



**Strengthening Canada's Workforce for the One Canadian Economy**  
Renewing the Federal Upskilling for Industry Initiative  
A Dedicated Training Initiative for Canadian Workers to Responsibly Adopt AI

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Marketing has never been more critical to Canada's economic success. Large national brands and thousands of small and mid-sized businesses across the country rely on strategic, effective marketing to grow, compete, and stay resilient in an ever-changing marketplace.

**Recommendation #1:**

That the Government of Canada invest in and expand the proven Upskilling for Industry Initiative, prioritizing high-growth and core business areas such as marketing, to equip workers with the modern, adaptable skills Canadian businesses need to build the strongest economy in the G7.

**Recommendation #2:**

Expand the Government of Canada's investments in Artificial Intelligence (AI) by establishing a national AI workforce readiness program to ensure Canadian workers can successfully adapt to AI-integrated workplaces through targeted training in AI literacy, ethical AI principles, and human-AI collaboration skills



## **Recommendation #1:**

**That the Government of Canada continue to invest and expand the proven Upskilling for Industry Initiative, with a focus on high-growth and primary business activities such as marketing, to provide workers with the modern and adaptable skills that Canadian businesses need to build the strongest economy in the G7.**

## **Marketing - A Proven Upskilling Case Study**

In February 2023, the Government of Canada launched the Upskilling for Industry Initiative, enabling employers to scale up proven, industry-led approaches delivered by third parties to upskill and redeploy workers in response to evolving industry needs.

Digital Marketing Skills Canada (DMSC) was created in 2023 for the purpose of upskilling and placing junior and mid-career marketers into digital marketing and similar high-demand roles. The program is offered by a consortium led by the Canadian Marketing Association (CMA). Program partners are Jelly Academy and Growclass. Each partner provides skilling pathways for entry-level and mid-career workers seeking to enter digital marketing careers. In addition, participants receive coaching and career mentoring to accelerate job placements.

DMSC has delivered tangible results. Designed to empower marketers at all levels, from junior to senior, the DMSC program opens new pathways into Canada's rapidly evolving digital marketing sector. It equips participants with cutting-edge skills and knowledge, fostering both innovation and adherence to ethical standards. The program emphasizes technical proficiency in emerging technologies and data-driven strategies, enabling marketing professionals to thrive in today's competitive AI environment.

The DMSC program educates marketers on the crucial skills and ethical implications of modern marketing practices, focusing on data privacy, transparency and consumer trust, and covers a wide range of topics including data analytics, digital marketing, content strategy, social media, customer relationship management, and ethical considerations.

DMSC program outcomes are compelling:

- A total of 1,527 mid-career Canadians were upskilled between January 2024 and March 2025.
- More than 1,200 applications were received in the most recent quarter (April to June 2025).
- More than 65% of the latest quarter's participants come from equity-deserving groups (women, BIPOC).
- Approximately 70% of DMSC participants found employment by the end of Q1.
- More than 238 employer, industry, networking and referral partners were engaged in job demand validation and program design.



DMSC is on track to exceed its objective of training 500 mid-career Canadians into careers in Upskill's two target sectors by December 2025, while strengthening new and untapped pipelines of diverse talent for Canada's best up-and-coming SMEs, helping them to compete locally and globally during these tumultuous economic times.

The success of the DMSC program underscores the importance of, and high demand for, marketing upskilling to grow Canada's economy and drive our country's innovation. It also demonstrates the effectiveness of ISED's Upskilling for Industry Initiative and the positive impact it is having on Canadian marketing professionals. Consequently, it is crucial to sustain support for this initiative and continue to make the Upskilling for Industry Initiative accessible to marketers across various industry sectors and regions, including small and medium-sized enterprises.

For these reasons, the government should continue to invest in and expand the Upskilling for Industry Initiative, with a focus on the marketing profession and digital technology industry given the significant role they both have in ensuring Canada's economy continues to flourish and our country remains competitive globally.

We recommend renewed funding for employer-driven upskilling initiatives like the Upskilling for Industry Initiative, so that initiatives like the DMSC have the capacity to expand to help more Canadians participate in and contribute to a growing and resilient economy.



## Recommendation #2:

**Expand the Government of Canada’s investments in AI by establishing a national AI workforce readiness program to ensure Canadian workers can successfully adapt to AI-integrated workplaces through targeted training in AI literacy, ethical AI principles, and human-AI collaboration skills**

### Helping Canadian Workers Responsibly Adopt AI

While Canada was the first country in the world to introduce a national AI strategy and has invested billions since 2017 to support AI and digital research and innovation, more government investments are needed to ensure Canadians have the skills and education to adopt this evolving technology.

As outlined in Prime Minister Carney’s mandate letter, “AI will create opportunities for millions of Canadians to find new rewarding careers – provided they have timely access to the education and training they need to develop the necessary skills.”

We agree. A key element that will be integral for Canada’s adoption of the latest AI technologies is education and training for workers.

The Q2 2025 Statistics Canada [survey](#) reveals a surge in AI adoption across three key sectors. More than 30% of Information and Communications Technology/Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services/Finance companies integrated AI by mid-2025, compared to the national average of 12%. These sectors, representing 406,000 businesses (one-third of Canada’s total), contribute \$340 billion to GDP and employ 2.8 million workers. Government support for AI initiatives in these sectors, specifically training for workers, will boost local, regional, and national economies.

