

**A YEAR OF
NOT-SO-B2B
24/25**

**A special thanks
to the team
behind the year
of Not-so-B2B
24/25 annual**

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WELCOME TO THE YEAR OF NOT-SO-B2B 24/25



Matthew Stevens
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As another year closes, we find ourselves at a crossroads in B2B marketing, where creativity is often reduced to being formulaic and optimized for volume production. But in our view, creativity is about much more than just ticking boxes—it's about breaking free from the usual boundaries and discovering something unexpected. In this Year of Not-so-B2B 24/25 – our first annual review of the best of not-so-B2B – we've pulled together a collection of ideas and insights that don't just live in the B2B world; they come from design, art, technology, and beyond. We wanted to create something to inspire you for the new year, away from all the usual tips and tactics.

Inside your copy of our very first Year of Not-so-B2B, you'll find themes and influences that have shaped our thinking in 2024 and point toward 2025. From immersive brand experiences that break down the traditional barriers to the rising call for authenticity, these ideas might be familiar in some ways, but they're presented here with a twist—an invitation to see things differently. For us, this is not about business as usual; it's about redefining what B2B could be if we take the time to slow down, look and think more laterally, and open ourselves up to a more intentional way of working.

Our approach is simple yet unconventional. We don't rush to quick solutions or fall back on predictable answers. This Not-so-B2B annual is a reflection of how we see our work—a blend of curiosity, fresh perspective, and the drive to change the narrative. As you dip into these pages, we hope you'll find inspiration to take a step back, challenge the norms, and imagine new possibilities for what B2B marketing can be.

We hope you like it, and thanks for being not-so-B2B.

**WHEN THE WORLD
DEMANDS TOXIC
PRODUCTIVITY,
CONTEMPLATION
IS A RADICAL ACT.**

Thomas Sharp for the Henry Moore Foundation

THE 6 BIG THEMES OF 2024

To make the Year of Not-so-B2B 24/25 Annual easier to navigate, we've organized it around the big themes that have been top of mind for us across the last 12 months, and that we think will be important to B2B marketers in 2025. These are the trends that are reshaping B2B marketing, prioritizing authenticity, customer experience, and data-driven insights.

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BE TURNING OUR
HEADS IN 2025

(available on request [here](#))

THE MOST LOVED BRANDS

**AREN'T NECESSARILY THE BIGGEST OR
MOST OUTRAGEOUS. WHAT THEY HAVE
IN COMMON IS AN UNDERSTANDING
THAT, AS OUR CULTURE CONTINUES TO
FRAGMENT INTO OBLIVION, YOU CAN'T
BE EVERYTHING TO EVERY PERSON.**

Lauren Sherman— Puck Media

BRAND IS POWER

Recommendations



Building a StoryBrand: Clarify Your Message So Customers Will Listen

by Donald Miller (2024 Edition)

An updated guide exploring Miller's StoryBrand framework, which details how businesses can better engage and influence customers with authentic brand narratives.



Air (2023)

A dramatization of the origin story of Nike's now-legendary partnership with hoops icon, Michael Jordan, with an all-star cast featuring Matt Damon, Ben Affleck, Jason Bateman, Marlon Wayans and Viola Davis to name a few.



SXSW Conference & Festivals (June 2025)

These yearly events feature sessions on brand authenticity and innovation. SXSW is coming to London in June 2025.



A black and white portrait of Psemby Kinsten, a man with short, wavy hair and glasses, wearing a dark blazer over a light-colored sweater. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is dark.

PSEMBI KINSTEN
**CHIEF CREATIVE
OFFICER AT DDB**

With a BAFTA, several Cannes Lions, and over 200 international awards under his belt, Psembi Kinstan is one of the most successful creatives in the industry - and we had a chance to pick his brain...



MOI: What's your secret to turning heads?

Psembi: It's simply bucking the category and making something that feels and looks totally unlike anything else that's being put out into the world. The best work comes from some truth about the brand, but brought to life in a compelling, fresh way.

I remember working on a whisky pitch with Nigel Bogle, and the discussion started with Nigel looking at the whisky box for a full ten minutes, reading every word carefully and coming up with the strategy that drove the entire brand idea. It all comes back to the brand's truth. Unless you're inventing that brand from scratch from scratch, chances are the most authentic, and therefore the most enduring idea, will be right there waiting for you to find it.

MOI: How much does brand purpose come into an idea?

Psembi: If by brand purpose you mean doing purposeful work to make a difference, well at the moment, I think that type of purpose counts for fuck all. With inflation remaining high, consumers aren't caring nearly as much as 12 months ago about anything beyond value. Will this come back around? Absolutely. But with Cannes deliberately moving away from potentially-scummy, purposeful work, I think we won't be rushing back to cause-based work like we were a decade ago.

MOI: What's one of your favorite projects you've worked on?

Psembi: I've worked with Made by Dyslexia for seven years, and this year we launched our biggest project yet, working with Virgin, Open University and TikTok to teach the world to think like a dyslexic. To learn the problem solving, creative thinking and storytelling that's inherent to dyslexics - skills that the world's largest recruiter has revealed are most in-demand. Contributing dyslexics include Virgin Group founder Sir Richard Branson, Shark Tank USA star Barbara Corcoran, Trunki founder Rob Law and many more.

MOI: What are your thoughts on the future of brand stories and media consumption?

Psembi: Social has been the dominant media (by spend) for the last 12 months, overtaking paid search. And what does social marketing reward? Brand stories. And for ambitious brands, that's a good thing.

Youtube, Meta and TikTok will all tell you that sound is back on, and if you can hold attention, there's no limit to how long your story can be. I think storytelling is about to come back in a big way, where brands can create stories of a minute, or three minutes, (outside of the UK Christmas ad season) and it's going to drive a massive jump in effectiveness. Short-form content that's heavily branded but lacking in story will only get you so far. That's why agencies need to invest in these new forms of storytelling.

MOI: We've been asking people outside of B2B why creative is important in B2B marketing. What's your take?

Psembi: This argument takes place in every specialism within our industry. Certainly, there are nuances, but the argument for creativity is one based on human nature. We like to think humans are rational creatures that respond to data and reason. But that's clearly bullshit. Humans respond to stories, not reason. Look at Brexit. The NHS bus claim was proven wrong immediately. But the story stuck, and it was a powerful one.

If you want higher effectiveness, create a compelling story that makes your audience feel the answer in their heart, not their brain.

**A GREAT BRAND
IS LIKE A GREAT
PERSON, TRUE &
HONEST ABOUT
WHO THEY ARE,**

UNAFRAID TO SHOW THEIR TRUE COLORS

Jessica Walsh – &Walsh

BRAND MATTERS, BUT IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THINK



Stuart Andrews
SVP Ideation & Innovation

B2B leaders love to talk about efficiency, product features, and sales funnels. But when the conversation shifts to brand, things tend to get fuzzy. Research tells us that brand is climbing up the B2B agenda—even edging out demand generation as a top priority. So, if more businesses recognize that brand matters, why does it still get such a bad rap?

The problem isn't that brand doesn't work in B2B—it's that too many companies are getting it wrong. They see brand as something surface-level, an afterthought. Or worse, a vanity project. The truth is, brand is just as important in B2B as it is in consumer markets—if not more so. But it's different, more complex, and requires a different approach. It's not just about logos, slogans, or company colors. It's about building trust, recognition, and emotional connection in a space where relationships are long-term and buying cycles are drawn out.

Why brand is essential in B2B

Let's start with the 95:5 rule, a concept developed by the B2B Institute at LinkedIn. The rule says that, at any given moment, '95% of your target audience isn't actively looking to buy.' That means only 5% of them are in the market for what you're selling. So, what's the strategy for that 95%? You can't target them with demand generation campaigns aimed at immediate conversion. Instead, this is where brand comes into play. Branding builds mindshare, positioning your company as the first choice when that 95% moves into the buying phase.

Without brand, you're invisible. Worse, you're replaceable. In

an industry where differentiation can be a challenge, brand is what helps B2B businesses stand out from the competition, create long-term relationships, and earn a spot on a prospect's "Day 1 list" when they're ready to buy.

Reality Check: Brand is not just for consumer markets. In fact, in B2B, where the stakes are higher and decisions are more complex, brand can be even more important. You're not just competing on price and features—you're competing on trust, reliability, and the ability to deliver value over time.

Why it's not as simple as you think

If only it were as easy as slapping a logo on a website and calling it a day. Branding in B2B is more nuanced. It has to align with long-term business strategy, touch every part of the organization, and be embedded into every customer interaction—not just at the corporate communications level. The mistake many companies make is thinking of brand as a one-time project. They launch a new visual identity or rework their tagline and expect it to deliver magic.

Branding is a long-term investment. It's about building mental availability in the minds of your audience, over time, and across every touchpoint. And the more complex the buying cycle, the more important brand becomes. When a decision involves multiple stakeholders, long-term contracts, and significant financial commitments, brand trust plays a critical role in tipping the scales.

Why brand often falls short

All too often, B2B companies feel let down by branding efforts. They don't see the ROI, and the brand never seems to impact sales the way they expected. Why?

Misalignment. Too many companies see brand as an isolated exercise—a high-level initiative divorced from the everyday realities of demand generation, sales enablement, or customer retention. They invest in brand at the corporate altitude but fail to translate that investment into something tangible at the level where the business operates—on the ground, with prospects and customers.

