



REPORT

The state of social media marketing 2027

Data-driven insights from marketers on AI adoption, social strategy, and measurable impact.





INTRODUCTION

AI is giving social teams more capacity

Output is up, teams are growing and AI is saving hours every week. The next test is whether that capacity turns into impact leaders can see and trust.

Social media marketing has always been about keeping pace with new platforms, new formats, and new expectations. But 2027 brings a different kind of pressure. AI has given teams the capacity to produce more, faster, and the question has shifted from whether they can keep up to whether all that output is working: governed, measured, found in search, and sustainable for the people behind it.

This report unpacks what marketers say is working, what is holding them back, and what they plan to do in 2027. It explores how teams are using AI while keeping it under control, where they are investing across platforms, creators, and communities, and how they are getting found in search and AI answers. It also looks at how they are proving social delivers. Practical insights for leaders who want to move from producing more to achieving more.



“In 2027, the strongest social strategies will not be defined by how much content teams can produce. They will be defined by how well they turn every interaction into measurable business value and a better customer experience.”

Claire Wilson, CMO, Emplifi



90%

Of marketers say **AI has increased their team’s output**

86%

Of marketers say their **content and campaign volume grew** in the past year

31%

Of marketers plan to **increase their investment in Reddit**



ABOUT THIS STUDY

What you will find in this report

This study explores the forces shaping social media marketing in 2027, and reveals how marketers are using AI, directing investment, and proving impact.

Methodology

Nature of survey: This was a 12-minute online survey offered in English only

Sample size: The sample was 405 marketing managers, directors, and executives across the US, UK, Australia, and New Zealand

When: Data collected September 2026

Qualifications: Must work full-time in a marketing-related role at a company with 11+ employees, have 3+ years in their industry, and influence marketing technology purchases



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01: AI IN MARKETING

AI is making social teams more productive

Nine in ten marketers say AI has increased their team’s output. For most, the gains are meaningful, but not yet transformational.

AI has moved from experiment to an everyday tool. Nearly two-thirds of marketers are already using or piloting AI in their marketing tools, while 38% say their organization is now scaling AI or leading in its use.

The payoff is clear: 90% say AI has increased their team’s output, and 87% say it has improved productivity, up from 82% last year. But most teams are still seeing meaningful rather than transformational gains. Just 38% report a significant productivity increase, suggesting there is still room to turn early adoption into bigger operational change.

Adoption is strongest in content creation and reporting, including caption and copywriting (72%), ideation (70%), image generation (64%), and reporting and analytics (64%). Community management is the clear outlier. Six in ten marketers (60%) are not yet using AI there: 40% plan to, and 21% say it isn’t on their radar.



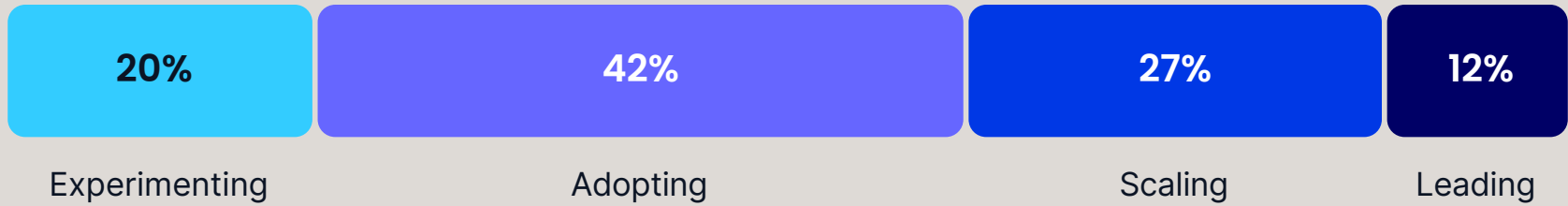
What this means for marketers

- 1 **Build on what works.** Embed AI in content and reporting first, then extend it to manual work like community management.
- 2 **Look beyond drafting.** Prioritize tools that run multi-step workflows: reporting, workflows and agents.
- 3 **Write the rules down.** Approve tools and set brand-safety guardrails so AI use stays visible.
- 4 **Measure outcomes.** Track what the extra capacity delivers, not just the time it saves.

Most teams are still building toward scaled AI adoption



% of marketers



62% Are still experimenting or adopting AI

Actionable insight



Make AI part of how the team runs.

Standardize the workflows that already work, set clear rules for how AI is used, and measure what it changes for the business, not just how much time it saves.

Ready to scale your community management with AI?

Book a demo

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01: AI IN MARKETING

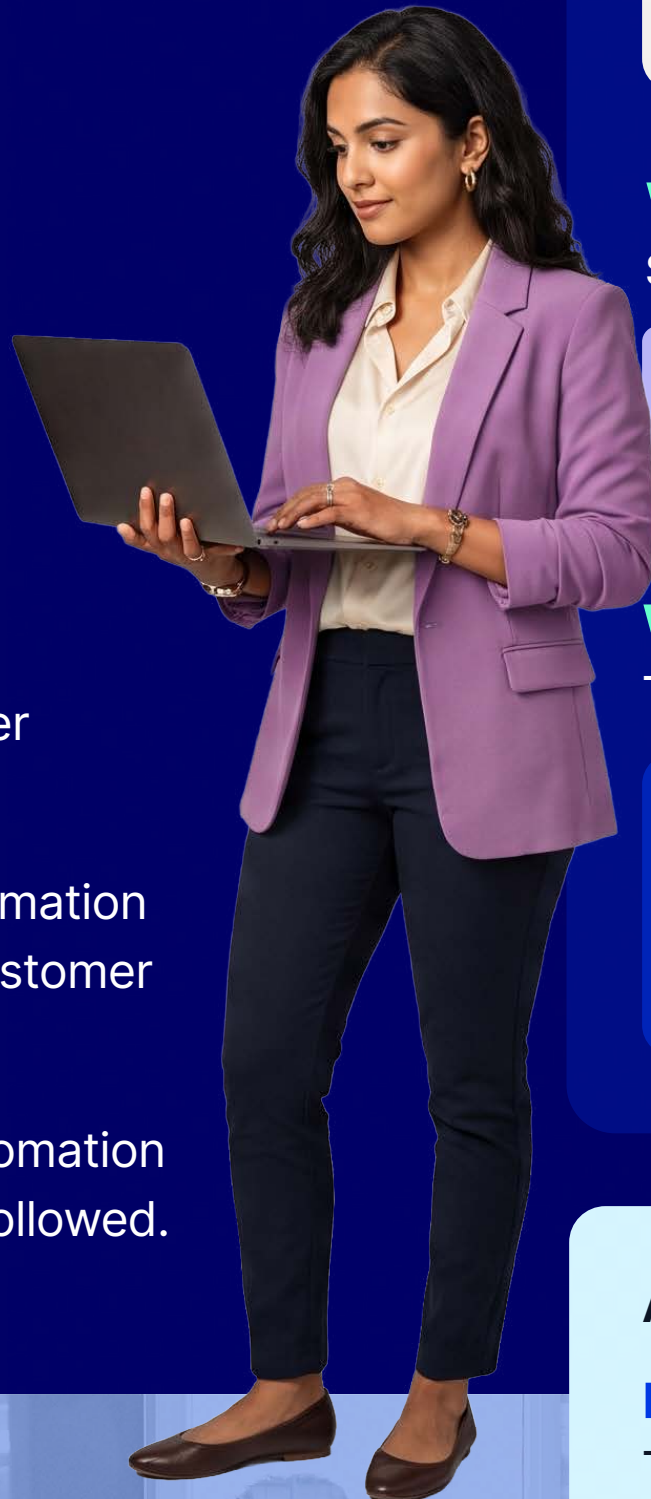
Where AI pays off, and where marketers look next

Teams value AI most for clearing routine work. Their next priorities are reporting, prediction and automation.

