

The top challenge for legal CMOs: Building a next-generation growth engine

September 2025

Forewords

LMA Europe

The Legal Marketing Association, Europe (LMA Europe) is delighted to have partnered with Source Global Research to deliver this valuable report, which examines the evolving landscape facing chief marketing officers (CMO) in the legal sector.

The legal services market is experiencing unprecedented transformation. Industry consolidation is a prominent feature as firms look to scale, while alternative legal service providers (ALSPs) are making inroads, and private equity firms are investing in law firms like never before. Against this backdrop, firms are facing growing pressure to deliver more for less in an intensely competitive market.

This research reveals a fundamental shift in the role of marketing and business development (BD) professionals in law firms, in particular the role of the CMO. With 67% of respondents expecting the CMO's role in revenue generation to become more important in the future, it is clear that the profession is stepping into a more strategic, commercially-focused position. However, this evolution brings new responsibilities and skill requirements that we must address collectively as an industry.

As marketing leaders, it is important for us to embrace data analytics, develop stronger relationship-building capabilities, and become fluent in emerging technologies whilst maintaining our core expertise in brand management and client experience.

The recommendations in this report offer a practical roadmap for CMOs looking to succeed in the law firm of the future, from defining clear USPs in an increasingly competitive market to building revenue-centric cultures and investing wisely in technology.

The legal marketing profession is at an inflexion point, and how we respond to these challenges will determine our success in the years ahead.

Karen Morton

CMO of Cleary Gottlieb and President of LMA Europe



Source

Across our research at Source, we are seeing market upheaval that has tipped us from an uncertain market into one that is unreliable. This is bringing fundamental changes in terms of how businesses operate, how they position themselves for growth, and the skills and mindset required for success.

This report, a collaboration between Source and LMA Europe, sheds light on how this new dynamic is reshaping what it takes to succeed as a legal services firm today. While the prolonged volatility in the macroeconomic environment means that an increasing number of clients and firms alike are worried—even frightened—by the situation and its impact on their ability to invest in their businesses, our research shows that marketing and BD leaders are determined to respond rapidly and thrive in this evolving ecosystem.

So, what does this look like on the ground? The research and interviews we carried out reveal leaders of marketing and BD teams who are stepping into more strategic roles—building influence across their organisations and recognising the part technologies can play in empowering their teams to drive efficiencies but also, crucially, drive growth.

The themes we've highlighted aim to inspire discussions on how marketing leaders can futureproof their own functions, whether by creating a revenue-centric culture, addressing specific skill gaps, or harnessing the power of new tech.

Let us know which findings, challenges, and actions resonate most with you—we'd like to continue the conversation.

Fiona Czerniawska

Founder and CEO of Source



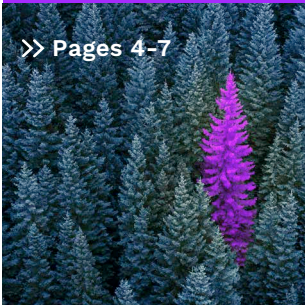
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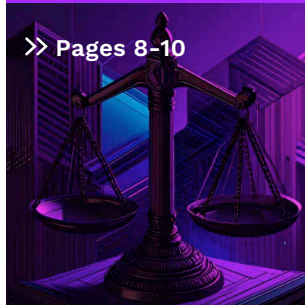


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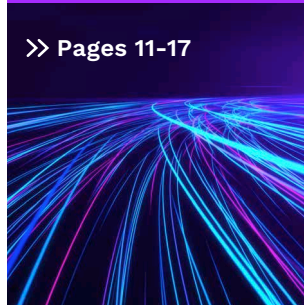


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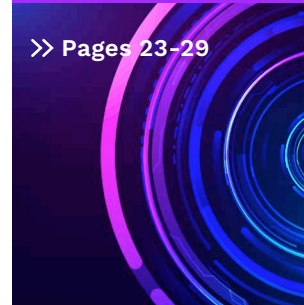


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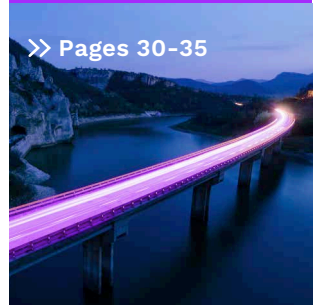


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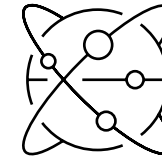
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1 A shake up in the legal services market is putting pressure on firms

Industry consolidation is a prominent feature in the legal services market globally as firms look to scale—Europe is no exception. Meanwhile alternative legal service providers (ALSPs) and the Big Four are making inroads into key segments, and private equity firms, with deep pockets, are making investments in law firms. At the same time, clients are under pressure from macroeconomic uncertainty and want more for less.

To help their firms navigate this dynamic marketplace, marketing leaders are looking to highlight their firm's tech capabilities, be clear on their USP, and put expertise at the heart of their brand activation.



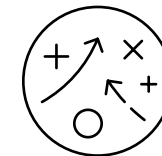
24%

of marketing leaders think buyers of legal services will prioritise global reach, and the same proportion seek tech & innovation capabilities

2 Expectations of marketing leaders are increasing

Growing expectations mean that CMOs need more than brand and marketing skills to succeed, with the role expanding to include business development and much more. The best marketing leaders are now seen as pivotal to strategy development, revenue growth, and client experience.

To deliver on this expanded role, CMOs will need to double down on leadership and relationship-building skills, while putting data analysis at the centre of their toolkit. Technology is set to be a powerful enabler for marketing leaders, who should also make sure they have the right people with the right skills supporting them.



67%

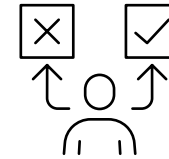
think the CMO's role in revenue generation will become more important

3

Marketing and BD teams will need new skills

As the role of the CMO expands, so does the remit of their marketing and BD teams. Marketing leaders recognise that there are some challenges and skills gaps that must be addressed.

The capabilities that need strengthening closely reflect the ones that we've highlighted as crucial to CMOs today: data & analytics, competitor intelligence, and relationship building. And CMOs that can build a culture of continuous learning in today's rapidly changing world are likely to have a competitive advantage in the market.



33%

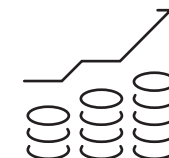
say employees cannot be adequately upskilled or lack the tech capabilities their firm needs

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MarTech—only the tip of the tech iceberg

Technology is an increasingly important feature of how law firms go to market. However, for the marketing and BD functions specifically, there is a lot of talk about how to use new tech, including generative AI (GenAI), but less clarity about where value is truly being created.

Marketing leaders have a lot to gain from making sure they're maximising the potential of their current systems, that they have the right data foundations in place to support the use of emerging technologies, and that they are prioritising AI that will help them meet their firm's strategic goals.



96%

say their level of investment in BD & marketing tech will increase over the next 18 months

Introduction



From influencer to shaper

To be a leader in marketing today is no easy task.

In the space of just a few years, the market, once fairly reliable, has transformed. Challenges prevailed, but it was a question of when rather than what. But in today's market, one day often bears little semblance to the next. One day, new geopolitical tensions seem to arise. Another, economic conditions get tighter. Meanwhile, technologies continue to advance at a breakneck pace.

The result? An unreliable market.

Clients' needs and ways of working are changing. They are budget constrained, and for some types of work, show a greater appetite to shop around for external support. New players are challenging incumbents that are unable to keep up. This is particularly palpable in the legal industry, where everything from billing structures to attitudes around outsourced work is being transformed.

But where there is a challenge, there is an opportunity. Over the last few years, the diversity of tasks landing on the desks of marketing leaders has expanded. They have stepped outside their shoes as brand guardians and are increasingly being recognised as critical drivers of revenue growth.

It was against this background that Source was engaged by the Legal Marketing Association in Europe (LMA Europe) to investigate what legal marketing and business leaders make of the changing market environment—and crucially, what this means for their teams for the future. To do this, we surveyed 200 marketing executives in the legal and consulting industry globally. This was supplemented with 11 in-depth qualitative interviews with leaders in the field, where we dug into various themes.

