

THE FUTURE OF MARKETING

Learning & Development Trends in 2026

What top-performing marketing teams are prioritising, and how you can use it to build a high-performing team of your own.

FABRIC





WHAT TO EXPECT

This report draws on anonymised skills data from marketing teams globally, using Fabric's coaching and training platform, based on data collected via interviews, skills assessments, business insights, personal development plans, learning pathways and business goals.

It covers six key trends:

TREND 1:

Strategic Alignment is
Non-Negotiable

TREND 2:

Emerging Trends &
Technologies

TREND 3:

Leadership is
Everyone's Job

TREND 4:

Marketing Needs
Better Measurement

TREND 5:

The Rise of Soft Skills

TREND 6:

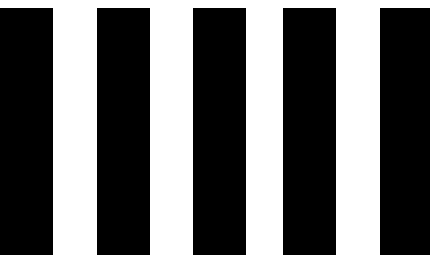
Performance vs
Brand Marketing

WHY MARKETING TRAINING NEEDS A RETHINK

At Fabric, we work with hundreds of marketing professionals across multiple industries. Through our skills analysis, we've uncovered the real gaps that are holding teams back, and the L&D opportunities that can unlock serious performance gains.

This report is a summary of what we're seeing. No fluff, no guesses. Just real insights based on real teams. We hope it helps you shape smarter training plans and build a stronger, more confident marketing team.

Let's dive in.



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The marketing world is evolving at speed. The skills needed to thrive in 2025 and beyond are no longer just about knowing the latest trends - they're about applying strategic thinking, leading teams with confidence, and making data-backed decisions.

Marketing needs more strategic thinkers.

7 IN 10

teams are struggling with a Lack of Commercial Awareness and Aligning Efforts to Business Goals

Trend 1

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT IS NON-NEGOTIABLE

The most common goal across all teams? Aligning marketing strategy with the wider business vision. Marketing is being asked to step up, to prove its value at the boardroom table, not just in the campaign room.

"We don't just need campaign experts. We need marketers who think like business leaders."

Lisa Eaton, Fabric Founder



SUCCESS METRIC:

High-performing marketing teams are **3.2×** more likely to have regular training on business strategy and commercial awareness compared to average performers.

Quantum Workplace, "Employee Performance & Impact Trends Report," 2023

90%

of leaders flagged Strategic & Commercial Awareness as a high priority knowledge gap

Marketing leaders want their teams to think more like business leaders, aligning activity to commercial outcomes, not just executing campaigns.

1 IN 10

leaders are prioritising Research & Segmentation skills

Traditional marketing foundations are being deprioritised in favour of strategic decision-making and commercial fluency, signalling a shift in how marketers deliver value.

2ND

most reported knowledge competency gap is General Industry Knowledge

With marketing moving faster than ever, teams are struggling to keep up with evolving channels, trends, and customer expectations, leaving capability gaps that affect performance and business impact.



Trend 1

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR L&D:

Training programmes must prioritise business acumen, financial literacy, and strategic planning. The most successful L&D initiatives are those that help marketers:

1. Understand business models and revenue drivers
2. Translate corporate objectives into marketing strategies
3. Speak the language of finance and operations
4. Make resource allocation decisions based on business impact, not just marketing metrics

At Fabric, we've built our platform around this very shift, equipping marketers with the strategic skills and commercial confidence to lead with impact. From 1-1 coaching with expert practitioners to masterclasses on business planning and financial fluency, we're seeing teams thrive when their training mirrors boardroom priorities.

Keeping up with AI & other technologies has never been more important.

74%

of leaders said their teams are struggling to keep up with the pace of marketing innovation



Trend 2

EMERGING TRENDS & TECHNOLOGIES

From AI-powered content to new marketing channels, today's marketers face a wave of rapid innovation. The most effective teams aren't just reacting to change - they're preparing for it. Staying ahead requires both curiosity and capability, but many organisations are still figuring out how to turn emerging trends into practical skills.

