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Gartner for Marketers

# Gartner Marketing Predictions for 2021 and Beyond: Marketing Hits Reset



# Market forces are shifting consumer behavior.

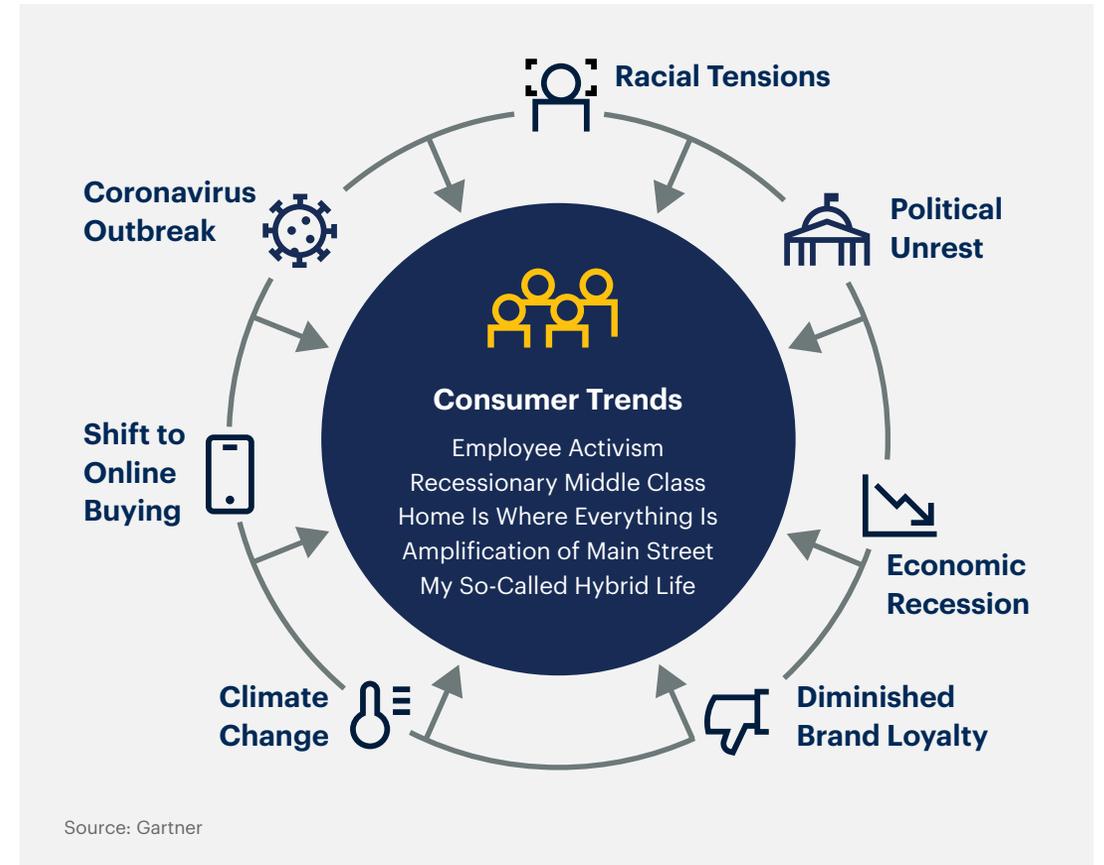
## Will marketing push Reset?

A global pandemic, combined with civil unrest and widespread instability, has reshaped the lives of customers and employees, demands on businesses and brands, and the operating landscape.

Predicting the future has never been more challenging, yet the need for vision, innovation and transformation is more important than ever.

Gartner predictions identify critical trends and events affecting marketers over the next two to five years to help you understand:

- What are the top marketing predictions for 2021 and beyond?
- What are the implications for the chief marketing officer?
- What is the CMO imperative right now?



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PREDICTION NO. 1

# Hybrid Experiences Take Precedence

By 2023, **60% of companies** that pivoted to virtual events will incorporate real-time/real-space elements into marketing experiences.

Source: Gartner



# Hybrid Experiences Take Precedence



## What we found

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, consumers quickly changed their behavior to embrace new technologies and channels when it served them.

Sensing these changes, marketers also pivoted to digital channels.

However, audience appetite for digital experiences isn't infinite.



## What it means

- Pandemic-related restrictions will extend our reliance on virtual events.
- “Zoom fatigue” has already set in, with digital falling short of real-life experiences.



## What you should do

**Audit** your brand's existing digital experience and virtual-event plans with an eye toward real-time and real-place elements.

