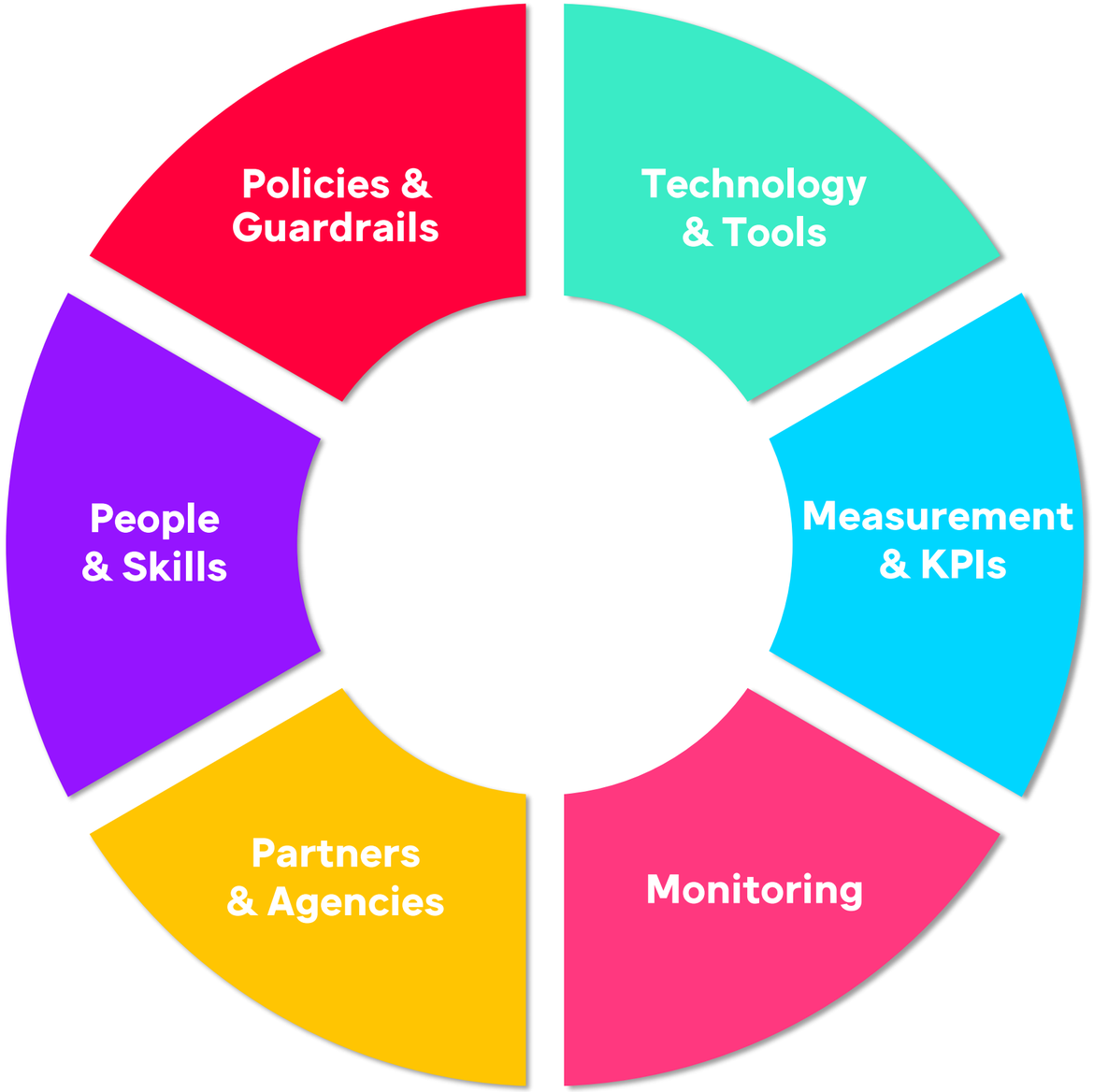
AI Acceleration Playbook

Supporting brands in building the foundations for effective, efficient and responsible AI in marketing



