Marketing2030

Leadership Companion

The Da Vinci Growth CMO and the Leadership Workstreams

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This is the companion to the Marketing2030 Leadership Lab Phase Three briefing pack. Where that pack sets out the five areas in which Marketing helps build the enterprise growth architecture, this document turns to the CMO leadership dimension: ***who*** *the Marketing leader needs to be, how they think, how to ensure they are fit to lead, and what the leadership workstreams are teaching us. It is a 'sampling' document to inform discussion at the St. Paul de Vence MLL meeting and is being developed for the October M2030 launch.*

Special Thanks & Recognition

We would like to recognize and express our special thanks to the individual M2030 community members and IRG partners who contributed to this learning. Mie Leng Wong is co-leading the development of the Da Vinci Growth CMO profile, and Esteban Ribero is supporting Agency2030. Andreea Sapunaru added a sustainability perspective. Waqas Ahmed is our resident Da Vinci expert, and Ash Tailor is leading the Marketing capability work. Chris Burggraeve, Marissa Jarratt, Greg Welch, Annabelle Delorme, Dave Blackshaw, and Jon Iwata are supporting the development of the future CMO profile. Without these leaders and all the IRG pilot study partners, none of this learning would be available for discussion in the IRG work sessions.

Introduction

The Phase Three briefing pack answers a functional question: where does Marketing help the enterprise build Enterprise Growth Architecture 2.0? This companion addresses the human one. An architecture is only as good as the people who design and lead it, and across the research, one finding is consistent — the gap that holds Marketing back is rarely technical. The shortfall is one of leadership and mindset, not skill. That is encouraging, because mindset can be developed with intention.

This pre-read has two parts. The first starts to paint a picture of the **Da Vinci Growth CMO** - a picture of what marketing leadership needs to become in the age of AI, and the habits of mind that get a leader there. The second reports on the **leadership workstreams** run between Phase Two and Phase Three: a set of pilots, with members of the Marketing2030 Leadership Lab, that pressure-tested the personal and human dimensions of the work — energy, voice, psychological safety, and capability.

One note on language, because it carries a useful story. This profile was first developed as the *Da Vinci Growth CMO*. After the earlier Impact Study, it was renamed the *Da Vinci Growth Leader* because the attitudes and behaviors it described proved common among strong leaders across every function in a multi-stakeholder world. In M2030, we will again deliberately bring it back to the **CMO** - not to narrow it, but because the Marketing leader carries distinctive responsibilities the other leaders do not.

As you read, hold three questions: where does this ring true against your own experience, where would you push back, and which ideas would genuinely help you and your peers? The most candid thinking from these sessions will shape the full report.

The Da Vinci Growth CMO

The research points to a more distinctive profile: the leader who holds data rigor and creative imagination in balance and knows which to draw on when. Modeled on Leonardo's way of thinking, it leads from the inside out — from a clear internal sense of what is true about the consumer, the brand, and where the world is going.

What new Marketing leadership looks like

The outside-in leader is at the mercy of whichever input is loudest or most measurable. The inside-out leader uses those same inputs with greater discernment, courage, and clarity about what she is trying to create. Four habits describe the orientation in practice:

- **Lead with coherence and conviction.** Consistency between word and action under pressure builds genuine trust — and the confidence to hold a considered, non-conformist view when the room reaches for easy agreement.
- **Sit with ambiguity.** Resisting the pull of the first available answer. The category-defining idea arrives in the willingness to stay open a little longer than is comfortable — which is also what allows a leader to govern AI thoughtfully rather than be governed by it.
- **Develop taste and curate brand worlds.** In a world of infinite, fragmented content, the scarcest capability is discernment: what to let in, what to amplify, and what to resist. The brand with taste does not push; it pulls.
- **Build creative courage.** Acting with conviction in the face of uncertainty — crediting the bold idea, defending the brief, protecting the experiment that taught the organization something.

The numbers around this are both sobering and hopeful. Under half of leaders say Marketing is regarded as a strategic business partner today (47%), and few feel able to respond quickly to market changes (28%) — yet the large majority of leadership shortfalls are about mindset, not technical skill (89%). The Da Vinci leader is not the one who has mastered all the habits, but the one who knows which she is working on and has built a daily practice around it.

