

FIELD REPORT - MAY 2026 EDITION

Curated from insights shared at the May 2026 Virtual AI for Marketers Summit.



MAY 13-14, 2026 · VIRTUAL · SUMMIT RECAP

The field's *inflection* point.

AI for Marketers Summit 2026 2 FULL DAYS · 13 SESSIONS · 21 SPEAKERS



You are now data scientists and software engineers. Everyone needs a GitHub with automated code review. You need to get hands-on, even if you're a CEO - these are table stakes now.

LUKE WALTON · SR. MARKETING MANAGER, AMAZON
[Edited for clarity]

ARTIFICIALINTELLIGENCESUMMIT.COM
NEXT: NOVEMBER 18-19, 2026

— BY THE NUMBERS

Two days. One field's inflection point.

A WORKING CONSENSUS ON WHERE AI IN MARKETING ACTUALLY IS, AND WHAT IT TAKES TO WIN THE NEXT TWELVE MONTHS.

2

DAYS OF PROGRAMMING

13

SESSIONS

21

SPEAKERS

10+

LIVE DEMOS

Topics spanned the full operational footprint of an AI-enabled marketing team: AI operations and team design, brand voice governance, AI search visibility, agentic workflows, creative strategy, content automation, guardrails and trust, and the future shape of the marketing role itself.

THE LINEUP



Dan Slagen
SVP of Marketing · **Zapier**



Chris Butler
Director, Product Ops · **GitHub**



Richard Demato
Head of Strategy, AI Lab · **Google**



Sara Hanley
SVP of Marketing · **ASAPP**



Luke Walton
Sr. Marketing Manager · **Amazon**



Archana Dhankar
VP of Marketing



Francis Brero
VP of AI Strategy · **HG Insights**



Sydney Myers
AI Transformation Lead · **H&R Block**



Patricia Clark
VP Go to Market · **Nexxen**



Edwin Choi
Founder & CEO · **jetfuel.agency**



Michele Nieberding
Head of PMM · **Optiversal**



Sarah Beaver
Director of Marketing · **OperationsHERO**



Carly Potock
Co-Founder/CEO · **Canvas+Co**



Haifa Barbari
Founder · **Possibilism**



Sharmin Attaran, PhD
Professor of Marketing · **Bryant University**



Katelyn Brower
Director, PR & Social · **First Advantage**



Adam Constantine
Founder & CEO · **ACE Creatives**



Joya Scarlata
Director of Marketing · **InterrallT**



Neil Dickson
Lead Analyst, Advanced Analytics · **AT&T**



Plus more
21 operators in total

AI is another powerful tool in the marketer's toolbox. Like all tools, however, you have to learn how to use them properly to avoid mis-steps. Having someone to show you how to properly use the tool, like these speakers, is sure to shorten the learning curve and ensure adoption.

- KATHY S. · PRESIDENT, MARKETING MASTERS WORLDWIDE

The five ideas every attendee left knowing.

ACROSS 13 SESSIONS, THE FIELD'S MOST EXPERIENCED OPERATORS KEPT RETURNING TO THE SAME CONCLUSIONS.

01 Tool adoption is not transformation.

Saving 10–50 hours a week hasn't moved pipeline at most companies because AI on top of old workflows produces more content, not better content. The win is operational redesign, not another seat license.

02 "Work slop" is the universal villain.

Francis Brero's diagnostic, already in the marketing vocabulary: read the AI output, wait 15 seconds, try to state the takeaway. If you can't, it's slop. Don't ship it. Slop was Merriam-Webster's word of 2025 for a reason.

03 Context engineering has replaced clever prompting.

A persistent context document (brand voice, ICP, voice-of-customer transcripts, on-brand examples) loaded at the start of every AI session is now the unit of work. The asset that matters is no longer the prompt - it's the containerized capability (skills, MCPs, custom GPTs) the whole team can invoke.

04 Workflows are intellectual property.

Prompts, skills, and AI automations should be treated like code: versioned, centralized, observed. If they live on individual laptops, they aren't IP. They're shadow ops. Every speaker running an AI program at scale said the same thing.

05 Humans own strategy. AI owns scale.

Francis Brero's \$5 / \$50 / \$500 framework: \$5 tasks (inbox triage, reformatting) - fully automate. \$50 tasks (drafts, summaries) - AI-assisted. \$500 tasks (strategy, brand POV, audience selection) - human-led. The goal of an AI-enabled team is to move every member up the stack.

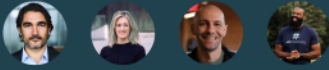


The marketers thriving twelve months from now won't be the ones who chased every new tool. They'll be the ones who built a brand-grounded, context-engineered, judgment-protected operating system around the tools.

- CONSENSUS ACROSS PANELS

Frameworks from AI bar raisers.

