

Marketing Production in the Age of AI

Explore what sets forward-thinking enterprise marketing teams apart and how they're bringing AI into their workflows.

2026 Report

knak.

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Marketers were promised more time for strategy. That promise is still unfulfilled.

There is a lot of noise right now about AI. Every day, we hear about marketers building websites in hours, handing work off to agents, and using AI to move faster than ever before.

But the reality for most enterprise marketing teams is an overwhelming amount of manual work, disconnected tools, approval bottlenecks, and campaigns that take weeks or months to launch. Effectively reaching your audience is almost impossible to do well when your team is stuck in slow, legacy production workflows.

AI is changing how marketing gets done, and the overall marketing production system in the next 1-3 years will look very different than it has. But I do not believe the future is AI replacing marketers.

The future is AI and marketers working together inside better systems that support the full marketing production workflow, which includes everything between the campaign idea and the send: building, reviewing, approving, and shipping.

Enterprise marketing has too much risk, complexity, and brand value to simply hand everything over to AI and hope for the best. The most successful teams will be the ones that move faster with AI while still protecting their brand using governance and compliance standards. And of course they'll still prioritize the human taste and creativity that makes great marketing great.

At Knak, we see a world where marketing production runs on a better system, and we're excited to be building it with you.



Pierce Ujjainwalla,
Knak Co-Founder and CEO

It's time to take a closer look at your production layer.

Budget and resource constraints were CMOs' top challenge to address in 2026. And marketing teams' most severe inefficiencies and wasted spend are in their production processes.

Enterprise marketers might have to repurpose email copy across 12 regions, including translations, manage five rounds of internal review on a landing page before it goes live, or architect a 10-step automation flow by scratch. Those tasks add up and create lengthy launch timelines, leaving a gap in the market for faster competitors to swoop in. They also eat into time for the real work: marketing strategy.

But today, AI is forcing a reckoning. As teams explore how AI and automation can help them be more efficient, marketing production has emerged as one of the biggest opportunities to streamline.

To quantify the real impact of production inefficiency, map the current state of marketing tech stacks, and identify what the most agile teams do differently, Knak surveyed more than 300 marketing decision-makers at enterprise organizations with \$50M to \$1B+ in annual revenue across the US, UK, and Canada.

Key Findings

Marketers' time is monopolized by production.

82% of teams spend at least half of their time on production instead of strategy or planning.

The time and cost of email builds quickly add up.

More than half of marketers say at least four people help create one email, and that 2-3 review rounds are required before launch.

Missed deadlines are expected on most enterprise teams

85% of marketing teams have missed at least one campaign launch date in the past 12 months due to workflow constraints.

Despite widespread adoption, AI isn't a production cure-all.

88% of teams say that AI-generated marketing content still requires 'moderate' or 'substantial' editing before it's used.

Most marketing teams use AI, but only around 1 in 3 are at an advanced level.

70% of marketing teams have deployed AI, with 29% reporting advanced adoption with AI embedded across the entire workflow.

AI advocacy is now essential to marketing career growth.

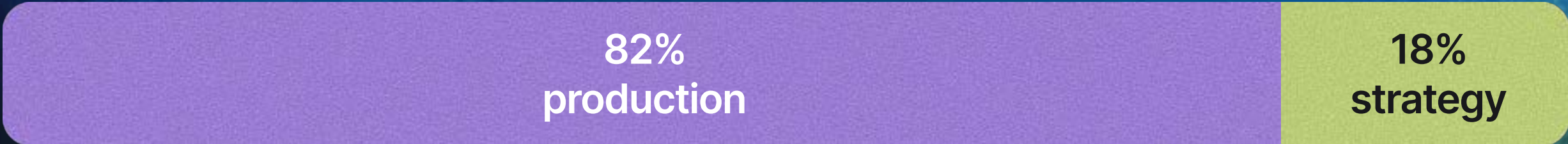
53% of marketing decision-makers say driving AI/automation across the org is the most critical skill for career growth.

Marketing teams are consumed by campaign production.

82%

of enterprise marketing teams spend at least half their time on production like building, formatting, reviewing, and sending rather than strategy or planning.

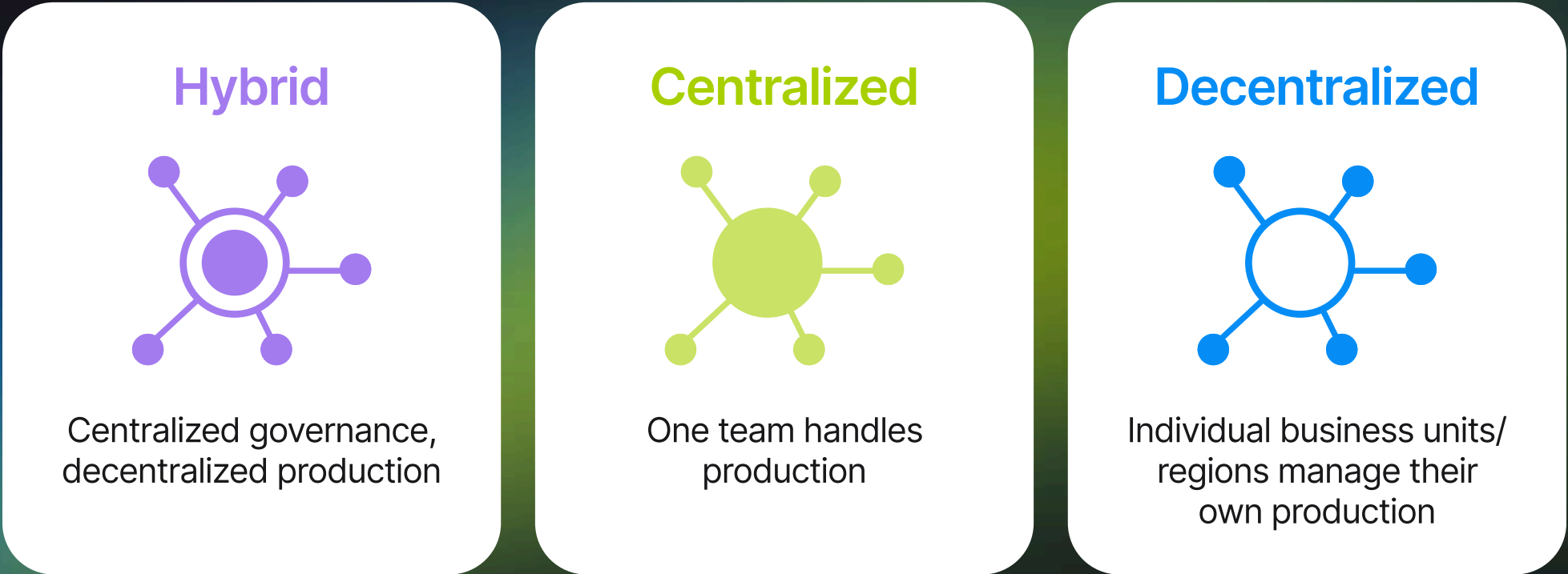
Approximately what percentage of your marketing team’s time is spent on production activities (e.g. building, reviewing, approving assets) vs. strategy and planning?



