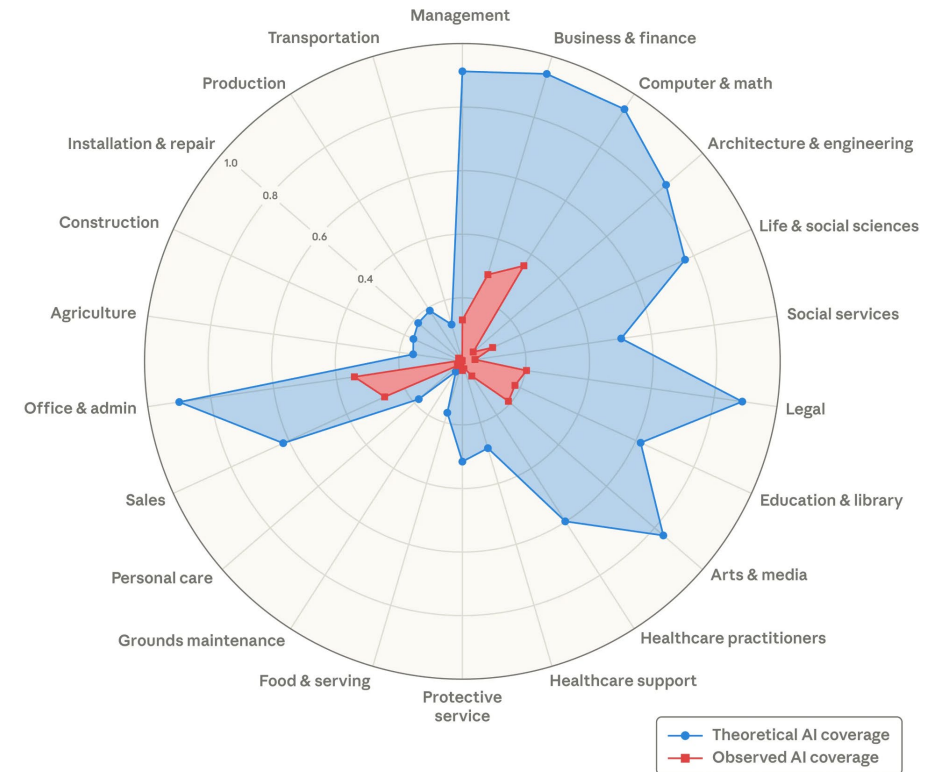


STRATEGIC ANALYSIS REPORT

How AI Will Reshape Media Planning and Media Buying

Implications for advertising agencies based on Anthropic's 2026 labor-market research and related industry evidence

Theoretical capability and observed usage by occupational category



Graphic from Anthropic: theoretical capability vs. observed AI usage by occupational category

Executive briefing deck

Prepared for board and leadership audiences in advertising agencies

AI compresses the operating layer—not the whole role

Three evidence points that matter most for agency boards

Anthropic

33% vs. 94%

In computer & math, observed AI coverage is still far below theoretical capability—evidence that adoption is advancing, but not yet complete.

IAB

>80%

More than 80% of media companies that have not fully scaled AI already have a timeline for doing so; about half expect full integration by 2026.