The five Da Vinci habits of mind

The profile roots this orientation in Leonardo's own practice — offering a route rather than only a destination. It is built, not found. These are not soft skills; they are demanding leadership capabilities, and, encouragingly, they can be developed with intention rather than being qualities one simply has or lacks.

- **Sapere Vedere — knowing how to see.** Deep observation: seeing what is truly there and asking what the data cannot show.
- **Necessità — the connecting structure.** Perceiving the shared structure beneath problems across the C-suite — the connector role the enterprise often lacks.
- **Sfumato — holding the blur.** Holding productive ambiguity rather than forcing premature closure.
- **Teoria ed Esperienza — theory and experience.** The honest loop between hypothesis and experience that builds credibility.
- **Scala Planetaria — thinking at scale.** Reasoning across time horizons at once — from the quarter to the long arc.

The role in driving growth in the era of AI

AI is making the average better, faster, and cheaper, week after week, across every category. The floor is rising for everyone. But efficiency and growth are not the same thing: AI is extraordinary at optimizing what already exists; it cannot originate what does not.

This produces a convergence problem. As every competitor reaches for the same tools, is trained on the same data, and optimizes toward the same signals, the output converges, and brands begin to look and feel alike. Reach and availability — long an engine of share — become a commodity. The growth that matters next will not come from doing more of the same more efficiently. It will come from the distinctly human work that decides what is worth making at all.

That places marketing leadership at the center of the growth agenda, not at the edge of it. The opportunity is to be the orchestrator of growth: the leader who turns deep consumer and cultural understanding into a clear direction the whole enterprise can commit to. The research describes this as the inversion of "believing is seeing" into "**seeing is believing"** — a picture of the future compelling enough that the business invests in it before the market has proven it. The headroom is real: while more than eight in ten leaders believe Marketing can create more value (82%), only about one in five feel their organization is organized to capture new growth (20%).

The shift: from positioning to brand worlds

Most brands still push messages out into an ever-more-fragmented landscape — consistent in their advertising, scattered everywhere else. A brand world is the alternative: a coherent, curated world a brand authors and sustains — its vision, its distinctive signature, how it behaves, the culture it keeps — that people choose to step inside. It is the new craft of pull, and it is the one thing AI cannot originate; AI can help scale and sustain a brand world, but the human authors it. This is where premium, preference, and genuine loyalty are won — beyond mere availability, into being chosen. It is also a growing opportunity: the ambition is widely shared, but few yet know how to build one well.

The move is:

- From financial targets dressed up as vision — toward true vision as growth architecture, a future the whole enterprise can commit to, and AI can be directed by.
- From consumers as data points (the *what*) — toward genuine empathy and the *why*, understanding people deeply enough to create desire.
- From brand positioning, consistent in advertising and fragmented everywhere else — toward worlds with coherence and curation across every touchpoint.
- From innovation as variety — toward innovation that creates desire, giving people something they did not yet know they wanted.

Championing the Human Quotient

As AI takes on more of the analytical and executional work, marketing has a distinctive role in championing the human capabilities — empathy, imagination, judgment, taste — that AI cannot replicate. This is not a marketing argument alone: every leadership group independently elevates the same thing as AI advances. The commercial case is well established: the overwhelming majority of purchase decisions are driven by emotion rather than reason; consumers show several times greater preference for brands they hold in high emotional trust; a balanced split between performance and brand-building can lift return on investment substantially over time; creatively excellent programs return multiples more than data-led work without creative quality; and consumers pay a meaningful premium for products positioned as human-made.

The point is not human versus machine but human and machine, stage by stage. AI delivers pattern recognition at scale — the *what*; human judgment adds the *why*, the emotional truth that makes an insight a springboard rather than a description. AI models scenarios and optimizes; human judgment supplies the emotionally precise vision worth committing to. AI generates variations; human judgment supplies the genuinely new idea and the discernment of true from merely interesting. AI delivers content at speed, scale and personalization; human judgment adds distinctive voice and emotional truth. AI delivers instant data and agentic outputs; human judgment adds what the data is not capturing, and a learning culture that compounds. The Human Quotient is not the alternative to AI — held with rigor, it is what gives AI a direction worth amplifying.