"It's not about chasing trends, it's about building the skills to lead innovation and apply it in ways that drive real impact."

Lisa Eaton, Fabric Founder

SUCCESS METRIC:

83.8% of marketers reported increased productivity after adopting AI tools.

Co-Schedule, "The State of AI in Marketing", 2025

While awareness of emerging tools is high, confidence in using them remains low, highlighting a need for applied, hands-on training.

68%

of marketers said they don't feel confident applying AI tools in their day-to-day work

The volume of new platforms, tools, and techniques is outpacing teams' ability to adapt, creating a risk of missed opportunities and slower execution.

74%

of leaders said their teams are struggling to keep up with the pace of marketing innovation

Without strategic understanding, teams may adopt tools without clear ROI, reinforcing the need for training that combines tech literacy with commercial thinking.

22%

of marketing practitioners felt equipped to evaluate and implement new technologies strategically

Trend 2

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR L&D:

Marketers need structured opportunities to experiment, explore, and build confidence using emerging technologies, with guidance on how these trends fit within strategy and execution:

1. Training in AI and automation for marketers (not just tech teams)
2. Up-to-date, practical learning from experts in the field
3. Safe-to-fail testing environments to encourage experimentation
4. Coaching on turning trends into strategic opportunities

Through hands-on training, trend-led masterclasses, and expert coaching, Fabric helps teams build forward-looking skills while tying them back to commercial outcomes. Whether it's using AI for content, experimenting with new platforms, or applying predictive analytics, we make sure innovation is grounded in real marketing impact.



There's a leadership skills crisis.

50%

of leaders are prioritising enhancing Leadership skills in their teams as a business goal



Trend 3

LEADERSHIP IS EVERYONE'S JOB

Modern marketing teams need leadership at every level - not just in job titles, but in mindset. This distributed leadership approach requires marketers at all levels to take ownership of strategic initiatives, drive cross-functional collaboration, and demonstrate the confidence to make data-backed decisions without constant supervision.

"We need everyone on the team to think like a leader - to make smart decisions, take ownership, and move things forward without waiting for permission."

Lisa Eaton, Fabric Founder

SUCCESS METRIC:

Teams that invest in leadership development for all marketing roles report **76%** higher success rates in cross-functional initiatives and **64%** higher employee retention.

[CIPD, "Resourcing & Talent Planning Report," 2024](#)

