

Is AI making or breaking your brand?

A survey by Crop - branding for the AI era

Ten findings from UK founders and marketing leaders on how AI is used in their marketing, and who is checking it stays on brand.

79%

say AI-assisted marketing goes out without
a senior person signing it off every time.

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Who is checking that marketing at the speed of AI is still on brand?

What does it mean to define, deliver and defend a brand in the AI era? Brands are hard to build and easy to kill. What tools and processes do founders and CEOs need to balance the pros and cons? How can we be sure activity isn't being confused with progress: that AI is building brand muscle, not fuelling a sugar rush? Six findings that get us closer to an answer:

94%

use AI in their marketing. 58% use it every day.

82%

say AI has made their marketing more productive. Only 47% say more creative.

79%

say AI-assisted marketing goes out without a senior person signing it off every time.

48%

have had AI-assisted content go off brand. 38% actually published it.

9 of 11

founders say nothing has gone wrong. 9 of 10 marketing heads say it has.

69%

worry about sounding like everyone else. Getting something wrong in public is fifth.

Crop is the branding agency for the AI era.

We define brands, deliver everything they need, and defend them: your guidelines built into the tools, and checks that run at the speed of AI.

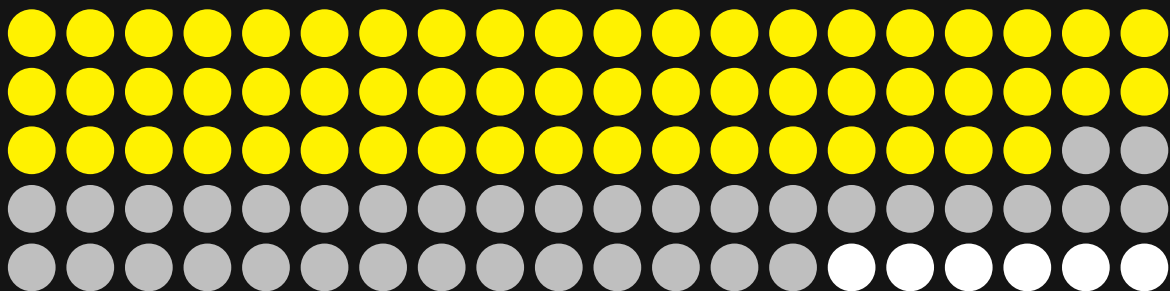
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AI in marketing is here in a big way.

94%

use AI in their marketing.
58% use it every day.

Is AI used in your marketing? One dot per percentage point.



● Yes, every day 58% ● Yes, sometimes 36%
● Not officially, but I'd bet it is 6% ● No 0%

WHAT WE MAKE OF IT

The debate about whether to use AI in marketing is over. Not one person said no. The debate about how, and who is checking, is only just starting.

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AI and marketing. Faster, yes. But better?

82%

say AI has made their
marketing more productive.
Only 47% say more creative.

Agree or disagree?

AI has made our marketing more productive



12% disagree

82% agree

AI has made our marketing more creative



41% disagree

47% agree

● Disagree ● Strongly disagree ● Agree ● Strongly agree
The rest said don't know.

WHAT WE MAKE OF IT

*Four in ten say AI has not made their marketing more creative.
Productivity is the easy win. Sameness is the bill that arrives later.*

