

Amplifying the Voices of Women CMOs in Fintech

**KEY INSIGHTS AND THEMES
FOR STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP**



Amplifying the Voices of Women CMOs in Fintech

In an industry as dynamic and fast-paced as fintech, the voices of women in leadership, particularly Chief Marketing Officers (CMOs), have never been more vital. As key drivers of brand innovation, customer experience, and business growth, women CMOs bring unique perspectives to an industry traditionally dominated by male voices. Amplifying their insights not only contributes to a more inclusive and diverse fintech landscape, but also highlights the critical role marketing plays in shaping the future of financial services.

In the third edition of our annual Women Fintech CMOs study, this year's report delves into the evolving role of these leaders with a specific focus on the women who are steering organizations through complex business environments, aligning brand with business strategy, and navigating the rapidly changing customer experience landscape. Their stories and strategies offer invaluable lessons for the future of the fintech industry because they are well-suited to become the its next cohort of CEOs.

This survey features insights from women CMOs and equivalent titles hailing from well-known financial technology companies and the investment community that propels them. You'll gain valuable insights into the marketing strategies they embrace, the technology they prioritize, their methods for attracting top talent, areas where they encounter challenges and the composition of their marketing mix. Additionally, you will learn how the CMO job at a fintech company requires much more than a simple marketing plan — **it requires being both a brand steward and the key strategic growth leader.**



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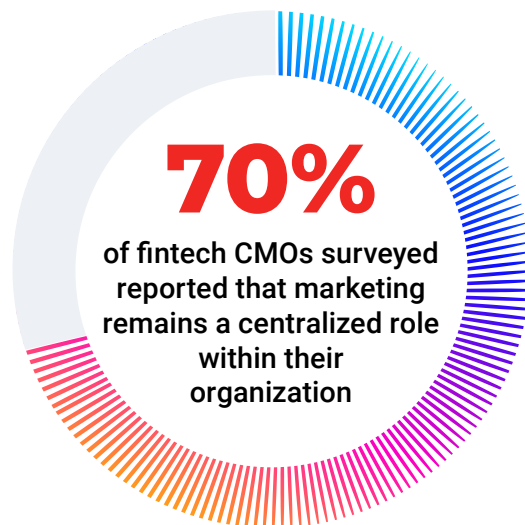
ABOUT THE FLETCHER GROUP

INSIGHT #1

The Evolving Role of CMO

A brand steward **AND** strategic growth leader

Over the past few years, some Fortune 500 companies have made headlines for eliminating or restructuring the CMO role by integrating marketing into broader business units like digital, strategy or operations. That shift is not as pronounced in the fintech space, where the responsibilities and impact of CMOs are expanding, as they lead an ever-growing and centralized marketing function. In fact, 70% of fintech CMOs we surveyed reported that marketing remains a centralized function within their organizations.



Our survey shows that marketing leaders are now expected to impact more areas than ever, including brand, customer experience and revenue functions, playing a crucial role in driving business growth. Their influence extends beyond marketing into product development and business strategy, making them pivotal collaborators across key departments.

Nearly all CMOs in our survey emphasized the vital link between their role, brand, and business growth. Kendra Rogers-Kelly, Chief Communications and Marketing Officer of Featurespace, captured this sentiment, “the CMO role is about creating stakeholder engagement and buy-in around positioning. And positioning is the most critical thing for a business.”

Brooke Fitts, Head of Payment Products & Strategy at First International Bank & Trust, further emphasized the expanding scope of the CMO’s responsibilities. “It’s about aligning the entire organization around a unified vision for growth, innovation, and customer experience,” she noted.

Today’s fintech CMOs are more than brand stewards; **they are essential drivers of company strategy**, intertwining brand value, customer experience, innovation, and revenue generation.

We know that businesses with strong brands are more successful overall—they have higher retention rates and can charge more in the market.”

**—Kendra Rogers-Kelly,
Chief Communications
and Marketing Officer,
Featurespace**

INSIGHT #1: THE EVOLVING ROLE OF CMO

This feedback highlights a key theme among fintech CMOs: marketing leaders are increasingly collaborating across key departments to drive integration across the entire business.