WEF

39%

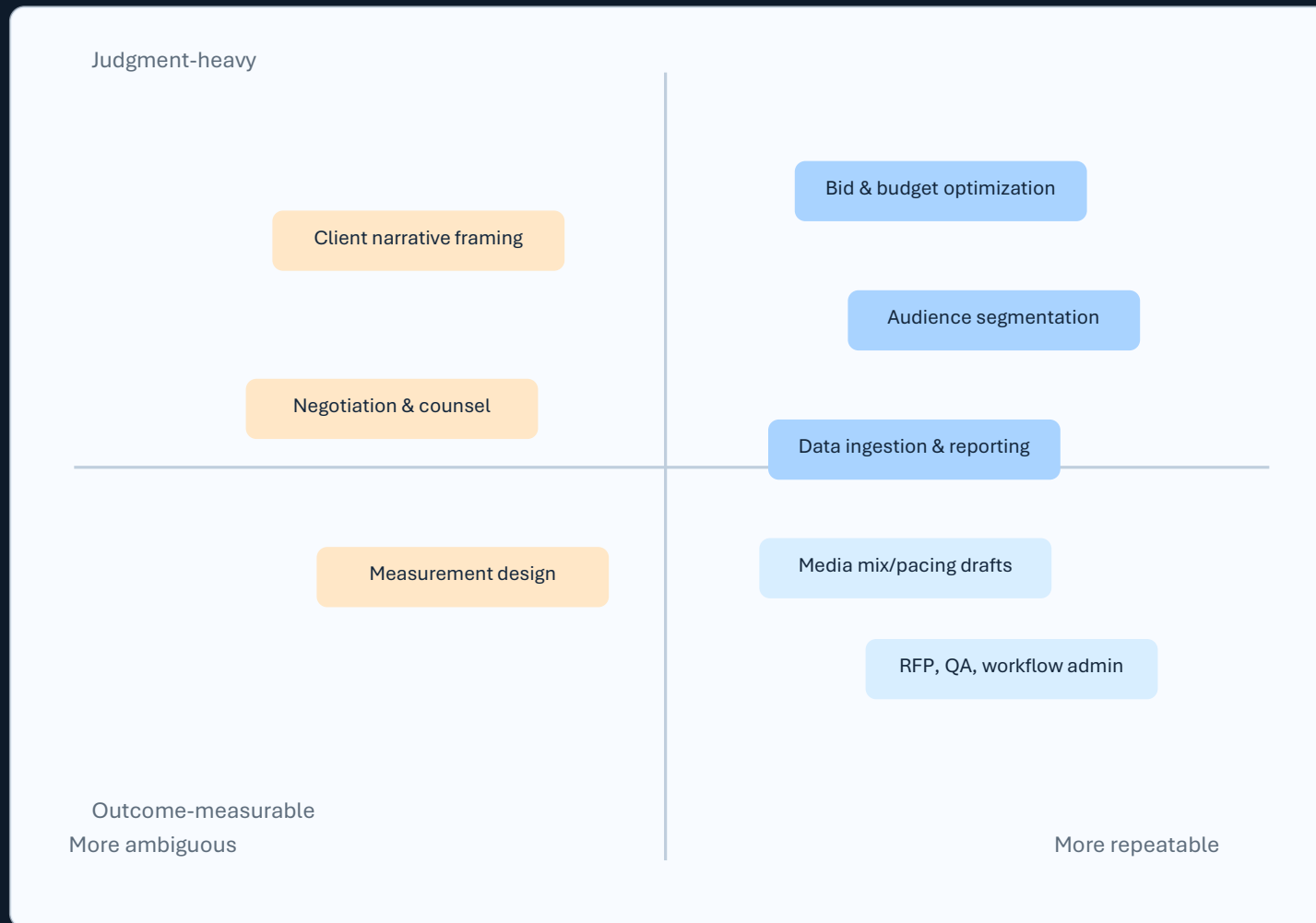
Employers expect 39% of workers' core skills to change by 2030, with AI literacy and analytical thinking rising fastest.

Board takeaway

Expect fewer manual planning and buying tasks, higher leverage per planner, weaker demand for purely executional labor, and greater value in strategy, governance, measurement, and client counsel.

What gets automated first

High-repeatability + measurable-outcome tasks move first



Near-term automation frontier

- Audience identification and segmentation are already leading buy-side AI use cases.
- Predictive real-time bid adjustments are moving from feature to default.
- Automated data collection and reporting reduce the apprenticeship work of junior teams.
- Platforms increasingly optimize creative, targeting, pacing, and matching inside their own ecosystems.

Implication: agencies should assume that executional “hands on keyboard” work will commoditize faster than advisory work.

