



# Elevate every decision with intelligent marketing operations

Fast-track to future-ready performance

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Today's C-suite leaders are in the hot seat—they're facing pressure like never before to deliver sustainable, profitable operational growth amid unrelenting uncertainty.

Marketing and advertising leaders are no exception; they, too, are expected to deliver against this objective. But what does that delivery actually look like? The advertising industry magazine B&T recently described it like this:

**When it comes to advertising, the customer might see an eye-catching ad on social, a short video on YouTube, a curb-side ad...on their screen. However, as any marketer will know, this 'end result' is only a fraction of the overall process. Driving these campaigns are highly sophisticated recommendation engines, personalization techniques, and all types of digital tools, systems and processes, connecting that message to that customer.<sup>1</sup>**

This can be thought of as the “marketing machine”—and the more efficient you make it, the more you can invest in the content that reaches your customer.

It's all a part of life for Chief Marketing Officers (CMOs), who today face an intimidating reality: Marketing itself has evolved from a relatively straightforward function to a dizzyingly complex one. Where once marketers were charged with delivering ads through a limited number of channels, now they're tasked with identifying users across multiple platforms and channels, aligning behavior, messaging and execution, as well as creative and brand consistency—all through a dense and rapidly changing media ecosystem.

Increasing customer expectations adds another layer of complexity: Irrelevant, poorly timed advertising can alienate otherwise promising customers. Winning them over means understanding and serving them with targeted, personalized content, at the right time. And once would-be customers—especially enterprise customers—are successfully converted to loyal customers, the marketer's work isn't done. Marketers must continue to engage them, addressing all stages of the customer lifecycle, providing an end-to-end experience to encourage loyalty and garner additional sales.

Providing the right content at the right time during a customer lifecycle is both an art and a science...and CMOs are on the hook for mastering both.

**Let's imagine that they can.**

What if CMOs could automate commoditized marketing tasks, creating headroom for their staff to spend time on more strategic endeavors? What if their staff could build engagement models, empowering them to test and discover the strategies that work? What if they could create personalized experiences and one-to-one engagements? What if they could continually develop new capabilities and rapidly deploy them where they're most needed?

The good news is we don't have to resign ourselves to just imagining such a scenario; it actually exists today. It's a state of operations maturity we call "future-readiness."

Future-ready organizations deliver excellent customer and employee experiences while performing better in efficiency and profitability. The principles and techniques fueling future-ready operations are relevant for business-to-consumer and business-to-business enterprises alike, with enhanced experiences and greater agility being key priorities for both.

