



LEADING OR LAGGING?

Law firms and tech-powered growth.

By James Fielding and Ben Scott

From lead scoring to predictive forecasting – sales and marketing is being transformed thanks to a proliferation of API integrations, artificial intelligence (AI), and cloud-based software options. Businesses of all shapes are exploiting technology to enable transformation and revenue growth.

In this new era of tech-powered sales and marketing – where do firms find themselves? What technology is being used? What challenges are being faced? And what impact is technology having on sales and marketing maturity?

To find out, we surveyed senior leaders from 37 large (500+ employee) law firms* – with representation from big law, industry disrupters, and leading mid-tier firms.

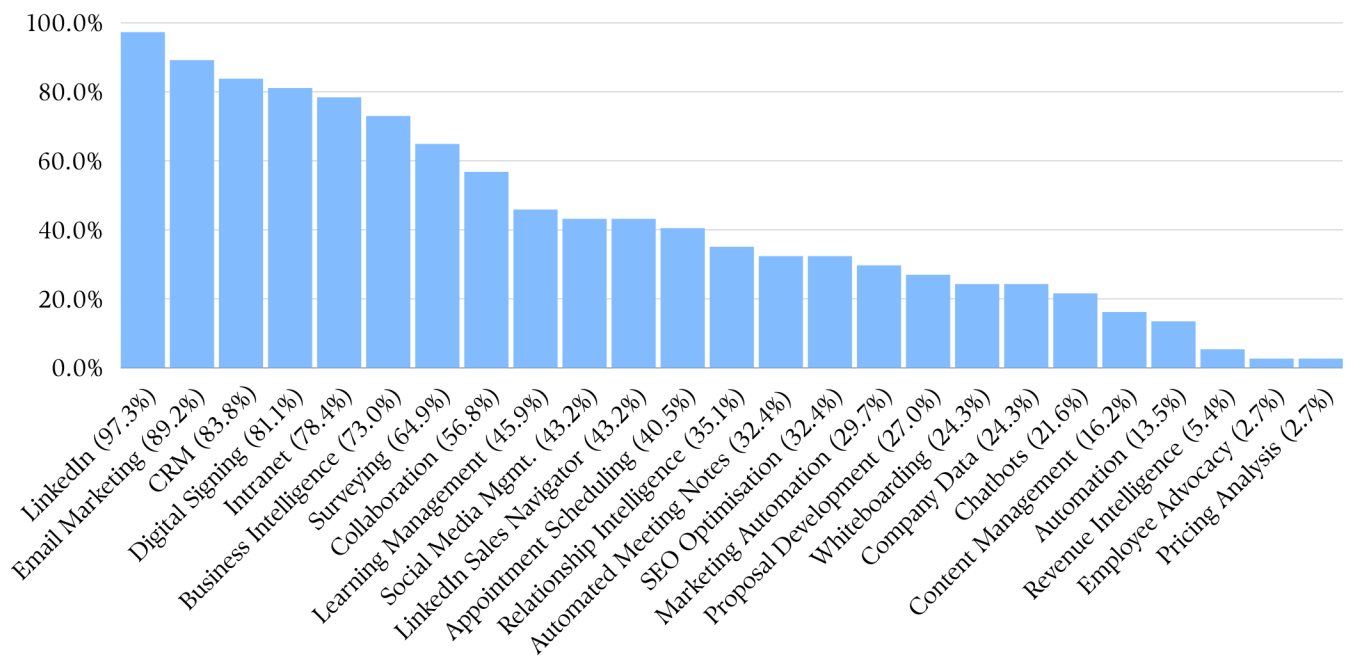
Here are the findings.

** Survey of law firms is a subset of a survey of 56 professional services firms conducted by Ummbrella: The Growth Agency and ICON APAC.*



TECHNOLOGY ‘STACKS’ AND USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI).

% of firms using the technology:



From chatbots to relationship intelligence tools – there’s plenty of technological firepower at firms’ disposal. There are no luddites.

From an integrated ‘stack’ perspective however – the picture is not so rosy.

