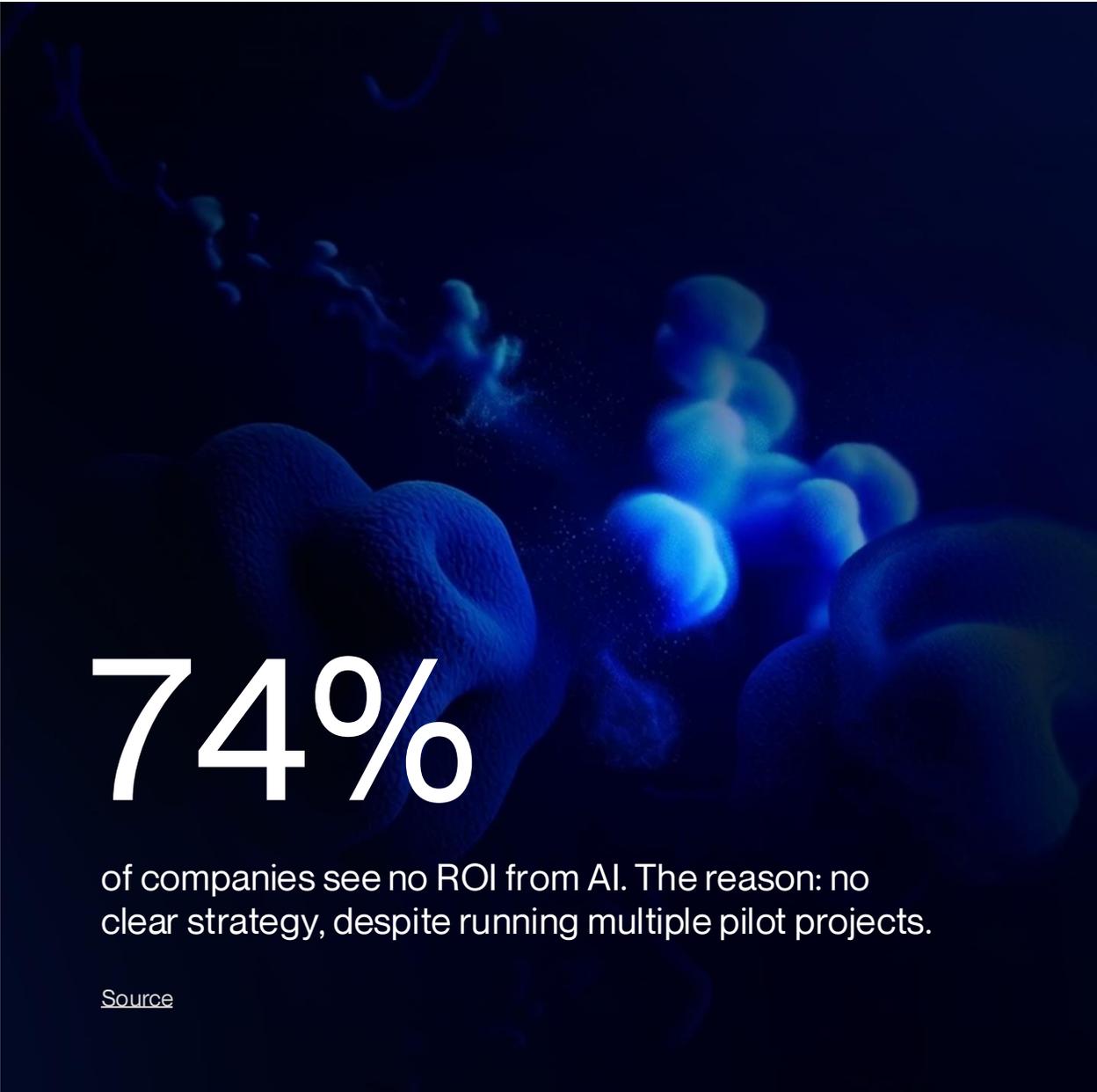ray sono

Detours that drain the budget

STRATEGY

Artificial intelligence can make communication faster, more cost-effective, and more impactful. Experimentation drives progress. But only those who stay focused turn potential into real advantage – not just expensive gimmicks.

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Flying blind with AI

Those who experiment without a clear framework risk scattered efforts and waste valuable resources. <mark>What matters is setting priorities and developing focus areas with intent instead of trying everything at once.</mark> Which areas should truly benefit from AI? Once that clarity is in place, experiments can deliver meaningful results instead of turning into aimless trial and error.

74%

of companies see no ROI from AI. The reason: no clear strategy, despite running multiple pilot projects.