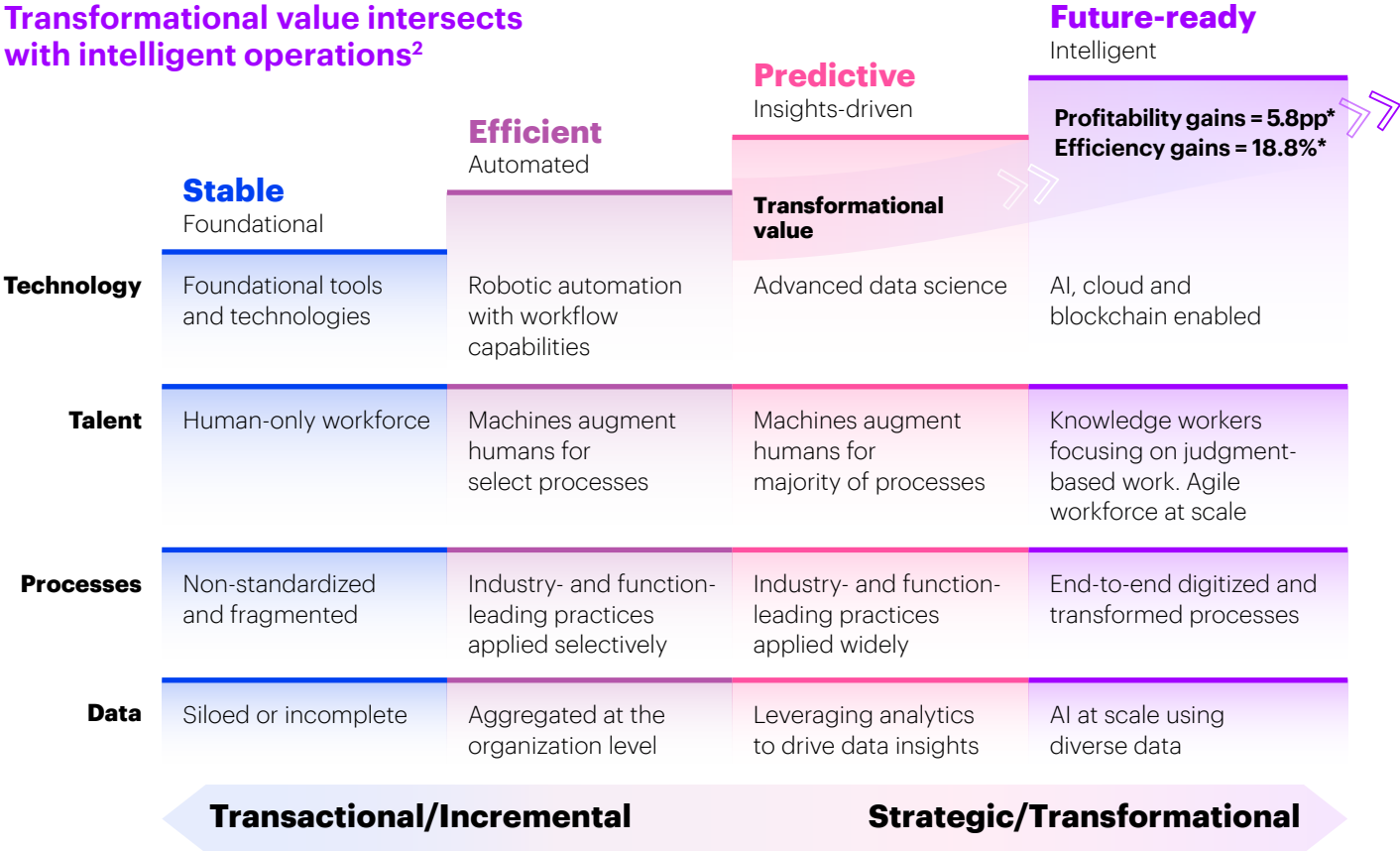


# Are marketers overconfident about operations maturity?

Accenture surveyed more than 1,100 C-suite and VP-level executives across 11 countries and 13 industries, including CMOs and their direct reports, to better understand the connection between business operations maturity and performance.

We identified four levels of operations maturity: **stable**, **efficient**, **predictive** and **future-ready**. Each level is grounded in and enabled by progressively sophisticated technology, talent, processes and data insight (Figure 1). As companies advance in operations maturity, they move from gaining transactional value to gaining a much broader mix of financial and non-financial measures of value which we deem transformational. And every advance they make will yield substantial benefits: Even a one level increase in operational maturity results in a projected 17% increase in global profits.

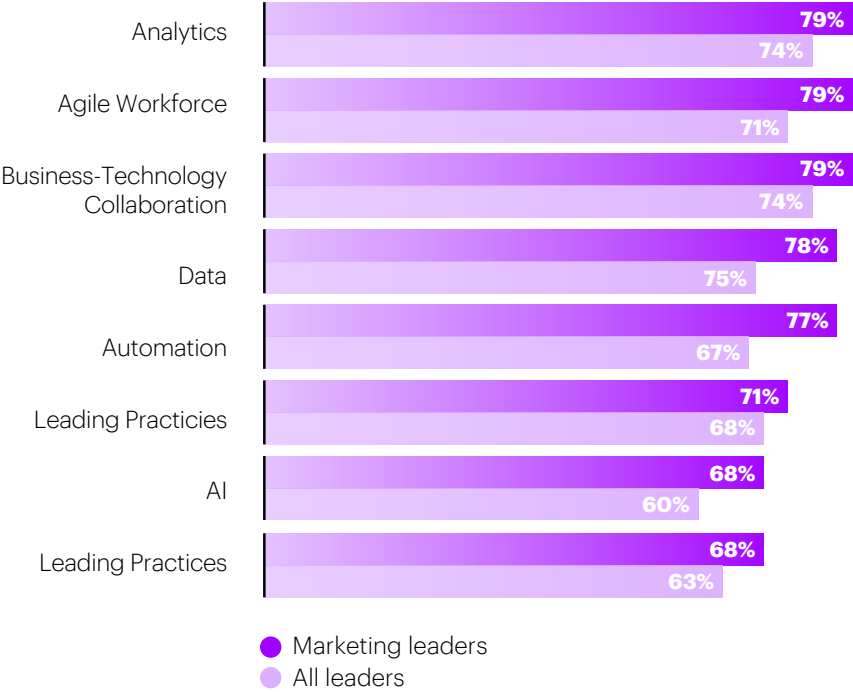
**Figure 1.**  
Transformational value intersects with intelligent operations<sup>2</sup>