This production-heavy trend is consistent across all team structures for campaign production, whether hybrid, centralized, or decentralized. It’s a massive part of what marketers are working on in their day to day.

So, reorganizing your team won't fix a production problem on its own. Instead, the fastest teams are optimizing beyond the org chart: ensuring fewer people per asset, a leaner marketing stack, tighter approval chains, and AI embedded where it saves build time.

Team structures for marketing production



Marketing measurement still emphasizes activity over impact.

1 in 3



Only about one third of marketers consistently hit or exceed their performance targets for email and landing page campaigns. But they're often optimizing for engagement, when CMOs really want to prioritize the channels that drive growth.

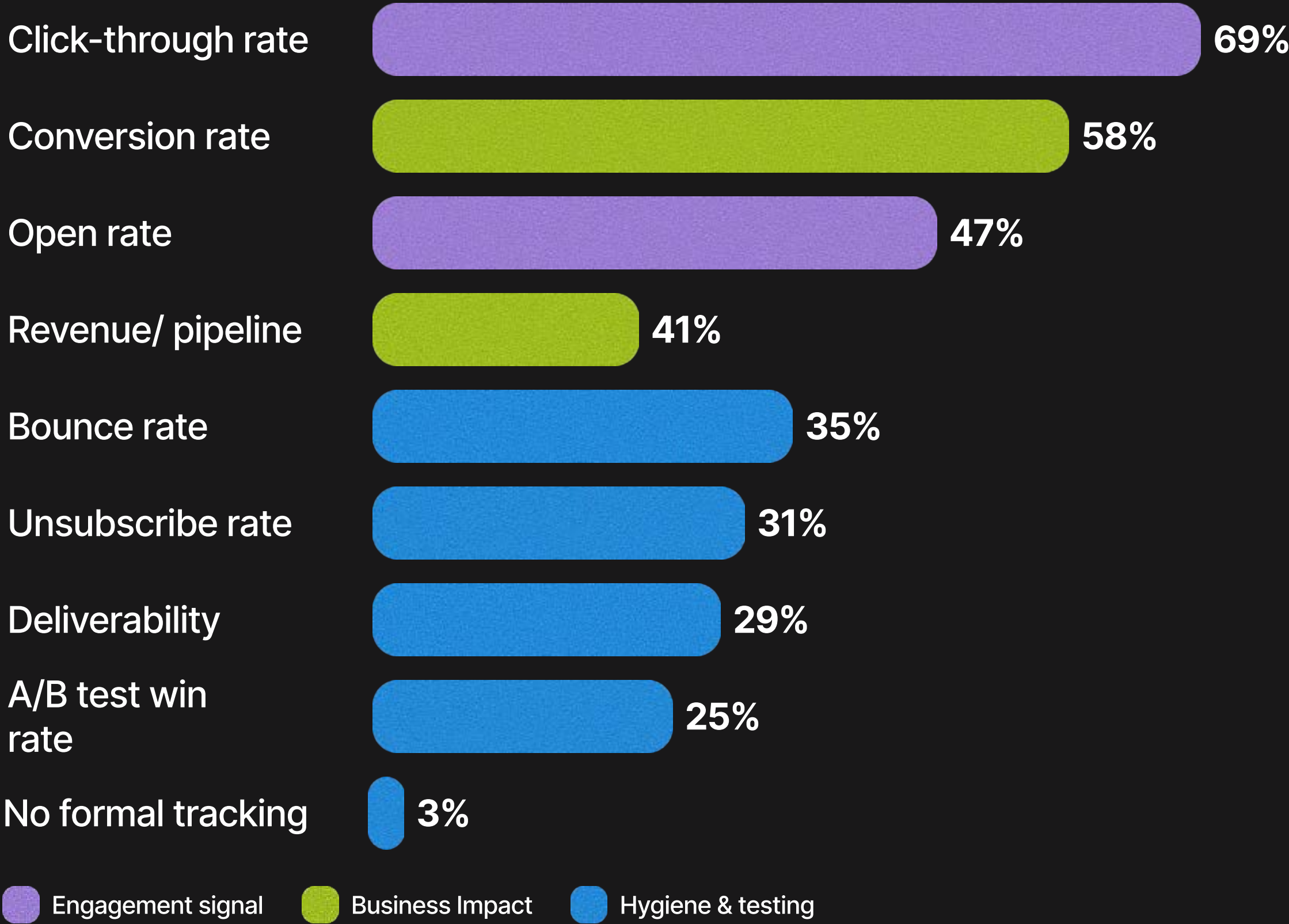
Marketing decision-makers are 68% more likely to measure email and landing page performance by click-through rate than by revenue or pipeline influenced.

That gap holds across industries, business models, and AI maturity levels. Most organizations aren't tracking the down-funnel influence of their work. The exception: teams with dedicated production tooling. **Knak users**, for example, are **17% more likely than all respondents to track revenue or pipeline influenced by email**.

Email marketing delivers at least a 36:1 ROI for one third of companies, so measuring revenue or pipeline from email can help guide top marketing investments more strategically.

Most enterprise MAPs and CRMs can already do this. Connecting email engagement to opportunity records allows marketers to report that **"email-influenced contacts generated \$10M in revenue this quarter, a 20% increase since we started using a new production platform,"** for example, and often changes conversations with leadership.

Which of the following metric(s) does your team currently use to measure email or landing page performance?



How enterprise teams work smarter

Amazon cut email production time by 95%, from over three hours to under ten minutes, by building a library of on-brand, reusable modules in Knak and giving marketers direct access to the platform. This freed their teams to shift focus toward strategy, segmentation, and experimentation.

As Andrew Eberting, Head of Global Martech and Operations at Amazon, put it: "Time is the currency. If I can give my team hours back by removing friction, that's the ROI." [Read the full story →](#)



Production takeaways

Audit before you add.

Map where your team's hours actually go and identify your specific friction points before reaching for another tool.

Treat build time as a cost line.

Email production has a price. Quantify it, then look for where consolidation improves your return.

Benchmark against faster teams.

Use the data from this report as a yardstick, and experiment with new team structures and tools to improve your process.

The campaign launch model is broken.