40%

of marketers cited Leadership & Management as one of their biggest skills gaps

40%

of marketers highlighted Communication & Influence as a major skills gap

24%

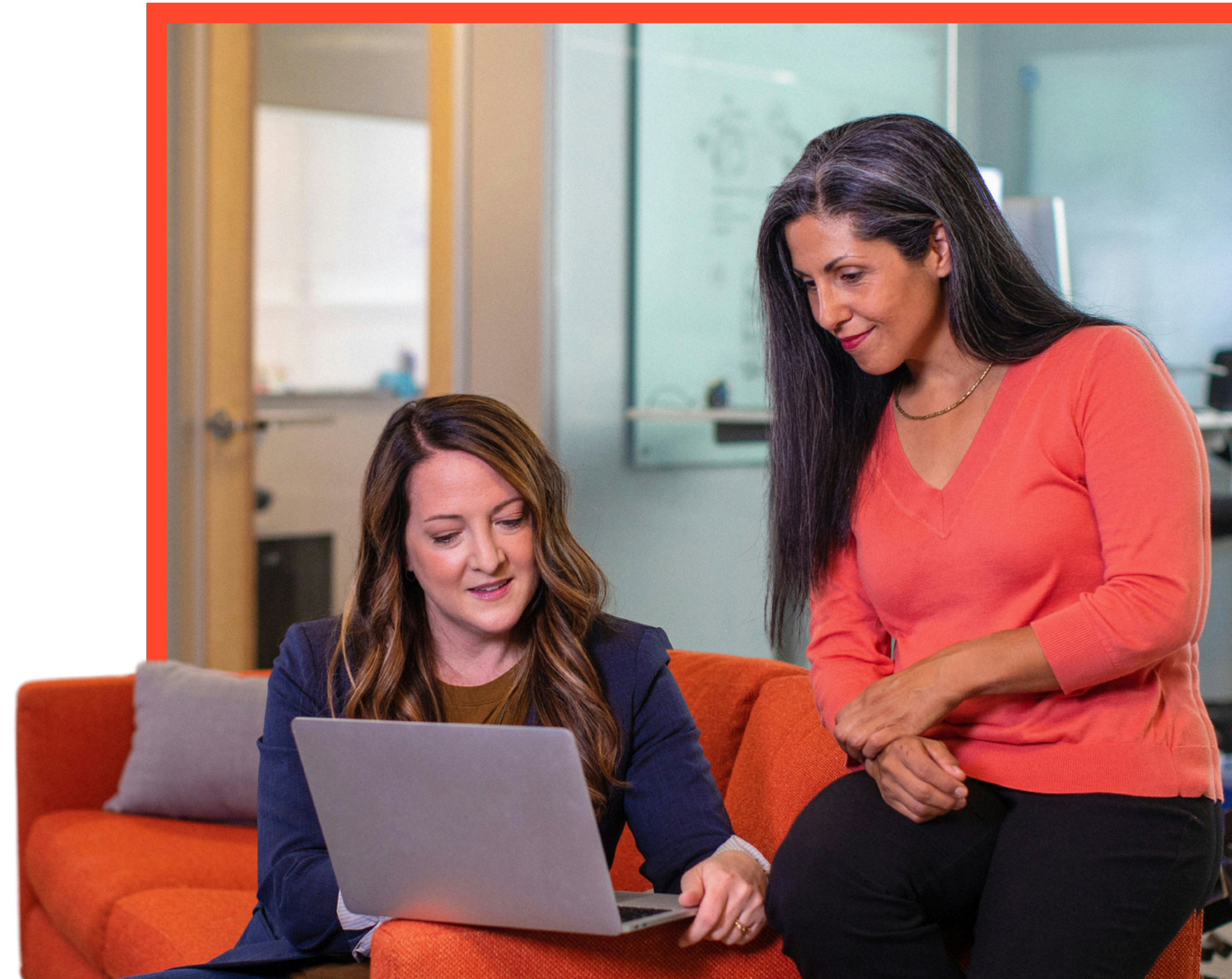
of marketers see Problem-Solving as a skills area they need to develop

Trend 3

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR L&D:

Marketing teams need leadership development that extends beyond traditional management skills:

1. Communication that influences across functions
2. Project leadership without positional authority
3. Emotional intelligence in high-pressure situations
4. Managing up and across, not just down



At Fabric, we design development experiences that nurture leadership in every marketer, not just those with 'Head of' in their title. Through coaching and practical training, we're helping teams build the confidence, influence, and emotional intelligence needed to lead from wherever they sit.

Growth and data are the core technical gaps.

40%

of marketing leaders identified Data, Measurement & Reporting as a priority development area