Source

AI without purpose is just expensive noise. It only drives efficiency when there's clear direction and focused execution.

Strategic use of AI in marketing starts with one decision: where to begin. Not by tackling everything at once, but by focusing on the areas with the greatest potential for impact – whether that's content creation, personalized campaigns, or data analysis.

What matters most is not how broadly AI is applied, but how purposefully. Success depends on clear intent, measurable value, and concrete use cases. What tasks can AI take over? What data does it need? And how will success be measured? Once those questions are answered, experimentation and testing become meaningful – and worth the effort.

60% higher revenue for companies that use AI systematically in marketing.

Source

3× more often, companies exceed their ROI expectations when AI projects are aligned with business strategy.

Source

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Start small, scale big: AI use cases in marketing

While simple use cases like content creation deliver quick efficiency gains, more complex areas such as personalization and data analysis offer the greatest long-term leverage for growth and competitive advantage.

AREA	CAPABILITY	SAVINGS POTENTIAL*	EFFORT
Content ideation & creation	▪ Automated text generation, style and spell check ▪ AI-supported image and video creation ▪ Content ideation and concept development	**30–50%** AI takes over routine tasks, teams focus on creative and strategic work	●●○○○ **LOW – MEDIUM** Fast to implement, many tools available
Optimization & testing	▪ Automated A/B test evaluation ▪ Visual optimization (e.g., AI visuals for ads)	**50–80%** Automated review and analysis of A/B tests reduce analytics effort and accelerate iteration cycles	●●○○○ **LOW – MEDIUM** Easy integration into existing workflows
Personalization & distribution	▪ Segmentation ▪ Personalized newsletter distribution ▪ Omnichannel orchestration of customer journeys	**40–70%** Audience assignment, send time etc. steered by AI; increases reach and engagement (often +20–40%)	●●●●● **HIGH** Requires robust data foundation and integration into CRM/ marketing-automation systems
Data analysis & forecasts	▪ Automated data analysis (reports, dashboards) ▪ Predictive analytics (e.g., churn risk, purchase interest) ▪ Offer optimization	**60–90%** Data analysis, pattern recognition, and AI-generated action recommendations; optimized budget allocation (ROI: often +15–30%)	●●●●○ **MEDIUM – HIGH** Requires clean data infrastructure and analytics know-how

Quick, tangible relief for operations and senior management

Long-term scalability, ROI and strategic advantage
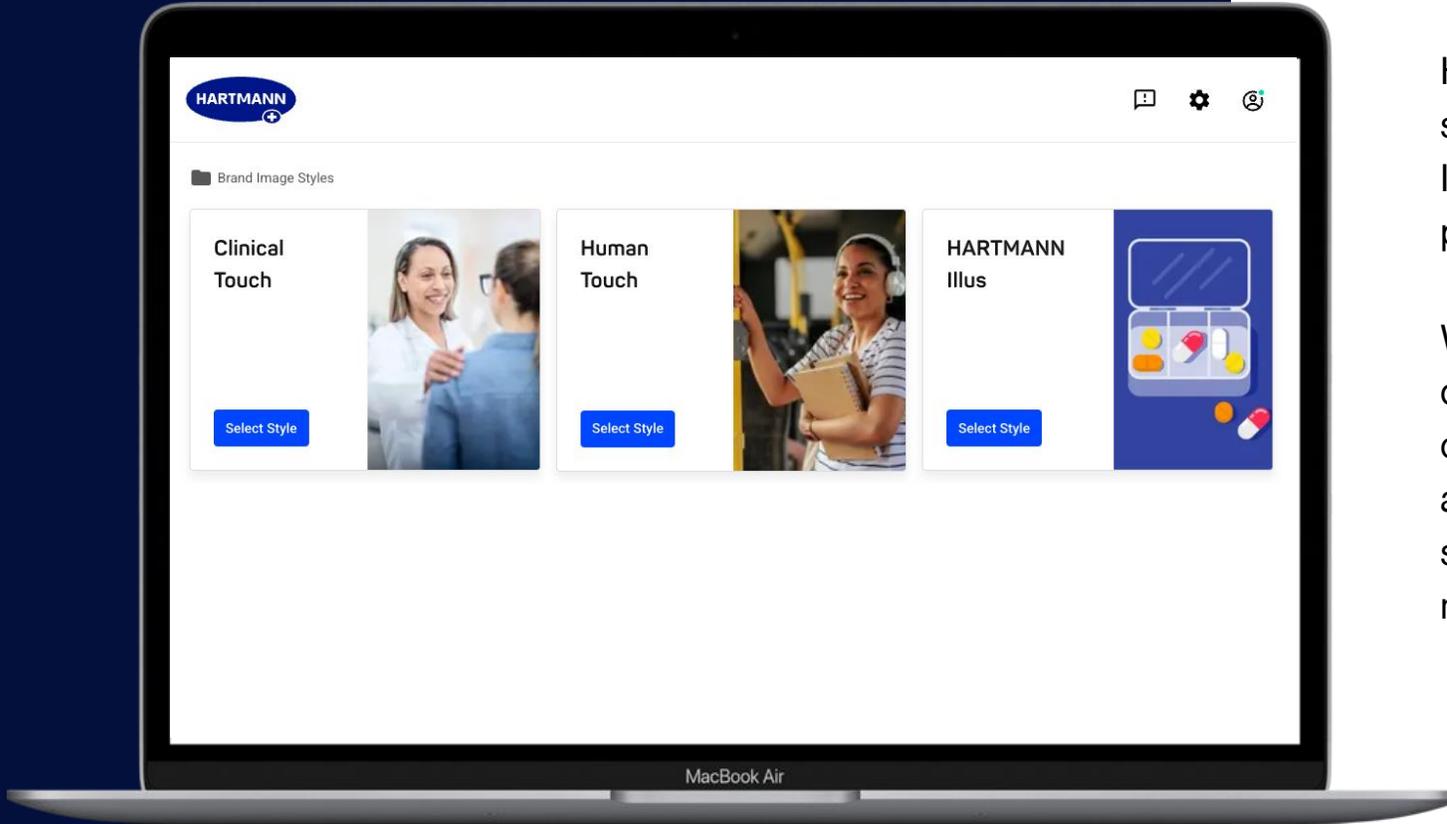
* Expert estimate