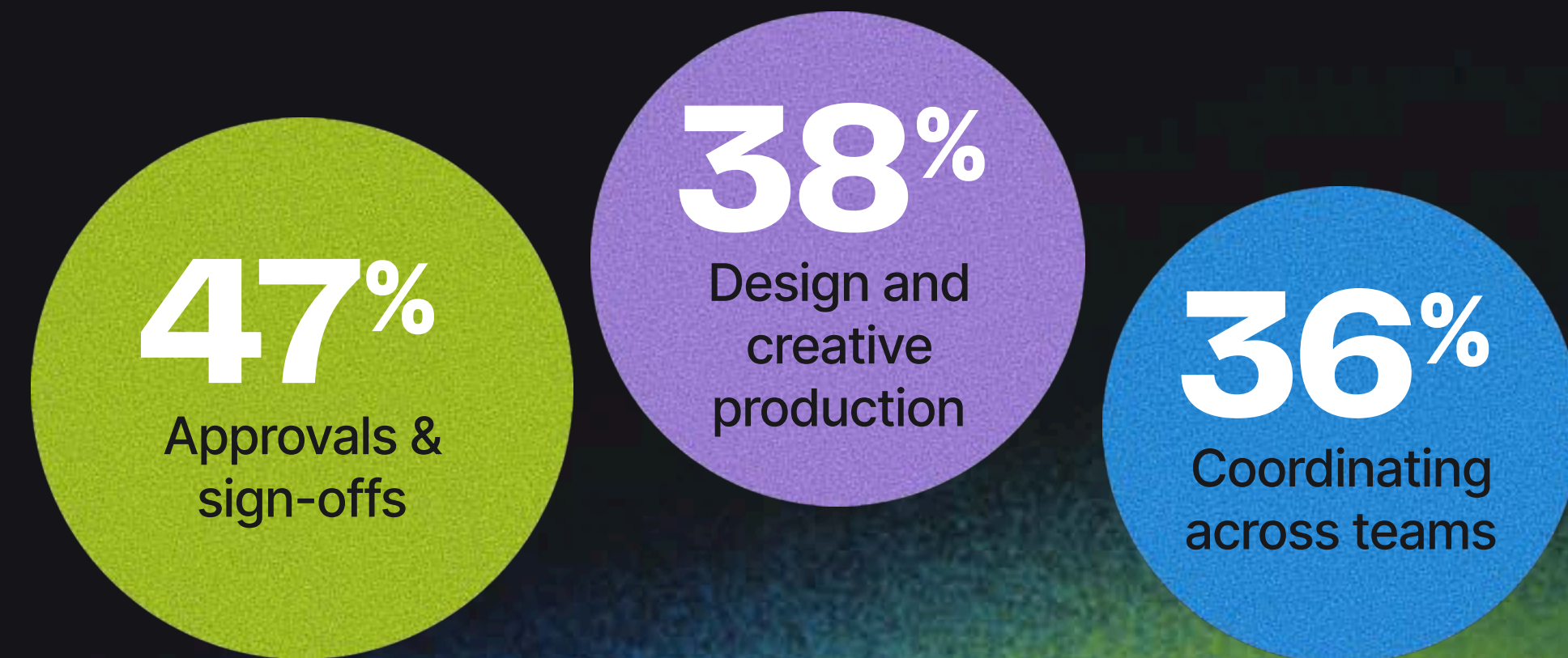
85%

of marketing teams missed at least one campaign launch date in the past 12 months due to workflow constraints. One in ten missed launch dates more than five times.

The culprits are consistent across company size and industry: getting approvals and sign-off (47%), design and creative production (38%), and coordinating across multiple teams and stakeholders (36%).

Smaller organizations are especially held back by limited team bandwidth, and those in the tech and professional services industries are more likely to cite content creation as a challenge.

Which of the following are your team's biggest challenges to launching marketing campaigns on time?



“

The strongest programs rely less on manual review and more on automation. Required elements, accessibility checks, domain and link validation, and legal disclosures are enforced automatically. Human review is reserved for higher-risk sends like regulatory communications or executive announcements.



April Mullen,
Head of Content Marketing, Impel

Email production is a team sport, but workflows are complex.

Sending a single marketing email is more expensive than most teams realize when you factor in the cost of the human time baked into every send.

\$2,400

per email, full day
production with
4 people involved.

36% of teams need at least one full business day to produce a single email, from brief to send.

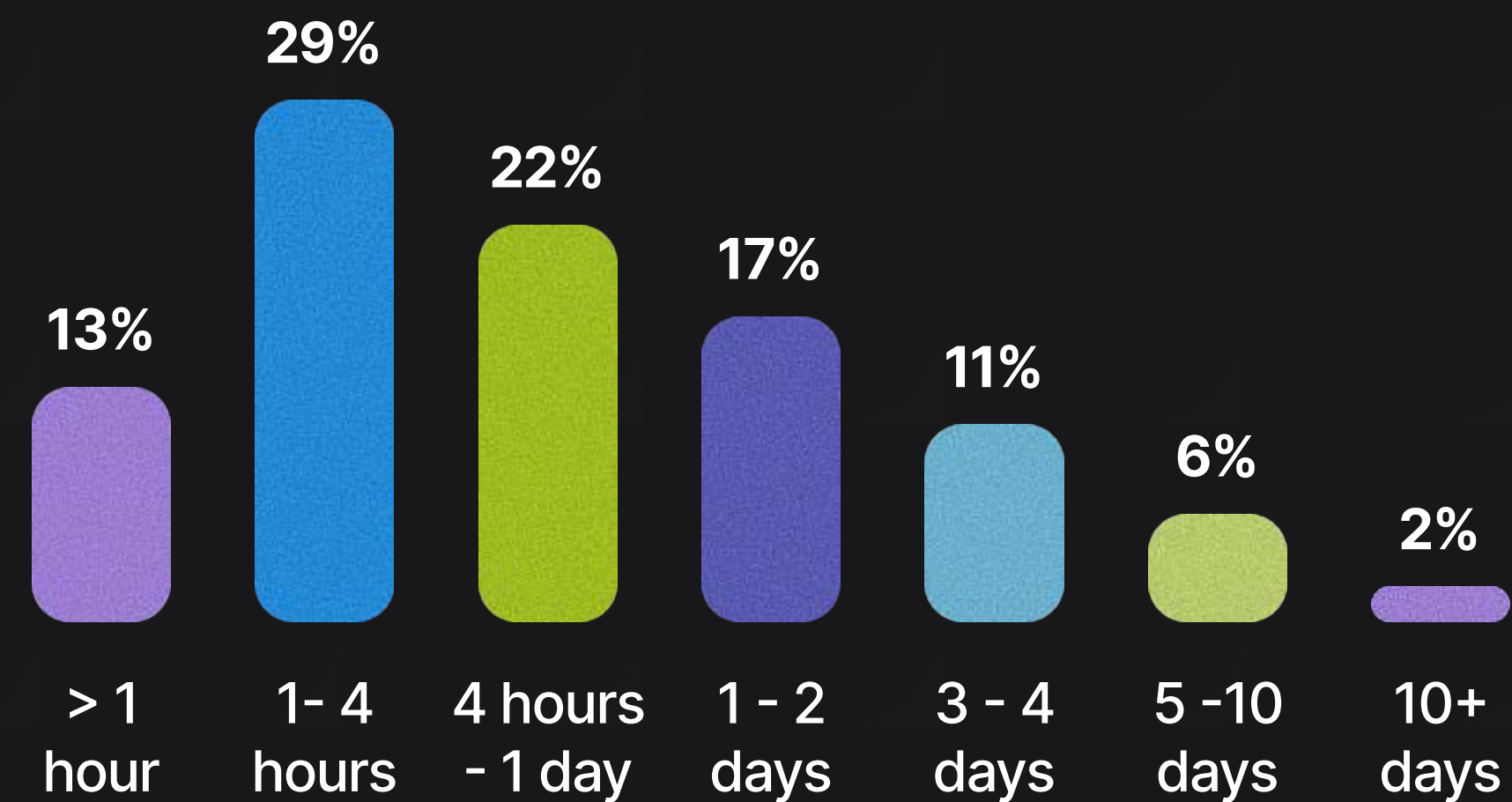
60% say at least four people are involved in the production process.

