

THE SIX PERCENT PROBLEM.

Why most PMM organizations are failing at AI integration — even the ones that bought the tools.

The Future of Product Marketing · A PMM Field Guide to the Agentic Era

~6% of marketing organizations are truly AI-integrated.
The rest are AI-adopted — and don't know the difference.

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Executive Summary

Somewhere in the neighborhood of six percent of marketing organizations are genuinely integrated with AI — meaning that AI has changed not just what tools they use but how they are structured, how they measure success, and who does what. The remaining ninety-four percent have adopted AI in the sense that they have purchased licenses and encouraged experimentation. They have not integrated it in the sense that matters.

This chapter diagnoses the gap — and makes the case that the organizations most at risk are not the ones that have been slow to buy tools. They are the ones that bought the tools, declared victory, and went back to running the same PMM organization they had in 2022. Adoption without integration is not just insufficient. It is actively misleading, because it creates the impression of progress while the actual structural change — the one that produces compounding leverage — fails to happen.

The six percent are not the organizations with the most AI licenses. They are the organizations that asked the harder question: what has to change about how we work for this to actually matter?

- 1 The Readiness Spectrum maps five distinct levels of AI integration — from AI-Unaware to Org-Transformed — and most organizations are at Level 2 or 3.
- 2 The Adoption vs. Integration distinction is the diagnostic frame that separates organizations making real progress from ones generating the appearance of progress.
- 3 The Six Percent Diagnostic offers eight questions that expose the gap between what an organization believes about its AI readiness and what is actually true.
- 4 The Org Design Shift shows what a PMM organization structurally looks like at full integration — and why getting there requires decisions that most PMM leaders are not yet making.

The Problem

The data point that anchors this chapter comes from a synthesis of more than a hundred and eighty articles on AI and marketing published in 2024 and 2025 — the same synthesis that produced the newsletter material the futureofpmm.com community has been reading for the past year. Across that corpus, one signal appeared more persistently than any other: organizations that described themselves as AI-forward, AI-enabled, or AI-ready

were, in the vast majority of cases, describing a state that amounted to license procurement and individual experimentation. They were not describing structural change.

The author heard some version of the same conversation with every PMM leader consulted for this chapter. 'We have ChatGPT. Some of our team uses Claude. We got a Perplexity license. We're covered.' None of them could describe what 'covered' meant in operational terms. None had changed how they staffed commodity work. None had a definition of readiness that extended beyond the procurement decision. That is adoption. It is not integration.

Tool procurement is not a strategy. It is a precondition for a strategy — one that most organizations have mistaken for the strategy itself.

Figure 1: The PMM Readiness Spectrum

Estimated distribution of PMM organizations by AI readiness level (2025)