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14 ×

lower
cost per image

SUCCESS STORY

Brand-compliant visuals in minutes

HARTMANN requires visual material tailored to specific medical contexts across different countries. Initial AI initiatives for this were decentralized and project-based, without a clear strategy or governance.

With AURA, an image-generation platform was developed that reduces effort across the entire company: trained on HARTMANN´s corporate identity and existing visual assets, it enables the creation of specific, needs-based photos and illustrations in just moments..

02

ROI factor data

DATA

_____

AI needs context – and data provides it. Data creates this context. Whether it's about automatically generating text or creating great brand videos, data illuminates the space where AI can bring real added value. The challenge is to define this space and make it usable – step by step, pragmatically, and sustainably.

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Dirty data:
When poor data slows
down success

==AI is only as good as the data it is built on.== But data – ranging from analytics data to content modules within systems – is inherently not clean: it sits in silos, information is missing, it is duplicated across different channels, and it is not standardized.

Poor data quality can even cause harm – in the form of time-consuming, retrospective problem-solving.

==Targeted data management and maintenance== is therefore an essential prerequisite before any AI-driven content automation.

15–25%
ROI loss

estimated by MIT experts due to poor data quality

Source

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Data housekeeping is an important long-term investment to prevent unnecessary costs and create the foundations for efficiency.

With structured, high-quality data and systematically modularized content, AI projects can be implemented faster, more reliably, and more successfully.

Even small, targeted measures within the scope of prioritized use cases, such as optimizing core data, create immediately noticeable improvements and reduce risks. AI-based automation tools for content creation keep the database clean over the long term.

Built up step by step, companies can then add larger measures such as system integration, monitoring, or governance without having to sacrifice early, rapid results. The key is getting the sequence right.

47% of companies in the DACH region cite poor data quality as the biggest obstacle to their digital transformation for the fourth time in a row, despite high interest in AI.

Source

546 hrs per year are required on average for damage control caused by poor data quality.

Source

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Step by step to clean data

Data-driven strategies and personalization are two of the biggest drivers of marketing efficiency. Well-maintained marketing data makes them possible. For this, we recommend a pragmatic three-phase approach.

1 Clean core data

Cleaning critical digital data fields, removing duplicates, and standardizing basic formats

(+) Immediate data quality improvements for rapid AI use, quick efficiency gains

1–3 MONTHS

2 Establish classifications

Structural improvements, data integration, development of monitoring processes, initial governance rules

(+) Reliable AI deployment across campaigns, reduction of incorrect decisions

4–12 MONTHS

3 Ongoing governance

Complete data harmonization, continuous quality assurance, scalable data platforms, governance is established

(+) Reliable insights, sustainable foundation for AI-supported marketing decisions, maximized ROI

