The State of *Creative Strategy* 2027

Salary, sentiment, and the future of the most important role in performance advertising.



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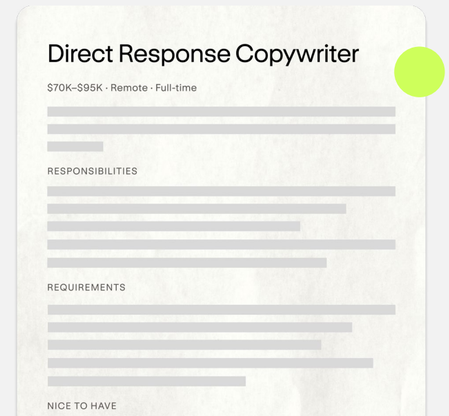
Specialists are disappearing

Performance marketing used to have clean borders between functions. Media buyers bought media. Copywriters wrote copy. Designers and editors made ads. You could get very good at one part of the job and build a healthy career on your expertise.

Now, specialization is disappearing. Platforms have absorbed much of the targeting and distribution work that once belonged to media buyers. AI makes it easier for one person to move between research, production, and analysis. And employers have found plenty of reasons to ask fewer people to cover more ground.

The thing is, creative strategists have already been absorbing multiple specializations for years. Naomi Peh Haeger, Creative Strategist at Granola, spent years moving through titles that each captured one piece of her job and missed the rest, until one of her former employers approached her about creative strategy. “When I heard creative strategy, it all just clicked,” she told us. “This is me.”

Our analysis of 1,400+ job postings, a survey of 1,190+ performance advertisers, and interviews with dozens of experts suggests her experience is becoming much more common. Nearly every function in marketing is getting broader. Which means breadth itself is no longer an advantage. What separates the people advancing fastest is what they do with that breadth. In 2027, marketing is about the decisions you own, the outcomes you influence, and the leverage you create. This report is about turning your breadth into leverage.







Methodology

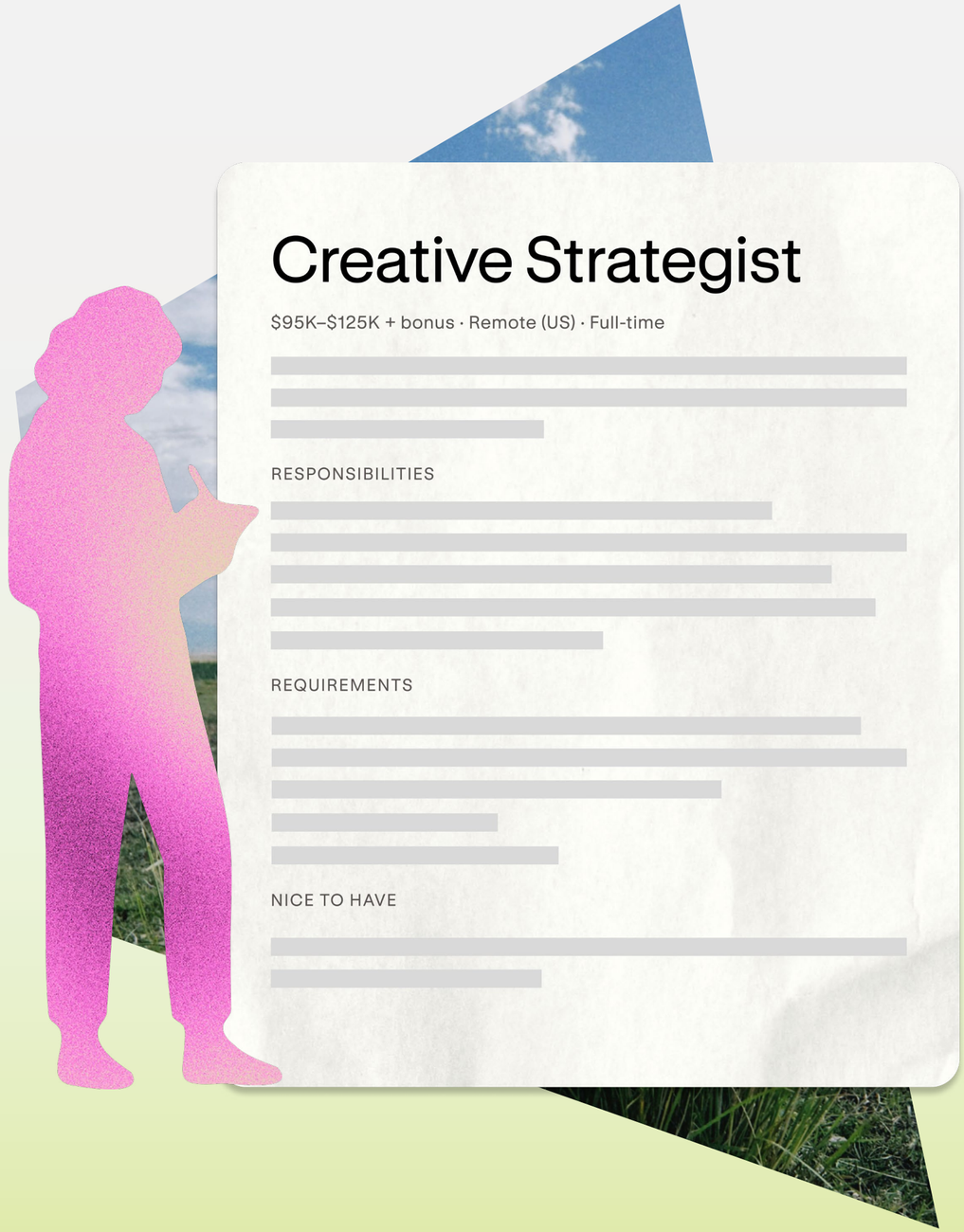
We draw on two datasets built specifically for this project:

Practitioner survey. 1,195 performance-marketing practitioners, drawn from 1,736 total responses after excluding incomplete submissions, screened-out respondents, and people outside the profession we set out to study.

Job postings database. 1,410 performance-marketing job postings collected from March 2025 through July 2026, spanning agencies, DTC brands, and non-DTC brands hiring across creative, growth, and performance.

The survey captures what practitioners say they own, how they feel about their work, and where they think their careers are headed, as well as self-reported titles and compensation. The job postings tell us what employers are looking for. Together, they let us compare what the market asks for with what the people doing the work say they actually do.

Full technical details are in the appendix, including sampling funnel counts, variable definitions, statistical tests, and known limitations, beginning on page 29.



Part 1

The job that ate marketing

Employers haven’t adapted to marketing’s new reality

Connor Gross has gotten used to clients asking him to find people who, on paper, probably shouldn’t exist.

Gross runs Constant Hire, a recruiting firm for seven-, eight-, and nine-figure consumer brands. The role his firm is asked to fill most often is creative strategist, though what that means depends almost entirely on who’s hiring. It might mean appearing on camera and making UGC, understanding organic social, sourcing influencers, managing affiliates or handling post-production. The title stays the same. The job it describes keeps expanding.

There is, Gross says, a practical limit to this exercise. “There’s not going to be somebody who’s the best in the world at everything,” he told us. If there is, he joked, “oftentimes they’re starting their own company.” When a client hands him one of these hybrid roles, Gross works backward from whatever will be hardest to teach, hires for that and assumes the rest can be learned.

Gross has watched budgets shift away from the pure paid-media buyer and toward creative strategists, whose salaries are rising as media-buying salaries decline. The reason, as he sees it, is simple: “the hard work is shifting more towards managing the creative flywheel.”

From Gross’s side of the hiring table, the old divisions of marketing labor have stopped holding. Companies still need the same work done. But they’re increasingly reluctant to hire a different specialist for every part of it.

In Brief

Performance marketing jobs are getting broader, fast. The typical performance marketing posting now asks for more scope than this time last year. Work that once sat across separate specialties is increasingly being bundled into the same role.

Titles haven’t caught up to changes in scope. Across more than 1,400 postings, we found more than 900 different job titles. Employers are converging on a broader kind of marketer faster than they are converging on what exactly to call these hires.

Breadth is becoming table stakes. Roles asking for zero to two years of experience demand about five functions on average, compared with three for roles asking for nine years or more. A broad skill set marketers once accumulated with time is increasingly expected early on.

Leverage is the advantage. Practitioners advancing fastest own only slightly more functions than everyone else. What separates them is leverage over people, systems, reporting, and strategic decisions. The career advantage is shifting to those that can create the most leverage with their skillset.



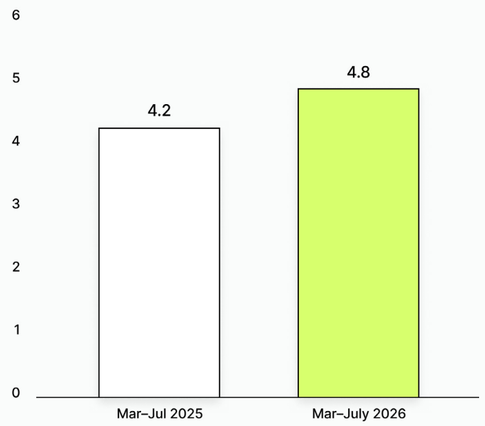
Marketers are taking on a broader scope of work

Our job post dataset tracked 13 job functions typical in performance marketing. On average, job postings today ask for almost a full function more now than they did this time last year.



Performance marketing jobs got 14% broader in a year

Average number of skills requested per job posting, March–July 2025 vs. March–July 2026



Recruiters we interviewed described a fairly practical calculation behind the change. Rather than hiring two specialists, employers increasingly hire for the harder-to-teach discipline and expect that person to pick up the adjacent skills on the job.

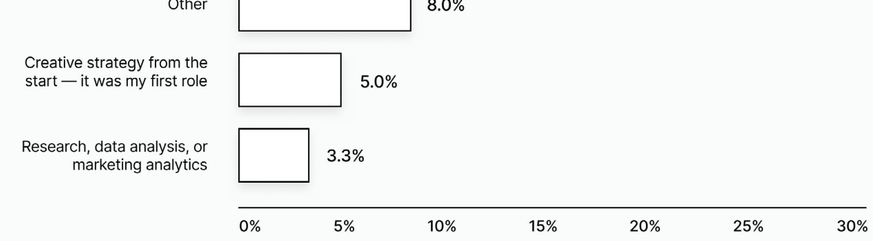
Employers have been expecting more out of a single hire for years now. US marketing employment still remains around 27% below pre-pandemic levels, according to the American Marketing Association's 2026 careers report. Smaller teams are under pressure to do more with less, and role consolidation is simply cheaper than division.

Traditional marketing roles are collapsing into one another

Performance marketing used to have relatively distinct roles. You could come up through media buying, copywriting, design and production, social, or brand strategy and build a career around your specialty. Increasingly, those roles are collapsing into one another.