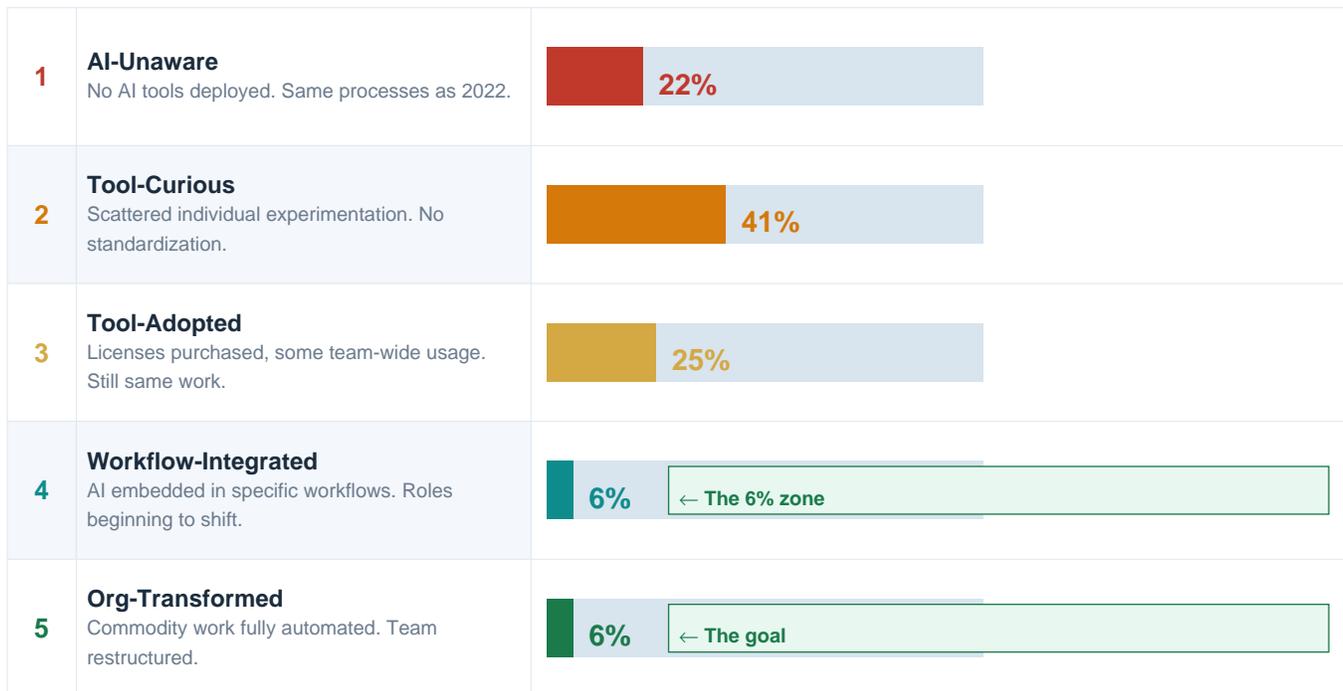


Figure 1. Five levels of AI integration, from AI-Unaware to Org-Transformed, with estimated distribution across marketing organizations. The 63% at Levels 1–2 have either no tools or only scattered individual usage. The 25% at Level 3 have purchased tools but not changed how the organization works. Only the 6% at Levels 4–5 are genuinely integrating.

The distribution is not surprising once you understand the structural incentive. Adopting AI tools is easy — it requires a purchase order and an announcement. Integrating AI requires answering questions that are much harder: which roles need to change, how do we measure the impact, what does it mean to succeed, and — most importantly — what are we going to stop doing so that we have capacity to do the irreplaceable work that actually compounds? Those questions do not have easy answers, and most PMM leaders are not yet asking

them explicitly enough.

Adoption vs. Integration

The adoption-integration distinction is not semantic. It describes a real and measurable difference in organizational behavior — one that shows up in how work is structured, how success is measured, and how the PMM team spends its time. The following framework makes the distinction precise enough to be diagnostic.

Figure 2: Adoption vs. Integration

DIMENSION	ADOPTION	INTEGRATION
How AI is used	<i>Faster way to do the same work</i>	Structural change to what work is done and by whom
Primary benefit	<i>Speed on existing tasks</i>	Capacity shift from commodity to irreplaceable work
Workflow change	<i>Individual, ad hoc, optional</i>	Team-wide, standardized, expected
Staffing implication	<i>Same headcount, same roles</i>	Roles redesigned; capacity redeployed
Content architecture	<i>Same formats, faster to produce</i>	Agent-readable formats added; GEO signals built in
Success metric	<i>'We're using AI more'</i>	'Commodity hours down X%; strategic hours up X%'
Risk	<i>Complacency disguised as adoption</i>	Organizational change requires leadership to lead it
Most organizations are at adoption. The 6% are at integration. The gap is decisions, not tools.		

Figure 2. Seven dimensions on which adoption and integration differ. The integration column describes what is structurally different in organizations at Levels 4–5 of the readiness spectrum. The adoption column describes what most organizations believe counts as progress.

The most diagnostic dimension is the success metric. Organizations at the adoption level measure AI progress by usage — license activation, prompt volume, tools deployed. Organizations at the integration level measure it by the shift in where their people's time goes: what percentage of PMM hours are now on commodity versus irreplaceable work, how has that ratio changed quarter over quarter, and what is the quality impact on the strategic outputs that matter? The measurement distinction is not just operational — it is a leading indicator of whether the organization is building compounding leverage or just making the same work slightly faster.

The staffing implication row deserves specific attention, because it is where most organizations are most evasive. If AI integration has not changed how you staff commodity work — if your PMM organization has the same roles doing the same mix of activities it had before the AI era — then the integration is not real. It is adoption with better PR. The PMMs who were spending sixty percent of their time on commodity work are still spending sixty percent of their time on commodity work, just faster. That is not leverage. That is efficiency applied to the wrong problem.