CONTINUOUS

From here on: meaningful implementation of AI
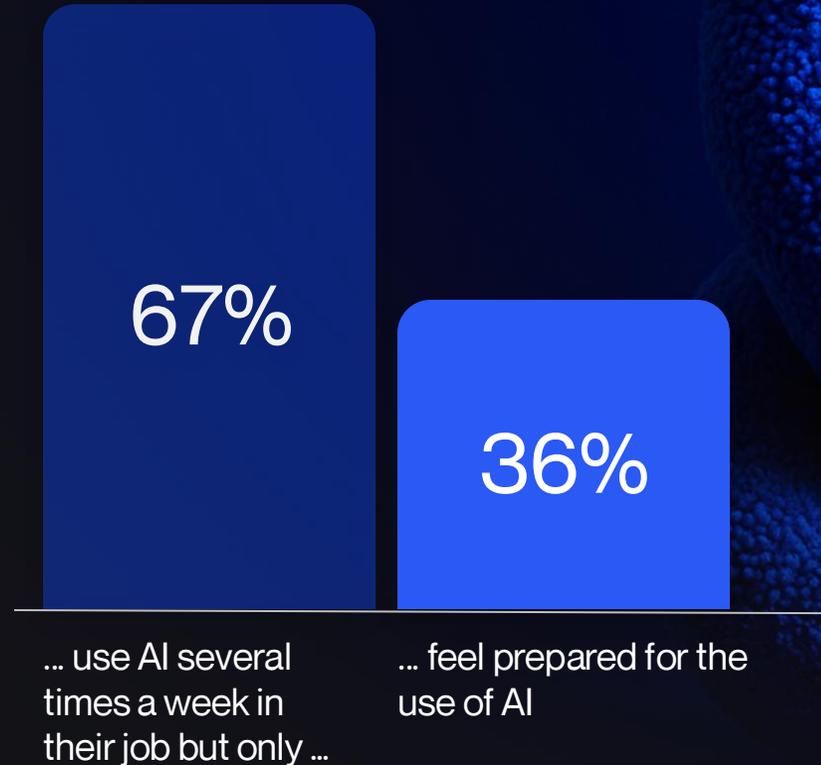
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Trust as capital

PEPLE & CULTURE

AI is the monster under the bed of German marketers. But those who empower their teams, create clear processes, and provide a sense of security will see that the monster turns into an ally. Implementing AI isn't a technical issue – it's a human one.

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The fear of the unknown

For many people, AI is a phantom. It ==triggers fear== that leads to hesitation in the work context – despite widespread private use of ChatGPT and Co.

Companies that shy away from enabling their workforce to use AI end up working against themselves: ==faulty outputs, inconsistencies, and serious compliance violations== are just some of the possible consequences.

Employees who ...

67%

36%

... use AI several times a week in their job but only ...

... feel prepared for the use of AI

Source

The question is not whether companies use AI for marketing content – but how quickly they empower their teams.

Fear of AI is eating away at companies from the inside: avoidance becomes the guiding principle, processes grind to a halt, teams lose their ability to act, and innovation becomes impossible.

To break out of this fight-or-flight mode, employees need a clear framework, guidance, and active support. They must understand what AI means for them, how to use it responsibly, and what specific benefits it brings – as well as what it does not bring.

Leadership here means enabling through transparency, trust, empowerment, and targeted involvement.

55% of employees with management support enjoy working with AI more (compared to 15% without support).

