BUILDING YOUR MARKETING DEPARTMENT

Who to hire *first*

How to structure and staff a marketing department in Saudi Arabia

The org chart, the roles, and the order to hire them. With 2026 Saudi salary bands, the new 60% Saudization rule, and the subsidies that lower the bill.

START HERE

Three rings of evidence, *one point of view*

Most articles on marketing team structure hand you a big company's org chart and tell you to copy it. This report does the opposite. It answers a sequence question, not a template question: given where your company is today, who do you hire next, and why. Every number here sits inside one of three rings, so you always know how far a figure traveled before it reached you.

01 **International.** The studies and named cases on how marketing teams are built, in both directions: what worked, and what got over-hired and cut.

02 **The Gulf.** Regional salary guides, ad-spend, and talent behavior. Thinner than the international ring, and we say so where it is.

03 **Saudi Arabia.** Salary bands in riyals, the Saudization rules, GOSI, and the government subsidies. This is the ring most reports skip.

What this is not: a neutral referee, and not a one-size org chart. It leans toward marketing that a company owns and sequences, because the evidence leans that way, and because building owned marketing departments is our work.

DISCLOSURE

BMD helps Saudi companies build marketing departments. Read us as interested experts, not a neutral panel.

SOURCES Method note on page 25

THE ANSWER

Hire an *owner* before you hire an org chart

Here is the whole report on one page. Your first marketing hire is an owner, not a doer and not an absentee: a player-coach who is deep in one area of marketing, competent across the rest, and willing to carry a number. Not a fresh graduate running the blog. Not a VP who has not touched the work in six years. After the owner, you sequence: two or three specialists behind the tightest point in your funnel, then you fill the funnel, then you specialize and add a management layer as you pass roughly eight people.

1

Owner you hire before anyone else

4.2%

Marketing as a share of headcount at 51 to 100 employees

Pave 2025

60%

Of your marketing roles must now be Saudi to count

MHRSD 2026

How many people, roughly: marketing runs about 3 to 4 percent of your headcount, so a 60-person company carries two or three marketers and a 200-person company carries six to eight. The Saudi twist that reorders everything: since 19 April 2026, 60 percent of your marketing roles must be Saudi nationals paid at least 5,500 riyals a month to count in the quota, so you plan the sequence around Saudi hires and the subsidies that fund them.

THE VERDICT

Own first. Sequence second. Specialize last.

SOURCES Pave 2025 · MHRSD 2026 · HubSpot 2025

DEFINITIONS

A department is a *system* with an owner, not a pile of hires

Judge the words before you judge the decision. A marketing department is not the count of people with "marketing" in their title. It is a function with an owner, a structure, a way to measure itself, and a line to revenue. Four names cover almost every structure you will be sold.

THE FOUR STRUCTURES

STRUCTURE	WHAT IT MEANS	FITS
Functional	Teams by discipline: content, performance, brand	A single product or brand. The safe default
Product or segment	Teams by product line or customer segment	Several distinct products or audiences
Geographic	Teams by market or region	Real variance across markets
Pod or squad	Small cross-functional units, 8 to 12 people	Scale, speed, once you are past 15 marketers

Two more distinctions decide your first hire. Owner versus doer: an owner sets direction and carries a number; a doer executes a task. Generalist versus specialist: a generalist covers the whole funnel shallowly, a specialist goes deep on one channel. The hire most first-timers actually want sits between them, and it has a shape.

> *The pi-shaped marketer: expert in one area of marketing, proficient in a second, literate across the rest.*

SOURCES HubSpot 2025 · MKT1 (Kramer) 2021 · McKinsey 2016

The Saudi clock just changed the *cost* of getting this wrong

This question reached your desk this year for a reason. On 19 April 2026 the Ministry of Human Resources began enforcing 60 percent Saudization across marketing professions in the private sector. It reaches any establishment with three or more workers in the covered roles, and a Saudi only counts toward the quota at 5,500 riyals a month or more. The ten covered titles are not edge cases: marketing manager, marketing specialist, advertising roles, public relations, and graphic designer are all inside the rule. Your marketing hires are now, by law, majority Saudi.