The Six Percent Diagnostic

The following eight questions are designed to expose the gap between what an organization believes about its AI readiness and what is operationally true. They are not a survey — they are a confrontation. Every PMM leader who answered them honestly in the research for this chapter arrived at a lower score than they expected.

Figure 3: The Six Percent Diagnostic

DIAGNOSTIC QUESTION	ADOPTION ANSWER	INTEGRATION ANSWER
1. Has your PMM org explicitly mapped which activities are now AI-executable?	<i>No formal mapping</i>	Yes — and capacity has been redeployed
2. Do you have standardized prompts/agents for your highest-volume PMM tasks?	<i>Individual experimentation only</i>	Team-wide library, maintained and updated
3. Has AI changed how you staff commodity work (briefs, research, first drafts)?	<i>Same headcount, same roles</i>	Roles redesigned; fewer people needed for commodity
4. Do you measure AI productivity impact — hours recovered, quality delta?	<i>No measurement framework</i>	Tracked and reported to leadership
5. Has your content architecture changed to include agent-readable formats?	<i>Same content types, faster production</i>	Schema markup, structured specs, GEO signals added
6. Do your competitive assets update continuously rather than quarterly?	<i>Quarterly manual update cycle</i>	Agent-monitored, near-real-time updates
7. Can your PMM team articulate the difference between adoption and integration?	<i>Not part of team vocabulary</i>	Active distinction, used in planning
8. Has leadership set integration targets with named accountability?	<i>AI as individual initiative</i>	Org-level KPIs; leader-owned

Figure 3. Eight diagnostic questions that distinguish AI-adopted from AI-integrated organizations. The adoption answer describes what most organizations can truthfully claim. The integration answer describes what the 6% have actually built.

The diagnostic is most useful when applied as a team exercise rather than a self-assessment. The gap between what a PMM leader believes is true about their organization and what individual contributors believe is true is

often illuminating — and the illumination is almost always in the same direction. Leaders overestimate the degree of integration. ICs underestimate the urgency. Scoring the diagnostic together, with honest answers from both levels of the org, tends to produce clarity that no strategy document achieves.

Every PMM leader who answered these questions honestly in the research for this chapter arrived at a lower score than they expected. That gap between perception and reality is precisely the problem this chapter is trying to name.

The Org Design Shift

The hardest part of the six percent problem is not the diagnostic — it is what the diagnostic implies. If AI integration is real, it does not produce a PMM organization that is the same size doing more work. It produces a PMM organization that is structured differently, staffed differently, and optimized for a fundamentally different mix of activities. The org design shift is not optional; it is the logical endpoint of genuine integration.

Figure 4: The Org Design Shift

BEFORE: Traditional PMM Org		AFTER: AI-Integrated PMM Org	
60–70%	Commodity execution Content, research, templates, first drafts	~5%	AI-supervised commodity Agents produce; PMMs review and direct
15–20%	Enablement ops Battlecard maintenance, training, RFPs	20–25%	Competitive intelligence Living systems, agent-monitored, always-on
10–15%	Campaigns support Brief writing, copy, asset management	25–30%	Narrative & positioning More time here than ever before
~10%	Strategic work Positioning, narrative, category, exec comms	40–50%	Strategic & exec work Positioning bets, roadmap influence, exec comms

Figure 4. Before and after comparison of PMM org time allocation. The traditional org spends 60–70% of capacity on commodity execution. The AI-integrated org inverts that ratio — with commodity work reduced to ~5% under AI supervision, and 40–50% of capacity reallocated to strategic and executive work.

The inversion in the 'after' column is not aspirational. It is what integration actually looks like when the commodity work — content drafts, competitive research, template production, basic enablement — flows through AI agents rather than through human PMMs. The PMMs who were doing that work do not disappear; they become the directors and editors of AI output, spending their judgment on the things that require judgment

rather than on the things that require effort. But the headcount implications are real, and most PMM leaders are not yet being honest about them — with themselves or with their teams.