62% of employees with management support view their career prospects positively (compared to 13% without support).
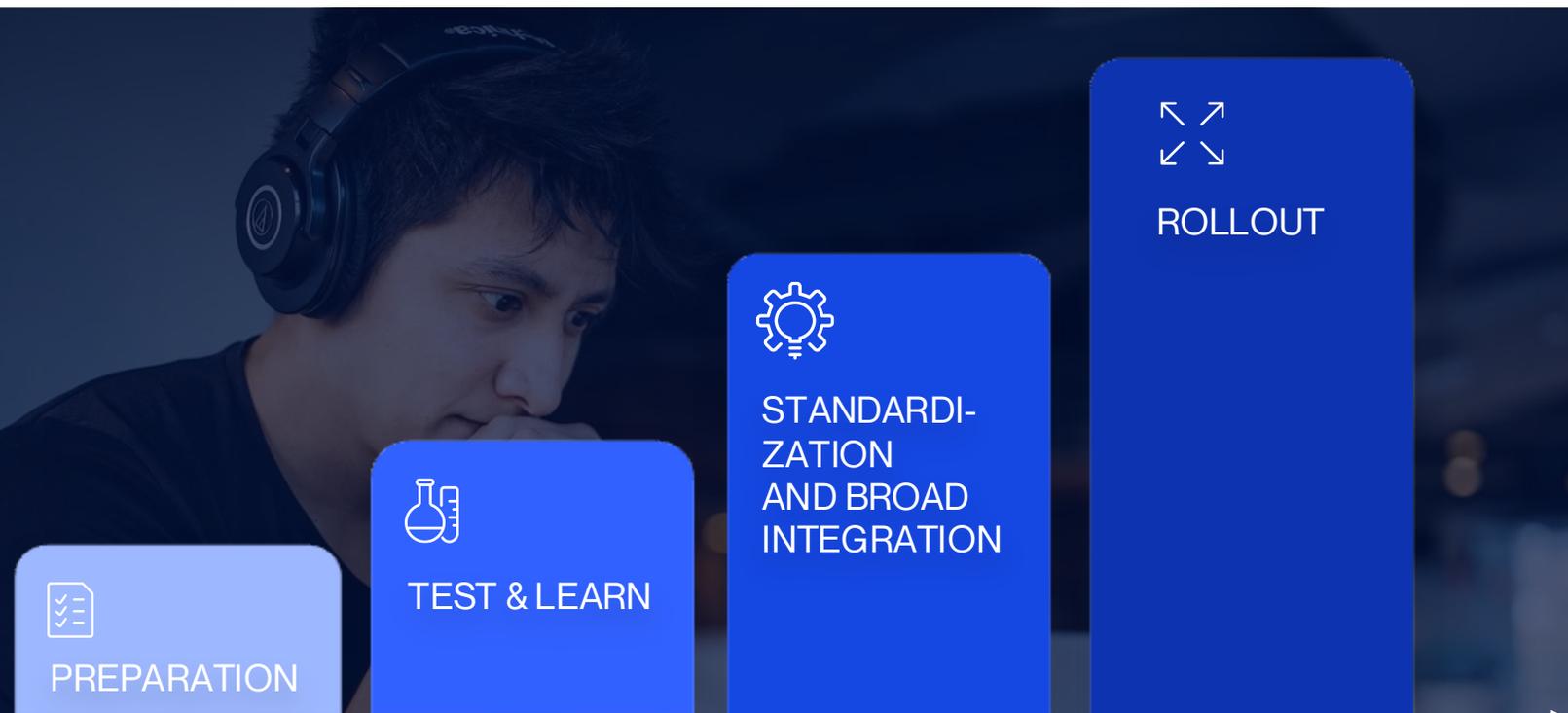
Source

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Trust beats technology

PREPARATION

- Factor in the learning curve
- Ensure leadership support
- Involve affected employees in require-ments management
- Define small use cases for meaningful, helpful relief

TEST & LEARN

- Approach: fail & learn
- Establish a small, cross-functional test team
- Consider the application context (e.g., social vs. newsletter)
- Secure learnings

STANDARDI-ZATION AND BROAD INTEGRATION

- Define AI strategy aligned with company goals
- Define governance
- Adapt roles
- Set up an enablement plan
- Prepare leaders

ROLLOUT

- Gradual rollout and broad integration, including change communications
- Use successes as proof points
- Promote skills through training/programs, support growth

The key to bringing employees and AI together effectively is not technology.

What matters most is ==trust, empowerment, and internal proof points==. Only then will uncertainty give way to curiosity, and skepticism turn into openness to new things.

