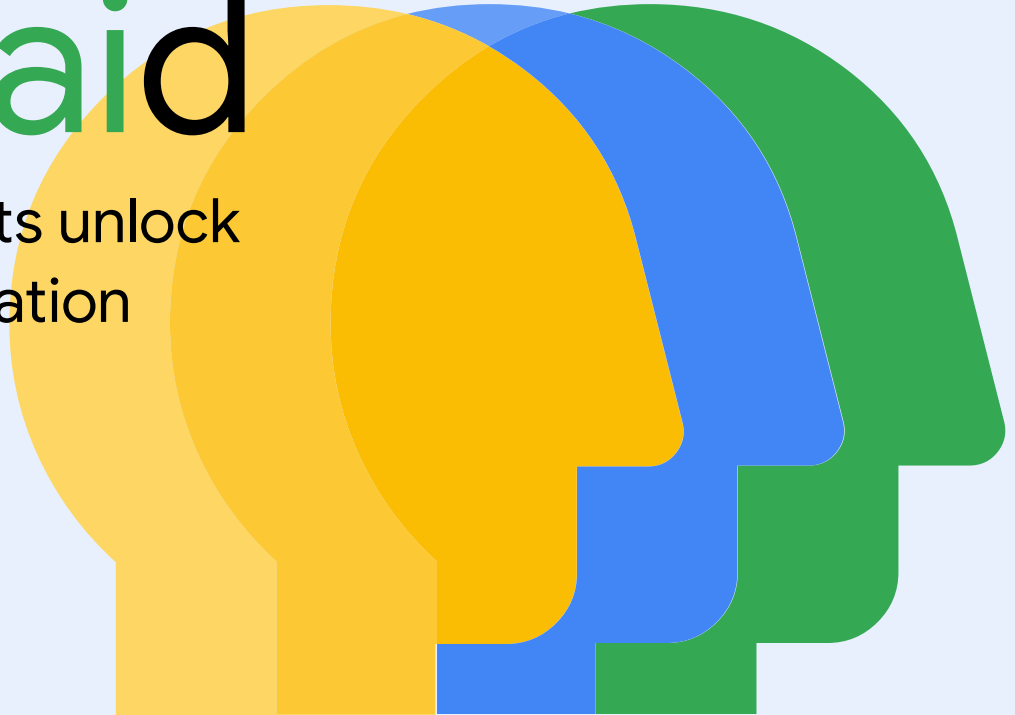


The Unsaid

How mindsets unlock
AI transformation



AI has the potential to drive impact across every area of marketing — and the results speak for themselves. Organisations leading in AI maturity report 60% higher revenue growth than those just starting out. Yet the gap remains wide: fewer than 20% are ahead of the curve, and less than 1% are truly transforming their business.

To understand why — and to help all marketers to advance more quickly — we wanted to dig down to the human level. After all, people are at the heart of successful AI transformation.

Source: Google/BCG, Path to AI Excellence, Global, N=2,135, marketing AI decision-makers/influencers at small to large companies, Sept. 2024.

Understanding the human edge in AI success

What we discovered is compelling: it's the mindsets, core beliefs and assumptions beyond the AI headlines that are the unsaid drivers behind successful AI adoption and ultimately leadership. We identified three primary AI adoption mindsets across individuals and organisations.

F O M O

Fear of Missing Out is a survival-oriented approach that forces action but without a clear strategy and assessment of how AI fits into business processes.

F O M U

Fear of Messing Up is an outlook focused on avoiding mistakes and minimising potential negative consequences — which is important but it can limit AI's transformative potential.

F O M A

Focus on Maximising Advantages is a more positive perspective that prioritises the potential gains from AI, and sees AI as an opportunity to get ahead of the competition and create value in innovative ways.

Mindset makes the difference

AI transformation requires new habits to be built. And that requires new ways of thinking. Behavioural science shows us that the way we think about our behaviour shapes our behaviour. It's why daily gym visits are much more likely if you actually believe you can keep them up. The same applies to AI: the way we talk to ourselves shapes action. The right mindset unlocks AI's potential for individuals and organisations; the wrong one restricts it.

Methodology

The research — carried out in partnership with [VML The Cocktail](#) — didn't just create surveys. We had real conversations with marketers in Europe, generating over 2,500 pages of transcripts and 3,000+ hours of analysis. Experts in language, strategy, and change helped us explore attitudes to AI using discourse analysis, studying how language reveals meaning and power. When possible and with full consent, we also examined real-world materials like pitches, emails, and agendas to understand how people truly communicate.

FOMO: The urgency trap

FOMO is a survival instinct that drives action in fast-changing times. It's often reflected in urgent language used when discussing AI, like "we must" or "we have to". While FOMO sparks momentum, it can also have unintended consequences, including a rushed AI adoption without strategy, copycat initiatives, siloed efforts with poor training, and a focus on appearances over real outcomes.

The marketing U-turn

A global retailer went big on AI, plastering billboards with the promise: "From now on, all our campaigns will be generated with AI." Eighteen months later, they're back in talks with a creative agency — looking for fresh ideas, collaboration... and a 30% cut in costs.

Spotting FOMO in your organisation

"I think AI is going to be absolutely central to the future of work...we shouldn't miss that train, we should jump on it now because things are moving very fast."