60%

Saudization required across marketing roles, enforced April 2026

5,500

Minimum monthly riyals for a Saudi to count in the quota

79%

Of Saudi professionals actively looking for a new role

Michael Page 2026

The rest of the market moved with it. Employer social insurance for a Saudi hired under the new system rose to 12.75 percent from July 2026, against 2 percent for an expatriate, with no income tax on either. And retention is loose: with 79 percent of professionals actively seeking, the marketer you hire is already being called by someone else. Building the department is no longer a someday project. The penalty for improvising it is now written into payroll.

THE VERDICT

> The rule changed. Improvising marketing hiring is now expensive.

SOURCES MHRSD 2026 · Arab News 2026 · GOSI via Mercans 2026 · Michael Page 2026

THE QUESTION · THE DEFAULT

How marketing actually gets staffed, and why it goes *quiet*

Nobody plans the default; it just happens. Revenue is fine, someone says "we need marketing," and the company reaches for the cheapest visible motion. Usually one of two moves. Move one: hire a junior, often a social media coordinator, give them the vague brief "do content and the socials," and wait. Move two: sign an agency retainer and treat marketing as a bill you pay, with nobody inside who owns the outcome. Both feel like progress. Both skip the owner.

The result has a name in the research: orphan marketing. Marketing with no senior internal owner underperforms, and the mechanism is not mysterious. Managers drive at least 70 percent of the variance in a team's engagement, so a marketer supervised by a founder who has never done marketing is a poor bet on output. Meanwhile the work cannot prove itself: in the most recent CMO Survey, 58.2 percent of senior marketers could not demonstrate the long-term impact of their spend quantitatively, and 22 percent could not show it at all. An orphan team plus no measurement is how a marketing budget disappears without an argument.

70%

Of engagement variance is driven by the manager · Gallup 2025

58.2%

Of senior marketers cannot prove long-term impact · CMO Survey 2024

THE VERDICT

A junior with no owner is a cost, not a department.

SOURCES Gallup 2025 · The CMO Survey (Fall 2024)

EVIDENCE · RING ONE

Team shape follows *size*, in a predictable ladder

Before you argue about structure, place yourself on the ladder. The most on-point benchmark for your size comes from HubSpot's own staffing guidance: under 25 employees, one strong generalist marketer; 25 to 49 employees, about three marketers; 50 to 249 employees, roughly eight, at which point you begin to specialize by discipline. Improvado describes the same arc by capability rather than count: a founder-led single generalist who owns the whole funnel, then a specialist model where every initiative has exactly one owner, then cross-functional pods once you pass about 15 marketers.

THE SIZE LADDER

COMPANY SIZE	MARKETERS	SHAPE
Under 25	1	One generalist owner
25 to 49	~3	Small generalist team
50 to 249	~8	Specialize by discipline
250+	Layered	Add management, then pods or product lines

Notice what the ladder does not say. It does not say hire a pod on day one because a scale-up you admire runs pods. Pods are a structure for 15-plus marketers who already have coverage. Copying them early gives you the coordination cost of a big team without the team.

THE VERDICT

Match the structure to your size, not your ambition.

SOURCES HubSpot (Chinn) 2025 · Improvado 2026 · McKinsey 2016

EVIDENCE · RING ONE

Marketing is about *three to four percent* of your headcount

Owners ask "how many marketers is right" and get told "it depends." It depends less than you think. Pave, using data from 2,914 companies with 50 or more employees, puts marketing headcount at 4.2 percent of total staff for companies of 51 to 100 people, 3.8 percent at 101 to 200, and 3.4 percent at 201 to 500. APQC, across 1,711 companies of all sizes, lands on a median of 2.7 percent. Read together: plan for roughly three to four marketers per hundred employees, a little higher when you are small, drifting down as you scale.

4.2%

Marketing share of headcount, 51 to 100 employees

Pave 2025

2.7%

Median marketing FTEs across all companies

APQC

7.7%

Marketing budget as a share of revenue, large firms

Gartner 2025

One honest caveat, because it matters. The famous budget figure, marketing at 7.7 percent of revenue, comes from surveys of very large firms; Gartner's 2024 sample had a median revenue above 5 billion dollars. Do not run your 80-person company on a billion-dollar company's ratio. The headcount benchmarks from Pave and APQC travel far better to your size than any percent-of-revenue rule does.