Our findings point to a shift from marketing and business development (BD) teams being perceived as a support function to being seen as a shaper of firm-wide strategy. Their unique position within the business has made way for the CMO to emerge as a strategic orchestrator of an internal ecosystem at a time when the market requires firms to operate with greater efficiency and as a symphony. This report draws on some of the steps CMOs and their teams can take to step into that role with success.

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A shake up in the legal services market is putting pressure on firms

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A highly competitive market and changing client needs make for a challenging time

The market for legal services is an increasingly competitive one: Industry consolidation is a prominent feature in Europe as firms look for scale, while new entrants, including alternative legal services providers (ALSPs) and the Big Four, are making inroads into key segments, leveraging technology to gain competitive edge over traditional players. Private equity firms are also making waves, as they make investments in firms and bring along generous budgets to plough into cutting-edge technology solutions as a way to shake up the industry and steal a march on incumbents. Recent target law firms have included DWF Group in 2023 through to Stowe and FBC Manby Bowdler at the back end of 2024¹.

To make matters more challenging, an unreliable macroeconomic environment and rapid advances in technology are reshaping clients' needs and perceptions of value. AI, in particular, is providing another level of market disruption, with the more repetitive and commoditised legal services work being an obvious target. Against this backdrop, firms are facing growing pressure to deliver more for less, intensifying competition.

With a greater number of options on the table and a desire to keep costs down, clients may also be more willing to change advisors than in the past, particularly when it comes to transactional or less differentiated work. Jon Brewer, former CMO at Orrick, explained: "A really big thing that is driving a hugely competitive market is the lack of client loyalty combined with the fact that clients would rather shop around. Loyalty has declined over the last five years, and it's set to decline even more."



"There are too many law firms and legal providers in the market. That means that there will be winners and losers. We're beginning to see some of that fallout. Some firms have gone out of business or have had to be absorbed by other firms. In particular, the mid-market is very overcrowded, so you're going to see a lot of consolidation."

Adam Soames, Global Chief Business Development Officer, Ashurst

¹ Josh Gabert-Doyon, *Private equity money flows into UK's consumer law firms*, Financial Times, Jan. 13, 2025 (accessed June 13, 2025). Available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/925dced8-e831-48f6-b679-39f86a84916e>.

At a time of such dynamic change, law firms need the whole top team to play their part in shaping and then meeting the organisation's goals, and the best marketing leaders will be right at the forefront of their firm's response. Business development and marketing leaders are under pressure to leverage the brand, build stronger client relationships, and play a pivotal role in delivering growth. They will also have a valuable insight on the market to share with firm leadership and can use their access to competitor intelligence to keep the firm abreast of market changes.



“Clients increasingly expect us to leverage technology to deliver better outcomes. While much of our work isn’t in the commoditised space most vulnerable to disruption from generative AI, we’re regularly asked, ‘How are you using technology to give me a competitive edge and drive results for my business?’ These expectations are shaping how we innovate and deliver value.”

Laura Nicholls, Chief Client Officer, Clifford Chance

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Expectations of marketing leaders are increasing

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The CMO role is evolving, and revenue generation is now a crucial capability

With the market for legal services more competitive than ever, it's all-hands-on-deck when it comes to revenue generation in law firms. The CMO is well positioned in the business to become a valuable partner in these growth efforts, and is armed with the right skillset. In particular, the CMO's place at the intersection of client needs and internal expertise, acting as a channel between the firm and the market, equips them to step more firmly into a strategic, revenue-generating role. This means moving beyond being brand guardian into a pivotal leadership position with commerciality and client experience (CX) at the heart of it—all while elevating the marketing function to be a more strategic partner to the business.

The respondents to our survey are well aware of this, with 67% expecting the CMO's role in revenue generation to become more important in the future.



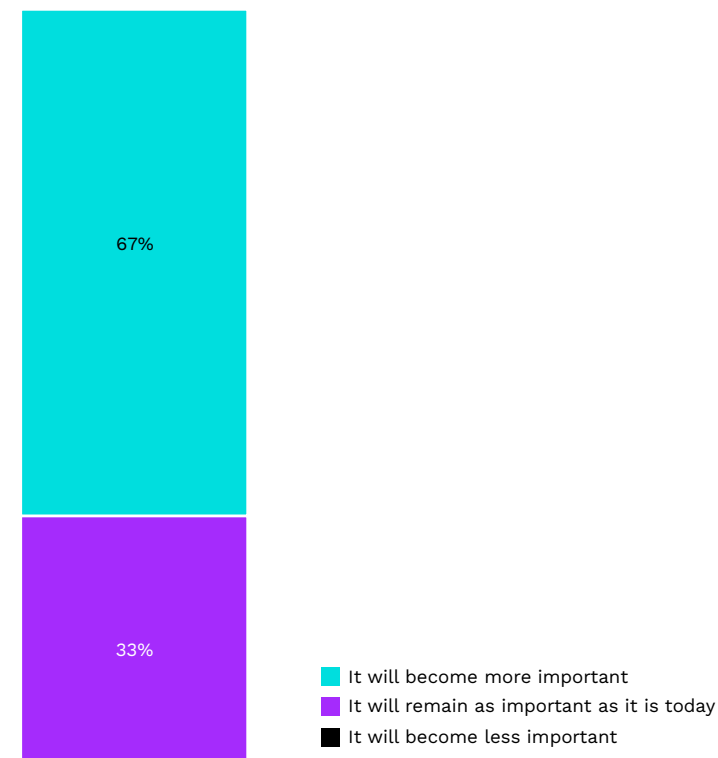
“It’s about how we help our partners and lawyers drive profitable revenue growth with a focus on our strategic clients. How do we expand the depth and breadth of those relationships? How do we grow our reputation as a leading firm in strategic industries? That is the way we want to compete.”

Adam Soames, Global Chief Business Development Officer, Ashurst

Heather Vadgama, CMO of Walkers, explained: *“There’s a lot more expected of CMOs today, and more we need to be doing. Firms really are expecting us to be leading the drive for growth, whether that is brand profile or revenue growth from clients.”*

Figure 1

If at all, how do you think the role of the CMO in revenue generation will change in the future?



Data source: LMA and Source CMO Survey 2025

When thinking about why marketing leaders are set to become more accountable for revenue generation, respondents flag the strategic importance of growth today, the CMO's expertise in CX, and that the rest of the business expects this leadership around growth from a true business partner.

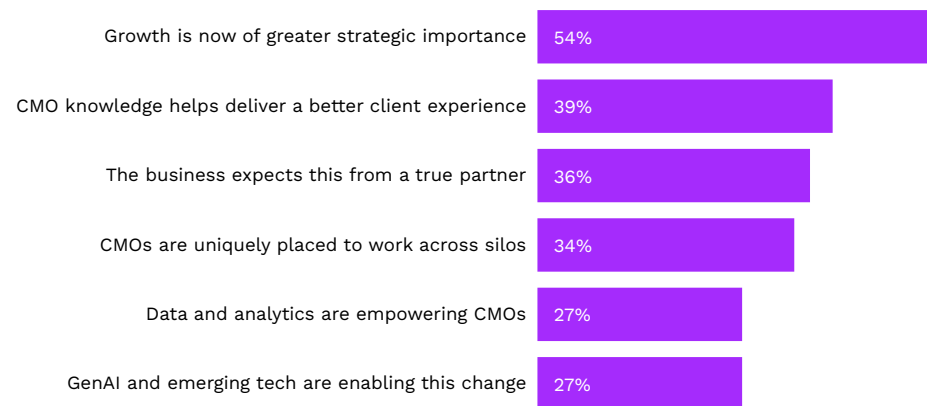


“Client growth metrics are very important. My teams lead in the setting of targets but this involves true collaboration with a variety of other teams from L&D to Research to Pricing and Finance. A lot of the targets are financial but we are also looking for indication of a mindset shift—measuring the correlation between partner training, for example, and client activity.”

Alessandra Almeida Jones, Global Chief Marketing Officer of BCLP

Figure 2

Why do you think the CMO will be more accountable for revenue generation in the future? (Select all that apply. Asked of those that said the CMO's role in revenue generation would become more important).