From channel operator to portfolio manager

The work does not disappear; the center of gravity shifts

Today's operator-heavy role

- Pulls data from multiple systems
- Builds decks and spreadsheets manually
- Paces budgets and bids in-platform
- Drafts first-pass analyses and reports
- Learns through repetitive workflow tasks

AI-native strategist role

- Supervises decision engines and exceptions
- Sets objectives, guardrails, and tradeoffs
- Owns cross-platform measurement logic
- Counsels clients on risk and allocation
- Builds trust, judgment, and negotiation leverage

+7%

Market research analysts and marketing specialists

+6%

Advertising, promotions, and marketing managers

-6%

Advertising sales agents

Labor-market signal

Strategic, analytical marketing work is still expected to grow. The most exposed work is the narrower, more transactional layer.

Board implication: redesign job architecture before AI reduces the traditional apprenticeship path.

The opportunity is bigger than cost takeout

Winning firms convert automation into leverage, speed, and new advisory revenue



Margin leverage

One planner can manage more scenarios, more clients, and more optimization loops.



Faster cycle times

Planning, reporting, and optimization can move from days to hours.



Better planning quality

AI evaluates more combinations of audience, channel, geography, pacing, and creative.



New advisory revenue

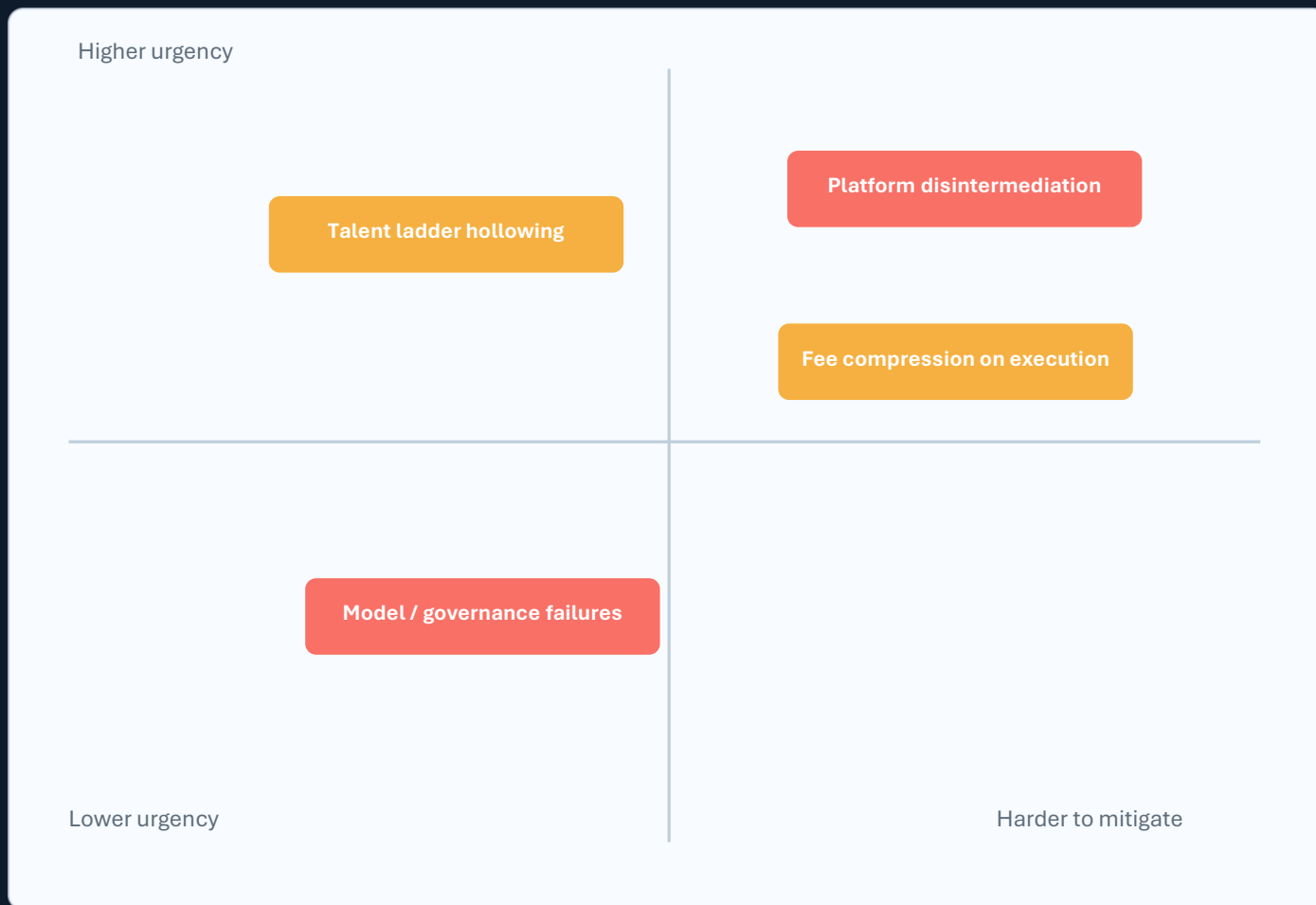
Governance, data readiness, experimentation, and measurement become sellable services.