13 SESSIONS. DISTINCT PLAYBOOKS FOR EVERY CORNER OF THE MARKETING FUNCTION.



Day 1 Keynote Panel

Richard Demato (Google) · Sara Hanley (ASAPP) · Dan Slagen (Zapier) · Moderator: Adam Constantine (ACE Creatives)

The AI Decisions Reshaping Modern Marketing, and the Leaders Making Them.

- Production-grade AI marketing is built for the **messy state**, not the demo state. Designing around your best use case erodes trust.
- Google is hiring "AI Transformation Managers" - a new role bridging marketing, MarTech, engineering, and finance.



Archana Dhankar
VP of Marketing

AI That Actually Works: Leading High-Performance Content Teams.

- **98%** of organizations have adopted AI, but most are stuck in Stage 1 (individual productivity).
- A 5-pillar framework: roles & decision rights, human-vs-AI ownership, brand tone governance, what you measure, sustainable workflows.
- Plan output by review capacity, not AI speed.



Carly Potock
Co-Founder/CEO · Canvas+Co

Beyond the Hype: Using AI to Amplify, not Automate, Your Creative Strategy.

- 2026 authenticity crisis: **75%** of consumers don't know what to trust online.
- Aerie banned AI on women's bodies - double-digit brand-awareness lift and **23%** sales jump.
- OpenAI is now hiring a human for content strategy.



Francis Brero
VP of AI Strategy · HG Insights

A Unified AI System: Building Shared Prompt Libraries for Teamwide Consistency.

- The **\$5 / \$50 / \$500** framework: atomize every task by value and route it accordingly.
- **Pair Marketing:** SME + AI-fluent practitioner, 90-minute sync, one specific piece of work.



Haifa Barbari
Founder · Possibilism

Marketing to the Machines: A Playbook for the Generative Internet Era.

- The shift isn't AI efficiency - it's customers asking AI for recommendations. AI is the medium *and* the market.
- The **Seen → Suggested → Selected** model: a three-tier playbook for AI visibility that replaces the funnel.



Sarah Beaver
Director of Marketing · OperationsHERO

Don't Let the Robots Go Rogue: Practical AI Guardrails for Marketers.

- Start with an AI audit: map where AI already speaks for your brand (Outlook, LinkedIn, HubSpot, sales tools).
- Build an **AI Field Guide:** a living doc covering Brand Voice, Source Discipline, Human Checkpoints, Tooling Permissions.



Day 2 Panel

Luke Walton (Amazon) · Patricia Clark (Nexxen) · Sharmin Attaran (Bryant) · Mod: Katelyn Brower

AI Maturity in 2026: Building & Enabling the Modern Marketing Team.

- Dr. Attaran's four maturity levels: from "speed" to "AI shapes which decisions get made."
- **Ghost influence:** AI engines sometimes recommend your competitors based on what you stand for.
- Don't hire an "AI specialist." Upskill existing marketers. Fluency is table stakes.

What attendees actually *saw built*.

Four operators didn't just talk frameworks - they built, automated, and orchestrated on screen. Here's the exact inventory of what attendees watched come together in real time.



Sydney Myers

AI Transformation Lead · H&R Block

7 LIVE BUILDS

The Full-Stack Content Engine: Orchestrating AI from Research to Reporting

- 01 A custom Gemini Gem for searcher intent
- 02 A Zapier-driven landing-page-copy template
- 03 A content-gap + SEO audit app built in Google AI Studio
- 04 A weekly industry newsletter generator
- 05 A Notebook LM enablement deck from raw data
- 06 A performance-deck generator from spreadsheets
- 07 A regulated-industry AI readiness workflow

"Don't feel overwhelmed, like, oh my god, I'm building an app. It's conversational AI. You just talk to it naturally, tell it what you want." - SYDNEY MYERS, H&R BLOCK



Michele Nieberding

Head of PMM · Optiversal

3 LIVE BUILDS

20/20 Vision: AI Tools That Show You What You've Been Missing

- 01 A Lovable-built landing page from one sentence
- 02 A Slack + Claude weekly industry-update bot
- 03 A Notebook LM enablement deck



Chris Butler

Director, Product Operations
GitHub

1 PRODUCTION TOOL

Advanced Prompting: Elevate Your Outputs With Structured AI Thinking

- 01 Walked through GitHub's own internal build that saves **tens of minutes x tens of PMs x multiple times per month**
- 02 Companion: a 5-part prompt template the room copied down - Goal/persona → Context → Constraints → Process → Examples



Edwin Choi

Founder & CEO · jetfuel.agency

1 OPERATING SYSTEM

The Trials & Tribulations of Building an AI Marketing Operating System

Walked through a custom MCP combining marketing channel data, Slack, and onboarding docs that auto-loads context into Claude Code every session - plus the "perfect day" exercise every employee runs to map automation targets vs. protected work.

