Find the Money, Fund the Growth:

The Limitless Marketer's Guide to Unlocking Budget for High-Impact Initiatives

You Have the Budget—
You're Just Spending It Wrong

Listen, I get it.

Every marketing leader out there is drowning in expectations but starving for resources. The C-suite wants more pipeline, more leads, more conversions, but the second you ask for more budget, they hit you with the "do more with less" speech.

Here's the truth:

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

I've seen this play out a million times. CMOs think they're budget-constrained, but when you dig into their numbers, the problem isn't the budget—it's where the budget is going. It's buried in low-impact events, bloated agency retainers, redundant tech stacks, unnecessary approvals, outdated hiring models, and inefficiencies nobody is tracking.

The money is there. You just need to go find it.

This playbook lays out six no-BS ways to free up marketing dollars, reallocate waste, and reinvest in strategies that actually drive growth. No fluff. No corporate jargon. Just real tactics you can start implementing TODAY.

SIX No-BS Ways to Free Up Budget and Scale Smarter

1 Stop Sponsoring Events that Don't Convert

Reality check:

Most companies treat events like a status symbol instead of a revenue driver.

How many times has your team sponsored a booth, paid for a speaking slot, or thrown cash at event marketing—only to walk away with zero tangible ROI?

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.

That's not marketing. That's chaos.

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—make them earn their fees.

Long-Term Play

✓ Move from traditional agencies to flexible, outsourced execution models. With 2X's B2B Marketing Managed 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 saw on X (formerly Twitter).

One AI tool is $20/month. But across 50 marketers? That's over $12K 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.
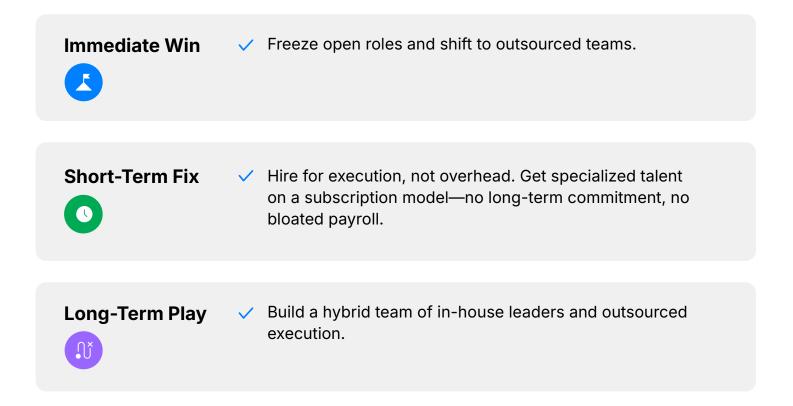
5   Replace Open Headcount with Outsourced Teams

Here's a fact:

If you have open roles in marketing ops, content, design, or campaign execution—close them and outsource instead.

A fully loaded U.S. hire costs $150K-$200K+ per year. With 2X's Marketing Managed Services model, you can replace that single role with 2-4 fully managed offshore specialists—for a fraction of the cost.

Immediate Win

✓ Freeze open roles and shift to outsourced teams.

Short-Term Fix

✓ Hire for execution, not overhead. Get specialized talent on a subscription model—no long-term commitment, no bloated 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?

AI isn't just replacing tasks—it's replacing workflows.

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's not working.

✓ Outsource where it makes sense—save money and scale impact.

✓ Use AI and automation—free up 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.

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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 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 is a leading B2B marketing-as-a-service firm that helps marketing leaders achieve greater impact while lowering costs through its managed services delivery model. Servicing over 150 clients including SAP, Ricoh, Docker, Hyland, Seismic, Qlik, and GoTo, 2X provides dedicated and highly skilled FTEs who specialize in marketing operations, martech management, campaign execution, content and creative production, and strategy consulting services. With more than 1,000 team members globally, 2X is backed by private equity firms Recognize and Insight Partners and has been recognized as one of the fastest-growing companies in the US by Inc. and the Financial Times. For more information, visit 2X.marketing or follow us on LinkedIn.