\*Accenture Research and Oxford Economics Intelligent Operations Survey, 2020  
 Accenture experience shows that additional productivity and efficiency gains up to 50% can be seen in organizations displaying future-ready characteristics.

Many of the more than 100 marketers surveyed are optimistic that their organizations are well-positioned to advance along the spectrum and reap the rewards. In Accenture’s eight keys to achieving operational maturity (as noted in the Figure 2), marketers were more likely than other executives to report that their organizations are outperforming others.

**Figure 2.**  
**Marketing executives see their organizations outperforming others across the board<sup>3</sup>**



63%

of marketing executives characterized their organizations as being in the “predictive” stage.

While

9%

reported that their organizations are currently future-ready—compared to 7% of the overall sample—38% expect to be future-ready by 2023.

# Preparing marketers to become future ready

The journey to 2023 starts now. Marketers serious about attaining future-readiness by that year or earlier must embrace a true operating model transformation.

**We found three things organizations must know to become future-ready:**

01

**Know the  
ultimate goal**

02

**Know the  
key steps**

03

**Know how to leapfrog  
maturity levels**

# 01 Know the ultimate goal

Think big. Act together.





The path to future readiness is not necessarily linear. Even stable organizations can accelerate their journeys by moving up more than one maturity level. CMOs will need to take a bold approach to attaining future-readiness. That means:

**Assessing and aligning technology:**

Is their marketing technology ecosystem working hard enough and achieving the right outcomes?

**Training Marketers:**

Are they upskilling employees to run smarter marketing operations?

**Marketing data:**

Are they making the most of their data and analytics capabilities?

As CMOs ask these questions, marketers must consider some transformational solutions.

Too often, organizations approach operations improvements in a siloed, incremental fashion. Instead, they should counter the tendency by thinking big and starting with the end goal in mind. They should conceptualize what a future-ready state looks like—for instance, what advances in operations would new technologies enable? They should set that point as an aspirational goal, and then consider the bold moves it would take to attain this goal (something our research shows many don't do.)

**Delivery excellence is no longer a nice-to-have. It's imperative to deliver the right experiences every time, at every interaction.**

02

# Know the key steps

Automation, augmentation,  
AI, cloud



There are many steps between one level of maturity and the next, but some can't be skipped. Accenture has identified three key steps that CMOs should consider:

- 1 Create data-driven agility**
- 2 Elevate human talent through technological innovation**
- 3 Collaborate across business and technology functions**

## 1 Create data-driven agility

More than ever, marketing activations are underpinned by data-driven decision making. Indeed, marketers report widespread or full-scale data use in their organizations. This impressive trend is the natural result of the proliferation of data—consumers are spending more time on their devices, yielding more data points—and the expansion of technology infrastructure and analytics capabilities.

For marketing activations to succeed, the data behind them must be scaled, actionable and quickly accessible. Yet marketers often have been limited by intermittent access to their data and disjointed reporting from legacy resources. In too many cases, data and insights are being governed externally, effectively creating barriers between the client and their own business insights.

That must change. Staying competitive means adopting an agile approach.

Marketers should establish a framework that allows them to govern their data assets and work proactively with all third-party data providers and partners to ensure real-time access and control over their data. This way, they will be empowered to deploy predictive analytics at pace to fuel business growth.