A September 2024 Forrester study points out that while 63% of Fortune 500s have a CMO or senior marketing

executive that reports directly to the CEO, 91% of financial services companies have CMOs.¹

And the CMOs we spoke to say their responsibilities are greatly expanding as they provide significant value as senior-level strategic leaders, central to shaping customer experience and driving growth.



“

Marketing is no longer just about campaigns, it's about shaping the entire customer experience. This requires leadership with a deep understanding of the market and the ability to build cross-functional partnerships that drive growth.”

—Brooke Fitts, Head of Payment Products & Strategy, First International Bank & Trust

CEOs who place marketing at the core of their growth strategies are

2X

as likely as their peers to **have greater than 5% growth**²

INSIGHT #2

The Ultimate CX Champions

Fintech CMOs are Well-Positioned to Step into the CEO Role

While many CEOs have historically come from operations or finance backgrounds, this is being challenged in the fintech space, as is the legacy mindset of marketing as a supporting function rather than a key driver of business strategy and growth. As the CMO role evolves—particularly in fintech, where growth is closely linked to brand awareness and customer experience—many CMOs believe we are beginning to see a shift in this trajectory.

As Kristi Lewis, Vice President of Marketing at Paramount Commerce, noted, “the legacy mindset that prioritizes finance backgrounds misses the strategic importance of customer experience. In fintech, where customer relationships are vital to success, CMOs are becoming natural contenders for CEO roles.”

Today’s CMOs are also positioned at the forefront of strategic decision-making. Natalie Rossiter, CMO of Vopay, explained, “CMOs act as the company’s eyes and ears, gathering insights from the market, customers, and competitors to ensure the organization stays aligned with its long-term vision.”

As the CMO role becomes more data-driven and growth-oriented, the traditional preference for finance executives as CEOs will likely be challenged. However, CMOs still face challenges from entrenched beliefs.

To break through, CMOs must continue to actively showcase their ability to drive growth across the organization, demonstrating how their impact is measured against business results. That also means stepping outside of their comfort zones and embracing cross-functional leadership opportunities that expose them to broader business challenges.



CMOs must continue to advance their ability to communicate in the financial and strategic language that resonates with the C-Suite.

CMOs need to forge stronger alliances with CFOs and COOs by linking marketing metrics with financial outcomes and operational efficiency.”

—Natalie Rossiter, CMO, VoPay



**Data-Driven
Marketing**

Brand & Positioning
Customer Experience
Strategy & Growth

INSIGHT #2: THE ULTIMATE CX CHAMPIONS

Sherry Kapralos, Senior Vice President and Group Manager at BMO Bank noted that “CMOs may have a perception (or reality) of a narrow acquisition focus and driving top-of-the-funnel activities, without a broader view of pricing, strategy, technology, financial levers, etc. These cross-functional, holistic views are needed for CEO roles.”



CMOs deeply understand and influence the business, but the importance of marketing has often been downplayed because it was seen as anecdotal. **With technology providing data and intelligence to demonstrate marketing's impact, the narrative is changing**, and I believe we will continue to see an increase in CMOs stepping into CEO positions.”

—**Claire Milazzo, Vice President of Marketing, PerformLine**

The Forrester study reinforces this point, noting that “a reason for CMOs leaving their roles that’s often left out in popular narratives: They move up.” Forrester Research Director Mike Proulx notes, “when you have CEOs that have marketing acumen, I would argue that they make some of the best CEOs because they’re looking at their enterprises and how they go to market in a much more holistic way.”¹

With their deep understanding of customer dynamics, brand strategy, and driving business growth, today’s fintech CMOs are establishing themselves as respected C-suite leaders.



