



Find the Money, Fund the Growth:

The Resilient Marketer's Guide to Reclaiming
Budget Under Economic Pressure



You Don't Need a Bigger Budget. You Need a Smarter One.

Tariffs are driving up production costs across industries. Inflation is reemerging, and recession concerns are making leadership teams more cautious with spend.

For CMOs, this adds up to relentless pressure: deliver growth while CFOs scrutinize every dollar. In many cases, you're being asked to do more with less, or justify why your headcount even exists. This moment calls for disciplined execution and tight prioritization. You need an operational triage.

Here's the truth:

**You don't need more money.
You need to stop wasting the money you already have.**

Across enterprise marketing teams, there's still six to seven figures sitting in underperforming channels, misaligned resources, and legacy vendors no one's reviewed since before the last election cycle. Boards are calling for pipeline contingency plans. PE firms are demanding cost compression. And yet, many CMOs haven't updated their operating model.

This playbook outlines six practical ways to free up existing budget, redirect spend toward performance, and reinvest in initiatives that support sustained growth.

Six Practical Ways to Free Up Budget and Scale Smarter

1 Stop Sponsoring Events that Don't Convert

Reality check:

If the event doesn't deliver measurable, attributable pipeline, it's a luxury. And right now, luxuries don't make the cut.

With economic signals slowing decisions and CFOs closely tracking near-term performance, event spend needs a clear connection to pipeline.

Immediate Win



- ✓ Cancel events that don't deliver pipeline. If you haven't signed the contract yet, ask yourself: Is this event actually moving the needle? If not, cut it.

Short-Term Fix



- ✓ Renegotiate contracts. If you're locked in, downgrade the booth size, cut extras, and negotiate sponsorship reductions.
- ✓ Co-fund with partners. Bring in a co-marketing partner to split the cost and still maintain presence.

Long-Term Play



- ✓ Kill low-performing events permanently and reinvest in higher-intent digital or targeted ABM strategies that actually convert.

2 Fire Redundant Vendors and Agencies

Here's the problem:

Every marketing org has a graveyard of old vendors, freelancers, and agencies that nobody even remembers hiring.

In one of my CMO roles, I found out we had 18 different PR agencies, freelancers, and contractors working on fragmented, one-off PR campaigns.

The result was fragmentation and duplicated effort.

Immediate Win



- ✓ Audit all agencies, vendors, and freelancers. If you can't explain exactly what they do and what impact they drive, cut them.

Short-Term Fix



- ✓ Merge multiple projects into one master agreement to cut down on overhead.
- ✓ Shift from retainers to performance-based contracts tied to defined deliverables and outcomes.

Long-Term Play



- ✓ Move from traditional agencies to flexible, outsourced execution models. With 2X's subscription-based go-to-market services model, you can outsource marketing execution at one-third the cost of an agency.

3 Stop Paying for Tech You Don't Use

Be honest:

When was the last time you checked who's actually using the tools you're paying for?

I guarantee your marketing team is sitting on hundreds of unused software licenses that you're STILL paying for because nobody's paying attention.

Immediate Win



- ✓ Reclaim unused software licenses. Request a usage report from your MarTech vendors and cut inactive users immediately.

Short-Term Fix



- ✓ Consolidate overlapping tools. You don't need three different ABM platforms or five different analytics tools.
- ✓ Negotiate contract swaps. Instead of adding a new tool, ask your vendor if they offer the same capability under your existing contract.

Long-Term Play



- ✓ Bundle multiple tools under an enterprise agreement. If you're using five different SaaS products from one vendor, negotiate a custom package to save money.

4 The AI Subscription Black Hole: Stop the \$20-Here, \$30-There Madness

AI is the biggest game-changer in marketing, but it's also a silent budget killer if you don't manage it.

Your team isn't just using ChatGPT Pro. They've got subscriptions to Claude, Gemini, Midjourney, Runway, Replit, and every other tool they've seen trending online.

One AI tool is \$20/month. But multiple subscriptions, across 50 marketers? We're talking tens of thousands a year.

Immediate Win



- ✓ Run an AI usage audit. Find out how many ChatGPT, Claude, or Gemini Pro licenses are floating around your org. Consolidate them now.

Short-Term Fix



- ✓ Move to an enterprise AI agreement. If your whole team is using AI, buy in bulk and get a secure, cost-efficient solution.

Long-Term Play



- ✓ Standardize AI usage across marketing. Move from random AI tools to an integrated AI-driven workflow.