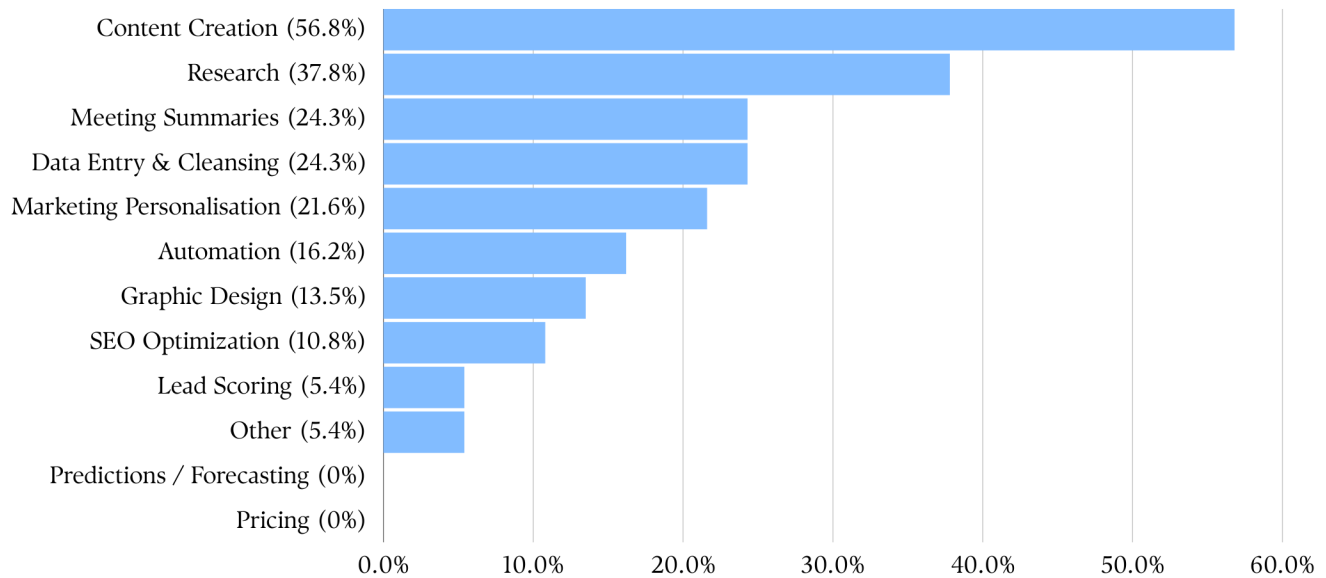
These technology ‘stacks’ are unbalanced and incomplete. 45.9% of firms are missing at least one foundational technology (i.e. CRM, intranet, email marketing, and business intelligence) and all firms have ‘technology gaps’ across pricing, automation, social selling, and more.

In broader research of professional services – firms from other industries (i.e. accounting, engineering, and consulting) averaged 3 more sales and marketing technologies than law firms.

“MANY FIRMS HAVE INVESTED IN A CRM OR PRACTICE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM, BUT ARE MISSING MARKETING AUTOMATION. WITHOUT MARKETING AUTOMATION, FIRMS LACK THE FOUNDATIONAL TECHNOLOGY ON THE MARKETING SIDE FROM WHICH TO SCALE AND LAYER OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCIES. A CRM AND MARKETING AUTOMATION ARE THE HANDSHAKE BETWEEN SALES AND MARKETING.”

Ben Scott, Grant Thornton

% of firms using AI for use cases:



72.9% of law firms are using AI for sales and marketing.

This use is centered around content creation and research using large language models (e.g. ChatGPT), along with off-the-shelf solutions for meeting summaries, data entry and cleansing, and graphic design.

No firms are currently using AI for pricing or predictions / forecasting, while other use cases (e.g. SEO optimisation) have low-level take-up.

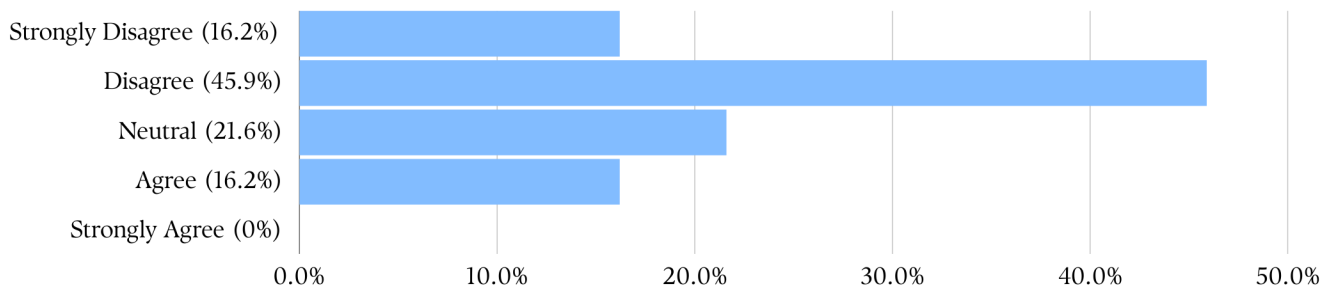
Use of AI for sales and marketing is narrow. But the opportunity is wide.