INSIGHT #3

Today's Fintech CMOs Have the C-Suite Respect They Deserve

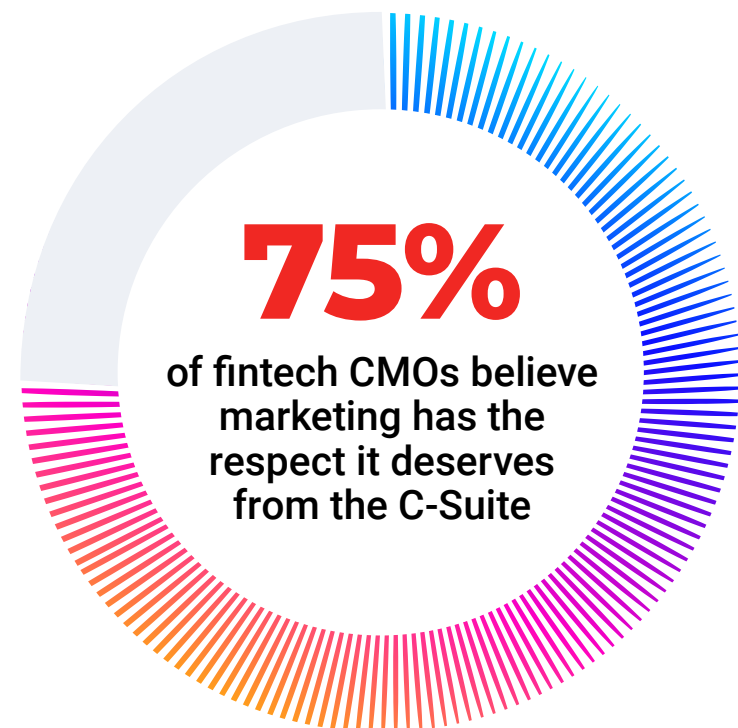
As long as they show measurable impact

By expanding their cross-functional influence and consistently proving their strategic impact, CMOs have worked hard to earn the respect of their C-suite peers, and it shows. When we asked fintech CMOs whether they believe marketing receives the respect it deserves within the C-Suite, the majority of our respondents believe that it does.

However, the CMOs agree that gaining and maintaining that respect hinges on one critical factor: the **CMO's ability to deliver measurable business outcomes**. And gaining this visibility and respect is no easy feat. Although many attribution tools can help leaders demonstrate the value of their work, proving success can still be challenging. As Laney Lewis, Partner at TTV Capital remarked, "marketing is both an art and a science. Good marketing has intangible value that can be difficult to measure, but you know when it works."

Nicole Callahan, Chief Marketing Officer of SRS Acquiom, echoed this sentiment, noting that "unlike other functions, everyone is marketed to in various aspects of their lives. As a result, some believe they have a greater understanding of what marketing is than they may actually have. It's imperative to approach marketing from a strategic growth and revenue-driven perspective."

Overall, CMOs largely agree that fintech marketing has indeed gained the respect it deserves, but that all connects back to how effectively marketing can demonstrate its value.



INSIGHT #4

Brand is Critical for Building Trust and Loyalty

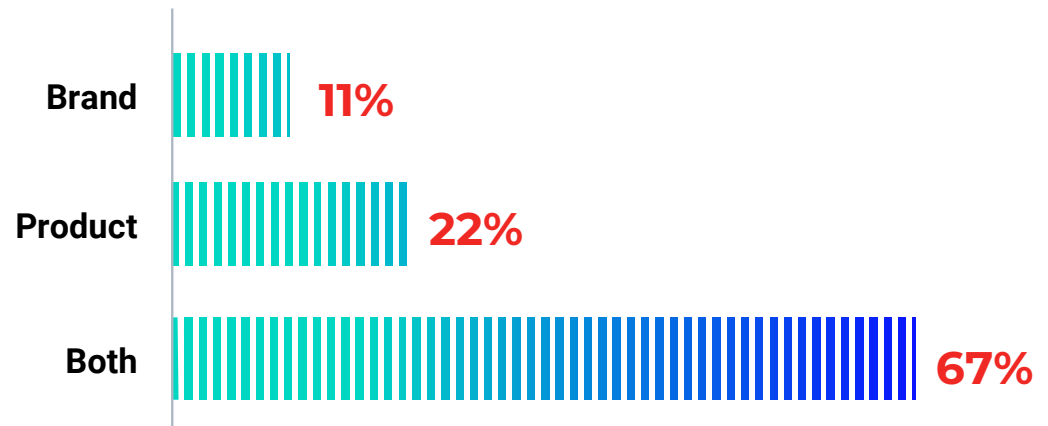
But it can't substitute for a subpar product

