

CMO TURNOVER, 2026

The average CMO now lasts less time in the job than a presidential term.

Here's why performance pressure is only part of the story.

3.1 years

The shortest average CMO tenure at a top 100 advertiser since 2009. One in five Fortune 500 companies changed marketing leaders in the past year.

GM, UPS, Etsy, and Walgreens have stopped hiring a CMO at all.

The role gets folded into a COO or Chief Commercial Officer seat instead.

The default explanation is performance pressure.

I think that's right as far as it goes. I also think it misses the bigger story.

The knowledge base marketing leadership was built on is being replaced.

Channel expertise and campaign management used to be the scarce skill. AI is automating large pieces of it faster than organizations have figured out what to build in its place.

Folding marketing into a COO or CCO seat isn't a fix.

It's a placeholder for a structure nobody has designed yet.

The bottleneck was never the technology.

Boris Cherny, who leads Claude Code at Anthropic, has mapped this gap across knowledge work. Individuals get productivity gains from AI long before their organizations are built to absorb them.

TRANSLATED INTO MARKETING

A rough map of where the organization actually sits.

Gated

Agent access barely exists past a pilot. Legal, IT, or brand approval blocks anything broader.

Assisted

One marketer, one agent. Every output still gets reviewed and reworked by a human before it ships.

Parallel

One person is now orchestrating several agents at once, generating and testing variations that used to require a full team.

Supervised autonomy

Whole workflows, campaign briefs, performance analysis, creative iteration, run on agents while a marketer sets direction and catches exceptions.

AI native

Marketing operates as a system of agents working across channels continuously. Leadership focuses on judgment calls, not day to day execution.

The gap between the two speeds is what's driving the turnover.

Not a string of leadership failures. An organization that hasn't caught up to what its own people can already do.

Full piece: marc-drucker.com