Performance marketers are coming from every corner of marketing

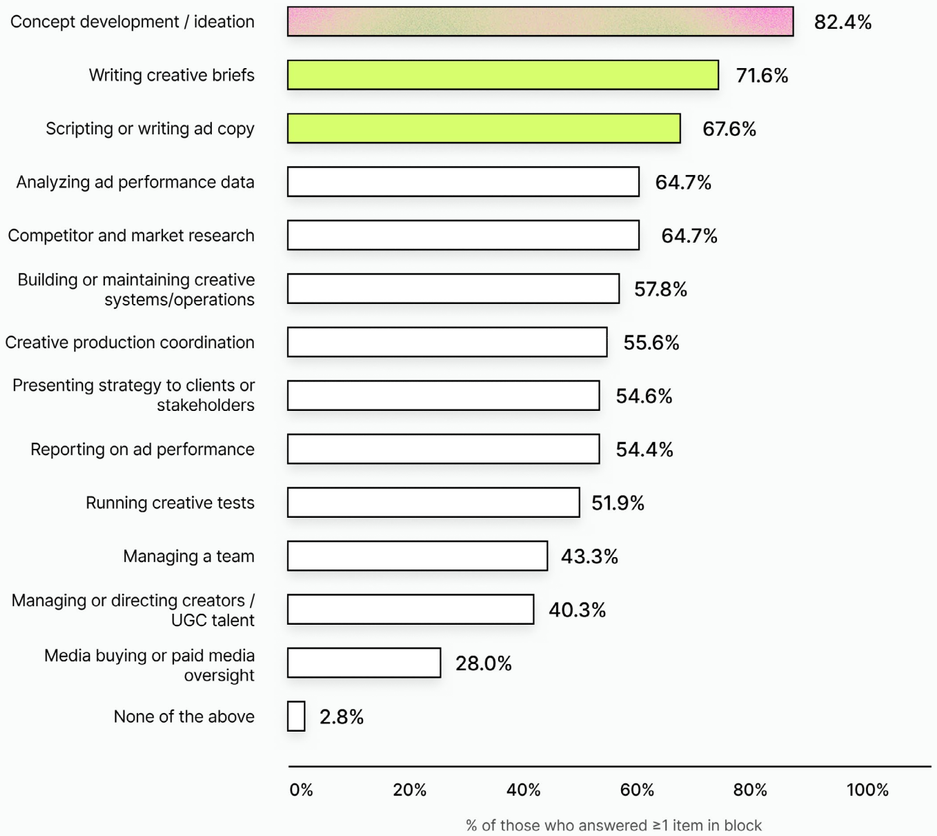
Professional backgrounds of surveyed practitioners before entering their current role, 2026



The starting points among the performance marketers we surveyed are remarkably varied. What they eventually own and execute isn't. Whatever specialty gets someone into the field, the job has a way of absorbing the work around it.

Different paths converge on the same broad skill set

Share of practitioners reporting full ownership of selected responsibilities, % of respondents

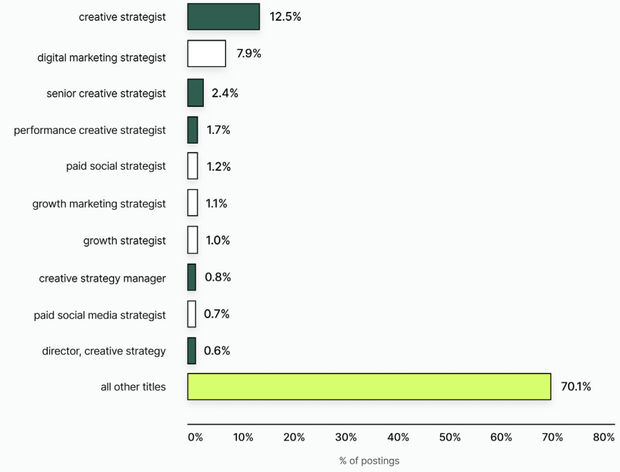


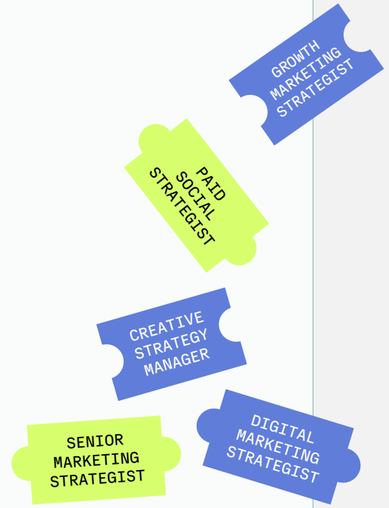
Nobody really knows what to call this emerging hybrid marketer

This new type of marketer is being shaped faster than job descriptions are able to describe them. Creative Strategist was the most common job title in our dataset. But even then, it accounts for just 12.5% of performance marketing jobs. Despite executing the similar functions, practitioners hold hundreds of vague and increasingly ambiguous titles.

Seven in 10 performance marketing jobs sit in the long tail of titles

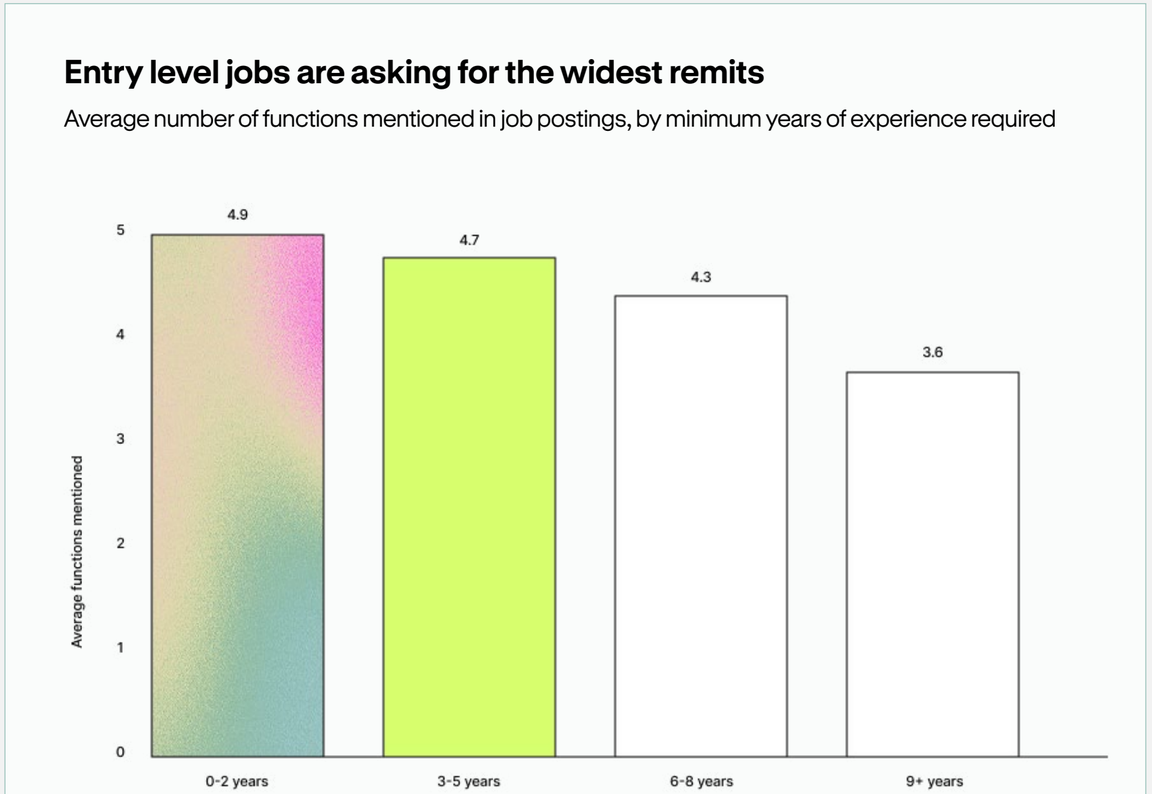
Share of performance-marketing job postings by job title, March 2025–July 2026





You can see the confusion within individual careers. Practitioners describe employers landing on a title, deciding it doesn't quite fit, and trying again a few months later, sometimes more than once, without the job itself changing. The work is converging faster than the language employers and practitioners use to label it.

Entry-level jobs are asking for the broadest skill sets



For most of a marketing career, breadth was something you earned. You started by getting good at one thing and gradually took responsibility for more of the work or responsibilities around it. Seniority widened your remit. Now, employers are beginning to invert that progression.

That creates a strange problem for anyone trying to find their first career job. Employers want early-career marketers who can already cross between functions that once supported distinct careers of their own, without the judgment that normally comes from having spent time specializing on each of them.

Breadth used to be something marketers accumulated. Increasingly, it's what they need before they're allowed through the door to begin with.

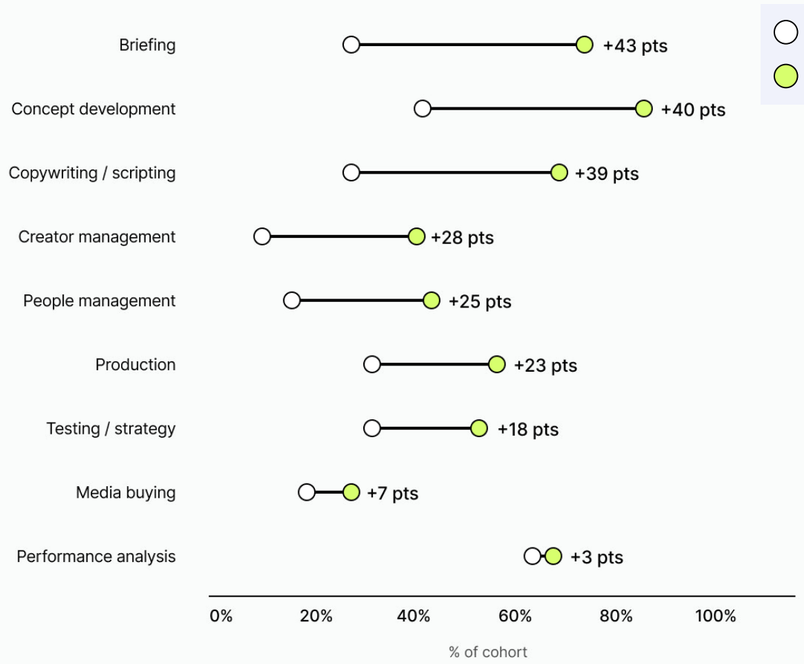


And still, marketers do far more than job descriptions ask for

Even as performance-marketing jobs get broader, employers are still understating how broad they become. Performance analysis is the rare area where the job description and the job itself roughly agree. Almost everywhere else, the job gets broader once someone is actually sitting in the chair.

