



EBOOK

The 2026 State of the Website

A website platform that supports AI-driven innovation is now a non-negotiable

As AI and AEO reshape the web, website success will hinge on systems designed for speed, collaboration, and scale.

For the third year, we surveyed 1,000 marketing and technology leaders across industries and company sizes from the U.S., UK, and Canada about how they're building, managing, and optimizing their websites. We asked about their biggest challenges, their AI adoption strategies, and their 2026 roadmaps.

This comes while AI adoption is reaching critical mass. As audiences incorporate AI into their daily lives, enterprises have moved from experimenting with AI to implementing it — and optimizing for it — across their workflows. AI is accelerating the pace of innovation, raising customer expectations, and fundamentally changing how teams need to work.

Our survey results reveal a fundamental platform problem: legacy CMSs can't keep up. Teams need platforms that support AI-driven workflows and real-time collaboration. Instead, their current platforms stand in the way — blocking the very innovation AI makes possible.

The organizations breaking through share one thing in common: modern website platforms with AI at the core. These platforms integrate AI seamlessly to break down silos and enable speed without sacrificing stability. They free up time for strategic work, like building sites optimized for Answer Engine Optimization (AEO), delivering compelling brand experiences, and driving measurable business impact.

That's why platform investment is the most urgent priority for businesses heading into 2026. It's what will separate winners from the rest while driving real, sustainable revenue at scale.

1,000 marketing and technology leaders reveal the biggest challenges — and most exciting opportunities — facing their websites.

Webflow's third annual *The State of the Website* report, produced in partnership with Vanson Bourne, was produced from interviews with 1000 marketing and technology leaders.

Webflow conducted an online survey between June 2025 and July 2025 across the United States, Canada, and the UK using a rigorous, multi-level screening process to ensure only suitable candidates participated. Respondents are all marketing or technology leaders, which are defined as someone who holds a Director-level position or above in a marketing or engineering/IT/DevOps department. All respondents work at an enterprise organization in the public or private sector with at least 50 employees.



VansonBourne

“Webflow’s survey builds on previous years by expanding its geographic coverage and incorporating a wider range of front-line perspectives. The result is a deeper look into platform investment priorities, recurring challenges, and emerging opportunities — with a heightened focus on how AI is driving efficiency, innovation, and collaboration — all of which will shape the year ahead.”

– NEIL THORINGTON, MANAGING DIRECTOR, VANSON BOURNE

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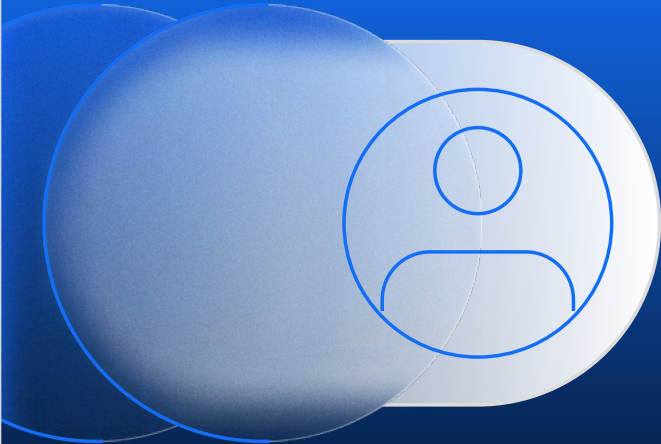
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A high-level overview of the current state of the website

Explore the data behind how leaders and web teams are navigating AI, collaboration, and technology shifts.

73%

of organizations face technical barriers and integration issues that affect their ability to adopt AI



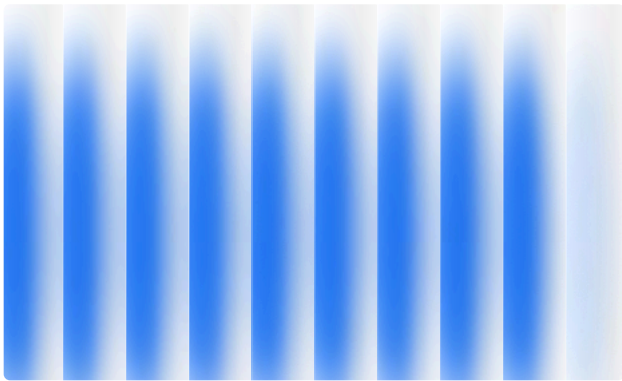
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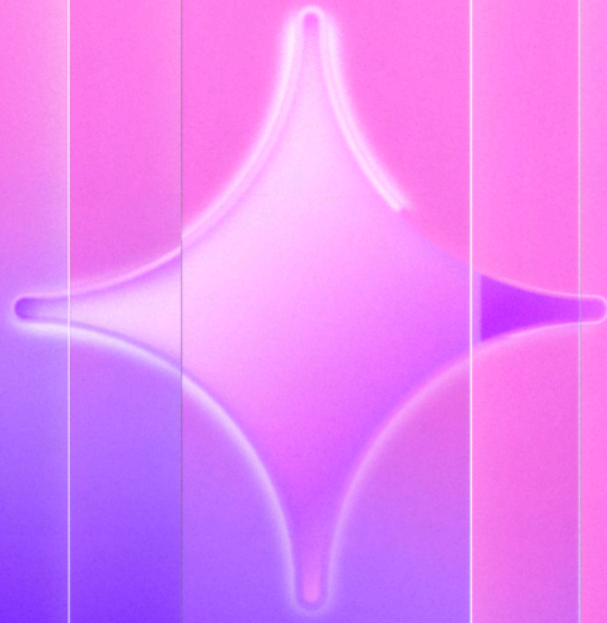
92%

of technical leaders believe AI is critical for website innovation over the next 2 years

96%

of marketing leaders believe the growing pace of innovation and customer expectations has increased the amount of pressure on their department in the last year

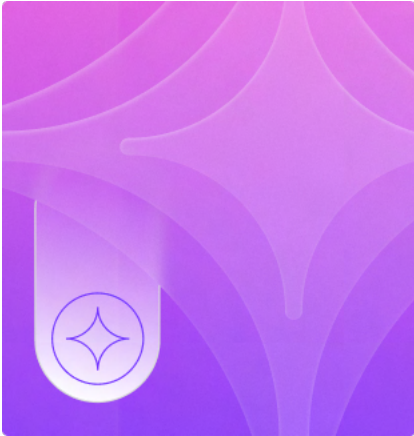




The AI adoption gap

Leaders see the promise of AI, but outdated systems
and unclear strategies are slowing impact.





Customer demands are intensifying as AI reshapes every aspect of marketing, from how buyers research and make decisions to how teams collaborate and optimize conversion funnels.

The stakes are clear: According to our research, 100% of marketing teams who can't successfully adopt AI fail to execute projects either on time or on budget. Marketing and technical leaders alike understand that adopting AI is how they'll meet evolving customer expectations and deliver on business goals. However, they're finding successful adoption extremely difficult.

Breaking this cycle requires businesses to use platforms that eliminate technical barriers and make AI-driven innovation practical rather than aspirational.

The opportunity is clear...

Leaders see the promise and potential that AI presents for their businesses. 92% of technical leaders surveyed believe AI is critical to web innovation in the next two years and can unlock new levels of productivity, efficiency, and innovation for their websites — from automating manual processes to enhancing personalization and improving analytics.

What excites marketing leaders about AI?	What excites technical leaders about AI?
1. Improving SEO, AEO	1. Increasing speed and efficiency
2. Improving analytics and reporting	2. Increasing teams' understanding of customer expectations
3. AI-powered virtual assistants	3. Improving search functionality
4. Automating manual processes	4. Improving user engagement
5. Enhanced personalization	5. Improving analytics

Among these opportunities, answer engine optimization (AEO) stands out as the most urgent.

As users increasingly search the web via LLMs, teams must optimize for it with highly structured, context-rich content that engines can easily parse, understand, and feature.

“AI examines user behavior and keyword trends to improve website content for search engines, boosting traffic and visibility.”

MARKETING LEADER, IT/TECH, U.S.

...but adoption isn't easy

A number of barriers — ranging from implementation gaps and security concerns to integration issues — prevent teams from making their AI visions a reality on the website. In fact, 95% of respondents report they experience barriers to adopting AI.

These blockers fall into two primary categories: hesitations and implementation barriers.

54%

of technical leaders cite concerns about using AI tools in production environments, particularly when it comes to security

Security concerns and capability gaps drive apprehension about AI

Despite recognizing AI's benefits, many technical leaders report they remain apprehensive about it.

54% of technical leaders cite concerns about using AI tools in production environments, particularly when it comes to security. They describe their organizations as generally risk-averse, highlighting the importance of proven results when vetting and adopting AI-based platforms.

64%

of all respondents reported hesitating to adopt AI due to resource gaps, uncertainty, or a lack of clear direction

“AI is improving our strategy by streamlining content creation, boosting personalization and enhancing analytics. However, we remain cautious due to security, privacy and compliance concerns, balancing innovation with risk.”