Beyond volume, AI's biggest effect is on how work gets done. One in four marketers (25%) say reducing manual and repetitive tasks has made the most meaningful difference, ahead of faster content production (20%) and better creative ideas and experimentation (20%).

Next, marketers want AI to take on more of the operational work. Reporting and analytics automation is the top priority, with 52% placing it in their top three, followed by predictive analytics and customer insights (44%), AI-driven ad targeting (37%), and automated content creation (35%).

When asked which single AI capability they most wish existed, marketers again pointed to automation and agents (37%). Reporting and analytics (26%) and task and workflow management (22%) followed.



Where AI pays off today

Most meaningful impact beyond output volume



25%
Cutting manual, repetitive tasks

20%
Speed of content production

20%
Better creative ideas

What marketers plan to prioritize next

Share placing each in their top three

52% Reporting and analytics automation

44% Predictive analytics and customer insights

What they wish AI could do

The one capability they wish existed

37%
Automation and agents

26%
Reporting and analytics

22%
Task and workflow management

Actionable insight



Hand AI a whole workflow, not just a task.

Teams already use AI to draft and ideate. The next gain comes from giving it a complete, repeatable process, such as weekly reporting, with clear quality rules and a measure of the time it saves. Connecting an agent to your social data, for example through an MCP server like Emplifi's Fuel AI MCP, lets it run that workflow on live data instead of exports.



01: AI IN MARKETING

AI use is outpacing AI policy

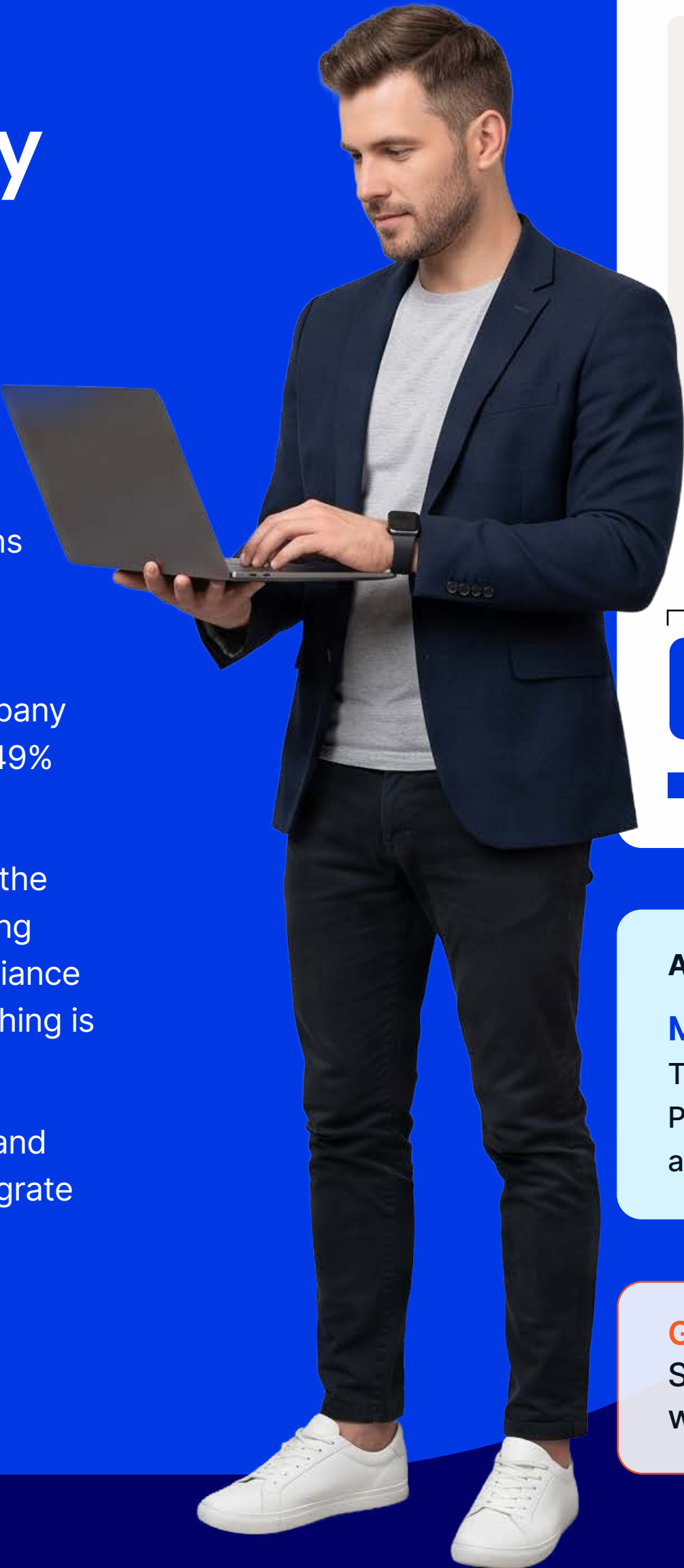
Guidelines are taking shape, but approved tools aren't always the ones teams use.

As AI use spreads, governance is catching up unevenly. 37% of organizations have a fully defined AI policy for marketing, and a further 41% have partial guidelines. 15% are still building one, and 7% have no plans yet.

Practice is running ahead of policy. 51% of marketers use AI tools their company hasn't approved at least some of the time, up from 42% last year, and only 49% use company-approved tools alone, down from 58%.

Marketers know what holds them back. Brand safety and content quality is the biggest barrier to broader AI adoption (26%), ahead of lack of skills or training (19%) and integration with existing tools (16%). Budget (11%), legal or compliance risk (10%) and leadership not prioritizing AI (8%) follow, and only 5% say nothing is holding them back.

Tool sprawl compounds the challenge: 27% of teams rely on six or more AI and marketing tools across their social workflow, while 45% say those tools integrate with their social platform only moderately well, or not well at all.



Shadow AI

51% Use AI tools their company **hasn't approved** at least some of the time



Biggest barrier

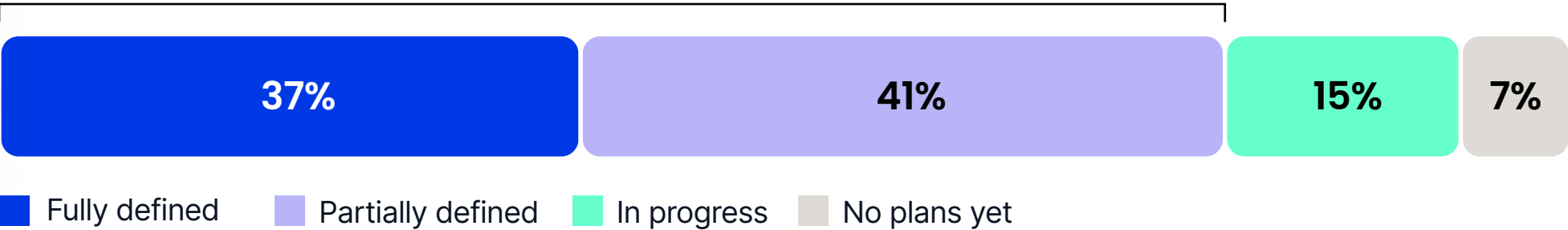
26% Name **brand safety and content quality** as the biggest barrier to broader AI adoption

Ahead of lack of skills or training (19%) and integration with existing tools (16%).

AI policy

Governance for marketing use

78% have at least partial guidelines



Actionable insight



Make the safe route the easy route.

Teams reach for unapproved tools when approved ones don't do the job. Pick vendors with documented security and brand-safety controls, and work with them to set up guardrails your team will use.

Give your team AI it can trust.

Security and brand-safety controls come built in, and our team works with yours to set guardrails that fit how you work.