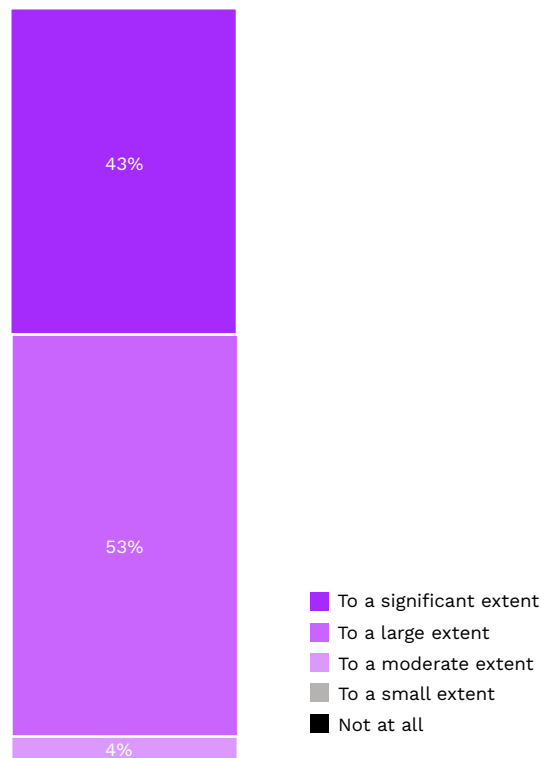
Data source: LMA and Source CMO Survey 2025

Client experience is also central to the CMO's remit

Homing in on client experience, marketing leaders see themselves playing a leadership role here. In a service business like law, where lawyers are interacting directly with clients, it is interesting to see that CMOs believe this is another area where they have accountability. Indeed, 96% of them said that the responsibility for helping deliver an exceptional client experience sat with them to a large or significant extent.

Figure 3

To what extent do you think responsibility for helping deliver an exceptional client experience sits with the CMO?



Data source: LMA and Source CMO Survey 2025

Technology will be a critical enabler here, with over half of respondents (51%) saying that their use of data & analytics to better understand client behaviour will be one of the most valuable ways they deliver an exceptional client experience. They also flag better onboarding and campaigns that drive conversations with clients as other routes to success.

Some of the tools that marketing leaders will be using to deliver on CX sit squarely within their function—those used for client onboarding and marketing campaigns, for example. Other systems, including those that deliver that all-important analytics capability, may require the input from colleagues in the wider firm to get the most out of them. The data marketing team often exists within the firm, but it's stuck in a silo or not usable in its current guise. CMOs will need to collaborate to deliver real results, and this means using their influence to place CX at the heart of the C-suite agenda.

Figure 4

In what ways do you think the CMO can deliver an exceptional client experience?



Data source: LMA and Source CMO Survey 2025

What's in a name?

There are other expectations on marketing leaders too: everything from strategy development to client experience to cost management. Alessandra Almeida Jones, Global Chief Marketing Officer of BCLP, set out the challenge: *“There has been a big shift. As CMOs, we are becoming increasingly involved in strategy development, not just the marketing and BD strategy, but firm strategy.”* Alessandra, who acted as facilitator when the firm worked on its growth strategy, continues: *“There is pressure to help grow the business and position the firm. But there is also pressure to ensure resources are used more strategically and efficiently.”*

The role has evolved to the extent that some say the title of CMO no longer captures the full, rich remit of the chief marketer. While some of the leaders we spoke to didn't want to change the title, others felt there were alternative options, like chief strategy officer, that now reflect their broad remit more accurately. *“We are still called CMOs, yet very few of us actually do any marketing”,* says Karen Snell, Chief Business Development and Marketing Officer at Kennedys. *“[Marketing] has evolved from the function that ‘made things look pretty’ and put on events to one that is driving firm strategy. A lot of what we are trying to achieve has dependencies across other parts of the business.”*

The CMO's evolving job title is evident beyond legal services too, with a recent HBR article² referencing growth of 80% in the use of the term chief product officer, 78% for chief sales officer, and 75% for chief revenue officer—all titles that speak to the commercial demands on today's marketing leaders.

While some people may feel that debate over the job title isn't the biggest issue here, what's behind the debate does have important implications: The CMO's strategic role now stretches so far beyond traditional marketing activities that some feel they are being stretched too thin. Marketing leaders need to keep educating the partnership about the scope and value of their role, as well as the resources they need to be effective.



“The role of the CMO is quickly becoming the role of the chief strategy officer.

The function of business development and marketing has continued to evolve from providing administrative support—collecting name tags and booking client dinners. Senior-level marketers and especially CMOs are now increasingly being asked to provide strategic business guidance to the firm in addition to managing tactical execution.”

Sam Howe, Director, Litigation Strategy, Nixon Peabody LLP (and formerly Director of Marketing and Business Insights at the firm)

2 Denise Dahlhoff, *Does the chief marketing officer role need an update?* Harvard Business Review, May 2025 (accessed June 13, 2025). Available at: <https://hbr.org/2025/05/does-the-chief-marketing-officer-role-need-an-update>.

With this vastly expanded role, what skills will marketing leaders need in their expanded roles?

A leader that can build alliances and influence

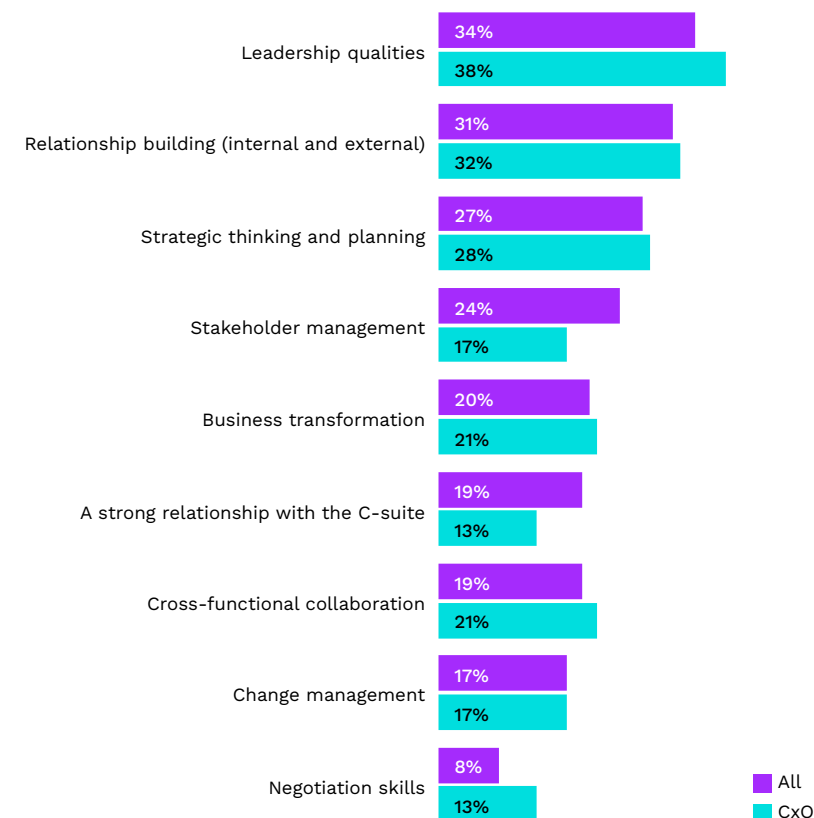
With the evolution of their role, it is not a surprise to find that leadership and relationship building are the top two soft skills that respondents think CMOs will need in the next five years. By relationship building we mean both external connections—that exceptional client experience—and internal collaboration—working with the leadership team, functional experts, and lawyers, right across silos to really deliver results.

Sam Howe, Director of Litigation Strategy at Nixon Peabody LLP, sets out what this relationship building looks like in practice: *“The most efficient way of innovating is to find a partner or a group of partners that are willing to try something new. You work with them; and if the idea in question has impact, you can then leverage that precedent to bring that new approach to the practice, departmental, or even the firm level. It’s about relationship building, consensus building, and clearly demonstrating results. Those will always be paramount skills in a law firm environment.”*

Other soft skills that marketing leaders will need include strategic thinking & planning, stakeholder management, and business transformation. All of this speaks to the increasingly important role CMOs are now playing in the business—driving strategy and making change happen, as they actively transform their role. This means being able to influence people at the most senior levels of the firm.