There's an opportunity for firms to combine a wealth of client data (e.g. billing, services used, pipeline, online engagement, opportunity sources, etc.) with demographics and firmographics for valuable AI-enabled insights. The technology foundations are there for predictions (e.g. client churn), revenue forecasting, pricing intelligence, recommended next best action, and so on.

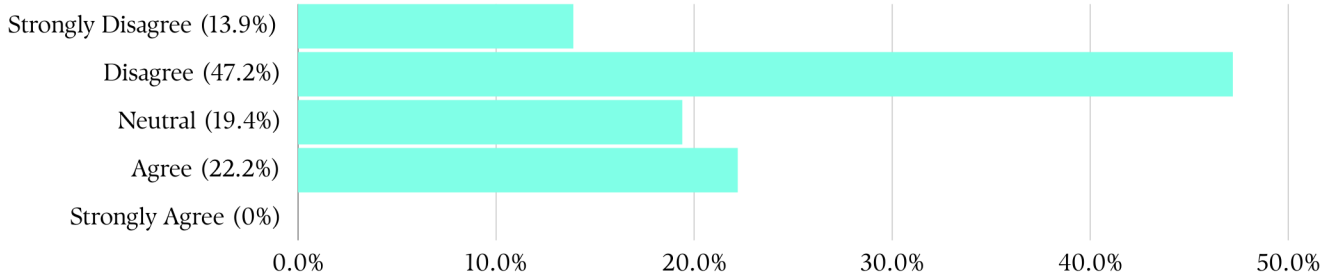
“THERE'S A GENERAL LACK OF AWARENESS AND AMBITION FOR A ROBUST TECHNOLOGY STRATEGY TO DELIVER THE GROWTH FIRMS SAY THEY WANT. THE FIRMS REAPING THE BENEFITS ARE THOSE DOUBLING DOWN ON DATA, BETTER UTILISING THEIR EXISTING TECH, AND INVESTING IN THE ESSENTIALS. THESE FIRMS ARE ALSO IMPLEMENTING LOW COST AND LOW FRICTION TECH TO DELIVER QUICK WINS.”

TECHNOLOGY 'STACK' SATISFACTION AND ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGY.

I'm satisfied with my firm's sales and marketing tech:



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There's a disconnect between the sales and marketing technology available within firms and what sales and marketing leaders believe they need.