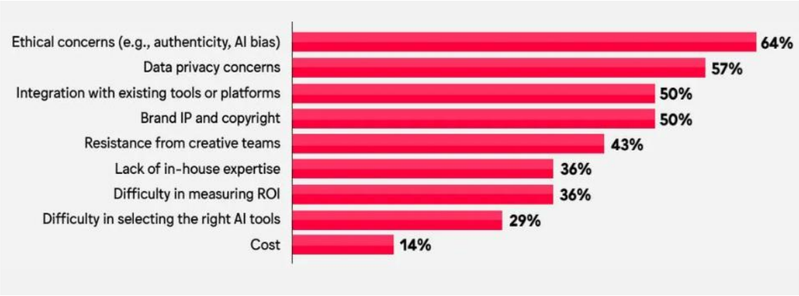
December 2025

Executive Summary

Latest WFA research reveals that 100% of brands are now using Generative and Agentic AI in marketing, yet 80% remain in the early adoption phases; still piloting a select number of use cases, testing or exploring AI's potential. And despite rapid experimentation and rising investment, a 2025 MIT *State of AI Adoption* report found that 95% of enterprise AI pilots, including those in marketing, have failed to deliver measurable business value or cost savings.

This gap between experimentation and impact reflects the real complexity facing global marketing leaders as they seek to balance innovation with organizational readiness, risk management and the practical challenges of scaling AI responsibly.

What are the biggest challenges you face when integrating Gen AI?



Source: WFA report on In-Housing AI (November 2025)

Prepared by WFA, leveraging the collective expertise of its global network of brands, this ***AI Acceleration Playbook*** is designed to support marketers as they seek to lay the foundations for effective, efficient and responsible AI adoption.

It provides a clear, practical checklist for consideration built around six pillars:

1. **Policies and guardrails:** to support with establishing the right internal rules, review processes and governance
2. **People and skills:** to equip teams with the knowledge and confidence to use AI responsibly.
3. **Partners and agencies:** to help ensure external partners meet required AI standards through transparency, contracts and oversight.
4. **Technology & Tools:** to support brands as they seek to vet and manage AI solutions to meet compliance expectations and oversight
5. **Measurement and KPIs:** to support brands identify the metrics that can help to track performance and inform decision-making.
6. **Monitoring:** auditing practices, identifying new risks and ensuring continuous improvement.

By considering this framework, marketers can move beyond early experimentation towards scaled, confident AI adoption that unlocks meaningful business value without compromising brand integrity.

WFA will continue to support client-side brands on this journey via its AI Community, which now brings together over 900 marketing, media, procurement, in-house agency, insights, legal and governance professionals from its 150 global brand members.

"While AI has the power to reshape marketing, many brands remain stuck in pilots, constrained by gaps in skills, governance and technology integration that prevent meaningful scale. Developed with the collective experience of the WFA network, this voluntary AI Acceleration Playbook offers a clear, actionable checklist to help marketers adopt AI in ways that drive business value and innovation, without compromising brand integrity. In the long-run this will help them in building responsible, scalable and future-ready AI capabilities."



Stephan Loerke, CEO, WFA



"WFA's acceleration playbook sets a shared standard for responsible and scalable AI adoption. It brings together best practices and safeguards - helping brands move faster, avoid common risks, and unlock value through consistent collaboration across the organization and with external partners."

Deniz Ozer Can, Global Head – Digital & AI Acceleration, Bayer Consumer Health

"What makes this Playbook so valuable is its grounding in lived experience of global brands. It cuts through the noise with a step-by-step guide on how to overcome the real operational and organisational barriers to AI adoption that we are all facing."



Jacqui Stephenson, Responsible & Purpose Marketing Officer, Mars



"The AI marketplace is exploding, but evaluating tools against genuine business needs remains a challenge. Scaling confidently can be tough, not least because it's hard to know whether the tools we invest in today will still be relevant next year. This Playbook helps guide us on the journey to ensuring our AI adoption drives meaningful business value today and in the future."