In our work with B2B companies, especially in tech, we've seen this gap play out repeatedly. Leaders get sold on a shiny new brand idea, but the execution fails to connect with their sales teams, marketing initiatives, or customer needs. Brand gets labelled as a "vanity project" because it never reaches the people responsible for moving deals forward.

Why do companies continue to overlook the power of brand?

Simple—it's misunderstood. There's a belief that B2B buyers are driven purely by logic and that branding is an emotional play only relevant in consumer markets. There's also the common misconception that branding is all about visuals, logos, and colors—a superficial add-on that doesn't impact the bottom line.

In reality, brand-building in B2B is about creating long-term differentiation in an increasingly crowded market. It's about building trust and credibility—two things that take time, effort, and consistency.

Too many businesses focus on short-term sales tactics, expecting branding to be a quick fix. When they don't see immediate results, they blame the concept of branding rather than their execution.

Want to know how to approach brand so it delivers?

The answer lies in understanding that brand is integral to the growth engine, not a cosmetic upgrade. Here's how to make it work:

1. **Align brand with demand generation**

Too often, companies separate brand-building efforts from their demand gen activities. Don't. Your brand should work hand-in-hand with demand generation, increasing the effectiveness of lead nurturing, making your marketing more memorable, and creating trust early in the funnel.

2. **Embed brand into sales**

Brand isn't just about marketing—your sales team needs to live it too. Sales reps aren't just selling products; they're selling the story, the values, and the trust that your brand represents. Equip them with the messaging and tools that let them lean on the brand in their conversations.

3. **Get internal buy-in**

If your people don't believe in your brand, your customers won't either. Branding isn't just an external exercise—it has to resonate internally, especially with those on the front lines. Get your employees involved and make sure they understand the role brand plays in every interaction with a customer.

4. **Consistency across channels**

Your brand must be consistent across all touchpoints. Whether it's a trade show booth, a whitepaper, or a cold call, every experience should reflect your brand's core values and messaging. Inconsistency erodes trust and leaves prospects confused about what your company stands for.

5. **Measure what matters**

Brand doesn't deliver instant results, but that doesn't mean you can't track its impact. Instead of focusing on short-term metrics like immediate conversions, track brand health over time—awareness, consideration, preference, and trust. When the 95% move to the 5%, you'll see the results.

Conclusion: Brand is the long game

The 95:5 rule makes it clear: brand building is not an expense—it's a long-term investment. It's the key to staying top-of-mind with your audience when they're not ready to buy, and it's the deciding factor when they are. B2B companies that fail to grasp the importance of brand are missing out on their biggest growth lever.

Brand is not a distraction or a vanity project. It's your ticket to long-term success. And if you approach it the right way—integrating it into your demand gen, sales, and customer experience—it will deliver the results you need, time and time again.

Authenticity Unleashed: How Brands Can Win in the AI Era

First published in Fast Company Feb 2024



This article by Rahul Raj in Fast Company from February 2024 caught our attention as it highlights the importance of authenticity in branding within the context of AI advancements, emphasizing the need for brands to maintain genuine connections with consumers, leveraging AI to enhance rather than replace human interaction.

Looking for a competitive edge in 2024? In this age of AI, keeping it real might just be the boldest brand strategy.

I recently came across a headline that stumped me: “The Rise of Fake Advertising.” The article delved into the work of Californian CGI video artist Ian Padgham, known as @origiful, a key figure in the emerging trend of “FOOH” (pronounced faux) or fake out-of-home content.

FOOH represents a novel advertising approach, using CGI tech to create compelling and seemingly real-life ad campaigns, like this Jacquemus ad that features oversized handbags racing through the streets of Paris.

Fast Company Newsletters

These FOOH creations masterfully toe the line between reality and digital fabrication, captivating viewers with their surrealism. Take, for instance, this Maybelline ad depicting a train in the London tube combing its larger-than-life eyelashes through a giant mascara wand.

In his interview with Marketing Brew, Fernando Febres, the VP of marketing at Maybelline New York, explained that part of their campaign goal was to spark debate over the video’s authenticity, engaging audiences in a conversation about what’s real and what’s not.

Certain advertisements are so impressively realistic that brands like Truff and Popeye’s have found it necessary to explicitly state that their ads are, in fact, fictional creations.

A complex cultural environment

There’s no doubt that 2023 was a landmark year for FOOH. Intriguingly, this rise coincided with Merriam-Dictionary appointing “authentic” as its word of the year. This creates a compelling cultural dichotomy.

On the one hand, we are mesmerized by CGI advertisements that push the limits of our perceptions of reality. On the other, there is a societal craving for authenticity and genuineness.

This begs the question: What should challenger brands do in this complex cultural environment?

Take a cue from IKEA Norway, which embraces the gritty realness of home life in their “Life is not an IKEA catalogue” campaign. One of their three ads shows parents arriving home to a huge mess after a teen party. From there, the ads take it to the next level, with furniture covered in vomit and animal urine.

Despite some negative feedback—from, you know, the puke—Norway’s head of marketing communication Annika Mørch Asté reassured The Creative Review, “Sure, it’s a bit tough to see our products on TV covered in vomit or dog pee, but life isn’t always neat and tidy, so we think it’s great that the campaign can reflect just that.”

IKEA Norway’s campaign offers a valuable strategy for challenger brands. In a time where authenticity is a rare commodity, keeping it real can be your most provocative move.

DON'T BUY THIS JACKET



Here are a couple of ways your brand can keep it real in 2024:

1. Embrace transparency

Patagonia's 2011 "Don't Buy This Jacket" campaign is one of the most impactful ads I've encountered. Featured in the New York Times' Black Friday edition, this full-page ad took a bold stance. It urged customers to reconsider their purchase, highlighting the environmental impact of manufacturing, including gas emissions and textile waste. While seemingly counterintuitive, this ad was a brilliant example of radical transparency.

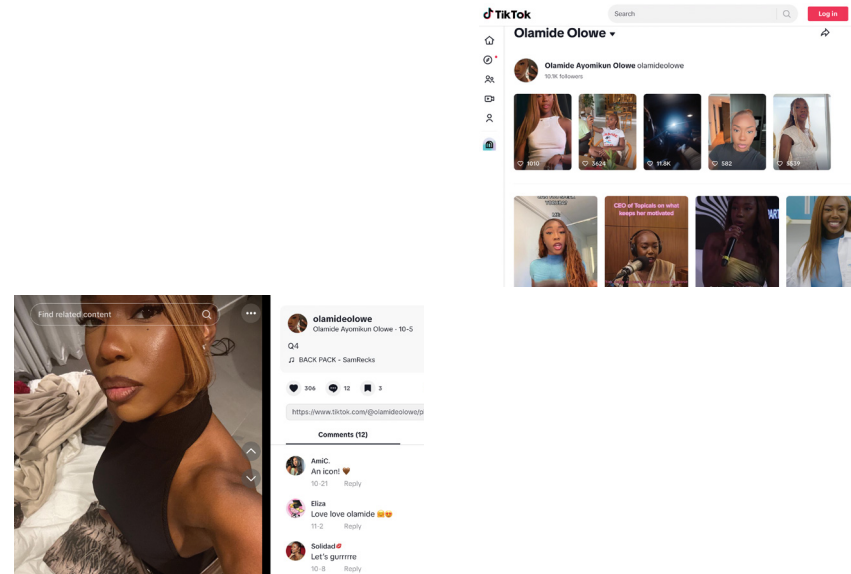
Interestingly, instead of deterring customers, the campaign saw Patagonia's sales increase by 30%. More importantly, it cemented Patagonia's mission in the public consciousness: "Build the best product, cause no unnecessary harm, use business to inspire, and implement solutions to the environmental crisis."

This move not only positioned Patagonia as an environmentally conscious leader but also highlighted the power of honesty and responsibility in advertising. By openly discussing the environmental cost of their products, Patagonia built trust with their audience and firmly aligned their brand with a greater purpose.

2. Humanize your brand through leadership visibility

In today's digital age, a brand's narrative gains authenticity when its leaders are actively involved in storytelling, making it crucial for CEOs and founders to be visibly engaged on social media in 2024.

Sprout Social's research underscores this trend, revealing that 65% of consumers feel a stronger connection to brands with a strong



social media presence. The impact is even more pronounced when company leaders are actively involved: 70% of consumers report feeling more connected to a brand when its CEO is active on social media platforms.

Consider the example of Topicals, a black-owned skincare brand led by its dynamic 26-year-old founder, Olamide Olowe. When Topicals launched their latest product, the Slick Salve Mint Lip Balm, Olowe didn't just rely on traditional advertising. She personally took to TikTok Live, engaging with her audience, sharing insights about the new product, and answering questions in real time.

This direct interaction not only humanized the brand but also created a sense of intimacy and trust with consumers.

Such personal engagement by CEOs and founders can significantly enhance brand perception, adding a human face and relatable stories to a corporate image. This approach is particularly effective in building brand loyalty and trust, crucial elements in today's competitive market. By sharing their passion, vision, and even challenges, leaders can foster a deeper, more meaningful connection with their audience, turning consumers into die-hard brand advocates.