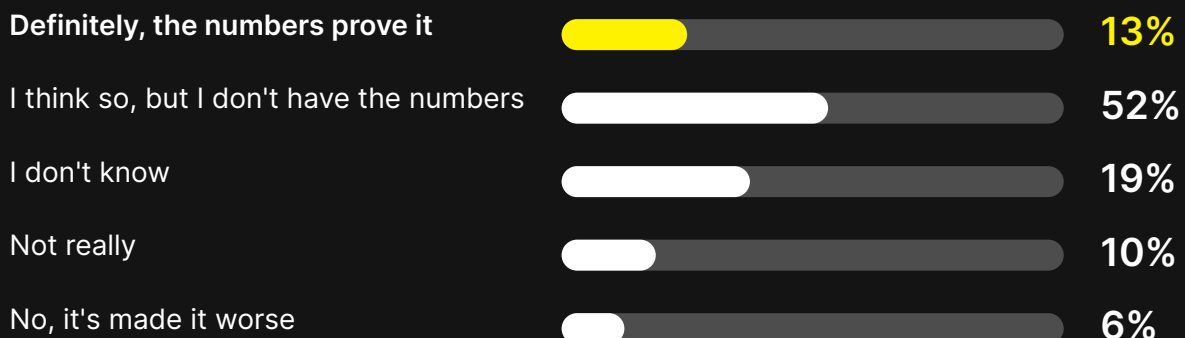
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Seven in ten can't show AI is working.

13%

can prove AI has made their marketing more effective. 52% think so but have no numbers.

Has AI made your marketing more effective?



WHAT WE MAKE OF IT

More output is not the same as more results. Most people are running on a feeling, and the feeling is good. The numbers are not in the room.

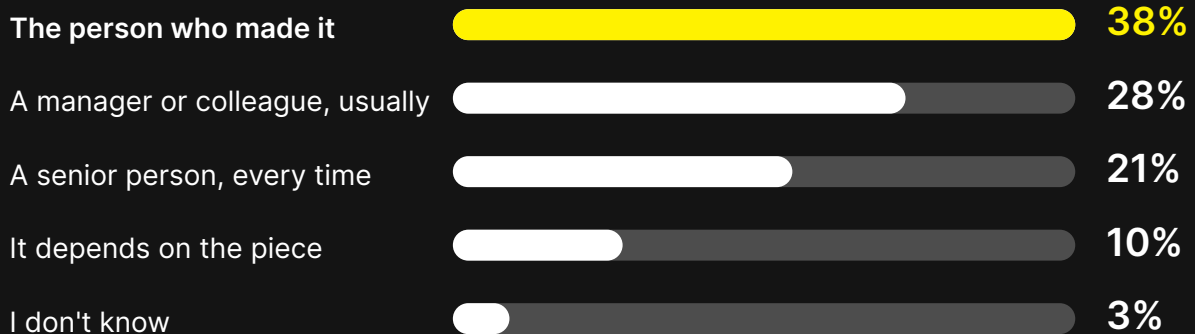
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AI users are marking their own homework.

79%

say AI-assisted marketing goes out without a senior person signing it off every time.

Who signs off AI-assisted content before it goes out?



WHAT WE MAKE OF IT

For 38%, the only check on AI-assisted content is the person who prompted it. Output has scaled. Checking has not.

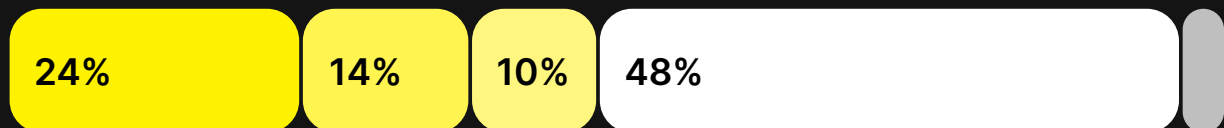
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Off-brand AI is commonplace.

48%

have had AI-assisted content go off brand.
38% actually published it.

Has anything AI-assisted gone out off brand, or nearly?



Something went out off brand, or nearly 48%

- Yes, more than once 24%
- Yes, and it was published 14%
- Yes, but we caught it 10%
- Not that I know of 48%
- We'd have no way of knowing 3%

WHAT WE MAKE OF IT

This is not a hypothetical risk. A quarter have published something off brand more than once. The tools arrived faster than the process.

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All my clients use AI. They didn't write their website; they got AI to do it. We spend hours rewriting whatever we are sent so that it eventually passes the AI-detection test. Because they saved themselves 30 minutes.

Agency owner, 2 to 10 people, answering the survey

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Are founders hearing about the AI brand errors?

