

RBH Mindset

December 2025

You've Got an AI for Radio



The new marketing operating system – GenAI gets real

Algorithms, conversation and the LLM plot twist

Artificial intelligence has been shaping digital marketing for years. It started with programmatic bidding, moved into predictive targeting and analytics, and now it's at the core – driving content creation, summarisation, and even creative execution. Large Language Models (LLMs) like OpenAI's GPT, Google's Gemini, Anthropic's Claude, and Meta's LLaMA are redefining what marketing teams can achieve, generating text, images, code, and video at unprecedented speed and complexity.

Now, GenAI is more than just a back-office efficiency booster. It's embedded in every facet of marketing strategy, creative production, and communication. Yet only about one in four organisations report seeing tangible, significant value from their AI investment.

Meanwhile, consumers have surged ahead – using AI for essays, coding, creative work, and sometimes testing the limits of what's ethical or possible.

Client expectations have changed, too. The Gemini app, for example, has reached 650m monthly active users – a striking indicator that demand for agile, AI-driven marketing isn't slowing. For leaders in marketing, the challenge is responding fast to these new expectations while proving measurable value with every AI decision.

Money talks: why every tech giant has an AI side hustle

Investment tells its own story. Companies like Alphabet and Microsoft are all-in, with Alphabet investing almost \$90bn yearly. In 2024, US private AI investment soared to \$109bn, far outpacing China and the UK. New platforms are emerging rapidly, each promising smarter insights, faster results, and more impressive ROI.

But the tech landscape is changing. North America leads in generative AI, especially in cybersecurity, signalling a move from wild experimentation toward more regulation. Now, innovation runs side by side with compliance and governance.

For CMOs and business leaders, AI presents both opportunity and risk. The best returns happen when AI is combined with strong processes, sound governance, and clear accountability – steering clear of chaotic, unchecked automation.

The new creative factory – practical GenAI deployment

Redefining speed and personalisation (minus the hype)

With GenAI making headlines and fuelling boardroom debates, it's easy to feel like everyone else is sprinting ahead – and you might get left behind. Yes, these tools help brands move fast: tailoring, iterating, and testing campaigns at scales unimaginable just a few years ago. Success stories about halving costs or boosting ROI have added to the sense of urgency.

But it's vital to remember: speed for its own sake can be a trap. Look at Apple – they waited, watched the MP3 player market get crowded, then launched the iPod and changed everything. Patience let them refine their offering and set new standards.

So, while over 60% of marketing teams now use AI (and many report measurable gains), less than half of these businesses see clear profitability. The fear of missing out is real – but chasing shiny new tech without a coherent plan rarely results in long-term success. The real advantage comes from a thoughtful strategy, rigorous testing, and knowing when to take action – or when to hold back. Booking.com's AI advisors aim to personalise travel; sometimes results land, sometimes they don't. Now, the focus is shifting to fresh creative, smarter automation, and freeing creative talent from repetitive tasks.



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

“Chasing shiny new tech without a coherent plan rarely results in long-term success”

How is the rest of the industry faring in their AI efforts?

AI in action: triumphs and innovation

Chris Capel & Nike (spec ad): a director's vision supercharged by AI

Director Chris Capel spent three months crafting a Nike Halloween spec ad, blending his creative magic with a comprehensive suite of AI tools. The visuals – 99% powered by Hailuo 2.0 – combined with platforms like Midjourney, Kling, Adobe Firefly, Magnific, Enhancer, and ElevenLabs for voiceover, produced an emotional, visually gripping spot that resonated widely, all without Nike's direct involvement.

Capel's work is a reminder: when experienced creatives work with AI, they unlock campaigns that are as original as they are efficient. The blend of storytelling and AI horsepower means more control, faster turnaround, and memorable content.

Heinz: "Ketchup AI" campaign

Heinz turned to DALL-E 2, an AI image generation tool, to test its status as an icon. The brand asked DALL-E to create images of "ketchup" and discovered the AI consistently generated bottles that looked strikingly like Heinz's design. Heinz then leveraged these AI-created images across digital campaigns, social media, and out-of-home ads. The campaign resonated because it blended tech curiosity with playful brand confidence, prompting strong organic engagement and media praise for its creativity and cultural relevance.



Mint Mobile: AI-powered advertising

Mint Mobile tapped into ChatGPT's copywriting ability and a video synthesis tool to create a campaign starring Ryan Reynolds – except the script was generated by AI. Reynolds provided his signature delivery, but the bones of the ad were crafted by ChatGPT based on a few prompts. The transparent, tongue-in-cheek nature of the spot garnered widespread positive attention, earning high engagement levels and further cementing Mint's reputation for innovation in the competitive telecom market.