69% cycle through two to three rounds of revision before anything gets approved.

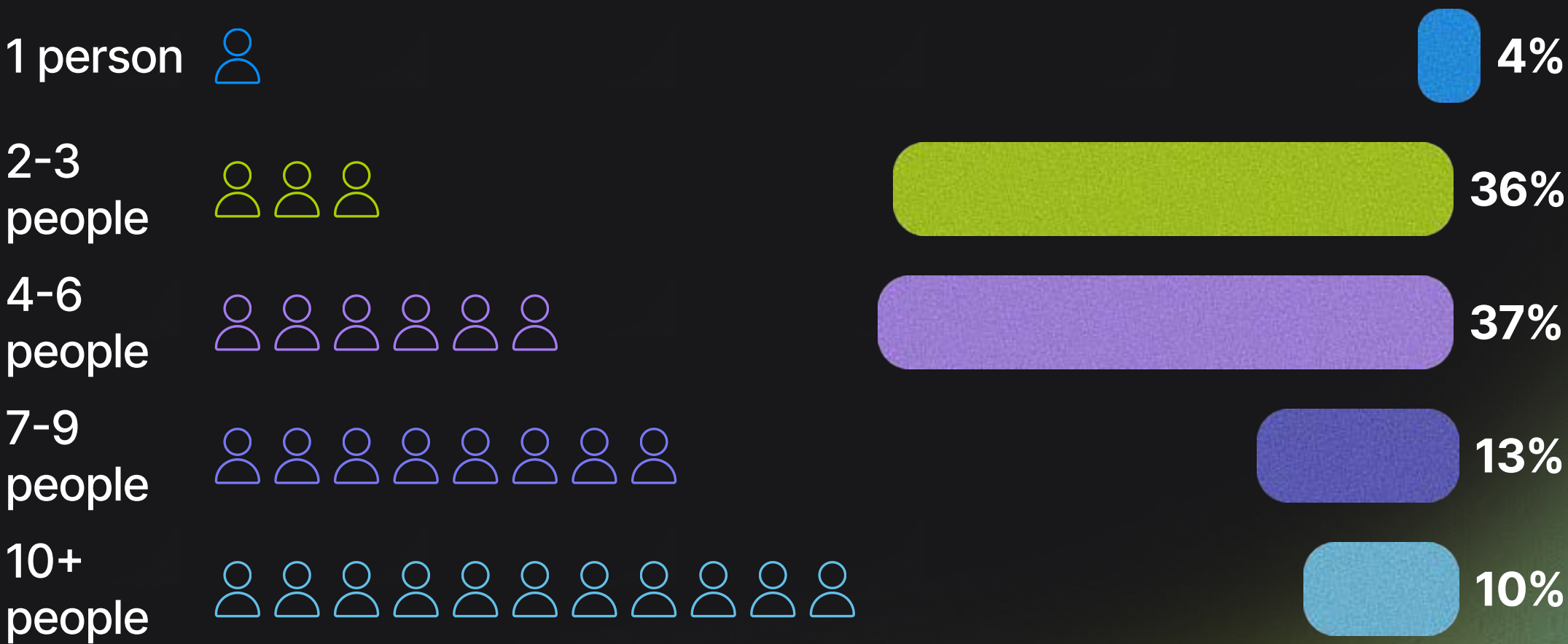
Based on BLS data for marketing managers, even in a best-case scenario where production takes an hour, four people in the room means more than \$300 in internal labor costs per send. **When you consider the full-day scenario x 4 people, that's \$2,400 per email.**



Approximately how long does it take your team to produce a single marketing email from brief to send, including all reviews and approvals?



Approximately how many team members are involved in the production of a single marketing email from brief to send?



What do agile marketing production teams look like?

The teams that can move from idea to send in under four hours share a consistent profile:

- They have 2-3 people involved in email production from idea to send
- There are 16-30 employees on the marketing team
- They use 3-5 tools in their marketing tech stack
- They are intermediate AI adopters who are using it deliberately, not experimentally
- Their tech stack is most likely to include Salesforce Marketing Cloud as their marketing automation platform, ChatGPT for content creation, and email, Slack, or Teams for campaign workflow management

How real enterprise teams work smarter

Google Cloud reduced campaign change requests by 90% after rethinking their production process, and added up to \$2M in savings. Now, they can focus more on strategy and creativity rather than getting bogged down by constant revision loops. [Read the full story →](#)



"Don't read this as a shopping list. Yes, the data shows these teams tend to run Salesforce Marketing Cloud and ChatGPT, but those tools are only part of the picture. They're also operating with small teams, fewer tools around the core platform, clear ownership, and AI aimed at the work that slows a launch down. Hand that same stack to a team that hasn't done the operating work, and nothing magically speeds up."



Sara McNamara

RevOps and Marketing Operations leader and author of The Marketing Operations Strategist newsletter

Campaign takeaways

Fix the approval chain first.

It's the top reason campaigns miss their launch dates, and the most addressable.

Match your template model to your team structure.

The fastest teams design for how they actually work.

Tie production speed to performance.

Shipping faster matters when it creates more room to test, learn, and iterate.

The right platform can help you overcome production challenges.

Integrate your email and landing page builder with your existing marketing automation tools so you can work more efficiently from start to finish.

How marketing teams are building tech stacks that can grow with them

Most marketing teams have accumulated a production stack piece by piece, with one tool for templates, another for approvals, and another built into their MAP. It works, until you want to scale or make improvements.