[Book a demo](#)

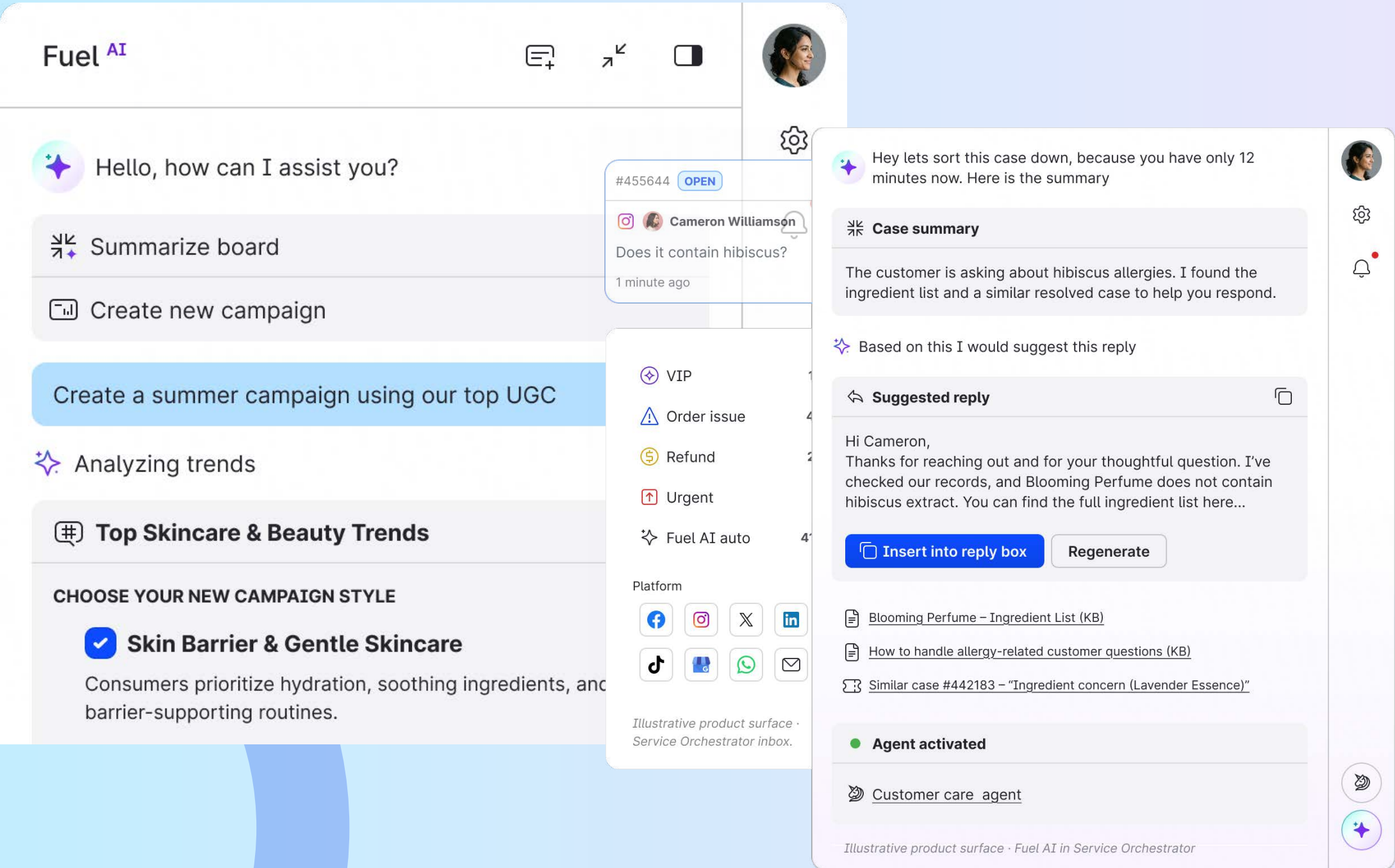
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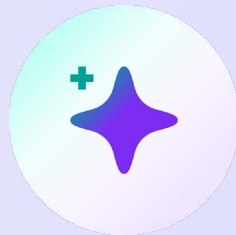
EMPLIFI FUEL AI

Turn capacity into impact with Fuel AI

The agentic intelligence layer built into **Emplifi Fuel**. Tell it what you need in plain language, and it takes on the repetitive work while your team keeps control.



The challenges social teams told us about, and how Fuel AI answers them



Repetitive work slows every launch

Creation and approvals are the biggest bottlenecks in the content workflow.

Fuel AI: Takes on the repetitive steps of content work, from trend research to a scheduled calendar. Your team keeps the approvals.

AI is moving faster than the rules

Many teams use AI tools their company has not approved, and brand safety is the top worry.

Fuel AI: one governed AI layer, with brand guardrails, multi-stage approvals and audit logs built in.

Proof is still built by hand

Reporting is manual, and showing ROI with clear attribution is hard.

Fuel AI: Turns social, listening and care signals into clear direction, and builds Unified Analytics reports from a plain-language request.

Ready to see Fuel in action?

Watch one prompt become a campaign plan and a content calendar, with your guardrails and approvals built in.

Watch now

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02: INFLUENCER MARKETING

Influencer budgets are rising, while virtual creator interest cools

Influencer budgets are rising, and creator content is gaining ground, but enthusiasm for virtual and AI-generated influencers has cooled.

Influencer marketing is a growing part of the strategy. More than half of marketers (53%) expect their influencer budget to increase over the next 12 months, and very few expect to cut it.

Creators are shaping the content mix too. Creator and influencer content is among the formats marketers expect to grow most, behind only short-form video and AI-generated content.

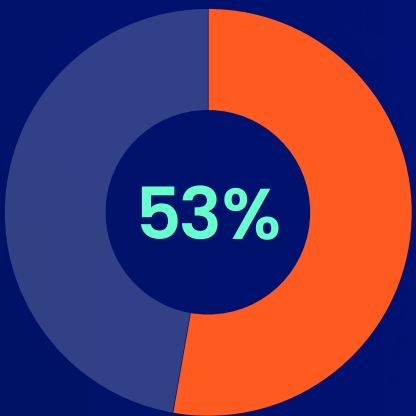
Virtual influencers are moving the other way. Just over a third of marketers (35%) plan to increase collaborations with virtual or AI-generated influencers, down from 58% last year.

Ready to scale your influencer strategy with smarter tools?

Book a demo

Influencer budgets

Plans for the next 12 months



Plan to increase their influencer budget

Virtual influencers

Plan to increase collaborations



58%
LAST YEAR

DOWN
23 percentage
points
→

35%
THIS YEAR

CREATOR CONTENT

37%

Expect creator and influencer content to grow in their mix over the next 12 months

The third most likely format to grow



Actionable insight

Grow creator budgets with the proof to match.

Agree goals and KPIs before spend rises, and track what creator content delivers alongside your owned content.



Your creator checklist

Before you scale spend



- 1 Set the goal**
Awareness, content, community, or sales: pick what creators should deliver.
- 2 Agree on the measures**
Decide the KPIs before defining budget.
- 3 Plan it into the mix**
Build creator content into your calendar, not just one-off campaigns.
- 4 Write the rules**
Set brand-safety and AI-use guidelines for creator content.
- 5 Pilot virtual influencers small**
Test with clear success measures before you commit more.

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03: SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGY

Instagram still leads as investment spreads



Social teams are rethinking where they show up and where they spend.

Instagram remains the anchor of social strategy. Nearly three-quarters of marketers (74%) actively use the platform, and more plan to increase their investment in Instagram than in any other channel, making it the top investment priority for 2027.

Beyond Instagram, planned investment is spread broadly across the major platforms. At least four in ten marketers intend to increase their investment in Facebook, TikTok, YouTube and LinkedIn. Among the platforms also tracked last year, Facebook and TikTok have moved ahead of LinkedIn as investment priorities, even though LinkedIn remains the third most widely used.

