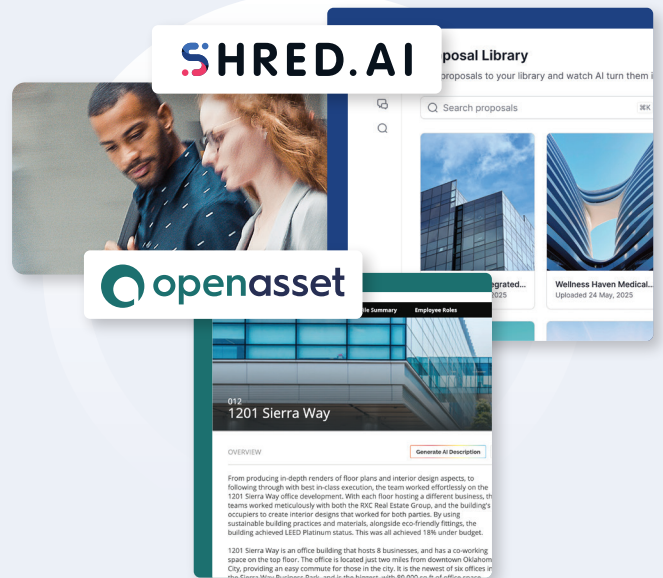


# The future of AI & innovation in AEC

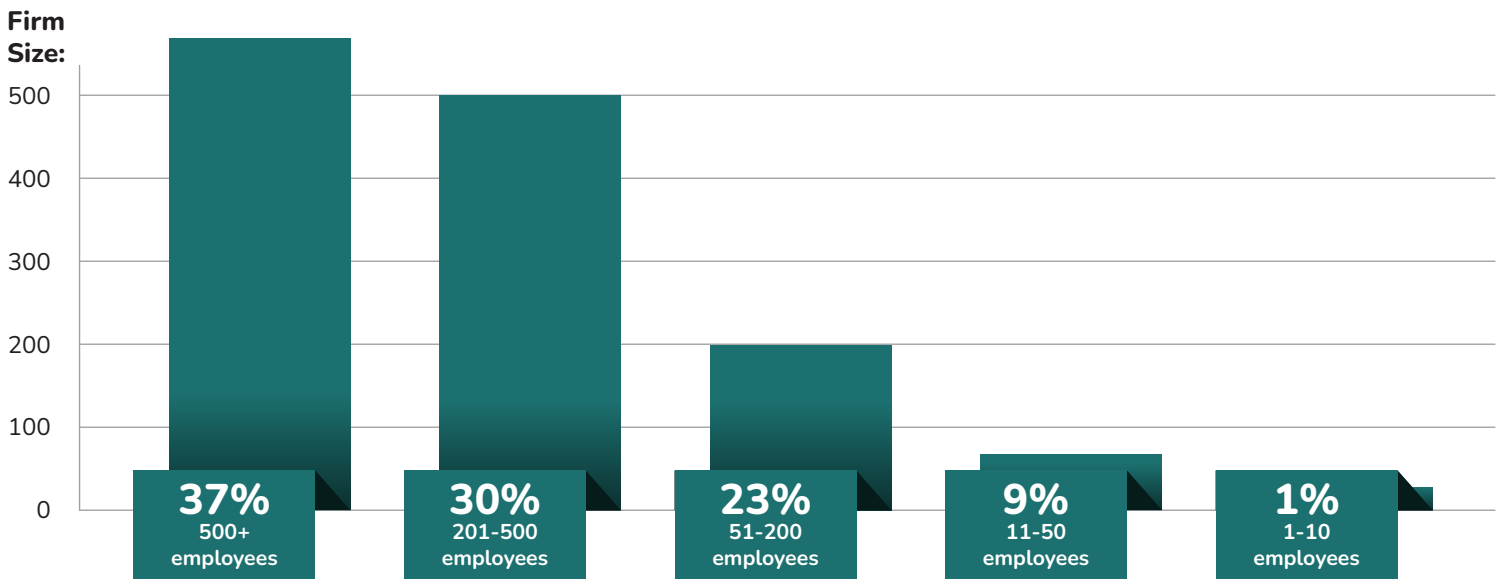
AEC marketing is at a turning point. Proposal deadlines are relentless, internal reviews eat up time, and accessing accurate project data can feel like a scavenger hunt. But there's good news: firms are finding smarter ways to work, and AI is already reshaping workflows, including the lengthy proposal writing process.