“The campaign generated millions of submissions, drove online buzz, and reinforced Coca-Cola's positioning at the intersection of creativity and emerging technology”

Coca-Cola: “Create real magic” AI experience

Coca-Cola invited global audiences to use a branded AI art platform, “Create real magic,” powered by OpenAI and Stable Diffusion. Fans could generate original Coca-Cola-themed artwork for a chance to be featured on digital billboards in Times Square and London. This interactive project doubled as both a marketing campaign and a live demonstration of AI's potential for audience co-creation. The campaign generated millions of submissions, drove online buzz, and reinforced Coca-Cola's positioning at the intersection of creativity and emerging technology

Lexus: “Driven by intuition” TV Spot

Lexus broke new ground with its “Driven by intuition” campaign, tapping IBM Watson to analyse fifteen years of luxury, emotion, and performance-driven car ads. IBM Watson identified patterns and emotional triggers, generating the script for a new Lexus spot – brought to life by acclaimed director Kevin Macdonald. The resulting ad was lauded for its compelling narrative and for showcasing how AI insights can inform, rather than replace, human storytelling.

AI in the spotlight: when things go wrong

Not every AI campaign nails it. Sometimes, brands fall flat, take heat for missing the mark, or raise ethical questions.



Levi's AI models backlash

Levi's introduced AI-generated models as part of an effort to showcase greater visual diversity in their campaigns. However, the initiative faced swift backlash from audiences and industry voices who argued that using synthetic models sidestepped the opportunity to support real people from underrepresented backgrounds.

Many critics felt the technology undermined authenticity and diluted representation, sparking a heated discussion about inclusivity, transparency, and the social responsibilities that come with deploying AI in advertising. The incident highlighted how, for consumers, genuine representation still matters far more than digital variety – proving the ethical debate around synthetic imagery isn't going away any time soon.



Burger King's Whopper flop

Burger King's AI-generated ads and social posts sometimes landed awkwardly – lacking the brand's signature style. The misfires led to digital confusion and sparked ridicule in the media. Despite this, Burger King pushed forward with their campaign, highlighting the need for authenticity and creativity in AI usage.





Dove's deepfake ad controversy

A Dove campaign leveraged AI-generated deepfake technology to create strikingly lifelike portrayals of women, aiming to spark conversation about beauty standards. However, some viewers raised concerns that relying on synthetic faces – even for positive messaging – could blur the line between real and artificial beauty. Critics highlighted the risk that such campaigns might unintentionally promote unrealistic expectations or undermine trust in what audiences see, fuelling ongoing debate about the ethical use of deepfake tools in advertising.

.. T .. Mobile ..

T-Mobile's AI voiceover flop

A T-Mobile digital campaign used AI for its voiceover, but the cold, robotic delivery ended up dampening the message and quickly drew public criticism. Social media users and commentators highlighted how the lack of human emotion made the campaign feel impersonal and disconnected from the brand's usual tone. The feedback was swift and candid: audiences were put off by the unnatural cadence, and the campaign's core message didn't resonate as intended. As a result, the brand faced negative coverage and a lesson in the importance of balancing technology with genuine human connection in communications.

The RBH Creative toolkit & tech stack: AI that delivers

At RBH, we see the future and the immense benefits of AI while staying mindful of cautionary tales, regulations, and processes. Our AI toolkit – carefully selected and constantly evolving – is built on a foundation of research, testing, learning, updating, and refining. Every tool is thoroughly vetted to ensure our clients can trust that they are fully compliant with regulations and usage terms, giving them peace of mind while staying ahead of the curve.

Tool category	Key tools	Primary functionality	Client value
Campaign optimisation	Google Ads (PMax, Smart Bidding), Microsoft Ads, Taboola	Predictive bidding, creative testing	More conversions, lower cost per action
Social/ad platforms	Meta Ads, TikTok Ads (Smart+), Reddit, Pinterest	CPA optimisation, fatigue management	Fresher placement adaptations, higher ROI
Programme buying	StackAdapt (AI-powered audience targeting, predictive analytics, real-time optimisation), ClickCease (for bot removal)	Data-driven buying, predictive campaign adjustments	Greater efficiency, smarter spend, higher impact
Video, voice & image gen	Runway, Higgsfield, Adobe AI suite (generative fill, masking, text-to-image, colour grading, content-aware editing), Veo3, DALL-E, Gemini, MidJourney, ElevenLabs, Magnific	Fast asset creation, rich editing options	Faster campaigns, creative edge
Workflow automation	Monday.com, Scribe, Microsoft CoPilot	Process automation, SOPs, sentiment monitoring	Smooth onboarding, campaign management
Market & audience intelligence	Semrush, Similarweb, YouGov, Brand24, Answerthepublic, Moz	SEO/PPC/market intelligence, competitive insights	Sharper targeting, informed strategy
Analytics & measurement	Google Tag Manager, Google Analytics, Looker Studio, Supermetrics	Insight integration, AI-driven reporting	Clear performance data, actionable results
Brand tracking	YouGov, Brand24	Pulse on reputation, sentiment	Real-time management of brand perception
Content generation & QA	Jasper, DeepL, Copyscape	Scale copy, translation, plagiarism checks	Brand-safe, global content oversight
Creative ideation & collaboration	Miro, Notion AI, Google Gemini, ChatGPT, Figma	Brainstorming, collaboration, documentation	Collaborative teamwork, structured creativity
Email & CRM automation	HubSpot, Mailchimp AI features	Automated journeys, analysis, performance tracking	Strong nurture flows, actionable insights