Trend 4

MARKETING NEEDS BETTER MEASUREMENT

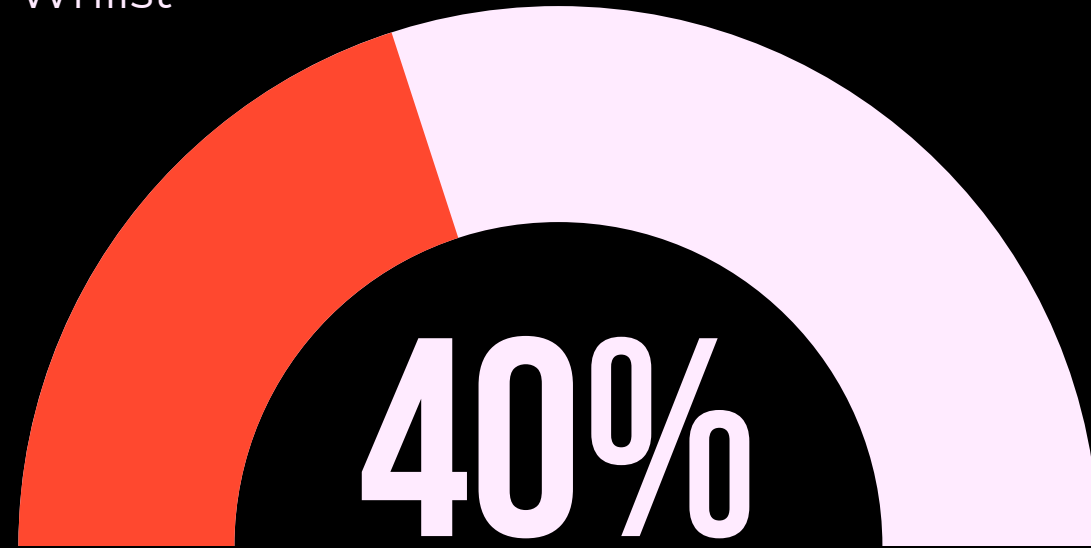
Despite having more data than ever, marketing teams struggle to transform information into strategic action. This "analysis paralysis" stems not from a lack of tools or metrics, but from insufficient capabilities in extracting meaningful insights, connecting data points across channels, and translating complex analytics into clear strategic recommendations that drive business outcomes.



SUCCESS METRIC:

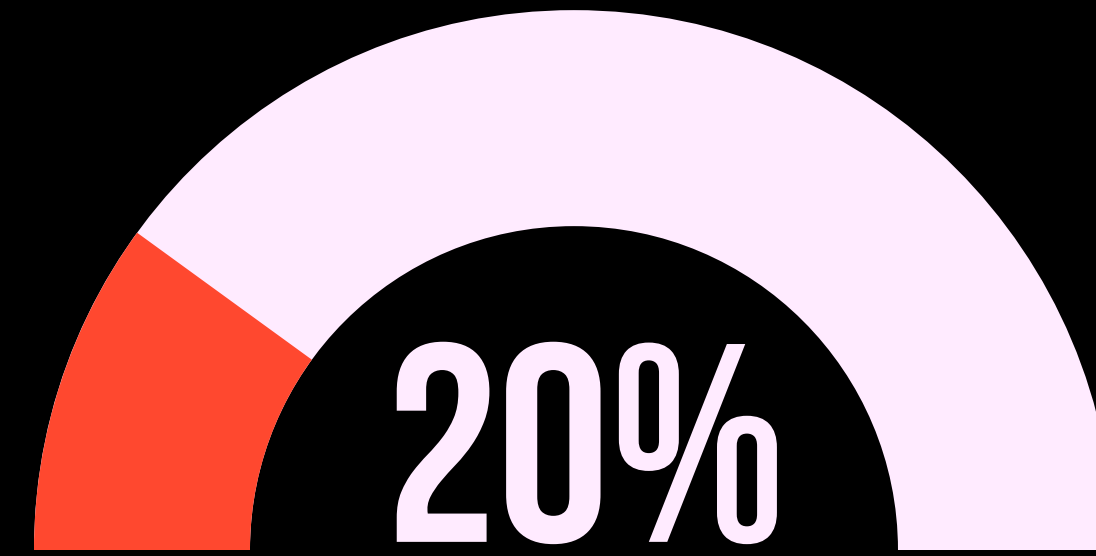
Organisations with data-driven marketing strategies achieve **5-8×** better ROI than those who rely on guesswork. [Invoca, "Data-Driven Marketing Trends", 2025](#)

Whilst



of marketing leaders stated that their teams need to focus on improving Data, Measurement & Reporting skills this year

Only



of marketing practitioners cited Data Insight & Analytics as a critical skills gap

As marketing becomes increasingly data-driven, teams must master the ability to track, measure, and analyse performance. Without these skills, proving ROI and making informed decisions becomes nearly impossible.

The disparity suggests a disconnect between what leaders expect and what practitioners recognise. Many marketers may be unaware of how limited data skills are holding back strategic impact and performance visibility.