> THE VERDICT
>
> Count people against headcount, not budget against a billion-dollar survey.

SOURCES Pave 2025 · APQC · Gartner CMO Spend 2024 and 2025 · The CMO Survey (Fall 2024)

The experts *disagree*, and the disagreement tells you the answer

Read enough and you find a real argument, not a consensus. The two camps are worth reading side by side, because the thing they share is the actual instruction.

CAMP ONE · GENERALIST FIRST

MKT1 (Kramer). Avoid a first hire with "too many firsts." A pi-shaped marketer, deep in one function and proficient in a second.

First Round (Jackson). Five to eight years of experience. Not an intern, and not a VP who has left the work behind.

CAMP TWO · HIRE DEPTH

SignalFire. A product marketer first, because growth spend is only as good as the strategy under it.

MarketerHire. Start with your single highest-impact channel.

Both camps agree on the two things they are really telling you. Do not make a junior your first and only marketer, and do not buy execution before a strategy exists. Jason Lemkin puts the economics bluntly: a 60,000-dollar junior "cannot own a number," while a stronger, more expensive owner can. The unicorn who is equally excellent at brand, performance, product, and comms is, in Jackson's words, a rare sighting, so you stack-rank and hire the shape that fits your funnel.

> *The agreement hiding inside the argument: an owner who can hold a number, not a junior running tasks.*

THE VERDICT

Not a junior, not an absentee. An owner who ships.

SOURCES MKT1 (Kramer) 2021 · First Round (Jackson, Spivak) 2021 · SignalFire 2025 · SaaStr (Lemkin) 2015 to 2024

EVIDENCE · REFERENCE

Twelve roles, and what each one actually *owns*

You cannot sequence hires you cannot tell apart. Titles blur in practice, so here is what each role owns, not what it is called. Keep this page; the sequence on page 19 refers back to it.

ROLE	OWNS
CMO / VP Marketing	Strategy, the number, the team. A C-suite or near-it owner
Marketing Director / Manager	Plans and runs campaigns inside a budget. The working owner for most SMEs
Growth / Demand	Acquisition and pipeline across the funnel. Carries revenue
Product Marketing	Positioning, messaging, launches, sales enablement. The strategy layer
Content	Articles, video, the owned audience. The fuel
Brand	Awareness, trust, long-term equity. Slow payoff
Performance / Paid	Paid media, bidding, measurable conversions. Fast payoff
SEO	Organic visibility, technical and on-page, now AI search
Design / Creative	The visual system and production. **Saudization-covered**
Marketing Operations	Martech, data, reporting, the plumbing
Social / Community	Channels, community, real-time response
PR / Comms	Reputation, media, crisis. **Saudization-covered**

Two distinctions save the most money. Brand builds slow reach; performance buys fast conversions; you need both but rarely in one person. Product marketing sets the strategy that growth then executes, which is why hiring pure growth before any strategy tends to burn budget.

THE VERDICT

Hire owners of outcomes, not collectors of titles.

SOURCES RevPilots 2024 · Orbit Media 2025 · Product Marketing Alliance 2026 · HubSpot 2024 to 2025

EVIDENCE · RING THREE

The salary is the visible half. *Price the rest.*

Start with the market. These are monthly base ranges in riyals, triangulated across recruiter and job-board sources; recruiter guides skew high, job boards skew low, so the ranges are wide on purpose.

MONTHLY BASE SALARY · SAR

ROLE	RANGE
Head of Marketing (first owner)	25,000–45,000
Marketing Director / CMO	60,000–120,000
Marketing Manager	14,000–37,000
Performance / digital specialist	6,000–17,000
Content / social specialist	7,000–15,000
SEO analyst	9,000–18,000
Graphic designer	6,000–14,000
Marketing coordinator	9,000–14,000

Now load it, because base salary is not cost. The good news for Saudi employers: the tax leg is small. Employer social insurance is about 12.75 percent for a Saudi under the new system and 2 percent for an expatriate, and there is no income tax. Add end-of-service accrual and benefits and a Saudi hire lands near 1.15 to 1.3 times base, well under the 1.25 to 1.4 times that the classic MIT method assumes for the United States. Then add the one-time costs everyone forgets: recruiter fees run 15 to 25 percent of a year's salary, a role takes weeks to fill, and a new leader needs about six months to reach breakeven.