No tool stands alone – our stack is built for smooth transitions and actionable insights, helping teams move fast without ever sacrificing compliance or quality. Discipline, rigor, and healthy scepticism are baked into every test and process.

We've delivered real gains for clients using AI behind the scenes – especially in automation, like Google Ads Smart Bidding (up to 18% more conversions), and creative tools that supercharge quality while streamlining production.



Risk, regulation and compliance

Simply ticking compliance boxes isn't enough. As AI grows ever smarter, clear rules for model training and data usage are crucial.

That's why RBH and agencies like us use waivers and release forms for every person, likeness, or asset AI touches. Securing proper permissions up front means assets are safe to use, wherever and whenever needed, without legal headaches. This focus extends beyond copyright: ensuring legitimacy for every face, voice, or creative input keeps both brands and agencies protected. Compliance in AI marketing means active, robust agreements – so innovation never comes at the expense of brand safety.

Copyright and guardrails – staying on the right side of progress

As AI use grows, so do the legal complexities. Brands crave the speed and agility of AI but must safeguard copyright, model rights, and indemnity. RBH works closely with clients to keep governance and transparency at the centre of every project, protecting both reputation and budget. Few AI platforms offer meaningful indemnity – Microsoft is a rare exception, though terms apply – so legal grey zones persist. In the UK, synthetic content faces increasing regulatory scrutiny.

Contracts, full transparency, and real legal support are now foundational. Legislation is racing to catch up. The EU set the bar with the AI Act – the world's first enforceable framework for AI, promoting transparency and banning some high-risk practices. In the US, lawsuits are multiplying: the Copyright Office has ruled AI-generated works without human authorship aren't copyrightable, muddying legal waters. Cases involving Getty Images and The New York Times suing over content scraping highlight the growing intensity of IP debates.

The bottom line: brands must stay alert – not just to avoid trouble, but to protect their reputation. Transparency throughout the creative chain and strong legal backing are essentials in this rapidly changing field. The best teams blend innovation with robust guardrails, ready for whatever's next.

The search shake-up – visibility in the age of AI



AI has truly shaken up the search landscape, especially in the UK. The old rule – “rank high for more clicks” – no longer holds. AI features like Google’s AI Overviews are changing the way people find information, make decisions, and even shop.



Google’s AI Overviews now appear in over 13% of all UK searches, signalling a real shift in user behaviour. While many marketers worry about “zero-click” searches, most of these losses happen in informational queries. The new focus? Authority. Getting cited by AI matters far more than being near the top of the search page.

Content strategy needs to adapt. Informational pages should aim to be go-to references for AI, not just sources of generic traffic. Transactional content still drives hard results – users click to buy, and paid search remains king for bottom-of-funnel conversions.

Paid search still offers the strongest ROI for securing high-intent buyers. Across the UK, people now use longer, more conversational queries – like “best wireless headphones under £100 UK 2024” – and expect smart, relevant answers, often summarised by AI from trusted sources. Brands need content that’s fresh, credible, and positioned for these standards.

AI is emerging as a personal shopping assistant – surfacing reviews, comparisons, and price data directly within search. Retailers who double down on structured data, expert reviews, and authoritative content are winning. Those who don’t are being edged out.

Winning brands today blend agility with authority. Expertise and trust are now the currency of digital marketing, with AI looking for credible references over raw traffic. The secret? Data quality, subject matter authority, and transparency – plus the ability to pivot with every new algorithm update.

At RBH, we work collaboratively with clients to keep content aligned for ever-evolving AIO visibility and AEO marketing. Regardless of if we are running their SEO, we ensure there is a link between our client’s content and our marketing efforts. Using advanced tools and a laser-sharp SEO team, we monitor algorithm changes, optimise for authority, and continuously update strategies. This keeps our clients confidently ahead of the pack.