54%

of teams use three to five separate tools to produce a single marketing email. And when a new capability gap emerges, 38% of teams patch it, adapting existing tools or relying on whatever their marketing automation platform already has built in.

It's a similar variation of the build vs. buy debate. AI has made spinning up an internal tool faster than ever, but homegrown solutions carry the same long-term cost as patches: someone has to maintain them, integrate them, and keep them compliant as everything around them changes.

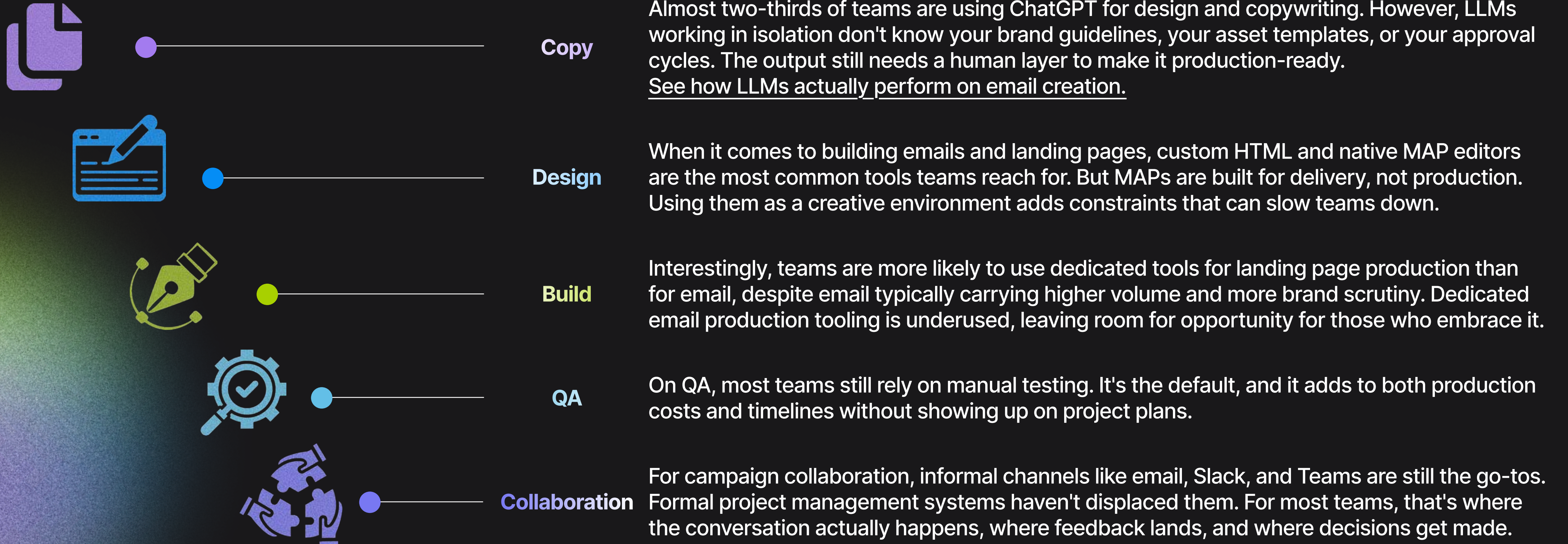
Plus, more tools creates more friction, as teams have to hand off copy and creative between them, creating more opportunities for things to break (and more time in the campaign production process).

As an alternative solution and new way of thinking about tech stacks, teams are moving to a composable martech architecture: a stack designed around integration and flexibility rather than one that adds point solutions over time. Instead of forcing every new need into whatever tools happen to exist, a composable approach lets teams swap components in and out as requirements change, with each piece connected through APIs or MCPs (which give marketers access to those same integrations through AI tools, no technical setup), rather than manual handoffs.

How real enterprise teams work smarter

Henry Schein simplified collaboration across design, creative, and marketing operations teams with Figma and Marketo integrations, and centralized review workflows. [Read the full story →](#)

The anatomy of a production tech stack

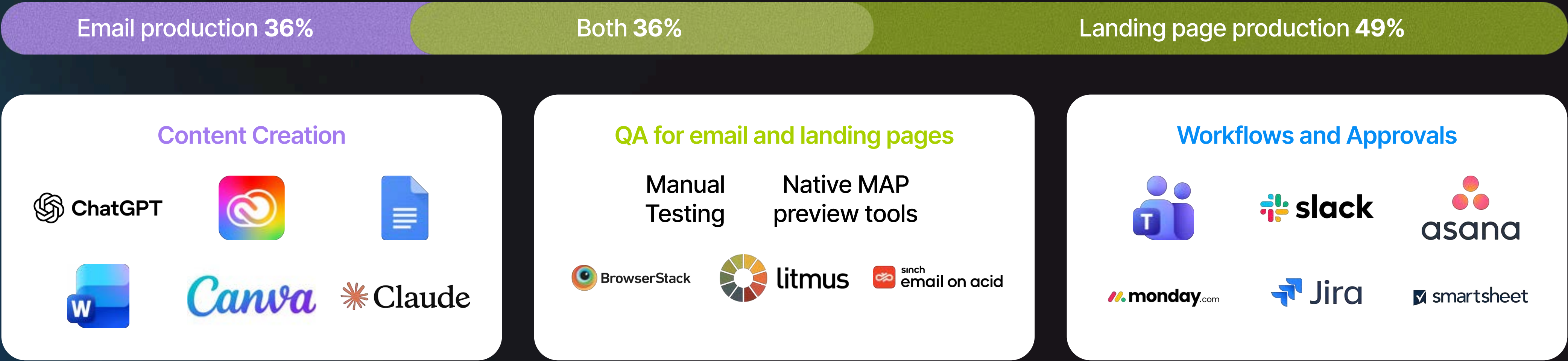


How real enterprise teams work smarter

OpenAI runs their campaign production process through Slack and Knak together. A marketer types the campaign brief into Slack, Knak MCP generates an email that the marketing team can perfect and collaborate on, then Marketing Ops deploys a brand compliant email.

[Read the full story →](#)

The most common tools marketers use for campaign production



What are Knak users doing differently?

Among the sample of enterprise marketing decision-makers we surveyed, nearly 1 in 5 use Knak for building emails or landing pages, doing QA and testing, or both. Here's what sets them apart from all respondents.

78% **They're at the forefront of AI adoption in marketing production.** 78% are intermediate or advanced AI users (11% more than all respondents)

30% **They're more likely to complete email production quickly.** 30% can go from idea to send in 1–4 hours.

17% **They track email impact.** Knak users are 17% more likely than all respondents to track revenue or pipeline influenced by email, and 2% more likely to track conversion rates.

48% **They are satisfied with their email performance and outperforming goals.** 48% of Knak users are “very satisfied” and consistently hit or exceed their performance targets.