Conditions for C-suite alignment

Marketing is often asked to be many things at once — a revenue engine, a growth architect, a brand custodian, a culture communicator — expectations rarely reconciled in a single operating model. The encouraging implication is that this is largely a design question, which means it can be designed differently, and best designed together across the C-suite. Four conditions help alignment take hold:

- **Design the role, don't just fill it.** The hire goes more smoothly when the role is shaped around outcomes the leadership team has agreed in advance — co-designed across the CEO, CFO, and Board.
- **Co-own measurement with the CFO from day one.** Built together rather than defended after the fact, a joint scorecard turns a potentially adversarial relationship into a shared one.

- **Let vision anchor the accountability conversation.** "Here is the future we are building, here is where we take measured risk together" reframes the budget conversation from justification to shared investment.
- **Earn the long term by owning the short term.** When near-term commitments are reliably met, the credibility exists to protect investment in the bolder, longer-horizon work.

The metrics that follow reflect what brand-building actually creates: pricing power, customer lifetime value, brand equity, category-growth contribution, and learning velocity. The underlying shift, for CFOs as much as CMOs, is to treat brand as infrastructure with compounding returns rather than discretionary spend. The need is clear: only around one in five say the value Marketing creates is fully captured and understood (21%), and fewer than half say all functions are aligned around a single shared strategy (43%). When the CFO co-owns the framework, the conversation changes in kind — Marketing is no longer defending spend, but reporting progress on a logic the whole leadership team shares.

Tools and frameworks for role clarity

What might a genuinely useful framework look like — one that marketing leaders, CEOs, and CFOs could use together to create role clarity?

The four leadership profiles — mirrors, not boxes.

Every leader carries elements of all four; the question is which orientation leads under pressure. Each is a respected strength and a starting point on the journey toward the Da Vinci destination. The **Commercially Anchored** leader brings CFO trust and commercial rigor; the growth edge is building commercial proof for creativity and developing taste as a discipline. The **Creatively Driven** leader produces the best work and a genuine long-term vision; the edge is earning commercial trust first, then protecting space for bold bets. The **Operationally Excellent** leader delivers at scale with the best governance; the edge is making room for the less predictable work real growth requires. The **Strategically Elevated** leader wins the enterprise argument and is invaluable at board level; the edge is staying emotionally close to the consumer and the craft of the work. The most generative pairings of leader and organization introduce a productive tension rather than mirror the existing culture — the strength that complements what the organization cannot easily see in itself.

The human-and-AI effectiveness chain.
A stage-by-stage operating model giving AI and human judgment distinct, complementary roles — AI for pattern, scale, and personalization; human judgment for the why, the vision, the genuinely new idea, and the courageous call. It is made operational across insight, strategy, ideation, content, and feedback.

AI as a thinking partner for divergence.
Where most AI tools converge on the most plausible answer, the Da Vinci approach uses AI built to broa*den* thinking — surfacing unexpected cross-disciplinary connections and challenging assumptions in a hypothesis, as a partner for cognitive growth that extends judgment rather than replacing it. We are looking into offering a dedicated tool for this.

Shared moves across the C-suite.

- **For CEOs:** co-design the role before hiring; offer genuine air cover for bold, long-term moves; trust the marketing leader's creative and strategic judgment.
- **For CFOs:** co-own the measurement framework from the start; include learning velocity as a KPI; treat brand as compounding infrastructure.
- **For CMOs:** co-build measurement, bring real consumer voices into the boardroom as a habit, and design the team for complementarity rather than similarity.

The Leadership Workstreams

Between Phase Two and Phase Three, a set of pilots ran alongside the functional research, with members of the Marketing2030 Leadership Lab, to test the personal and human dimensions of the work in practice rather than in theory. They are reported here as a personal and leadership layer, distinct from the five functional areas, and as directional, discussion-setup learning rather than settled findings. The pilot measures below are early, cohort-based and largely self- and partner-reported; they are best read as signals of direction, not validated effects.

B1 · Energy fluency — the "Regenerate" pilot

An international cohort of roughly 45 senior leaders ran a 60-day energy-fluency program built on the idea of *energetic literacy*: the capability to understand, manage, and renew personal and organizational energy in real time. Leaders used daily biometric tracking (heart rate variability as a measure of nervous system resilience), psychometric mapping of stress-response styles, and a shared vocabulary for navigating three operating states — *Push, Maintain, Recover* — rather than defaulting to constant push.