Reddit is the notable outlier. It is the only platform where the proportion planning to increase investment (31%) exceeds the proportion currently using it for marketing (28%), signalling clear potential for growth.

Actionable insight



Expand your platform mix without expanding your workload.

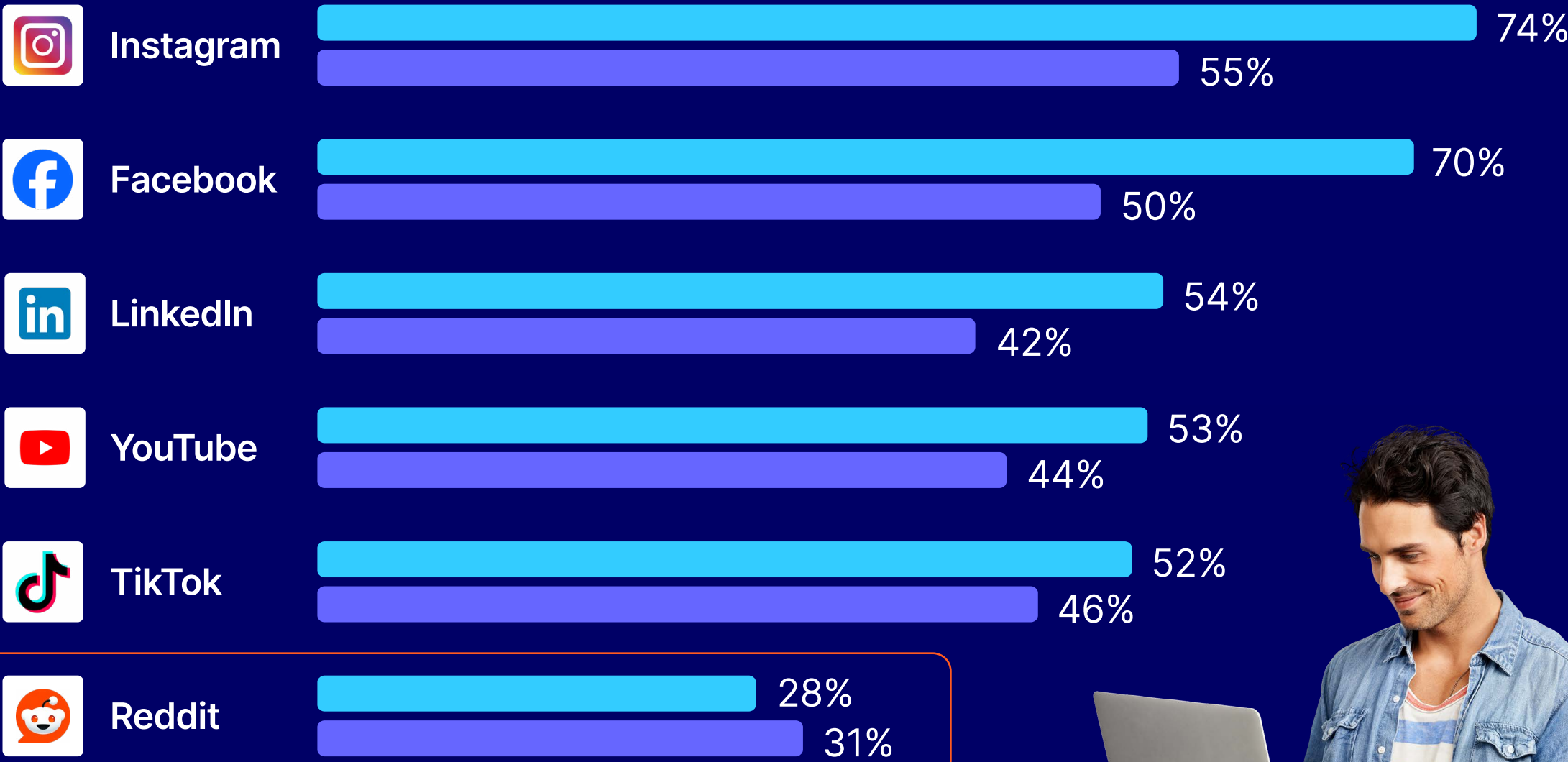
Every new channel creates more to manage. Plan, publish, and measure across them all in one place, so reaching new audiences doesn't require another tool.

Platform priorities



Active today and planned investment increases

Market on today Plan to increase investment



31% Plan to increase their investment in Reddit

The only platform where plans outrun current activity





03: SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGY

Short-form video leads as content pressure grows

Teams are managing more content than ever, with creation and approvals now the biggest bottlenecks.

Short-form video is the format marketers expect to grow most over the next 12 months (55%), ahead of AI-generated content, creator and influencer content, and carousel posts.

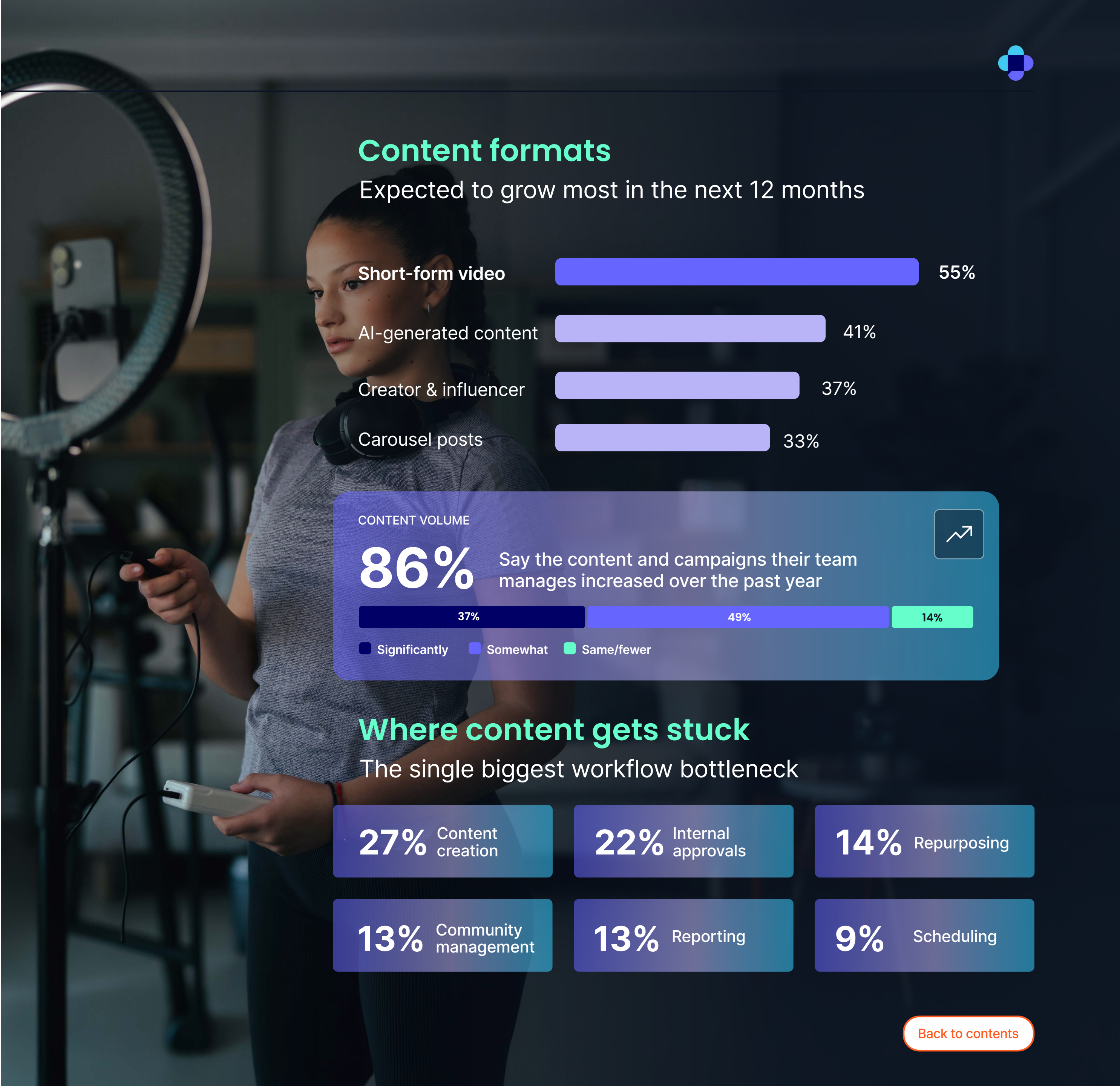
Demand on teams is rising to match. Nearly nine in ten marketers say the volume of content and campaigns they manage has increased over the past year, and for more than one in three it has increased significantly.