How enterprise teams work smarter

Uber rebuilt their global production model and cut asset deployment time nearly in half, **from 10 days to 4.5**, while eliminating the manual workflows that had been draining their team's capacity.

[Read the full story →](#)

Marketing tech takeaways

Stop patching capability gaps with tools you already have, and think twice before building.

Every workaround adds a handoff, and every homegrown tool adds a maintenance burden. At some point, the patches (and the side projects) become a problem.

Get production out of the MAP editor.

It was built to send, not to build.

Don't let LLMs become another silo.

AI that isn't connected to your templates, brand guidelines, and approval workflows creates a new layer of cleanup.

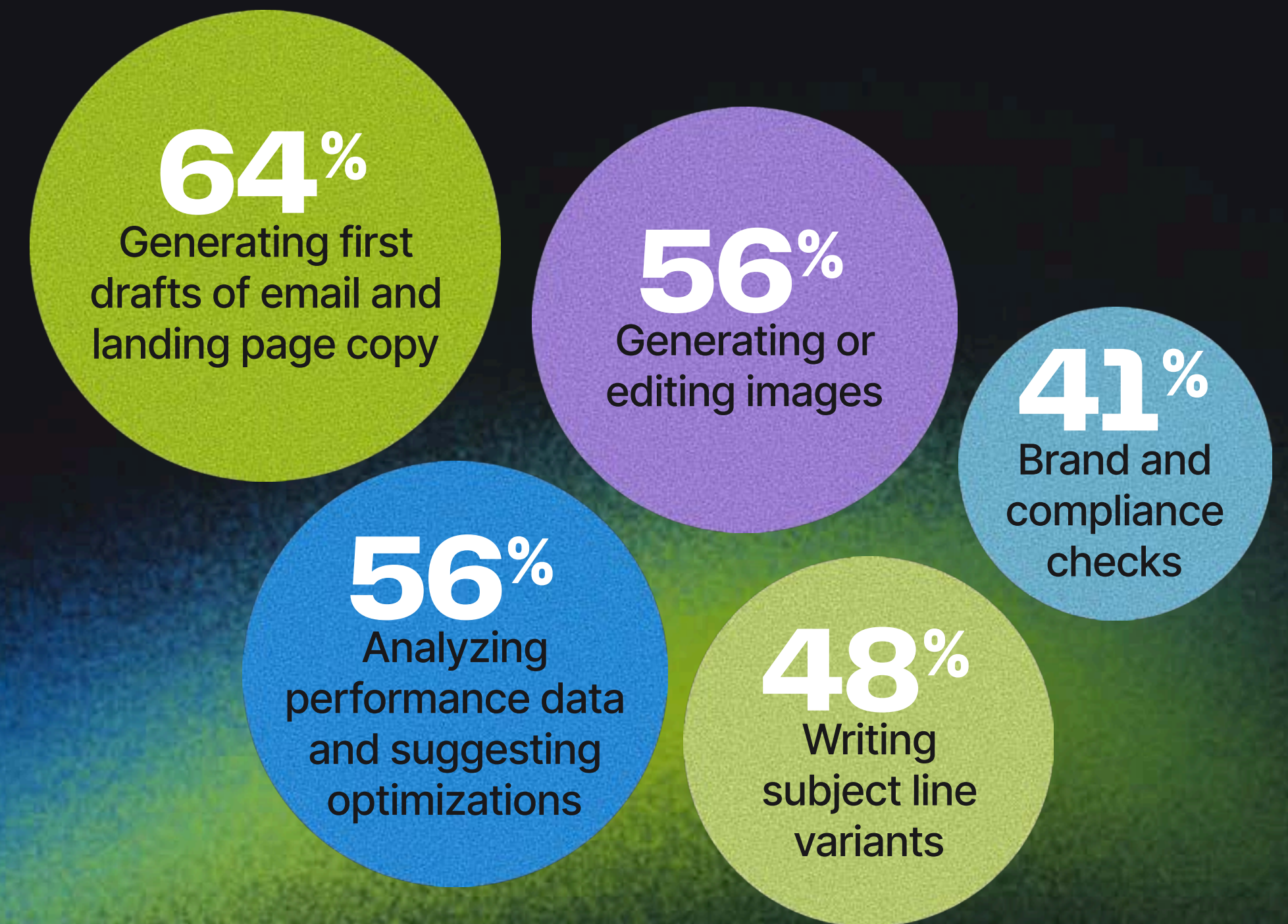
AI is embedded in, but **not fully taking over,** **marketing workflows (yet).**

70%

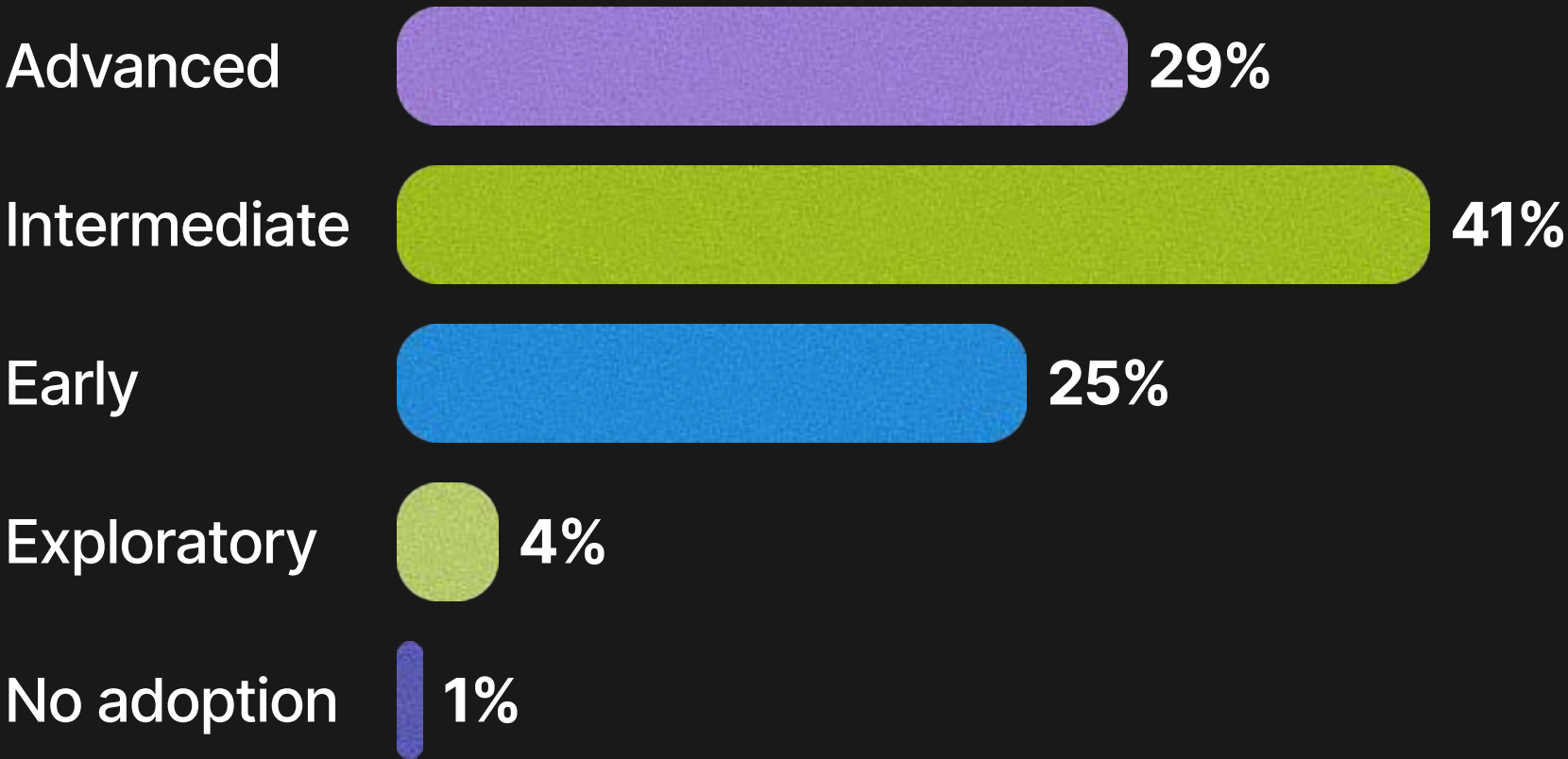
of marketing teams have deployed AI in some capacity, with 29% reporting advanced adoption with AI embedded across their entire workflow. The other 41% are somewhere in between: experimenting, expanding, or still figuring out where it fits.