Final Thoughts

As we usher in 2024, the rules of engagement are clear: authenticity isn't just a buzzword; it's the secret sauce. In a world where AI-generated content could make us question the fabric of reality, the brands that stand out will be those daring enough to keep it real—mess, imperfections, vomit, and all.

**PERSONALIZATION
IS NOT ABOUT
KNOWING IT ALL**

**IT'S ABOUT MAKING PEOPLE
FEEL LIKE THEY MATTER... TRUE
PERSONALIZATION COMES FROM
EMPATHY, NOT ALGORITHMS.**

Rory Sutherland

MAKE IT (EVEN MORE) PERSONAL

Recommendations



Hello World: Being Human in the Age of Algorithms
by Hannah Fry (2023)

Explores the power and limitations of algorithms in everyday life, and the role they play in human interactions.



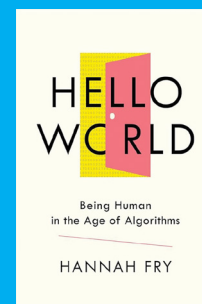
The Great Hack (2019)

A documentary film about the explosive Facebook-Cambridge Analytica data scandal, uncovering the dark side of social media and non-consensual data mining.



Adobe Summit (March 2025)

The Adobe Summit returns in March 2025, with more than 200 sessions, hands-on labs and inspiring keynotes. 2024's event had a strong focus on digital experience and personalization strategies.



A black and white portrait of Rory Sutherland, Vice Chairman of Ogilvy. He is a middle-aged man with curly hair, wearing a striped button-down shirt and a jacket. He is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. The background is dark.

RORY SUTHERLAND
VICE CHAIRMAN
OF OGILVY

The element of surprise, emotional responses, and the Kano theory - we spoke to Rory Sutherland, Vice Chairman of Ogilvy, Spectator columnist, Ted Talk speaker and bestselling author, about what it takes to turn heads in marketing.



MOI: What's your secret to getting attention and turning heads with your campaigns?

Rory: I think everything attention-worthy has an element of the unexpected. And it can be almost anything.

I'll give you a very small but pertinent example. When you check in at a Doubletree Hotel, they keep an oven underneath the check-in desk, and they give you a bag of their signature DoubleTree cookies to take up to your room. Now the point isn't that anybody particularly wants cookies, it's the fact that nobody was expecting it. And it's a gesture which carries an unusual amount of attentional freight through being, in a sense, unasked for and unexpected. No other hotel would have that on their list of what you might call core service offers, but that's precisely what makes it so potent. The whole question of what to attend to is a really, really interesting question in psychology and neuroscience, and it is interesting that the best advertising has some element of mischief to it.

MOI: What recent campaign has got your attention?

Rory: There's a beautiful campaign for ALDI in Australia. And it's someone who comes to the till, but there's one thing that they can't find, and they say: "I'm terribly sorry. I couldn't find the cheesecake mix" or whatever. "I'm going to have to go somewhere else for it."

It's a brilliant way of taking it into the new context, which is, "Don't worry, we all know you shop elsewhere." It says, look, if you judge ALDI as the place you go for your whole weekly shop, you'll find it slightly sub-optimal because it doesn't have the range of a Tesco or a Sainsbury's, or whatever the Australian equivalent is. But what it's actually saying is: "Go to ALDI for all the things you can buy at ALDI - and then go elsewhere." And it's creating sort of permission for a behavior, in other words.

MOI: Another type of ad that I really like is when they say, "our product is not for everyone", similar to the ALDI ad you mentioned.

Rory: That's right. It's worth noting that the first thing finance people kill about a brand is the thing that they don't think is core to its central function. But there's a wonderful thing called Kano theory. Kano was a guy at the University of Tokyo who did a lot of work with the Japanese consumer electronics industry back in the 70s and 80s. And he divided product attributes into three components.

First there's the table stakes where you have to be non-shit. Then you have performance attributes, which is what the thing is notionally there for. That would be something like battery life in a phone or sound quality in a cassette deck. And then he has these third things which he calls delight attributes. And those are often the first things that the finance guys try to kill. But actually, it's what draws people to pick it.

What we're really saying is it has a disproportionate importance to your appreciation of something. One very clever guy said, "I always think we should make the distinction between value," which is what is the thing and how much does it cost, "and appreciation," which is a much more emotional thing, how much you actually warm to something, or how much it instils trust, affection and other emotional qualities.

Appreciation is a much bigger thing than value, actually. The things we really care about in human interaction aren't the things that we tend to measure.

**THE MAGIC
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**THE MAGIC
LIVES IN THE
WONDER OF
WHAT WE DO
NOT KNOW.**

Rick Rubin — *The Creative Act: A Way of Being*

WHY B2B NEEDS TO RETHINK PERSONALIZATION



Stuart Andrews
SVP Ideation & Innovation

It's ironic, isn't it? Just as AI and data analytics give us the tools to create marketing so personal it could bring a tear to your eye, trust in B2B content is sinking faster than a stone.

Personalization was meant to be the savior of relevance. Yet here we are, with audiences side-eyeing anything that looks like a white paper or gated report.

Here's the truth: B2B marketing has become too predictable. It's all a bit too B2B. The language, the formats, the approach—everything feels like it's been put through the same corporate machine. And the result? Audiences don't just tune it out; they don't trust what's being pumped out to them.

The trust gap: why familiarity breeds contempt

Let's talk about trust. [Informatel's Trust Index report](#) lays it bare: 68% of B2B buyers trust marketing content less now than they did three years ago. That's not a throwaway stat or data point. It's a red flag.

How did it come to this? Because we've trained our audiences to expect the same old rinse-and-repeat formulas: generic headlines, gated content that rarely delivers, and ABM campaigns pulled from a template.

Trust and value are inseparable.

When every piece of content feels the same, the perceived effort behind it is diminished. And when effort feels low, trust collapses.

Hyper-personalization done right

Here's the paradox: we need to get more personal, but to do that, we need to get better at being human. Hyper-personalization isn't just about dropping someone's first name into an email subject line or segmenting audiences by job title. It's about understanding what your audience values and delivering it with authenticity and relevance.

Lately, it feels like B2B marketing has lost sight of the real goal behind campaigns. It's not just about driving leads or increasing the pipeline.

It's about getting a human to engage with your content. And how can they do that if they don't care about what you've offered?

It's time to involve your customers in every step of the journey. When buyers actively inform your B2B campaigns, they feel heard. Invite them into the conversation, into the data. Stop relying on outdated pain point clichés that just no longer resonate.

AI and data analytics can help—but only when used with precision and empathy. The best ABM strategies don't just rely on intent data; they craft genuinely valuable, bespoke experiences for each buyer. It's about creating meaning, not mass production.

Rebuilding trust: a radical proposal.

If we genuinely want to create content that connects on a personal level, we need to:

- 1. Take off the corporate comms cuffs**
Stop writing like a committee-approved robot. Write like a human who actually gives a damn.
- 2. Embrace genuine insights**
85% of buyers believe high-quality thought leadership improves brand perception. But 'high-quality' doesn't mean academic waffling. It's fresh, actionable, provocative perspectives.
- 3. Atomize your content**
Don't hoard your best insights behind paywalls. Spread them everywhere – social media, blogs, podcasts, and beyond.

How being not-so-B2B can make you more personable

B2B marketing is at a crossroads. We have the tools to get hyper-personal, but if we don't pair them with authenticity and creativity, we'll just sink further into the trust gap.

Our industry needs to stop trying to be perfect and start being memorable. We need marketing that feels like a conversation, not a sales pitch. Content that enlightens, not just informs.

Here's my challenge to every B2B marketer reading this: be brave enough to be different. Be human enough to be authentic. And for the love of all that is holy, stop writing like a corporate automaton.

Personalization isn't a technology problem. It's a humanity problem. And we're long overdue for a solution.

How to enhance customer loyalty through personalized experiences

First published in Marketing Week Nov 2023



This piece explores strategies for enhancing customer loyalty through personalized experiences, highlighting the role of AI and data analytics in delivering tailored content and offers.

Imagine walking into a hotel room and finding a note with your name on it beside a plate of your favourite food. As you open it, the note details all the hotel amenities and suggests dishes similar to the one in front of you. The hotel even went the extra mile to recommend local attractions that align with your interests. Sounds like a dream, doesn't it?

Personalization is of paramount importance in many industries, especially in the hospitality sector.

It enables businesses to tailor experiences and services to meet the unique needs and preferences of individual customers, leading to enhanced customer satisfaction and loyalty. Ready to wine and dine your way into loyalty? Let's delve into this fascinating realm.

Understanding personalization in the hospitality industry

Personalization is a burgeoning trend in several sectors, with hospitality being a prominent one. Hotels and restaurants that leverage customer data can craft tailored experiences that cater to individual needs, including personalized ads, rewards, room amenities and dining recommendations. The right personalization strategy can significantly enhance guest satisfaction, differentiate businesses and bolster brand reputation.

Consequently, it's no surprise that an increasing number of hospitality companies are incorporating personalization into their offerings.

However, personalization must be executed with the utmost care to address privacy concerns for guests. Collecting and using hospitality customers' data or over-personalization can make some guests feel uncomfortable and deter them from returning.