- 01 Channel-data + Slack + docs MCP
- 02 "Perfect day" mapping exercise
- 03 80/20 split: high-value/high-time vs. quick wins
- 04 Auto-context loader per session

"Using AI is easy. Using it well is a skill - and that skill is context, constraints, and the right question."

- Michele Nieberding, Optiversal

Key AI metrics referenced by speakers.

DATA POINTS PULLED ACROSS THE 13 SESSIONS - THE PICTURE THE SPEAKERS PAINTED, IN RAW FORM.

AI ADOPTION

98%

of organizations have adopted AI. But most are stuck in Stage 1: individual productivity. The lift comes from Stage 2 (workflow integration) and Stage 3 (operational redesign).

SEARCH CTR

↓ **65%**

The largest decline in brand history. Search is collapsing into AI overviews.

CHATGPT USERS

800M

The customer journey has shrunk to an instant. AI is the new audience in the mix.

THE AERIE EFFECT

+23%

Sales jump after Aerie banned AI on women's bodies. Paired with a double-digit brand-awareness lift. "Realness becomes special in an industry where everything is generated." - Carly Potock

TRUST CRISIS

75%

of consumers don't know what to trust online. 78% of Gen Z/Millennials are fine with AI use for faster responses - their #1 concern is brands using AI without disclosing it.

THE CFO MATH • ANTHROPIC

\$30-40B

Revenue with ~5,000 employees. Salesforce: similar revenue, 79,000 employees.

RECORD-QUARTER CUTS

-20% / -40%

Cloudflare cut 20% in a record-earnings quarter. Block cut 40% after beating.

GOOGLE • ADAPTATION WORK

30-50%

Time and cost savings already reported on mid- and lower-funnel adaptation work.

What the speakers predicted for 2027.

TWELVE MONTHS FROM NOW, THE MARKETING FUNCTION WILL LOOK MEANINGFULLY DIFFERENT - AND THEY AGREED ON WHAT.

12-24 MONTHS OUT

AEO vendors face a reckoning.

On the wave of AI-SEO/AEO vendors selling guaranteed LLM rankings, Patricia Clark warns of buying into black-hat AEO vendors.

NOW → 2027

Centralized prompt libraries replace ad-hoc copy/paste.

Skills, MCPs, versioning, observability, and "earn the right to automate" governance become standard.

ALREADY HAPPENING

Search keeps collapsing into AI overviews.

Brands without structured data, FAQs, third-party reputation, and a distinctive POV become invisible.

BY Q4 2027

Hero creative stays human; production goes AI-led.

Google reports 30-50% savings on mid- and lower-funnel adaptation work already.

12-24 MONTHS

Agentic AI moves from demo to operational.

Patricia Clark put it at 12-24 months for higher-stakes channels like media buying. Agents talking to agents in 2026; AI native to phones and wearables.

THE UNANIMOUS CLOSER

A pendulum back toward human texture.

Hyper-personalization will start to feel like surveillance. People will crave a typo. A real voice. Anthropic's Super Bowl ad and Aerie's no-AI stance are the templates Q4 2027 will copy.

ATTENDEE TESTIMONIALS

"The AI for Marketers summit was a very valuable experience. The focus on HOW, with walk-through of specific examples, was very valuable!"

MARIANA Q.
VP, MARKETING · CHILDREN'S MINNESOTA

"One of the most useful conferences I've recently attended. Immediately actionable information presented in a compelling, easy-to-access way."

SUSIE S.
SR. MANAGER, MARKETING · COPIC

"Genuinely inspiring. You leave with a sense of direction and excitement - straight from the leaders themselves."

GRACE B.
CORP. MARKETING & COMMS · MILL CREEK RESIDENTIAL

"A surprising collection of lectures and demonstrations that helped further my confidence in testing out new tools. Time well spent."

DEANN B.
VIDEO SPECIALIST · ENDEAVOR HEALTH

SAVE THE DATE

The conversation picks up where this one left off.



The next *Summit* is coming.

November 18-19, 2026 · VIRTUAL · REGISTRATION OPEN

A RETURNING FAVORITE



Sydney Myers

AI Transformation Lead · H&R Block

AI for Data Analysis & Reporting. In May, Sydney walked attendees through 7 live demos that took routine workflows from 30 minutes to instant. In November, attendees will see what that engine produces when it's pointed at performance data.

A GLIMPSE AT THE NEW PROGRAM



Angela Brown

Head of Marketing · Halda.ai

Standing Out in the Age of AI.

Brand differentiation when everyone uses AI - how to define a voice specific enough that AI can amplify it, and a positioning framework distinctive enough to hold up in a crowded field.

WHAT TO EXPECT

A new roster of AI experts paving the way for operationalizing AI in marketing, alongside a few returning favorites you'll recognize from May.

REGISTER NOW

See you in November.

artificialintelligencesummit.com