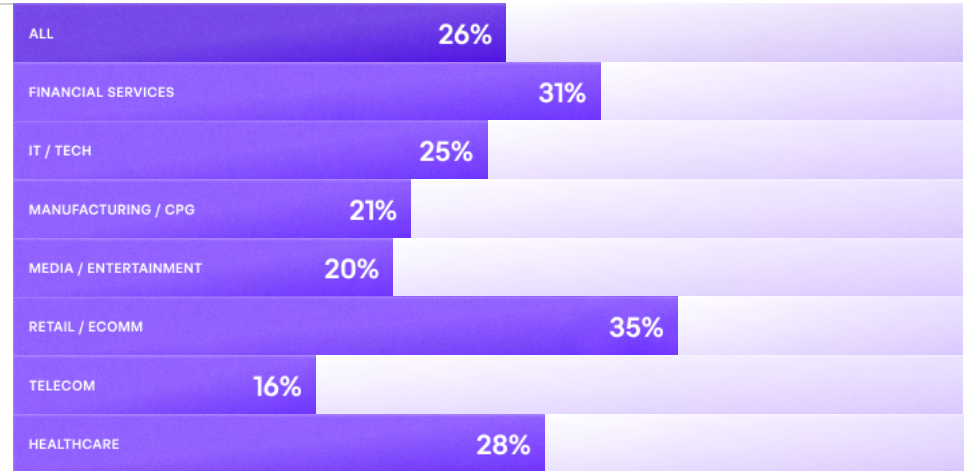
TECHNICAL LEADER, IT AND TECHNOLOGY, UK

Additionally, 64% of all respondents reported hesitating to adopt AI due to resource gaps, uncertainty, or a lack of clear direction — challenges amplified by platforms that don't provide clear pathways for AI implementation.

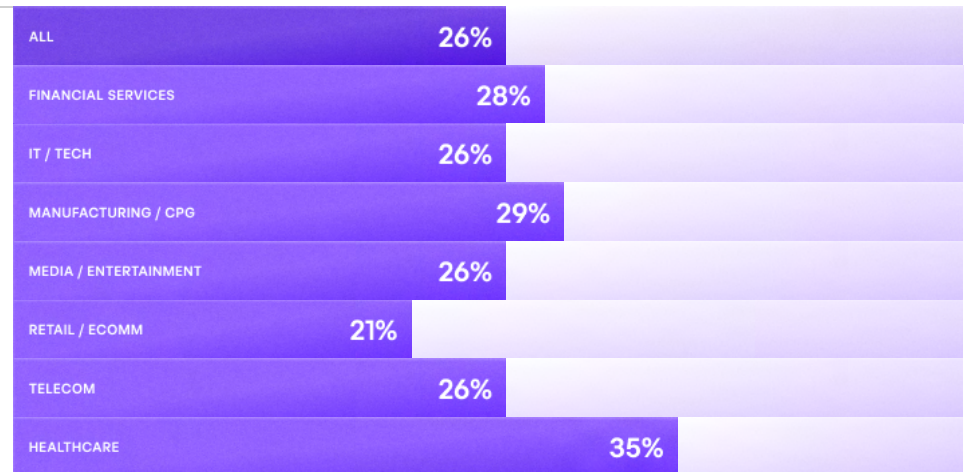
That same uncertainty is dogging marketing leaders who measure business impact. 67% struggle to calculate accurate ROI for AI tools. Platforms that lack proper analytics and attribution capabilities leave teams unable to quantify AI's value, further delaying internal adoption.

What's driving AI apprehension, by industry

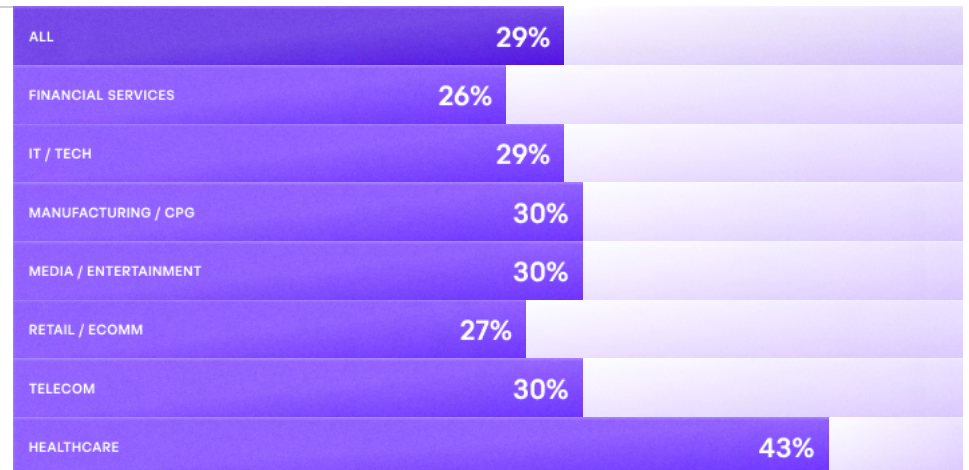
Lack of resources / budget



Reluctance to settle on a specific technology



Uncertainty around use cases and benefits



Implementation hurdles compound the problem

Beyond apprehension, teams face concrete technical barriers when they try to integrate AI into their workflows and tech stacks. These aren't just organizational challenges — they're direct consequences of working with platforms that weren't designed for AI-driven work.

Teams face three primary barriers to AI implementation:

1

Technical hurdles

Integration challenges, ineffective tools, insufficient in-house expertise

2

Security and data issues

Weak governance, low-quality data, compliance shortcomings

3

Brand protection concerns

Mistrust of AI to accurately meet brand standards

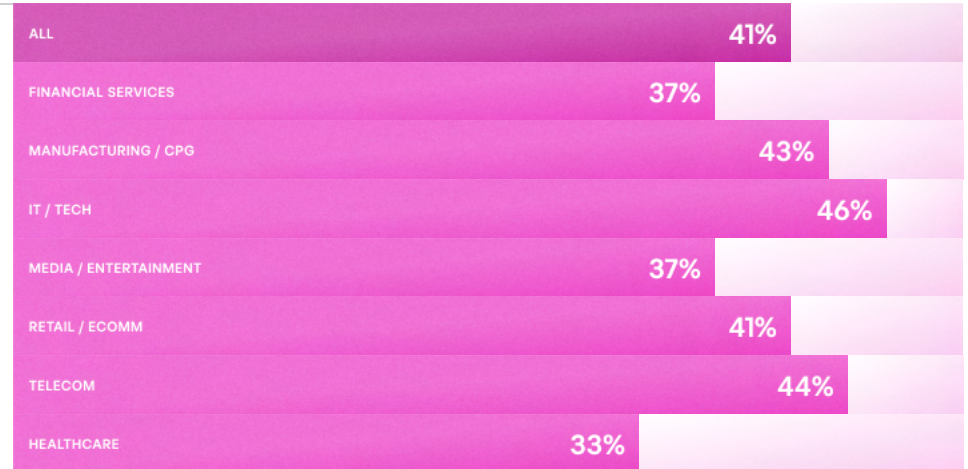
Technical and integration barriers are hitting teams the hardest — 73% of respondents face at least one. These challenges persist thanks to platforms that force teams to piece together fragmented solutions rather than providing native AI capabilities.

“AI is enabling faster content personalization, predictive analytics for users and automated SEO optimization, but the negative side effects range from [putting] brand authenticity at risk and data privacy concerns.”

