IRG
Humanized Growth

Marketing2030
driving impact in a new era

Enterprise Growth Architecture 2.0

Beyond Marketing

Marketing2030 Phase Two Report

Phase Two
Executive Summary

This report summarizes the findings of Marketing2030's Phase Two. Our research builds on the Phase One 'Growth Paradoxes' and asks the urgent question: ***How should organizations evolve to succeed in this new world, and what role does Marketing need to play?***

The overarching conclusion is that dramatic technological developments, specifically AI, and recent geopolitical uncertainty have caused a fundamental, structural shift in how businesses operate. This change is permanent: "*We are not returning to 'normal'" says* Victoria Sjardin of MARS Petcare. *"This market fragmentation is irreversible."*

To succeed, businesses will need a new approach: **Enterprise Growth Architecture 2.0.** This architecture must balance short-term pressure with long-term ambitions, adopt an AI-enabled, more fluid operating model, and build intangible assets such as societal trust and employee loyalty.

In this new world, competitive advantage will shift to the **Human Quotient** - the ability to bring uniquely human capabilities, such as contextual understanding, empathy, judgment, creativity, and inspiration to a system increasingly driven by AI. "*In a world increasingly defined by 'Agentic AI,' human agency is the only remaining differentiator. Unchecked, AI just accelerates commoditization – and a brand without differentiation isn't growing – it's just surviving,"* says Dean Aragon of Shell.

Winning businesses apply what we are calling a **Marketing Mindset** to bring this human approach to every aspect of the business – uncovering unmet needs, understanding context, shaping perception, and driving meaning for all stakeholders. To not only ask what is happening, but also *why*.

This approach has major implications for all business leaders, and especially marketers. The consequences are reassuring, unsettling, and exciting.

Reassuring, because Marketing's core strengths – understanding people, creating meaning, building trust and connections, and effective communication – have never been more relevant.

Unsettling, because there is no clear definition of the Marketing role, nor organizational or industry agreement on what the scope of the Marketing function is today or should be tomorrow.

Exciting, because Boards and C-suite peers are actively seeking the expertise that Marketing is best positioned to provide, creating a significant opportunity for CMOs to step up, engage more broadly across the functions, and help create value for all stakeholders and drive growth.

As Miriam van der Heijden of Randstad told us: "*What's different is that this is not another revolution in Marketing. It's a rewiring of the entire function within the broader business.*"

This is, at its heart, about what the IRG calls 'Humanized Growth' – that driving sustained business success for shareholders, and more human value creation for all stakeholders are not in tension but aligned.

This M2030 Phase Two report explains what the Enterprise Growth Architecture 2.0 must account for and the role Marketing can best play in helping it succeed.

About Marketing2030

Marketing2030 focuses on identifying the Marketing strategy, structure, capability, and CMO leadership characteristics required to drive sustained business growth.

Led by the Institute for Real Growth (IRG), in partnership with the Future of Marketing Initiative (FOMI) at Oxford's Saïd Business School and over 25 marketing leadership organizations globally, the study will deliver essential leadership learnings and practical takeaways:

- **The macro forces shaping society, consumption, and stakeholder expectations of businesses and brands.**
- **The Marketing strategies, structures, and capabilities required to win.**
- **The necessary CMO leadership characteristics required to lead in the future.**

M2030 Phase One defined the trends, business and cultural shifts, and stakeholder expectations that businesses and brands need to understand and navigate. The M2030 Phase One Report can be downloaded by clicking here.

M2030 Phase Two captures how businesses are responding to these global trends and stakeholder expectations, as well as WHAT Boards and business leaders expect from Marketing. Our research included over 500 interviews with experts, academics, Board members, CEOs, CMOs, and Marketing's C-suite functional peers across five continents. We also curated and analyzed insights from over 1,300 expert reports and Board governance reports, 1,000 investor calls, and 6,000 leadership podcasts in five languages.