Trend 4

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR L&D:

training now requires a more sophisticated approach to data skills development. Rather than focusing solely on technical proficiency with analytics platforms, marketers need to develop a "data mindset" that integrates metrics with business strategy to drive meaningful decisions:

1. Moving beyond basic tool training to analytical thinking
2. Connecting data to business outcomes, not just marketing metrics
3. Building data storytelling capabilities
4. Developing decision-making frameworks based on analytics

At Fabric, we go beyond platform tutorials to help marketers develop a true data mindset. Our coaching and masterclasses focus on analytical thinking, storytelling with data, and tying insights back to business impact, so teams don't just report numbers, they drive decisions.

It's no longer enough to focus solely on technical gaps.

98%

of marketing leaders cited various soft skills as important areas of development in their teams



Trend 5

THE RISE OF SOFT SKILLS

Some of the most significant performance barriers aren't technical, but interpersonal. In today's collaborative marketing environment, even the most brilliant strategic thinking falters without the ability to communicate effectively and build consensus across teams.

*"Hard skills get you noticed. Soft skills get you promoted."
Lisa Eaton, Fabric Founder*

SUCCESS METRIC:

Marketing leaders with strong soft skills deliver **41%** higher team performance and 53% better retention rates than those focusing primarily on technical expertise.

Hays, "Skills Report," 2025

As marketing teams juggle growing workloads and shifting priorities, poor time management leads to inefficiencies, missed opportunities, and team burnout.

90%

of leaders noted Time Management as a significant skills gap in their teams

Adaptability is rarely prioritised until it's urgently needed, but proactive development here could give marketers a competitive edge in fast-moving environments.

16%

of marketers noted deficiencies in their Adaptability skills

These lower-priority skills may be undervalued, but neglecting them risks burnout, misalignment, and weaker team culture over time.

12%

of marketers cited Emotional Intelligence, Motivational Skills, or Time Management as development areas

Trend 5

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR L&D:

Soft skills require structured development solutions, not just experience. You can't assume marketers will "pick up" these skills on the job. They need intentional, scenario-based training that reflects real workplace challenges, alongside coaching that builds on these skills:

1. Scenario-based training for communication challenges
2. Development of time-management strategies
3. Coaching on influencing without authority
4. Building adaptability before it becomes urgent



At Fabric, we start with a detailed skills analysis to uncover soft skill gaps across your team, then build targeted development plans through tailored coaching and real-world training in areas like communication, time-management, influence, and leadership.

Growth can't be an afterthought.

32%

of marketers highlighted Growth & Performance Marketing as a critical skill gap

Trend 6

PERFORMANCE VS BRAND MARKETING

The shift toward measurable, growth-focused marketing is reshaping skill requirements. As budgets tighten and accountability increases, marketers must develop expertise in maximising return on investment across channels while maintaining brand integrity and long-term customer relationships.

"Performance marketing isn't just a specialty anymore, it's becoming everyone's job."

Lisa Eaton, Fabric Founder



SUCCESS METRIC:

Integrating brand and performance marketing can boost ROI by **25% to 100%**, with an average lift of **90%**.

WARC, "The Multiplier Effect Report," 2025

32%

of marketers highlighted Growth & Performance Marketing as a critical skill gap

There's mounting pressure on marketers to drive measurable growth, but many lack the technical skills and strategic mindset to run performance-driven campaigns with confidence.

28%

identified gaps in Marketing Strategy & Strategic Planning

Performance marketing is only as effective as the strategy behind it. Without strong strategic planning, teams risk investing in short-term tactics that don't ladder up to business goals, leaving ROI on the table.

16%

needed enhancement in Content & Social Media Marketing skills

While content is still king, the lower priority placed on these skills may signal a shift. From producing more content to making existing content work harder through strategy, targeting, and performance tracking.