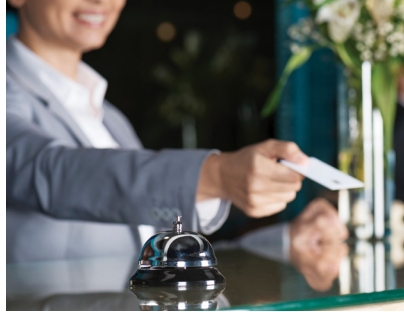
Furthermore, not all hotels and restaurants have the capacity to offer extensive personalization options, and some personalization efforts may translate into increased workload for staff. Implementing personalization can be intricate, necessitating advanced technology and data analytics in the hospitality sector.

The past and the future of personalization

The concept of personalization in marketing dates back to the 1990s. However, merely targeting customers based on manual segmentation or personalizing a message using their name is no longer sufficient. With technological advancements, particularly in machine learning (ML) techniques and the growing utilisation of artificial intelligence (AI), marketing activities can now be highly individualised and personalized.

Machine learning collects three general types of data:

1. Customer interaction: Data related to reservations, special requests or other interactions are valuable for the hospitality business.
2. Product or service ratings: Beyond traditional reviews, tracking activity is crucial for personalization efforts.
3. Customer demographics: Information like age group, location or preferred communication channel serves as the foundation for personalization marketing systems.



Strategies to personalize loyalty touchpoints in the hospitality sector

Once you've gathered all the necessary data with the help of ML or AI, the next step is to develop profiles to gain a better understanding of individual preferences, behaviors, and their relationship with your business. While customised communication is prevalent in today's marketing strategies, it's essential not to overlook it. Utilise customer preferences to suggest personalized dining options, activities or even local experiences. The collected data can also inform the design of marketing campaigns that align with individual customer profiles.

Tailored services are an excellent way to make your customers feel like royalty. Offering choices in bedding, room amenities, room temperature, lighting or entertainment based on past stay data can greatly enhance their experience.

Real-time personalization allows you to customise a customer's journey during their stay by suggesting local attractions or events. An omnichannel approach can be incredibly valuable here.

Personalize the survey after the stay to encourage completion and gather more data from your customers. Your communication should not end when your guest leaves the hotel or restaurant. Remind customers of your services and regularly update customer profiles to ensure ongoing customisation. Adapt your strategies based on evolving market trends. All of this can be managed through a customer loyalty management programme.

The best loyalty programmes out there enable you to recognize and celebrate important occasions, such as birthdays or anniversaries, with personalized offers, messages, decorations or small gifts. Furthermore, customer loyalty programs can offer rewards based on individual users' preferences, spending habits and interests.

AI-powered personalization tools

One tool that facilitates the creation of unique personalization solutions for the hospitality industry is the Comarch Loyalty Marketing Platform. This AI-powered loyalty platform delivers personalized customer experiences across multiple touchpoints. It achieves this through four main pillars:

- **Loyalty management:** Design and launch engaging marketing campaigns for the hospitality sector.
- **Data analytics:** Easily personalize marketing campaigns and analyse them in a matter of seconds.
- **Marketing automation:** Building and visualising customer journeys enables you to send the right message at the right time.
- **Omnichannel marketing applications:** A dedicated set of front-end apps that enhance customers' interactions with loyalty programmes.

The presented tools and additional features, such as gamification elements, fraud detection or a mobile app help you build long-lasting customer relationships and, ultimately, lead to improved ROI.

In today's dynamic hospitality landscape, personalized experiences can elevate a good hotel stay to a great one. More and more consumers expect brands to understand their preferences and be thoughtful, driving the industry to give their guests what they crave. Tailoring services and creating the ideal experience are key ingredients in increasing customer loyalty. Leverage technologies such as ML or AI in your marketing efforts for personalization and create the trip of a lifetime.

THE TIME HAS COME FOR B2B MARKETERS

**TO BREAK FREE FROM THE
SHACKLES OF OUTDATED FORMULAS
AND EMBRACE A MORE CREATIVE,
LESS RIGID APPROACH**

Joel Harrison – B2B Marketing

YES, EXPERIENCE IS NECESSARY

Recommendations



The Experience Economy

by B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore (2024 Edition)

An updated version of the 1999 bestseller from Pine and Gilmore, the 2024 edition includes updated insights into creating memorable customer experiences.



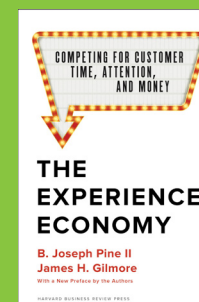
Tour de France: Unchained (2023)


A Netflix series providing an immersive behind-the-scenes look at the 2022 Tour de France. It captures the meticulous planning, intense pressure, and dynamic coordination required to stage one of the world's most prestigious sporting events.



Venice Biennale (April-November 2026)

A major contemporary art exhibition, the 61st Venice Biennale will be curated by Koyo Kouoh and run from April to November in 2026. The exhibition offers immersive experiences with pavilions from around the world.



A black and white portrait of Chris Do, a man with a friendly expression, wearing a black beanie, glasses, and a dark jacket. The background is solid black. The text 'CHRIS DO' is in green, and 'FOUNDER & CEO OF THE FUTUR' is in white.

CHRIS DO
FOUNDER & CEO
OF THE FUTUR

For this issue we had the privilege of interviewing Chris Do, CEO and Chief Strategist of Blind, visionary founder of The Futur, and Emmy award-winning designer and director. Chris has been a headline speaker at Adobe Max, AIGA Design Conference, HOW Design Live, and The Design Conference, as well as sharing his experience on international stages such as SXSW and TEDx.



Chris's tips for creating content that turns heads:

1. Be clear as to who you are speaking or writing to. Don't have a group in mind, have a person in mind.
2. Identify 2-3 problems or challenges they're having. Talk about this in their language so that they feel as if you're reading their mind. Now that you have their attention, say something...
3. Reframe the problem or solution so that they are seeing the world in a new way. As in, "huh, I never thought of it that way before".
4. Give some concrete steps/actions to take. Now that you know the problem, can see it in a new way, do this.

In this exclusive Q&A, we asked Chris to share his 'secret' for coming up with head-turning ideas and what the most inspiring event experience he's had in his illustrious career is, so far. Read on to find out Chris' take on the electrifying atmosphere of SXSW and why he thinks the social content being inspired by the Paris Olympics says a lot about the power of an event to shape our cultural narrative.

MOI: First off, what's your secret to getting attention and turning heads with your work?

Chris: For me, the only 'head' that matters is the one that hired you. I think it's important to do the job you were paid to do and put that ahead of your own desire to create award-winning work - that is a perk to me. When you accept money from a client, this should be your highest priority—serve the client's needs.

MOI: What recent campaign has got your attention?

Chris: I'm loving the organic posts that are emerging from the Paris 2024 Olympics. It's not an organized campaign by one entity, but rather the output of so many people having a genuine emotional connection to what is going on. For a short period of time, we can forget that we're in a contentious election cycle, multiple wars going on, and celebrate individual human achievement.

MOI: What's the coolest event or experience you've gone to - or been involved with?

Chris: I really enjoyed my first time at SXSW. I spoke on a panel but the best part for me were all the parties and independently organized events. For the first time, I went to an event and didn't make any plans. I kept it open so I could just go with the flow. I had dinner with some of my friends and peers from the Asian American community. It felt like a long time coming, but seeing a diverse group of Asian professionals coming together was really heart-warming for me.

It has to be said - listening to Chris is an experience in itself, promising to enlighten and inspire anyone passionate about creativity and innovation.

**THE EXPERIENCE
ECONOMY IS
ABOUT STAGING
EXPERIENCES**

**THAT ARE
MEMORABLE
& ENGAGING.**

B. Joseph Pine II & James H. Gilmore
– The Experience Economy

THE ART OF HEAD-TURNING EXPERIENCES



Nicky Kemp
Copywriter

How is it that certain events or experiences manage to capture your attention and create such a lasting impression in ways that others don't? They stick in your memory. Make you feel part of a collective. Urge you to think about things that you might never normally think about. But how? What is it that differentiates an unforgettable experience from a forgettable one?

The truth is, there is no copy-and-paste formula. But there is one universal truth – and it's that no one goes to an event purely to 'go to the event'. They go with the anticipation of having an experience, and the best events know exactly how to deliver.

Let's take a look at one resoundingly successful example from summer 2024...

A masterclass in experiences: the Taylor Swift Songbook Trail at the V&A

There are many examples of unique and expertly crafted experiences in the world of marketing. But sometimes, the most inspiring lay outside of the industry. And 2024's Taylor Swift Songbook Trail at the Victoria & Albert Museum is a subtle masterclass in how to make an experience accessible, inclusive, and awesomely engaging.

For those that missed it, here's what you need to know. The Taylor Swift Songbook Trail was a free, one-mile-long exhibition that spanned four floors of the V&A. It was made up of 13 installation 'Stops' (her lucky number), featuring iconic outfits from award ceremonies, music videos and previous concerts, alongside other artefacts that marked a chapter in the songbook of Taylor's career.

But what made the exhibition so head-turning wasn't what lay within the displays - it was the thought, detail and psychology that went into crafting an immersive journey for visitors.

1. Immersing your audience

No matter the event, venue or purpose, there is one golden rule of crafting meaningful, memorable experiences. And that's to involve and immerse your audience. This is something that the Songbook Trail demonstrated in spectacular fashion.