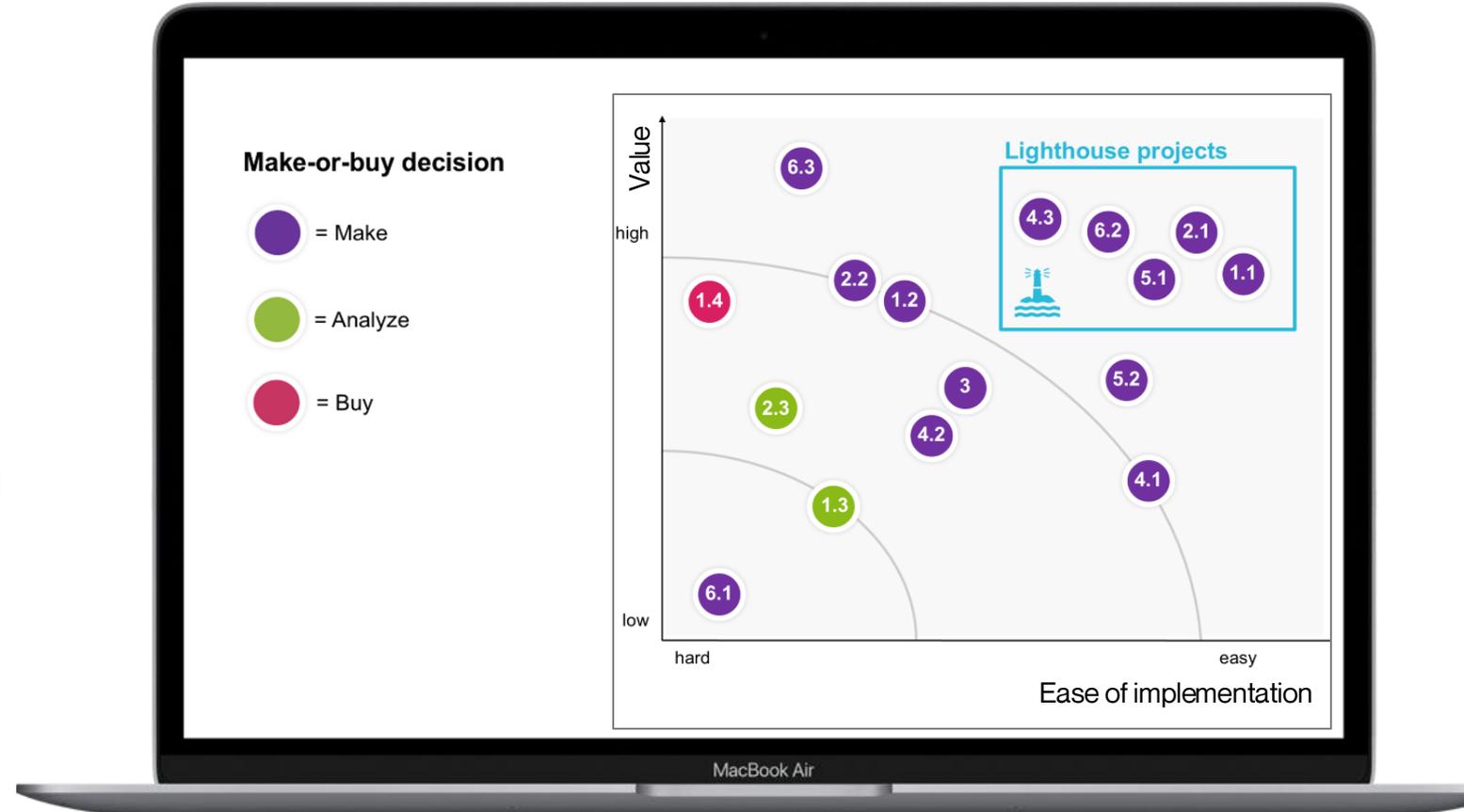We recommend a four-step approach.

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Bottom-up toward a holistic strategy

VOITH

Voith set out to determine where artificial intelligence can provide support. The goal was to identify, assess, and prioritize scalable AI use cases.

Using a fast-track "speedboat" approach and working from within the workforce, we analyzed the various use cases and existing initiatives. The focus: "AI slices" instead of large-scale transformation.

In addition, we conducted a readiness assessment and mapped the initiatives to a maturity model. This laid the foundation for a group-wide AI strategy using a pragmatic, collaborative approach.

Make-or-buy decision

● = Make

● = Analyze

● = Buy

Lighthouse projects

Value

high

low

hard   easy

Ease of implementation

MacBook Air

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Operational friction

PROCESSES

AI promises acceleration, but in practice this often falls short. The reason: old processes are not built for new technology. That's why implementing AI must always go hand in hand with questioning your own structures.

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A foreign body in the system

AI is becoming an ==active team member== and, like its human counterparts, must be clearly integrated and embedded. This applies to both AI agents and assistive AI.

In reality, however, things often look very different: fragmented, isolated AI setups and misguided steering approaches slow down the very pace marketers are hoping for.

What is needed is a ==new understanding== of collaboration and ==smarter interaction== between humans and machines – one that addresses the right points.

95%

of AI pilot projects do not achieve a measurable ROI solely because they are embedded incorrectly in business processes.

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The right interaction between humans and machines is what makes AI usable in the first place. A patchwork of tools and isolated actions doesn't turn AI into an investment – it turns it into a cost driver.

AI enriches marketing teams when it streamlines workflows and reduces routine effort. In the new process mindset, this means: decide, review, use results – and above all, clarify beforehand which process steps are unnecessary.

The interaction between humans and AI must be clearly defined at the right points: there must be clarity on goals, roles, and decision-making authority. To ensure that AI works reliably, human-in-the-loop steering is essential. Early management of AI within the process – for example through precise prompts – prevents unnecessary review loops and duplicate work. Continuous AI training gradually paves the way toward maximum relief through automation.