Figure 5

What are the top two soft skills you believe CMOs will need in the next five years? (Select two)



Data source: LMA and Source CMO Survey 2025

A leader empowered by data

While CMOs are set to play an increasingly influential role at the top table, they will also need a toolkit of “hard” skills to deliver on this potential. Marketing leaders recognise that expertise around data & analytics will be crucial, and almost one in four (23%) selected this as the top technical skill they will need in the next five years.

The value of data, and the CMO’s role in releasing that value, was evident across all of the interviews we conducted. Interviewees said that while it remains a crucial goal to improve the way data is used to measure the value of marketing initiatives, this is also about supporting the wider business with insights on clients’ needs and buying behaviour.

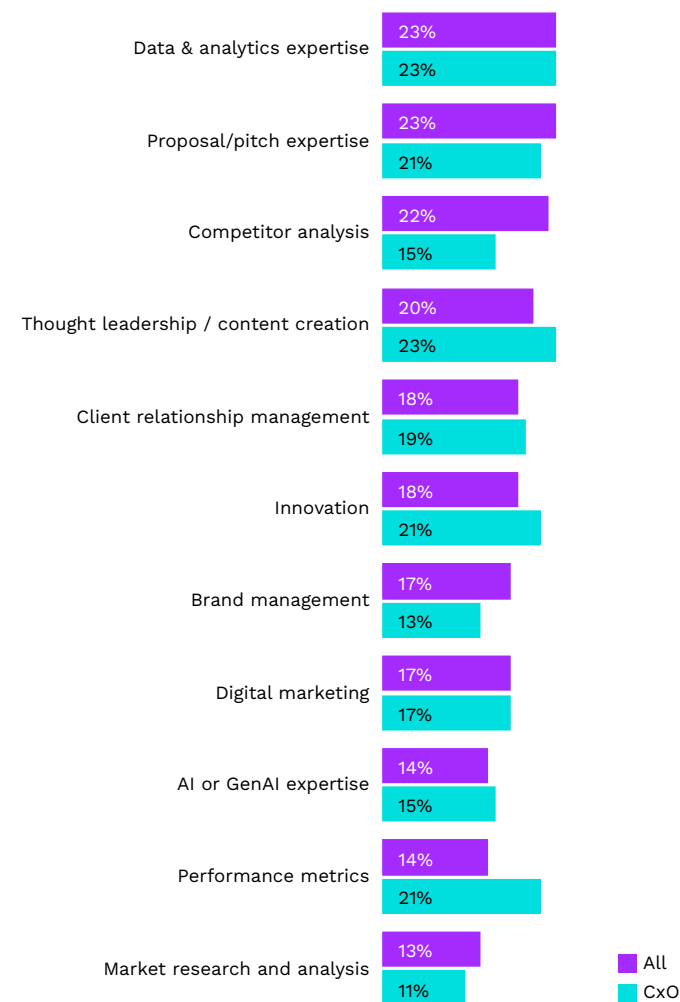
However, some substantial challenges are also being encountered where data & analytics are concerned, with marketing leaders highlighting problems with data quality and access. If not addressed, these issues can lead to wasted time, poor decision making, and damaged trust.

With these opportunities and difficulties in mind, CMOs are now increasingly collaborating with chief technology officers as a means of driving up data quality and reaching across organisational siloes to extract and use untapped data. To do this well, marketing leaders will need to become personally adept at handling and manipulating data, using this insight to feed into strategy discussions, and also ensuring their teams are set up for success.

In addition to data skills, also right at the top of the CMO’s wanted list is proposal & pitch expertise. This will be key to the revenue-generation role we’ve discussed. Other important abilities include competitor analysis (already flagged in this report as more crucial than ever in today’s uncertain market, and rated highly here by respondents from across all senior marketing roles), as well as performance metrics, thought leadership / content creation, and innovation (which were flagged by those at C-suite level in particular).

Figure 6

What are the top hard skills you believe marketing leaders will need in the next five years? (Select two)



Data source: LMA and Source CMO Survey 2025

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Marketing and BD teams will need new skills

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It's crucial to tackle resourcing issues head on and get the right people with the right skills in place

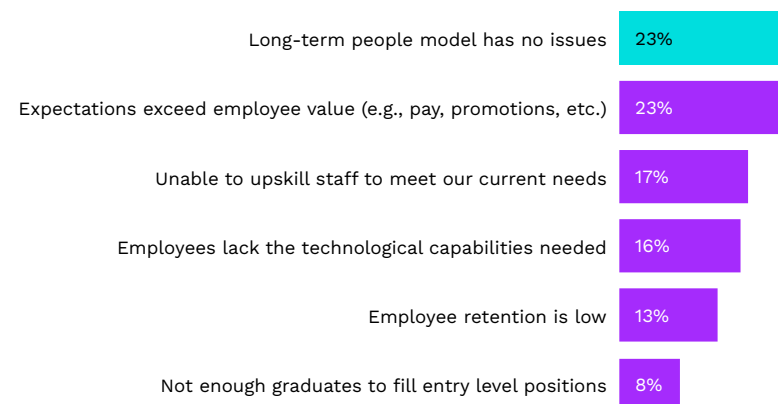
If the CMO is to be freed up to deliver on an expanded and more strategic role, they will need a strong team behind them. This means tackling any resourcing issues head on and getting the right people with the right skills in place.

A fortunate 23% of marketing leaders said that their long-term people model had no issues, but the remaining 77% were grappling with a variety of challenges. By far the biggest concern (one expressed by 23% of the respondents) was that some employees' expectations exceed their value to the business—marketing leaders flagged pay and promotions as sticking points here. In a tough market, it's not always proving possible to meet employees' demands.

Other key challenges include skills gaps within the marketing and BD functions, with a combined 33% of respondents highlighting a lack of tech capability or staff that cannot be upskilled to meet the firm's needs. With technology front and centre of so much of what marketing does today, this is clearly a concern to many leaders.

Figure 7

What, if anything, is the most pressing issue around your people and teams that currently needs to be resolved? (Select one)



Data source: LMA and Source CMO Survey 2025

Teams with best-in-class analysis and relationship-building skills will lead the way

There are some clear parallels between the skills that we have already seen CMOs will need and those that will be central to the success of their teams. Not least of these is strong analytical skills. Firstly, in a competitive market, firms need to look outwards to avoid other firms streaking ahead. This likely explains why competitor analysis skills were selected as the number one requirement for marketing and business development teams (highlighted by 52% of respondents). Secondly, wider data and analytics expertise (selected by 43%) is also set to be a differentiator, reinforcing the importance of strong data foundations to a modern law firm's success.

Karen Morton, CMO of Cleary Gottlieb, explains that the push for these skills, alongside wider tech capability, is also coming from outside the function: *“There is a definite shift in the skillset that we’re investing in as a firm, and we’re [recruiting] more people with a data and a tech background than historically. I have a mandate from the managing partner to be using generative AI wherever possible and fully embedding technology across all we do.”*

While analysis and tech are clearly important, the human side is critical, too, and reassuringly, relationship building takes the second spot (selected by 45%). We think this points to the importance that firms are rightly placing on sticking close to customers through effective account management, understanding the needs of prospects, and also building their reputations internally.

Interestingly, AI and GenAI expertise features lower down the wish list of skills, selected by only 35% of respondents. This suggests that marketing leaders know they must get their data and technology fundamentals in place first before they can get the most out of these cutting-edge tools.

Figure 8

What skills do you think will be the most crucial to the success of business development and marketing in the next one to two years? (Select two. Marketing and business development combined.)



Data source: LMA and Source CMO Survey 2025

And when it comes to building the technology capability that firms need both now and in the future, it's worth noting that there can be wider benefits for workforce engagement, too. Jon Brewer brought this to life as he recounted his experience with a business development team (although this has implications for marketing, too) and more widely across law firms: *"[A tech platform] removed the BD team from admin and gave them access to better data. They felt valued—like they were being used in the way that they wanted to be,"* Jon explained. *"Over time, I could see earlier engagement from the partners with the BD team had produced valuable insights. It was the first time I've really seen how a tech platform, data, and insights can really move a BD team from reactive to proactive."* This double-sided benefit may prove particularly valuable at a time when, as we have seen, firms are struggling to deliver on staff expectations around pay and promotions.