The findings were subsequently discussed and validated by the members of the IRG Marketing2030 Leadership Lab – a group of 50 senior and influential Marketing industry leaders globally.

M2030 Phase Three shifts the IRG analysis to HOW Marketing leaders can best align with peers on their role as enterprise growth drivers. This phase includes a quantitative validation of identified best practices using data from a global online survey, as well as the identification of the leadership characteristics required to succeed in the future.

The final report will provide CMOs with frameworks, case studies, and practical examples to help implement winning strategy, structure, and capability recommendations.

IRG Humanized Growth

2030: Already Here

2030: Already Here

Fragmentation. Distrust. Insecurity. Pressure to evolve.

Members of the Marketing2030 Leadership Lab were unequivocal on the permanence of the most recent shifts. Every function now operates in a world of instability. Markets are more polarized. Consumers are more volatile. Talent is more anxious. Capital is more impatient. AI is amplifying both productivity and instability. Trust — long treated as a soft, nice-to-have outcome — is becoming a business requirement and an essential asset.

Past growth models built on scale, efficiency, and optimization still matter - but are no longer sufficient. They are too siloed for relationship-led growth, too fragmented for coherent trust-building, too narrow to apply human understanding consistently across all stakeholders, and too focused on downstream execution when enterprises need help making upstream choices that reflect new consumer preferences.

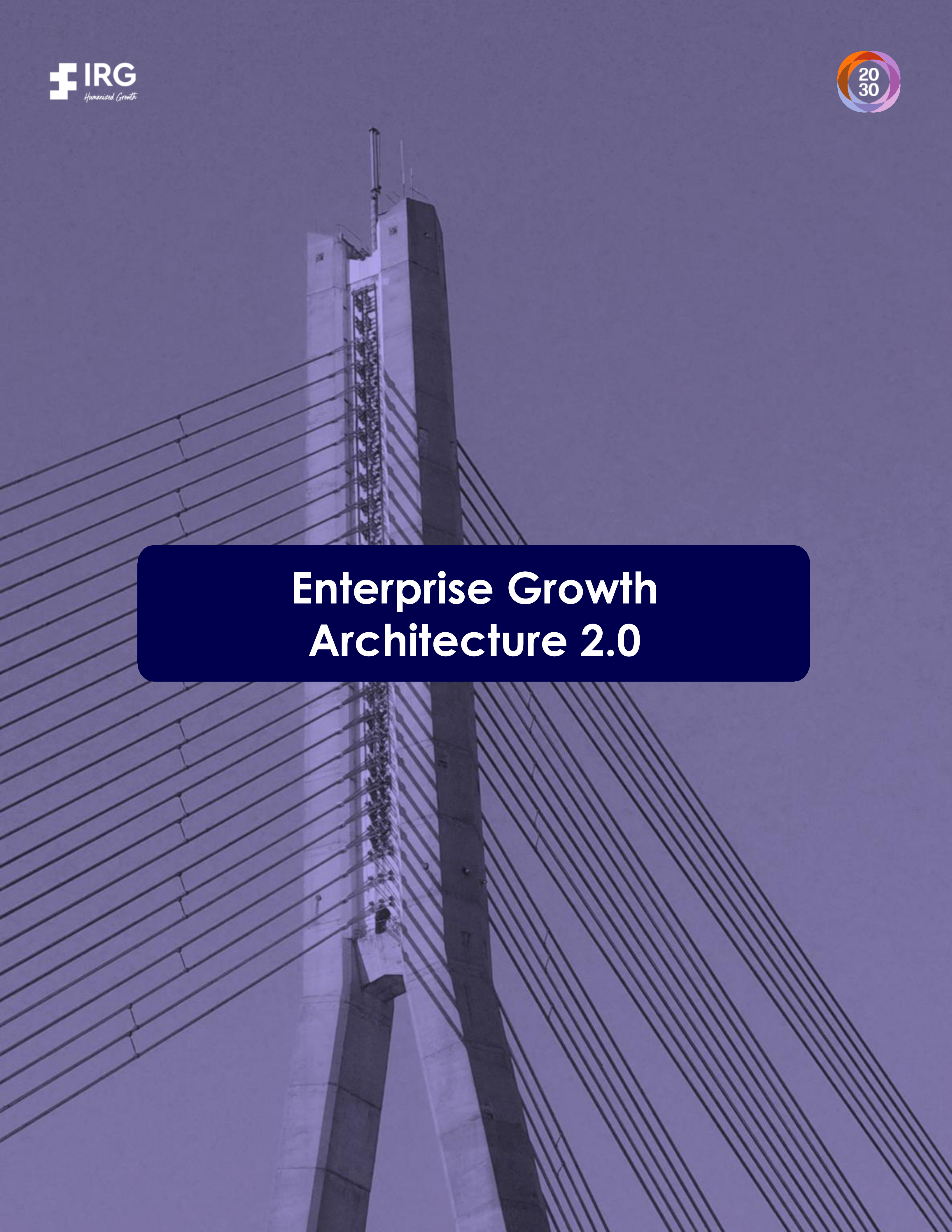
AI is rapidly industrializing execution – and shaping demand, making what was once unique easily accessible and what was once scarce abundant. Companies will need to learn to work with AI agents that act as gatekeepers for their customers and maintain brand control in a world where influencers reign and everyone can create campaigns.