**Redirect** dollars from in-person event marketing to enhance virtual-event livestreaming, shared experiences and more.

**Watch:** [Panel Discussion — Produce Compelling Virtual and Hybrid Events That Inspire Attendees](#)

PREDICTION NO. 2

# Channel-Agnostic Strategies Put Customers First

By 2025, consumers' omnichannel behavior will drive **60% of B2C brands** toward a functional, rather than channel-based organizational structure.

Source: Gartner



# Channel-Agnostic Strategies Put Customers First



## What we found

The pandemic has accelerated omnichannel adoption — blending physical and digital commerce channels — as consumers quickly adopt digital-first interactions.

In the long term, however, at least some consumers have a desire to return to in-person interactions. Physical locations still play an important role, especially when it comes to urgent needs that can't be met quickly and easily online.



## What it means

- Channel-centric organizational models don't reflect this blend and stand in the way of customer-centric experiences.
- Metrics that focus on a single channel don't account for the halo effect of omnichannel experiences.



## What you should do

**Use customer insights** to help the organization reimagine its remaining physical spaces.

**Reorient teams and objectives** around a customer-first, channel-agnostic strategy.

**Read:** [Update B2C Digital Commerce Strategies During Crisis](#)

PREDICTION NO. 3

# Subscription Offerings Shift Strategy

By 2025, **20% of B2C revenue** will come from recurring revenue models, causing profound shifts in marketing strategies, spend and channels.

Source: Gartner



# Subscription Offerings Shift Strategy



## What we found

2020 saw a significant rise in subscription revenue due to forces such as changing attitudes toward product ownership among younger consumers and disrupted shopping journeys for all consumers.

With a wide variety of goods available via subscriptions — from clothing, health, beauty and grooming products to transportation and beverages — appetite for these services is growing.



## What it means

- Subscription growth will make it harder for any subscription offering to stand out.
- Potential churn and a heavy focus on sign-up will increase the cost of acquiring new subscribers.