5 Replace Open Headcount with Outsourced Teams

Here's a fact:

If you have open roles in marketing ops, content, design, or campaign execution, it's going to cost less to outsource them instead.

A fully loaded U.S. hire costs \$150K-\$200K+ per year. 2X's marketing-as-a-service model allows you to replace that single role with 2 to 4 fully managed offshore specialists for a fraction of the cost.

Immediate Win

✓ Freeze open roles and shift to outsourced teams.



Short-Term Fix

✓ Prioritize execution capacity. Use subscription-based specialized talent to add output without increasing permanent payroll.



Long-Term Play

✓ Build a hybrid team of in-house leaders and outsourced execution.



6 Automate and AI-Power Your Execution

Why hire more when you can automate more?

When every department is forced to justify headcount, marketing will be on the chopping block unless you show operational leverage. That starts with automation.

Immediate Win

✓ Use AI for task automation (content, social, analytics).



Short-Term Fix

✓ Move from task automation to full AI-powered workflows.



Long-Term Play

✓ Partner with an AI-enabled outsourcing firm (like 2X) to scale execution without scaling headcount.



Conclusion: No More Excuses. Go Find the Money

There's no such thing as "we don't have the budget." There's only "we're spending money on the wrong things."

- ✓ Audit your spending. Cut what isn't delivering.
- ✓ Outsource where it creates leverage. Reduce costs and boost output.
- ✓ Bring in AI and automation to reclaim time and resources.

→ **Want to find your budget? Use the checklist below.**

Find the Money: The Ultimate Marketing Budget Optimization Checklist

Quick-Action Guide to Freeing Up Budget and Reinvesting in High-Priority Initiatives

STEP 1 Cut Waste and Reallocate Budget

Audit Your Event and Sponsorship Spend

- ☐ Cancel low. ROI events before signing contracts.
- ☐ Negotiate contract reductions for committed events (smaller booth, fewer add-ons).
- ☐ Partner with another company to co-fund event participation.
- ☐ Use early termination clauses. Paying a cancellation fee may be cheaper than moving forward.
- ☐ Reduce ad spend and company-hosted events around conferences. Focus only on what drives pipeline.

Eliminate Redundant Vendors, Agencies and Freelancers

- ☐ List every agency, freelancer, consultant and vendor under contract.
- ☐ Eliminate underperforming or redundant agency contracts (especially those handling PR, design, or digital in silos).
- ☐ Consolidate agencies doing overlapping work under fewer, higher-value partners.
- ☐ Negotiate bulk pricing if multiple projects are handled by the same vendor.
- ☐ Move from retainer-based contracts to performance-based models.
- ☐ Check for unnecessary auto-renewals on vendor agreements.

Optimize Your MarTech Stack

- ☐ Run a full MarTech audit. List every tool, subscription, and cost.
- ☐ Check usage reports. Request them from vendors if needed.
- ☐ Eliminate tools with low adoption or duplicate functionality.
- ☐ Replace multiple tools with an all-in-one solution if feasible.
- ☐ Negotiate lower rates or migrate to an enterprise plan.
- ☐ Reallocate unused license costs toward critical tech investments.

Control AI Subscription Sprawl

- ☐ Identify all AI subscriptions (ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Jasper, Midjourney, etc.).
- ☐ Cut duplicate or unused licenses.
- ☐ Move from individual to enterprise AI plans for cost efficiency and security.
- ☐ Standardize AI tools across marketing teams to prevent tool sprawl.
- ☐ Automate AI content workflows to reduce production costs.

STEP 2 Optimize Your Talent Strategy

Close Open Headcount and Outsource Instead

- ☐ Freeze open roles that don't require an FTE and consider outsourcing instead.
- ☐ Use outsourced execution for content, creative, campaign ops, and marketing analytics.
- ☐ Replace one U.S. hire (\$150K+) with 2-4 offshore resources for the same budget.
- ☐ Hire execution roles via subscription-based outsourced teams for more flexibility.

Move from Fixed Costs to Flexible Resourcing

- ☐ Shift agency contracts from retainers to project-based or performance-based models.
- ☐ Use outsourced execution teams instead of hiring expensive full-time employees.
- ☐ Utilize on-demand subscription-based marketing services (like 2X) to scale execution without long-term commitments.

STEP 3 Kill Internal Inefficiencies and Free Up Team Capacity

Taskify Your Workflows to Find and Eliminate Waste

- ☐ Map how work gets initiated. Is it coming from marketing plans or random internal requests?
- ☐ Track where your team's time is going. Eliminate work that doesn't contribute to revenue.
- ☐ Identify and reduce "random acts of marketing" (RAOMs).
- ☐ Cut non-revenue-driving internal comms projects (e.g., internal newsletters, flyers).

