

AI Marketing Workflow Control Matrix 2026

A reproducible operational framework for using artificial intelligence across research, search, content, advertising, conversion and measurement without transferring accountability to the tool.

Version	1.0
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Framework	24 controls across 8 workflow stages
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Direct answer. AI marketing needs a control system, not merely a prompt library. This matrix assigns a decision, failure mode, evidence requirement, accountable owner and review cadence to each major stage.

1. Purpose and scope

The matrix helps a marketing team decide where AI can accelerate work, where evidence must be retained and where a person must approve the result. It covers planning and execution but does not claim that one tool, prompt or control guarantees rankings, advertising performance or revenue.

The framework can be used by an internal team, agency, founder or course participant. It is intentionally platform-neutral. Model and advertising interfaces change; decision rights, source quality and auditability remain.

2. Method

MTF Institute decomposed an end-to-end marketing workflow into eight stages: objectives, audience research, search demand, content production, paid media, conversion, measurement and governance. For each stage, three recurrent failure modes were defined from professional practice. Each failure was then paired with the minimum evidence and review action needed to make the work inspectable.

This is an original operational framework, not a survey of market prevalence and not a causal performance study. It should be adapted to the organization's risk, sector, privacy obligations, data access and decision authority.

3. How to use the matrix

Select the controls relevant to a campaign. Name the owner before work starts. Store the specified evidence with the campaign record. Review high-impact controls before publication or spend; review lower-impact controls at the stated cadence. Record exceptions and the person who accepted them.

Step	Action
1	Define the business decision and conversion event.
2	Select applicable controls and assign owners.
3	Retain sources, prompts, versions and approvals.
4	Review evidence before publication or spend.
5	Compare outcomes with the original hypothesis.

4. Interpretation

Evidence before fluency. A polished answer is not evidence. A control should point to the platform record, customer material, approved source or documented experiment that supports the decision.

Human accountability. The named owner is responsible for deciding whether the output is fit for use. Human review is a decision, not a ritual click after automated production.

Measurement with context. Reach, clicks and model scores are intermediate signals. Interpret them with conversion, revenue, margin, customer quality and the limitations of the attribution model.

5. Limitations and update policy

The matrix has not been validated as a universal maturity score. Organizations should not add the 24 controls into a single number without first deciding whether each control is relevant and how evidence quality will be judged. Legal requirements vary by jurisdiction. Platform features and model risks will change, so the framework should be reviewed at least annually.

Corrections and field-tested extensions may be incorporated in later versions. A new version will retain a visible publication date and summary of changes.

6. Citation

MTF Institute (2026). *AI Marketing Workflow Control Matrix 2026*, version 1.0. Lisbon: MTF Institute.

Companion dataset

The machine-readable CSV contains the same 24 controls and may be adapted with attribution. The canonical page and current files are published at mtfinstitute.com.

AI Marketing Workflow Control Matrix 2026

Twenty-four controls. Use the downloadable CSV for sorting, adaptation and audit records.