"In the future it will be those who understand technology, generative AI, data lakes, the business, and data & analytics that will succeed. That's where we'll invest further."

Karen Morton, CMO, Cleary Gottlieb



"We strive to bring a client-centric, market-savvy approach to business development and marketing. We're looking at ways to harness data and AI to improve flows of client, market, and competitive intelligence and to identify industry and legal trends affecting our clients. We want our team to become more comfortable handling and proactively sharing that type of information, positioning them as true business partners to our lawyer teams."

Kerri Vermeylen, Chief Marketing Officer, Sidley Austin LLP

One other point worth noting is that when we asked about the skills needed by business development teams specifically, proposal and pitch development skills were deemed critical; indeed, they were ranked right up at the top, alongside data & analytics expertise, for this function. Negotiation skills were also highlighted. Both of these will be central to supporting the CMO's growing role around revenue generation.



“That curiosity and continuous learning and being comfortable with technology and data is becoming increasingly valuable for marketing, business development, and communications professionals. There’s so much data. You’ve got to understand what’s really important. How do you analyse it, how do you make decisions off the back of it? A growth mindset, technology, and data skills have become key for those in the function.”

Heather Vadgama, CMO, Walkers

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MarTech—only the tip of the tech iceberg

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Marketing leaders will be investing in tech, but how much remains to be seen

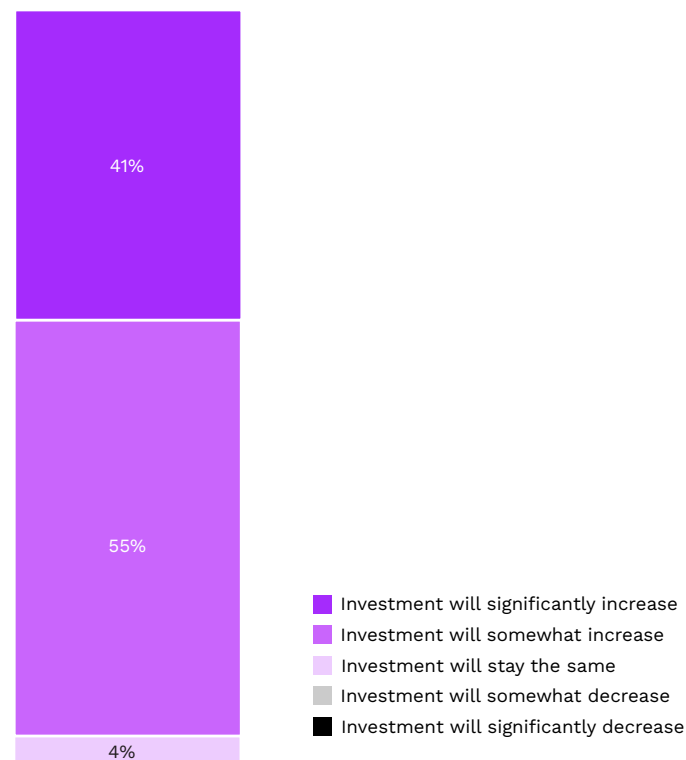
It is clear from the research throughout this report that marketing's key stakeholders recognise the importance of technology: buyers of legal services want to see firms use it, employees need the skills to leverage it, and marketing leaders themselves identify data & analytics skills (supported by the right tech infrastructure) as crucial to their success over the next five years. What isn't so clear is how large the investment will be in specific business development and marketing technology.

The vast majority of marketing leaders say that investment in marketing technology will increase within the function, but only 41% say it will increase significantly. The remaining 59% say it will increase somewhat or stay the same. One reason for this hesitancy may be that marketing leaders don't think that their area of the business will be a priority for the technology budget that's available, with front-line services likely to be favoured.

Another reason for caution about the level of spend, and one that was frequently raised in the qualitative interviews we carried out, is that marketing leaders don't see the need for significant levels of investment in new MarTech until their firms' data fundamentals are sorted out and the technology that has already been put in place has been embedded properly. Alessandra Almeida Jones of BCLP explains: *"Most firms have purchased a lot of technology and haven't implemented it properly [...] We still have legacy systems that don't talk with each other. I don't think we need to acquire more tech, but we need to make what we have work."* Other marketing leaders also talked about inadequate legacy tech, siloed systems, and the need for data to flow more effectively throughout the organisation.

Figure 9

In the next 18 months, to what extent do you believe the level of investment in business development & marketing technology will change within your function?



Data source: LMA and Source CMO Survey 2025

However, there is optimism too, with some pointing out that emerging technologies may offer direct solutions to the data quality issues that firms face. *“They always talk about ‘garbage in, garbage out,’”* says Adam Soames of Ashurst. *“That is becoming easier [to resolve] with automated data capture and cleansing tools; structured enterprise data repositories correlating data points from multiple sources; and the wider use of AI to help us cleanse, organise, and produce actionable insights from our data. There aren’t many slam-dunk solutions out there, but we’re getting closer.”*



“There’s some new BD technology that we’re still bedding in, but it hasn’t yet reached its potential. We need the overarching ‘how do we make this all fit together?’ We’re still bedding it in and getting [elements of] the tech to talk to each other. We have tech tools but there’s a lot of tweaking at the edges to make it feel efficient, useful, and accurate.”

Karen Morton, CMO, Cleary Gottlieb

Efficiency gains are the top goal of new tech investment

The productivity benefits of investing in MarTech are front of mind for CMOs. Twenty-nine percent say the technology will allow them to produce and publish content more efficiently (often a long and laboured process), and another 29% believe it will help them track and measure the effectiveness of marketing initiatives (a persistent challenge).

There are broader advantages to investing in technology, too, beyond internal benefits. Another group of CMOs sees MarTech investment as critical to keep up with competitors (indeed, 28% selected this as their top reason for investing) and to improve the client experience (23%).

Figure 10

Select the main reasons driving your increased investment in marketing and business development technology in the next 18 months. (Select two)



Data source: LMA and Source CMO Survey 2025

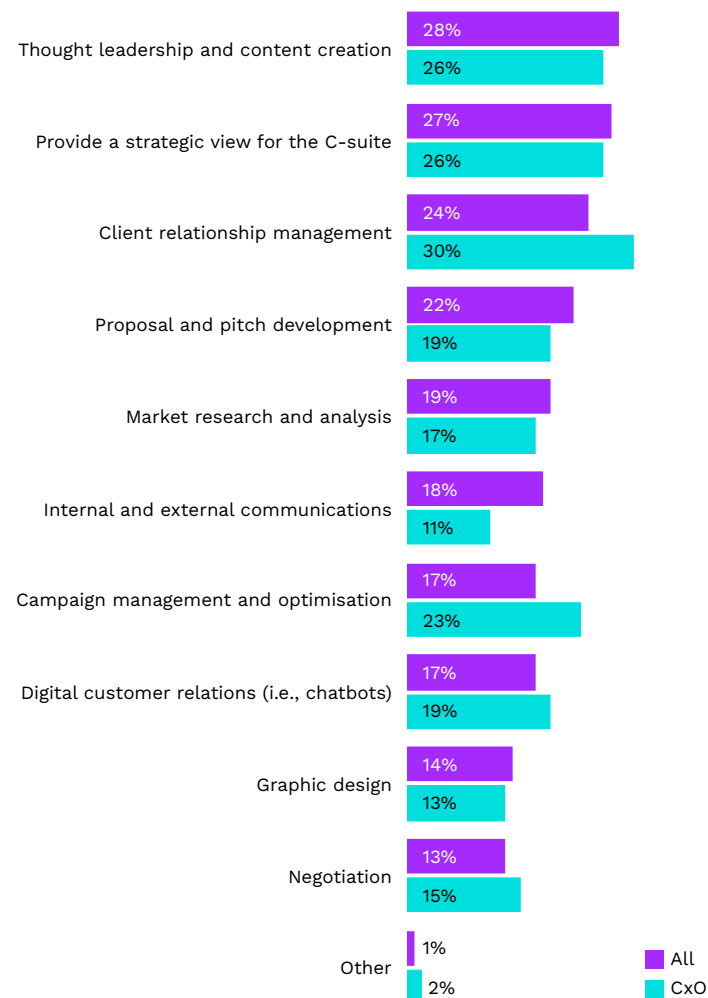
Where could tech have most impact?