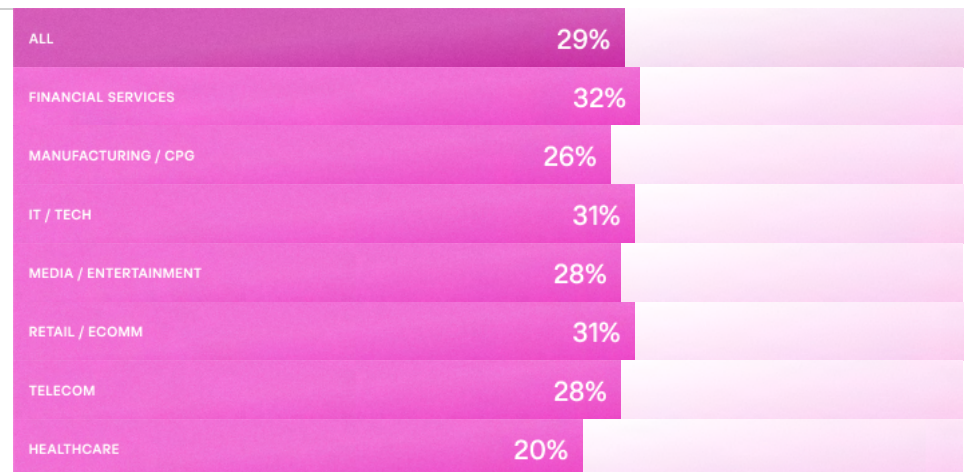
TECHNICAL LEADER, MANUFACTURING/CPG, UK

What's blocking AI adoption from a technical perspective, by industry

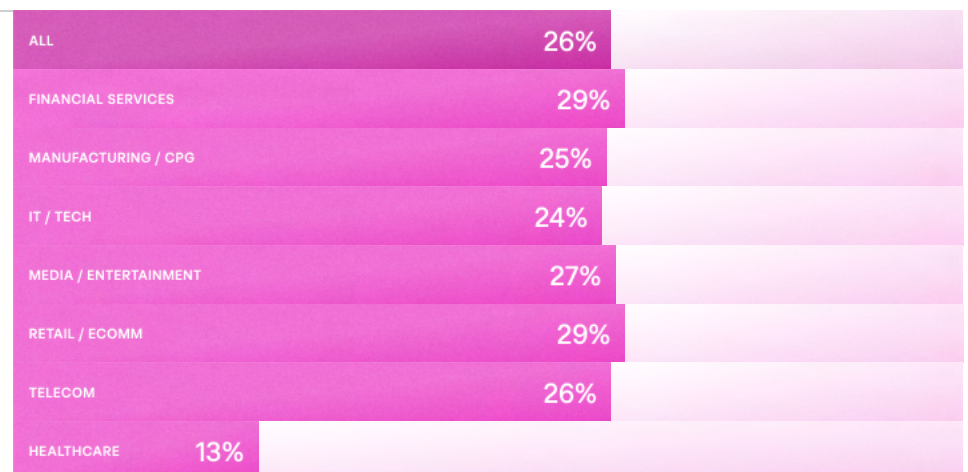
Technical integration challenges



Lack of implementation expertise



Difficulty in identifying the right tools and/or vendors



Harnessing AI is a competitive edge

Leaders understand that as search behavior shifts toward AI-powered experiences, their website strategy must evolve — and many are taking steps in the right direction.

64%

of marketing leaders report their teams are actively building content with large language models (LLMs) and AEO/GEO in mind

69%

of teams are actively optimizing website content to ensure visibility across LLMs and AI-generated search results

Getting started with AI is critical — but turning early experiments into lasting competitive advantage requires more than initiative. To truly scale their AI efforts successfully, teams need the right expertise and the right foundation.

First, they need to get their organizations more comfortable with AI — whether through training, documentation, or bringing specialized talent onto teams. They must also develop clear AI governance frameworks that establish when and how to use AI safely. Without this, even the best tools will remain underutilized.

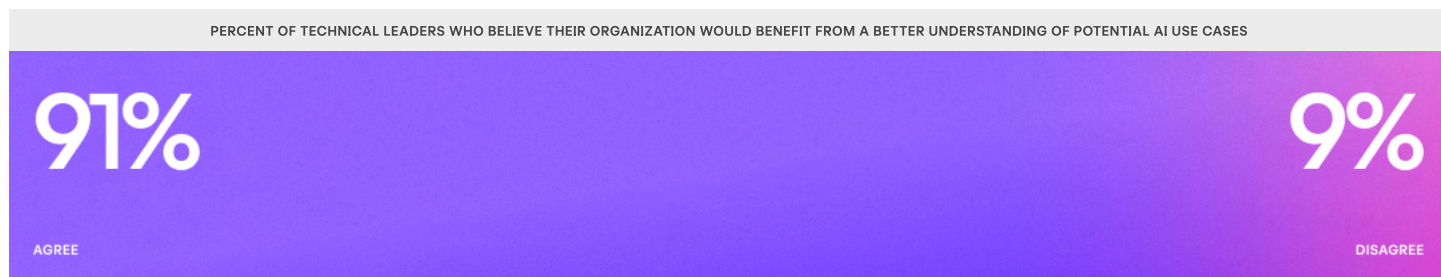
PERCENT WHO BELIEVE INTERNAL EXPERTISE COULD BE IMPROVED TO EFFECTIVELY GOVERN AI USE

97%

MARKETING LEADERS

92%

TECHNICAL LEADERS



“AI is enabling faster content personalization, predictive analytics for users and automated SEO optimization, but the negative side effects range from [putting] brand authenticity at risk and data privacy concerns.”

TECHNICAL LEADER, MANUFACTURING/CPG, UK

But knowledge alone isn't enough. Turning strategic vision into measurable impact requires AI-native platforms that optimize SEO, AEO, site performance, and engagement with AI-powered insights and action. Without this foundation, technical teams lack confidence that their infrastructure will remain safe and secure, and marketers lack trust that they can protect their brand at scale.

The competitive advantage will go to teams that combine both internal expertise and AI-ready platforms to move from pilot programs to production, from experiments to measurable results, from intention to effective execution.

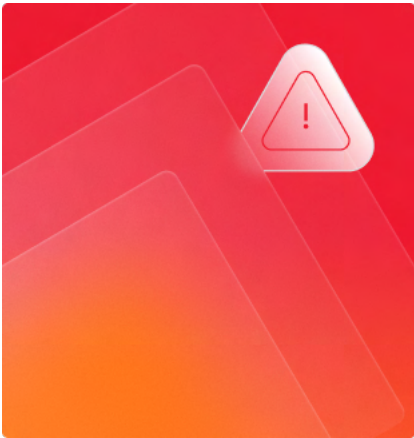
The gap between these teams and those stuck on platforms that can't support their website visions will only widen. Organizations that develop forward-thinking web strategies and adopt platforms built for AI-driven innovation today position themselves to scale confidently while competitors will remain stuck at square one.



The collaboration crisis

Misaligned ownership and clunky tech stacks are straining relationships between marketing and engineering.

02



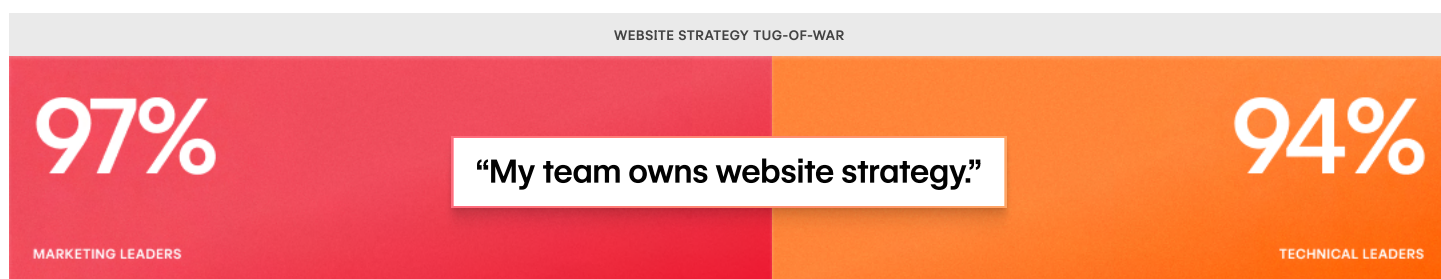
Websites were traditionally built through a sluggish but orderly system: marketing teams filed tickets, technical teams executed those tasks, and projects were slowly completed one after the other.

But as technology and business priorities have evolved, some organizations have piloted a new system — one that gives marketers greater autonomy, involvement, and ownership over the website, which in turn gives developers and engineers the ability to focus on the highest-impact site work.

This shift only works when cross-functional teams can collaborate seamlessly. But without the right tools to support it, successful collaboration and project execution remain out of reach for many of our respondents.

Who really owns the website?

Marketing and technical leaders don't see eye to eye when it comes to website strategy.