Performance marketers own far more than employers ask for

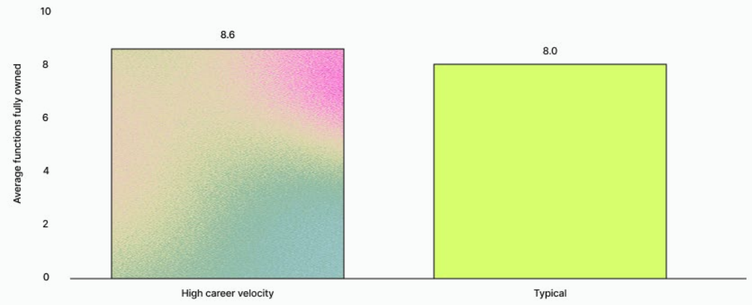
Difference between the share of job postings mentioning select responsibilities and the share of practitioners who report full ownership



Breadth is the baseline, not the advantage

Getting ahead isn't simply a matter of owning more

Average number of functions fully owned by high-career-velocity vs. typical creative-strategy practitioners, 2026



Source: State of Creative Strategy 2026 practitioner survey.

If breadth is tablestakes, you might expect the people advancing fastest to simply be broader than their peers. But that's not the case. To see what separates them, we identified practitioners in our survey who reached leadership earlier than others with similar tenure called "high career velocity." We found that, counterintuitively, their scope looks similar to a typical markter of equal seniority.

Who is “High Career Velocity?”

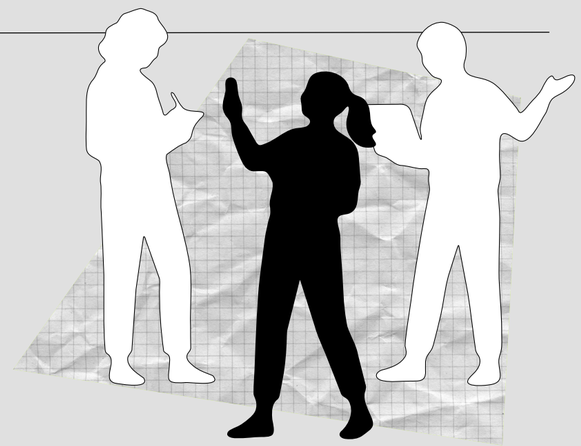
We wanted to find people whose careers were moving unusually fast — not just people with a senior title, and not just people who own a lot of job functions.

A director with ten years in the field is on a normal path. A director with two years is not. So we only compared each person to others who had been in the field for about as long as they had.

Within that peer group, we asked two questions:

1. Did they reach a more senior level faster than most of their peers?
2. Were they paid more than most of their peers?

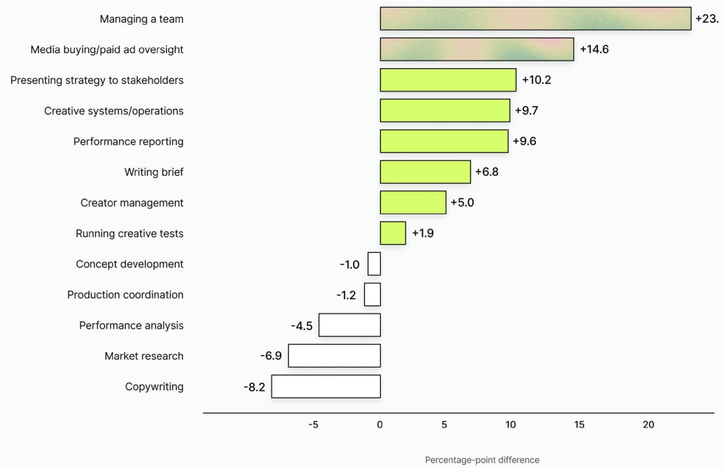
If the answer to both was yes, we called them high career velocity. Everyone in the middle of the pack on those same things, we called typical.



The type of scope you pick up determines how quickly your career moves

The fastest-advancing marketers own systems, not just execution

Percentage point difference in full ownership: high-career-velocity vs. typical marketer, 2026



Source: State of Creative Strategy 2026 practitioner survey

The difference between those advancing fastest and the average appears to be less about how many things someone can do than what they’re trusted to own.

The fastest-advancing marketers are creating more leverage and owning more outcomes.

Their judgment simply travels farther, beyond their own output and into the people, decisions and systems surrounding the work.

Creative Strategy provides a model for the broader marketing role

Creative strategists already work across boundaries that other marketing roles are beginning to cross. Their remit connects creative development with performance analysis, requiring them to interpret evidence and translate it into decisions about what gets made next.

“The ideal creative strategist is an analytical person who isn’t afraid to use their creativity to solve problems,” says Dara Denney, creative strategist and performance marketing consultant. “You have to be numbers-motivated, almost to a fault. You want to see the numbers go up. That has to sit right alongside the creative instinct.”

As employers consolidate responsibilities, that combination becomes relevant across more of the marketing function.

Creative strategy offers an established example of how analytical and creative work can operate within one role.

That experience provides a foundation, but it does not guarantee influence or advancement. A strategist can understand the entire creative process and still spend most of the day executing tasks within it. The career advantage depends on whether that understanding gives them a greater role in setting priorities, directing resources, and shaping decisions.

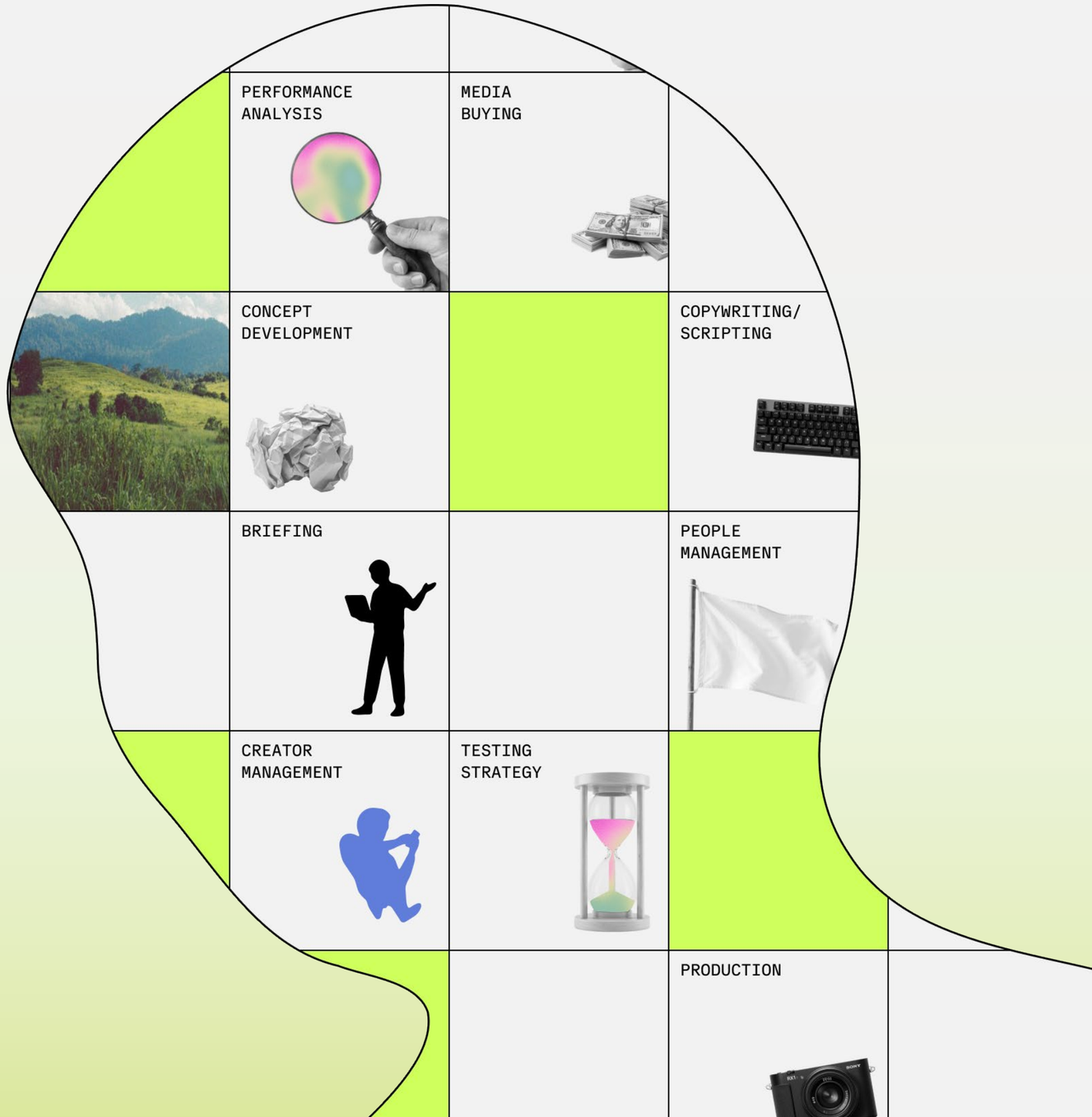
For creative strategists, the next step is to build the capacity, authority, and organizational recognition to exercise that judgment.

Part 2 examines how.



Part 2

Turning breadth into leverage



Judgment needs room to operate

Janae LeVander's job is too broad for one person. That is, in some ways, the point.

As Senior Manager of Performance Creative at Caraway, LeVander's remit stretches from strategy and performance analysis through research, persona testing, and production to managing designers and editors. There is no dedicated project manager, so some of that work belongs to her, too.

The obvious way to excel in a job like that would be to get very good at doing many things very quickly. LeVander has built something different. A system, and the delegation to make that system sustainable.

She also has something many creative strategists don't. Caraway's leadership understands the function and has invested in it. When changes to Meta required LeVander to rethink how her team worked, she didn't have to spend weeks arguing for permission. She had the agency to act.

Sophia Beauvoir, Senior Creative Strategist at Readyset, has been thinking about the same problem from another perspective. AI can now handle more of the mechanics of her job, including research and the early work behind a creative flywheel. It can also, she points out, confidently produce nonsense. Someone still has to know the difference, decide what matters and explain the decision to a client. "Only the creative strategist can really talk through it in the way that the client needs to hear it," she told us.

LeVander and Beauvoir are both figuring out what comes after building breadth. A broad job creates opportunity, but it also creates a fairly obvious problem: there are only so many hours in which to do it. The way forward is not to keep adding more tasks to the job, but to get more leverage from the parts of it that require your particular judgment.

In Brief

Use AI to create capacity. Heavy AI users report higher job satisfaction and more sustainable workloads than moderate or light users. The practitioners getting the most from these tools appear to be using them to make room for higher-value work, not simply to produce more of the same.