The pressure shows up in the workflow. The biggest single bottleneck is content creation itself, from ideation to design, followed closely by internal approvals and sign-off, then repurposing content across platforms.

Actionable insight

Streamline creation before you scale volume.

Creation and approvals are the biggest bottlenecks holding teams back. Standardize templates, clarify sign-off roles, and build repurposing into campaign workflows so content moves faster.





03: SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGY

Discovery now runs through social search and AI answers

Marketers are treating social platforms as search engines and beginning to track AI visibility, but ownership is still unclear.

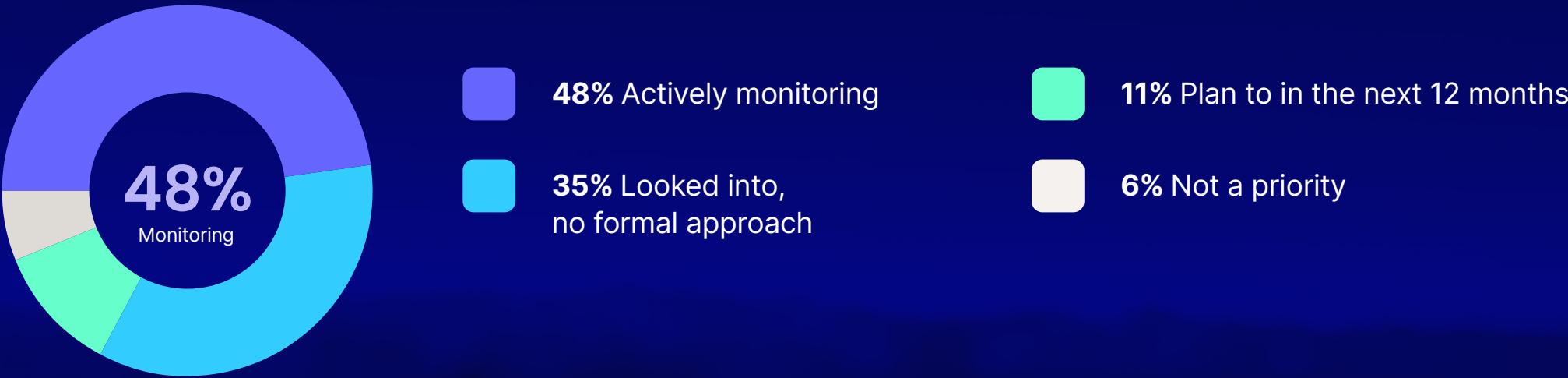
Search behavior is shifting to social platforms. Some 86% of marketers say optimizing social content for discovery and search is either a formal priority or on their radar for the next 12 months. Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube are the platforms most commonly treated as search channels.

AI platforms add another dimension to brand discovery. Almost half of marketers (48%) actively monitor how their brand appears in tools such as ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, and Perplexity, while another third have explored the issue without establishing a formal approach.

Ownership, however, remains fragmented. Responsibility for AI visibility sits variously with social and content teams, SEO, PR, or brand. For around one in five organizations, nobody owns it, or no defined approach exists. Although three in four marketers have already adapted their social content to improve visibility in AI-generated results, only just over a third are working from a defined strategy.

AI visibility

Tracking how the brand appears in AI platforms

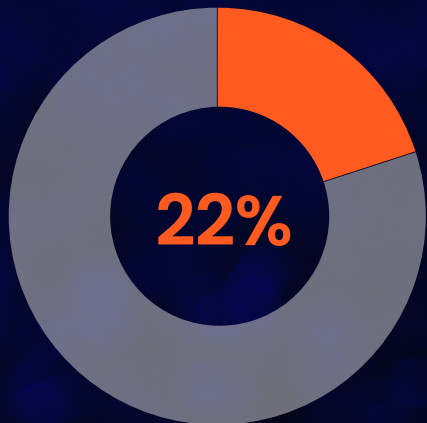


Who owns AI visibility

Social and content teams lead



Ownership gap



Say nobody owns AI visibility, or they have no defined approach

Actionable insight



Give AI visibility an owner, and keep every team on the same page.

Social, SEO, PR and brand all shape how a brand shows up. Bring the right teams into one workflow, and automate the reporting, so what you publish on social stays consistent with the rest of the business.



03: SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGY

Social listening is standard, but manual reporting holds it back

Most teams use listening to track brand health and sentiment. Turning insights into action takes automation.

Nearly every team (94%) now uses social listening in some form.

The most common applications - monitoring brand mentions and reputation and understanding customer feedback and sentiment - are also the areas marketers say deliver the greatest value.

Listening has its limits.

The biggest are manual reporting, too little headcount to act on what teams find, and insights spread across too many tools.

Most marketers trust AI-generated insights from their listening tools to inform decisions (60%), though only about one in five trust them completely.

Reddit is the newest layer.

Seven in ten marketers monitor it, actively or occasionally, mainly for listening and brand monitoring, customer research and trend discovery. The barriers are practical: It isn't seen as a priority, its impact is hard to measure, and teams lack the expertise to use it well.

Actionable insight

Choose a listening platform that does the manual work for you.

Look for a partner whose AI handles the reporting and sorting and turns insights into actions your team can take, so more of your time goes to the high impact activities that bring ROI.



SOCIAL LISTENING

94% Use **social listening** in some form



WHERE LISTENING DELIVERS MOST VALUE

Tile size shows the share naming each use case

29% Brand mentions and reputation

23% Customer feedback & sentiment

15% Campaign performance

10% Competitor intelligence

8% Trends & influencers

7% Crisis detection

7% Product feedback

WHAT HOLDS LISTENING BACK

The single biggest limitation

19% Manual, time-consuming report

18% Too little headcount to act

16% Too many fragmented tools

HOW TEAMS USE REDDIT

Among teams that monitor it or plan to



53%

Listening & brand monitoring



46%

Customer research & insight



46%

Trend discovery

Emplifi's AI-powered listening automates the reporting and surfaces what matters, so your team spends less time on manual work and more time acting on what it hears.

See it live

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04: PROVING IMPACT

Engagement leads the dashboard. Attribution proves the value.

Reach and engagement still dominate executive reporting, but demonstrating social's full business impact requires a clearer connection to revenue and business outcomes.

When asked which three KPIs they report on most, marketers put reach and impressions (58%) and engagement rate first. Customer retention and loyalty and conversion rate follow, while fewer than one in three report on social-attributed revenue.

That mix shapes what leaders see. Fewer than half of marketers (48%) say their team can confidently demonstrate social media ROI to leadership with clear attribution and data.

Another 42% have indicators, but not full attribution, while around one in ten say it remains a persistent challenge or cannot be done.