9 of 11

founders say nothing has gone wrong. 9 of 10 marketing heads say it has.

Has anything AI-assisted gone out off brand?

Founders and CEOs

11 people

2

9

Heads of marketing

10 people

9

1

☒ Yes, something went out off brand

☐ No way of knowing

WHAT WE MAKE OF IT

Same companies, same AI, different view from the top. Founders are five times as likely as their marketing heads to be completely confident last month was on brand.

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Confident it's on brand? Half have already been burned.

72%

are confident everything published under their brand last month was on brand

48%

have had AI-assisted content go out off brand, or nearly

Same 29 people. Only 21% have a senior person sign off every time.

WHAT WE MAKE OF IT

Most are confident. Half have already been burned.

Only one in five has a senior sign-off every time.

The confidence is not coming from the process.

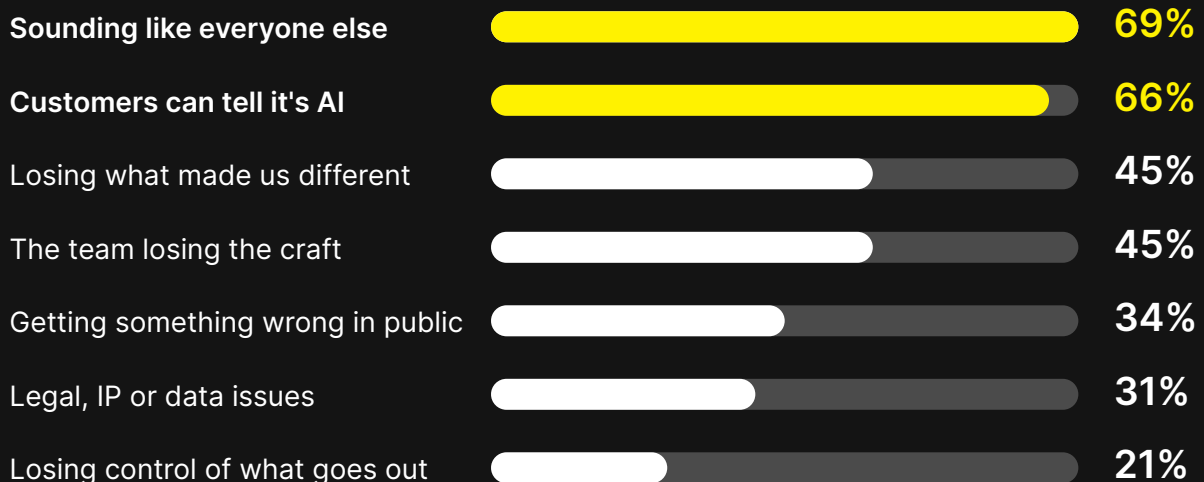
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The fear isn't scandal. It's sameness.

69%

worry about sounding like everyone else. Getting something wrong in public is fifth.

What worries you about AI and your brand? (pick all that apply)



WHAT WE MAKE OF IT

Leaders are less afraid of a public mistake than of quietly becoming indistinguishable. Anyone can copy features. Nobody can copy how a brand makes people feel.