In this report, we combine survey findings from **over 200 AEC professionals** with customer voices to explore how AEC marketers are using tools like OpenAsset and AI to reimagine their workflows. Discover the challenges they're wrestling with, the opportunities they see, and the tools your peers swear by.

## Who's shaping the future of AEC marketing?

To understand where AEC marketing is going, it helps to know who's driving it today. Our survey respondents represented a wide range of firms, with **37%** working in companies of **500 or more employees**, another **30%** in firms with **201–500 employees**, and **23%** in mid-sized firms with **51–200 employees**. Smaller firms made up the remainder, with just **10%** from firms of **50 employees or fewer**.



Roles were equally diverse, but **marketers and technical staff made up the largest group**. These are the teams on the frontlines of proposals, project data, and brand storytelling, which made their perspective and insights especially noteworthy.

## Why teams value a digital asset management tool

When we asked what they loved most about OpenAsset, the answers pointed to **speed, simplicity, and visibility**. Respondents called out the ability to quickly find images and project information, the [InDesign plugin](#) for drag-and-drop efficiency, and the [Portals](#) feature for seamless client sharing.

“The InDesign plug-in is a lifesaver for proposals that have a lot of images. It’s awesome to always have them in the same place, and not worry about links breaking if folders or files are moved.”

— Erin L.

“The Portals function has made sharing professional photography with our clients a much better experience. I love that it has our logo on it and I can customize a lot of it.”

— Lauren S.

**AI-powered search also emerged as a favorite, especially for teams needing to find images with a specific “look” or “vibe.”**

“AI Search has been a lifesaver — it saves the team hours every week by finding the exact imagery we need.”

— Sarah C.



### What are AEC marketers up against?

Even with strong tools, challenges persist. We asked marketers to share their biggest current marketing challenge, and the top hurdles were **accessing accurate project data quickly** and **building [high-quality proposal content](#)**.

Download the free AI proposal writing [do's and don'ts checklist](#).



## Challenges facing marketing teams



Accessing  
accurate project  
data quickly



Building  
high-quality  
proposal content



Collaborating  
effectively across  
teams



Tracking  
marketing ROI

## Precious time lost in AEC proposals

A common frustration for AEC marketers is the lengthy and often cumbersome proposal collaboration process. Over the past 20 years, we've heard story after story of the heroic efforts involved in gathering, negotiating, revising, polishing, and finalizing proposal content.



Learn how to navigate the most common review personas that are sabotaging your proposal delivery efficiency [here](#).



And if you ask where these teams are losing the most time, the answers point to inefficiencies: **searching for boilerplate or past project data** and **internal reviews and edits**.

“Our biggest time-suck was finding boilerplate info. Luckily, QA/QC of content as we set up Text Libraries in OpenAsset has been a great project. LOVE IT.”

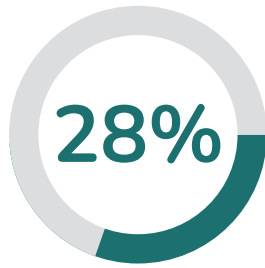
— Katie M.

## Most time-consuming part of proposals

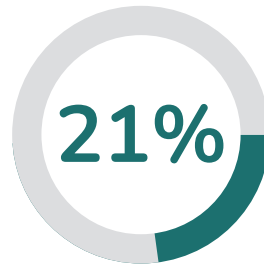
Here's the full breakdown of what's actually draining proposal teams and taking up the majority of their time.