Attribution is the most commonly cited reporting obstacle, ahead of manual processes, data fragmented across multiple dashboards, and inconsistent data quality. For around one in seven marketers, the challenge goes beyond measurement: Leadership simply does not engage with social metrics.

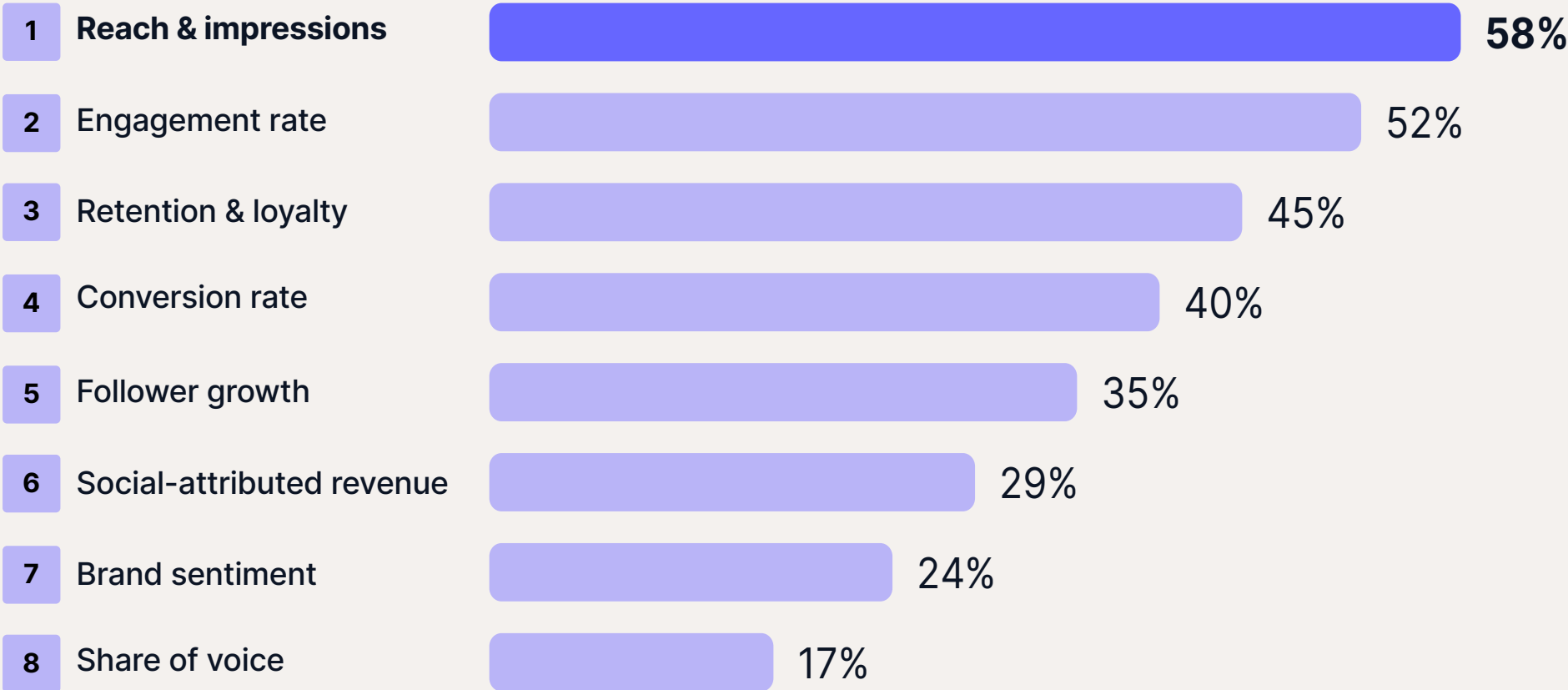
Actionable insight

Let AI handle the measurement so your team can focus on decisions.
Automate data collection and reporting, then use AI to uncover patterns that manual analysis might miss. This frees your team to interpret the insights, decide what matters, and take action.



What teams report on

Share ranking each in their top three KPIs



52%

Can't yet demonstrate the ROI of social to leadership with clear attribution and data

What gets in the way

The single biggest measurement challenge





04: PROVING IMPACT

Manual reporting is a major time sink, but AI is returning hours

Most marketers spend hours compiling weekly analytics. AI automation is rapidly reclaiming that time.

Manual reporting takes up a meaningful share of the week. Six in ten marketers (62%) spend four or more hours on reporting and analytics each week, while more than one in five spend seven hours or more.

AI is starting to give that time back. Over the past 12 months, 69% say AI has saved their team three or more hours a week on reporting and analytics, and around one in seven say it has saved more than 10.

The gains are widespread. Just 3% say AI has saved no time, although around one in ten either do not use AI for reporting or are unsure of its impact. That helps explain why reporting and analytics automation is the AI capability marketers most often place in their top three priorities for the next 12 months.

Actionable insight

Reinvest the hours AI gives back.

Use the time saved on reporting to look closer at what's driving results, and bring leadership to the story behind the numbers.



Time spent and time saved



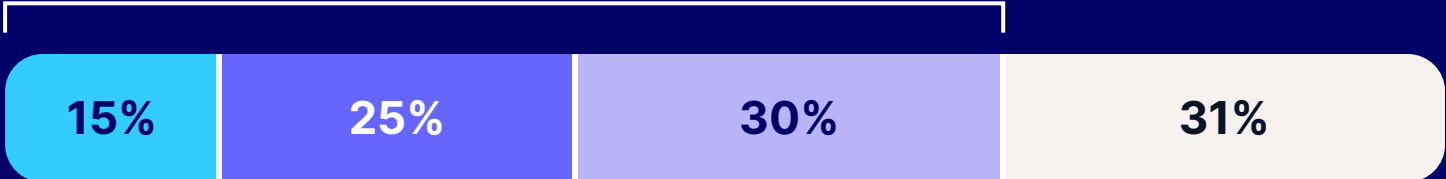
Hours a week on reporting and analytics



Hours AI has saved

Compared with 12 months ago

69% save 3+ hours a week



10+ hours 6-10 hours 3-5 hours Under 3 hours, none, or not using AI for reporting

BIGGEST SAVINGS

15% Say AI has saved their team more than 10 hours a week on reporting



05: TEAM CAPACITY & BURNOUT

Social teams are growing, and so is the workload

Growth only creates an advantage when teams can turn added capacity into more strategic work.

More than half of marketers (54%) say their social team has grown in the past year, and very few say it has shrunk. Teams of seven or more people now make up 42% of the sample, compared with 35% last year. Workloads have grown with them. Most marketers say the volume of content and campaigns they manage has increased, and for more than one in three it has increased significantly.

Actionable insight

Protect your team’s time before you add to it.

With time and budget the biggest limits, start with the manual work that slows every launch, from approvals to reporting, and automate what you can before you add headcount or channels.



Time and budget are the biggest operational constraints, each named by roughly one in four marketers, ahead of tools, unclear priorities and headcount. Even so, four in five describe their workload as manageable, in line with last year.