Teams at organizations with \$1B+ in revenue are 72% more likely to still be in the early stages of AI adoption compared to all respondents. Scale introduces complexity, governance requirements, and legacy infrastructure that slow adoption down.

Marketers are most often using AI in production workflows for:



Which of the following best describes your team’s current stage of AI adoption in marketing production?



Agentic production workflows are now a reality

Two of the latest use cases for AI in marketing production is using Model Context Protocols (MCPs) to connect AI tools like Claude directly into production tools like Knak, and using agents to complete parts of the marketing workflow independently, while following brand guardrails and sending production-ready assets for human approval.

“Our campaign stack, Slack, Knak, Linear, Customer.io, Salesforce, used to be a set of destinations a human walked between, carrying data by hand. Now it is an assembly line that runs from a single Slack thread. The tools did not change. What changed is that an agent now connects them and carries the work between them, so a person does not have to.



Cory Gabor,
Senior Marketing Operations Manager, Vercel

AI-driven marketing production has become the capability that defines marketing leadership

53% of marketing decision-makers cite driving AI and automation adoption as the most critical skill for their career growth over the next one to two years, more than three times any other capability. At \$1B+ companies, it hits 64%. And at organizations with advanced AI adoption, that figure jumps to 72%.

53%

Of marketing
decision-makers

64%

At \$1B+
companies

72%

At advanced AI
adoption
organizations

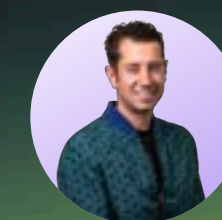
Today, the leaders who will define the next chapter of marketing are the ones who figure out how to industrialize how work gets made.

“

*Building an AI-first organization requires an internal cultural shift,” says **Pierce Ujjainwalla**, Co-founder and CEO at Knak.*

At Knak, we’re pushing that cultural shift through education and reassurance. We’ve instituted mandatory lunch-and-learns on AI. We have AI office hours where anyone in the company can show up and ask questions of our AI experts. We’ve built an internal ‘AI dream team’ to build internal AI applications, educate employees on AI, evaluate third-party AI products, and provide thought leadership while pushing the company on important AI initiatives.

As a leader, I’m preparing everybody on our team for the future of work. AI is here to stay.



Pierce Ujjainwalla,
Co-founder and CEO at Knak.

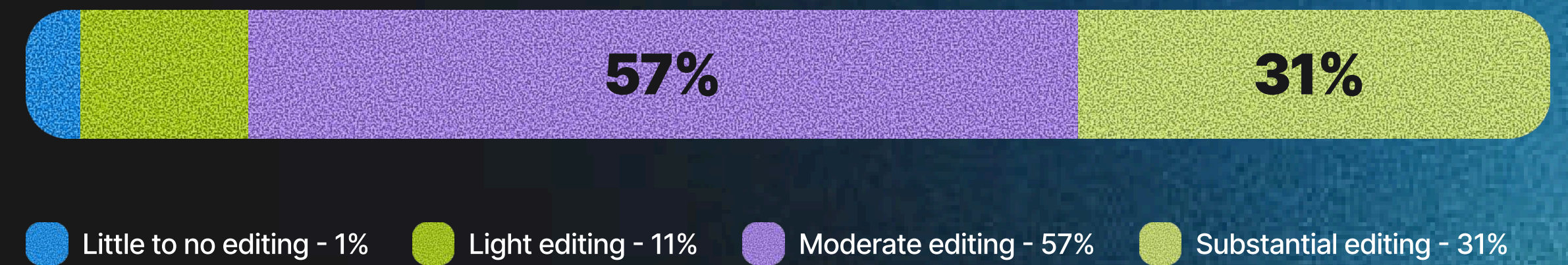
Most AI-generated assets aren't launch-ready

88% of teams say **AI-generated marketing content requires moderate or substantial editing before it's usable.**

That's not surprising when you consider how, and where, people are using AI. 63% of respondents use ChatGPT for content creation in their marketing production workflow. But ChatGPT doesn't have access to your brand guidelines, your approved templates, or your governance rules out of the box. It can produce a capable first draft, but not a launch-ready asset.

Until AI is deployed inside the production layer itself, with brand standards already built in, it will keep slowing down the process.

When using AI to generate marketing content, how much human review and editing typically takes place before the content is used?



How advanced AI adopters are pulling ahead

Teams adopting AI at an advanced level aren't the largest teams or those with the most budget, they're the ones with a culture of innovation, who are willing to invest in the workflows that allow marketers to be more strategic. And the outcomes from those embracing AI show where the gaps will continue to grow between AI-forward teams and non-adopters.

Advanced AI adopters are:

62%

more likely
to produce a single
marketing email in
under an hour

25%

more likely
to send 100 or more
emails per month

2x

more likely
to be very satisfied
with their team's
email and landing
page performance.

Advanced adopters are also 44% more likely to use AI agents for building and coding emails and landing pages, **41% more likely to use it for brand and compliance checks**, and **34% more likely to use it for translation and localization**. They've moved AI past the drafting stage and into the production layer itself.