When asked about the importance of brand versus product, most fintech CMOs agree that it's not an "either-or" situation but a symbiotic relationship. Callahan emphasizes that it's not brand vs product, but an 'and' approach instead. "I believe tension on this front often arises when brand is viewed as a "logo" versus the strategic growth lever a well-crafted brand can be," she says. "Products, coupled with client experience, are key brand proof points. All elements should work together - not in competition with each other."

So while it's clear that brand plays a crucial role in establishing trust and fostering customer loyalty, it can't compensate for a subpar product.

As Brooke Fitts noted, "brand is what builds long-term trust. Customers need to believe in the reliability and security of your offerings before they even consider the product. But if the product doesn't deliver, the brand can only take you so far." Sherry Kapralos at BMO noted, "brand leads to trust, and trust leads to business - brand is critical over product."

WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT?



INSIGHT #4: BRAND IS CRITICAL FOR BUILDING TRUST AND LOYALTY

In an industry where many different products may solve similar customer pain points, a strong brand can be a key differentiator that helps drive loyalty.

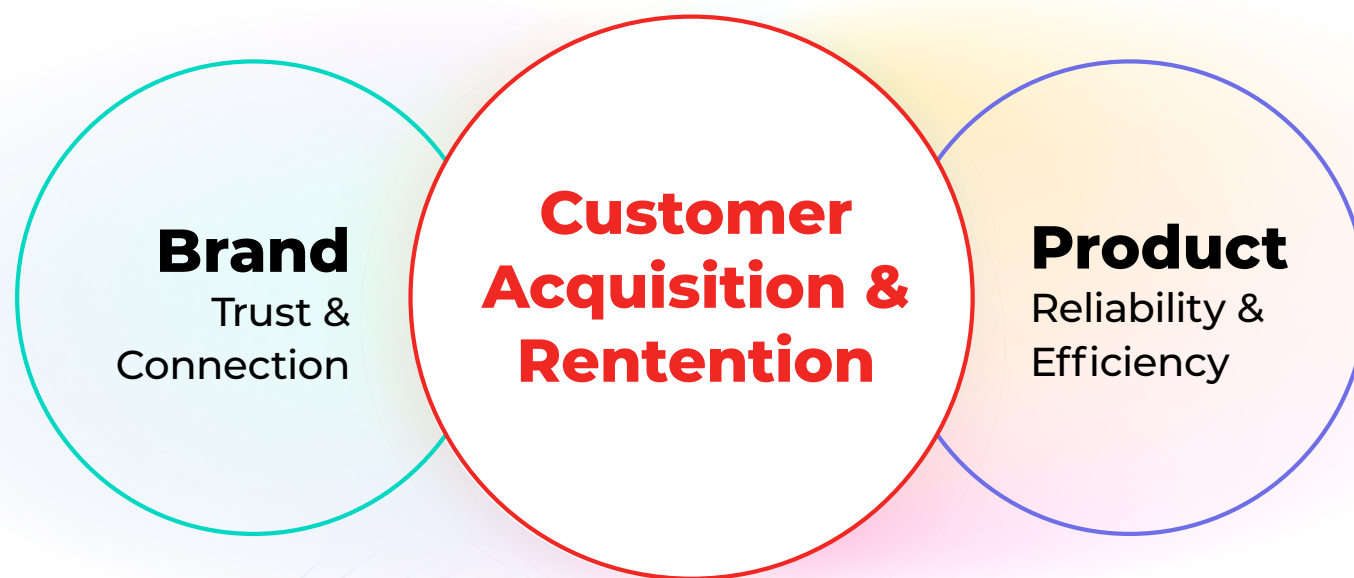
While most CMOs support the balanced importance of both brand and product, the emphasis may shift depending on the specific business. Lindsey Ogan, CMO of Stride Bank, offered a different perspective. “In our business, product is everything. Operational excellence is what matters most to our customers.”