\$0.8T–\$1.2T

McKinsey's estimate of incremental productivity potential across sales and marketing from generative AI—evidence that agencies can use AI to expand both margin and scope if they rewire operating models early.

The real risk is disintermediation, not just automation

Platform automation can compress fees, client dependence, and junior labor demand



Why this matters now

- Google is expanding AI-powered campaign automation and query matching inside Search.
- Meta has signaled ambitions to automate ad creation and targeting more end-to-end by 2026.
- IAB says agencies' biggest AI concerns are implementation complexity, data security, knowledge gaps, and accuracy—not job displacement alone.
- If agencies stay organized around manual workflow, platforms capture the value and clients expect fee reductions.

Bottom line: protect the layer above the platforms.

Five moves that reposition the agency model

The objective is to own decision quality, not manual workflow

1 Redefine planner and buyer roles

Shift from platform operation toward diagnosis, supervision, and client counsel.

2 Own the cross-platform control layer

Measurement, incrementality, pacing logic, and auditability must sit above any one platform.

3 Build proprietary agency intelligence

Use agency taxonomies, benchmarks, historical data, and client rules to create defensible IP.

4 Rebuild the apprenticeship model

Teach judgment through simulations and supervised AI workflows, not only repetitive tasks.

5 Shift pricing and governance

Price for outcomes, managed complexity, and control—not for labor hours that AI removes.

Winning agencies will look less like labor pyramids and more like AI-enabled control towers with stronger strategic talent density.

12–24 month implementation plan

A staged rollout lowers risk and creates proof points quickly



Suggested proof points: planning-cycle time, reporting hours eliminated, % spend under AI-assisted optimization, exception rate, incrementality confidence, and gross-margin impact.

Questions management should answer now

Use the AI transition to strengthen—not dilute—the agency's role with clients

Board questions

- Which workflows are becoming commoditized, and how fast?
- What part of our value proposition sits above the platforms?
- How are we protecting the talent ladder as junior tasks disappear?
- Where do we have proprietary data, methods, or governance that clients will pay for?
- How will our pricing model capture productivity gains instead of giving them away?

Core metrics to track

% workflows AI-assisted

Time to plan

Hours removed from reporting

% spend under supervised optimization

Gross-margin lift per account

Closing take

The agencies that win will not be the ones that defend manual workflow. They will be the ones that turn AI into a stronger control layer, a better advisory model, and a more defensible client relationship.

For the Full Report

“How AI Will Reshape Media Planning and Media Buying”

<https://www.bionic-ads.com/2026/03/how-ai-will-reshape-media-planning-and-media-buying/>