If the marketing function was to successfully improve its use of technology, leaders, on average, think the biggest positive impact would be on thought leadership and content creation, closely followed by the ability to provide a more strategic view for the firm's leadership team. This makes sense given the important role that thought leadership plays in legal firms today. Karen Snell explains: *"If you can build a picture of what is important to your client and you can develop content and thought leadership that enables you to position the firm to win new work, that's absolutely critical."*

When we home in on the views of C-suite-level respondents, they also foresee value being added to client relationship management—for these most senior marketers, investment here has the potential to deliver both more valuable strategic insights and top-line growth.

Figure 11

In which areas of the marketing function do you think better use of technology would have the biggest positive impact on your organisation? (Select two)



Data source: LMA and Source CMO Survey 2025



“The marketing team is looking at the different tools we can use to do things more efficiently and quickly. We now use LLMs to produce trip packs, bios, and things that would otherwise have taken three or four hours to do. We can now get somebody to flick a switch and do it quite quickly. The research and insights team rely heavily on use of AI now. But should we be training the business so that [marketing] doesn’t have to produce everything? Yes. Should we helping the business to prompt engineer to produce marketing materials? Yes. So, we are using the tools ourselves, but we are also trying to educate the business on how best to use the tools so that they can self-serve and get them there faster.”

Michelle Holford, Chief Commercial Officer, Slaughter and May

GenAI has potential but there are barriers to rapid adoption

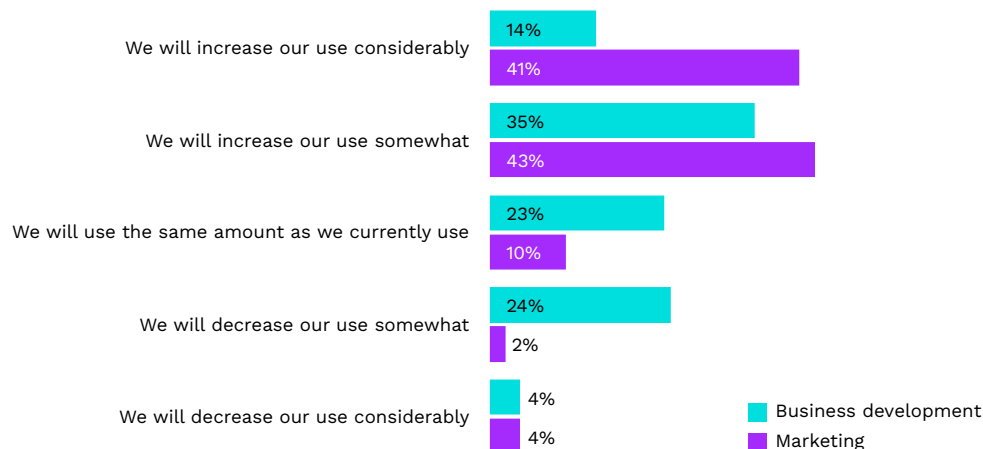
As part of their technology investment journeys, marketing leaders tell us they are using GenAI to a limited extent and exploring its potential more widely, but there are challenges that need to be overcome. Generative AI—and its more established partner, analytical AI—is only as good as the data that feeds it and, as we have heard, legal services firms still have some way to go in building the strong data foundations that they aspire to.

Data quality is a problem that organisations across all sectors face, but the next issue—tech and AI adoption—is particularly acute in sectors including legal services. Jon Brewer explains: *“The problem is, if you use a Large Language Model (LLM), it’s in the public domain and that creates confidentiality problems. So you need to be cautious about what information you put in there. To solve this problem, a lot of law firms are having their own proprietary LLM behind a firewall.”* Law firms, like their peers in finance and healthcare, are having to approach GenAI opportunities with caution, and indeed many are developing in-house, gated models to reduce the risk of breaches.

When we look at the appetite for AI adoption, CMOs are hungriest to invest in marketing, with over 80% of them expecting to ramp up adoption somewhat or considerably. When thinking about applying it within business development they are less bullish, with under half expecting to increase their use. In the interviews we conducted, many CMOs told us they were actively exploring this technology, but use cases remain clearer in the marketing function, for example, with thought leadership and content creation.

Figure 12

To what extent will you increase your use of AI or GenAI within marketing and business development in the next 18 months?



Data source: LMA and Source CMO Survey 2025

6



Do what really matters— A roadmap to succeeding as a CMO in the law firm of the future

Four key messages 31

1

To win a competitive marketplace... **define your USP**

“

“Geopolitics is probably the biggest disruptor we’re seeing at the moment: A change of president in the US, various wars, and other tensions around the world are disrupting capital flows, which has a direct impact on our business. Second is the rapid evolution of technology, and it’s a huge investment to try to keep up and ahead with things that are moving, and to make a decision on when is the best time to jump in.”

Heather Vadgama, Chief Marketing Officer, Walkers

With new competitors making noise in the market and client loyalty declining, firms must be very clear about their unique selling point (USP). Marketing leaders play a critical role in defining the firm’s USP, ensuring it’s clearly understood, consistently communicated, and embedded across the business. It’s essential to ensure lawyers are fluent in it, too.

Find the whitespace

As new players increasingly crowd the legal services market, many firms would benefit from strengthening their competitor intelligence capabilities to keep track of what other providers offer potential clients. GenAI can make that happen at speed, at scale, and with a level of precision that was previously out of reach. Competitor insights are often embedded in company reports that run in the hundreds of pages, so identifying small strategic shifts is like finding a needle in a haystack. With GenAI, marketing leaders can quickly extract key insights to capture small shifts in the market that might make it clearer where their opportunities lie.³

Once you find your whitespace, you can focus on your positioning. Expertise sets firms apart in the legal services market, so marketing leaders should partner with internal experts to drive brand activation. Find the right forums in which to promote them, whether digitally or at in-person events, and use thought leadership to showcase their most innovative thinking. And, at a time when clients are looking for firms with global reach, bringing in insights from across your firm’s global presence will demonstrate not only the depth of your firm’s expertise, but its breadth too.

Stick close to your clients and develop a more granular understanding of them

As firms gain a better understanding of the market, they will also need a better understanding of their clients. Most firms could get more value from their client research, and marketing teams should invest to better understand clients’ needs and leverage existing in-house data to develop deeper, more granular insights. Qualitative client insight is valuable and often remains locked in silos. CMOs can take the lead on gathering this insight from partners and the wider business, for example, by running a client listening project.

³ Thomas H. Davenport, José Parra-Moyano, Karl Schmedders, and Stephan Schulte, *Use GenAI to uncover new insights into your competitors*, Harvard Business Review, Nov. 2023 (accessed June 13, 2025). Available at: <https://hbr.org/2023/11/use-genai-to-uncover-new-insights-into-your-competitors>.

2

To evolve alongside the changing definition of CMO... embrace marketing's strategic importance



“You have to be able to have strong relationships with the partners because you have to be able to nudge them in the right direction. Those relationships also help you push back and say no at times. It's not frictionless, but relationships are absolutely essential to be able to deliver.”

Michelle Holford, Chief Commercial Officer, Slaughter and May

Over recent years CMOs have actively taken a more influential seat at the top table. Their business acumen, ability to bring the voice of the customer to the room, and cross-firm perspective mean they can be a valuable partner to the CEO. Marketing leaders should tap into all this expertise to shape the firm's strategy and steer a client-centric course through today's challenging business environment.

Develop a revenue-centric culture

The first step is for marketing and BD teams to clearly define their purpose. The wide-ranging mandate of the function makes it vulnerable to scope creep, which can distract from the core objective of revenue generation. Next, instil a culture of accountability for revenue, making sure to upskill marketing teams so they can speak in revenue terms. Developing KPIs that better capture marketing's influence on revenue generation will also keep teams focused on this central goal.