Colin Kavanagh, CMO North America, Pernod Ricard

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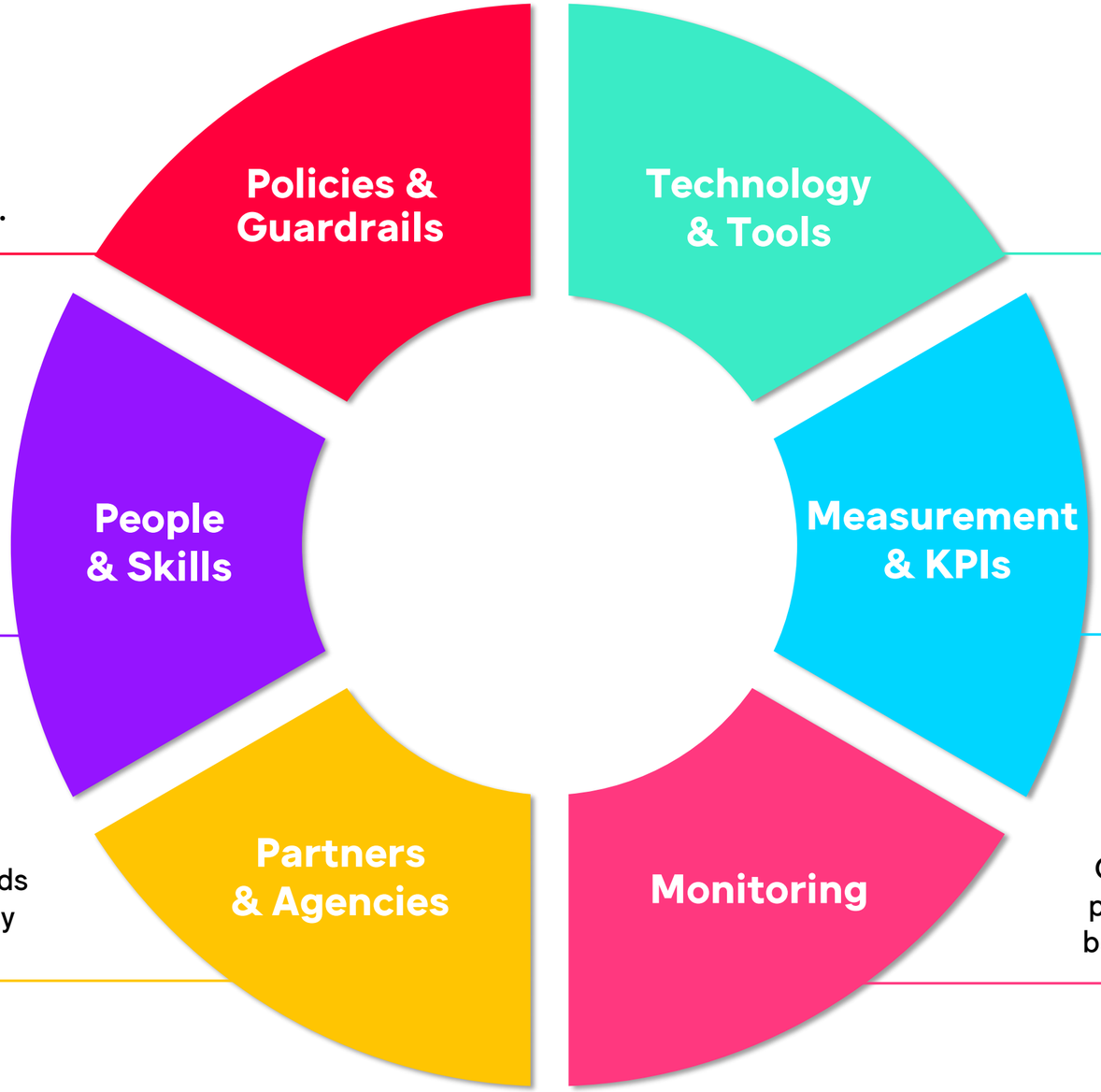

1 Define clear rules and review processes to ensure responsible AI use in marketing.

2 Equip teams with the skills and knowledge needed to feel empowered to use AI effectively and responsibly.

3 Ensure external partners (incl. agencies) meet your AI standards through contracts, transparency and oversight.

Vet and manage AI tools to align with brand values, legal compliance, and technical security needs. 4

Track the performance and business impact of AI initiatives through clear metrics. 5

Continuously monitor and audit practices and adapt governance based on findings and new risks. 6

1 Policies and Guardrails

Consider defining clear rules and review processes to ensure responsible AI use in marketing.