Get as close to the evidence as you can. Creative strategists sit all over the org chart, but proximity to performance data gives them something more valuable than a particular reporting line. It gives them evidence they can use to influence what gets made next.

Insist on clarity on what's expected of you. Unclear scope is much more common among practitioners with ambiguous organizational placement or undefined metrics. When nobody decides where a generalist's job stops, the easiest answer is everywhere.

Make your output visible. Practitioners in formal, well-defined creative strategy functions report dramatically stronger morale than those doing the work without a clear title or mandate. And 58% still believe they are underpaid relative to their scope. If the job has expanded beyond the title, the case for recognition and compensation has to be built around what you actually own.



Increase your capacity

Every capability you add to a broad job draws on the same finite resource: time. At some point, taking on more starts crowding out the work that needs your judgment. AI offers a way to create room by reducing the time spent on routine, repeatable tasks.

Heavy AI users report higher satisfaction and more sustainable workloads

Heavy AI users report higher job satisfaction and more sustainable workloads than their peers.

	Light/none	Moderate	Heavy
Role Satisfaction (mean, 1-5 scale)	3.19	3.34	**3.54**
Workload Sustainability (mean, 1-5 scale)	2.98	2.99	**3.20**

But occasional use may not be enough to make the job feel more manageable. Moderate AI users report almost identical workload sustainability to light users, while heavy users report both more sustainable workloads and higher satisfaction. The survey cannot establish whether AI causes that difference, but the pattern suggests that creating capacity may depend on making these tools part of how the work gets done.

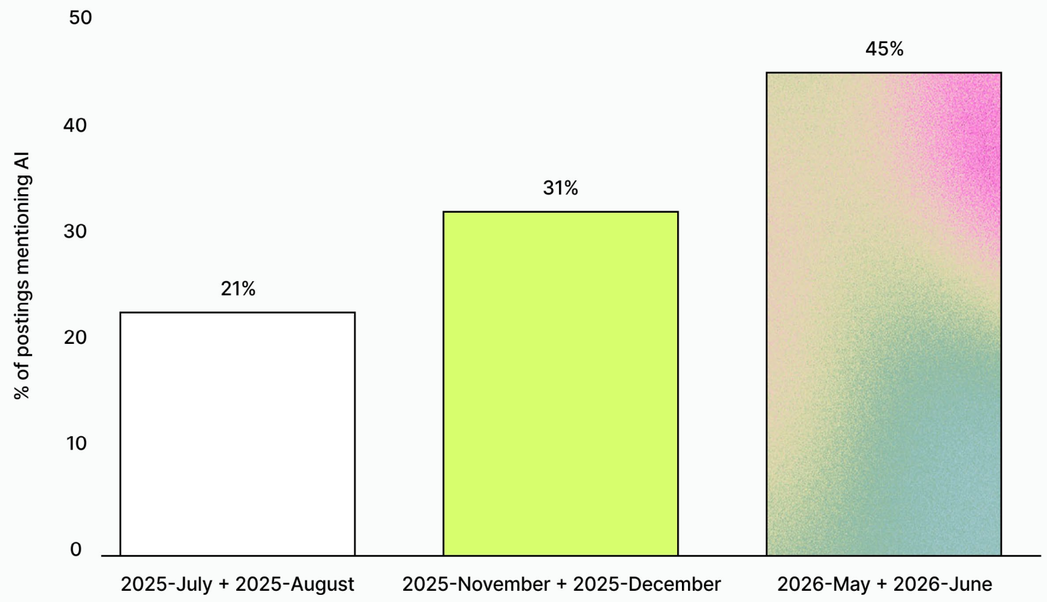
The goal is to give routine work less of your time so that decisions requiring your judgment can get more of it.

Employers increasingly expect AI fluency. The share of performance-marketing job postings mentioning AI rose from 21% to 45% across the periods shown—more than doubling in a year.

Practitioners have already made these tools part of their work. Nearly nine in ten report using AI, suggesting it is becoming an established part of the role even where employers have yet to make it an explicit requirement.

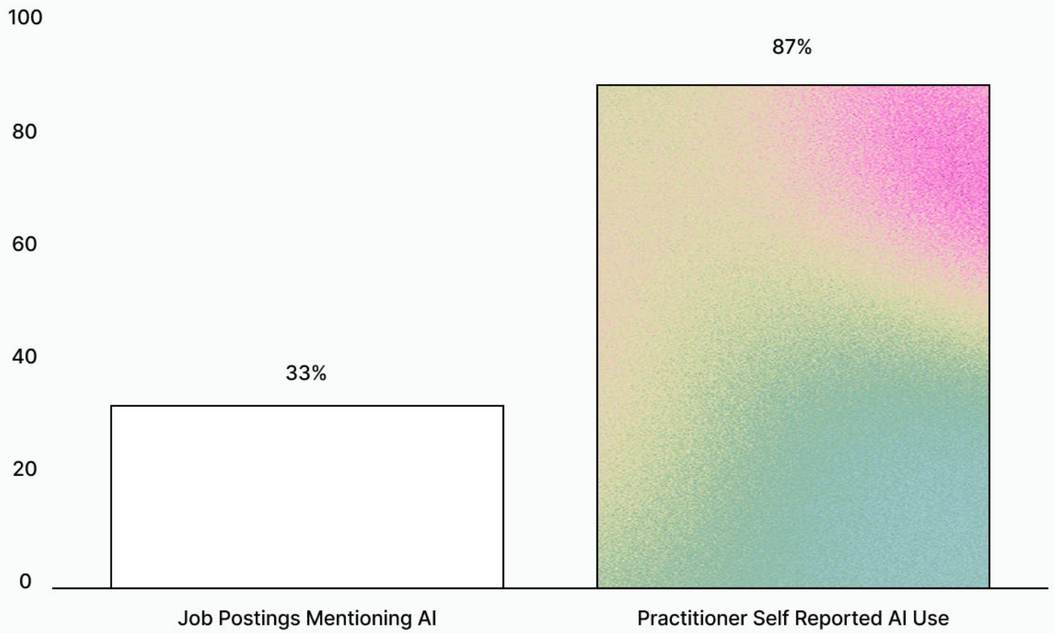
AI demand in performance marketing jobs has doubled in a year

Share of performance-marketing job postings mentioning AI, selected two-month periods



AI in job descriptions massively lags practitioner adoption

Share of performance-marketing job postings mentioning AI vs self-reported AI use



Job descriptions and reported usage measure different things, but together they suggest AI fluency is becoming a baseline skill. The advantage will depend increasingly on what strategists do with the capacity it creates.

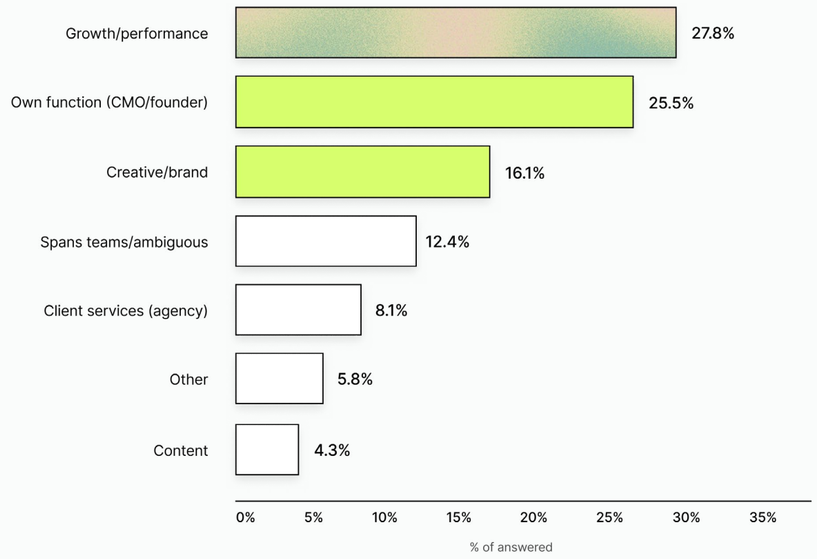
Increase your authority

Creating capacity gives you more room to work. Authority gives you a say in which work matters. That means influencing what gets tested, how results are interpreted, and what your team does next.

There is no single organizational home for creative strategy. Practitioners sit within growth and performance, report directly to founders or CMOs, or work across teams. Each position offers different access to evidence and decisions. What matters is whether that access gives strategists a meaningful say in the work they are expected to improve.

Creative strategy has no obvious place in the org chart

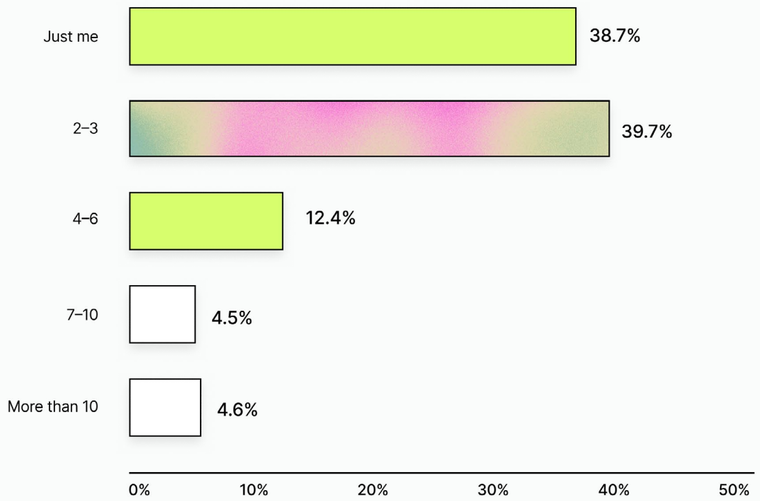
Primary team or reporting line among creative strategy practitioners, 2026



Organizational placement is only part of the picture. Nearly four in five practitioners work alone or on creative-strategy teams of two or three. Most have little infrastructure through which to exercise authority. On a larger team, understanding copywriting, production, media, and analytics can give you more work to direct. On a team of one, it can simply give you more work to do. That makes authority harder to inherit from the function itself.

Most creative strategists work alone or on teams of three or fewer

Number of people working on creative strategy at practitioners' organizations, 2026



One way to build influence is to get closer to the performance evidence behind creative decisions. Being able to explain what worked, what failed, and what to test next gives others a reason to act on your judgment. That evidence helps turn responsibility for producing work into influence over its direction.