Streamline Review and Approval Processes

- ☐ Eliminate excessive stakeholder approvals.
- ☐ Time-box approvals to 24-48 hours.
- ☐ Set a two-tier approval system:
 - **Strategic:** Leadership approves high-impact initiatives.
 - **Operational:** Marketing leads approve day-to-day execution.
- ☐ Use AI-assisted content and asset reviews to speed up feedback cycles.

Implement AI and Automation to Replace Manual Execution

- ☐ Use AI for repetitive tasks (content production, campaign optimization, reporting).
- ☐ Automate multi-step marketing workflows (SEO, paid ads, content syndication).
- ☐ Eliminate unnecessary manual work by integrating AI into the marketing stack.
- ☐ Consider an AI-powered marketing partner instead of building from scratch.

STEP 4 Secure Cost-Sharing with Internal and External Partners

Co-Fund Marketing Efforts with Sales and Product Teams (Internal Cost-Sharing)

- ☐ Identify cross-functional initiatives that can be co-funded.
 - If Marketing is investing in market research, can Product co-fund it to gain customer insights for product development?
 - If customer and buyer insights are needed, can Sales co-fund it to get sales personas, messaging, and outreach templates?
 - If competitive analysis is critical, can both Sales and Marketing co-invest in gathering intelligence for GTM alignment?
- ☐ Leverage sales enablement and field marketing budgets.
 - If Marketing is creating content, messaging, or training materials for Sales, ensure Sales contributes budget to the initiative.
- ☐ Align with Finance early. Co-funded projects should be positioned as business-wide investments, not just marketing expenses.

Co-Fund High-Impact Marketing with External Strategic Partners (Partner Ecosystem and Market Development Funds)

- ☐ Tap into partners' market development funds (MDF).
 - Many strategic tech partners, resellers, or ecosystem players offer co-marketing dollars to amplify joint efforts.
 - Example: If 2X partners with 6sense, both companies could co-fund a demand-gen campaign, ABM initiative, or field event.



Co-exhibit at major industry events.

- Instead of paying full price for a booth or sponsorship, partner with a tech vendor, integration partner, or reseller to split the cost.
- Many partners will pay for additional ad spend, content creation, or promotional activities around the event.



Co-create content and campaigns with partners.

- If a partner is targeting the same ICP or vertical, propose joint research, webinars, or white papers where both companies contribute resources.
- Example: A tech partner funding a customer success story that benefits both brands.



Negotiate co-branded digital advertising and paid media.

- If running LinkedIn, Google, or paid social ads, can a strategic partner co-fund those campaigns to drive more reach?
- Example: If a cloud provider partners with a SaaS company, they may split paid ad costs to drive demand for a joint solution.

Final Step

Execute and Track Results



Identify three internal teams and/or external partners who can co-fund key marketing initiatives this quarter.



Propose cost-sharing opportunities for upcoming events, research, or content creation.



Find at least one major cost-saving opportunity today.



Reinvest saved budget into new demand-gen initiatives.



You already have the budget. You just need to unlock it.

About the author



Lisa Cole serves as the CMO at 2X, where she helps marketing leaders deliver greater impact with fewer resources. Former CMO for Huron, FARO Technologies, and Cellebrite, and author of Brand Gravity, The Limitless CMO, and The Revenue Ramp, Lisa has a proven track record of transforming marketing organizations into high-performing, scalable growth engines. She specializes in leveraging AI, strategic outsourcing and growth marketing strategies to scale marketing, driving operational excellence, and accelerating revenue growth.

About 2X

2X helps GTM leaders achieve greater impact while lowering costs through its comprehensive managed services delivery model. Building on its foundation as the leader in B2B Marketing-as-a-Service (MaaS), 2X now provides end-to-end go-to-market orchestration including GTM engineering, marketing operations and MarTech management, campaign build and optimization, content and creative production, revenue operations, sales technology implementation, and strategic consulting services. 2X is a services partner of 6sense, Salesforce, Adobe, HubSpot, Gong, Bombora, Clay, WordPress, Google, Meta and many other leading revenue platforms.

With nearly 1,300 team members globally, 2X is backed by private-equity firms Recognize and Insight Partners. In 2025, 2X was recognized as one of the fastest-growing companies in the US by Inc. 5000 and the Financial Times: FT ranking of The Americas: Fastest-Growing Companies.