# BRAND COMMERCE™ INTEL FOR TODAY'S CMO

THE BLUE CHIP WHITE PAPER SERIES

# THE FIGHT TO PROVE THE VALUE OF MARKETING

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS



blue chip

# Introduction

## Marketing’s Moment of Truth

01

### Navigating Marketing Challenges in a High-Pressure Era

As margins tighten and growth slows, proving the value of marketing has never been more urgent—or more difficult. Blue Chip’s 2025 Survey of 100 CPG marketing professionals offers a rare inside look at how marketing leaders are navigating brand advertising and campaign activations in an era of relentless pressure, budget scrutiny and sky-high expectations. The findings reveal an industry at a crossroads, where only the most collaborative and data-driven marketers will thrive.

### Turning Marketing Pressure into Opportunity

But this report is more than a diagnosis—it’s a playbook. Inside, you’ll find the strategies and organizational shifts that high-performing marketers are using to align with finance, defend their budgets and drive measurable growth for their brands. From advanced analytics to test-and-learn budgeting, this white paper outlines a clear path for marketers ready to turn pressure into performance.

### The Takeaway

Our survey signals a strategic inflection point: CPG marketers who embrace collaboration, measurement and innovation will not only weather today’s pressures—they’ll drive lasting growth.

02

# Facing the Breaking Point

## Margin Pressures and Economic Struggles Redefine the CPG Landscape

Blue Chip's 2025 Survey found that 89% of CPG professionals who manage marketing campaigns rate margin pressure as significant for their brands. Those same marketers report that the main drivers of that pressure are a complex mix of cost of goods (69%), retailer pricing demands (39%), fierce competition (28%) and supply chain disruptions (25%).

There's no sugarcoating it—the state of the industry is stark. The world's top 50 CPG companies by revenue managed just 1.2% year-over-year growth in the first half of 2024.[1]

Meanwhile, five-year annualized shareholder returns for the largest CPGs have dropped by more than half as investors lose faith in price-driven growth.[2] Similarly, persistent inflation, tariffs and supply chain disruptions abound.[3]

But the impact goes beyond the balance sheet; there is also a human cost to these pressures. Many marketers report feeling overwhelmed, undervalued and emotionally exhausted.[4]

**89%**
of CPG marketers rate margin pressure as very or extremely significant for their brands

### The Takeaway

Margin pressure has become an urgent and multifaceted challenge for CPG marketers, with deep financial and emotional consequences across the industry.

1 Bain & Company's 2025 Consumer Products Report
2 Ibid.
3 JP Morgan 2025 US Tariffs Report
4 Marketing Week's 2025 Career & Salary Survey (subscription required)

# Value Proposition

## The Fight to Prove Marketing's Worth

03

**With tighter budgets, marketers must justify every dollar spent on their campaigns. According to the Blue Chip 2025 CPG Survey, 95% of marketers find demonstrating ROI to finance challenging, with 61% saying it's "very" or "extremely" challenging.**

CPG companies that invest in advanced analytics, such as multi-touch attribution and full-funnel measures, are significantly more likely to defend—or even grow—their marketing budgets.[1] And to boost sales and profits, CPGs must scale digital tools, especially AI, that drive greater productivity efficiency and effectiveness.[2]

A recent McKinsey study found that boosting revenue growth management (RGM) capabilities can yield a 3–5% return on sales—making it the top near-term lever for most CPG brands.[3] Meanwhile, new analytics tools, especially those combining location and sales data, enable smarter forecasting, precise optimization and real-time performance tracking.[4]

**95%**

of CPG marketers find demonstrating ROI to finance challenging

So what does all this tell us? In a margin-constrained world, marketers who embrace data, tech and financial fluency aren't just surviving—they're leading.

### The Takeaway

In a margin-constrained world, marketers who lean into data, financial fluency and performance analytics aren't just surviving—they're leading.

1 Gartner's 2025 CMO Spend Survey
2 Bain & Company's 2025 Consumer Products Report
3 2024 McKinsey CPG Report
4 NIQ's 2024 CPG Data Report (2 parts)

04

# A Tale of Two Marketers

## The Revenue-Focused Trailblazer versus the Old-School Traditionalist

The Blue Chip 2025 CPG Survey reveals a divide in the way CPG marketers navigate the relentless squeeze on margins and heightened demands from finance and, ultimately, in how they demonstrate value.

## The Trailblazer

### Data driven, finance minded, collaborative

Our survey shows that many marketers use a mix of advanced, revenue-based analytics to link campaigns to sales, profit and customer value. To justify budgets, they highlight KPIs like customer acquisition cost (48%), incremental revenue (29%) and customer lifetime value (23%). But their modern approach doesn't stop there: it also includes things like partnering with finance and working cross-functionally with other departments.