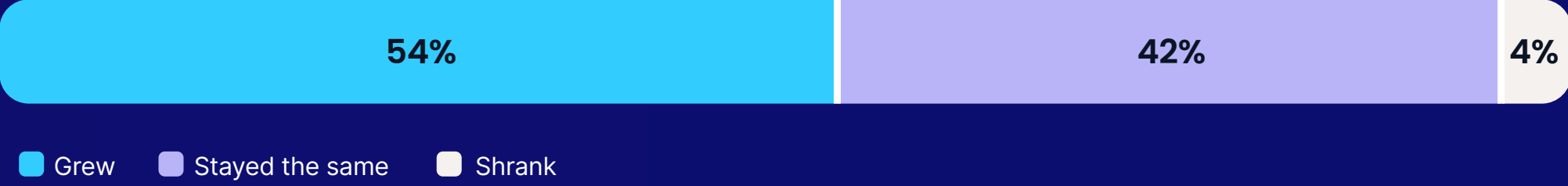
Bigger teams

Social teams of seven or more people



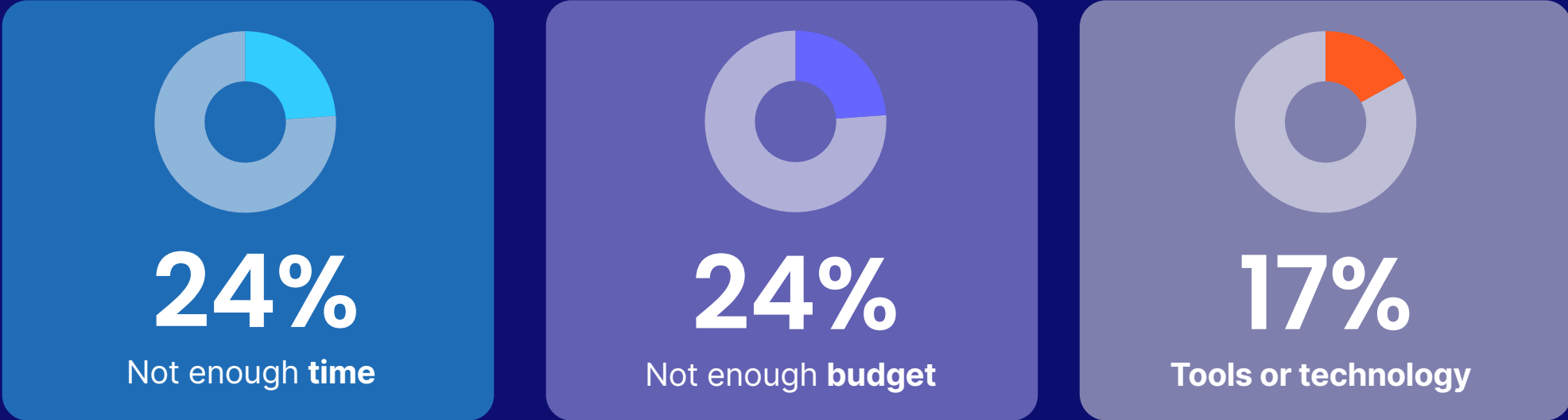
Team size, past 12 months

Has your social team grown?



What limits teams

The single biggest constraint





05: TEAM CAPACITY & BURNOUT

Workloads feel manageable, but burnout is widespread

Sustainable social performance will depend on redesigning how the work gets done.

Burnout sits alongside manageable workloads. Just over three in four marketers (77%) say they feel burnout at least sometimes, and 24% feel it very often, up from 17% last year.

When asked what would make the biggest difference to their team’s capacity and output, marketers point first to smarter automation across workflows, followed closely by more headcount and better AI tools to reduce manual work. Taken together, automation and AI tools are named about twice as often as headcount.

Better collaboration across teams, clearer goals and reduced scope, and streamlined tooling matter too, but each is chosen by fewer marketers.

Actionable insight



Make automation your first lever for capacity.

Marketers name smarter automation and better AI tools more often than headcount as the biggest difference to what their team can do. Start with the repetitive workflows that take the most hours, so your people spend their time on the work that needs people.

Ready to do more with the team you have?

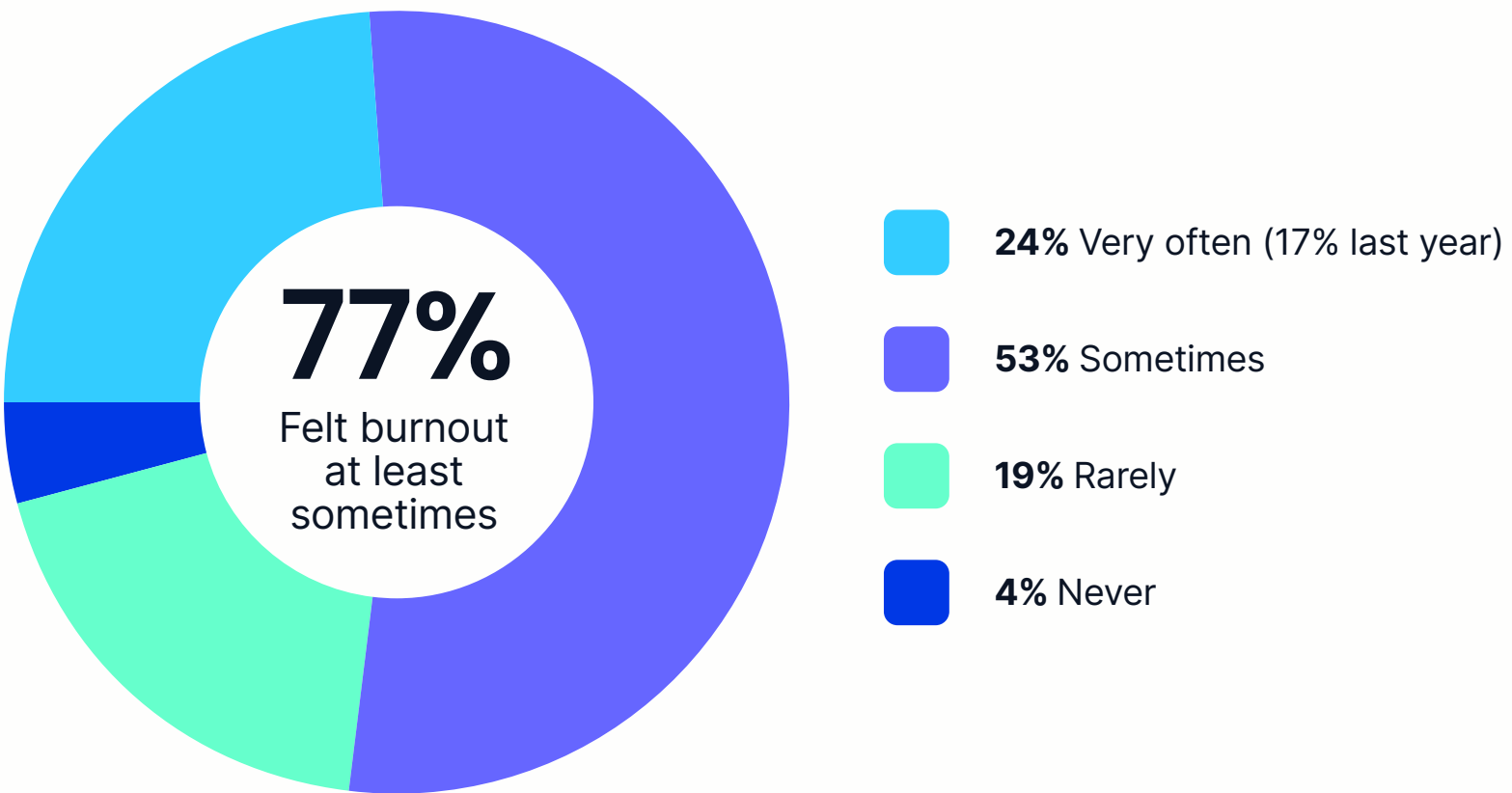
Emplifi’s AI and automation help social teams take on repetitive work, so your team can do more without adding to its workload.