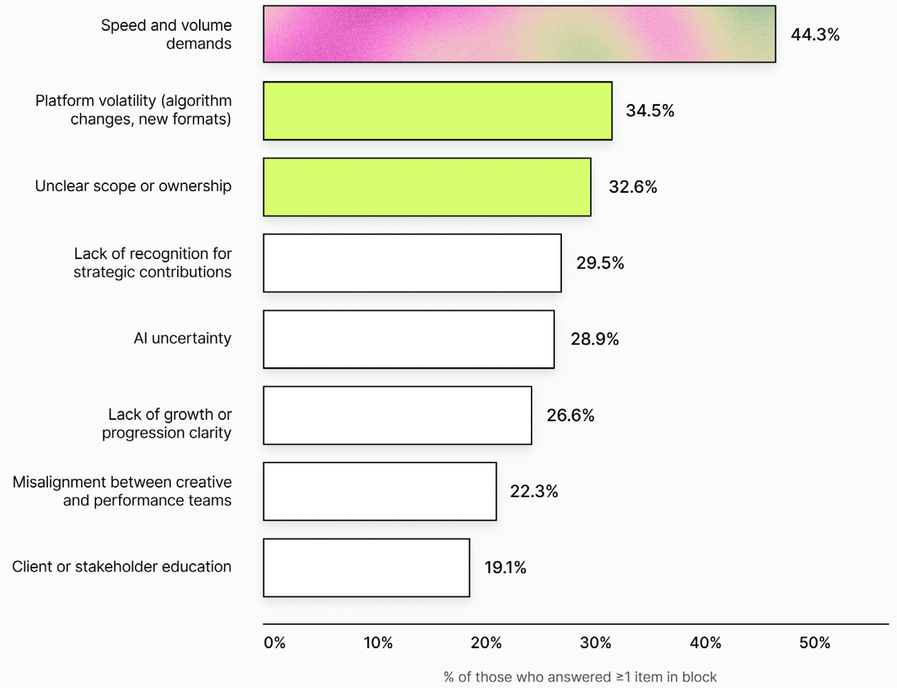
Protect your boundaries

Authority needs boundaries as well as influence. A strategist may be capable of contributing across the marketing function, but that does not make every adjacent task theirs to own.

Nearly one in three practitioners cites unclear scope or ownership as a leading frustration. Alongside pressure for speed and volume, that ambiguity makes an expansive role harder to manage: new responsibilities accumulate without agreement on what should take priority — or what should stop.

Unclear scope is one of practitioners' biggest frustrations

Share of the practitioners citing each issue as a top source of frustration, 2026



Creative strategy is unusually capable of absorbing work. Someone who moves between creative, performance, production, and media can plausibly contribute to almost anything. Without an agreed mandate, that versatility makes it easy for a temporary request to become a permanent responsibility.

The practical task is to make those trade-offs explicit. What does the strategist own? Which decisions can they make? When something new enters the remit, what moves out? Clear answers help preserve the capacity and authority that make breadth useful.

Recognition matters, too. Among practitioners in a well-defined creative-strategy function, 67% describe morale across their professional network as strong or generally optimistic. Among those doing the work without a recognized title or mandate, that falls to 37%.

That 30-percentage-point gap concerns perceptions of professional-network morale, rather than respondents' own job satisfaction. Even so, it points to an important distinction: doing the work and having the function recognized are different experiences.

A broad remit can give strategists permission to cross disciplines, influence decisions, and own more of the outcome. Without an agreed mandate, it can also leave them carrying responsibilities without the authority or recognition to match.

Well-defined roles report 30 points higher morale

Share who describe network morale as strong or generally optimistic, by role clarity, 2026



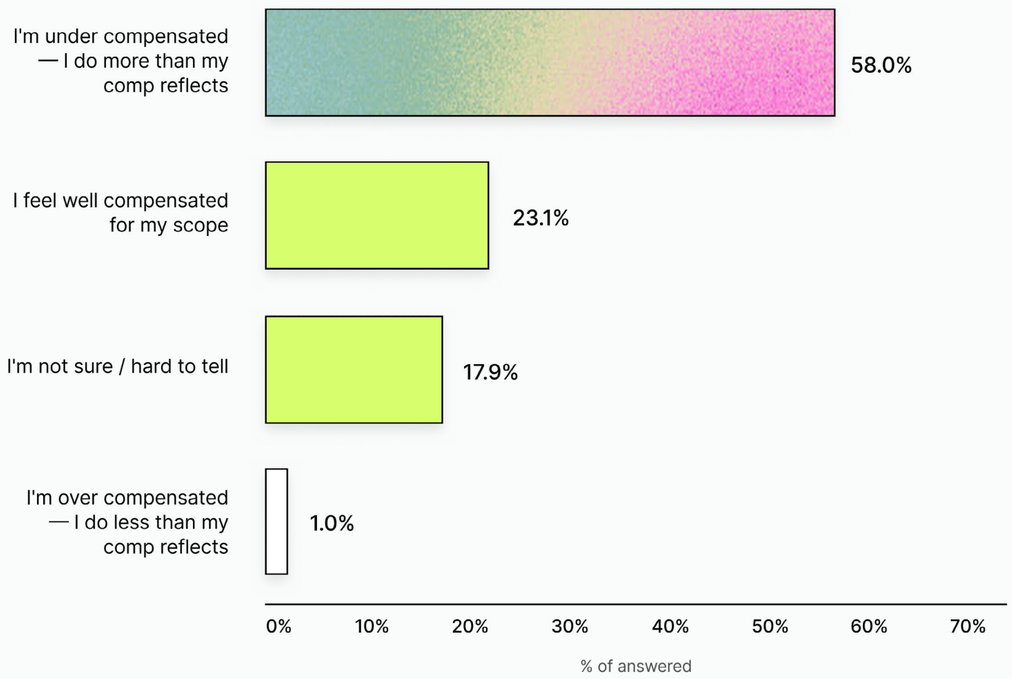


Capture your value

A recognized mandate makes it easier to explain what the role contributes. Compensation is another test of whether that contribution is understood. Fifty-eight percent of practitioners say they are undercompensated relative to their scope; just 23% feel well compensated.

Most practitioners say their pay hasn't caught up with their scope

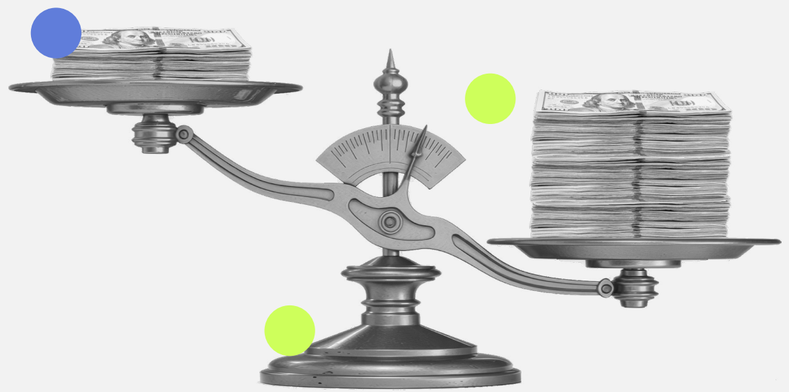
Assessment of whether compensation reflects scope of role, 2026



These responses describe a perceived gap between responsibility and reward. They do not establish what any individual should earn, but they show that most practitioners believe their compensation has not kept pace with the work they own.

Making that case requires more than listing additional tasks. It means showing how your judgment changes the work: which decisions you influence, which systems you improve, and how your contribution helps the team act on performance evidence.

The salary benchmarks that follow offer a reference point. The stronger case connects that market context to your actual remit—the decisions, people, and outcomes you are accountable for.



How much should creative strategists be getting paid?

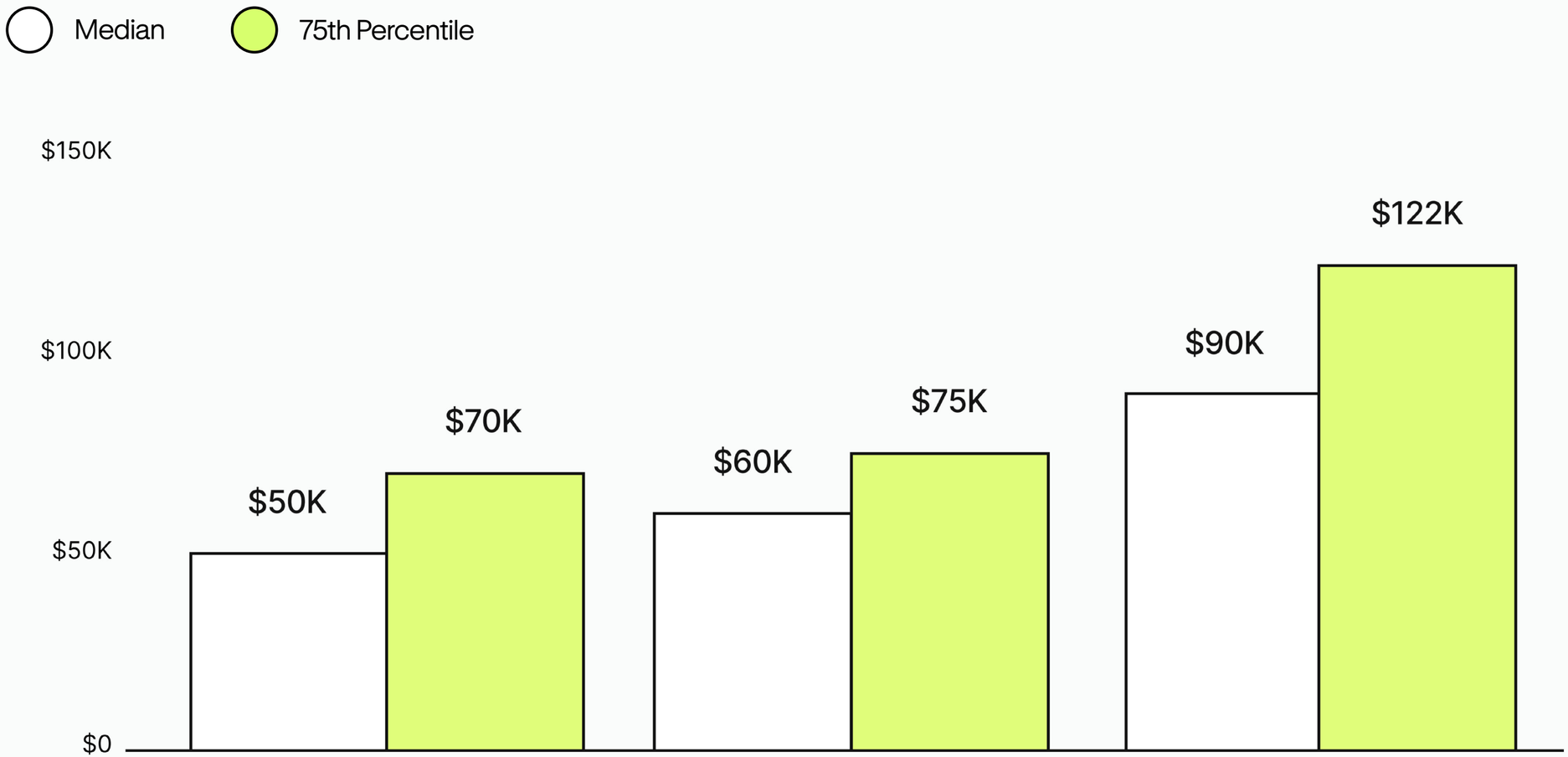
Creative strategy has no standard title, scope or pay scale. More than half of practitioners surveyed believe they are underpaid, while most hiring managers lack a salary benchmark. These charts provide a reference point: base pay by seniority across three regions, drawn from self-reported salary bands and expressed in US dollars.