CMOs can draw inspiration from JLL's marketing team, which rethought its KPIs to better capture and track its contribution to the company's growth, in areas like contribution to the pipeline and engagement on digital channels. In just two years, their pipeline contribution grew 3x, and their revenue contribution, a staggering 4x.⁴

Educate the rest of the organisation on the role of the CMO

Some parts of the business remain behind in their understanding of the marketing function and its commercial value to the business. CMOs and their teams should work to change this with a combination of education and demonstrating their value in action. This could include marketing leaders encouraging their teams to build close relationships with other functions by collaborating with them on a day-to-day basis. Revenue-centric KPIs will also help facilitate these conversations.

⁴ Julia Hood and Will Wei, *How JLL improved marketing performance and lowered costs, according to CMO Siddharth Taparia*, Nov. 2024 (accessed June 13, 2025). Available at: <https://www.businessinsider.com/how-jll-improved-marketing-lowered-costs-cmo-siddharth-taparia-2024-11>.

3 To future proof the function... find and develop the most important skills



“You must continually assess the future skillsets your function will require and proactively invest in training your team to meet those needs. Those leading the functions are not only operational managers but also custodians of capability, so building teams with the right, future-proofed expertise is essential to staying relevant.”

Laura Nicholls, Chief Client Officer, Clifford Chance

The market is constantly changing, and new tools are becoming available at pace. Promoting a culture of learning will encourage teams to gain new skills, trial new ways of working, and ultimately help the firm keep up with industry developments and its competitors.

Revisit the talent model

Marketing today requires a highly diversified skillset and leaders should take a close look at their people model to identify gaps. Skills that need a particular focus include commerciality and relationship building. And with GenAI and other digital tools evolving at pace, there is also a shortage of people who can leverage technology in marketing teams, particularly people that can interpret data and apply AI.

Trial new ways of learning beyond the conventional

Encouraging teams to explore training courses that draw on learnings from beyond those that are traditionally offered will allow them to bring in new commercial skills and think out of the box. Ashurst, for example, launched an in-house programme called Propel that teaches lawyers how to identify sales opportunities and build relationships. The programme brings clients into the room to roleplay situations such as pretending to be a fictional customer seeking a strategic partner rather than a traditional service provider. The key takeaway? Listen more.⁵ Similar activities could be extended to marketing teams and BD teams—they may also have lessons to learn.

Promote the use of emerging technologies

While the quantitative data points to a relatively low appetite for GenAI skills, our qualitative interviews highlighted the potential of this technology to transform the function. And this will be crucial, as lawyers and others within the firm will likely expect marketing teams to be using technologies more as the firm as a whole moves to tech-enable their legal services. As we’ve discussed, it will be crucial to get the right data foundations in place, but marketing leaders also need to encourage their teams to experiment with technologies like GenAI to test and find new opportunities to differentiate themselves in the market. What’s more, doing this with the utmost transparency provides a pathway to building trust.

⁵ George Russell, *Law firm training highlights business relationships and tech skills*, May 2025 (accessed June 13, 2025). Available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/7b163dc6-6669-4f0b-944c-252772cc9994>.

4

To unlock value from technology... get the foundations right



“We are working with colleagues in our data & AI and creative design teams to modernise our pitch process. We have a wealth of data and content in myriad systems across the firm. We need an integrated and intuitive pitch assembly and design platform that can help us mine the most relevant of that information and bring it together to create truly client-centric, bespoke proposals. Right now, it’s still a laborious process for our team and the lawyers. I firmly believe there are better ways to do this and am excited to take this foundational BD activity to new levels.”

Kerri Vermeylen, Chief Marketing Officer, Sidley Austin LLP

To make a business case for wider investment, it is crucial that any technology solution is linked to the firm’s strategy. CMOs need to be clear about how the tech will help achieve the firm’s goals and how success will be measured.

Prioritise your tech investment

There are countless tech offerings on the market, and CMOs need to invest where it matters most, avoiding getting distracted by shiny new tools and focusing on use cases that create real value. What use cases? The marketing leaders we spoke to have used GenAI to save time pulling relevant case studies to support proposals, and to generate content for thought leadership, to name just a few applications. But remember: quality still matters. In a world where clients are constantly bombarded by material from firms, they will be looking for something that is genuinely differentiated. As such, GenAI should be used to amplify the voices of your experts, not replace them.

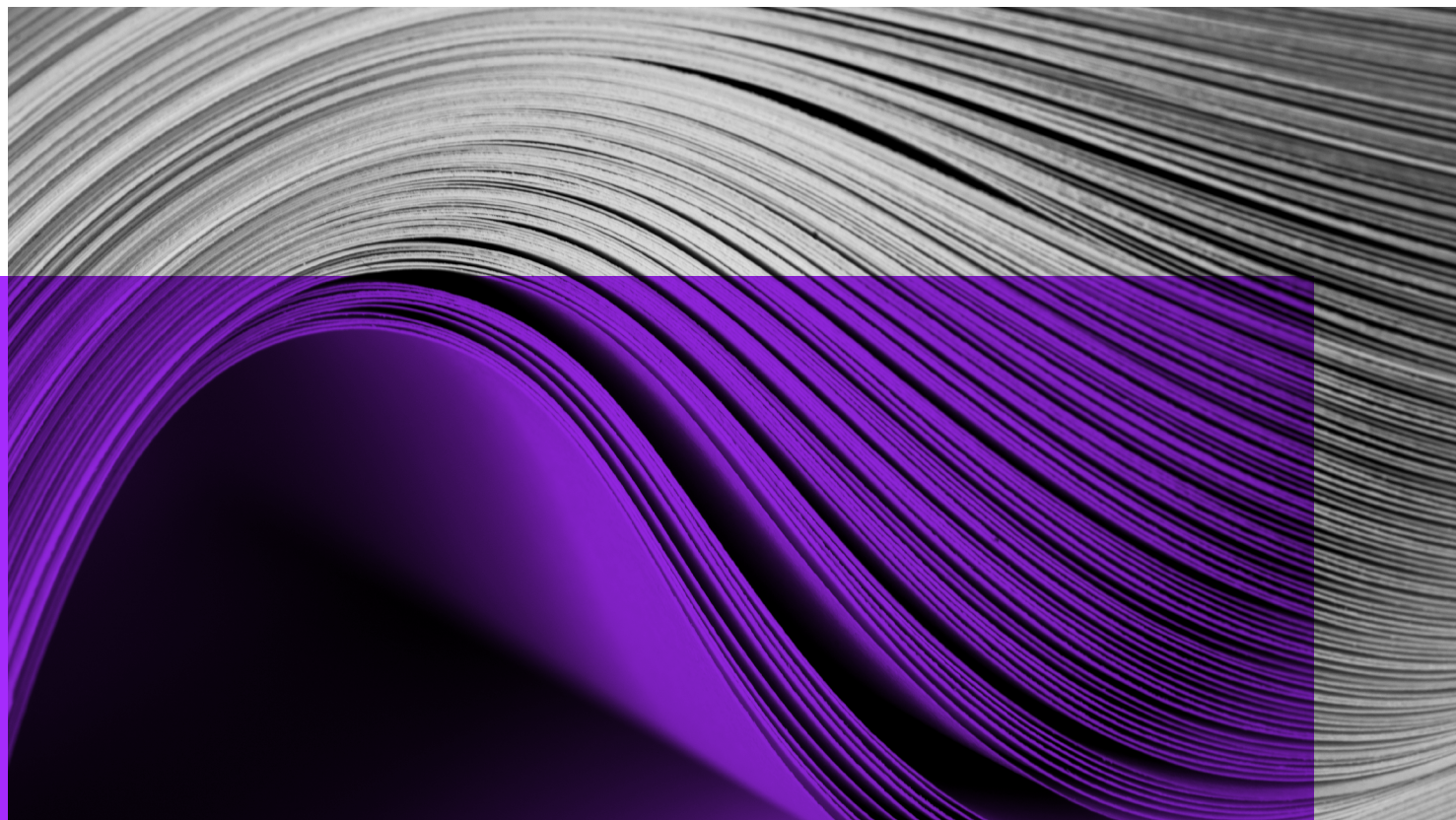
However, legacy systems can also hold back firms, including their marketing and business development ambitions. Marketing leaders should work closely with other functions and tech experts to strike a balance between upgrading old systems and investing in new solutions. In particular, strategic partnerships with CTOs, CIOs, and their governance, risk, and compliance colleagues can help create alignment in the firm’s technology investment plans.