The directional results were encouraging across the window: gains in personal energy awareness and agency, in stress awareness and recovery habits, in relational presence and psychological safety, and in executive focus and contribution to culture, with cohort engagement far above the usual benchmark for wellbeing programs. The central learning is the more important output: high-stress environments drive mechanistic leadership behaviors that lead to burnout, and **resilience is a systemic capability, not an individual burden**. When a leadership team shares a common language for energy, it stops making false assumptions about capacity, designs healthier workflows from aggregate signals, and reduces the strategic friction that comes from forcing teams to push when they need to recover.

The pilot also produced a set of simple, practical energy-support practices, organized around connection to oneself, to others, and to the work — naming one's emotional state before reacting, inviting a reset when something feels off, opening team meetings with a single feeling-word per person, and normalizing genuine recovery. Modest in themselves, they make energy a shared, discussable part of how a team operates.

Executive voice — the LinkedIn pilot

A second pilot worked with founders and senior leaders to turn executive voice into an *evidence layer* for the work — moving from company-page messaging toward the leader as a recognized architect of specific ideas. The diagnostic found an inversion problem common to expertise-rich organizations: the institutional page carried the communication burden while the individuals with the deepest credibility maintained a modest, inconsistent presence.

The central learning is that visibility alone is insufficient. Credibility at the C-suite level is won through *territories of legitimacy* — being recognized for specific strategic themes, such as AI ethics or growth architecture, rather than for generic commentary. Handled this way, the executive platform becomes a strategic asset for internal alignment and recruitment, not merely external PR — a way for a leader's point of view to do organizing work inside and outside the company at once.

Psychological safety — the precondition

Across the workstreams, one theme recurred as the enabler of all the others. Psychological safety — being safe to speak up, take calculated risks, and disagree — is the single strongest predictor of high-performing teams. It is the way trust is built, and trust is what makes speed possible; it is also what turns diverse talent into genuine distinctiveness rather than representation on paper, because difference only adds value when people feel safe to voice it.

This connects the leadership layer directly back to the functional pack. The Human Quotient — the empathy, judgment and creative courage that AI cannot replicate — only thrives in an environment where people can experiment without fear of negative consequences, and today only about a third of organizations say they have built one. Crucially, safety and high standards are not opposites: being safe to speak up *and* committed to excellence is precisely where high performance lives.

For the Da Vinci leader, providing that air cover — taking the risk so the team can do its best, bravest work — is not a soft nicety; it is the core of the job.

Marketing capability — the upstream mandate

A capability analysis drawing on a wide audit of prior studies asked where the real constraint on Marketing's contribution sits. The finding was consistent with the functional pack's diagnosis: organizations are stuck in downstream execution, and the binding constraint is not technical skill but the cross-functional authority to connect data and insight to enterprise growth. Marketing's opportunity is to own more of the upstream design of growth, not only the downstream delivery of campaigns.

Encouragingly, the capability gaps this analysis identified — enterprise growth, deep human understanding, human-and-AI orchestration, trust and stakeholder relationships, and long-term value — map almost exactly onto the five areas in the functional pack. That independent overlap is a quiet reinforcement of the spine of the whole program, and it points directly to the capability-building tools that follow in the next phase.

What the pilots show together

Read as a set, the pilots offer complementary leadership insights, not a single story: energy fluency created the cognitive clarity for a clearer strategy; executive voice gave that thinking a platform; capability work pointed it upstream; and the connecting thread across all of them was the need to *unlearn* mechanistic, linear models of how leaders and organizations are supposed to operate. The destination describes a leader with the energy, standing, safety, and the capability to hold both systemic complexity and human intuition at the same time.

A related workstream on the agency and partner ecosystem (Agency2030) is being taken forward separately and is signposted here only for completeness.

Toward October

Taken together, the parts of this companion describe the leader from multiple directions: the Da Vinci Growth CMO profile sets out who that leader is becoming and how they think, and the leadership workstreams show what it takes in practice - energy, voice, psychological safety, capability - to lead well. The next step is to make that picture usable. On the way to the October launch, the profile becomes the basis for a personal assessment leaders can hold themselves to—a way to gauge not only what they know but also how well they are fit to lead the growth agenda, alongside the capability-building the pilots point toward. None of it is settled. This is a sampling of the thinking, brought to the room precisely so it can be tested: where it rings true, where it should be pushed back on, and which parts would genuinely help you and your peers. The most candid contributions from these sessions are what will shape the full Marketing2030 report.