Ultimately, a strong brand can establish the trust that helps drive loyalty and acquisition and retention, but it must be supported by a reliable product. For most CMOs, neither can stand alone—each complements the other in creating lasting business growth.



The balance between brand and product is key. Brand establishes trust and emotional connection with customers, while product ensures reliable and efficient retention.”

—Rina Hahn, CMO, Remitly



INSIGHT #5

Attracting Top Talent

CMOs prioritize curiosity, innovation, and a commitment to continuous learning

Attracting top marketing talent in fintech presents some unique challenges. Companies need candidates with a balance of creativity and technical acumen to understand complex products. There is often a steep learning curve associated with learning the payments and fintech space.

To meet this challenge, many CMOs emphasize their company's focus on both innovation and growth throughout the hiring process. This helps attract candidates who want to make an impact, are excited to learn, and be part of something dynamic and cutting-edge.

A BALANCE OF CREATIVITY AND TECHNICAL ACUMEN

CMOs emphasize a focus on both innovation and growth throughout the hiring process.

AGENCY PARTNERSHIPS

To remain flexible, many CMOs also leverage talented freelancers or agency partners that can step in and execute key programs quickly. However, it's crucial that these partners have a deep understanding of the company's brand and messaging to ensure consistency in their work.

Curiosity has also become an essential quality that CMOs look for. In an industry that's constantly evolving, a passion for continuous learning can help candidates stand out even if they lack that specific industry expertise. As Rogers-Kelly stated, "in interviews, I ask candidates what type of training they would do if given the opportunity. This helps me gauge their curiosity level and whether they are excited to learn new skills. It also shows candidates that we are invested in their growth."

CMOs are increasingly utilizing platforms like Glassdoor and LinkedIn, where employees share their experiences, as part of their strategy to attract top talent. This helps build the company's reputation as a desirable place to work. After all, hiring is a two-way street—candidates need to feel excited about joining a company just as much as companies need talented candidates.

INSIGHT #6

CMOs Plan to Spend More in 2025

Fintechs continue to maintain or grow their investments

Marketing spend is necessary for building brand awareness and helping companies meet customer acquisition goals to drive growth. As we head into 2025, the majority of CMOs—82%—plan to increase their marketing investments, while the remaining 18% plan to maintain current levels. Notably, none of the CMOs surveyed plan to decrease their marketing spend. This marks an increase from last year, when 87% of CMOs planned to invest the same or more.



We're growing.

Marketing is an active participant as the bank grows."

*—Lindsey Ogan,
CMO, Stride Bank*



Simply put, **we're investing more because it's working.**

*—Rina Hahn, CMO,
Remitly*

The reasons behind the increasing investments vary. For some organizations, it's about driving growth or launching new products or features, while for others, it's simply because their marketing strategies are delivering the results they need.

As CMOs increase their marketing budgets, where exactly are they directing those resources? The marketing mix, of course, depends on the unique needs of each business, but there are some notable trends.

One of the most common themes for 2025 is an increased focus on PR and earned content. Many CMOs are concentrating on securing media coverage to highlight their thought leadership. As one CMO noted, "earned media remains a key part of our strategy, as industry recognition and media coverage help build credibility and trust."



The C-Suite at Paramount Commerce recognizes the importance of marketing as a strategic partner to achieve its business goals.