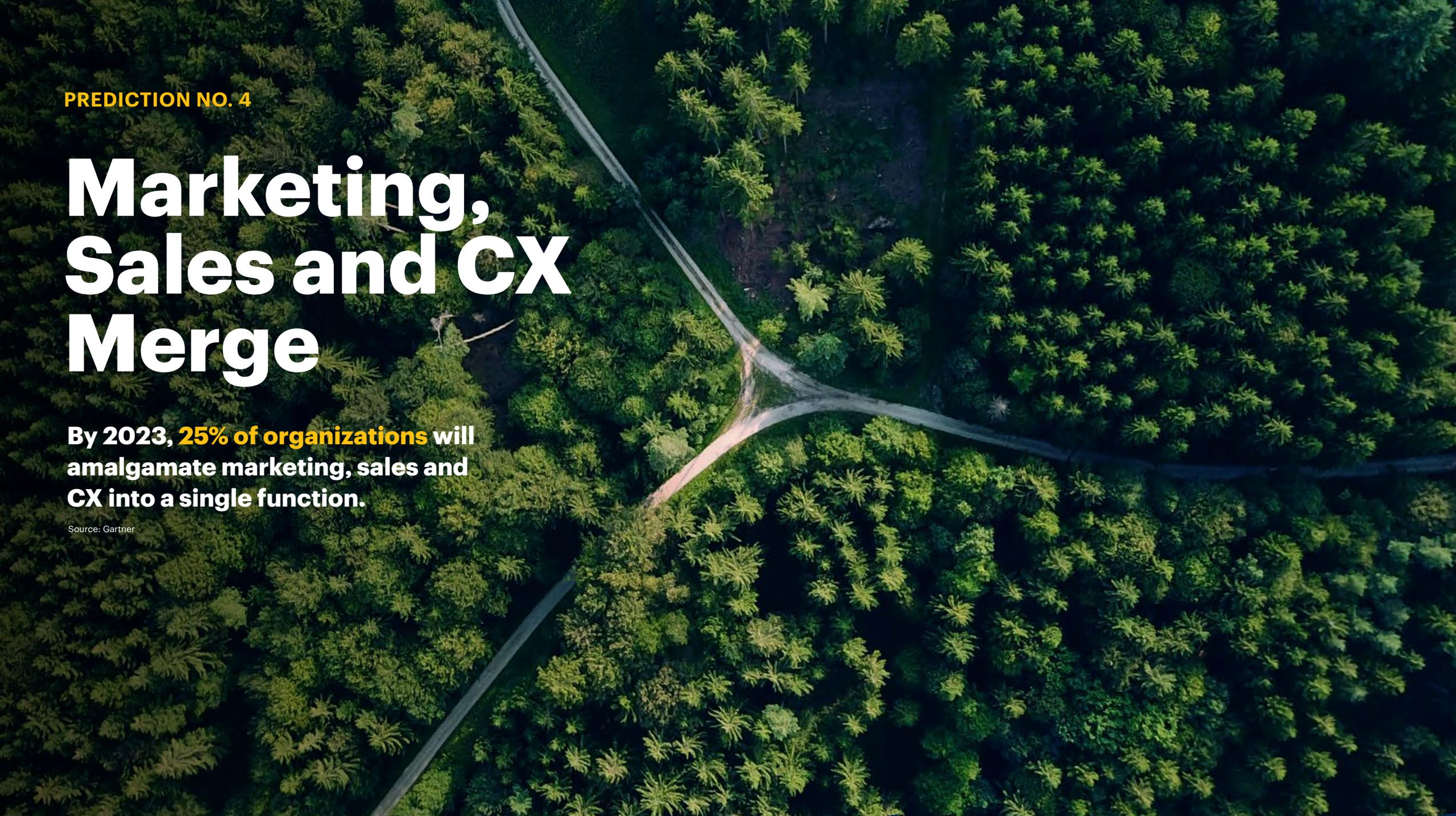


## What you should do

**Elevate subscriptions** by combining replenishment, convenience, discovery, access and curation.

**Focus** marketing on subscriber retention and lifetime value, while managing churn, given the customer acquisition cost.

**Read:** [What Do You Do When Everything Changes?](#)

An aerial photograph of a dense tropical forest, likely a palm forest, with a road intersection in the center. The road splits into three paths, creating a Y-shape. The trees are a vibrant green, and the road is a light grey color. The overall scene is lush and natural.

**PREDICTION NO. 4**

# Marketing, Sales and CX Merge

**By 2023, 25% of organizations will amalgamate marketing, sales and CX into a single function.**

Source: Gartner

# Marketing, Sales and CX Merge



## What we found

Approximately 90% of marketing leaders agree their function is under pressure to become more adaptive in order to deliver on long-term strategy.

Yet 76% of marketing leaders say they cannot fully maximize the impact of initiatives when also striving for efficiency.

Cost constraints and overlapping functional activities will drive amalgamation aimed at reducing duplicative efforts, and standardizing and centralizing operations across marketing, sales and customer experience (CX).



## What it means

- Digital acceleration amid cost constraints requires nimble, streamlined operations.
- Marketing, sales and CX functions have long been expected to collaborate, but COVID-19 intensified demands on executives to work cross-functionally.