Trend 6

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR L&D:

Beyond just understanding the mechanics of various channels, they must develop the strategic and analytical capabilities to quickly identify opportunities, optimise spending, and demonstrate tangible business impact:

1. Growth marketing frameworks and methodologies
2. Performance analysis and optimisation techniques
3. Attribution modeling and funnel optimisation
4. Integration of brand and performance strategies

Fabric's combination of expert-led coaching and practical training helps teams master funnel optimisation, attribution modelling, and performance analysis, while ensuring these skills are grounded in strategic thinking and aligned with brand goals. The result? Marketers who can drive ROI across channels without compromising long-term brand impact.

The ROI of Targeted L&D

Organisations that align their marketing L&D strategy with these priority skill areas report:

42%

higher marketing-attributed revenue

McKinsey & Company, "The Revenue Performance Index," 2024

64%

better retention of top marketing talent

LinkedIn Talent Solutions, "Marketing Skills Development and Retention Report," 2023

38%

improvement in cross-functional collaboration

Harvard Business Review, "The Collaborative Marketing Organization," April 2024

53%

higher employee engagement scores

Gallup Workplace Analytics, "State of the Marketing Workforce," 2025

76%

greater ability to adapt to market changes

Deloitte Digital, "Marketing Adaptability Index," 2024

TURNING INSIGHTS INTO ACTION

What's working in the high-performing marketing teams we coach at Fabric...

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

We help teams align individual development goals with wider business priorities, turning strategy into capability through role-specific learning plans and strategic coaching.

EMERGING TRENDS & TECHNOLOGIES

Through trend-led masterclasses and specialist coaching, we equip teams to confidently explore AI, automation, and new channels while connecting innovation to commercial outcomes.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

From emerging talent to senior managers, our programmes embed leadership at every level, building confidence in project ownership, stakeholder influence, and team empowerment.

DATA & MEASUREMENT

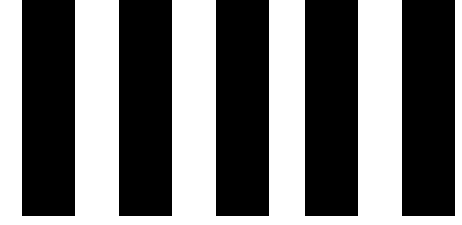
We go beyond tools. Fabric focuses on growing data fluency, helping marketers interpret insights, ask better questions, and apply data to real-world decisions and strategy.

COMMUNICATION EXCELLENCE

Our coaching tackles the soft skills that unlock team potential, from influencing without authority to managing upwards and navigating difficult conversations with confidence.

PERFORMANCE MARKETING

We train marketers to think commercially, applying growth frameworks, building attribution models, and integrating brand with performance to show real business impact.



YOUR NEXT STEPS

Every team's development plan should be as unique as the team itself. At Fabric we don't do guesswork. We start with data.

Every marketer gets a personalised development journey, with the right support at the right time. Your business gets the confidence that their growth is in expert hands, consistently guided and carefully managed. It's everything your team needs to grow, without you needing to manage it all.

SKILLS & BEHAVIOURAL ASSESSMENT

We start by understanding every marketer's strengths, gaps, and growth opportunities, across both skills and mindset. This insight shapes a development journey that's actually relevant to their role.