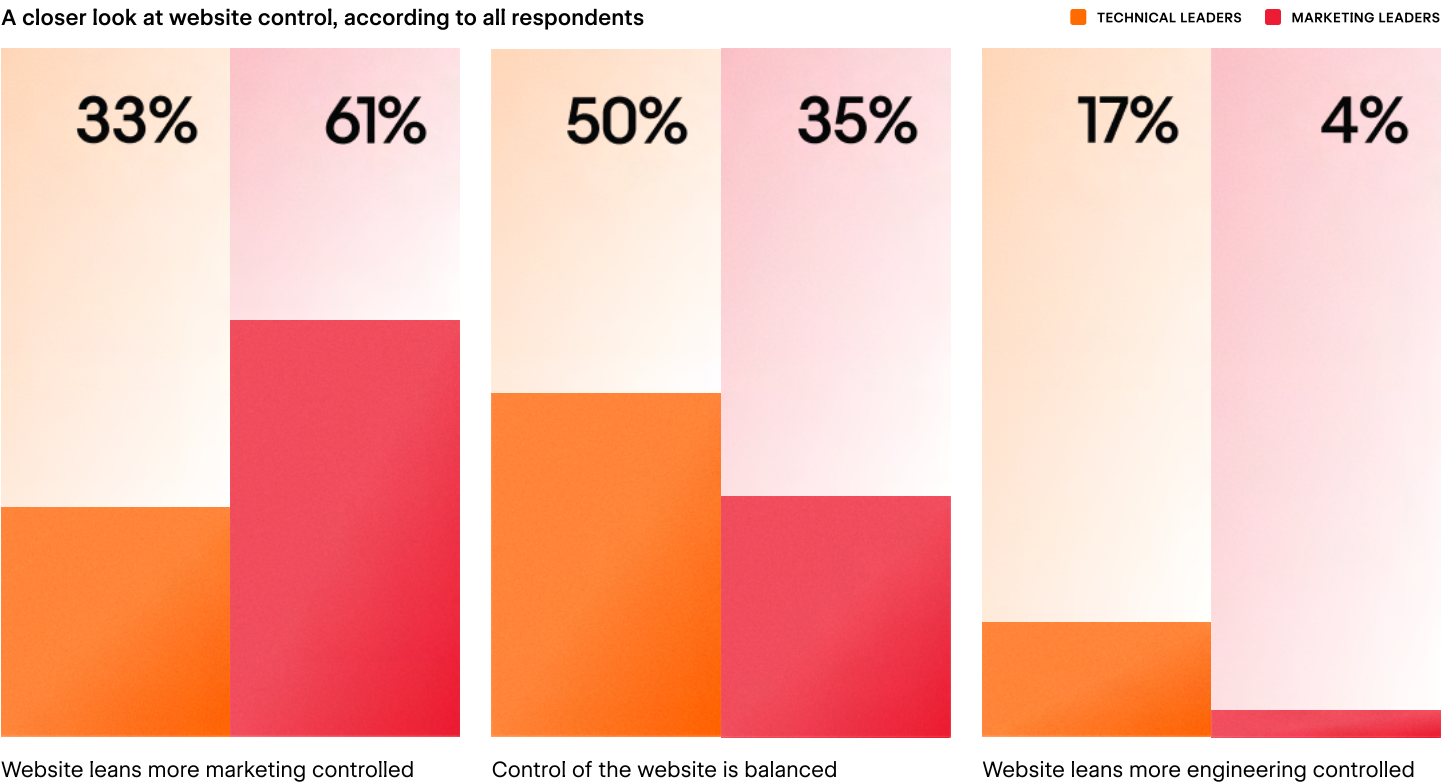
The traditional model of web development has technical teams executing the majority of web updates, while more modern CMSs give marketing teams autonomy. It's a tension stemming from a shift currently underway over who has control over changes to the website.

Without effective technology and governance protocols in place, teams are trapped in a cycle of inefficiency. 91% of technical leaders report there is some level of friction today within their organization between technical and non-technical teams when making changes to the website.

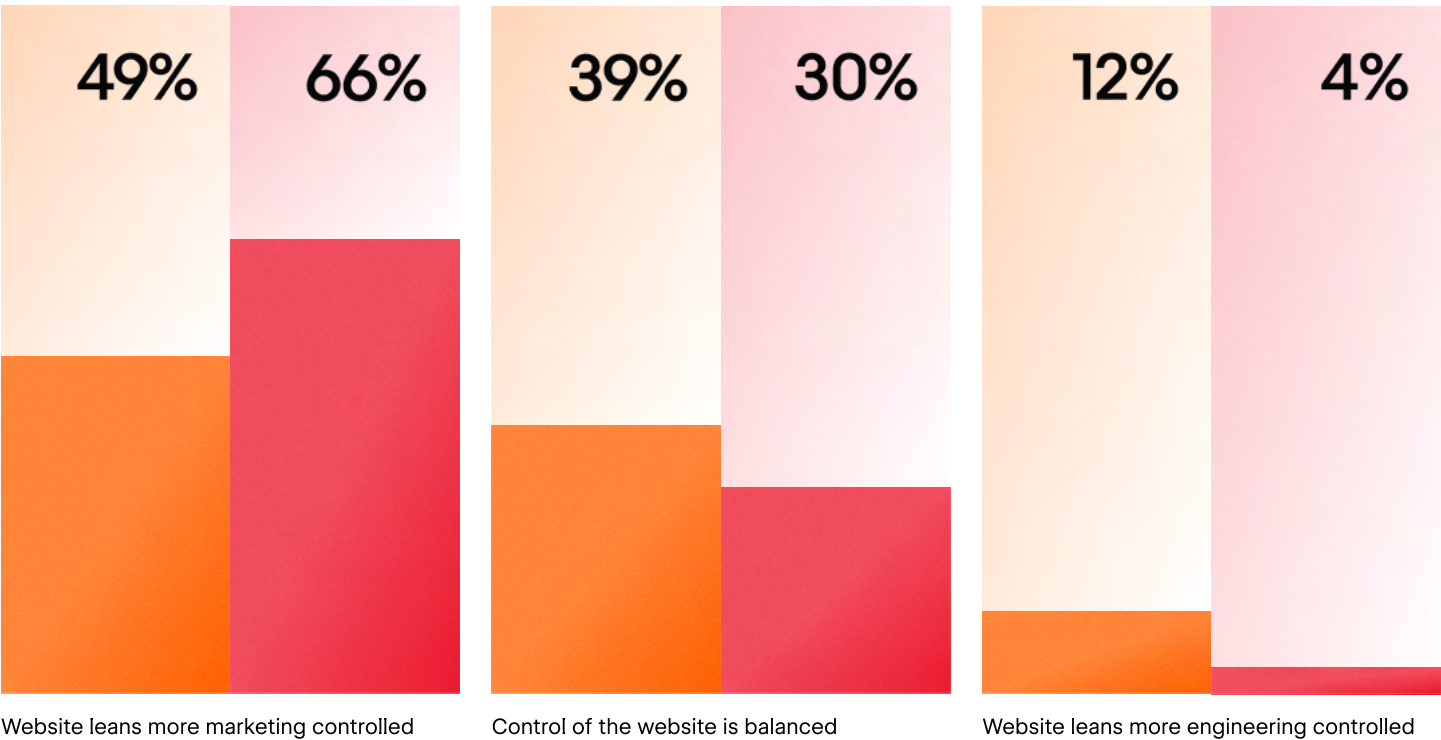
Leaders believe this absence of effective collaboration is seismic and are keen to solve it, with 92% reporting they believe the relationship between marketing and engineering needs to improve.

THE COLLABORATION CRISIS

A closer look at website control, according to all respondents



A closer look at website control, according to respondents who are completely satisfied with their websites today