# 78%

of marketers report widespread or full-scale data use in their organizations—some 2.5 times more than three years ago.



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### Case study

Accenture worked with a global software leader to set up an integrated, end-to-end analytics operating model consisting of data scientists and insight generation specialists.

This team worked with the company to develop advanced predictive models, drive actionable recommendations and enable marketers with self-serve campaign performance reports. The initiative increased the speed with which they gained valuable insights by 80%, enabling faster decisions and activations.

Such agility requires the best technical foundation: Cloud infrastructure. The cloud empowers companies to deploy data at speed and at scale. Fortunately, many organizations have already made significant cloud investments: 75% of marketing executives report that they've applied cloud at scale.

Through their increasing use of cloud-powered capabilities and tools like predictive modeling, marketers are at the forefront of the democratization of technology—the movement to put powerful, user-friendly tech solutions into the hands of people who weren't trained as engineers or technologists. Empowered with such technology, more marketers will excel at data-driven agility. As barriers to data insights fall, businesses will flourish.

## 2 Elevate marketing talent with the right digital innovation

The cloud is just one technological innovation key to powering marketing agility. Another is automation.

Every company has its commoditized tasks, and marketing is not immune. While these will vary by organization, one thing most companies have in common is that their lists of commoditized tasks tend to grow longer as the companies themselves grow and expand. As a result, marketing talent is frequently deployed against these low-value exercises—efforts that would be better concentrated on content creation, experience design and generally more strategic activities.

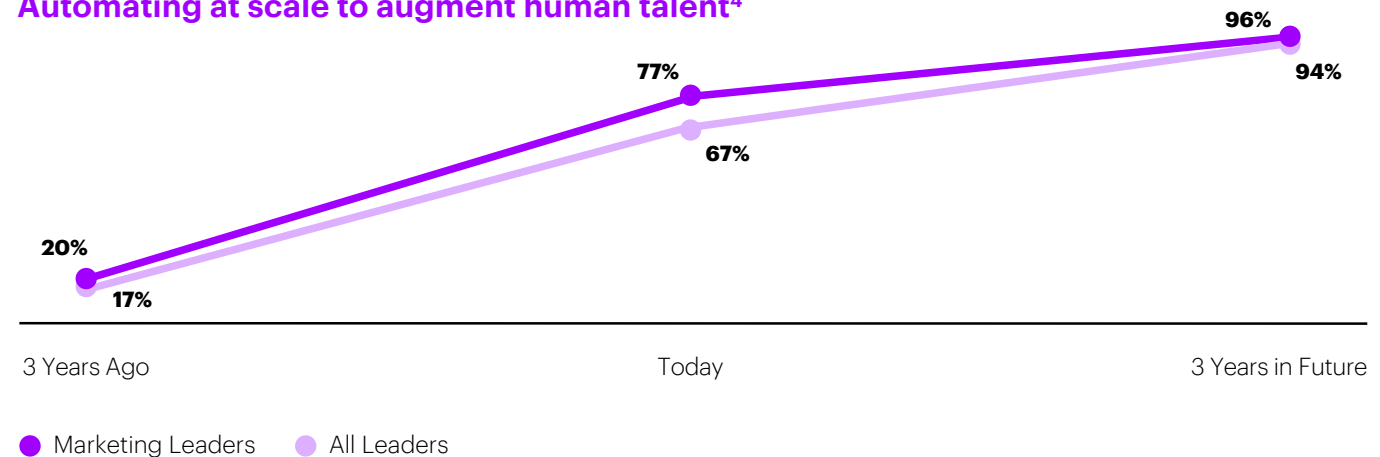
### Automation can help.

Automation can manage and improve commoditized tasks like optimization, dashboarding and reporting, thereby driving efficiency while freeing human talent to pursue more complex, high-value work. Companies can increase speed to insight as marketers gain bandwidth to iterate, test and learn.

Marketing leaders report impressive strides in automation: The number of marketing executives reporting widespread or full-scale automation at their organizations has surged more than threefold over the past three years (Figure 3).

But scaling automation isn't simple: It's critical to identify which processes to automate for performance and efficiency. The right partner can help guide a marketer in this endeavor.