The competitive intelligence row in the 'after' column deserves specific attention. At twenty to twenty-five percent of org capacity, it is substantially larger than in the traditional org — because agent-monitored competitive intelligence is both more valuable and more feasible than the quarterly manual update cycle it replaces. The PMMs freed from commodity execution have capacity to do competitive strategy at a depth that was previously impossible. That is the compounding leverage that the six percent are building, and that the ninety-four percent have not yet accessed.

Three Moves

The diagnosis is useful only if it leads to action. The following three moves address the specific decisions that separate organizations making real progress toward integration from those generating the appearance of it.

Move 01: Define Readiness Before You Buy Anything Else

Most organizations are buying tools faster than they are defining what success looks like. Readiness is not a license count. It is a workflow map, a capacity plan, and a set of KPIs that tell you whether AI integration is actually happening. The organizations that build those things before the next procurement decision — rather than after — consistently outperform the ones that assume the tools will create the clarity themselves.

01

Action Item

Write a one-page definition of what AI-integrated looks like for your PMM org specifically. Share it with your team before next quarter's planning cycle.

Move 02: Redesign Roles Around the Commodity/Irreplaceable Split

If your PMM roles look the same as they did in 2022, AI adoption is happening but integration is not. The commodity work should be flowing through agents. The headcount that was doing that work should be redeployed to the irreplaceable activities — or, in some cases, honestly acknowledged as no longer required at the same scale. The PMM leaders who make that call deliberately, with transparency and investment in transition, will build the organizations that compound. The ones who avoid it will eventually have it made for them under less favorable circumstances.

02

Action Item

Map each PMM role to the commodity/irreplaceable split. Identify which roles need to evolve, with what timeline, and with what investment in skill development.

Move 03: Measure What You're Actually Trying to Change

'We're using AI more' is not a metric. 'PMM team spent 62% of hours on strategic work this quarter versus 38% last year' is a metric. The organizations that are genuinely integrating AI are tracking the shift in where their people's time goes — not because it is easy to measure, but because it is the only way to know whether the integration is actually working or whether the org is just running the same processes slightly faster with better tools.

03

Action Item

Set one specific, directional AI integration target this quarter. Name the person accountable for it. Measure it at the end of the quarter regardless of the outcome.

Why the Laggards Are Not the Ones Who Should Be Worried

The chapter's most counterintuitive claim is worth addressing directly. The organizations most at risk are not the ones that are behind on AI adoption. They are the ones that are ahead of it — the ones that bought licenses in 2023, made an announcement, and have been operating under the assumption that the hard work is done. The AI-unaware organization at Level 1 of the readiness spectrum is at least operating with accurate information about where it stands. The AI-adopted organization at Level 3 is operating under a misapprehension — and misapprehensions compound in the wrong direction.

The organizations that will be most competitive in the next three years are not the ones with the most AI tools. They are the ones that used the AI tools to change the structure of the work — to free capacity for the

irreplaceable activities that generate durable competitive advantage, and to build the measurement systems that tell them whether the change is actually happening. That is what integration means. And the gap between adoption and integration is the six percent problem.

The PMMs who cross the adoption-to-integration line will look back and realize the decision was organizational, not technological. The tools were never the hard part.

Chapter Takeaways

- ~94% of PMM organizations have adopted AI tools. Only ~6% have integrated them — meaning AI has changed how the org is structured, not just what tools it uses.
- The Readiness Spectrum has five levels. Most organizations sit at Level 2 (Tool-Curious) or Level 3 (Tool-Adopted). The 6% are at Levels 4–5.
- The adoption-integration distinction is diagnostic: adoption is using AI faster; integration is structurally changing what work is done and who does it.
- The Org Design Shift is the logical endpoint of full integration: ~5% of capacity on AI-supervised commodity work; 40–50% on strategic and executive work.
- The three moves: Define readiness before buying more tools. Redesign roles around the commodity/irreplaceable split. Measure the shift in where time actually goes.

The practical implication of the six percent problem is that the organizations which will win the next competitive cycle are not necessarily the ones with the most sophisticated AI tools. They are the ones that used the tools to answer the harder question: what does our organization need to look like in order to compound on what AI makes possible? The answer to that question is not a tool. It is a series of decisions — about roles, measurement, workflow design, and leadership commitment — that most organizations have not yet made. The six percent have. That gap is closeable. But closing it requires naming it first, which is what this chapter has tried to do.

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