Curated with the fanbase in mind, every Stop along the trail showcased a beloved item from the singer's archives – from microphones to instruments, iconic outfits, and more – along a winding, embedded journey.

Now, with only 13 installations, the V&A could have easily dedicated just one room to the pop-up exhibition. It certainly would have looked good on paper to have masses of visitors flocking to one installation space. But they didn't. Why? Because it wouldn't have engaged the audience in the same way.

Instead, they connected each display across multiple rooms and floors, taking visitors through an immersive experience that told the story of the singer-songwriter's career to date. Rather than being all about guiding visitors to a single destination and 'collection', every step of the Taylor Swift Songbook Trail WAS the experience.

When you stop and think about large scale B2B shows, summits and conferences that so many of us are involved in every year, we could learn a lot from experiences like this – making every touchpoint part of the experience, not just a means to an end, whether that's maximizing visitor numbers, generating leads or increasing pipeline.

2. It's in the details

There are some things about an event that are obviously central to the experience. The venue. The catering. The theme and decor. But the real magic lies in the details. These are the bits that take an experience from average to exceptional, and they're usually the bits that the audience remembers.



For the Songbook Trail, no detail was spared. At first glance, you'd be forgiven for thinking the displays were nothing more than a collection of props and costumes, randomly sprawled across the museum's footprint. But in reality, it goes much deeper.

Each display was beautifully and sympathetically embedded amongst the V&A's permanent exhibits – and the location choices are far from random. Every room and surrounding exhibit were carefully chosen to enhance and elevate the experience.

Take the first Stop on the trail, for example. The display showcased the wig and costume from the music video for Swift's song *The Man* – a track that imagines how differently she would be perceived if she were male. But look outside the display cabinet, and you'd find it's flanked by statues of the goddesses Venus and Diana. And beyond that? A room filled with art made by men, depicting women. A coincidence? As Swifties know all too well, there's no such thing.

Every intricate detail of the trail helped to create a cohesive, immersive experience that was uniquely tailored to the fanbase's ability to seek out hidden meanings and untangle invisible strings. And that's precisely what made it so unique and memorable. It wasn't just a collection of artefacts. It was entrenched with meaning and symbolism.

In the world of B2B, the same principle applies. Every decision – be it design, messaging, strategy or experiences – should be intentional.

Integrating small but meaningful details that make every interaction feel personalized and distinctly tailored.

3. The power of psychology

Marketing and psychology have always gone hand in hand. But when it comes to crafting memorable experiences, understanding individual and collective behaviors has never been more important.

From beginning to end, it was clear that the Taylor Swift Songbook Trail was produced with an appreciation for the behavioral psychology of visitors. Spanning the expansive footprint of the V&A museum, it naturally encouraged visitors to stray from the trail and absorb the art, culture and artefacts outside of the exhibition. The further along the trail you went, the more fans slowed down, stopping to take in



non-Swift related exhibits and experience things they might not naturally gravitate towards – but always coming back to the trail.

It demonstrated a clear confidence that giving visitors freedom to explore doesn't mean you'll lose them. If anything, it prolonged the experience, and gave audiences a richer, more rewarding experience than expected. A love for Taylor Swift might have drawn them to the exhibition, but through clever planning and consideration, a very focused attendee audience was exposed to wider, unexpected things that elevated the experience and made it all the more memorable.

This is a principle we can certainly adopt in B2B. With laser-focused vision on capturing leads, events and experiences in B2B can feel like you're competing for attention. But by loosening your grip just slightly and considering how your experience fits into the wider picture, you can draw people back with something distinctly unique and engaging.

4. A new era for B2B experiences .

For too long, B2B has been seen as B2C's dull older cousin. Experiences are rolled out as a means to an end, instead of a baked-in strategy. And in the never-ending pursuit of leads, we're failing to create memorable, meaningful brand experiences.

Sure, B2B is founded in data and insights. But people aren't data points – and standout B2B experiences rely on empathy, personalization, and a deep understanding of your audiences and what makes them tick.

The world is teeming with inspiration to make experiences more engaging, purposeful, and audience-driven. We just need to know where to look.



AN OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE

Immersive Theater: Breaking the Fourth Wall

By: Emily Smith, First published on Medium Jun 2024



An exploration of how immersive theatre productions are engaging audiences by dissolving traditional boundaries between performers and spectators, creating participatory experiences.

The magic of theater has always captivated me. An undeniable change in atmosphere occurs as soon as the house lights go out and the stage lights go on. In this realm, everything is conceivable, and reality bends. Yet, the emergence of immersive theater, where the boundaries between the audience and performers blur and the fourth wall is broken, is one of the most intriguing changes in theater that I have seen in my professional life.

Performing in a small avant-garde show in my hometown in California was how I first came into contact with immersive theater. Though basic in concept, the notion was innovative in that it involved the audience moving around the stage and participating with the performers and set rather than simply sitting in rows. I still recall the excitement I felt when a spectator responded to my character as though we were having a private discussion, staring right into my eyes. It seemed both thrilling and unsettling at first. Something that traditional theater occasionally lacks was developed by this immediate involvement.

Grand stages and ornate costumes are not the focus of immersive theater. Immediacy and closeness are key components. The entire play was staged in a sequence of compact, connected rooms during a production I saw in New York. Depending on where they wandered, each audience member had a unique experience.

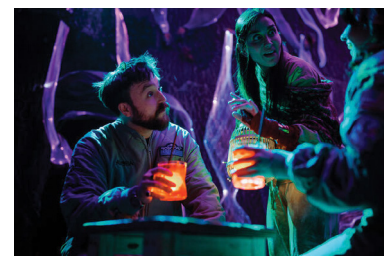
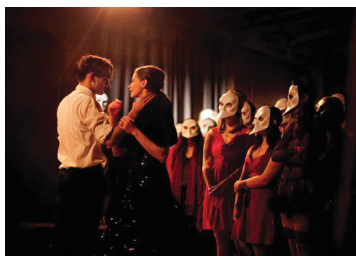
Experiencing a tale unfold seemed closer to being a part of it. I performed a part in which a small group of individuals crammed into a small, poorly lit room were treated to a very personal speech by my character. Everything felt more important because of how close the audience was.

Unpredictability is what makes immersive theater so beautiful.

In order to respond to the reactions of the audience, an actor must always be on the lookout. An enthusiastic guest of mine once spontaneously decided to dance with me. I embraced the situation and led them in a waltz across the performance, refusing to deviate from my persona. That was an exemplary case of how immersive theater fosters genuine human connection and spontaneity.

I was a part of a play in London that was housed in an old, broken-down warehouse. A post-apocalyptic scenario was created in the venue, and in order to piece together the narrative, viewers had to navigate through dim, winding hallways and communicate with the actors. "It feels like I'm in a movie," a patron whispered to a buddy one evening, and I heard them. Making the audience feel like active participants rather than just viewers is the main goal of immersive theater, and that's why that comment has remained with me.

But emotional connection is just as important to immersive theater as physical spaces.



At a performance, a man who was moved by the scene's intense emotion confided in my character about having suffered a personal loss. It served as an impactful reminder of the safe haven that theater can provide for people to examine their own emotions and experiences.

I tried experimenting with a smaller immersive production in community theater back in California. The location of our play was transformed from a neighborhood coffee shop. Joining the story could involve the audience ordering drinks, seated at tables. Some high school students showed up one evening, obviously skeptical about what they were going to witness.

They had become totally absorbed in the play by the time it ended, laughing and chatting with the actors. Immersive theater has the power to enthrall even the most reticent spectators; it was a touching experience.

My actor-partner Alex has been a consistent source of support and collaboration for me on all these escapades. Together, we've experienced the immersive experience and the stage numerous times, developing our ability to read one another's cues and the energy of the audience. Particularly in a setting as dynamic and fluid as this one, performing with someone you know so well brings a special delight.

Its capacity to dismantle boundaries is what distinguishes immersive theater. In a shared environment where everyone is a part of the story, it pulls performers and audience members together.

Strong memories and profound emotional impact can result from this link, which has the potential to be quite powerful. Living a performance is just as important as watching one.

As I reflect on my journey through the world of immersive theater, I am grateful for the opportunities it has given me to connect with audiences in meaningful ways. It's a reminder of why I fell in love with theater in the first place — the ability to transport people, to make them feel, and to bring a little bit of magic into their lives. If you ever have the chance to step into an immersive theater experience, I highly recommend it.

You might just find yourself becoming part of the story in ways you never expected.

**THE NEXT TIME
SOMEONE PUTS
UP A HAND**

**OR POSTS THE SAME DREARY CHALLENGE
ABOUT ‘WHETHER THIS IS APPLICABLE
TO B2B’, I RESERVE THE RIGHT TO REPLY,
‘YOU BET YOUR FUCKING LIFE IT IS,’ &
THEN JUST MOVE ON.**

Mark Ritson — Marketing Week Mar 2024

AI-ENABLED EVERYTHING

Recommendations



Artificial Intelligence and the Arts: Computational Creativity, Artistic Behavior, and Tools for Creatives
by Penousal Machado, Juan Romero and Gary Greenfield (2022)

Explores the relationship between AI and creativity, and how creatives can leverage AI to augment artistic abilities.