Employees who are told AI *empowers* are seeing entry-level roles disappear. A lack of psychological safety and increased workplace stress are becoming major sources of disruption.

Despite the recent retrenchments on DEI and sustainability, many stakeholders still expect businesses to make a meaningful impact and are increasingly calling out performative language. Investors continue to prioritize short-term returns but also demand greater long-term corporate resilience.

In response, business leaders across all functions are increasingly recognizing the importance of *intangible* corporate assets, such as reputation, employee loyalty, brand equity, culture, and the company's social license to operate.

There is a broad understanding that traditional corporate silos, with internal handoffs, need to evolve to enable more continuous customer relationships – where subscriptions and *total experiences* are replacing traditional one-off transactions and campaign-based ways of working. Businesses understand they need a new approach to growth.



Enterprise Growth Architecture 2.0

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All of this points to an urgent need for a new way of organizing the business. We call this the Enterprise Growth Architecture 2.0.

This encompasses an integrated organizational model that fluidly aligns the organization's strategic priorities and capabilities with stakeholder expectations and measures success by sustained value creation.

What does this look like? At its core, the new architecture must run on a dual operating logic: an AI-powered efficiency engine that drives speed, scale, and economic advantage; and a human-powered business engine that delivers profitable solutions to customer needs, builds trust, shapes culture, and creates lasting relevance.

Neither is sufficient alone. Businesses that optimize only for efficiency risk becoming commoditized. Those who invest only in meaning risk losing investor support. The companies that will outperform are those that learn to run both engines simultaneously and that have the organizational design, shared metrics, and leadership alignment to keep them in sync.

"*The next era of growth isn't defined by who has the most data, but by who has the organizational courage to use that data to restore the human connection at scale*," noted Alannah Sheerin from Google. "*We aren't just automating marketing; we are architecting a more responsive, intuitive enterprise*."

The precise architecture required will differ by company and industry: there is no universal blueprint. But the principle is consistent: businesses need a more effective way to connect with their customers and align on how value is produced and consumed. The goal is to understand how the enterprise can be configured into a business model that produces value in a form customers are willing to pay for and consume.

The new growth architecture will bring together efficiency with meaning, technology with humanity, and short-term performance with long-term value creation.

What the Enterprise Growth Architecture 2.0 must solve for

The Phase Two interviews and analysis revealed the key themes influencing the design of every new Enterprise Growth Architecture. Here, we highlight three because of their relevance to the role of Marketing.