Their collaboration infrastructure reflects the same intentionality. **Advanced adopters are 83% more likely to use structured project management tools** like Trello or Basecamp, and **56% more likely to use native MAP approval workflows**.

They're also more decisive when capability gaps emerge. **Advanced adopters are more likely to buy or subscribe to a dedicated tool** rather than patch the gap with what they already have (56% vs. 36% overall). These teams have worked out where AI reaches its limit and purpose-built tooling is needed.

AI takeaways

Move AI past the first draft.

The teams seeing the biggest gains are embedding AI in build, compliance, and localization.

Keep a human in the loop.

Speed without governance creates a different kind of production problem.

Set up governance at the production layer.

AI tools need access to your brand guidelines, content, and products so outputs are close to ship-ready.

Marketers are doubling down on the channels they control.

88%

of marketing teams produce campaign assets for email, making it the most widely used channel by a long shot. Paid social is the next most popular channel, but email is produced by nearly 50% more teams.

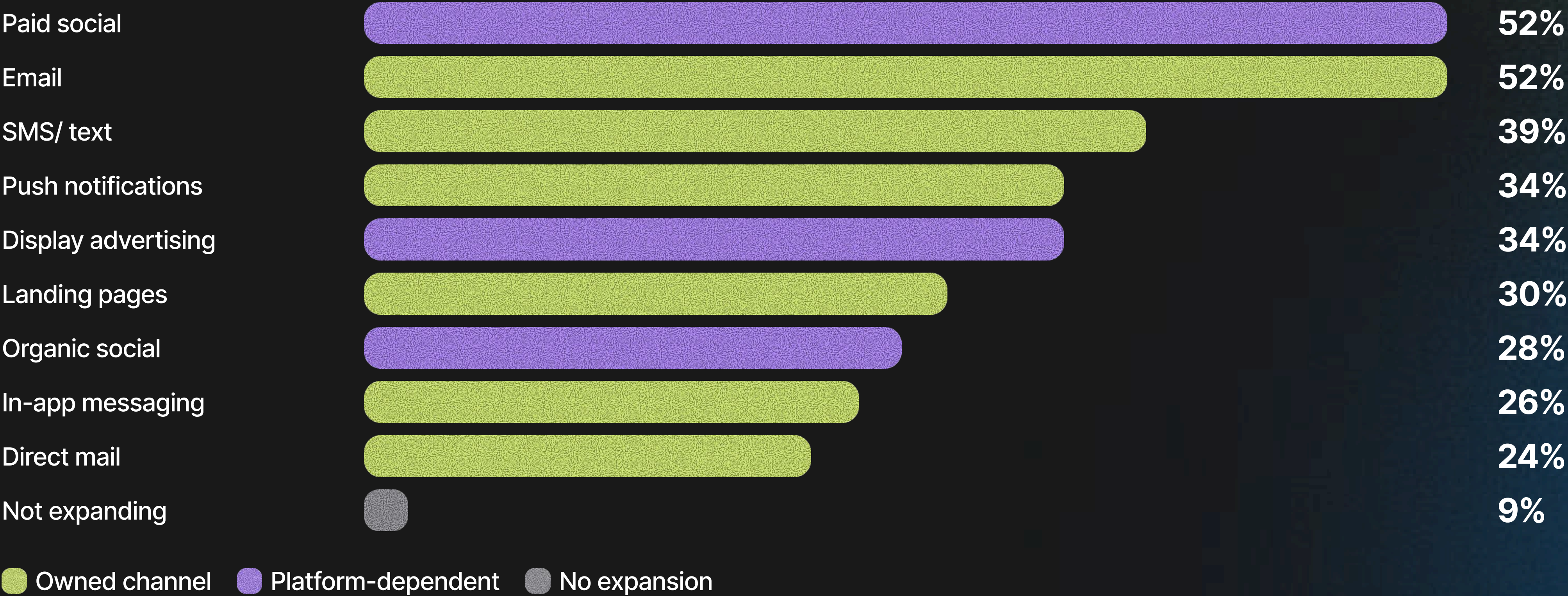
And the appetite for email isn't slowing down. Just over half (52%) of marketing teams plan to add or significantly increase email spend over the next 12 months. That ties email with paid social as the top channel they plan to invest in.

With the economy in flux, business leaders are investing defensively. And since social algorithms can shift without warning and display ad costs can fluctuate with the market, it makes sense that marketers would want to prioritize channels that they own.

Email provides direct access to a brand's audience and predictable economics. As investment in other channels grows more uncertain, email remains a strong, high-performing channel. That investment goes further when the production layer is ready for it. Teams that build the infrastructure now with faster workflows, cleaner governance, and less tool fragmentation will be able to scale email without scaling the overhead that comes with it.



Which of the following marketing channels is your team planning to add or spend significantly more on in the next 12 months?



Future of campaigns takeaways

Build the production system before you scale the channel.

More email spend without a faster, more governed production process means more of the same friction at higher cost.

Make your production layer callable by AI agents.

The teams that will move fastest are the ones whose infrastructure is ready for agentic workflows.

Plan for omnichannel AI production now.

Email is the priority today, but the production challenges don't stop there. The teams investing in a unified production layer will be better positioned as AI expands across every channel.

Bridging the marketing production gap is **your biggest opportunity.**

Marketing production shouldn't be a bottleneck teams work around. It should be the layer that enables collaboration, creative freedom, and the speed that modern campaigns require. For too long, enterprises have looked to the MAP as the source of friction and tried to solve for it there. But MAPs are built for delivery.

What teams actually need is a dedicated production layer: lean, agile, purpose-built, and AI-ready. They need a system that sits between the campaign idea and the MAP and enables marketers to do full-stack work without depending on developers or patching together disparate tools.

The teams closing the gap between content generation and campaign launch are:

Auditing where time is actually going across strategy, planning, and production before adding more tools or headcount.

Deploying AI across the full production cycle: creation, governance, QA, translation, and launch.

Investing in a dedicated production layer that sits between their campaign idea and their MAP, rather than using existing tools for work they weren't built for.

Ready to see what that looks like in practice?

Go from draft to launch-ready in minutes, with Knak

Methodology

The research in this report was conducted by Datalily via Centiment, a market research provider, on behalf of Knak. A 30-question survey was administered to 333 marketing decision-makers in the US, UK, Canada, and to Knak customers between April 29, 2026, and May 18, 2026.

Respondents included a sample of marketing decision-makers working in marketing operations, demand generation, field marketing, growth marketing, or senior marketing leadership at organizations with between \$50M+ and \$1B or more in annual revenue. Respondents were from organizations that send a minimum of 5 marketing emails per month, and use an enterprise marketing automation platform.

Report created in collaboration with Datalily.
www.datalily.com • hello@datalily.com