Searching for  
boilerplate or  
past project data



Internal reviews  
and edits



Drafting  
content



Formatting  
and layout

## The tools that keep AEC marketers sane

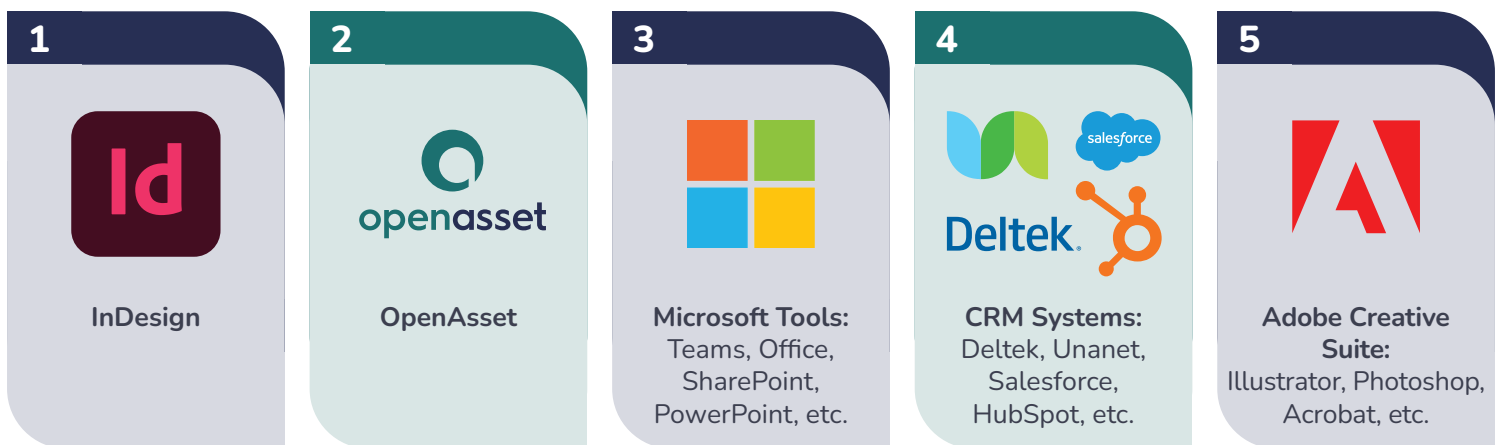
Despite all the challenges, specific platforms keep work flowing for AEC marketers. Here's the handful of tools they told us they use in almost every workflow.

**Adobe InDesign** ranked highest, cited by **40%** of respondents, underscoring its role as the core design and layout tool for proposals. Close behind, **OpenAsset** was named as the essential hub for managing project imagery and data by **37%** of responders.

Mentioned in **35%** of responses, **Microsoft tools** like **Teams**, **SharePoint**, and **PowerPoint** also play a huge role in keeping marketing connected across departments and geographies. **CRM systems** like as Deltek, Unanet, Salesforce, and HubSpot were noted as the backbone of client data by **30%**. And rounding out the top five, **Adobe Creative Suite apps** like Illustrator and Photoshop highlight the continued importance of design polish (**included in 23% of marketer answers**).

The numbers make it clear: AEC marketers rally around a core toolkit. InDesign, OpenAsset, CRMs, Microsoft, and Adobe aren't just apps on a desktop; they're the daily lifelines for hardworking AEC professionals.

## Top 5 most essential tools



## Riding the AI wave in AEC marketing

Unsurprisingly, AI is already embedded in many top AEC workflows. More than half of respondents (**57%**) said their teams already use AI for proposal writing, while **27%** are considering it, and only **16%** aren't using it yet.

The most common tools are familiar names: **ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, Adobe Firefly, Claude, Gemini, Jasper, and Perplexity**, alongside a few custom in-house AI tools.

“OpenAsset’s AI Search has been a complete game-changer. It has saved the team hours of work and even increased our monthly visitors by 20%.”

— Sarah C.

What’s especially exciting is how [AI is showing up](#) inside the tools AEC marketers already use every day. For example, [OpenAsset’s AI features](#) are already cutting through repetitive tasks:

- **AI Image Search** lets marketers find the right image simply by typing in a description — “modern glass façade at dusk,” “team collaboration photo” — instead of sifting through hundreds of files.
- **AI Auto Tagging** saves hours by automatically generating tags for new uploads.
- **AI Text Generation** helps teams draft project descriptions, captions, and summaries in seconds.

These are real-world, time-saving applications of AI that go beyond hype and directly impact daily workflows.

## Where AI can make the biggest impact

While image management and content tagging are powerful, marketers told us their biggest bottlenecks are in the **proposal process** itself — drafting boilerplate, managing reviews, and chasing down data.