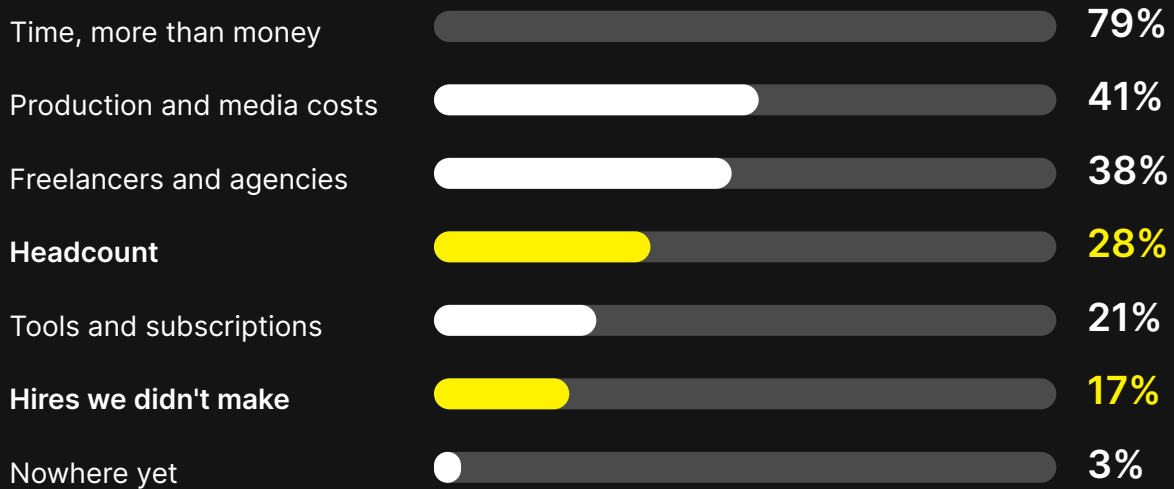
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The savings are real. Some of them are people.

38%

say AI has saved on headcount or hires they didn't make. 79% say it has saved time more than money.

Where has AI saved you money so far? (pick all that apply)



WHAT WE MAKE OF IT

Most of the saving is time. But more than one in three say AI has already replaced a role or a hire, and as many again have cut agency and freelance spend.

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Twice as many fear going too slow as too fast.

31%

say the bigger risk is moving too slowly with AI. 17% say moving too fast without checks. 48% say both.

Which is the bigger risk to your brand right now?

31%

48%

17%

- Moving too slowly with AI 31%
- Both, equally 48%
- Moving too fast without checks 17%
- Don't know 3%

WHAT WE MAKE OF IT

Nobody wants to slow down, and they shouldn't have to. The answer is checks that run at the same speed as the tools.

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Half have no guardrails at all.

Four of the questions score each respondent's guardrails: who signs off, whether anything has gone wrong, whether the brand guidelines reach the tools, and how confident they are. Out of the 27 who completed the survey:



52%

No guardrails

Checks happen, if at all, when someone remembers. Guidelines have never met the tools.

37%

Some guardrails

Someone is looking. By hand, when there is time, which is not every time.

11%

Guardrails in place

Guidelines loaded, sign-off in place, and you can say so with a straight face.

WHAT WE MAKE OF IT

This is where most brands are right now, and it is not a criticism. The tools arrived faster than the process did. But a brand is a promise kept every time, and at the speed of AI, every time is a lot of times.

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Tell us about a time AI content went wrong. Or right.

Anonymous answers, lightly edited for length. Roles and company sizes as given.

*Logo replication in an AI-designed image was awful.
We now no longer use AI for design purposes.*

Marketing director, 250+ people

*Only ever use it as a first pass, to break procrastination
or writer's block, and then a final sanity check. The first
pass is nowhere near the end result in terms of tone, brand
message and differentiation, which is why I don't let it run
anything autonomously.*

Founder, 2 to 10 people

Off message. Obvious AI.

Director, 11 to 50 people

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Nobody wants to slow down. So the checks have to run at the same speed.

- 01** Decide who signs off. A named senior pair of eyes, not the person who prompted it.
- 02** Put the guidelines where the tools can read them. Prompts, custom instructions, templates.
- 03** Check last month, cold. Ten recent pieces against your guidelines. One hour.

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We define brands, deliver everything they need, and defend them at the speed of AI. hello@wearecrop.co.uk

Please share this. The survey is still open at wearecrop.co.uk/ai-brand-survey

36 UK founders and marketing leaders took part between late September and early October 2026; 27 completed every question. Percentages are of those who answered each question. Respondents came from Crop's own network, so this is a snapshot of a marketing-literate crowd, not a representative sample. The survey is still open and the findings will be updated as the numbers grow. Quotes are anonymous and lightly edited for length.