1. Geopolitical and Economic Fragmentation

Put simply, the things that unite us are currently being drowned out by those that push us apart. Once-solid political and trade alliances are crumbling. War and global tariffs have shaken the principles of international commerce, forcing companies to set up 'Tariff Monitor' and 'Cultural Code' centers to help respond to the whims of political leaders. It's not just companies. A recent Ipsos study finds that 48% of consumers globally believe that *more* trade barriers are needed to protect their economy.

Marketers are being asked to help the enterprise make sense of external change to guide business strategy development and decision-making. As Antonio Lucio of PayPal puts it: "*The world is changing so fast. It's Marketing's duty to bring internal clarity and understanding.*"

2. The Need for '*Stagility*'

AI's ability to do the work of so many has created what some are calling a *'jobocalypse'*. Leaders of every function are reporting higher levels of anxiety and work-related stress.

Winning organizations are prioritizing what Deloitte calls '*stagility*' — the right mix of stability and agility that enables colleagues to feel connected and sufficiently psychologically safe to innovate, transparently share results, and even fail without fear of job loss.

Asmita Dubey of L'Oréal explained how the company has rebuilt Marketing around defined skills and organized into communities such as Media, Measurement, CRM, and Influencer, to foster collaboration, share new work, and accelerate learning.

Underlying both of these challenges is what our research identifies as the most consistently cited constraint on business and Marketing effectiveness: the structural constraints of short-termism. This is not a failure of strategic intent - every leader we spoke with understands the value of long-term brand investment. It is a failure of system design: incentive structures, measurement frameworks, investor expectations, and leadership tenure cycles all pull organizations toward short-term decisions, regardless of what their strategy says.

Breaking this lock-in requires simultaneous intervention across measurement, governance, and role design — a coordinated enterprise response that no single function, including Marketing, can deliver alone.

The cost of this lock-in is well documented. Binet and Field's landmark research shows that a 40/60 investment balance between brand building and performance marketing increases overall ROI by up to 90%. Our own interviews also confirm this: leaders across every market described measurement systems that still overwhelmingly emphasized short-term metrics, structurally undermining the very investment patterns proven to deliver superior returns. It is precisely the kind of challenge that Enterprise Growth Architecture 2.0 is designed to address.

3. A Trust Deficit

There is a widening trust deficit between companies and their stakeholders, with 56% of respondents in a recent Ipsos survey reporting that they think "*the system is broken*". Consumers expect personalization but question how their data is used. In the same study, only 48% trust that companies using AI will protect their personal data.

Marketers will need to balance the power of AI in customizing products and messaging with safeguards to prevent abuse. "*Accountability cannot be delegated to AI. The more we use advanced AI, the more important acting responsibly becomes,*" says Sunita Bangard of Aditya Birla.

Secret Sauce: *The Human Quotient*

Secret Sauce
The Human Quotient

The rapid advancement of AI is accelerating and amplifying these shifts. This leads us to one of our most important findings: the next era of competitive advantage will belong to the companies that can best apply what we call the Human Quotient.

The Human Quotient is not about sentimentality or nostalgia for a pre-AI world. It is the growing strategic value of the capabilities that AI cannot yet replicate, such as empathy, judgment, creativity, curiosity, storytelling, meaning-making, and contextual understanding. As AI becomes better at everything else, these capabilities become not less important but more — because they are what determine whether speed and scale serve human ends or simply accelerate commoditization.

CEOs are demanding customer-centric strategies rooted in data rather than C-suite personal bias. CFOs emphasize the importance of better investor storytelling and now view customer experience as both a value-creation opportunity for the company and a better way to mitigate financial risks. HR leaders want customer-experience principles applied to the candidate and employee journeys.

"*As technology commoditizes our ability to execute fast and do more, the true differentiator becomes our uniquely human understanding of the consumer context, turning fragmented data into real, valuable and sustainable connections*," notes Marie Gulin-Merle of Google.

