

# THE AI AGENT AND AEO READINESS GAP

**BRIGHTEDGE**  
RESEARCH

**How enterprise marketing teams are preparing for the AI and agent-driven web. Where organizational gaps in awareness exist - and where alignment needs to happen.**

Over the last three months BrightEdge surveyed more than 1,000 enterprise digital and search marketers. The AI agent and AEO picture that emerges is consistent. Awareness is high, ownership is unclear, and most teams cannot yet prove readiness to their leadership.

## Key Findings

- **Marketing owns agentic AI success by default, not by design.** 72% of respondents say marketing inherited the question of whether AI agents can access their site. Only 17% say IT or engineering owns it.
- **Only 19% can prove they're ready.** When asked how they'd answer their CMO tomorrow, just one in five said "yes, and I can prove it." The rest are working on it, uncertain, or unable to explain the gap.
- **Competitive framing is the unlock.** 82% pointed to one phrase as the thing that has actually moved the needle internally: "our competitors are being cited and we're not."
- **More than half of cross-functional conversations stall.** 56% of last conversations with IT or security were stalled, blocked, misclassified as SEO, or actively avoided.
- **The top wish is proof, not strategy.** 40% said the single thing they would change tomorrow is getting clear proof that AI is driving business outcomes.

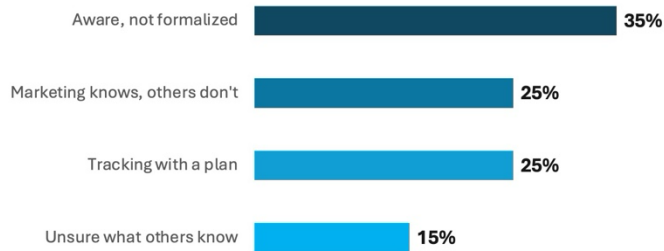
## 01: Awareness is broad, alignment is rare

**Question:** How aware is your organization (importance) of AI agents interacting with your website, and is there an action plan?

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### Awareness is broad, alignment is rare

**Question:** How aware is your organization (importance) of AI agents interacting with your website, and is there an action plan?



# 75%

**lack a tracked plan or clear ownership**

Only a quarter of organizations report having a tracked, planned response. The remaining 75% cluster around partial awareness but with lack of clarity on accountability and action.

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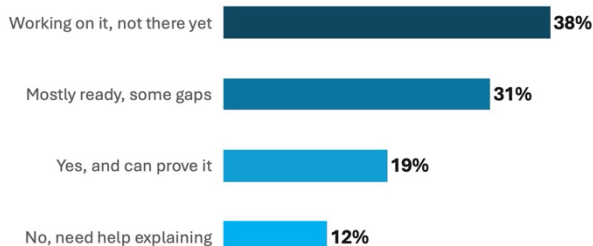
## 02: Most teams can't yet answer the CMO question

**Question:** If your CMO asked tomorrow, "are we ready for AI agents?" what's your most honest answer?

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### Most teams can't yet answer the CMO question

**Question:** If your CMO asked tomorrow, "are we ready for AI agents?" what's your most honest answer?



# 19%

**can confidently say yes, with proof**

Only 19% can confidently say yes with proof. 50% are either still working on it or unable to explain the situation upward. This is a leadership communication problem as much as a technical one.

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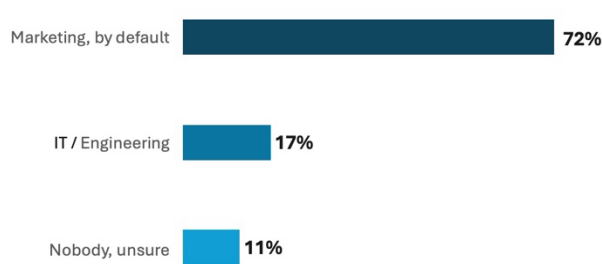
### 03: Marketing owns agentic success by default

**Question:** *Who inside your company owns the question of whether AI agents can access your site?*

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#### Marketing owns agentic success by default

**Question:** *Who inside your company owns the question of whether AI agents can access your site?*



# 72%

**say marketing owns by default**

Marketing owns the question in nearly three out of four organizations, often without having asked for it. Only 17% report that IT or engineering has taken it on, and 11% admit no one owns it at all. This surfaces a potential friction point.