"We're seeing growing tension between marketing and legal teams. Necessary risk management processes are creating complex workflows which are slowing innovation dramatically. We need agile governance that enables, faster, safer, decision-making across teams if we want to unlock growth and sustain a meaningful competitive edge as AI reshapes our industry." **- WFA member**

Adopt responsible AI principles.

These should guide the organisation's use of AI in ways that align with brand values and drive ethical marketing outcome.

WFA has compiled an overview of the most commonly used responsible AI principles, which can be downloaded here.

Define a process for identifying and signing off new AI use cases.

Establish a transparent process to vet, prioritise and approve new AI use cases. As part of this process, creating a registry of AI use cases can be helpful to track initiatives across marketing and capture details such as purpose an objective, which business problem it tries to solve for, intended users, outputs and level of automation required. Develop processes to assess risk of each use case, cross-functional review and clear approval process.

Create clear disclosure guidelines for the use of Gen AI in external-facing creative.

Clearly outlining when content should be labelled as generated with AI and when not. These guidelines are most useful when they align with legal requirements and industry best practice.

Consider an approved list of use cases.

Creating and maintaining an 'approved use case register' may help provide clarity to marketing teams on how AI can and cannot be used. You may want to include descriptions of each use case and specify which tools, platforms or vendors are authorised for which use case. Review and update use case list on a regular basis.

Adopt a practical checklist of do's and don'ts.

This checklist could outline potential guardrails that should be adopted for each use case. E.g., don't publish AI-generated marketing copy or images without human review first, don't input sensitive commercial information into AI tools. Make sure these are accessible for all marketing teams.

Set up an AI Governance Committee.

Look to foster a cross-functional governance committee bringing together marketing, legal, procurement, policy, IT and other key business stakeholders. It may be useful for such a Committee to meet on a regular basis to discuss high-risk use cases, policy and regulatory developments, approve or review AI adoption plans, develop and update internal processes and policies, oversee vendor and partner accountability and evaluate AI performance.

Create clear review processes for AI outputs.

Specify which AI outputs must be reviewed by humans before publication or use, for example for customer-facing content. Define roles and responsibilities outlining who (which teams or individuals) are responsible for reviewing what and build these review steps into workflows. Document and track reviews for the purposes of audits, compliance reporting and learning loops.

2 People and Skills

Equip teams with the skills and knowledge needed to feel empowered to use AI effectively and responsibly.

> "As a principles-based company, we consider the responsible use of AI to be non-negotiable. We can only unlock value if our teams feel prepared and empowered to use them responsibly. That means investing just as much in training, capability-building and ongoing support as we have in technology."
>
> **Jacqui Stephenson**
> Responsible & Purpose Marketing Officer, Mars



Provide targeted trainings.

Look to equip teams with general AI knowledge and role-specific capabilities. This could include foundational AI literacy training responsible AI in marketing training, broader AI risk and governance training and function-specific role-based training. This could be done in house or in partnership with agencies or third-party partners.

Appoint AI Champions or AI Business Stewards.

These champions should act as on-the-ground translators of company AI principles and policies into day-to-day practice. Champions and Stewards should aim to ensure that AI is used consistently and responsibly across different geographies, brands and functions, monitoring adherence to approved use cases, tools and guidelines within their specific teams.

Demonstrate visible senior leadership buy-in and support.

Senior leaders should publicly champion the organisation's approach to AI and foster a culture of responsible AI via existing internal communication channels (town halls, newsletters, etc.). Leaders should be encouraged to attend trainings or pitch sessions and explicitly connect AI to the organisation's overall growth objectives.

Foster an innovation mindset.

Set up an internal AI incubator or innovation lab to allow teams to test AI tools in low-risk, experimental settings and brainstorm new use cases. Run AI 'dragons' den' sessions that encourage teams to pitch new AI use case ideas to reward innovation. Share success stories across the organisation.

Engage in external AI Communities.

Join external organisations, working groups or forums focused on responsible AI to stay informed, shape best practices, contribute to the global conversation on the ethical use of AI in marketing and bring the outside perspective in.

WFA's AI Community brings together senior marketing, legal, policy, procurement, insights and media professionals from over 140 global brands.