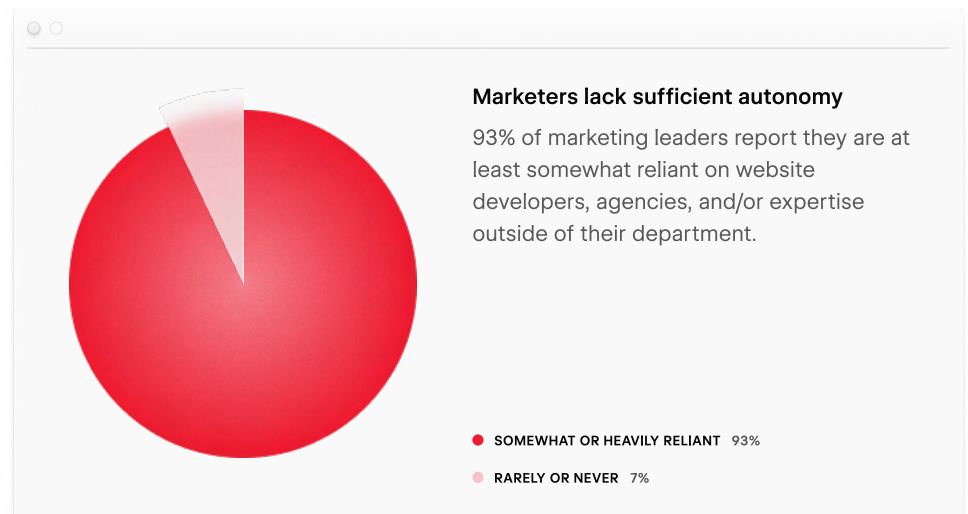
Friction affects every layer

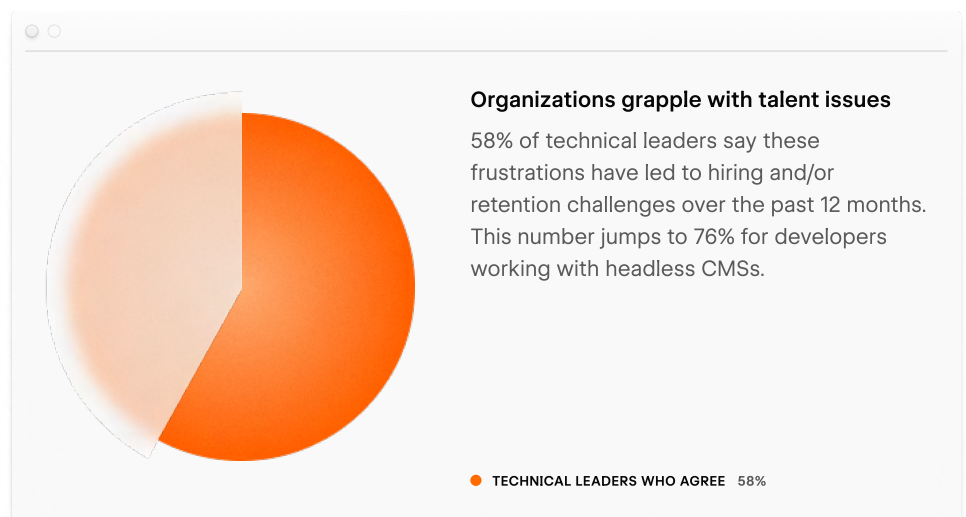
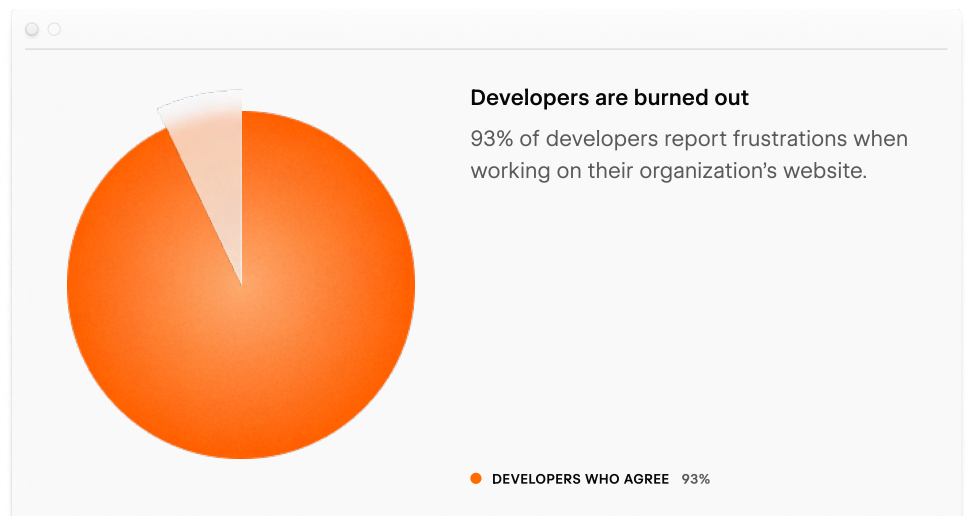
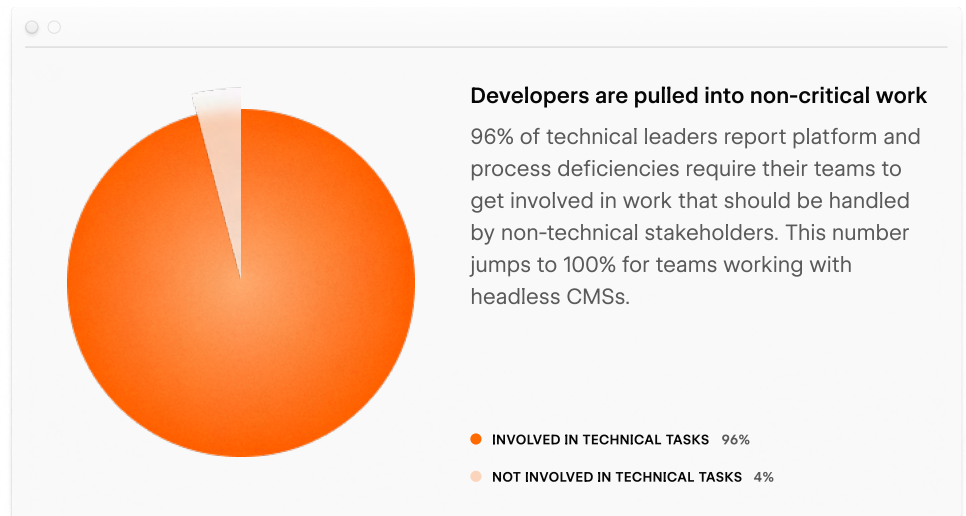
The downstream effects from these collaboration pains and lack of alignment are palpable. For marketers, there's a feeling of helplessness that goes hand-in-hand with a lack of autonomy to action on website changes themselves.

For technical teams, developer talent is being burned out on a growing number of requests from marketers and other non-technical stakeholders, leading to retention challenges.

Additionally, many organizations fail to deliver web projects within scope. And these delays and frustrations further obstruct the path to AI adoption and innovation.

The hidden cost of poor collaboration





Organizations are struggling to execute their projects efficiently

Growing customer expectations require businesses to accelerate speed-to-market to stay ahead. However, this remains a major challenge for nearly half of organizations surveyed, who report they are unable to deliver web projects on time or within budget.

46%

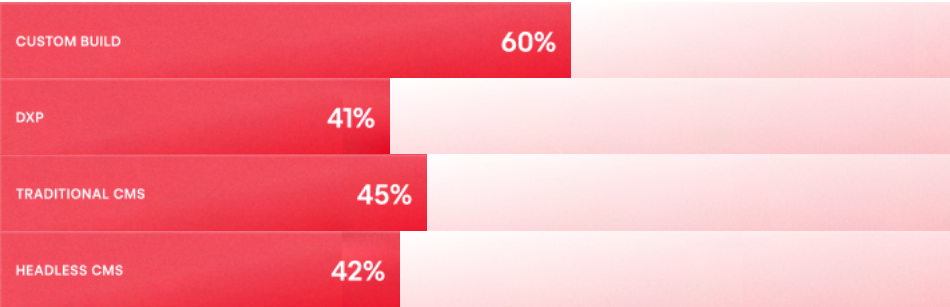
of organizations struggle to always deliver projects on time

53%

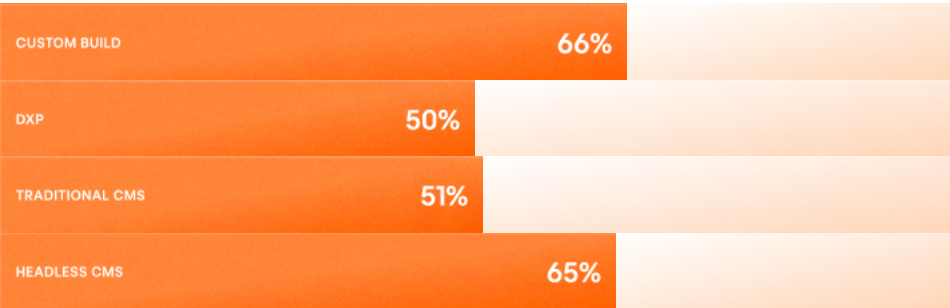
struggle to keep projects within budget

In the pursuit of efficiency, there often seems to be a tradeoff. Teams using headless solutions report difficulty staying on budget. Meanwhile, organizations going the custom build route struggle with both.

Organizations who struggled to keep projects on time, by platform



Organizations who struggled to keep projects on budget, by platform





The weight of technical debt

Years of patchwork tools and outdated systems have left teams stuck maintaining, not innovating.





The technical debt crisis manifests differently for marketers and developers:

Marketers are constrained by systems that require developer intervention for basic site or content management.

Developers spend their days maintaining fragile codebases instead of building the robust, scalable solutions that would actually empower their marketing counterparts.

Cross-functional tensions don't exist in a vacuum; they're often amplified by underlying technical realities.

Years of working within the confines of restrictive CMSs have accumulated technical debt — the burden of outdated systems, inefficient integrations, and layered workarounds that pile up as organizations add new tools without modernizing their underlying infrastructure. This limits organizational agility and creates a bottleneck for even the most collaborative of teams.

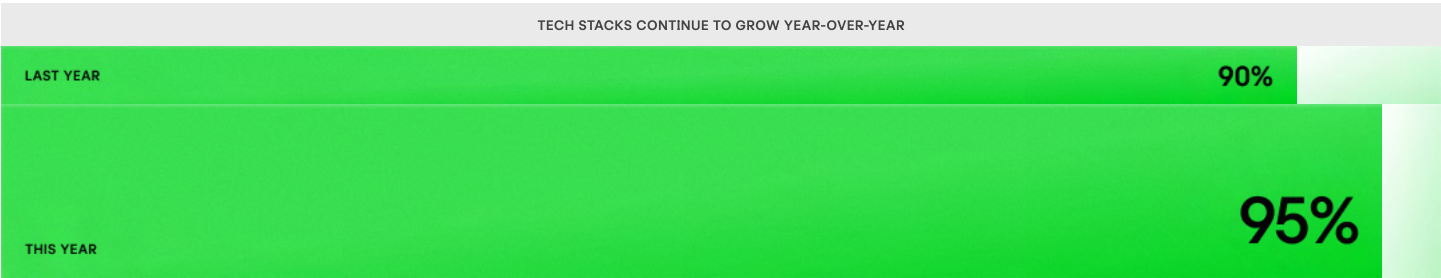
Technical debt compounds over time, making websites not just harder to maintain, but actively resistant to the kind of collaborative workflows that modern web teams need. The result is an organization unable to fully execute on its own web strategy, compromising speed to market, innovation, and overall productivity.