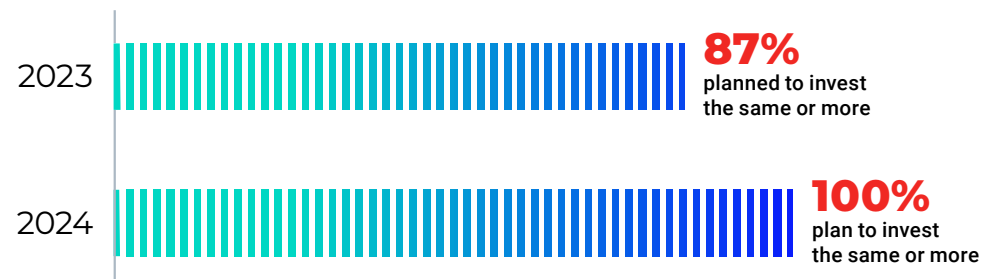
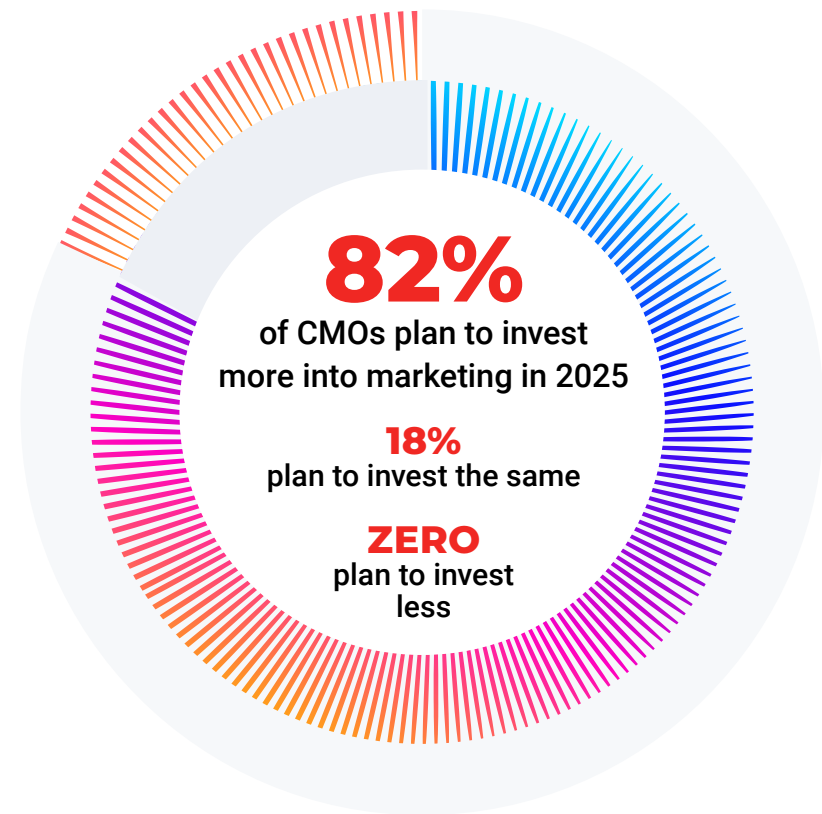
With a focus on feature development and market expansion, marketing is a critical piece of that puzzle."

*—Kristi Lewis, VP of Marketing,
Paramount Commerce*

INSIGHT #6: CMOs PLAN TO SPEND MORE IN 2025

Owned content also continues to be a major focus for many CMOs. Several mentioned they plan to double down on this next year, with trends emerging in the types of content that resonate most and least with their audiences:

- **Video** has risen in prominence, with many CMOs citing it as highly effective in engaging their target audiences and helping to convey complex messages.
- **Long-form content** such as eBooks and whitepapers remains vital to CMOs.
- **Visual Content** such as infographics continue to be important, showing that audiences value data-driven, visually engaging formats.
- CMOs are divided on the impact of **social media content**. Some CMOs emphasize its immense value and importance, while others rank it lower on their list of priorities. The effectiveness depends on the specific audience or campaign goals.
- **Podcasts:** Many CMOs noted that podcasts have been one of the least effective forms of content for their audiences. This mirrors feedback from last year, where CMOs reported that despite the considerable investment of time and resources, podcasts delivered lower ROI.