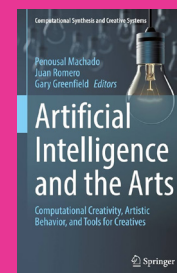
There's no winning strategy (future release)

Made in 2023 but unreleased thus far, this is a visually compelling film that delves into the complexities and potential dangers of artificial intelligence (AI). Directed by Alan Warburton, the film actually uses AI-generated visuals to explore its subject matter. It's one to watch out for in future, but there's a great article about it [here](#).



The AI Creative Summit (Autumn 2025)

Returning for another year, the AI Creative Summit brings together the best of technology, creativity, and innovation to explore what a future with AI looks like, and how businesses can prepare.





ANNA STOILOVA
CO-FOUNDER
OF ROGUES

Anna Stoilova is the passionate co-founder of independent game studio, Rogues, as well as a Women in Games ambassador and startup coach. She has an extensive background in product marketing, design and UX, and is using these skills to build a community-based post-apocalyptic gaming universe incorporating the blockchain.



MOI: Tell us about your journey and how you became the founder and creator of Rogues?

Anna: I've always been drawn to the world of gaming, but I first got the startup "bug" in 2017, when my co-founder and I launched our first start-up in educational gamified VR software, and sold it to US-based schools, hospitals, and even the World Health Organization.

Then, in 2022, the rise of web3 and blockchain presented an opportunity to set up my own gaming studio - one that really leaned into the community aspect of web3. From here, Rogues was born - our independent game studio creating the next gen of multiplayer games in a post apocalyptic universe.

MOI: What's your secret to getting attention and turning heads with your work?

Anna: My secret has always been staying true to myself and my talents. It's very easy to get FOMO-ed and think that everyone around you is doing better than you or be tempted to shift focus. But the reality is that everyone's talents are different.

Having a team and co-founders that are great at what they do (like our artist!) also makes all the difference. When it comes to creativity, there's no room for politics, ego or simply "showing up". You have to always give your best.

Find what you're best at. Focus on that strength. Obsess over it. Perfect it. And you'll go very far.

MOI: What is one of the best examples of gamification you've seen?

Anna: I think Duolingo is a great example of gamification outside of the gaming industry. I was immediately hooked by the Daily Streak system they had developed to keep users coming back every day. After reaching more than 100 consecutive days of learning, I was ready to do anything to save my streak from getting down to 0.

By combining classic gamification techniques - streaks, leader boards, badges and points - Duolingo maintains high retention rates, keeping users motivated and giving them a sense of journey progression.

I'm the living example of this - I gladly gave away £15.99 (twice), simply to keep my daily streak intact!

MOI: What is one thing creatives could learn from the world of gaming?

Anna: A game is the ultimate art form. Within a single game, you have multiple art worlds living together - from visual art, to sound, storytelling, programming and of course game design.

And while the final product has an artistic form, ultimately it has to serve a purpose to players. That's why the game creation process hinges on discipline. The creatives need to come up with many options for a single character that works for the final product, not just for their own ego. They need to work cross-departmentally to ensure that the game is consistent and cohesive.

It's not an easy task, so don't embark on the journey without a hefty dose of discipline.

**AI IS THE
TOOL, NOT THE
CRAFTSMAN.
IT'S THE
CREATIVITY**

**OF THE HUMAN
MIND THAT
GIVES AI
ITS PURPOSE**

Demis Hassabis – co-founder of DeepMind

7 OBSERVATIONS ON GEN AI'S ROLE IN B2B MARKETING



Yvonne Torrent-Lim
VP Transformation
& Delivery Excellence

You've probably heard the Harvard buzz: "AI Won't Replace Humans – But Humans With AI Will Replace Humans Without AI". No fluff, just fact: AI in marketing is like that secret ingredient that turns a good stew into a culinary legend. It's not about the robots taking over; it's about them giving us superpowers. The integration of AI in our daily practices is not just inevitable; it's essential.

It's been over a year since ChatGPT became a household name, a meme, and for some, an indispensable personal assistant. We've seen the proliferation and occasional misuse of the letters "A" and "I" in every tech realm. While native applications are gradually integrating AI features, 3rd party SaaS startups are rapidly flooding the market with incredible speed, and GTM timelines are reminiscent of Skynet.

Many have questioned since the start if agency jobs were immediately at risk.

**We now understand it's
a transformative journey, not
a rip and replace.**

But make no mistake, change is inevitable in the agency workflow, if it hasn't already occurred. Here are my observations and a bold glimpse into the future of AI for agencies.

1. Crafting the next masterpiece

How creatives experiment, play and produce with AI will reveal the extent of its potential, highlighting the essential role of human intervention in achieving polish. While one-click video or creative apps offer speed, they lack the finesse provided by human touch. The challenge lies in leveraging AI's speed without compromising on quality. For an inspiring demonstration of what humans and machines can accomplish, watch the Coca-Cola ad 'Masterpiece'. AI brought speed and computing power to the table, but it's human creativity that adds soul and polish. Whether you like the message or not, it's undeniably a visually captivating experience.

Yet, Jerry Della Femina's adage rings true: "Nothing kills a bad product faster than good advertising." This is best illustrated by the recent failed Willy Wonka Experience event in Glasgow, Scotland, where the AI-drawn fantasy was quickly labelled a marketing scam once attendees arrived at a dismal, abandoned warehouse with sad props and embarrassed actors. It serves as a reminder to always deliver on your marketing promises.

The other aspect is around originality, governance and copyright – are we respecting artists and their original work? If humans aren't vetting, checking and validating the AI output, could we be unwittingly plagiarizing as opposed to paying homage to an artist's original piece? Look at what happened recently with Under Armour and you'll see very quickly how important it is to have that layer of human intervention.

2. Decoding desires with data

Can machine learning understand a client's preferences, desires, wants, and needs? Can it anticipate challenges and present solutions intelligently? Perhaps even delve into the psychology behind their purchasing decisions, uncovering what they may not reveal during a video call? Could machine learning know them better than they know themselves and their organizations? While these may not be happening right now, this level of insight may soon be expected of agencies. By combining advanced technology with human emotional intelligence, we're going to solve more riddles and predict the words, even before a client whispers it.

**Creepy? A little. Game-changing?
Absolutely.**

3. The efficiency evolution

AI's helping us find shortcuts we never knew existed. We're talking hyperspeed efficiency that'll make The Flash look like he's walking. This is particularly true for critical functions like operations, finance, and project management. We already rely heavily on financial, scheduling and task management apps, which now incorporate predictive models for resource management, reporting, estimating, scheduling, and note taking. The list is endless.

What's the human's role in this? We can't simply race against AI on computers; it's not a sprint.

The human world is incredibly complex, with diverse departments, operating systems, and ongoing transformation programs.

We can't expect AI to solve this complexity for us. Instead, we must leverage the human capacity to navigate real-world intricacies, experimenting, testing, and iterating with AI as our ally. AI can streamline backend operations while humans drive decision-making, making us smarter in our approach to complexity.

4. Brainpower plus computing power

AI in data offers unprecedented insights into customers, trends, and all the juicy stuff that can make or break a campaign. However, it's human data analysts who transform this data into meaningful stories and ensure ethical considerations. Don't get me wrong; while AI outperforms humans in data analysis speed, patterns recognition, and coverage, we still steer and translate insights into action.

5. Demand in a cookieless world

Cookies may be going out of style (not the chocolate chip variety, mind you), but AI is stepping up to guide us in placing our ads and forging real connections with people. While I'm no expert, Liz Wood, our VP of Demand, has the lowdown on this cookieless new world order as detailed in her [article](#).

How will advertisers navigate this new landscape? It sounds like we're in for a wild ride with advanced AI targeting, optimization, segmentation, and first-party data charting new territories. We've barely scratched the surface of what's possible. It is going to transform the customer experience and help us form new, trusted relationships with brands.

6. A match made in marketing heaven

Account-based marketing is undoubtedly in the future of B2B. It's about smarter targeting, zero waste, maximizing budgets, and making customers feel like we've only got eyes for them. Just a few years ago, ABM was limited to a select set of target accounts due to resource constraints. However, AI has levelled the playing field, empowering every marketer with unprecedented processing power to personalize experiences like never before.

It's the perfect fusion of ABM strategy and tactics with AI technology, poised to unlock opportunities previously out of reach. But to achieve this, you need the brains behind the machine. Again, while I'm no authority on this, some clever cookies at MOI have broken this down to a science.

7. Big dreams, big bucks

Then there's Publicis, tossing money into the AI pot like they're making it rain. But what truly stands out about their strategy is their investment in people. While we may not all have deep pockets, the approach is solid: empower humans. At MOI, we're proud to echo this sentiment. We've created a safe lab environment, allowing individuals to immerse themselves in tech, with an allocated AI budget enabling us to test, fail fast and apply our learnings. We've put people before platform.

It's been over 12 months since the world went ChatGPT crazy, yet we're merely at the base of Everest—exploring, experimenting, testing, and iterating. The geek in me is thrilled about our trajectory. Gen AI has taught me how to code without pulling my hair out, turning daydreams into visuals faster than I can open a file in Photoshop. And yes, it's reminded me that bedtime stories with my kiddo should not be outsourced to AI, and that's perfectly fine.

Because even ChatGPT agrees, sometimes the simplest answers, like the meaning of life, the universe, and everything, is just “42.”