The concept of the '*1:00 AM Consumer*' — marketing to the consumer's private, truthful, and often illogical self, rather than their public, more aspirational persona — introduces a level of sophistication that most enterprise Marketing has not yet reached. It is the difference between knowing what a consumer says they want and understanding what they truly need. AI can surface the signals; only human judgment can interpret what they mean and decide how to respond with relevance, empathy, and care.

The winners of the future are those who master the interplay between machine capability and human judgment. Effectively managing the Human Quotient helps organizations better direct technology to benefit all their stakeholders.

"The human quotient brought by human friction is where the new premium is. Content that is raw, unmistakably human, and intentionally imperfect. This is how you stand out in a sea of average AI content," Kimberly-Clark's Patricia Corsi told us at the Marketing2030 Leadership Lab.

Empathy, Creativity & Growth
The Marketing Mindset

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Winning businesses are applying a Marketing Mindset to bring the Human Quotient to every aspect of the business — uncovering unmet needs for each stakeholder and making an impact by identifying new opportunities to create business value.

This means going beyond the data to understand *why* something happens or how someone feels - linking data to motivation, product to narrative, and strategy to behavior.

Consider the following example: show a typical room of executives a photograph of someone in an airport security line and ask how that person feels. Most will assess the 'data' — at least 20 people ahead of the person — and conclude that the person is feeling frustrated. A marketer is likely to ask: "*How many people are behind the person?*" This is because a marketer knows that the emotion of waiting is shaped not just by delay, but by relative position. Context determines feeling. And the Marketing Mindset brings a unique and often underrepresented perspective to business strategy discussions.

Throughout our interviews and analyses of leadership podcasts, a consistent theme emerged: the company needs not so much a specific *function* as a particular *mindset* to better connect, understand, create value, and communicate with its stakeholders.

There are, of course, plenty of other leaders who can bring this human-centric approach. Yet Marketing is often the function best positioned to bring this perspective, to bring the outside in, help the company understand customers better, interpret cultural shifts, sense opportunities, and connect strategy to lived human reality.

We believe the M2030 Phase Two findings highlight an important opportunity for many marketers: to step up and work more closely with their peers for enterprise growth. Several of the M2030 Leadership Lab participants even describe this as an *obligation* for marketers.

"*A business's marketing investment must become its single most valuable and trusted driver of growth*," notes Devika Bulchandani, Chief Operating Officer at WPP. "*Making that a reality demands a dynamic interplay of imagination and intelligence, magic and machine — neither can deliver sustained impact alone, together we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reimagine growth*."

The potential business upside goes beyond the obvious. CFOs are asking for better investor storytelling, and CHROs need help with employee and recruitment communication. When asked whether their company's HR-led communication is as strong as their own brand campaigns, almost all CMOs in our research said 'no', even though the same leaders fully agree that recruitment is crucial to business success.

This gap is significant, and leads us to ask: **what role should Marketing play *beyond* Marketing?**

Marketing Redefined

Marketing Redefined

The M2030 Leadership Lab emphasized the importance of reframing Marketing's role entirely. Companies today are not making sufficient use of the Marketing resources they already have. They deploy these skills to sell their products and services, but fail to deploy them to identify growth markets, recruit talent, shape investor narratives, or build community trust.

There is also no generally accepted definition of what Marketing *is*. What other function lacks a universally accepted definition? In some companies, CMOs are the brand stewards; in others, the CMO owns commercial outcomes, culture, and connects the enterprise functions.

Most Board members don't understand how Marketing contributes to growth, and many C-suite peers feel that Marketing is not commercial enough. Chris Burggraeve, formerly of AB InBev, often says that CMOs need to speak '*Wall Street.*'

There is an opportunity for many CMOs to step up, but a word of caution: tread very carefully, as this should not be used as an excuse for a Marketing *land grab*. If anything, it is a call for some serious CMO introspection. Why isn't Marketing invited to strategic business discussions? Why have so many companies downgraded the CMO role?