INSIGHT #7

Generative AI Tools Have Had a Positive Impact

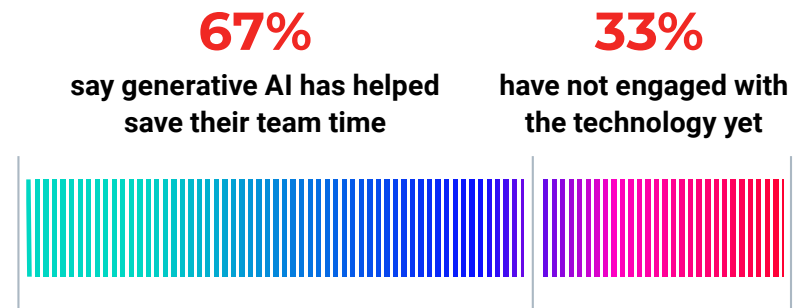
Fintechs continue to maintain or grow their investments

The majority of CMOs, 67%, say that generative AI tools like Chat GPT have helped save their teams time and make them more efficient. This is an increase from 2023 where just over half of CMOs reported that AI had increased their team's efficiency.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, 33% of CMOs have not engaged with the technology yet. CMOs that have not yet fully integrated the technology within their marketing strategy want to gather more meaningful data and insights around the best ways to leverage AI tools. However, as we found last year, CMOs do see the potential of AI becoming a powerful tool and an integral part of marketing strategies, especially for content creation, audience segmentation and predictive analytics.

While generative AI has become an important tool for many marketers, **what is most important is that all teams ensure they are approaching their use of the tool with ethics and compliance at the forefront.**

Namely, marketers should be rewarded to develop and maintain detailed policies about protecting confidentiality while using AI, as well as rigorous fact-checking and editorial standards.



INSIGHT #8

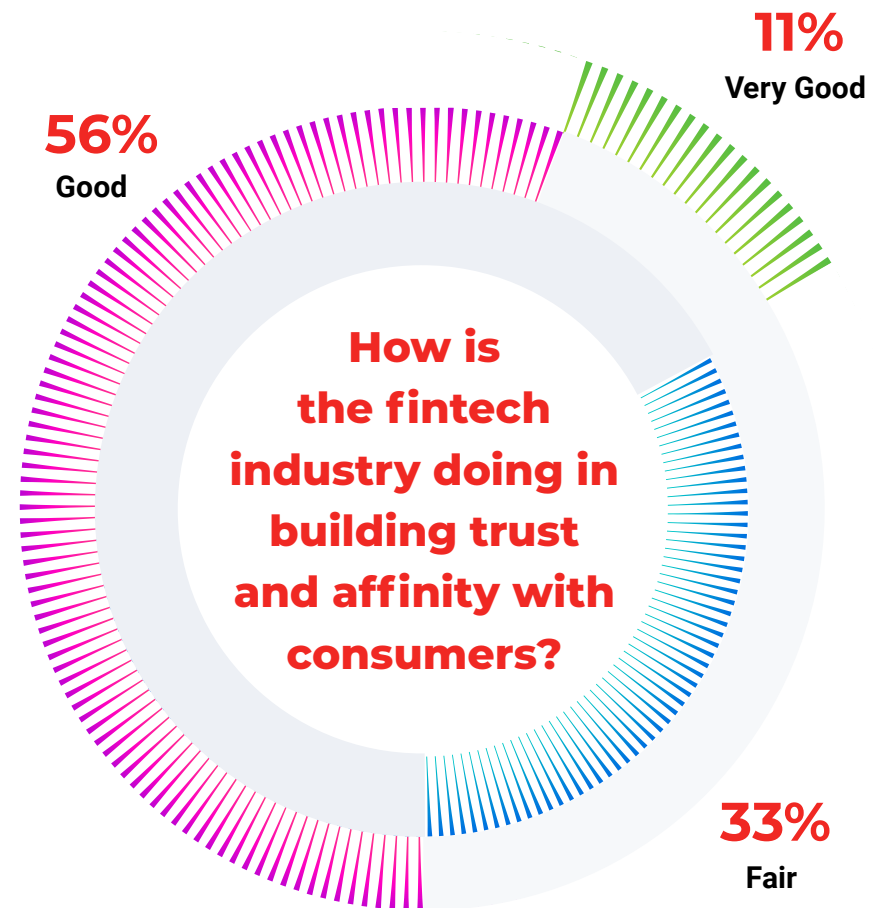
Trust is at the Heart of a Fintech Brand

CMOs want improvement

Trust has always been a cornerstone of the fintech industry, which was born out of the need to expand financial services to underserved markets. Today, trust has become even more critical as fintechs navigate turbulent times marked by regulatory scrutiny and rising customer expectations.