## The Traditionalist

### Speaks in buzzwords, finance as obstacle, siloed

Others remain stuck, leaning too heavily on softer metrics—like brand awareness and engagement (43%)—avoiding data that links marketing directly to revenue. Similarly, traditionalists often maintain outdated practices with finance teams and sidestep collaboration with other departments. This disconnect can gradually undermine their credibility with each new budget cycle.

### The Takeaway

A clear divide has emerged between progressive "trailblazer" marketers and outdated "traditionalist" marketers in how they prove marketing's value. Those who cling to traditional, siloed approaches risk losing relevance, credibility and budget.

# Warning Signs of Traditional Approaches

## Silos, Struggles and Stalled Growth

05

Blue Chip's 2025 CPG Survey highlights an important gap: While 68% of CPG marketers recognize that CFOs prioritize profit and margin growth, a notable portion still find it challenging to align with finance in day-to-day practice.

**46%**
of CPG marketers say their teams operate in silos

### Financial Disconnect

- 1 in 10 marketers say they only "occasionally" collaborate with finance.
- 7% feel only "slightly" aligned with finance on key performance indicators.
- 9% report that marketing is still perceived as a cost center within their organizations.

### Outdated Operations

- 46% say their teams operate in silos.
- 17% rarely use test-and-learn methods to justify spend.
- 6% work for brands that resist adopting modern measurement frameworks.

### The Takeaway

Organizations where marketing is siloed and seen as a cost center face budget cuts and slower growth. The gap between "revenue engine" and "cost center" is widening.

# The Reality

06

## Trailblazing CPG Marketers Are Optimistic Amid Budget Uncertainty

Blue Chip's 2025 CPG Survey found positive signs that trailblazing marketing is occurring within many CPG organizations. For example, 91% of marketers believe their teams are seen as revenue drivers by other functions within their organization. 89% collaborate with finance at least quarterly.

93% say marketing and finance teams are "mostly" or "completely" aligned on business goals and KPIs. And highly integrated, cross-functional teams are the norm for 53% of the CPG marketing respondents.

Test-and-learn approaches are widespread—83% use them "often" or "always" to justify incremental marketing investment.

However, even among this trailblazing group, margin pressure and the need to prove ROI haven't diminished. When asked about their biggest barriers to defending or growing marketing budgets, they cited:

- Short-term thinking from leadership (28%)
- Lack of actionable data (24%)
- Siloed decision-making (17%)
- Weak collaboration with finance (16%)
- Inability to prove ROI (15%)

**91%**

of marketers believe their teams are seen as revenue drivers for their organization

**and yet...**

these same marketers believe there are still barriers to defending their budgets

### The Takeaway

While many CPG marketing teams are making real strides in aligning with finance, adopting test-and-learn strategies and being seen as revenue drivers, persistent barriers continue to hinder their ability to prove ROI and secure budget growth.

07

# Recommendations

## The Path to Trailblazer Marketing

### For All Marketers:

1 **Embrace a test-and-learn culture.** Earn investment one proof point at a time. Prioritize advanced analytics to connect marketing to revenue and profit.

2 **Build cross-functional teams** with unified KPIs and shared incentives.

3 **Advocate for leadership** to invest in talent, data and tech that bridges marketing and finance.

4 **Foster ongoing partnership with finance**—co-create strategy, don't just defend budgets.

5 **Build, buy and scale digital tools** balancing cost and fit, with AI driving productivity and new capabilities.

6 **Engage the experts:** Consider a fast, free business audit from Blue Chip's Brand Commerce team tailored for actionable insights.

### For Marketers at Risk of Budget Reductions:

1 **Seek quick wins:** Pilot a joint marketing–finance dashboard or a small-scale attribution project.

2 **Use external benchmarks** to make the case for innovation and investment.

3 **Ask for mentorship or partnership** from agency consultants or peers to achieve more integrated teams.

4 **Engage the experts:** Consider a fast, free business audit from Blue Chip's Brand Commerce team tailored for actionable insights.

## How Blue Chip Can Help

**Blue Chip has developed an approach to marketing we call Brand Commerce.** It's the secret sauce that enables CPG marketers to build brands that consumers love and campaigns that drive measurable business results—precisely what finance and brand leadership demand. Brand Commerce builds brands over time and sales over night.

**Want to learn more? Contact us for a free marketing audit to get started.**

## About Blue Chip

We're an independent, full-service Brand Commerce agency. We bring change for our clients by uniting brand building and sales performance. We build brands over time and sales overnight.

## About The Report

From June 3 to June 11, 2025, Blue Chip conducted an online survey of 100 US-based marketing professionals working in the consumer packaged goods (CPG) sector. The survey covered a number of marketing-related topics, including marketing margin pressures, marketing operations, advanced marketing analytics and collaboration with finance.

## Contact Us

**Email**

svanheirseele@bluechipww.com

**Address**

650 Dundee Road

Northbrook, IL USA

+1 847 418 8000

**Web**

www.bluechipww.com

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