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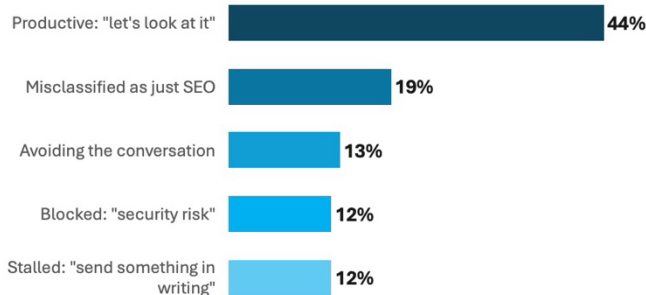
### 04: Over 50% of cross-functional conversations don't progress

**Question:** *Which of these sounds most like your last conversation with IT or security about AI agents?*

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#### More than half of cross-functional conversations don't progress

**Question:** *Which of these sounds most like your last conversation with IT or security about AI agents?*



# 56%

**of conversations stall, get blocked, or are avoided**

44% of conversations are productive, but the remaining 56% are stalled, blocked, misclassified, or being actively avoided. When AI agent success is filed under marketing it tends not to receive the IT attention it requires.

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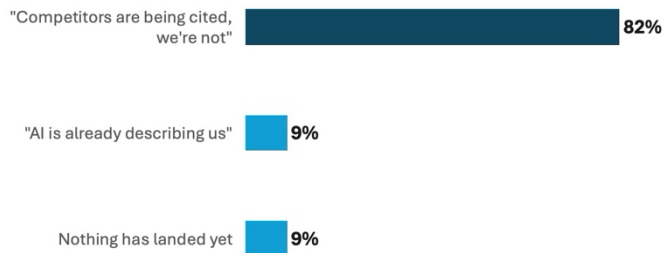
## 05: One key framing question dominates internal traction

**Question:** What's the single phrase or framing you use that moves the AI action needle in your organization?

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### One key question accelerates internal traction and action

**Question:** What's the single phrase or framing you use that's moves the AI action needle in your organization?



# 82%

**"competitors are being cited and we're not" wins internal buy-in**

Competitive citation is the unlock and the conversation framing that changes internal conversations. Abstract discussions about AI is much weaker.

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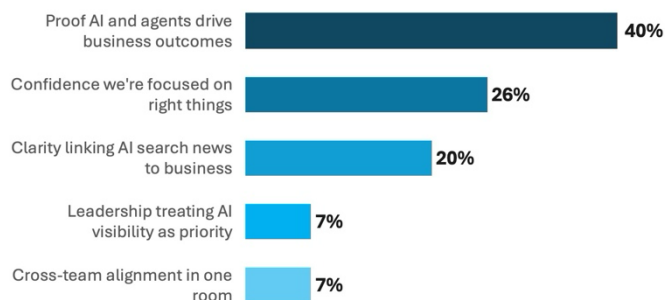
## 06: What teams want is proof, not more strategy

**Question:** If you could wave a wand and do one thing tomorrow to help your AEO efforts, what would it be?

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### What teams want is proof, not more strategy

**Question:** If you could wave a wand and do one thing tomorrow to help your AEO efforts, what would it be?



# 40%

**want proof that AI drives business outcomes**

Proof of business outcomes at 40% and confidence in current focus at 27% together account for two-thirds of responses. The bottleneck is evidence, not buy-in or coordination.

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## Key Takeaways

The AI agent and AEO readiness gap is not a gap in awareness. It is a gap in cross functional ownership and evidence. Marketing has been handed responsibility for an infrastructure-adjacent question, while the proof points needed to escalate it remain out of reach. The teams making progress share two traits.

They have re-framed the conversation around competitive citation, and they have invested in measurement that connects AI and agent activity to business outcomes. This is helping move the needle on leadership communication and action. Everything else, including alignment, prioritization, and formal plans, appears to follow from those two moves.

The path forward is not more strategy decks. It is evidence that AI visibility translates to business value and a competitive framing that makes the urgency to act undeniable.

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## Stay Ahead With BrightEdge

**BrightEdge AI Hyper Cube:** Answer the question every CMO is asking: "How are we doing in AI?". The BrightEdge AI Hyper Cube shows every prompt shaping your brand and the exact sources driving those answers, so teams act on evidence, not opinion.

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**BrightEdge AI Catalyst:** Track brand presence and sentiment in one view across Google AI Overviews, ChatGPT, Perplexity, and more. Optimize once, see what to change in real time, and stay ahead as the platforms keep shifting.

[brightedge.com/ai-catalyst](https://brightedge.com/ai-catalyst)

**BrightEdge AI Agent Insights:** Be agent-ready. AI Agent Insights surfaces the broken pages, blocked resources, and slow responses keeping AI agents from your content, so rising agent activity becomes more citations, more mentions, and more business value from AI.

<https://www.brightedge.com/resources/guide-for-ai-agents>

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