THE VERDICT

Budget the loaded year, not the headline salary.

SOURCES Recfront 2025 · Paylab 2026 · GOSI via Mercans 2026 · Hadzima / MIT · Watkins 2003

EVIDENCE · RING THREE

The state will pay part of the salary you are already *Saudizing*

The 60 percent rule forces Saudi hires. The same government funds them, and most companies never claim it. Two programs matter for a marketing team. Tamheer places a graduate with you for three to six months on a stipend paid by the Human Resources Development Fund, not by you: 3,000 riyals a month for a bachelor's degree, 2,000 for a diploma. It is a low-risk way to trial a junior Saudi marketer or designer. For a permanent hire, Employment Support pays 30 percent of the wage, plus up to 10 percent more, capped at 3,000 riyals a month or half the wage, for up to 24 months, on salaries between 4,000 and 15,000 riyals.

WHAT THE STATE COVERS

PROGRAM	YOU GET	FOR
Tamheer	3,000 SAR/mo stipend, paid by HRDF	Graduate trainee, 3 to 6 months
Employment Support	30% of wage, up to 3,000 SAR/mo	Saudi hire, wage 4,000 to 15,000, up to 24 months

SAR 72,000

Real subsidy over two years on a Saudi content specialist at 9,000 riyals a month, a hire you were required to make anyway. Employment Support can offset up to 3,000 of that for 24 months.

The subsidy does not change who is worth hiring. It changes whether you can afford to hire two Saudis instead of one.

THE VERDICT

You were going to Saudize. Get paid to do it.

SOURCES HRDF (Tamheer) · HRDF (Employment Support) · MHRSD 2026

EVIDENCE · THE THIRD PATH

Own the strategy and the data. *Rent* the hands and the specialists.

This is not in-house versus agency. The companies that win run a hybrid: they own the core and rent the edges. Own the strategy, the customer data, the brand, and the always-on content, because those compound and cannot be outsourced. Rent the specialisms you need occasionally: a launch film, a paid-media burst, a design sprint. The market has been voting this way for years. Among national advertisers, the share with an in-house agency rose from 42 percent in 2008 to 82 percent in 2023, and cost was the top reason.

42% → 82%

National advertisers with an in-house agency, 2008 to 2023

ANA 2023

88%

Of senior MENA marketers admit a limited grasp of their own digital ad buying

IAB MENA · Altman Solon 2025

Rent for the right reason, though, not to avoid learning. That 88 percent is the trap: renting a capability so long that you never build the judgment to manage it. Own enough to hold the agency accountable. An agency can execute; it cannot own your outcome.

> *Ownership cannot be outsourced. Execution can.*

THE VERDICT

Own the core. Rent the edges. Never rent the judgment.

SOURCES ANA 2023 · IAB MENA and Altman Solon 2025

FAILURE MODES

Seven failures, *one root*

Marketing departments fail in patterns, and almost all of them trace back to hiring seats before owning a system. Name them so you can see them coming.

01 **Junior first.** A graduate as the only marketer, with a number they cannot own.

02 **Orphan marketing.** No senior internal owner, so nobody is accountable for the outcome.

03 **Specialists, no strategist.** Channels running with no positioning underneath them.

04 **Execution before strategy.** Doing PR and ads before the message exists.

05 **Boom hiring.** Over-staffing in a good year, cutting in a bad one.

06 **Agency dependency.** Renting so long you never build internal judgment.

07 **No measurement.** A team that cannot prove its value loses the argument at budget time.

The receipts are real. In the last downturn, 39 percent of marketing leaders planned to cut labor and 39 percent planned to cut agencies, which is what over-hiring buys you: a team assembled to be dismantled. And measurement is the quiet killer: 58.2 percent of senior marketers cannot prove long-term impact, so when finance looks for something to cut, marketing volunteers itself.

THE VERDICT

> Seats without a system get cut first.