That’s why the next frontier of AI in AEC is **proposal writing**. Tools like Shred.ai, OpenAsset’s [AI-powered proposal writing platform](#), are designed specifically to address these challenges. By pulling accurate project data and past content directly into proposals, Shred.ai reduces the hours teams waste searching, copying, and reformatting.

“I love the idea of using AI to track voice for future proposal drafting and analyzing ROI/win-rate in the future.”

— Miranda C.

Just as AI search has redefined how marketers manage assets, Shred.ai is redefining how they create proposals. Instead of replacing the expertise of AEC marketers, it amplifies it, giving teams the speed and confidence to focus on crafting compelling stories.

"I think using Open Asset [Shred.ai] at a proposal writing and creation level would most certainly save time and perhaps improve the quality of content."

— Mary N.

Marketers see AI as more than just a writing assistant. In the future, they believe AI can transform nearly every part of their workflows. When asked where they'd like to see further AI implementation, here's what they said:



**44%** see it in proposal writing & content creation



**25%** envision it in admin tasks & research



**18%** want to utilize it in analytics & reporting



**10%** see a future in image & asset management

"The AI features save us hours — what used to take me days I can now do in minutes."

— Kathryn K.

## Training and confidence in AI

Of course, adopting new technology requires support. Just over half (54%) of respondents said their company had provided training on AI tools, while 46% are figuring it out on their own.

Despite that, confidence in AI is growing: **53%** said they're possibly interested in learning more, and **36%** are definitely ready to use AI for proposals.

"I would like to see AI tools and training become more common throughout the entire office."

— Griffin A.

Beyond formal programs, many teams mentioned taking a proactive approach to learning. As one respondent noted, *“Right now, we just use ChatGPT, but we have been attending webinars to learn more about Copilot.”*

Others are going even further, building their own internal solutions. One marketing professional explained, *“We have a custom GPT, and we are training it to learn our boilerplate and firm information under our voice, as well as individual designers’ approaches.”*

This combination of formal training, self-directed learning, and grassroots experimentation shows how quickly teams are adapting. Even where structured programs are lacking, curiosity and initiative drive adoption. As AI confidence continues to grow, these early experiments are laying the foundation for broader, org-wide transformation.

## Hidden gems in OpenAsset

Some of the most inspiring feedback wasn’t about the well-known OpenAsset features, but the “hidden gems” that are quietly transforming AEC workflows. Here’s what AEC pros told us they love and wanted to share with their peers:

“The map view for projects is an underutilized gem that makes filtering easier.”

— Skyler S.

“I think that the best hidden gem in OpenAsset is the map feature. I’ve found that most people don’t realize they can expand it and see where all of our projects are across the country. I would consider that my favorite hidden gem.”

— Carrie M.

“You can specifically see which projects selected team members have worked on together — a big help for kickoff meetings.”

— Amanda G.

“Being able to convert an album into a PPT is super helpful — I didn’t know that was even possible until recently.”

— Aftin N.

*“I love being able to drag and drop images directly from the website into my PowerPoint or any other web-based platform. I don’t have to download images and clog up my hard drive or server space. I can just find the images I need and drop them into what I’m working on. That has really streamlined the process.”*

— Thabang N.



## The road ahead for AEC

Our survey results show a clear shift. The slow reviews, scattered project data, and repetitive edits that once felt like immovable obstacles are now being reshaped into catalysts for change. AEC marketers are embracing technology that reduces friction and frees them to focus on what matters most: **strategy and storytelling**.

AI and tools like OpenAsset and Shred.ai are already breaking down these barriers. And while percentages tell one side of the story, the customer voices bring it to life.

“AI Search has been a complete game-changer.”

— Sarah C.

“OpenAsset’s AI image search feature is very helpful when team members are trying to find an image with a certain vibe or color for a proposal.”

— Brin W.

“The new AI features within OpenAsset have helped us find images within a topic area or theme more easily.”

— Janice K.

“Quick access to files and AI-powered search categories has completely sped up our process.”

— Lisa V.

---

The future of AEC marketing isn't just about working faster. It's about working smarter, collaborating better, and [telling more compelling stories](#). And that future is already unfolding.

Discover how your firm can be part of the AEC innovation revolution at [openasset.com/platform](https://openasset.com/platform)