Agents are the future AI companies promise – and desperately need

First published by The Verge - Oct 2024



This article by the Verge discusses the development of autonomous AI agents capable of performing tasks with minimal human input, highlighting their potential to revolutionize productivity and the challenges in their implementation.

Humans have automated tasks for centuries.

Now, AI companies see a path to profit in harnessing our love of efficiency, and they've got a name for their solution: agents.

AI agents are autonomous programs that perform tasks, make decisions, and interact with environments with little human input, and they're the focus of every major company working on AI today. Microsoft has "Copilots" designed to help businesses automate things like customer service and administrative tasks. Google Cloud CEO Thomas Kurian recently outlined a pitch for six different AI productivity agents, and Google DeepMind just poached OpenAI's co-lead on its AI video product, Sora, to work on developing a simulation for training AI agents. Anthropic released a feature for its AI chatbot, Claude, that will let anyone create their own "AI assistant." OpenAI includes agents as level 2 in its 5-level approach to reach AGI, or human-level artificial intelligence.

Obviously, computing is full of autonomous systems. Many people have visited a website with a pop-up customer service bot, used an automated voice assistant feature like Alexa Skills, or written a humble IFTTT script. But AI companies argue "agents" – you'd better not call them bots – are different. Instead of following a simple, rote set of instructions, they believe agents will be able to interact with environments, learn from feedback, and make decisions without constant human input. They could dynamically manage tasks like making purchases, booking travel, or scheduling meetings, adapting to unforeseen circumstances and interacting with systems that could include humans and other AI tools.

Artificial intelligence companies hope that agents will provide a way to monetize powerful, expensive AI models. Venture capital is pouring into AI agent startups that promise to revolutionize how we interact with technology. Businesses envision a leap in efficiency, with agents handling everything from customer service to data analysis. For individuals, AI companies are pitching a new era of productivity where routine tasks are automated, freeing up time for creative and strategic work.

The endgame for true believers is to create AI that is a true partner, not just a tool.

"What you really want," OpenAI CEO Sam Altman told MIT Technology Review earlier this year, "is just this thing that is off helping you." Altman described the killer app for AI as a "super-competent colleague that knows absolutely everything about my whole life, every email, every conversation I've ever had, but doesn't feel like an extension." It can tackle simple tasks instantly, Altman added, and for more complex ones, it will attempt them but return with questions if needed. Tech companies have been trying to automate the personal assistant since at least the 1970s, and now, they promise they're finally getting close.

At an OpenAI press event ahead of the company's annual Dev Day, head of developer experience Romain Huet demonstrated the company's new Realtime API with an assistant agent. Huet gave the agent a budget and some constraints for buying 400 chocolate-covered strawberries and asked it to place an order via a phone call to a fictitious shop. The service is similar to a Google reservation-making bot called Duplex from 2018. But that bot could only handle the simplest scenarios – it turned out a quarter of its calls were actually made by humans.

While that order was placed in English, Huet told me he gave a more complex demo in Tokyo: he prompted an agent to book a hotel room for him in Japanese where it would handle the conversation in Japanese and then call him back in English to confirm it's done. "Of course, I wouldn't understand the Japanese part – it just handles it," Huet said.



But Huet's demo immediately sparked concerns in the room full of journalists. Couldn't the AI assistant be used for spam calls? Why didn't it identify itself as an AI system? (Huet updated the demo for the official Dev Day, an attendee says, making the agent identify itself as "Romain's AI Assistant.") The unease was palpable, and it wasn't surprising – even without agents, AI tools are already being used for deception.

There was another, arguably more immediate problem: the demo didn't work. The agent lacked enough information and incorrectly recorded dessert flavors, causing it to auto-populate flavors like vanilla and strawberry in a column, rather than saying it didn't have that information. Agents frequently run into issues with multi-step workflows or unexpected scenarios. And they burn more energy than a conventional bot or voice assistant. Their need for significant computational power, especially when reasoning or interacting with multiple systems, makes them costly to run at scale.

AI agents offer a leap in potential, but for everyday tasks, they aren't yet significantly better than bots, assistants, or scripts.

AI agent startups have secured \$8.2 billion in investor funding over the last 12 months.

So, if AI agents aren't yet very useful, why is the idea so popular? In short: market pressures. These companies are sitting on powerful but expensive technology and are desperate to find practical use cases that they can also charge users for. The gap between promise and reality also creates a compelling hype cycle that fuels funding, and it just so happens that OpenAI raised \$6.6 billion right as it started hyping agents.

Big tech companies have been rushing to integrate all kinds of "AI" into their products, but they hope AI assistants, in particular, could be the key to unlocking revenue. Huet's AI calling demo outpaces what models can currently do at scale, but he told me he expects features like it to appear more commonly as soon as next year, as OpenAI refines its "reasoning" o1 model.

For now, the concept seems to be mostly siloed in enterprise software stacks, not products for consumers. Salesforce, which provides customer relationship management (CRM) software, spun up an "agent" feature to great fanfare a few weeks ahead of its annual Dreamforce conference. The feature lets customers use natural language to essentially build a customer service chatbot in a few minutes through Slack, instead of spending a lot of time coding one. The chatbots have access to a company's CRM data and can process natural language easier than a bot not based on large language models, potentially making them better at limited tasks like asking questions about orders and returns.

AI agent startups (still an admittedly nebulous term) are already becoming quite a buzzy investment. They've secured \$8.2 billion in investor funding over the last 12 months, spread over 156 deals, an increase of 81.4 percent year over year, according to PitchBook data. One of the better-known projects is Sierra, a customer service agent similar to Salesforce's latest project and launched by former Salesforce co-CEO Bret Taylor. There's also Harvey, which offers AI agents for lawyers, and TaxGPT, an AI agent to handle your taxes.

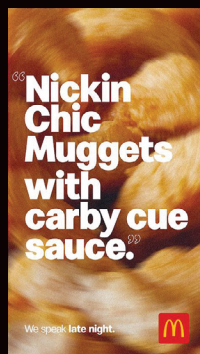
Despite all the enthusiasm for agents, these high-stakes uses raise a clear question: can they actually be trusted with something as serious as law or taxes? AI hallucinations, which have frequently tripped up users of ChatGPT, currently have no remedy in sight. More fundamentally, as IBM presciently stated in 1979, "a computer can never be held accountable" – and as a corollary, "a computer must never make a management decision." Rather than autonomous decision-makers, AI assistants are best viewed as what they truly are: powerful but imperfect tools for low-stakes tasks. Is that worth the big bucks AI companies hope people will pay?

For now, market pressures prevail, and AI companies are racing to monetize. "I think 2025 is going to be the year that agentic systems finally hit the mainstream," OpenAI's new chief product officer, Kevin Weil, said at the press event. "And if we do it right, it takes us to a world where we actually get to spend more time on the human things that matter, and a little less time staring at our phones."

**12 MONTHS.
6 EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEWS.
HUNDREDS OF REAL-
WORLD EXAMPLES
OF HEAD-TURNING
CREATIVITY.**

BEST OF A YEAR OF HEADS UP CREATIVE

As we prepare to welcome 2025 with open arms, we're looking back at some of the best bits of one whole year of Heads Up Creative..



Who hasn't been drunk or confused when they stumble into a fast-food restaurant, late at night? McDonalds threw language onto the grill, then served it up to us, in a bap—with relish—delicious from their agency (DDB New Zealand).

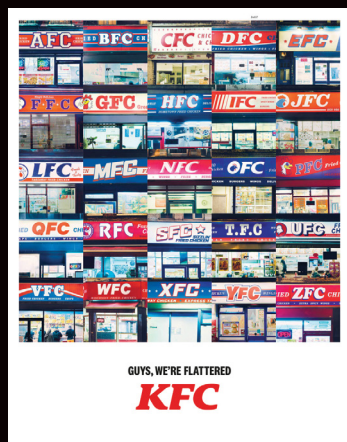
ADS: CREATIVES, SALESPEOPLE, ENTERTAINERS



Never ones to be overshadowed by their competitor, this cheeky job ad has a dig at the golden arches while promoting vacancies.



If people brand themselves with your logo, you definitely have a brand...



...the same applies if competitors copy you.

BRANDS: THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE

If your brand presence is powerful enough, you don't need snappy taglines or clever copy. Your brand - and your reputation - does the talking for you.

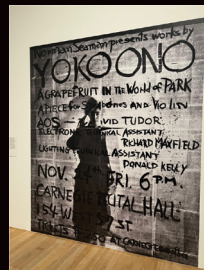


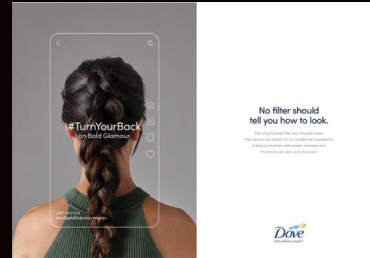
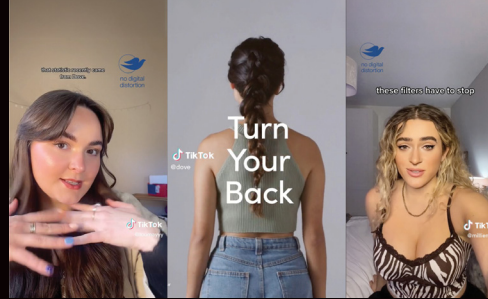
The simple brilliance (or brilliant simplicity) of this Heinz ad speaks for itself....