70% of the biggest hurdles companies face with AI come from the field of "people and processes" (the remaining 20% from "tech" and 10% from "algorithms").
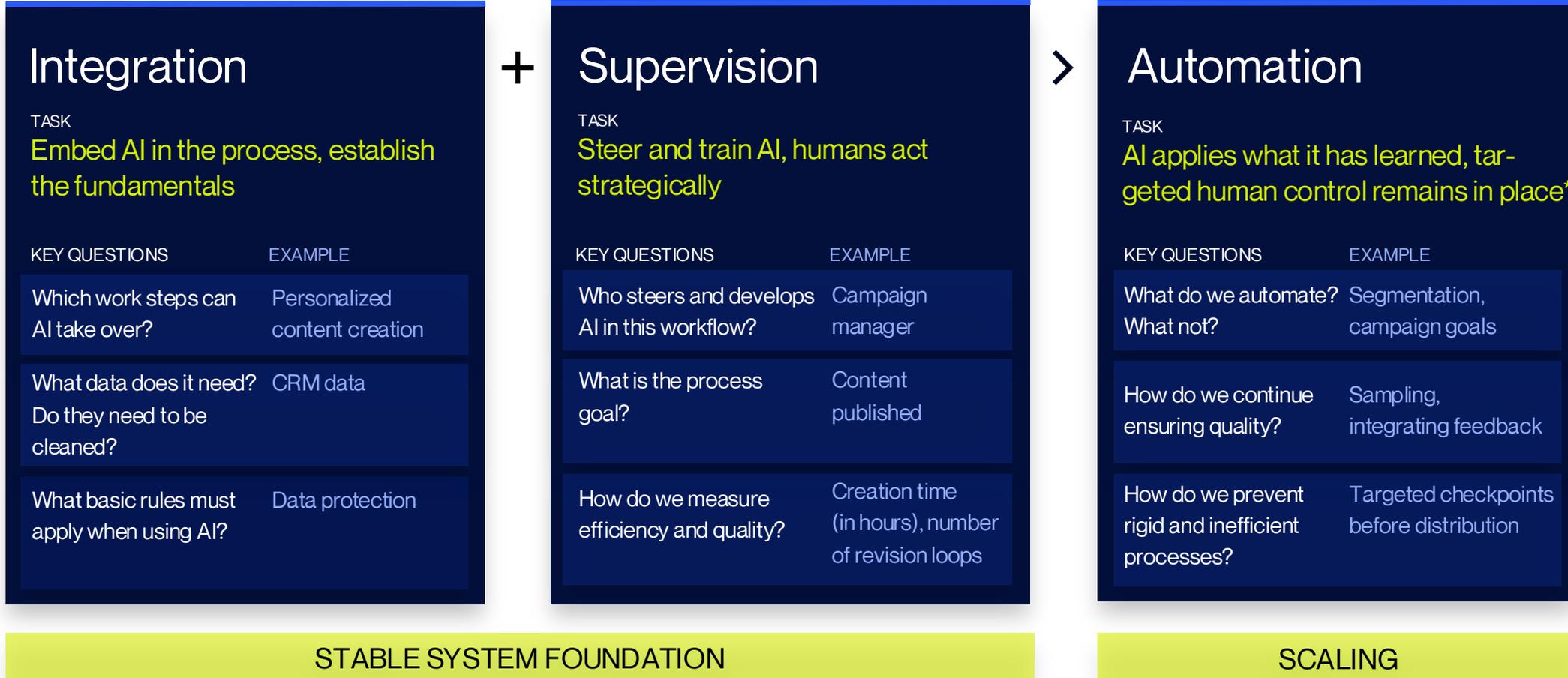
Source

80% of companies have not firmly integrated AI into their marketing processes.
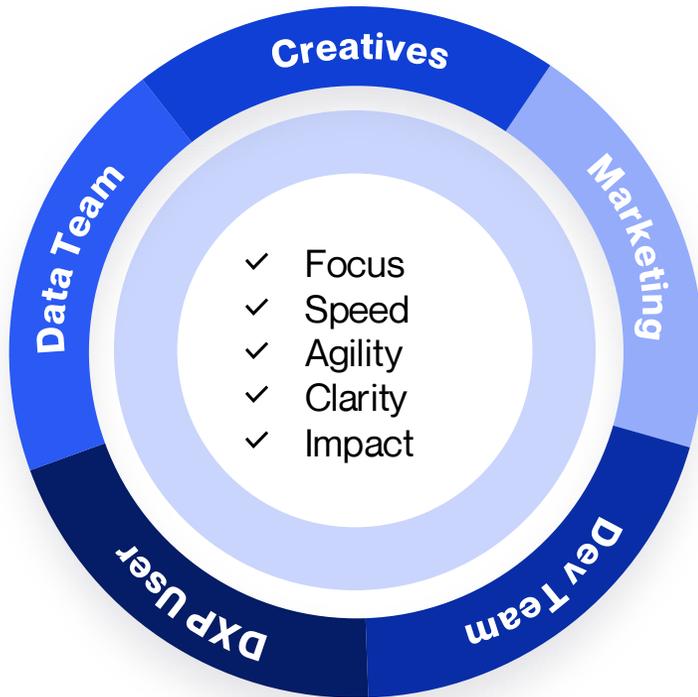
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Process steps for sustainable AI efficiency