**Figure 3.**  
Automating at scale to augment human talent<sup>4</sup>





### Case study

Accenture partnered with a multinational pharmaceutical company to automate a variety of tasks related to their delivery of digital content around the globe. As part of a new, integrated operating model, this automation played a critical role in scaling the pharmaceutical company's marketing operations to serve 40 markets and over 50 brands.

Production turnaround times shrank 30%, while speed to market increased by over 20%. Perhaps most importantly, marketers were able to devote more of their energy to the sophisticated work of devising healthcare content, and medical professionals were able to access that information faster—a healthy outcome all around.

**30%**

decrease in production  
turnaround

**20%**

increase in  
speed to market

### 3 Collaborate across business and technology functions

As a business grows and expands, its various functions tend to develop different key performance indicators and objectives. This creates internal fragmentation and deprives leaders of a unified view of performance and growth.

Customers, however, aren't interested in a fragmented experience. Though they live in an increasingly omnichannel world, they expect a consistent, satisfying experience regardless of which platform they're using. Organizations must think the same way. As customers embrace new ways of interacting with and experiencing brands, future-ready businesses are going beyond simply improving the customer journey. They are excelling at what we call the "Business of Experience" by responding to unmet and evolving needs, as do successful digital sales operations (see Accenture's Elevate Every Decision with Digital Inside Sales report.) It's not about convincing the customer of their appetite for a particular product or service—it's about matching the right solution to the right customer.

### Delivering an exceptional and consistent customer experience requires breaking down barriers across functions, from the front office to the back office.

Delivering such exceptional and consistent customer experience is part of advancing to a future-ready state. It requires breaking down barriers across functions—from the front office to the back office—and aligning KPIs to ensure consistency in the customer experience approach. Such alignment, of course, can be a challenging endeavor, especially for sophisticated businesses with complex ways of working.

CMOs, in particular, can struggle to achieve alignment with other business functions. That's partly because they rely on marketing proxies that are considered proven tools of measurement, but in reality don't provide a direct link between marketing performance and business growth. They should take advantage of new tools and capabilities that present a clear picture of how marketing activations contribute to customer conversions. Doing so would forge a new level of connectivity between front, middle and back-office functions, supported by a unified infrastructure and common objectives and measurement criteria.



### Case study

A global energy giant pursued this connectivity with Accenture's help. We worked with the company across functions to assemble a unified view of the customer experience. This view empowered a new, customer-led marketing approach that enabled the business to scale across new territories and audiences while building deeper relationships with loyalty customers. The collaboration resulted in significant increases in customers' engagement online, with a 160% spike in time spent on the company's digital channels, while overall engagement with the brand rose 58%.

### Preparing marketers to become future-ready

Most marketing executives we surveyed have yet to reach this level of connectivity; just 15% say business-technology collaboration is being used at scale at their organizations. But they also see a brighter future ahead, with 60% predicting that such collaboration will be used at scale three years from now. And as marketers become more connected with other functions, they'll connect better with their customers, too.

03

# Know how to leapfrog maturity levels

Don't go it alone

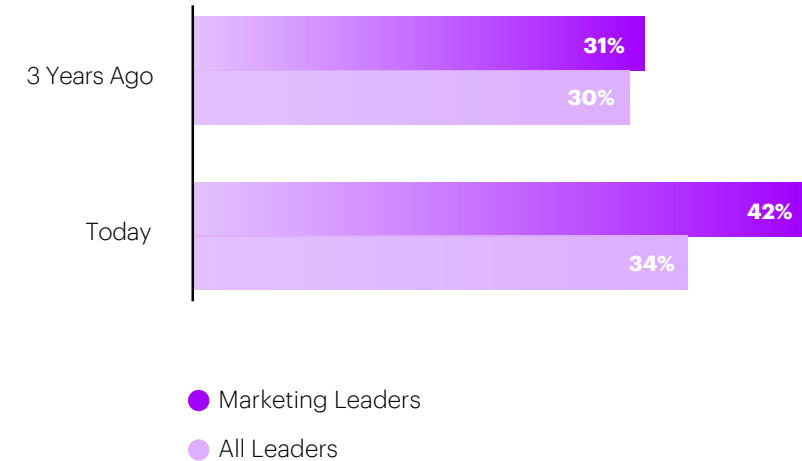
## How can you skip levels? Form and build ecosystem relationships.