SOURCES The CMO Survey (Fall 2024) · Gartner CMO Spend 2025 · Gallup 2025

FAILURE MODES · ILLUSTRATIVE

“We hired a marketer. Marketing went quiet.”

ILLUSTRATIVE · A COMPOSITE OF COMMON SITUATIONS, DETAILS CHANGED

A 40-person Riyadh services company hires a bright graduate as its first and only marketer at 8,000 riyals a month. The brief is “grow our brand and handle the socials.” She reports to the founder, who has never run marketing and reviews her work between customer meetings. Six months in, the feed is consistent and the follower count is up, but the pipeline has not moved, and nobody can say whether marketing produced a single deal. The founder concludes “marketing does not work for us” and quietly stops investing.

Nothing here is a talent problem. It is a structure problem. A junior was handed a strategy job with no owner above her and no number to aim at. The two safeguards every expert names, do not hire a junior as your only marketer, and give the function a senior owner, were both missing. The engagement research predicts the ending: with no capable manager, the output was never going to land, whatever she did.

THE VERDICT

A first marketer without an owner is set up to fail.

SOURCES SaaStr (Lemkin) 2015 to 2024 · Gallup 2025

“We copied a scale-up's org chart, then cut half of it.”

ILLUSTRATIVE · A COMPOSITE OF COMMON SITUATIONS, DETAILS CHANGED

A funded 70-person company raises a round and decides to “build marketing properly.” It copies the org chart of an admired scale-up: a head of brand, a head of growth, two content creators, a social lead, a designer, six hires in a quarter. Salaries and tools clear 2 million riyals a year. There is no shared strategy yet, so the specialists optimize in different directions. Eight months later, growth has not matched the burn, the round looks tighter, and four of the six roles are cut. The company now believes marketing is a money pit.

The mistake was treating an org chart as a starting move instead of an outcome. That scale-up's structure was the residue of years of sequencing; lifted whole into a company without the strategy underneath, it produced coordination cost and little else. This is over-hiring in miniature, the same pattern that drove 39 percent of leaders to cut marketing labor in the last cycle, run at company scale.

THE VERDICT

An org chart is an output. Do not start there.

SOURCES Gartner CMO Spend 2025 · Entrepreneur 2026

THE ONE BIG IDEA

The borrowed org chart is the *trap*

Put the two failures side by side and they are the same mistake wearing different clothes. The junior-first company bought one cheap seat; the borrowed-org-chart company bought eight expensive ones. Neither owned a system first. Both confused a picture of a marketing department with the act of building one. An org chart is what a working department looks like after the fact. It is never the first move, and it is never a thing you copy.

You do not fill an org chart.
You sequence a system.

OWN FIRST

Hire one accountable owner before anything else.

SEQUENCE SECOND

Add capability behind the single tightest bottleneck, one hire at a time.

SPECIALIZE LAST

Split into disciplines and add a management layer only when scale forces it, around eight people.

THE VERDICT

Own first. Sequence second. Specialize last.

SOURCES MKT1 (Kramer) 2021 to 2024 · Lenny's Newsletter 2023 · HubSpot 2025

Five questions before you write the *job post*

The first hire fails more often from bad timing than bad hiring. Before you post the role, answer five questions honestly. Three or more "no" answers means fix the gap first, or start with a fractional owner and an agency for hands rather than a full-time hire.

01 **Do you have something that sells**, that a marketer can pour fuel on? Marketing amplifies fit; it does not manufacture it.

02 **Is there at least one channel you have seen work**, even a little, yourself? Hire after the first sign of traction, not before.

03 **Can you name the number this hire will own?** If not, you are hiring a task, not an owner.

04 **Can you fund the loaded first year**, not just the salary? Count GOSI, tools, recruiting, and ramp.

05 **Do you have a Saudi-majority plan that clears the 60 percent rule?** The quota is not optional.

This is exactly what BMD's Scale Readiness Assessment scores, across the five parts of a working department, in about five minutes. The questions are cheap. Getting the answer wrong is a loaded year of salary and six lost months.

THE VERDICT

If you cannot name the number, you are not ready.