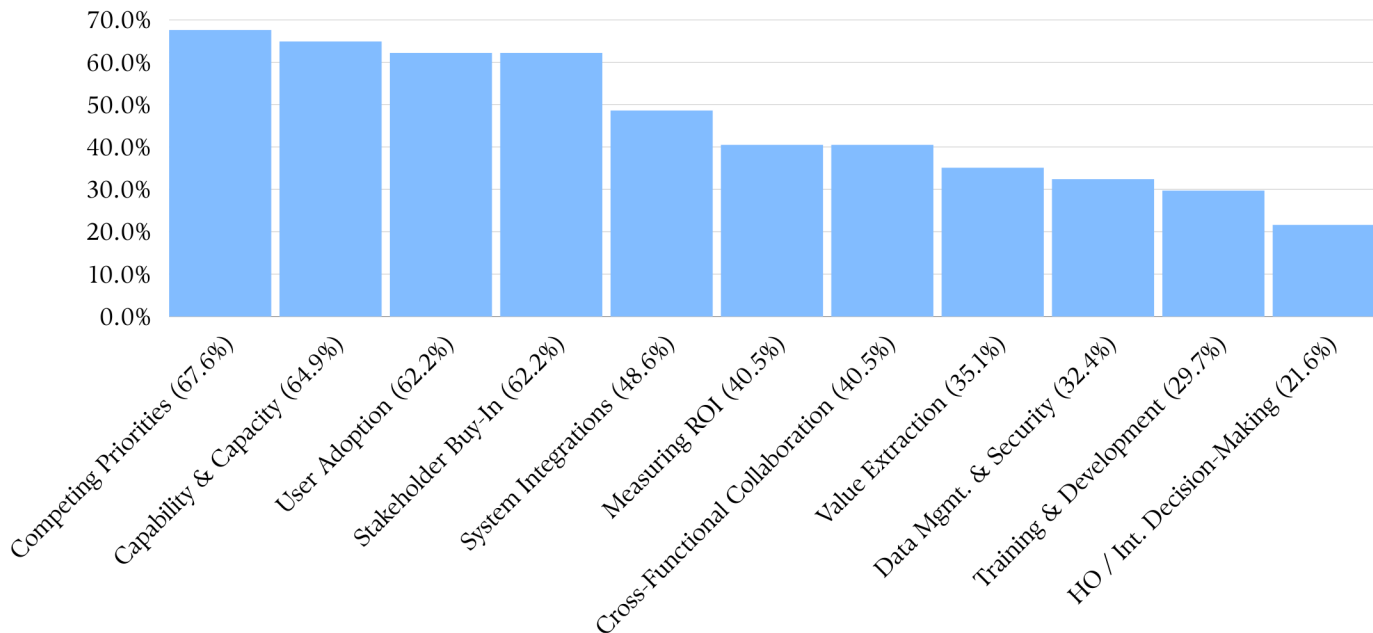
Just 16.2% of sales and marketing leaders are 'satisfied' with their firm's technology stack. And only 22.2% believe their 'stack' is appropriate to support their firm's strategy.

These numbers are bleak.

For context, in broader research of professional services firms – 44.5% of sales and marketing leaders from outside law are 'satisfied' with their firm's technology stack. 57.9% believe their 'stack' is appropriate to support their firm's strategy.

CHALLENGES TO DELIVERING TECH-POWERED GROWTH.

% of firms facing challenges:



From competing priorities to value extraction – there’s a myriad of challenges getting in the way of firms delivering tech-powered growth.

These widespread challenges are chiefly ‘people’ related – with capability, capacity, and stakeholder understanding and buy-in widespread barriers.

A challenge for 62.2% of firms – ‘user adoption’ can be seen as both a driver and symptom of other challenges. With user adoption challenges firms are unable to extract value. This lack of value then impacts stakeholder buy-in for program prioritisation and investment in training, system integration, and so on.

“SALES AND MARKETING TECHNOLOGY PROJECTS ARE REALLY TRANSFORMATION PROJECTS AND ARE ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO DO IF YOU’RE JUGGLING BAU WORK OR FIRM LEADERS ARE NOT PASSIONATELY COMMITTED TO CHANGE.”

James Fielding, Ummrella: The Growth Agency

Added complication of international decision making:

Of the 54.1% of firms labelled as 'global' or 'multinational' - 30% of respondents nominated 'Head office / international decision-making' as a challenge to delivering tech-powered growth.

Training and development:

In a typical firm multiple functions are delivering training on sales and marketing technology, with this training primarily provided by marketing and business development teams (78.4%) and external providers (56.8%).