3 Partners and Agencies

Ensure external partners (incl. agencies) meet your AI standards through contracts and transparency

"AI will only scale faster once partners and agencies join the journey. Without visibility into their AI use, governance gaps emerge and progress stalls."

Deniz Ozer Can
Global Head – Digital & AI Acceleration, Bayer Consumer Health



Consider embedding AI governance clauses in contracts.

You may want to require agencies and external partners to comply with your AI principles and risk management processes by introducing robust AI clauses in Gen AI contracts and mandate transparency from partners on how they are using AI. Developing template addendums with standard contractual clauses will help support adoption across the organisation.

For an overview of the types of issues and provisions that should be covered in contracts, download WFA's voluntary Gen AI Contract Guidance best practice here.

Pre-approval of AI tools and use cases.

Consider requiring agencies to prioritise pre-approved AI tools and use cases which have been validated against brands' risk criteria. You may also want to ask them to submit an AI tool and use case inventory as part of onboarding or contract renewals.

Provide partners with brand AI guidelines.

Share your AI governance guidelines and brand-specific requirements with creative, media and tech partners. You may want to ensure these include approved and restricted use cases and tools and simply practical do's and don'ts.

Consider asking your agency to appoint a senior AI governance lead.

Agencies and partners should ideally designate a senior-level AI governance lead who is responsible for overseeing the compliant use of AI on brands' behalf. The lead should maintain an internal registry of AI tools and use cases, conduct and share risk assessments and report on AI use in regular governance reviews. It may be worthwhile including this requirement in contracts and SOWs.

Consider AI literacy standards for agency teams.

You may benefit from ensuring that agencies and partners working on your brand meet baseline AI training standards. This could include offering access to brands' own literacy and training workshops or inviting them to internal training sessions. Include mandatory trainings as part of the onboard process for any new team members.

4 Technology and tools

Vet and manage AI tools to align with brand values, legal compliance and technical security needs.

"The AI marketplace is exploding, but evaluating tools against genuine business needs is incredibly difficult. This slows down our ability to scale confidently, not least because it's hard to know whether the tools we invest in today will still be relevant next year." **- WFA member**

Consider introducing a process for AI tool selection and approval.

Consider establishing a formal, cross-functional process for evaluating and approving AI tools before they can be used. This could include requiring all new AI tool proposals to be submitted through a standardised intake form, assembling a review group to evaluate tools, developing clear guidelines for tools that have been approved. Communicate the process internally so all staff know how to propose a new AI tool.

Keep track of approved tools.

You may want to create a centralised repository of tools that have been approved for use within the organisation. The inventory should include the tool name and provider, outline what the tool does (e.g. content creation or text generation), a list of the specific use cases for which the tool is approved and where it cannot be used, who the internal team or person responsible for the tool is and any additional safeguard required.

Define 'enterprise-safe' tool criteria that work for your organisation.

It may be important to ensure that AI tools used by marketing, agencies and other partners are enterprise-safe and compliant with data standards to minimise data misuse or legal exposure. Example criteria could include ools meeting certain enterprise security protocols, vendors must specify how long data is stored etc. Tools should confirm that no sensitive brand, customer or proprietary data is used to train or fine-tune models unless explicitly agreed and contractually permitted.

Look into creating an AI vendor due diligence checklist.

Co-designed by legal, procurement, marketing, IT and other relevant stakeholders, a due diligence checklist/questionnaire could be helpful as a first port of call for any team looking to procure an AI tool or solution. Core categories of questions could include model transparency, bias and fairness, IP and usage rights, data privacy and security, human oversight, sustainability and regulatory compliance.

Keep track of AI vendors currently involved in lawsuits or regulatory enquiries.

Consider maintaining a live list of vendors currently involved in lawsuits, with details in terms of the nature of the lawsuit (e.g. copyright, privacy, bias, etc.), jurisdictions/markets involved, status (whether ongoing, settled or dismissed) and how it might be relevant to the given use case for the particular tool.

Consider user interface warnings in AI tools.

Create clear, easy-to-understand warnings directly within the AI tool interface (at the point of data entry) to remind staff of data usage rules. These warnings should clearly state what types of data are permitted or prohibited, helping to prevent accidental input of sensitive, proprietary or confidential information.

Prepare IT infrastructure for AI adoption and scaling.