Let’s talk

Feeling burnout

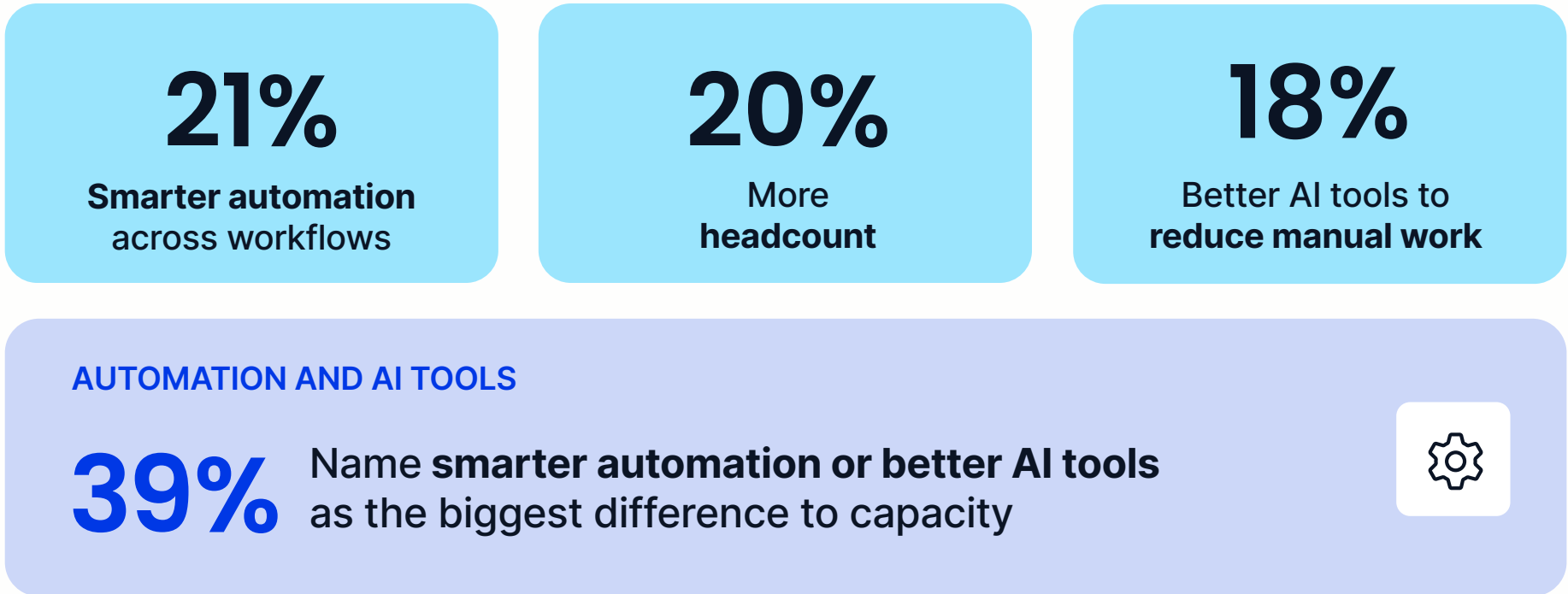


How often marketers feel burnout in their role



What would help most

The single biggest difference to capacity and output



*Sample sizes: 2027 report n=405; 2026 report n=564. Comparisons are directional.



06: FUTURE

Building your playbook for the year ahead

AI has given social teams more capacity. The teams that turn it into impact will invest in automation, prove what works, and put clear ownership around the work.

Marketers are clear about where they plan to put their money next. Asked which capability will receive the biggest investment over the next 12 months, the most common answer is AI tools and automation (31%), well ahead of short-form video production (19%) and analytics and reporting (15%).

Three in four expect AI's role on their team to grow over the next two years. The findings in this report point to what will decide whether that growth turns into impact: clear rules, clear ownership, and proof that the work is paying off.



"The future of social will not be won by the teams producing the most. It will be won by the teams that use technology to create space for better judgment, stronger customer experiences, and work their people can sustain."

Claire Wilson, CMO, Emplifi

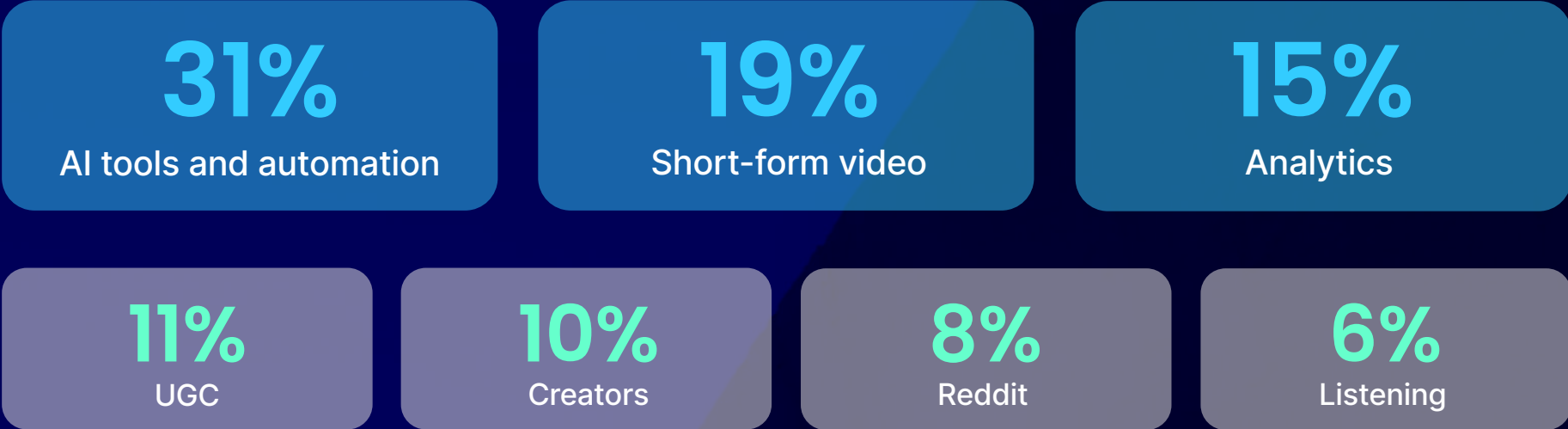


Turn today's challenges into tomorrow's growth advantage.

Let's talk

Where marketers will invest most

The biggest investment in the next 12 months



AI's ROLE

74% Expect AI's role on their team to grow over the next two years



Marketers who thrive in the year ahead will be those who:

- Put AI to work across whole workflows, with the rules written down.
- Grow creator and community investment with a goal and a measure behind it.
- Anchor on their core platforms, and add new ones on purpose.
- Give search and AI visibility a named owner.
- Report on outcomes, not just reach, and automate the reporting.
- Protect their team's time before they add to it.

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NOTES ON THE DATA

How to read this report

About the survey

Emplifi partnered with Alchemer to survey 405 marketing managers, directors, and executives in September 2026.

Percentages:

Figures are based on the respondents who answered each question and are rounded to the nearest whole number, so totals may not add to 100. In ranked questions, each respondent ranked three items, so we report the share who placed each in their top three.

Combined answers:

Some figures combine adjacent answer options, such as “significantly” and “moderately”. The combined answers are named in the text or charts.

Comparisons with last year:

Where we compare with The State of Marketing 2026 (n=564), the samples differ in geography, company size and qualification criteria, and some questions were reworded. We treat comparisons as directional and describe a change as a rise or fall only where it is large enough to stand out from sampling variation.

About the data:

Results reflect the self-reported views of marketing managers, directors and executives.

Citing this research:

Emplifi and Alchemer, The State of Social Media Marketing 2027, survey of 405 marketers, September 2026.

Turn today’s challenges into tomorrow’s growth advantage.

Let’s talk

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Emplifi is the only **Autonomous CX platform** unifying social marketing, commerce, and customer care for more than 22,000 brands worldwide. Powered by Fuel AI, built on more than 5T of data, and recognized as a leader by leading industry analysts, Emplifi helps enterprise teams orchestrate connected customer journeys and deliver personalized experiences at scale, turning every customer touchpoint into a competitive advantage.

Turn social insights into impact

See how Emplifi can help your team turn its plans into results

[Book a demo](#)