Collaboration isn't just critical among internal functions—external partners play an important role in making marketing organizations future-ready, too. Marketers recognize this, with many citing ecosystem partnerships as a top-three business priority (Figure 4) and nearly half reporting that their partnerships have improved over the past three years.

The path to such improvement is not without obstacles. As they work across multiple technology platforms and with multiple service providers, marketers too often rely on a patchwork of low-value, commoditized tasks to manage their provider relationships. Their employees, for instance, might find themselves facing the thankless duties of cataloging reports or standardizing data from multiple ecosystem partners.

As previously noted, automation can help. But just as important is the ability of marketers to govern and scale their relationships with their ecosystem partners. This means identifying how each partnership delivers value and how best to engage with each partner. Successful management of ecosystem partners can free marketing talent to focus on strategic pursuits. It also requires developing the right in-house capabilities to best capitalize on the services and benefits the partner delivers, ultimately driving efficiency and sustainable growth.

**Figure 4.**  
Keeping ecosystem relationships in focus<sup>5</sup>





### Case study

A global cosmetics giant eyed sustainable growth when it collaborated with Accenture to build relationships with ecosystem partners. It sought to drive a deeper understanding of customers and transcend its status quo: Because the company did not sell products directly to customers, marketers struggled with limited insights on customer preferences and behavior.

With Accenture's help, the business partnered with a technology company and a department store that sold cosmetics. These partnerships transformed the company's client relationship management system, empowering it to gather once-inaccessible customer intelligence. The company also developed in-house capabilities to efficiently leverage that intelligence. The team created customer personas and tailored, data-driven customer engagement strategies.

In short, the brand went from having virtually no information on addressable customers—that is, customers that could be targeted for marketing outreach—to knowing exactly how to appeal to them. Empowered with this new, targeted marketing approach, the company experienced a 25% increase in customer engagement and a 10% increase in revenue per customer purchase. Customers were inspired to engage more with the brand and spend more on its products, delivering sustainable growth. The right ecosystem relationships made it all happen.

Investing in strategy is another way to leapfrog your way to a future-ready state.

Future-ready capabilities, including those described above, should be implemented as part of an overarching strategy, leading you to achieve your ultimate goal. While this approach may initially appear obvious, all too often businesses haven't invested enough in shaping the data-driven insights and assembling the best resources to make this happen.

The good news is that marketing executives and executives across the board increasingly understand the importance of cohesive strategies. They recognize that technology must play a central role, with most executives (83%) across functions agreeing that their organizations' business and technology strategies are becoming inseparable.

Strategy can position organizations to leapfrog maturity levels, even enabling some to jump straight from stable to future-ready.

But whether they take one big jump, or several smaller ones, organizations will undoubtedly find their strategies evolving. In fact, as marketers add and develop the capabilities for intelligent operations, they will exponentially increase their ability to sharpen their strategic direction, do so with agility, and discover new growth opportunities along the way.

83%

of executives agree that their organizations' business and technology strategies are becoming inseparable.<sup>6</sup>



Elevate every decision with intelligent marketing operations

## The future-ready advantage

It would be foolhardy to believe that marketing will ever become less complex. But pursuing operations maturity will help CMOs excel, complexity notwithstanding.

The journey to becoming a future-ready organization will look different for everyone. What organizations will have in common, however, is that they will reap substantial benefits for every advance they make.

Meanwhile, as CMOs aspire to advance their operations, customers are primed to embrace the end products. They crave future-ready experiences, seeking personalized engagement delivered through multiple channels. They interact and spend more with brands that provide just that.

Delivering for customers in this fashion means CMOs must fine-tune their own marketing machines. They must achieve agility, embrace innovation, and leverage data-driven decision-making. It is in taking these bold steps that they will achieve future-ready state, with intelligent operations that yield sustainable growth and fuel a successful future.

# About the author



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