When asked how the industry is doing in building affinity and trust, **67% of respondents rated the industry's performance as "good" or "very good," while 33% said it's only "fair."** However, even among the positive ratings, CMOs agreed that there's significant room for improvement.

Many CMOs acknowledged that mistakes in the industry have impacted trust. As Nancy Eichler, SVP of Marketing at Sezzle, pointed out, "fintechs are making great strides but face some challenges in building and maintaining trust. And those who don't prioritize transparency and long-term value won't be around for long."



INSIGHT #8: TRUST IS AT THE HEART OF A FINTECH BRAND

Compliance must be a top priority for fintechs. Many CMOs also shared this sentiment, noting how critical a commitment to transparency is in building and maintaining trust.

On the other hand, fintechs do have a natural advantage in building trust in some respects. Lindsey Ogan pointed out that fintechs are inherently customer-centric. “Unlike large banks, which sometimes prioritize profit over customer needs, fintechs are solving nagging customer problems. That’s why they continue to grow.”

It’s also important to consider how trust in the fintech space can vary by region. In Canada, for example, consumers tend to be more risk-averse and have a high degree of trust in incumbent financial institutions. But as Kristi Lewis noted, consumers are starting to demand more. “As fintechs continue to innovate and provide exceptional services that aren’t matched by the banks, consumer trust will be earned,” she said.

COMPLIANCE MUST BE A TOP PRIORITY FOR FINTECHS.

“Astute fintechs realize that an effective compliance program, one that supports consumer protection efforts, is critical to ensuring their brand’s continued trust with partners and, most importantly, with consumers...”

—*Claire Milazzo, Vice President of Marketing, PerformLine*



CONCLUSION:

Each year we conduct the Women CMOs in Fintech Report, we discover a new group of strategic marketing leaders who are redefining the role of CMO to match the growth momentum of this industry. And while the progress toward gender parity in the C-Suite has been slow, McKinsey's Women in the Workplace study does report that women today make up 29% of C-Suite positions, compared with just 17% in 2015.³

As more women ascend to Chief Marketing Officer, they're no longer charged with just managing the brand and the messaging, but also being a customer voice champion, a cross-department collaborator, and a strategic growth leader. All skills necessary to become the next generation of fintech CEOs and propel the fintech industry forward.

CMOs were
asked to sum up fintech
marketing in one word, they said:

Accelerated
Regulation
Disintermediation
Turbulent
Transformative
Integrity
Adapt
Compliance-focused
Opportunity

Thanks to the dynamic group of marketing leaders who contributed their insights to this report:

- Nicole Callahan, Chief Marketing Officer, SRS Acquiom
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- Laney Lewis, Partner, TTV Capital
- Claire Milazzo, Vice President of Marketing, PerformLine
- Lindsey Ogan, Chief Marketing Officer, Stride Bank
- Kendra Rogers-Kelly, Chief Communications & Marketing Officer, Featurespace
- Natalie Rossiter, Chief Marketing Officer, VoPay

¹ Bruce, I., Proulx, M., (2024, September 19). *The CMO Role is Alive and Well*. Forrester. <https://www.forrester.com/what-it-means/ep384-cmo-tenure/>

² Fusaro, R., Rahilly, L., Tas, R. (2024, March 7). *Analyzing the CEO-CMO relationship and its effect on growth*. McKinsey & Company. <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/growth-marketing-and-sales/our-insights/analyzing-the-ceo-cmo-relationship-and-its-effect-on-growth>

³ Field, E., Krivkovich, A., McConnell, M., Smith, H., Yee, L. (2024, September 17). *Women in the Workplace 2024: The 10th-anniversary report*. McKinsey & Company. <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/women-in-the-workplace>



ABOUT THE FLETCHER GROUP:

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To learn more about how we help marketing leaders bring their vision to life, [visit **fletchergroupllc.com**](https://www.fletchergroupllc.com).