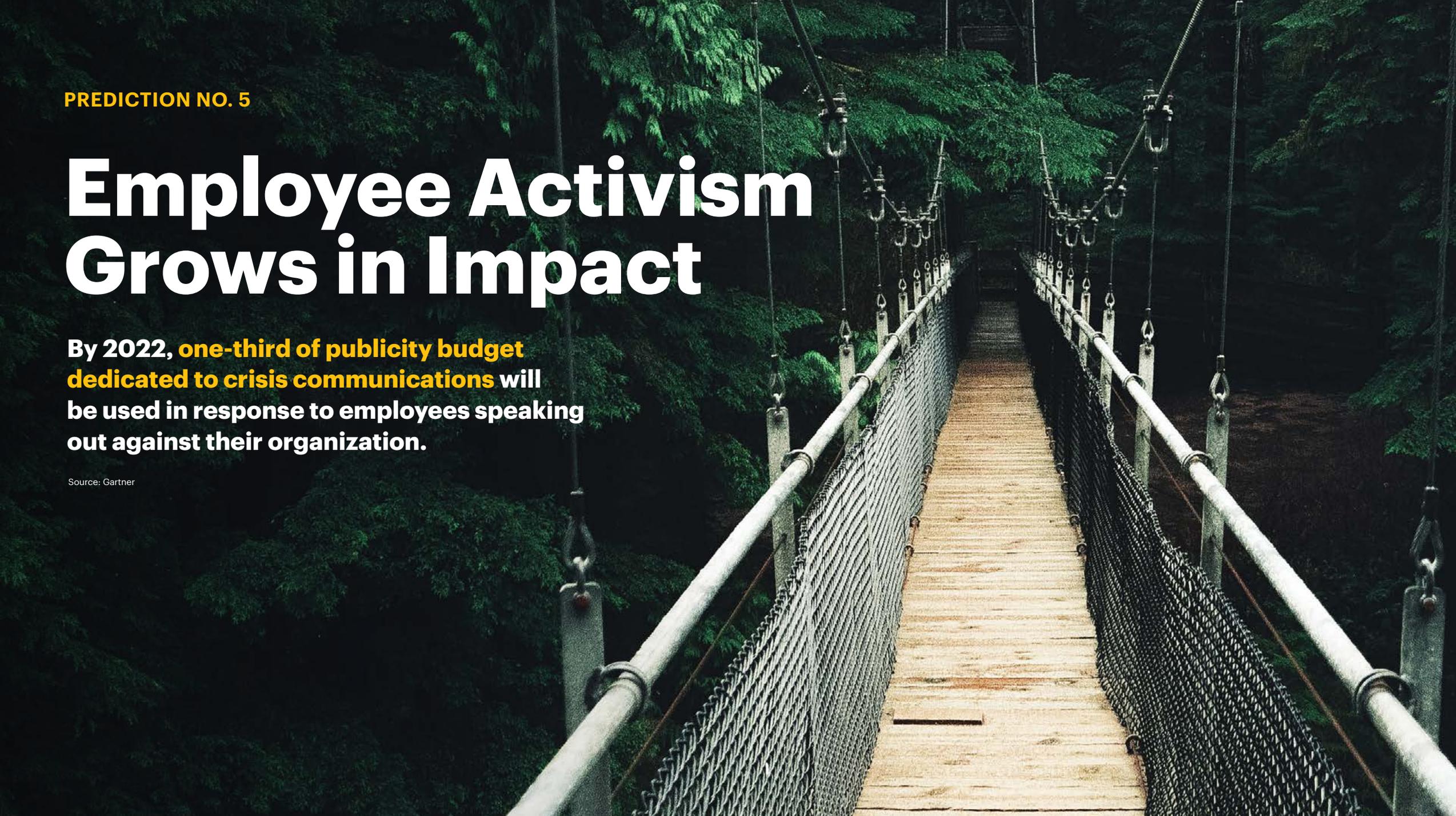
## What you should do

**Share customer and market insights** across the organization to inform a continuous experience and reduce redundancy.

**Use end-to-end customer journey maps** to identify hand-offs and points of friction between functions.

**Identify duplicate workstreams** and realign those resources to shared goals and outcomes.

**Read:** [Key Insights From the Gartner Marketing Operations Survey 2020](#)



PREDICTION NO. 5

# Employee Activism Grows in Impact

By 2022, **one-third of publicity budget dedicated to crisis communications** will be used in response to employees speaking out against their organization.

Source: Gartner

# Employee Activism Grows in Impact



## What we found

Growing social and civil unrest has characterized 2020, permeating the workplace.

Employees increasingly speak out about poor working conditions, bypassing HR departments to publicly highlight everything from lack of COVID-19 safety precautions to racial bias and suspect business practices.

Notable brands have been impacted by changing employee attitudes and public responses on social media.



## What it means

- Employee experiences can conflict with the company's public stance on societal issues.
- Consumers, attuned to employee grievances, reconsider perceptions and purchases.
- Crisis communications increasingly factor into tactical messaging and marketing discussions.



## What you should do

**Partner** with HR and communications leaders to address negative comments from employees.

**Prepare** a response to consumers' concerns about employees' comments and core brand values.

**Share** voice of the customer (VoC) to drive internal dialogue and change when brand messaging and actions are misaligned.

**Read:** [Facebook's Black Business Backing](#)

PREDICTION NO. 6

# Content Moderation Is a Top Priority

By 2024, **30% of large organizations** will identify content moderation services for user-generated content as a C-suite priority.

Source: Gartner



# Content Moderation Is a Top Priority



## What we found

Many social media and retailer platforms depend on user-generated content to drive engagement.

However, as the volatility and polarization of online content reaches a fever pitch, marketers face a deluge of malicious content.

Content moderation service and software providers have emerged and grown their client rosters through their ability to support even large, multibrand corporations that are monitoring, moderating and managing high volume and high frequency user-generated content.



## What it means

- Freedom of expression both draws in and alienates individuals, risking brand reputation.
- Large platforms that rely on user-generated content test business needs and brand values.



## What you should do

**Audit** both internal and platform-provided content moderation capabilities across outposts.

**Invest** in tools to enable your online audience to enforce moderation and report content violations.

**Collaborate** with industry peers to standardize content ratings that assess brand safety.

**Download:** [2020 Hype Cycle for Digital Marketing](#)

# Interested in learning more?

Watch the webinar

[The Gartner Top Marketing Predictions for 2021 and Beyond](#)

## About Gartner for Marketers

Gartner for Marketers provides the objective, expert advice and proven tools you need to seize the right opportunities with clarity and confidence and stay ahead of the trends that matter. Benchmark your performance with data-driven insights. Prioritize investments and areas of improvement. Execute your mission-critical priorities with speed and confidence.

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