RBH strategy 2026 – maturity over hype

There’s no shortcut to real success with AI. At RBH, we don’t make bold promises we can’t keep. Instead, we guide clients with clarity, proven process, and thoroughly tested tools. We focus on learning, constant improvement, and protecting outcomes with hands-on management.

Trusted partnerships and strategic patience

Our strength is in our alliances. Strong partnerships with leaders like Google and Adobe mean early insight and robust, creative solutions for clients. As Google Partners and Adobe specialists, we’re selective – waiting for tools to reach maturity before full adoption, just as the savvy consumer holds out for a perfected product rather than the first flashy arrival. This approach keeps our solutions robust, effective, and tailored to client goals.

Human insight – still at the core

Even as technology accelerates, people remain essential. Expertise, intuition, and timing – knowing when to trust the tech or step in – ensure the best results and smart risk management.

The maturity curve of AI

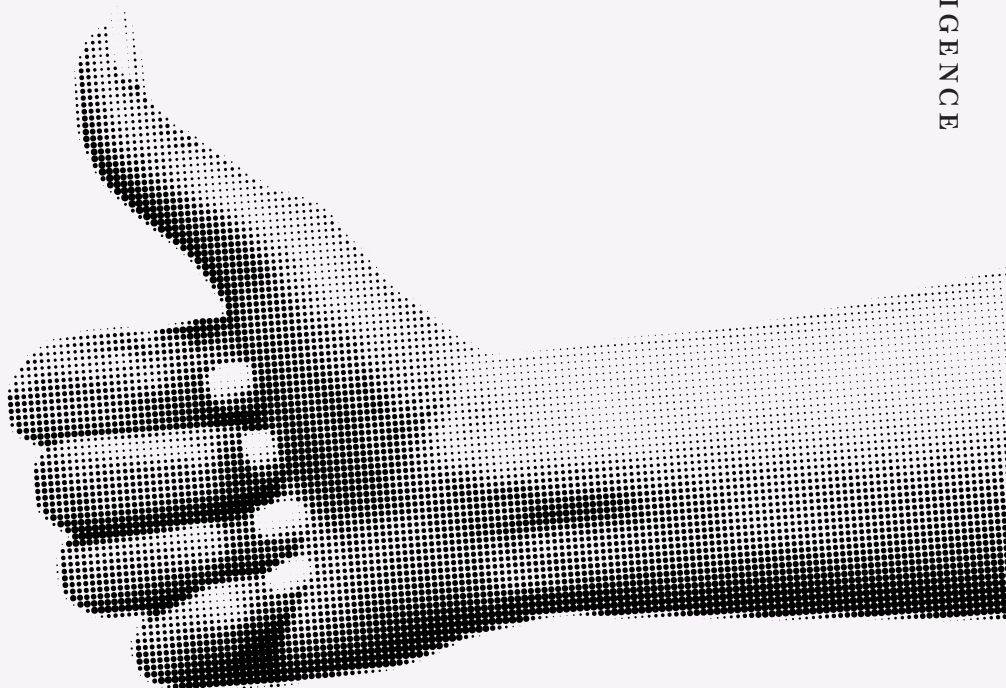
AI is developing fast. Its journey moves from early pilots to wider optimisation, and finally to strategic integration. Here’s how it unfolds:

Maturity stage	What’s happening	Human role	RBH’s focus
2024-2025 (Early)	GenAI, automation pilots	Constant oversight	Risk, compliance, validation
2026-2027 (Growing)	Optimisation, AI agent testing	Strategic interventions	Auditing, ROI
2028+ (Advanced)	Multi-channel autonomy	Policy guidance	Strategy, disruption watch

Ready for 2026

- AI is an enabler, not a strategy. Optimise consistently, track ROI, and stay focused on your core objectives while leaving room for creative play.
- Risk management and compliance are must-haves. Coming regulation is a strategic opportunity – use it to get ahead.
- SEO and search are evolving fast. In this new era, authority and vigilance reign, with PPC safeguarding your high-intent prospects.
- Test, measure, refine. Blending new tech with disciplined process is the winning formula.

The AI revolution isn't slowing down. Real value comes from clarity, discipline, and a relentless drive for ROI. At RBH, every step is engineered for standout, creative-first work that lasts.



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

References

Reference sources are available and fully cited within the original materials. For further detail or attribution, please request documentation.

If you want to turn these insights into
a powerful creative-first solution
for your brand, then get in touch at
hello@rbh.co.uk