This raises perhaps the most important challenge identified in Phase Two: *Marketing's Identity Crisis*. Our work finds that this identity crisis is very real, but less a *Marketing* challenge and more an existential business challenge that needs to be addressed at the enterprise level.

The crisis has a structural engine: Marketing operates within a self-reinforcing cycle — under-resourced because it cannot demonstrate value; unable to demonstrate value because it is not strategically aligned; not strategically aligned because it is set up with contradictory expectations; and those contradictions produce the tactical scrambling that reinforces the cost-center perception — leading to further under-resourcing.

At the root of this cycle is a measurement problem that goes deeper than KPIs. *"GAAP-based reporting excludes intangible assets. The strategic contribution of Marketing cannot be properly assessed so long as businesses default to financial accounting metrics as the sole measure of success,"* says Jonathan Knowles of Type 2 Consulting.

Breaking this cycle requires more than better Marketing. It requires the enterprise-level growth architecture redesign that is central to our M2030 findings.

The CMO Growth Opportunity

It is not up to Marketing to redefine Marketing; that is precisely the point. It requires the CEO to co-design the CMO role before hiring. It requires the CFO to co-own the KPI framework rather than imposing a purely financial one. It requires the Board to understand how Marketing contributes to enterprise value, not just quarterly revenue. And it requires the CMO to start demonstrating, in the language of the business, why Marketing's unique capabilities are essential to win in tomorrow's competitive landscape.

This is not about defining a new standard CMO job description. The companies that get this right do not simply have better Marketing. They have better businesses.

"There is no single CMO prototype anymore," says Greg Welch of Spencer Stuart. *"Every situation is different. Companies are seeking transformational marketing leaders with a demonstrated ability to make a real impact, engaging with and influencing the C-suite."*

"Marketing's opportunity is to become more of a strategic business partner, more useful to all facets of the business," says Norman de Greve of General Motors.

Some companies are ahead of the curve: *"We see CMOs functioning as the 'Window on the World,'"* says Eleni Nicholas of Ipsos. Chris Brandt told us how, at Chipotle, the CHRO invited him to help develop the new recruitment campaign. At McDonald's, Tariq Hassan helped colleagues rebuild the franchisee recruitment approach by developing *franchisee personas* and an innovative, all-digital acquisition strategy.

In both cases, the value came not from doing Marketing in the narrow sense, but from the CMO partnering across functions to create value and enterprise growth. *"The question is not whether Marketing should own more. It's whether the company is applying its best human-understanding capabilities where they matter most,"* Marketing2030 Leadership Lab participant Marissa Jarratt of 7-Eleven told us.

It is clear that the development of an Enterprise Growth Architecture 2.0 presents a unique opportunity to re-engineer and re-energize the Marketing function into a role that bridges efficiency and meaning, data and creativity, and technology and humanity.

"Marketers have to stop defining their role as holding on to the budget or being the brand champion," says Janet Balis of the Boston Consulting Group, *"The far more important calling is to become the growth architect of the business."*

What Marketing leaders can do now

Phase Three of Marketing2030 will offer CMOs a self-assessment tool and a set of personas to help identify which role best fits their company's industry and growth stage, ownership priorities, competitive context, culture, and personal experience and credibility. In the meantime, there are some actions that every CMO can take now to begin the transition:

Shift the frame. Marketing leaders can broaden their focus from *Marketing* effectiveness to overall *enterprise* value creation. At Nedbank, Khensani Nobanda measures marketing effectiveness solely through business growth KPIs such as market share growth, return on equity (ROE), and Net Promoter Score (NPS).

Start questioning the scope. Clarity is fundamental to driving impact. *"It is critical to have an explicit conversation about what the business needs from Marketing. Get clarity on what Marketing needs to own, influence, and support. These questions are too consequential to leave vague,"* says Tariq Hassan, formerly of McDonald's.