TAILORED LEARNING PATHWAYS

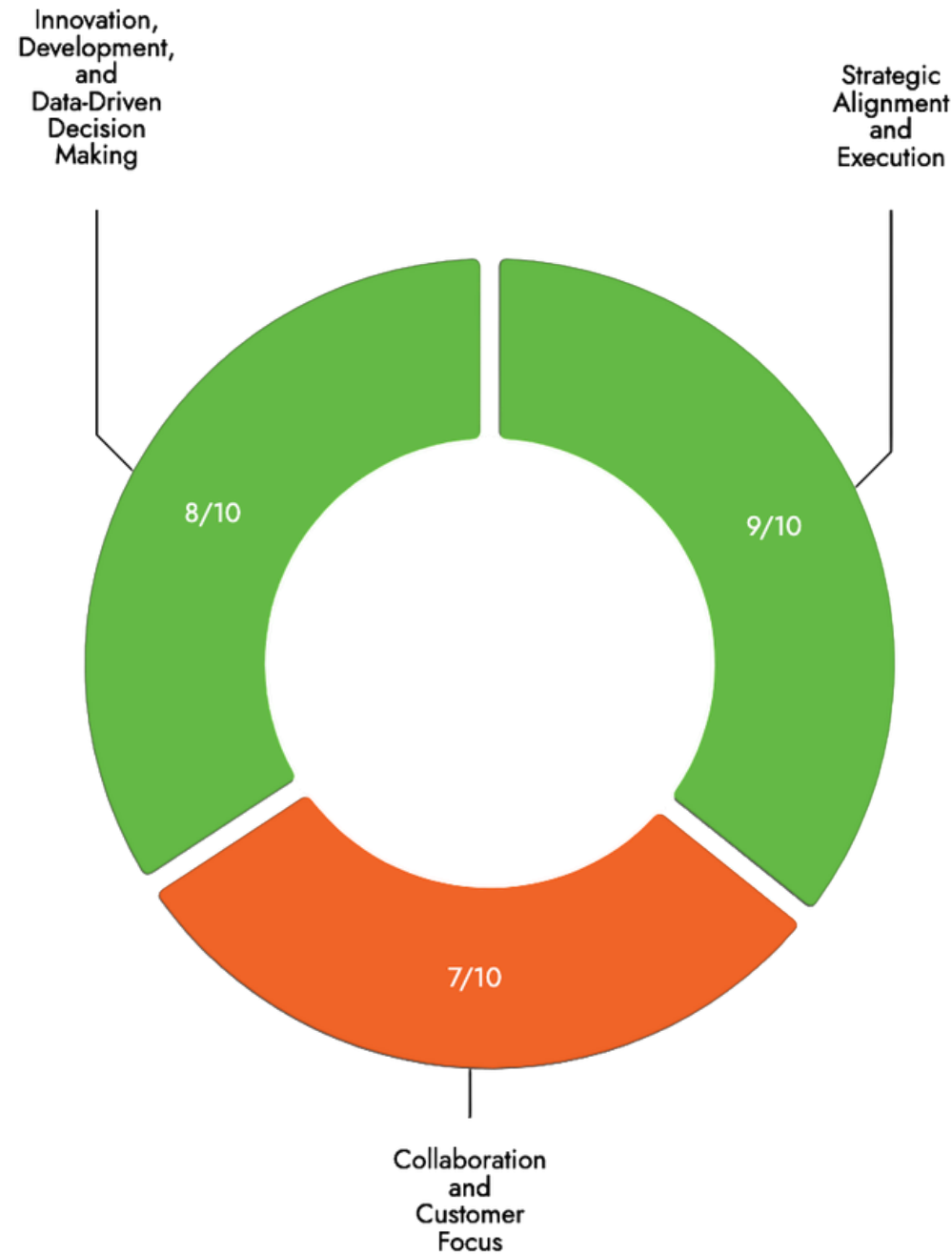
Each team member gets a clear, customised pathway, built from our mix of live programmes, coaching, and on-demand learning. This removes the guesswork and drives focused, strategic growth.



MEASURABLE PROGRESS & REPORTING

We'll track their progress in real time, across skills, confidence and behaviour. You'll receive quarterly L&D insights, Impact Reports and a clear view of their performance and development.

READY TO TRANSFORM YOUR MARKETERS INTO HIGH PERFORMERS?



Take our quiz to assess your team's effectiveness and uncover key areas where you can boost performance, align with business objectives and maximise ROI.



Scan to take our 3-minute quiz



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TRUSTED BY GLOBAL BRANDS

“Fabric helped us build on technical strengths, think more strategically, align to broader goals, and apply learning to support the wider business.”

Jonathan, Head of Marketing Vertu Motors

“There’s a lot of value here. The team is receiving great support and we’ve seen measurable progress across skills, strategy and self-belief.”

Nicky, Marketing Director NatWest

“Fabric gave me the confidence to go for a promotion, and the strategy to make it happen. Now I’m leading a team, mentoring others and building strategies that drive results.”

Darren, Digital Channels Lead Petrofac



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Marketing L&D Trends: Looking Beyond 2025