Rising complexity, falling confidence

Organizations continue to invest in strategies and talent to meet growing customer expectations. However, their technical debt continues to increase risk, slow down the pace of work, and impact their teams’ abilities to effectively manage their website.

And websites have become significantly harder to manage: 92% of organizations say that requests for website updates are growing in size and complexity, and 95% of organizations report they are receiving more web project requests overall.

Companies have cobbled together point solutions, stitching tools together they hope work well enough — whether for the short or long term. But these fragmented tech stacks don’t reduce the burden on teams; if anything, they exacerbate it.

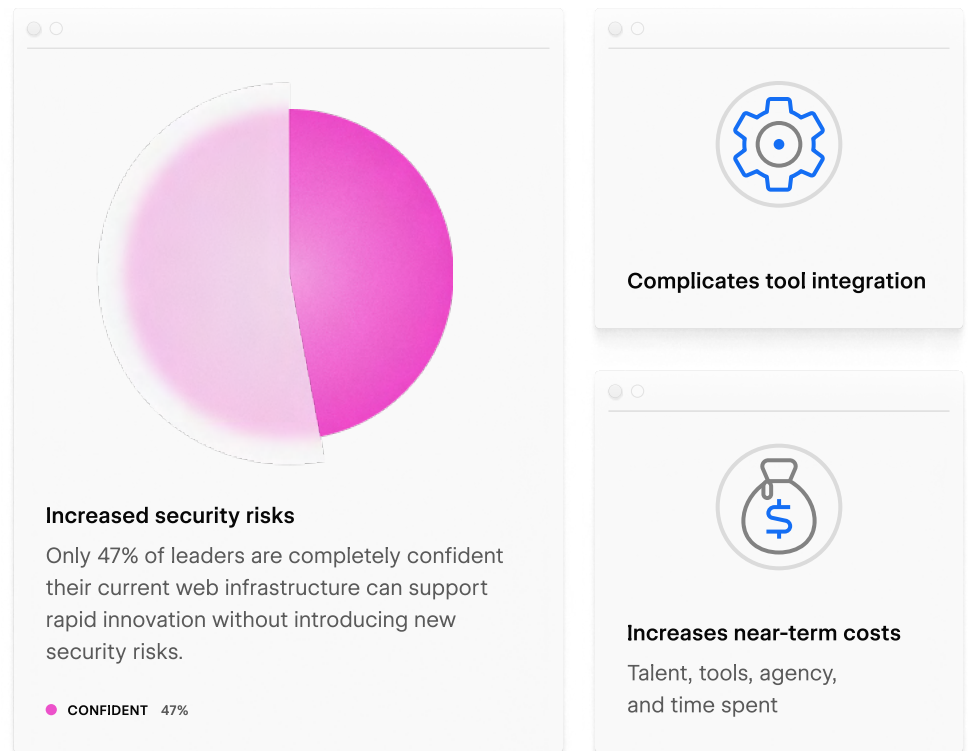


A burden shared across teams

Engineering and marketing teams feel the weight of technical debt. Technical teams are especially concerned with the rising security risks that come with growing tech stacks, and 97% of technical leaders report technical debt is impacting their team’s ability to effectively manage the website.

Simultaneously, marketers are trapped in a cycle of handoffs without the ability to manage or update underlying content templates or build pages.

How tech debt affects technical teams:



Most time-consuming website tasks for marketers:

1

Improving SEO

2

Creating/managing/updating page templates

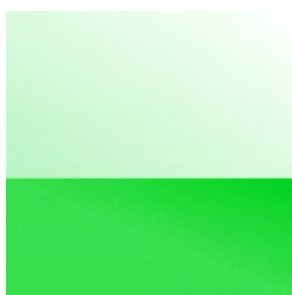
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Designing/launching custom experiences or pages

Developer fatigue is real

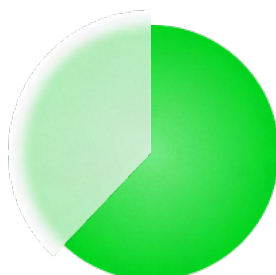
Technical leaders report frustrations with platforms and processes. And when compounded, they aren't just minor inconveniences — they're systemic obstacles that erode team morale, delay launches, and prevent teams from building innovative websites that move the needle for business.

The result is a growing dissatisfaction with the status quo — with many leaders citing multiple issues.



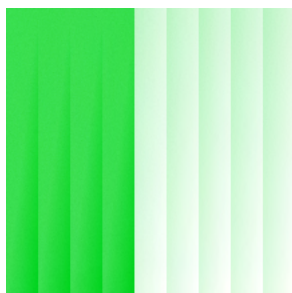
42% of technical leaders blame poor collaboration or siloed information, including:

- ✓ Too many requests from marketing
- ✓ Siloed teams and/or communication issues



62% of technical leaders blame platform issues, including:

- ✓ Rigid platform limitations
- ✓ Inability to customize code
- ✓ The lack of automation

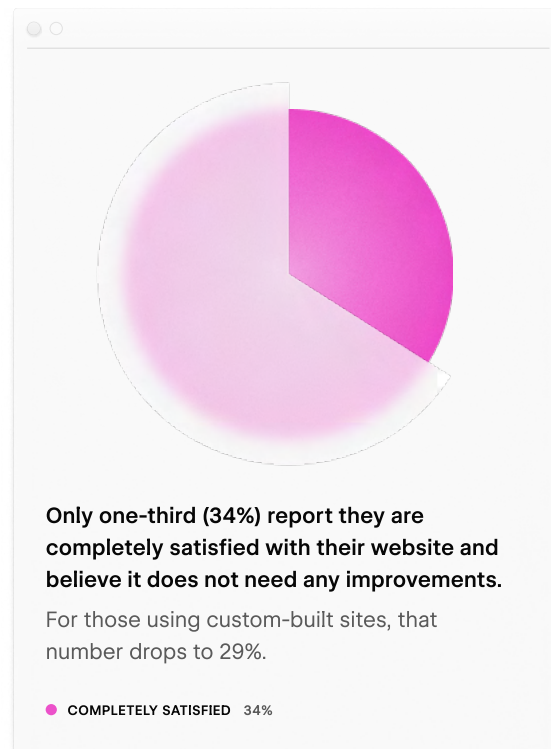


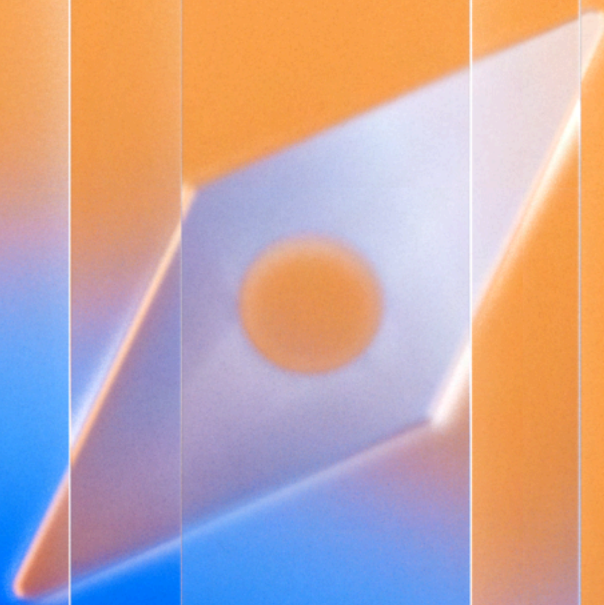
45% of technical leaders blame inefficient processes, including:

- ✓ Slow or complicated cross-functional workflows
- ✓ Poor documentation or training

It's no surprise then that technical leaders are unhappy with the current state of their websites today.

However, leaders are still optimistic: 94% acknowledge their current workflows and tooling could be improved to better support web development — a signal they're aware of platform investments they can and should be making to drive better business outcomes.





The path forward:

Modern platforms for modern teams

The next generation of websites will be built on AI-native technology that unites creativity and performance — empowering teams to move faster, safer, and smarter.

04



Three converging trends make 2026 the year for platform transformation.