Work with IT teams to benchmark current infrastructure against AI use case requirements, check agreements with cloud providers for data security and AI capabilities, review data storage and access controls, review and upgrade security protocols to prevent data breaches or system vulnerabilities and create cross-functional workflows for integrating AI tools into marketing systems.

5 Measurement and KPIs

Track the performance and business impact of AI initiatives through clear metrics.

> "The real challenge isn't bringing in AI: it's rethinking how we work so AI actually moves the needle. And the uncomfortable truth is that AI is making us confront why we do things the way we do, and admit that a lot of our processes simply weren't built for the world we're in now."
>
> **Ramzi Chaabane**
> Director, Marketing Indirect Procurement, L'Oréal



Define clear business objectives.

Before adopting AI, you will benefit from ensuring that each initiative has clearly defined business and commercial objectives. On an initiative basis, this may include identifying the problem you're solving for, opportunity being unlocked and desired business outcome. Objectives could, depending on organizational needs, include efficiency and cost reduction, revenue growth, customer experience improvement, risk management, etc. You may want to map and prioritise use cases by impact and feasibility.

Align use cases to KPIs.

For each use case, determine how success will be measured. These could be divided into performance metrics (e.g., productivity gains) or business metrics (e.g., revenue impact). For example, if the use case is content generation and the business objective is cost reduction, a success metric example could be time saved vs manual creation (hours saved) or cost per asset vs traditional process. Before implementing, seek to determine current baseline performance so there's a meaningful comparison and review KPIs regularly as AI matures or use cases evolve.

Look into responsibility KPIs.

Alongside commercial KPIs, you may want to define a clear set of targets that track responsibility, in line with your brand responsibility principles. For example, if fairness and inclusion is a responsible AI principle, a KPI could include setting thresholds for representation and bias in outputs across demographics (e.g. race, gender, ethnicity). For data privacy, consider including metrics on how well tools are complying with internal data use rules and data privacy rules. These KPIs may need to be developed in partnership with legal, DEI, compliance and sustainability teams.

6 Monitoring

Continuously monitor and audit practices and adapt governance based on findings and new risks.

"Selecting an AI tool is only half the battle. Integrations, data access and compliance checks can take months, with many hidden costs emerging along the way. This is creating real friction and slowing impact." **- WFA member**

Look into developing monitoring mechanisms.

Consider tools and systems to monitor performance of AI tools and use such as for example dashboards, audit trails and feedback loops. This will allow teams to track progress against KPIs in real-time, support accountability and compliance and flag issues and help improve systems over time.

Don't ignore human oversight.

You may benefit from setting out when, where and how human oversight must be exercised over AI use. This is likely to work best when it includes clear criteria for when human review is necessary (e.g. for content creation, automated decision-making), an identification of who is accountable for monitoring AI tool usage and validating outputs and a way to document oversight processes.

Consider tool and vendor monitoring.

It may be useful to explore oversight mechanisms for third-party AI tools and partners , for example to ensure they comply with your ethical, legal and operational standards. These should include due diligence and onboarding checks, ongoing monitoring of third-party tools, regular reporting requirements and evaluation of outputs. Ensure there are teams internally designated to review vendor reports and take any necessary action in case of risk.

Monitor governance processes.

Establish a structured approach to track internal AI policies, trainings and governance practices. Regularly review internal AI policies and procedures to identify potential gaps, monitor policy compliance by tracking which teams and individuals are following governance protocols. Monitor completion rates for required trainings. Assigning responsibility to an internal governance lead or committee could help ensure accountability and continuous improvements.

Track and monitor AI-generated outputs.

Implement systems to monitor AI outputs for quality, accuracy and compliance. As part of this, building an incident reporting system that enables individuals to flag problematic AI outputs and establish a process to check outputs for alignment with brand tone, legal standards, factual accuracy and potential harms (IP, bias, stereotyping, personal data, etc) may be useful.

Stay ahead of evolving risks.

Actively monitor the external environment for developments that could impact your organisations' use of AI. This includes tracking new or changing AI laws, industry standards and enforcement trends. Stay updated on platform-specific AI rules like labelling, ad restrictions, content policies, and adjust practices accordingly and identify new and novel risks and threats.

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