The CMA offers a wide range of training programs, including several on the ethical and effective use of AI. We are dedicated to helping marketers navigate this evolving technology, providing guidance on responsible AI adoption that balances innovation with ethical considerations. We agree with [Don Tapscott](#) when he says, *“If Canada wants to remain a strong G7 nation and thrive, we need a national moon shot – one that retools, re-educates and rebuilds our economy from the ground up.”*

In April 2025, the CMA released the [CMA Guide on AI for Marketers: Using AI Safely and for Positive Business Impact](#), along with CMA Accountability Checklists for AI in Marketing, and [Setting the Stage on AI: A CMA Primer on AI for Marketers](#). These materials were developed by a group of senior marketing leaders on the CMA’s AI Committee and endorsed by the Vector Institute.

The materials outline regulatory expectations, offer practical insights and suggest best practices to help marketers leverage AI effectively and ethically. They help organizations earn the confidence of regulators, maintain a strong brand reputation, and foster consumer trust.



Also, in April 2025, the CMA launched the [CMA Mastery Series](#) of weekly AI Playbooks to equip marketers with the knowledge and skills to navigate the opportunities and challenges that AI presents.

Building off the success of these materials, the CMA is well-positioned to play a vital role in providing workers and companies with the necessary skills and education to navigate this emerging technology and responsibly adopt AI.



## **The Vital Role of Marketing to Business Success**

Marketing is a primary, indispensable business function that drives growth, enhances customer satisfaction, and ultimately determines a company's success in the digital marketplace.

As the economy digitizes and the demand for digital skills skyrockets, the shortage of job-ready marketing talent with the right digital skills is a key challenge that has been identified by research across the sector and by CMA members.

Digital marketing is one of the fastest-growing in-demand professions across the Canadian innovation economy. The Conference Board of Canada estimates that the demand for digital marketers has grown more than 90% in the past five years.

The Information and Communication Technology Council forecasts that Canada's interactive digital media space is on pace to require an additional 103,000 workers by 2025.

According to the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, 70% of Canadian CEOs report significant challenges recruiting and retaining diverse digital marketing talent with the right certifications and skills.

Despite this widespread need for new talent, the digital marketing profession faces major challenges around inclusivity. A sizable number of professionals identifying as Black, Indigenous and/or BIPOC point to unique barriers to entering the profession, and firms are reticent to adapt the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion practices needed to recruit diverse professionals to their teams (*Innovate BC*).

Addressing these talent and diversity gaps in Canada's digital marketing space requires bold, collective action that drives the training, placement, and retention of diverse, job-ready workers.

## **Meeting Consumer Expectations**

More than ever before, customers demand relevant information and personalized offers. The era of one-size-fits-all marketing is not just outdated: on the contrary, it is detrimental to business success. Modern consumers, inundated with information and choices, have grown not just frustrated but often angry when bombarded with irrelevant ads. This shift in consumer attitude makes data-driven, personalized marketing not just a competitive advantage, but a necessity for maintaining positive customer relationships and for providing consumers with the goods and services that they need and want.

Gone are the days when companies produced ads to be viewed by the masses, hoping they would be noticed by the small percentage of customers who were interested in those products, while potentially alienating many others. Data-driven marketing uses advanced analytics and machine learning to identify patterns in consumer behavior, preferences and needs. This allows businesses to craft highly targeted campaigns that are better able to reach the right audience with the right message at the right time.

The benefits of this approach are manifold. For businesses, it leads to more efficient allocation of marketing resources, higher conversion rates, and improved return on investment. More



importantly, it fosters stronger, more meaningful connections with customers. When people receive offers and information that align with their interests and needs, they are more likely to engage with the brand, make purchases, and become loyal customers.

The application of data in marketing extends far beyond customer acquisition. It plays a crucial role in customer retention and lifetime value optimization. By analyzing customer data, businesses can predict future needs, identify at-risk customers, and proactively address issues before they lead to churn. This level of customer understanding and proactive engagement, which was simply not possible in the pre-digital era, is absolutely essential today.

By leveraging data to connect businesses with their ideal customers through relevant communications, modern marketing drives revenue, enhances customer experiences, and fosters long-term business success.

### **Remaining Innovative and Competitive**

Marketing has evolved into a sophisticated, analytical discipline that serves as the essential engine of business growth and customer satisfaction. To meet these challenges, the marketing profession has undergone a seismic shift over the past decade, evolving at a pace that arguably outstrips many other professions. This rapid transformation has been driven by colossal technological advancements, changing consumer expectations, and a surge in data-driven decision making.

Marketers need to pursue continuous learning to ensure their organizations remain competitive and successful in this new landscape. The role of marketing has become significantly more complex, often requiring a blend of creative, analytical and technical skills that were previously siloed. Traditional marketing skills are becoming obsolete at an accelerated pace. Skills that were cutting-edge five years ago may now be considered basic or outdated. Marketing now frequently intersects with AI, IT, data science and customer service, requiring marketers to develop cross-functional knowledge and collaboration skills.

The rapid pace of change has made continuous learning and upskilling a necessity rather than a luxury for marketing professionals.

### **About the CMA**

*The CMA is the voice of Canada's marketing profession. We are the catalyst to help Canada's marketers thrive today, while building the marketing mindset and environment of tomorrow. We represent virtually all of Canada's major business sectors, and all marketing disciplines, channels, and technologies.*