

Deloitte on AI Agents, Data Strategy and What Comes Next: Inside the 2026 Modern Marketing Data Stack



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Each year, the Modern Marketing Data Stack report captures a snapshot of where marketers are heading — and what’s changing in the technology landscape. The 2026 edition shows an industry in motion: AI is advancing from helpful assistant to operational engine, data architectures are being reimagined for scale, and organizations are wrestling with how to modernize without adding complexity or risk.

For some additional perspective, we spoke with Deloitte, a Snowflake partner helping enterprises adopt modern marketing architectures and responsible AI. Their insights reflect what many teams are feeling: This is a moment of both acceleration and recalibration.

AI agents are reshaping expectations for martech and adtech

Asked to identify the single development that most reshaped the landscape in 2025, Deloitte didn’t hesitate: the rise of agentic AI.

“It’s no surprise, but AI, and specifically the agentic nature of AI, has created ripple waves in the industry,” says David Chan, Head of Customer Data and AI at Deloitte Digital. Agentic AI is pushing organizations to rethink long-standing martech and adtech design principles in a world where tasks can be automated end to end. It’s also challenging agencies to deliver greater efficiency in an AI-powered environment.

The report reflects this shift with a new, dedicated category for LLMs — positioned directly alongside the marketing data and AI foundation and increasingly embedded across activation, analytics and customer experience tools. While fully autonomous marketing agents remain on the horizon, the trajectory is clear: AI is expanding from decision support to decision execution.

Deloitte’s view underscores why marketers must be intentional in how they adopt AI. Not all experimentation delivers value, and moving too quickly without alignment can expose teams to risk.

AI strategy isn't optional — and neither is choosing a stance

One of the most common questions emerging this year is: Should organizations proactively seek new AI technologies or wait for vendors in their stack to embed capabilities?

Chan frames it as a cultural decision as much as a technical one. "Often this is dictated by your company culture and philosophical approach to emerging trends. Regardless, every organization needs to start documenting an AI strategy that at a bare minimum outlines what is permissible, to avoid putting themselves at risk due to directional ambiguity."

This perspective echoes a core 2026 report finding: Enterprises are increasingly blending what they buy with what they build. AI success now hinges on operating models, governance and shared understanding just as much as on the technology itself.

Data quality emerges as the true performance multiplier

If AI is accelerating marketers' ambitions, data quality is determining how far those ambitions can go. When asked whether marketers should prioritize data quality or "data in action," Chan is unequivocal.

"If I had to choose one, I'd choose data quality. Because as they say, you reap what you sow. . . . In the end, focusing only on action is the equivalent of playing cards with a partial deck."

The Modern Marketing Data Stack report backs this up with a noticeable shift toward warehouse-native architectures, zero-copy integrations and unified identity. As brands consolidate their data foundation — and increasingly bring applications and AI to that data — quality becomes the multiplier for every downstream capability, from personalization and attribution to automation.

Looking ahead

The 2026 report shows a marketing ecosystem that is both expanding and converging: expanding in the sense that AI is unlocking entirely new workflows, and converging in how organizations unify their data, identity and AI foundations.

Deloitte's advice cuts through the noise:

- Treat AI adoption as both a technology and culture shift.
- Establish clear AI governance early.
- Invest in data quality before layering on advanced activation.

These principles won't just help organizations modernize their stack — they'll help them build marketing systems that are adaptable, trustworthy and ready for the next wave of change.

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