SOURCES SaaStr (Lemkin) 2025 · a16z 2023 · MHRSD 2026

First one, first three, first five, first *eight*

This is the page to photocopy. It is the hiring order for a Saudi company, tied to size, with what to own and what to rent at each step. Move to the next row only when the current one is full and working, not when a competitor's headcount makes you nervous.

STEP	YOU ARE HERE	HIRE	RENT FOR NOW
0	Under 25 staff, pre-owner	Nobody yet. Founder runs channels	Agency or freelancers for hands
1	First owner	**Head of Marketing: pi-shaped, owns a number**	Design, paid media, production
2–3	~40 to 60 staff	Add two behind the bottleneck: usually demand or performance, plus content	Brand film, specialist paid
4–5	~60 to 120 staff	Fill the funnel: bring design or social in-house, add operations	Overflow production
6–8	~120 to 250 staff	Specialize by discipline, add a manager per five to six people	Niche specialisms only

Two rules hold across every row. Sequence behind the bottleneck: if acquisition is the problem, hire demand or performance next, not brand; if nobody understands why you win, hire product marketing first. And Saudize as you sequence: with 60 percent of these roles required to be Saudi, use Tamheer to trial juniors and Employment Support to fund the permanent ones, so the quota and the budget move together.

THE VERDICT

One owner, then the bottleneck, then the funnel, then depth.

SOURCES Revel One 2024 · Lenny's Newsletter 2023 · HubSpot 2025 · MHRSD 2026

What a good first owner does before *hiring anyone*

You hired the owner. Do not let them hire a team in month one; that is how the borrowed org chart sneaks back in. A strong first owner spends the first quarter proving the system, not staffing it. That order also happens to be the front half of the BUILD sequence BMD uses with clients: baseline what is true, then build the engine before you crew it.

01 **Baseline.** Find out what is actually working: which channel, which message, which numbers are real. Kill the vanity metrics.

02 **Own one number.** Pick the single metric this function lives or dies on for the next two quarters, and publish it.

03 **Win one channel.** Get one acquisition channel repeatable before opening a second. Depth beats spread.

04 **Then, and only then,** write the first specialist job description, aimed at the bottleneck the baseline exposed.

A new leader needs roughly six months to reach breakeven, and a structured plan cuts that meaningfully. The 90-day discipline is not bureaucracy; it is how you avoid paying for a team before you have a system for them to run.

THE VERDICT

Prove the system in 90 days. Then staff it.

SOURCES Watkins 2003 · BMD BUILD framework

THE VERDICTS · YOUR SITUATION

Three companies, three *first moves*

SCENARIO A

Situation. 15-person founder-led services firm in Jeddah, sales all by referral, no marketer.

Not yet. Fractional owner plus an agency.

FIRST 90 DAYS — Founder runs one channel, proves demand, books a fractional Head of Marketing a day a week to set the number.

SCENARIO B

Situation. 60-person product company, growing, one overloaded social hire, no strategy.

Hire the owner now, above the junior.

FIRST 90 DAYS — Bring in a pi-shaped Head of Marketing, baseline the funnel, keep the junior on execution under them, Saudize the next hire with Employment Support.

SCENARIO C

Situation. 200-person company, marketing reports to nobody senior, spend unaccounted.

You have orphan marketing. Give it an owner.

FIRST 90 DAYS — Install a marketing director with a mandate and a number, audit the agency roster, cut what cannot be measured.

THE VERDICT

Different sizes, same first move: find the owner.

SOURCES SaaStr (Lemkin) 2024 · Gallup 2025 · MHRSD 2026

Three *harder* cases

SCENARIO D

Situation. Family-owned, sales-led, 120 staff, wants “a real brand” for the next generation.

Product marketing before brand campaigns.

FIRST 90 DAYS — Hire an owner who can define positioning first, then spend on brand once the message is settled, not before.

SCENARIO E

Situation. Funded startup, pre-product-market-fit, tempted to hire a big-name CMO.

Too early. A CMO cannot build an engine from zero.

FIRST 90 DAYS — Hire a hands-on Head of Growth or a fractional CMO, keep the pivot room, wait for fit before the senior title.

SCENARIO F

Situation. Agency-dependent, 90 staff, no internal marketer, three retainers running.