Pay rises with seniority in every region, with the sharpest director-level premium in North America. Use the median to assess typical pay and the 75th percentile to benchmark more competitive offers.



Canada: base-pay by seniority

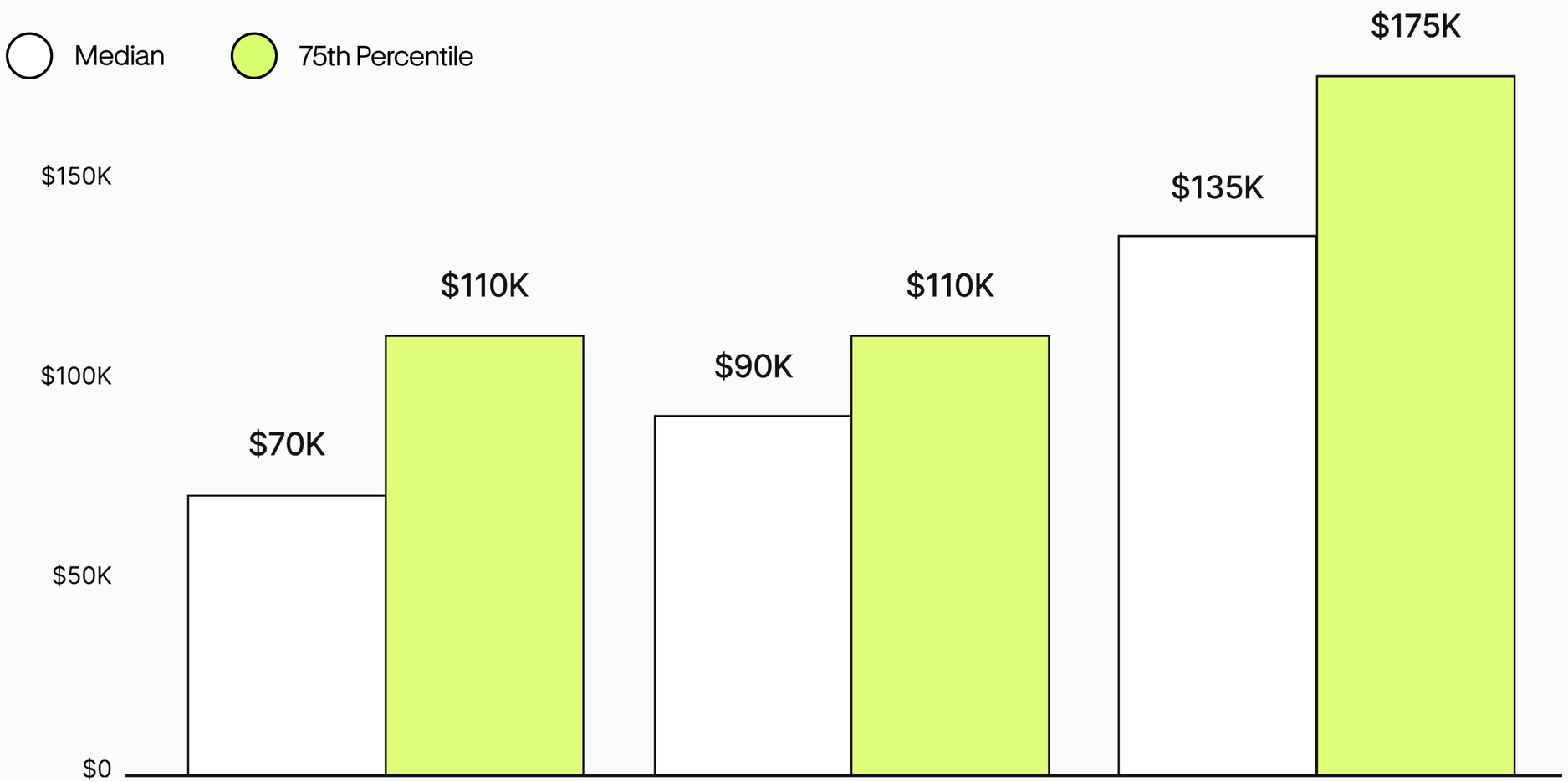
Annual base salary, USD





US: base-pay by seniority

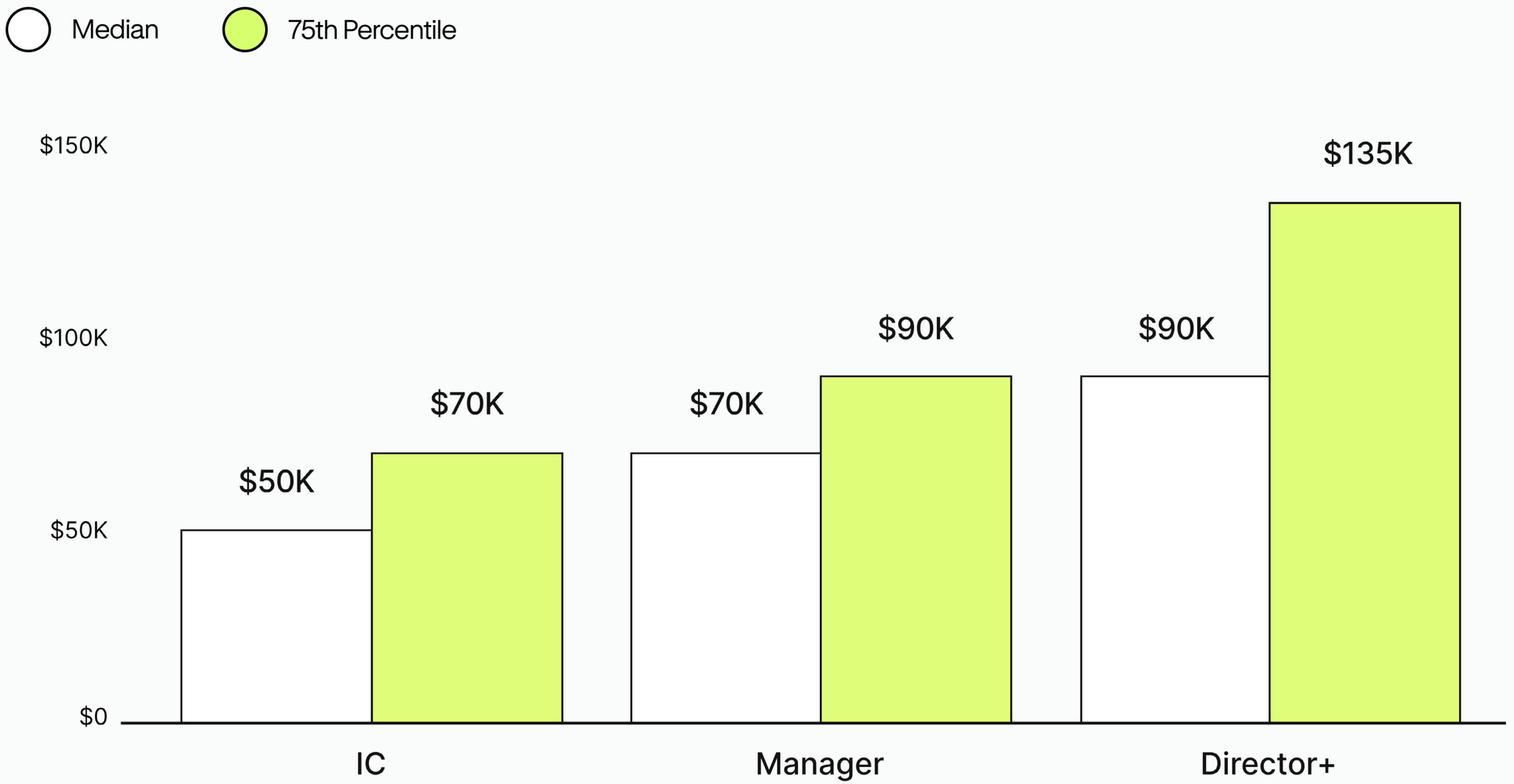
Annual base salary, USD



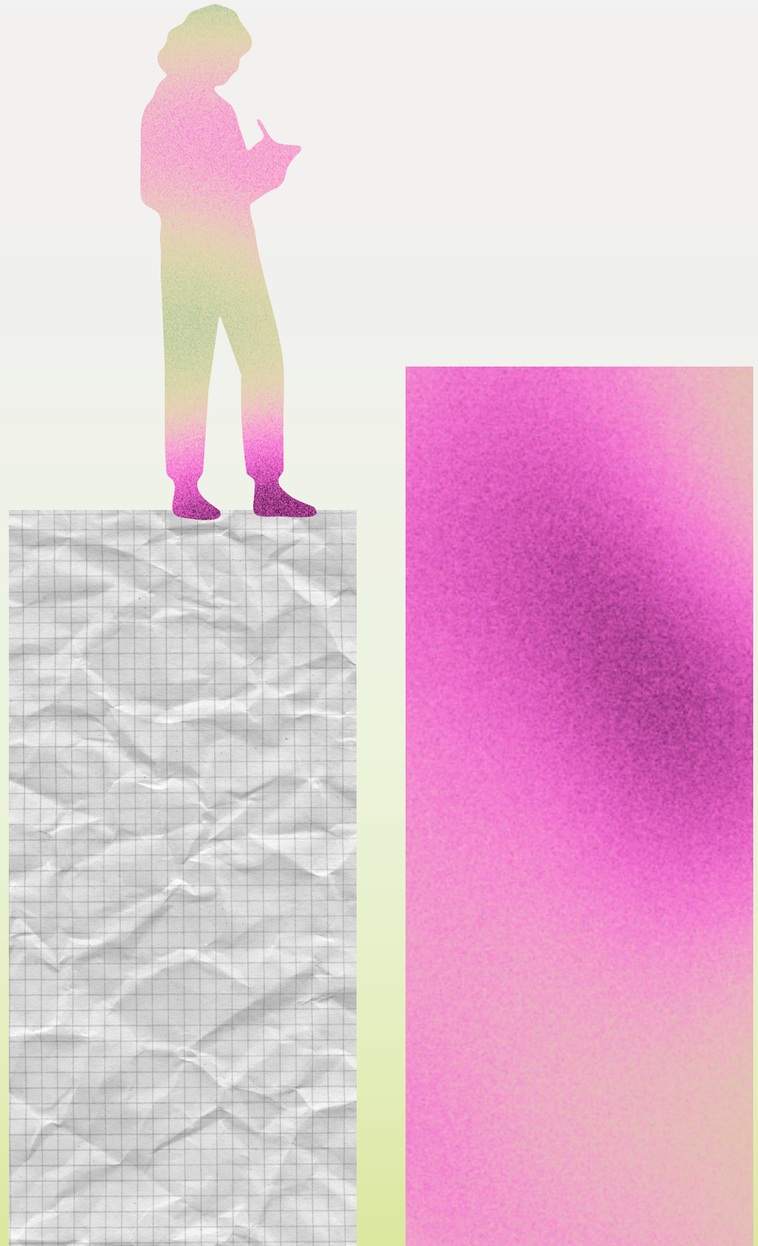


EMEA: base-pay by seniority

Annual base salary, USD







Part 3

Launchpad, not a ladder

Creative strategy broadens the path to marketing leadership

As a Director of Paid Creative, Joanna Wallace has control issues. “If you’re building a plane and you’re in charge of the wings, perfect wings only get you so far,” Wallace told us. “Nobody’s flying anywhere if the engine’s broken or there are no doors.” In her metaphor, the ad is the wing. The website is the door, and the offer is the engine.

