

FUTURE OF TELEVISION

Imagine This... How Will AI Revamp Marketing—and the Role of CMOs?

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This summary article showcases ideas from a recent episode of BCG's Imagine This... podcast. Alongside BCG managing director and partner Janet Balis, we explore how AI is reshaping the role of the CMO, from campaign optimizer to company-wide transformation architect.

Imagine this: It's 2030. CMOs no longer serve primarily as brand stewards or campaign managers. Instead, they're architects of growth, leading company-wide transformation by connecting customers, data, and decisions with the power of AI.

The So What

We're still a long way from the 2030 vision. Companies are making investments in AI, but they are not yet capturing value at scale. BCG recently conducted a survey with the Marketing + Media Alliance (MMA) that asked CMOs where their organizations were deploying AI.

Of the 60 CMOs who participated, 20% said that they were still in learning mode; 31% were focusing on functional pilots; and less than 30% were pursuing enterprise-wide initiatives to connect different business functions to each other. "We're still thinking too narrowly about what AI can really do, which is to connect the dots far more broadly and far more strategically to create more value," says Balis.

Most companies are still stuck in "use case" mode, testing AI in isolated pockets of marketing, HR, or finance. However, the real value of AI emerges when the technology operates throughout the enterprise. And because CMOs function at the intersection of customer understanding, brand storytelling, and digital infrastructure, they are uniquely suited to lead integration—if they have the mandate to do so.

Dive Deeper

The End of Silos. CMOs can evolve from tactical marketers to strategic growth architects by using AI's power to break down organizational silos and connect marketing data with that of other business functions, such as supply chain, finance, and R&D. This interconnectedness gives CMOs a unified view of the enterprise, enabling them to link marketing actions directly to business outcomes. In a setting where AI agents continuously analyze multimodal and federated data, CMOs can gain predictive insights and real-time intelligence to make faster, more holistic decisions. GenAI will automate and accelerate personalization, optimization, and testing processes, freeing CMOs to focus on creativity and strategic orchestration of the customer journey.

The Emotional Spark. AI can remix content, generate versions at scale, provide inspiration, and even create mood boards, but human insight is necessary to make a brand stand out. Exceptional brands forge strong emotional connections with customers—and, no surprise, humans have the edge here. Keeping humans in charge of ideation helps prevent algorithmic fatigue—the commoditization of concepts and the creation of polished AI content that starts to look generic and fails to differentiate the brand.

The Politics of Data. For AI to connect the dots within the company and across external agencies and partners, information must flow seamlessly. But because information has long been a source of power, people naturally hoard it and may resist sharing data. Moreover, sharing comes with risks:

- **Personal Risk.** Individuals want to protect their jobs and their influence by controlling information.
- **Corporate Risk.** Company leaders need to control who sees what data, as sensitive information is subject to misuse or exposure when widely shared.

To manage these risks, organizations need to establish governance frameworks—with board-level oversight—that set clear rules for data integration (what connects and what stays siloed) and decision-making protocols (where AI ends and human judgment begins).

Now What

CEOs can take five steps to tap AI's full value and achieve company-wide transformation:

- **Champion the CMO.** Without support from the top, CMOs won't have the political capital to drive cross-functional change. Prioritize having the CFO, the CIO, and the CMO work as one team, to ensure that AI efforts are customer-centric and link directly to business outcomes.
- **Put the board in charge of AI governance.** Decide which decisions AI can make autonomously and where human oversight is mandatory. Set clear rules for managing data risk, data privacy, and data reliability, and schedule regular reviews.
- **Invest in the connective tissue.** Fund integration architectures and data flows across paid, owned, and earned channels—and out to supply chain, R&D, finance, and external partners—so the CMO can orchestrate growth end-to-end.
- **Move beyond pilots.** Start in safe spaces where connecting data is a low-risk operation with a high upside—for example, connecting marketing data with supply chain data to enable inventory-based targeting—and then scale enterprise-wide programs with clear links to outcomes.
- **Reset culture and incentives.** To overcome resistance to sharing information, reward collaboration and shared outcomes, and update performance metrics to reflect team-based results. Treat marketing as an innovation lab rather than a cost center. Flatten hierarchies to

encourage faster decisions, and align agency incentives to promote sharing of AI-created value and accountability.

Janet Balis is a managing director and partner at BCG. She helps companies unlock growth through marketing transformation and AI strategy.

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