ID	Stage	Decision or output	Failure mode	Evidence	Owner	Review	Control
OBJ-01	Objective and offer	Campaign objective	Activity metric substituted for business outcome	Approved objective and conversion definition	Campaign owner	Every campaign	Name the business outcome and conversion event before tool selection
OBJ-02	Objective and offer	Offer statement	Generated promise exceeds the actual product	Current product terms and approved claim sheet	Product owner	Every campaign	Compare every material promise with the current offer
OBJ-03	Objective and offer	Audience action	Call to action is ambiguous or inconsistent	Approved journey map and destination URL	Campaign owner	Every campaign	Use one primary action and verify destination continuity
RES-01	Audience research	Market summary	Model invents market facts or statistics	Named dated primary sources	Research reviewer	Every output	Separate sourced facts from hypotheses and model inference
RES-02	Audience research	Customer analysis	Personal or confidential data enters an unapproved tool	Approved data inventory and processing purpose	Data owner	Every output	Use only approved data and environment
RES-03	Audience research	Competitor comparison	Outdated or selectively sampled evidence	Source capture with access date	Research reviewer	When sources change	Retain the compared pages and date boundary
SEO-01	Search and content	Keyword or topic cluster	Generated keywords are treated as demand evidence	Search Console or search-platform evidence	SEO owner	Every content plan	Validate demand and intent outside the model
SEO-02	Search and content	Page brief	New page duplicates an existing page	Site inventory and canonical purpose statement	Editorial owner	Every new page	Document the unique reader question and canonical destination
SEO-03	Search and content	Search claim	Ranking or traffic outcome is promised without evidence	Approved claim sheet	SEO owner	Every publication	Remove unsupported performance promises
CON-01	Content and creative	Factual article or landing page	Unsupported factual statement is published	Claim-level source notes	Subject reviewer	Every publication	Verify material claims against primary sources
CON-02	Content and creative	Brand copy	Generated text conflicts with brand or credential rules	Current brand and legal language	Editorial owner	Every publication	Run brand and regulated-language review
CON-03	Content and creative	Image or text asset	Copyright or licence status is unknown	Asset provenance and licence record	Creative owner	Every asset	Use owned licensed or permissioned material only
ADS-01	Paid advertising	Ad variation	Generated variation violates platform or legal policy	Approved claims and platform policy checklist	Media buyer	Every launch	Review every live variation before activation
ADS-02	Paid advertising	Experiment design	Multiple variables change without an interpretable hypothesis	Experiment brief and naming convention	Media buyer	Every test	Define one primary hypothesis and success measure
ADS-03	Paid advertising	Budget allocation	Automation spends outside agreed boundary	Platform budget and alert configuration	Budget owner	Daily	Set limits pacing alerts and named escalation owner
CVR-01	Conversion	Landing page	Price credential or offer differs from advertisement	Ad-to-page continuity checklist	Product owner	Every launch	Compare the live ad offer and checkout terms
CVR-02	Conversion	Lead form	Form collects unnecessary personal data	Field inventory and processing purpose	Data owner	Every form change	Minimize fields and preserve consent evidence
CVR-03	Conversion	Checkout completion	Payment succeeds but fulfillment or invoicing fails	Payment event fulfillment log and exception route	Operations owner	Every transaction	Use idempotent processing and a visible support fallback

ID	Stage	Decision or output	Failure mode	Evidence	Owner	Review	Control
MEA-01	Measurement	Conversion event	Duplicate or missing events distort results	Tag diagnostics and transaction reconciliation	Analytics owner	Every release	Test one action against one expected event
MEA-02	Measurement	Attribution report	Source or campaign parameters are lost	Landing session and conversion identifiers	Analytics owner	Every campaign	Retain campaign parameters through the conversion record
MEA-03	Measurement	AI-generated analysis	Correlation is described as causal evidence	Underlying report and reviewer note	Analytics owner	Every report	Label inference uncertainty and alternative explanations
GOV-01	Governance	Approved tool register	Team uses unreviewed tools for sensitive work	Current approved-tool and data policy	System owner	Quarterly	Review tools access data classes and contractual terms
GOV-02	Governance	Incident response	Incorrect public output has no escalation route	Named incident owner and correction procedure	Governance owner	Every release	Publish a correction path and retain revision evidence
GOV-03	Governance	Control maintenance	Workflow remains unchanged after model or policy changes	Change log and scheduled review record	Governance owner	Quarterly	Retest critical controls after material platform changes

Applying the controls

High-impact controls should be reviewed before publication, media spend or a material customer decision. Medium-impact controls can be reviewed inside the normal campaign cadence. Record exceptions, the accountable person and the evidence used. Do not treat the matrix as a universal compliance checklist or add the rows into a maturity score without a documented scoring method.

Canonical report: <https://mtfinstitute.com/insights/ai-marketing-workflow-control-matrix-2026/>