“At a certain level in creative strategy, you realize how little of the funnel you actually control,” she said. “You can make the best ad in the account and it still sends people to a website or an offer you had no say in. So you start wanting a say in all of it.”

Her ambitions have expanded accordingly. Wallace wants responsibility for the website, newsletters, out-of-home and the rest of the funnel. Maybe that eventually makes her a head of creative, a head of marketing or a CMO. She is less interested in the title than in having responsibility for how all the pieces work together.

That interest in connecting the pieces also runs through Naomi Peh Haeger’s work. Where Wallace wants a wider view of the customer journey, Peh Haeger values the perspective that comes from learning across products and brands.

Peh Haeger came into creative strategy after moving between brand and growth roles and found a job that let her keep a foot in both. Now the possibilities are multiplying again: creative performance, perhaps, something approaching CMO or eventually an agency of her own. “I feel like I haven’t decided either,” she said when asked whether younger strategists should specialize or remain generalists.

Alongside her full-time role at Granola, Peh Haeger freelances across different product and brand spaces. The appeal is the opportunity to connect the dots: to learn how performance works in different contexts and bring those lessons to another marketing problem.

Wallace wants responsibility for more of the customer journey. Peh Haeger values learning across brands and disciplines. Both build on the range creative strategy has given them — a foundation for several paths into marketing leadership.

In Brief

This is becoming a career, not a way station. 55% of creative strategists say they see this as their long-term career path. Just 7% are already planning to leave, even though nearly three-quarters of the field has five years or less of experience.

The path to leadership is unusually short. Almost 59% of practitioners with less than a year in creative strategy are still individual contributors. Within three to five years, that share has nearly halved. By the ten-year mark, seven in 10 hold a Director-level title or higher.

There is no single job waiting at the top. Practitioners are splitting toward brand and creative leadership, independence, deeper specialization in creative strategy, and growth or CMO roles. The same breadth that accelerates their careers also gives them more than one place to take them.



Creative strategists say they are committing early

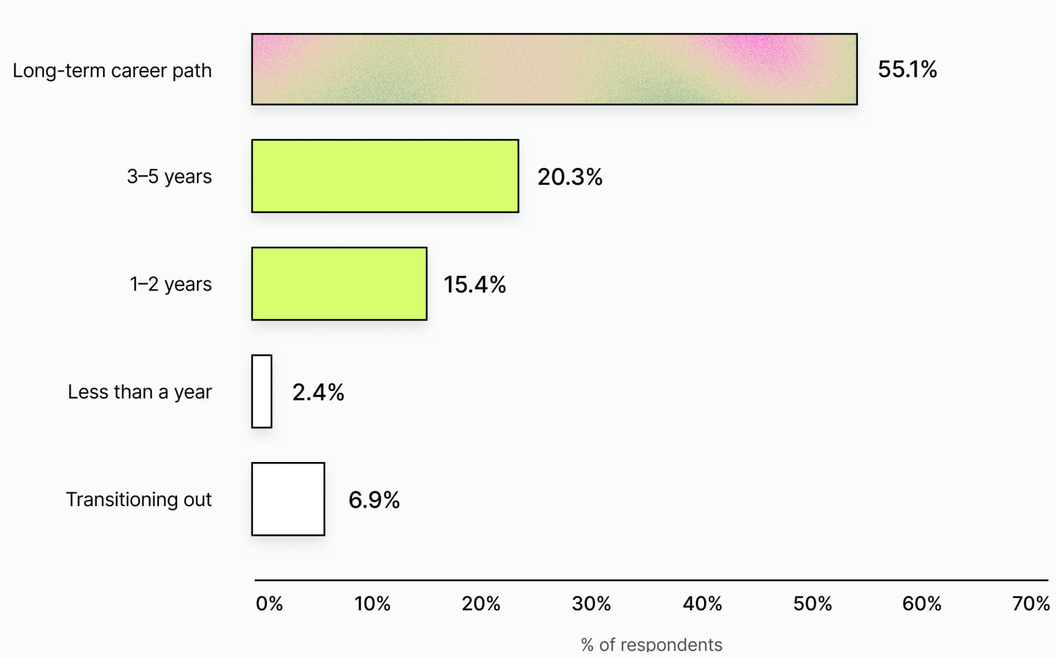






Most creative strategists see this as a long-term career

% of creative-strategy practitioners by how long they plan to remain in the field, 2026



Creative strategy may still be an emerging discipline, but the people doing it increasingly see it as a long-term destination. Fifty-five percent of practitioners describe creative strategy as their long-term career path. Very few are already planning to transition out.

That commitment comes early. Nearly three quarters of respondents have worked in creative strategy for five years or less, including one in five for under a year. Many are choosing a career whose senior roles and progression routes are still being defined.

We heard a version of the same uncertainty across several interviews for this report, and it didn't read as a deterrent. One strategist who's built a team under her said outright that she doesn't know where the ceiling is, since nobody in the field has held a senior title long enough to show her what comes next. Another, several years into the role, said she likes it precisely because it's less subjective than the brand work she came from. Data tells her what's working, so she doesn't have to argue about it. She's not sure yet whether that leads to a CMO title or a creative-performance role of her own invention, and she says she's building toward starting her own agency either way.

Creative strategists reach leadership roles faster than typical marketers

Among practitioners with less than a year in the field, 59% are still individual contributors. By three to five years, that share has nearly halved. By the ten-year mark, seven in 10 hold a Director-level title or higher.

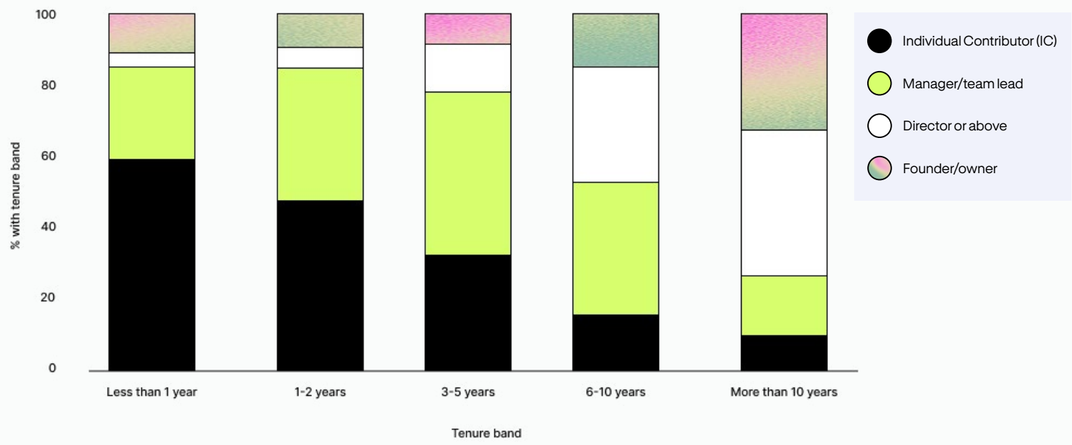
Set that against what a typical marketing career looks like. HubSpot's 2026 survey of marketing professionals puts the climb to director-level around 12 years, with most people needing five to eight years just to reach their first management title. Creative strategists are hitting Director+ in roughly the same window HubSpot's benchmark says it should take to reach management at all.

Creative strategy hands marketers the next function, and the title tends to catch up. That doesn't make seniority automatic. A title still has to be earned. But it does mean creative strategists are getting the kind of cross-functional exposure leadership eventually requires years before a traditional track would have handed it to them.

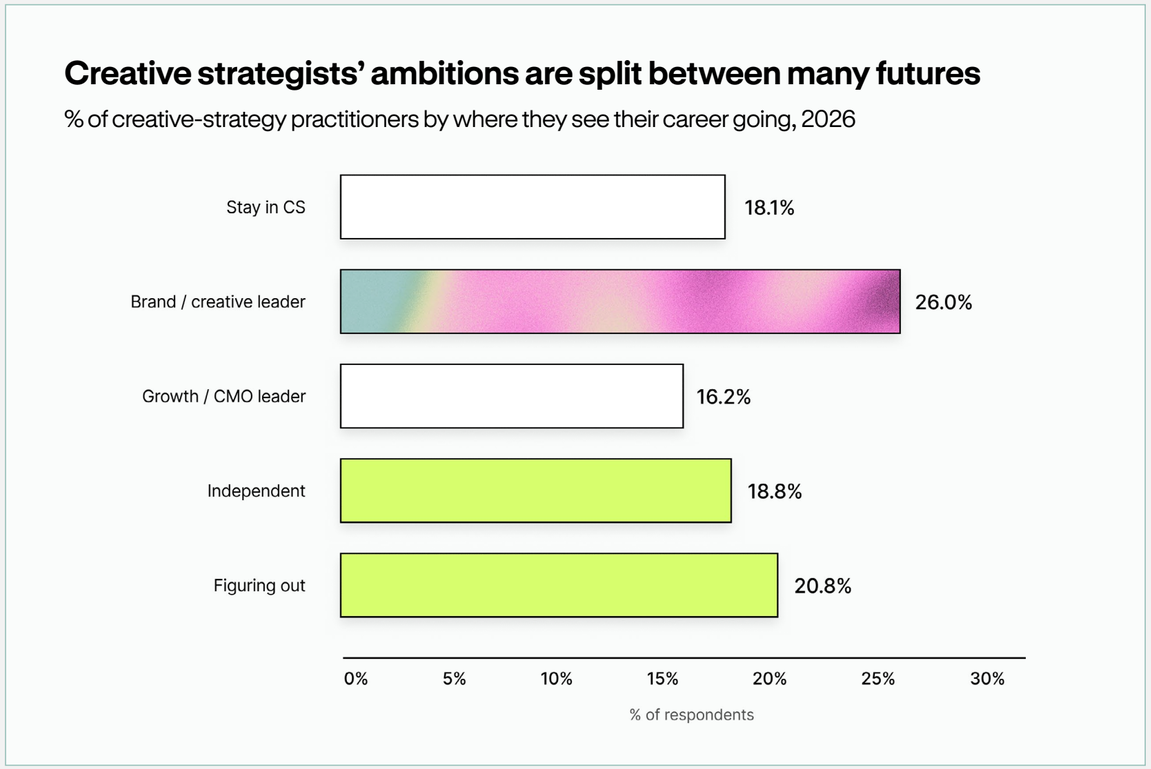


Creative strategists move into leadership quickly relative to peers

Share of practitioners by seniority level and years working in creative strategy, 2026



Creative strategy branches into four distinct careers



There's no single next step after creative strategy. Practitioners split across four genuinely different destinations. Twenty-six percent are moving toward brand or creative leadership. Nineteen percent plan to go independent. Eighteen percent are staying in creative strategy and going deeper. Sixteen percent are heading toward growth, performance, or eventually a CMO track. One in five say they're still figuring it out.