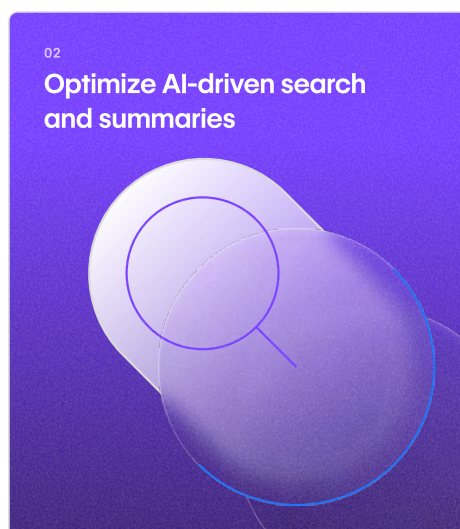
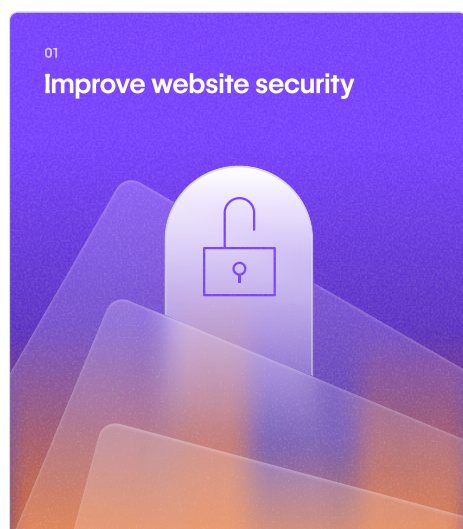
- ✓ AI reaching enterprise maturity
- ✓ Technical debt hitting critical mass
- ✓ Ineffective collaboration reaching a tipping point

To make transformation a reality — without taking on more technical debt — organizations must make dedicated investments in AI-native web platforms that create a shared language between design and development.

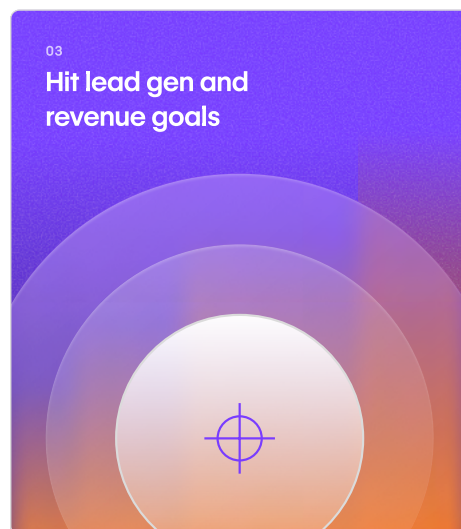
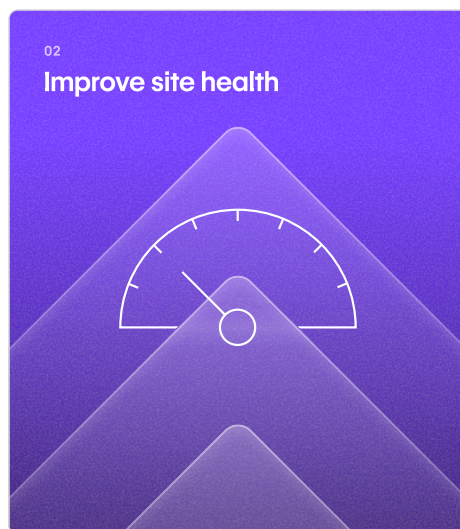
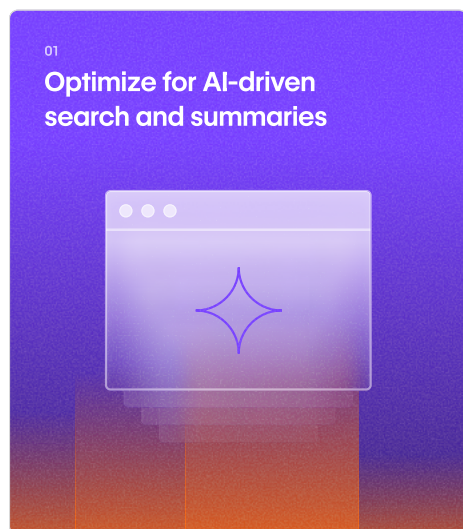
Turning ambition into action with technology

Marketing and technology leaders have a critical set of priorities they want to tackle over the next year — ones that can help them build, manage, and optimize the website lifecycle more efficiently. But in order to successfully carry them out, they will need systems and website platforms in place that can support their ambitions.

Tech leaders' top website priorities for the next 12 months



Marketing leaders' top website priorities for the next 12 months



These priorities reveal three truths about today’s web:

- 1

AI-native website platforms are table stakes. Companies that don’t adopt and optimize for AI at the foundational platform level will lose visibility, relevance, and market share.
- 2

Cross-functional collaboration is a competitive requirement. Meeting rising customer expectations and outpacing competitors requires marketing and technical teams to work in lockstep on site performance, security, and optimization.
- 3

The website is your revenue engine — if you can move fast. Achieving business goals at the speed and scale today’s market demands requires a platform that empowers every team member to execute with agility.

Organizations that address all three will win. When asked about AI’s impact on their web strategy, here’s what leaders already seeing results had to say:

Marketing leader

“By analyzing historical data, AI can predict user trends and preferences. This helps us plan our website updates and marketing strategies in advance, staying ahead of the competition.”

IT / TECH CANADA

Technical leader

“AI allows us to have more flexibility and more complex processes in place because a lot of our manpower is freed up from doing automated tasks. We’re also finding that we have more bandwidth to utilize on creative projects and that enables more collaboration across different teams.”

RETAIL / ECOMMERCE CANADA

Technical leader

“AI has really helped us code much more efficiently, making our site much more dynamic and secure. The code is more secure and the website layout and features are much more rich.”

IT / TECH CANADA

Teams no longer have to settle for platforms that can't keep pace. DXPs, headless or traditional CMSs, drag-and-drop builders, and even custom-builds — these all create unsustainable technical debt and block the adoption of new AI technologies and workflows. But beyond these technical limitations, they're actively driving misalignment across organizations. When both tech leaders and marketing leaders believe they're driving web strategy, it's clear these platforms are forcing teams into siloed workflows where no one truly owns the outcome.

Teams need a next-generation platform that serves developers, designers, and marketers equally, while being built for how answer engines consume and understand content. An **AI-native website experience platform** delivers exactly this: true cross-functional collaboration with the flexibility and speed teams need, eliminating both the technical debt and organizational dysfunction that hold teams back.

It's the organizations that demand more from their tech stacks that will gain the agility to innovate, transforming their websites into a true competitive advantage.