Experience Design Director | Agency | France

FOMU: The comfort-zone trap

FOMU is a fear of moving too fast and getting it wrong. It shows up when discussing AI in language like “risk”, “oversight”, and “safeguard”. A healthy attitude to risk is important, but the unintended consequences of FOMU can include restricted tech access, overly cautious risk assessments, small-scale AI pilots, and a reluctance to promote or champion AI initiatives internally or externally.

The AI mandate paradox

Leaders sent company-wide emails urging everyone to “embrace the future” and use AI every day. Two weeks later, in a review meeting, the same leaders frowned over a presentation: “He’s clearly used AI for this,” whispered one. “Just cutting corners instead of doing the work,” another agreed. The result? A confused workforce stuck in an impossible bind: AI was mandatory, but only if no one could tell it was AI.

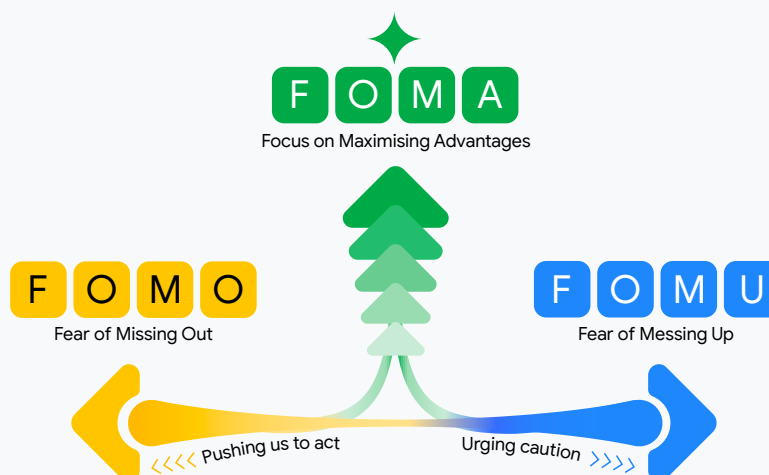
Spotting FOMU in your organisation

*“I wouldn’t **approve a chatbot directly to customers just yet**, but I would **optimise everything behind the scenes**.”*

Head of AI | Retailer | UK

The mindset tug-of-war

Many organisations and individuals are trapped in a tug-of-war between these two mindsets, between FOMO and FOMU. The obligation to take action at any cost pushes the accelerator while caution slams on the brakes — leading to wasted energy, disappointing results and failure to see the true potential of AI.



FOMA: Breaking free from the cycle

When we look at individuals and organisations with a FOMA mindset, we see a very different internal language. Words used by FOMA marketers are much more positive, collaborative, and come with a real feeling of empowerment — words such as “augment”, “collaborate”, “transform”, “vision”, “opportunities”, and “excitement”. It’s the language of partnership with AI.

FOMA marketers see the value of AI and embrace uncertainty. They have an experimental mindset and make proactive — not reactive — decisions. For organisations, it’s about putting the business challenge at the heart, then having the permission to use the latest tools to solve it.

Thinking like an AI leader

We've identified five key behaviours that set FOMA marketers and organisations apart — and how you can start thinking like an AI leader. Viewed alongside FOMO and FOMU mindsets, these behaviours reveal the clear attitude shifts that drive AI leadership.

1

FOMO

"I asked all the copywriters to become prompt engineers."

Founder | Agency | France

Partner with AI: Individuals treat AI as a partner and organisations have a clear and strategic intent for AI.

FOMA

"I feel empowered and AI is making me hopeful...I have the opportunity to go beyond my abilities to express myself in ways I couldn't before."

Cosmetics | Senior Product Manager | France

2

FOMU

"How do you train the teams?
On what do you train them?
On which technology do you train the teams?"

Tech | Head of Corporate Marketing Support | Germany

Learn AI by doing: Individuals embrace hands-on experimenting while organisations support and scale experiments.

FOMA

"My boss is insanely open to using AI because he knows the value of using it in the right way... he does a lot of encouragement and then we just take it from there."

Software | Senior Marketing Operations Manager | Germany

3

FOMU

"AI is everywhere and it's just completely flipped what was best practice before."

Social Media Manager | Food & Beverage | U.K.

Embrace AI uncertainty: Individuals accept uncertainty, using it as fuel for growth, while organisations combine ready-made and custom tools.

FOMA

"There are important topics that are not yet quick-win ready, but we could make experiments and set some bigger bets on."

Head of Corporate Marketing Support | Tech | Germany

4

FOMO

"It's coming at everybody like a train and we have to get on board."

Head of AI | Retailer | U.K.

Proactively add business value: Individuals make deliberate choices that add value, instead of reacting to every trend, while organisations create structured AI skills development.

FOMA

"AI is cultural. It's skills-based. If the CEO just goes, 'We're doing this training program,' you're not going to get anywhere. The champion needs to have a strategy... an AI goal."

Marketing Director | Hospitality Platform | UK

5

FOMU

"We use AI for little things — meeting reports and to-do lists and writing offers."

Chief Client Officer | Agency | Germany

Reimagine with AI: Individuals use AI to reimagine, not just optimise, the way things are done, while organisations foster AI "safe spaces".

FOMA

We're looking too much at AI as a way to replace existing stuff, the real potential is how you completely disrupt marketing."

GM GenAI | E-commerce | Germany

Move your AI mindset forward



Feeling the FOMO?

Become "in the know" with [Google AI Essentials](#).



Fighting the FOMU?

Find the right products, training and partnerships with [Accelerate with Google](#).