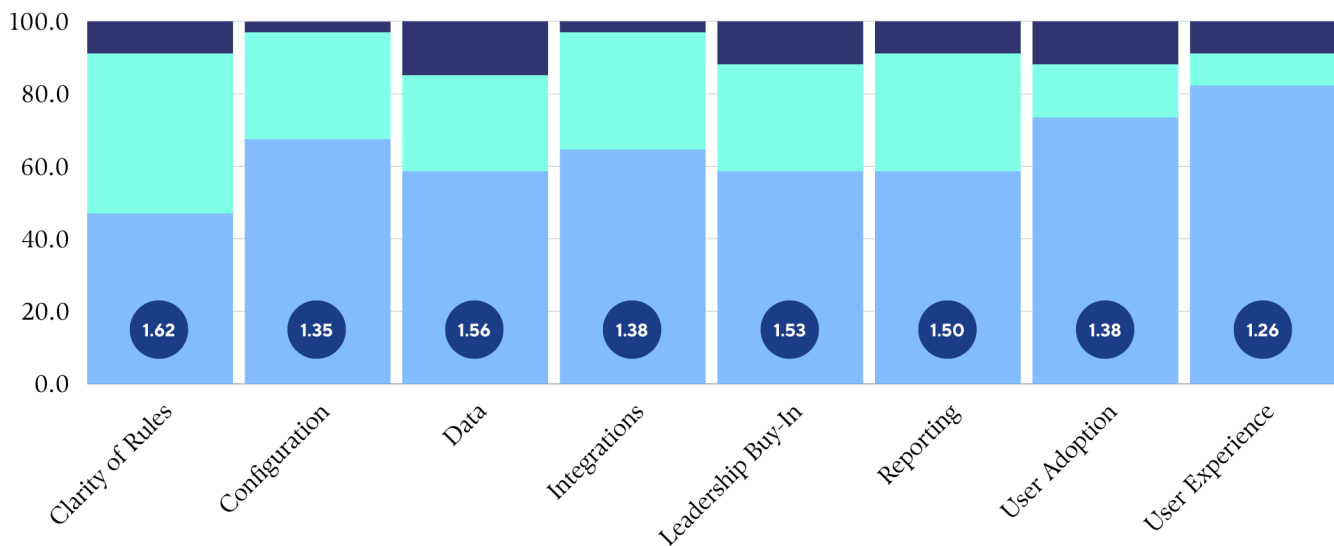
There's little difference between who is providing training between the 29.7% of firms who nominated training and development as a challenge and those that didn't.

“THE TYPICAL CHALLENGE OF USER ADOPTION IS MAGNIFIED IN PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AS YOU'RE OFTEN SEEKING OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCIES WITH THE NEW TECHNOLOGY. TO DRIVE CHANGE YOU NEED TO INVEST IN TRAINING, NOT ONLY FOR IMPLEMENTATION BUT IN ANNUAL TRAINING BUDGETS, WHILE ALSO LOOKING TO BUILD OR ATTRACT SPECIALIST TALENT THAT CAN UPLIFT TECHNICAL CAPABILITY.”

Ben Scott, Grant Thornton Australia

CRM USE AND OPERATIONAL MATURITY.

83.8% of firms surveyed use a CRM system. This use is dominated by the big 3 systems of InterAction, Salesforce, and Microsoft Dynamics.



In the eyes of sales and marketing leaders – there’s room for improving operational maturity – especially in the areas of user experience, user adoption, system configuration, reporting, and integrations. Across all areas of CRM operations, the self-assessed level of maturity sits between ‘developing’ and ‘proficient’.

In broader research of professional service firms – CRM operational maturity scores were higher for Salesforce (1.93) and ‘Other’ (1.78) versus Interaction (1.23) and Dynamics (1.31). These scores are built on attaching scores to maturity levels (i.e. Developing = 1; Proficient = 2; and Advanced = 3) and calculating an average.

“INTERACTION HAS BEEN LOSING MARKET SHARE, MAINLY TO SALESFORCE AND MICROSOFT DYNAMICS, OR INDUSTRY SPECIFIC VERSIONS OF THESE. THE JURY IS STILL OUT ON WHETHER INTERACTION+ WILL STOP THIS MARKET SHIFT. AND WITH NEW NICHE CRM ENTRANTS PUSHING HARD INTO LEGAL, IT’S GOING TO BE INTERESTING TO SEE WHAT THE LANDSCAPE LOOKS LIKE IN A FEW YEARS FROM NOW.”

Al Mercer, Introhive.

SALES AND MARKETING MATURITY.