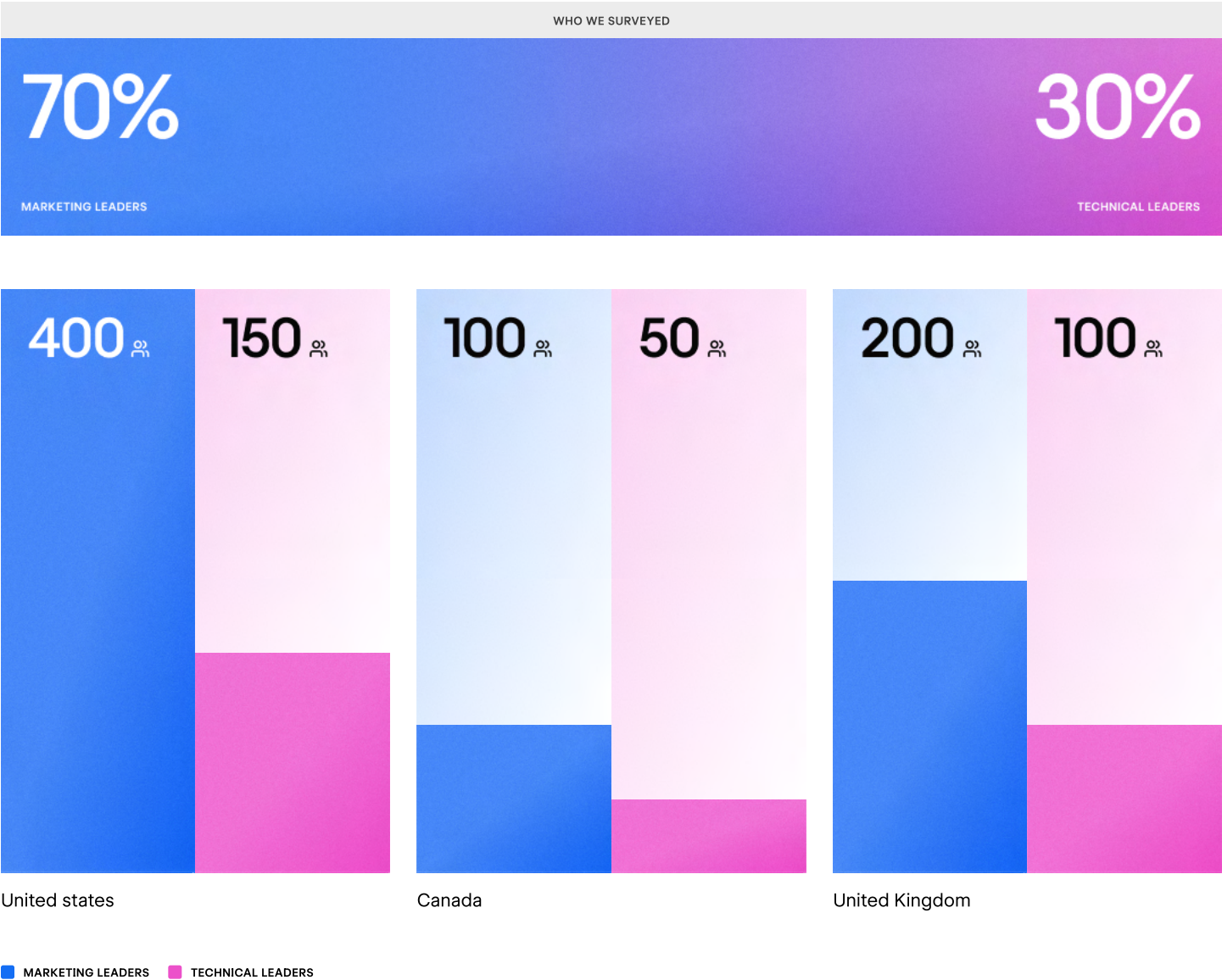
Methodology

Sector, geographic, revenue, and organization response data

05

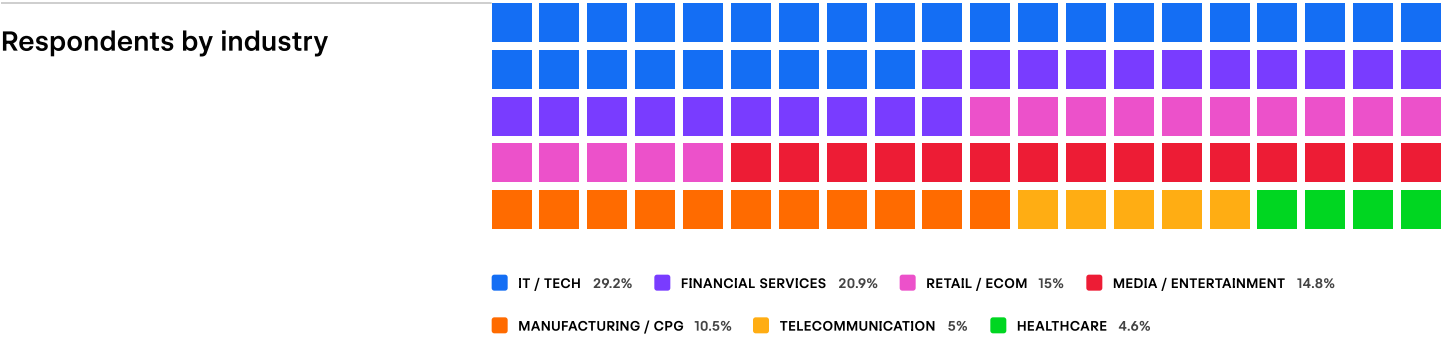
Audience breakdown

Webflow conducted an online survey of 1000 participants across the United States, Canada, and the UK. Respondents are all marketing or technology leaders, which are defined as someone who holds a Director-level position or above in a marketing or engineering/IT/DevOps department.



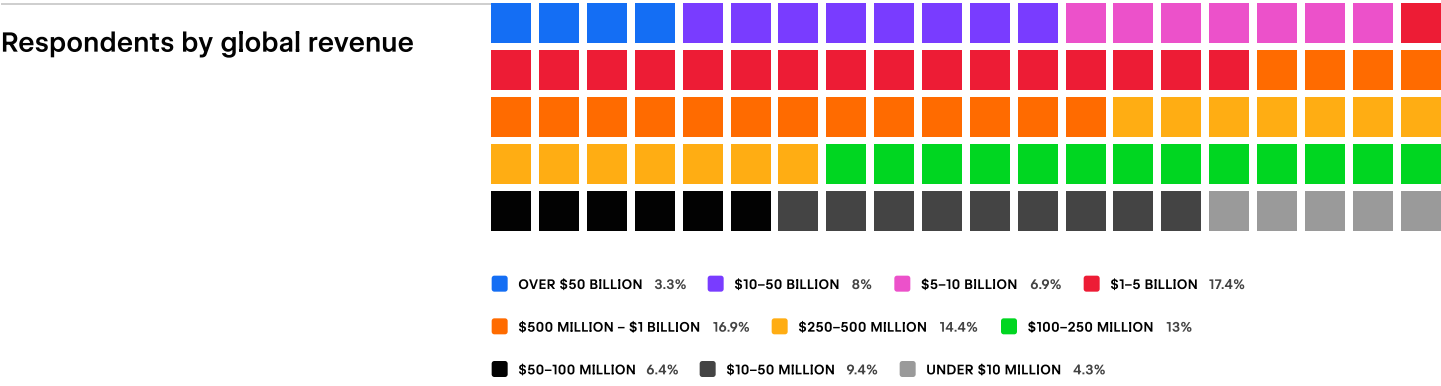
Industry breakdown

All respondents work at an enterprise organization in the public or private sector with at least 50 employees in the following sectors.



Revenue breakdown

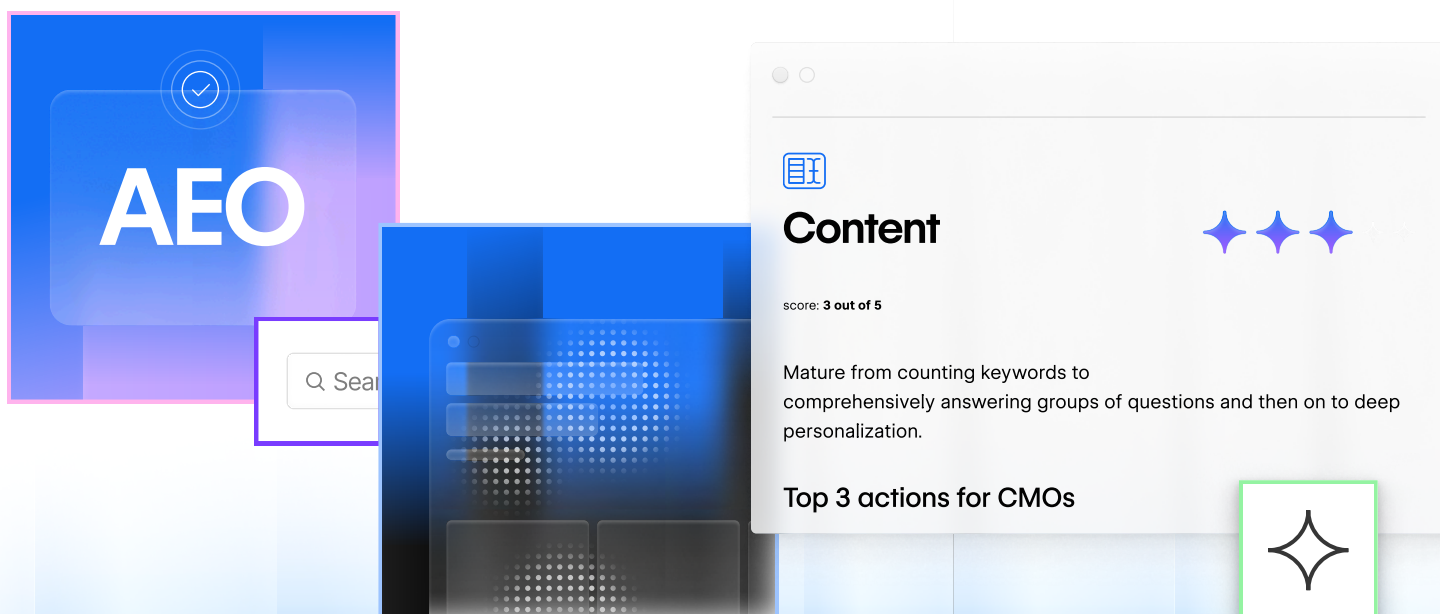
Respondents' organizations global revenue covers a significant range, from under \$10 million annually to over \$50 billion annually.



Assess the state of your website.

Is your site ready for AI search? Get a free AEO assessment to analyze how prepared your site is for the new era of discoverability. You'll get insights into how effectively your brand is likely to be interpreted for large language models, and what still needs attention.

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The future of the web is yours to build.

Learn more today →

Webflow Enterprise gives marketing teams the flexibility, security, and reliability they need to scale innovative web experiences that drive growth in the age of AI.

Today, over 300,000 of the best companies in the world — from The New York Times, Dropbox, Monday.com, TED, Orangetheory Fitness, and Checkout.com — use Webflow to build, manage, and optimize their websites.

If you're ready to drive tangible business impact with your website, get in touch. We'll show you how Webflow's AI-native platform can turn your brand's creative vision into dynamic web experiences that drive real results.

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