Marketing success with AI emerges when integration, supervision, and smart automation work together in the right sequence. This can be achieved in three steps.

Integration

TASK
Embed AI in the process, establish the fundamentals

KEY QUESTIONS	EXAMPLE
Which work steps can AI take over?	Personalized content creation
What data does it need? Do they need to be cleaned?	CRM data
What basic rules must apply when using AI?	Data protection

+

Supervision

TASK
Steer and train AI, humans act strategically

KEY QUESTIONS	EXAMPLE
Who steers and develops AI in this workflow?	Campaign manager
What is the process goal?	Content published
How do we measure efficiency and quality?	Creation time (in hours), number of revision loops

\>

Automation

TASK
AI applies what it has learned, targeted human control remains in place*

KEY QUESTIONS	EXAMPLE
What do we automate? What not?	Segmentation, campaign goals
How do we continue ensuring quality?	Sampling, integrating feedback
How do we prevent rigid and inefficient processes?	Targeted checkpoints before distribution

STABLE SYSTEM FOUNDATION

SCALING

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* Exception: legally relevant content and branding-related content

Mastering AI together

Austrian

iab.
webAD Award
Bronze in the category "Best User Activation"

- ✓ Focus
- ✓ Speed
- ✓ Agility
- ✓ Clarity
- ✓ Impact

Creatives · Marketing · Dev Team · DXP User · Data Team

In AI processes, tiger teams can be helpful as small, interdisciplinary, but highly qualified task force to implement AI in a targeted way.

In the case of Austrian Airlines, experts from data science, creative, marketing, and IT collaborated cross-functionally, pooling their knowledge and experience to identify use cases early on, set priorities together, and make fast, reliable decisions.

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Ready, set, grow: 4 takeaways

The decisions that marketing executives make today lay the foundation for how AI will work in their teams in the future. Deployment and optimization can already be prepared for with specific questions.

1 Define your AI ambitions

What should AI help with, and what should it enable? The clearer the vision, the faster meaningful solutions can be found.

2 Involve the team

Team acceptance is essential. Early involvement – for example, when identifying use cases – builds trust and transparency.

3 Assess your data situation

What data is available and what condition is it in? This determines a realistic assessment of how to proceed.

4 Adopt the right mindset

Introducing AI means: testing and learning. It's normal that not everything runs perfectly from the start – small pilot projects help reduce risks.

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From idea to implementation

NEXT STEPS

———————

Recommended steps for a thoughtful yet pragmatic AI start.

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Achieving marketing efficiency with AI: Pragmatic, well-founded, tailored

We help companies use AI where it truly creates value. There are many possible entry points; we adapt to your individual needs.

Strategy development

A clearly defined AI road map for marketing and sales

- Vision & goal workshops
- Tool & tech assessment
- Maturity analysis
- Potential analysis and opportunity assessment
- Strategy development, including road map for AI initiatives, KPI definition, and scaling plan

↳ Inquire now

Operationalization

identification of use cases and process frameworks

- Identifying use cases along the content life cycleData readiness checks and enablement
- Developing data pipelines and integration concepts within existing systems
- Establishing integrated process frameworks

Change & scaling

Preparation and support for AI transformation

- Rollout concept, change communications and stakeholder management
- Enablement & training measures, including supporting materials
- Monitoring, tracking & evaluation of pilot projects
- Scaling successful use cases to additional departments or markets

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About us

Hi, we are Ray Sono. For over 25 years, we have been turning visions into reality by combining pragmatism with bold, actionable strategies. We are a team of experienced experts with a shared mindset: pragmatic, focused, open, and honest. Our common goal: to unleash digital potential.

Our customers (excerpt)

DB   Austrian   audi   DACHSER   e·on   Consorsbank   VOITH   Adobe   O₂ Telefónica   HARTMANN   Boehringer Ingelheim

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Sounds exciting, doesn't it?
Let's talk about it.

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