At Randstad, Marketing's scope was deliberately extended to the candidate and employee journey, applying consumer-grade insight and experience design to talent acquisition - with measurable impact on recruitment quality and employer brand strength.

Widen the conversation. The future role of Marketing cannot be decided by Marketers alone. CEOs, CFOs, CHROs, CTOs, and boards all shape what the function can become — and all need to be part of the discussion. *"High-performing Boards and C-suite teams don't leave Marketing's role to interpretation. Without alignment, performance will always fall short,"* says Marcel Bucsescu of the National Association of Corporate Directors (NACD). At Mercado Libre, cross-functional collaboration between Marketing, Technology, and Commerce is how the business is designed to operate, and is among the most cited reasons for its sustained growth trajectory.

Start building dual technology and human fluency. The future belongs to those who can combine machine intelligence with human judgment, and who keep getting better at both. *"The machine part is going to level the playing field, and the delta will come from the people who put that magical touch of human understanding and human interaction on top of that,"* says Sean Summers of Mercado Libre.

Asmita Dubey of L'Oréal adds: "We can be more demanding of AI - it is not about what AI can do for us; it is about what we, as a business, need AI to do for us."

Phase Three: From WHAT to HOW

Phase One defined the external context. Phase Two clarified the emerging role of Marketing. Phase Three will address the most practical question of all:

How can Marketing leaders best step up within their own companies?

Because enterprises vary so widely in structure, maturity, market context, growth model, and culture, there will be no single answer. That is precisely why Phase Three will focus on guidelines, self-assessment, and internal alignment.

Agency2030: The New Marketing Ecosystem

The Marketing2030 Phase Two findings make it very clear that the changes reshaping Marketing do not stop at the organization's edge. They are also disrupting the entire ecosystem of partners, platforms, and capabilities on which Marketing depends.

The traditional agency model is under severe pressure. According to the ANA, the average client-agency relationship, which lasted 6.5 years in 2015, had fallen to 3.7 years by 2025. AI is automating many tasks that agencies have historically charged clients for.

CEOs question the value they receive. CFOs demand greater transparency. And the fundamental questions of what to build internally versus what to buy externally, who owns the data, and how to compensate partners have become some of the most strategic decisions a CMO can make.

These questions deserve their own dedicated study. That is why IRG has launched Agency2030 - a new, complementary initiative to examine how the Marketing ecosystem needs to evolve: the future of client-agency relationships, new compensation and partnership models, the make-vs-buy decision in an AI-driven world, and what *good* looks like for the ecosystem as a whole.

Agency2030 is being developed in close partnership with Marketing leaders, agency leaders, and platform partners globally. For more information, please contact lobo@instituteforrealgrowth.com.

Participate and contribute to M2030 Phase Three

Our work makes a clear case for marketers to move with clarity and conviction - collaborating with their C-suite peers to define what overall business growth requires as an architecture, and what the role of Marketing should be. The answer will differ by company, by industry and context, even by leader. That is precisely why Phase Three will focus on practical frameworks and tools to support that conversation. We look forward to continuing this journey with you.

To contribute to Marketing2030, or to ask a question, please contact:

info@instituteforrealgrowth.com

With special thanks to all the M2030 Partners:

The Institute for Real Growth (IRG)
The IRG is independent and operates as a not-for-profit. Our purpose is to increase CMO personal, business, and societal impact by driving more Humanized Growth. Our events and leadership programs are built on the learning generated in our though leadership studies:

The **IRG Growth Study** (2020) found that revenue growth overperformers create value for all stakeholders, not only shareholders. We coined this 'Humanized Growth'. The **IRG Impact Study** (2024) provided C-Suite leaders a 'Humanized Growth Driver Model' to develop and execute more sustained business growth. **IRG Marketing2030** (2026) is defining the Marketing strategy, structure, and capabilities required to win in the future, and **Agency2030** (2027) will focus on how the Marketing ecosystem will need to evolve to deliver winning Marketing programs.