Insource the owner, keep one agency.

FIRST 90 DAYS — Hire one internal owner to hold the agencies accountable, consolidate three retainers to one, build the judgment you have been renting.

THE VERDICT

The title you want is usually one level too senior.

SOURCES CRV 2026 · a16z 2023 · ANA 2023

THE VERDICTS · IF THIS IS NOT YOU

Under 20, or over *250*

This report is built for companies of roughly 20 to 250 people. If you are outside that band, the first move changes.

UNDER 20 PEOPLE

Do not hire a full-time marketing team yet. Stay founder-led on one channel, use freelancers or a fractional owner for a day a week, and wait for the first real sign of traction before you commit a salary. Your constraint is proof, not people.

OVER 250 PEOPLE

You almost certainly already have marketers. Your problem is rarely the first hire; it is structure, ownership, and measurement. You are choosing between functional teams and pods, deciding what a center of excellence should own versus what sits in the business units, and fixing the fact that 58 percent of senior marketers cannot prove long-term impact. Different report, same root: own the system, then shape it.

> THE VERDICT
>
> **Too small, prove it first. Too big, measure it first.**

SOURCES HubSpot 2025 · Gartner 2025 · The CMO Survey (Fall 2024)

THE MOVE

Five minutes beats a *lost year*

Reading a report does not tell you where your own company stands. Measuring does. BMD's Scale Readiness Assessment scores your marketing across the five parts of a working department in about five minutes, and returns a plain readout of what to fix before you hire, not a sales call.

THE 5-MINUTE MOVE

Take the Scale Readiness Assessment

Five minutes, across the five parts of a working department. A plain readout of what to fix before you write a job description.

buildingyourmarketingdepartment.com

Use it before you write a job description. If the assessment says you are not ready, that is the cheapest bad-hire you will ever avoid.

THE VERDICT

Diagnose before you hire.

Where the numbers come from, and what they *cannot tell you*

Three rings of evidence, weakest claims flagged in the text. Named sources below.

RING ONE · INTERNATIONAL

HubSpot and Improvado team-size ladders; Pave 2025 headcount benchmarks (2,914 firms, 50-plus employees); APQC marketing-FTE median (1,711 firms); Gartner CMO Spend Survey 2022 to 2025; The CMO Survey, Fall 2024 (Duke, Deloitte, AMA); MKT1, First Round, SaaStr, SignalFire, Lenny's Newsletter, a16z, CRV on first-hire and sequence; McKinsey on pods; ANA 2023 on in-housing; Gallup 2025 on manager impact; Watkins, The First 90 Days, on ramp.

RING TWO · THE GULF

Cooper Fitch, Recfront, Paylab, GulfTalent, Michael Page salary data; IAB MENA and Altman Solon 2025 on in-house ad-buy understanding; DataReportal 2025 on reach.

RING THREE · SAUDI ARABIA

MHRSD on the 60 percent marketing Saudization decision and the 5,500-riyal threshold; HRDF on Tamheer and Employment Support; GOSI rates via Mercans 2026; Michael Page 2026 on talent mobility.

STATED LIMITS

The budget-as-percent-of-revenue figures come from surveys of billion-dollar firms and should not be applied to an SME. No Gulf-specific survey of marketing-team structure exists; the structure evidence is imported and labeled. Salary bands are triangulated because the flagship recruiter PDFs are gated. The often-quoted “a bad hire costs 30 percent of first-year salary, per the US Department of Labor” has no traceable primary and is not used here.

SOURCES Full source list with URLs available on request

THE MOVE · WHO MADE THIS

We build the *department*, not the deck

Building Your Marketing Department helps executives in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf turn marketing from a cost into a measurable function. The method is the BUILD framework, applied across marketing departments in the region and beyond, with a practical assessment, a set of tools, and a community of Gulf leaders doing the same work.

Disclosure, again, because it belongs here: we make the case for owned, sequenced marketing because the evidence supports it and because it is what we do. If that case is right, the first move is not to hire a team. It is to find the owner, and to measure where you stand before you write the first job description.

You asked who to hire first. The honest answer is: an owner, then a sequence.

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