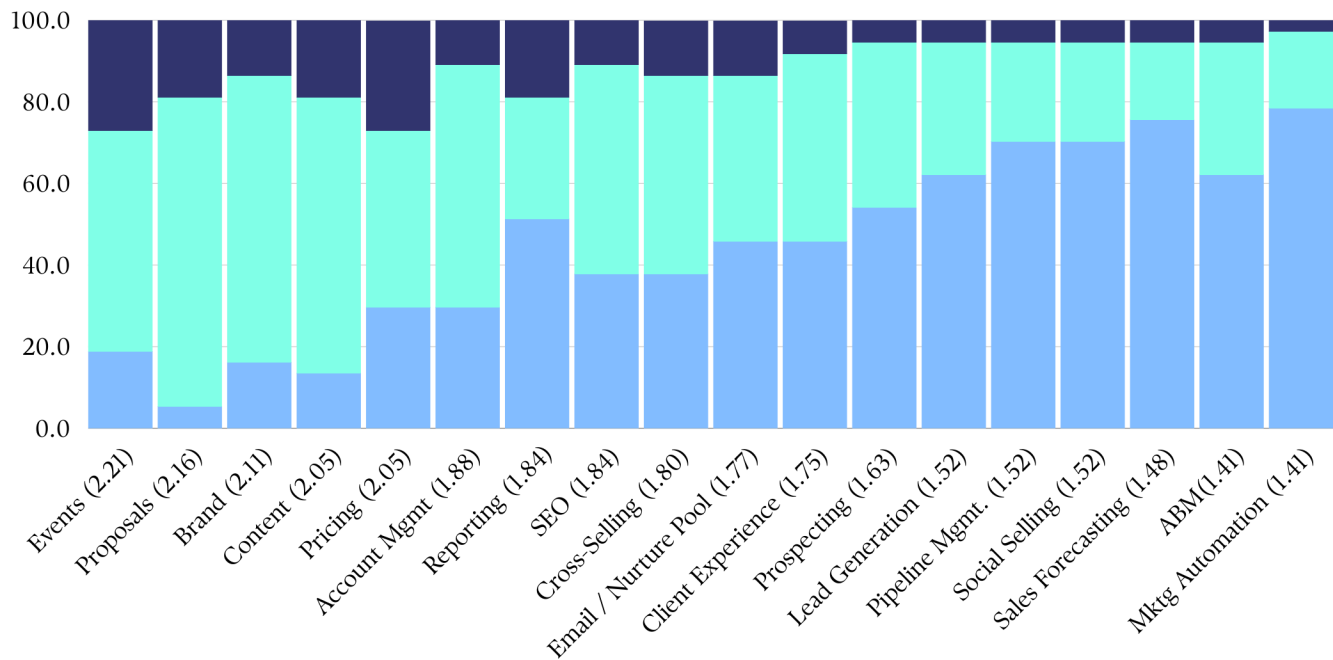
Self-assessed operational maturity:

Developing

Proficient

Advanced

Maturity scores are built on attaching scores to maturity levels (i.e. Developing = 1; Proficient = 2; and Advanced = 3) and calculating an average.



As a collective – firm sales and marketing leaders see themselves as operationally ‘proficient’ to ‘advanced’ in traditional marketing activities, such as events, proposals, brand, and content development. This maturity drops in sales-focused areas of marketing, including account-based marketing (ABM) and marketing automation.

Operational maturity sits between ‘developing’ to ‘proficient’ in sales-focused activities, such as prospecting, lead generation, pipeline management, social selling, and sales forecasting. This is not surprising, given these sales activities have not traditionally been undertaken within law firms or have been the exclusive domain of Partners.

In broader research of professional services firms - law firms lag in operational maturity across reporting (-33.9%), sales forecasting (-41.5%), pipeline management (-36.3%), and social selling (-36.3%).

SUMMARY.

The survey numbers tell a story of opportunity and challenge.

As a collective – law firms have unbalanced and underutilised technology ‘stacks’, people-centered barriers to change, and low levels of technology satisfaction and strategy alignment. These technology challenges are both a cause and symptom of operational immaturity across areas of sales and marketing.

It’s not unfair to say that law firms are lagging in tech-powered growth. Most firms are failing to exploit technology to enable transformation and performance uplift.

But with challenge comes opportunity.

For law firms that get this right – there’s an opportunity to gain significant competitive advantage through data-driven decision-making, hyper-efficient and effective sales activity, intelligent client management, and more.

There are big dollars on the table.

James Fielding
Founder & Partner, Umbrella:
The Growth Agency

James has won multiple awards for technology-enabled selling and was recognised as ‘One to Watch in Sales Enablement’ globally in 2023.

He’s known for growth strategy, sales transformation, and capability building. In 2024 he developed and launched Symbiotic Selling™ - a ground-breaking sales methodology for experts and advisers.

Ben Scott
Head of Digital Marketing &
Communications, Grant
Thornton

Ben Scott is a ‘Marketo Fearless 50’ alumni – which recognises the top 50 marketers in the world driving digital transformation.

Along with James Fielding (co-developer of the Tech-Powered Growth in Professional Services Survey) he’s built a multiple award-winning sales and marketing technology stack and is a recognised authority on marketing automation and attribution.