In interviews for this report, the destination tracked pretty closely to which side of the job someone already leaned into. Performance-driven strategists, the ones who came up fluent in budgets, testing, and revenue, talked about growth or CMO-track leadership as the obvious next step. The gap wasn't strategic judgment. It was media-buying fluency: learning to predict volume and margins well enough to run a budget rather than just report on one. Brand-driven strategists described the opposite gap. They already lead with positioning and creative quality, so the path toward creative leadership means broadening out, learning to think about a brand's full portfolio instead of a single performance channel.

Going independent traces back to something closer to temperament than skill. The job already asks strategists to move fast, pivot on a new format or algorithm change, and operate without much structure around them. People heading independent described that as practice for running something of their own, not a departure from what the job already demanded of them.

The strategists staying put, going deeper rather than moving on, weren't describing a lack of ambition. They described a craft that still feels unfinished, with new problems showing up faster than anyone's solved the old ones.



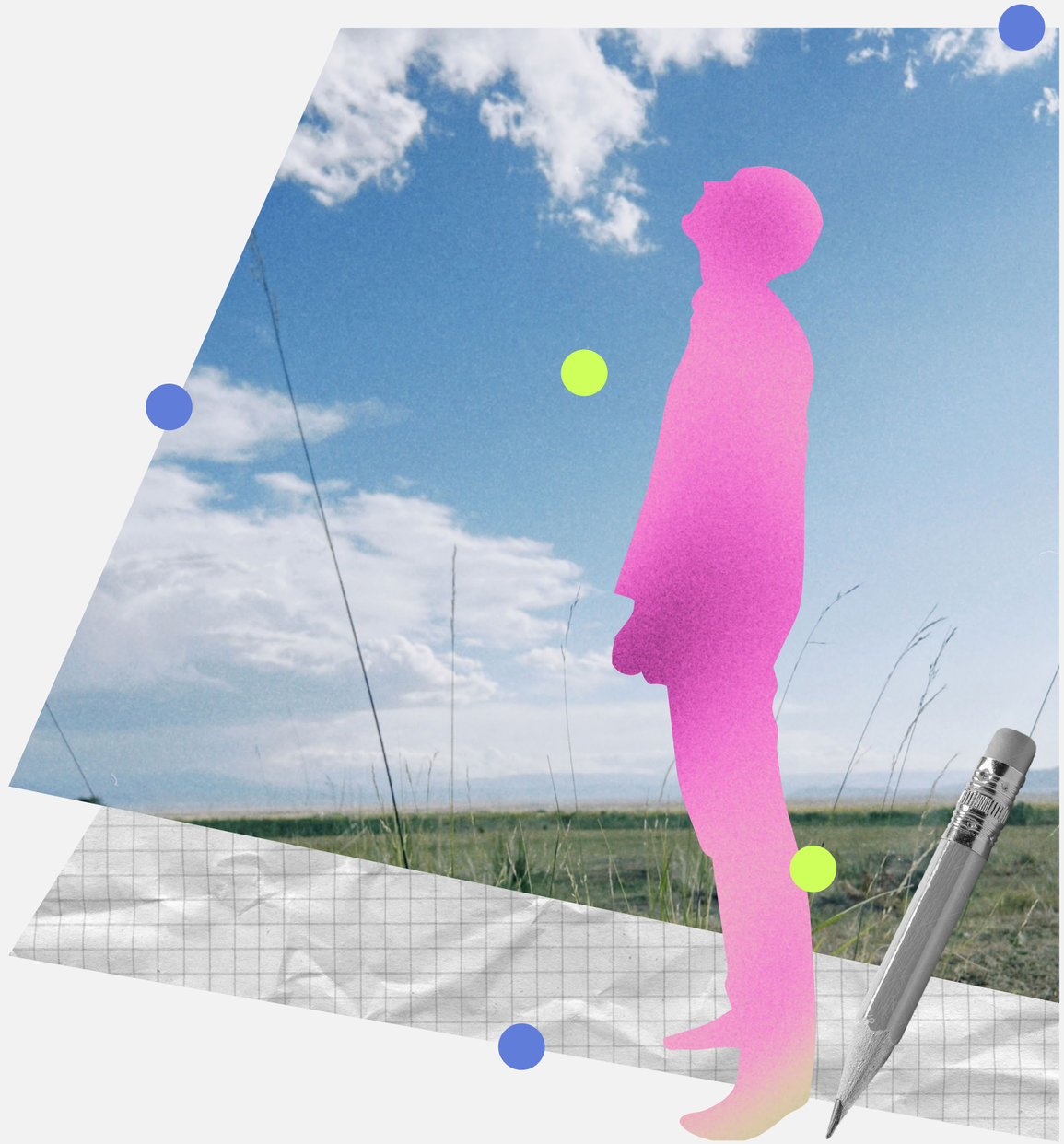
The outlook for creative strategy in 2027

Creative strategy is becoming an established career before it has become a standardized function. Practitioners are committing to the discipline, but titles, reporting lines, and mandates remain inconsistent. That gap creates both opportunity and uncertainty: strategists have several routes into leadership, with few agreed markers for navigating them.

Breadth alone will become a weaker source of differentiation as employers ask more marketers to work across functions. AI will further expand what individuals can produce. The stronger career advantage will come from translating that capacity into better decisions, repeatable systems, and measurable contributions to performance.

For practitioners, the priority is to make that contribution explicit. Define the decisions you own, establish boundaries around execution, and build evidence of how your judgment improves the work. Use that evidence to guide discussions about resources, compensation, and progression. Employers face a corresponding task. Hiring a strategist to connect creative and performance delivers limited value if the role lacks access to data, authority to influence decisions, or capacity to act. Organizations that want strategic judgment must create the conditions for it to shape the work.

The discipline's future is likely to encompass several paths: deeper specialization, creative leadership, growth leadership, and independent practice. What connects them is the ability to turn cross-functional understanding into responsibility for outcomes. In 2027, that is the capability practitioners should develop—and employers should recognize.



Appendix

A1. SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The survey was fielded to performance-marketing practitioners and yielded 1,736 total responses. From that pool, we built an analytic cohort of 1,195 respondents, defined as complete responses that passed the eligibility screen and reached the main survey ending.

Cohort Funnel

Stage	
Total responses	1,736
Complete	1,318
Partial	418
Screened out (Q1 = “None of the above”)	123
Eligible	1,613
Analytic default (final cohort)	1,195

Cohort composition, analytic default (n=1,195)

- **Region:** United States 49.2%, Europe 21.2%, Canada 10.3%, Asia Pacific 9.9%, Latin America 5.2%, Africa 2.7%, Middle East 1.5%
- **Seniority:** Individual contributor 36.5%, Manager/team lead 35.1%, Director or above 15.1%, Founder/owner 13.3%
- **Business type:** Brand 46.9%, Agency 31.2%, Freelance/consultant 21.9%

Readers should treat these figures as describing who responded to this survey, not the profession’s true population distribution. The sample was not drawn probabilistically and should be read as reflecting practitioners reachable through Runneth’s own community, audience, and partner channels.

A2. JOB POSTINGS METHODOLOGY

The postings dataset contains 1,410 performance-marketing job listings collected between March 2025 and July 2026, with no duplicate job IDs or listing URLs. No exclusion filter is applied to this dataset beyond the collection criteria themselves, since it functions as a census of postings meeting our search parameters rather than a screened sample.

Listing status. 191 postings were open at the time of collection, and 1,219 were closed. All 1,410 are included in skill, title, and function analysis regardless of status, since the report treats postings as a historical record of what employers asked for at the time of hiring, not a live snapshot of current openings.

Company mix. Non-DTC brand 51.6%, Agency 35.7%, DTC brand 12.7%.

Salary disclosure. Only 44.0% of postings disclose pay, and disclosed figures are concentrated in a handful of currencies (predominantly USD, with smaller shares in CAD, GBP, EUR, INR, and AUD). Given the disclosure rate and the mix of currencies and geographies involved, this report does not cite postings-derived salary figures anywhere in the analysis. All compensation statistics in this report, including the salary cheat sheet, come from the practitioner survey's self-reported bands.

Skill flags. Thirteen skill flags were coded per posting. All skill-breadth statistics in this report are therefore built from the flags: briefing, performance analysis, testing strategy, concept development, copywriting/scripting, creator sourcing, creator management, production, video editing, media buying, project management, people management, and AI.

Geography. Country data is harmonized to standard codes for 92.4% of postings; the remainder includes a handful of unmapped or ambiguous entries (e.g., "Worldwide," inconsistent country-name formatting) that were left unmapped rather than guessed.

A3. LIMITATIONS

- Founder and owner compensation is understated. The survey captured salary only, not equity. Founder/owner respondents make up 13.3% of the analytic cohort, and their reported compensation should not be read as their total earnings.

- Self-report bias. Ownership-of-responsibility and compensation-adequacy questions rely on respondents' own account of their role, which may run ahead of or behind how their organization would formally describe it.

- Job postings reflect what employers chose to write down, not the full scope of the role. This report treats that gap as a finding in its own right (see Part 1, "Practitioners do far more than employers ask for"), but it also means postings data should not be read as a complete description of any given job.

- Non-probability sample. Findings describe practitioners reachable through Runneth's audience and partner network. Directional patterns are likely to generalize; precise percentages should be read as describing this sample.

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