Get your organisation data ready

No matter how much data your firm has, or how rich it is, it can’t drive effective strategies if it’s siloed, inaccessible, or lost to bad organisation. By working closely with other parts of the business, such as the technology function or lawyers, CMOs can help transform the way their firm captures data and, in turn, deliver consistently clean, high-quality information that breaks down data siloes. Karen Snell, Chief Business Development & Marketing Officer at Kennedys, for example, tells us that she has partnered with her CIO to address the data flows in her organisation: *“Our CIO is looking to create a single data source for the firm so we are working quite closely on what that means. I never thought that would be part of my role, but it’s expanded. We are looking at work types and taxonomies and data quality.”*

Don't ignore the risks

There will always be a balance to strike between exploring achieving more with your data and maintaining security, particularly in legal services, where confidentiality is paramount. But clients expect the firms they work with to embrace new developments and apply the best technology for the job. In today's competitive environment, marketing and BD teams need to encourage a culture of experimentation with emerging technologies while investing in robust cyber and other security solutions. If privacy concerns are an issue, options such as private LLMs can help contain sensitive data within the firm's walls.



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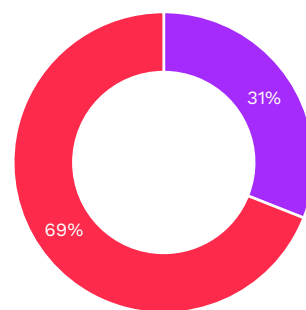
Methodology



Source was engaged by LMA Europe to undertake research into the future of the legal marketing and business development functions. The research methodology consisted of a quantitative and qualitative study of legal marketing and business development leaders globally to understand their perspective on the future of their functions and the role of the CMO.

Over the course of February 2025, we surveyed 200 senior marketing and business development executives in the legal and consulting industry globally. This was supplemented with 11 in-depth qualitative interviews with leaders in the field. For the purposes of this study with LMA Europe, all findings in this report are based on the respondents in the European legal sector, the sample size of which is 83, unless otherwise stated.

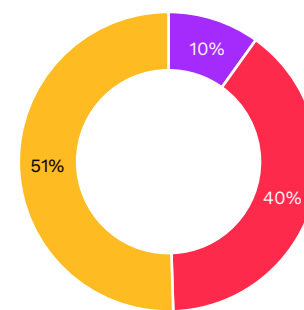
Sample




By region



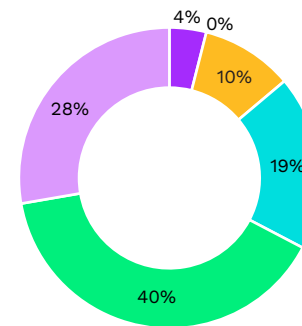
 Continental Europe
 UK

By headcount



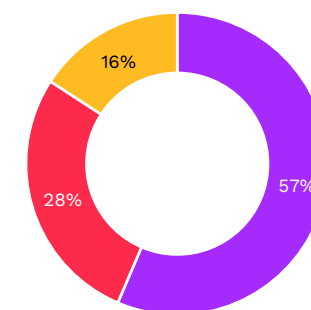
 700-999 employees
 1,000-4,999 employees
 5,000+ employees




By organisation size



 US\$100m - US\$500m
 US\$500m - US\$1bn
 US\$1bn - US\$3bn
 US\$3bn - US\$5bn
 US\$5bn - US\$10bn
 US\$10bn+

By seniority



 CxO
 Head of department
 Director

Acknowledgments

With thanks, we interviewed the following senior leaders:

Name	Job title	Firm
Adam Soames	Global Chief Business Development Officer	Ashurst
Alessandra Almeida Jones	Global Chief Marketing Officer	BCLP
Karen Morton	Chief Marketing Officer	Cleary Gottlieb
Laura Nicholls	Chief Client Officer	Clifford Chance
Karen Snell	Chief Business Development & Marketing Officer	Kennedys
Jon Brewer	Senior DealCloud Growth Director, Intapp	Formerly CMO at Orrick
Kerri Vermeylen	Chief Marketing Officer	Sidley
Michelle Holford	Chief Commercial Officer	Slaughter and May
Heather Vadgama	Chief Marketing Officer	Walkers
Sam Howe	Director, Litigation Strategy	Nixon Peabody LLP
Nicole Petrie	Chief Marketing & Business Development Officer	Proskauer Rose LLP

Special thanks to Karen Morton, Heather Vadgama and Jon Brewer who have been instrumental in shaping this report.

Meet the experts


Omaro Maseli

Omaro is a Senior Consultant at Source with extensive experience shaping thought leadership on topics at the intersection of customer, business, and technology trends. Her expertise lies in her ability to turn market signals into strategic insights for business leaders across different industries.

She has written and advised on a range of business journal articles featured in the likes of Harvard Business Review.

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Emma Carroll

Emma is Source's Head of Content. She hosts Source's podcasts, writes data-focused articles, and oversees content coverage for the business. Emma leads the Editorial team, ensuring that all of Source's publications are of the highest quality and provide actionable insight to everyone that uses them. Prior to working at Source, Emma was Managing Editor at a leading community for C-suite executives and NEDs. She qualified as a Chartered Accountant with PwC.

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Natasha Cambell

Natasha is a Principal Thought Leadership Consultant in Source's Marketing Advisory team and is deeply passionate about content and actionable insights. In her role, she works with clients to help them shape and execute impactful thought leadership and content strategy. Day to day, Natasha works on thought leadership ratings and reviews, authors reports, and leads on bespoke client projects.

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Margaret Cameron-Waller

Margaret is an Associate at Source with over 30 years' experience in consulting, having worked on strategy and operating model projects at a number of consulting firms.

She has been an Associate at Source for over 10 years, where she has specialised in working on strategy, brand positioning, and proposition projects. She has also supported on several global M&A projects.

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About us

We help professional services firms *understand what really matters* when facing decisions of vital importance.

The best decisions are based on evidence, objectivity, and a willingness to change. That's why, at Source, we tell you what you need to hear, rather than what you want to hear.

We draw upon our deep roots within the professional services sector to provide firms with a clear picture of their clients' worlds. Through comprehensive research and meticulous analysis, we pinpoint what truly matters and deliver actionable insights that help firms map out the right way forward.

We believe in thriving individually and succeeding together. And we would love to help your firm crack its latest conundrum.

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About the LMA Europe



Launched in 2021, the Legal Marketing Association's European Chapter (LMA Europe) brings together more than 250 legal marketing and business development professionals across the region. The community connects members to a wide range of regional initiatives — including mentoring, webinars, networking groups, social gatherings, and a regional conference — while also opening access to the LMA's extensive global resources. These include thought leadership from across the world, tailored training in the Body of Knowledge, advanced learning opportunities through the Practising Law Institute, complimentary access to a library of more than 300 on-demand webinars and 350+ conference recordings, as well as access to content from the LMA Annual Conference hosted each year in the United States.

Learn more about the LMA at: <https://www.legalmarketing.org/>

Publication schedule for 2025

2025	Market Trends Reports	Market Trends Briefings	Client Perceptions Studies	Emerging Trends Programme	White Space Reports	White Space Insights
Q1	January		UK US GCC France			Featured thought leadership (monthly) Quarterly webinar series
	February			Pricing: Expectations vs. Reality		
	March				Quality Ratings Report (QRR)	
Q2	April	India South America	Germany Australia China Japan Retail Energy & Resources Financial Services Technology, Media & Telecoms	What's next for people, HR & change consulting?		Featured thought leadership (monthly) Quarterly webinar series
	May					
	June			Client attitudes to AI and barriers to implementation today	Client Perceptions of Thought Leadership	
Q3	July	Healthcare & Pharma	Risk Tax			Featured thought leadership (monthly) Quarterly webinar series
	August			How to talk to your clients about value		
	September				Thought Leadership Innovation	
Q4	October	Public Sector	Audit Technology	The new consulting frontier: Adapting to global economic change		Featured thought leadership (monthly) Quarterly webinar series
	November					
	December			Predictions for 2026	Hot Topic Report	