
Strategy got cheap
in 2026.

Hands-on is where
the money moved.

CMI 2026 CAREER OUTLOOK · 644 MARKETERS SURVEYED

76%

of marketers say they're doing the work of more than one job. **91%** say they're being asked to do more without additional support.

Source: Content Marketing Institute, 2026

THREE FORCES STACKED AT ONCE

It wasn't AI alone.

01 AI made strategy abundant

A junior marketer with Claude can produce a credible GTM strategy in an afternoon. The artifacts that proved seniority are now generated.

02 Org charts went pyramid → rectangle

Mid-level execution layer disappeared. Every senior role now expected to translate strategy AND ship work themselves.

03 CFOs demanded more output per FTE

If AI makes us productive, the headcount line must go down. That math only works if seniors can actually ship.

QUOTED IN MARKETING WEEK · JAN 2026

"Now they're realising they need people who can *strategise AND execute.*"

"Roman is starting to see an uplift in head of marketing job titles at startups — often for a team of below three — who can strategise and execute rather than hiring two separate people."

Charlie Rawstron, 3Search · Marketing Week, January 2026

"HANDS-ON" IN 2026 ≠ "HANDS-ON" IN 2018

It's not about "willing to help."

Builds the workflow themselves

Opens n8n / Make / HubSpot. Architects multi-step automation. Tests failure modes. Ships.

Writes the agent prompt themselves

System prompt, few-shot examples, structured output. Tests across edge cases. Documents.

Ships the campaign solo if needed

Email. Landing page. List. Tracking. Send schedule. Report on Monday.

Debugs the stack themselves

When the integration silently fails — they're the first to dig in. Often before anyone notices.

5 SIGNALS OF A TRUE OPERATOR

What separates signal from talk.

- 01 Self-taught a new tool in the last 6 months
- 02 Has a portfolio link, not just a CV
- 03 Can describe a workflow they architected end-to-end
- 04 Uses AI as a collaborator, not a delegation channel
- 05 Has shipped solo work in the last quarter

"Beware of any resume optimized for the word 'strategy.'"

"People who play up their strategic chops are typically the ones trying to appear more senior than they are."

Rand Fishkin
Co-founder, SparkToro · Former CEO, Moz

AUDIT YOUR LINKEDIN VERBS

Same accomplishment. Different signal.

STRATEGY TALKER

Led

Drove

Oversaw

Managed

Owned

Directed

HANDS-ON OPERATOR

Built

Shipped

Wrote

Configured

Architected

Launched

WHICH ONE DOES YOUR LINKEDIN SIGNAL?

Which one are you, really?

STRATEGY TALKER All framework, no shipped work. At risk in 2026.

HYBRID IN TRAINING Capability there. Portfolio missing. Easy fix.

HANDS-ON OPERATOR What 2026 pays a 20–30% premium for.

SOLO OPERATOR Powerful. Make sure it's not a leadership ceiling.

10 QUESTIONS · 3 MINUTES · NO EMAIL GATE

The **Hands-On** Marketer Self-Check

- Identifies your archetype across 3 dimensions

- 3 specific things to fix in the next 30 days

- Full article: why strategy got cheap and what to do