If there is one thing Yoko Ono understands, it's the power of involving your audiences. A trailblazer of conceptual and participatory art, she actively invites visitors to take part in her creativity - whether it's cutting off her clothing, contributing personal wishes for peace, or hammering a nail into a canvas.

The Tate Modern's 'Music of the Mind' exhibition was erected to celebrate over 200 works by Yoko Ono, spanning more than seven decades. If you missed it, the exhibition book can still be bought.

EXHIBITION: YOK-OH NO YOU DIDN'T, AT TATE MODERN

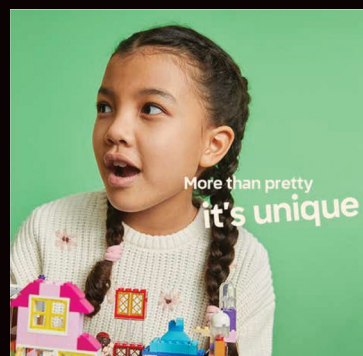
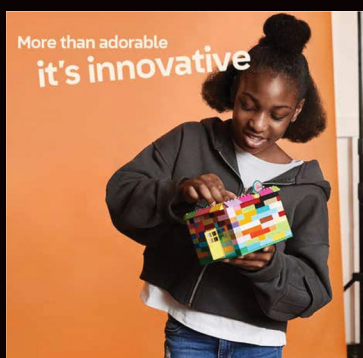




In the modern age of selfies and filters you can make yourself anything you want to be. TikTok's Bold Glamour AI filter even allow you to film yourself looking like a supermodel, adding makeup and subtly morphing your features.

In Dove's campaign, which is one of the latest in a crusade to protect the self-esteem of women and girls against an onslaught of 'perfection', they urge you to flip the rules of good video and selfie etiquette and #TurnYourBack denying the filter the one thing it needs – your face.

TRENDS: CHANGING THE SELF-WORTH SCRIPT



More than perfect is the Lego ad campaign that rewrites the language we use for young girls. In this video we see how the language we use to describe what girls make – pretty, perfect, cute etc – can be limiting and harmful.



Whilst brands are something that affect all of us as consumers, a lot of B2B companies still haven't quite got brand 'right' – trust us, it's not easy. However, there are exceptions, and ServiceNow are one.

One of the fastest growing B2B tech companies, ServiceNow is a business that totally, completely and utterly 'gets' brand: how to build it, evolve it, have fun with it and leverage it to turn heads.

TURNING HEADS: IDRIS ALWAYS TURNS HEADS

Their new brand campaign (created by the inimitable BBDO) which launched this month is a total head turner, and a case in point. It stars Idris Elba as the ultimate CEO who shows us how by helping people work better with AI on the ServiceNow platform, everything works better.

ServiceNow is a business we love to work with as they understand how to properly harness the power of brand to turn heads AND they're open to our Turning Heads approach. This is brand that absolutely Turns Heads by being Not so B2B.

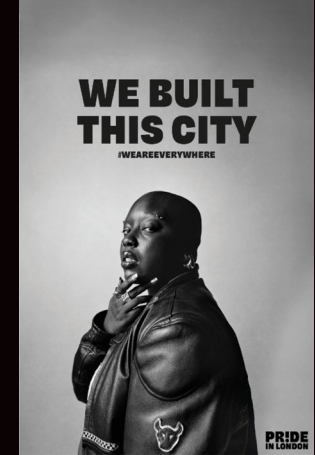


**PUT AI
TO WORK
FOR
PEOPLE**



Pride in London celebrates the spirit and impact of LGBTQIA+ Londoners.

A series of portraits shows different people from the community owning their individuality and refusing to deny any part of themselves. The campaign was created by creative directors Pip and Lib and was shot by Pip Jay King through Racket.



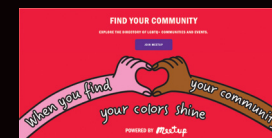
CAMPAIGN: PRIDE MONTH

Styles of Pride: Express Yourself

LGBTQ+ young people deserve to be embraced as their authentic selves. Macy's and The Trevor Project are working together to make that world a reality. As these LGBTQ+ young people re-live core memories and celebrate stories, outfits, and moments that helped them find themselves, they can inspire us all to take the journey of remembering and rediscovering ourselves.



Community has the power to change lives. That's why Meetup has partnered with SKITTLES® to celebrate Pride, by showcasing amazing stories of LGBTQ+ members who are building inclusive and supportive local communities, as well as providing resources to help you find your own.





Known for its iconic branding, Coca-Cola is rooted in tradition. Which is why embracing a consumer-led rebrand was a perfectly unexpected way to celebrate creativity and showcase a deep understanding of contemporary consumer culture.

By integrating hundreds of community-inspired designs into their marketing and packaging, Coca-Cola not only honours its heritage but also stays relevant in a dynamic marketplace. Seeing their own creativity reflected in Coca-Cola's global presence, customers connect with the brand on a deeper and more personal level.

Few brands could get away with relinquishing such control, but for Coca-Cola, it served as the perfect testament to their commitment to authenticity and continuous evolution.



 LIONS

BRANDING: LET THE PEOPLE SPEAK

Another example of creative courage? When Heinz sought out self-proclaimed “mayo haters” for a NotMayo taste test.

What they don't know is the product they're tasting is a plant based “NotMayo” condiment with striking resemblance of the traditional mayonnaise. Almost identical.

The courage to have people say that their product is disgusting is making the point to consumers that their product tastes like the real deal.



Willy's Chocolate Experience, 2024

You like Charlie and the Chocolate Factory? Well, this extremely off-brand "experience" was nothing like that. With misleading, AI-generated marketing, an AI-driven script for the actors that was complete gibberish, and children being rationed to just two jellybeans each, this event was far from magical.



HOW NOT TO TURN HEADS

It's possible to turn heads for the wrong reasons, as proven by these absolute disasters

DashCon, 2014

With attendee numbers only reaching a fraction of what was estimated and special guests and vendors dropping out left, right, and centre, every part of this Tumblr-inspired convention was a disaster. But what truly secured a place in the history books was the offer of "an extra hour in the ball pit" as reimbursement for a cancelled panel.



Fyre Festival, 2017

The event organizer being jailed for six years for fraud is never a good sign. Tickets to Fyre Festival cost up to \$100,000 but attendees turned up at the festival site (an island once owned by Pablo Escobar) to find their "luxury" accommodation to be a mattress on the floor. And the less said about the food, the better. But the music must've been great, right? Nope, all the musicians dropped out.



COLLABS: A BIT OF CHEEKY NOSTALGIA



With the premier of Marvel's latest blockbuster, Deadpool and Wolverine, this summer has seen a plethora of masterful brand collabs to promote the release – and this team-up with Xbox could be their cheekiest yet (pun intended).

Leaning into the sarcastic, brazen persona of Ryan Reynolds' character, Xbox teased fans with spanking new controllers sporting Deadpool and Wolverine's iconic costumes (and rear ends!). With one lucky gamer set to win the controllers as part of a sweepstake, the campaign gained huge amounts of attention online and blurred the lines between product ad and movie teaser.



Nostalgic arcade games, edible treats and prizes to be won – what's not to love? Oreo's recent collab with PAC-MAN sees each of the game's distinctive assets brought to life in full delicious glory, embossing six cookies with scannable patterns that allow shoppers to play special mazes and win prizes. Combining gameplay with snack time, Oreo successfully solidifies its status as the world's most playful cookie!



B2B brands are often seen as the nerds of marketing—hyper-specialised, smart, and brilliant at solving complex problems.

But they can struggle to communicate their expertise engagingly. And that's okay.

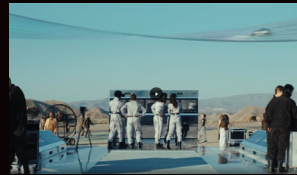
B2B doesn't need to imitate consumer brands selling lifestyle dreams. They're offering high-value, intricate solutions like digital transformation or cybersecurity. It's fine to be a bit geeky when that's your strength.

The lesson? Own your geekiness.

Make intelligence and expertise the core of your brand and humanise it by being engaging and authentic. People respect genius, especially when it's relatable.



FAIL



Take Mercedes' "So AMG" campaign—it tried too hard to be flashy and lifestyle-driven, missing what makes AMG special.

Contrast that with Audi's iconic R8 V10 ad, which celebrated pure engineering brilliance.



EPIC



**TURNING HEADS™:
NERDY BY NATURE.
WHY B2B BRANDS
SHOULD EMBRACE
THEIR INNER GEEK**

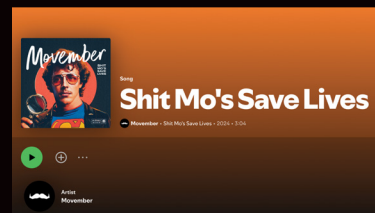
Shit MO's Save Lives

It's no secret that all of us like to watch someone do something out of the ordinary that, in some circles, might be considered embarrassing. So why not turn that universal truth into doing good?

You don't need a movie-star moustache to be a hero in the fight for better men's health, unapologetically questionable moustaches are just as valuable in this movement. Movember has always been for everyone – after all, men's health doesn't just affect men, it impacts us all.



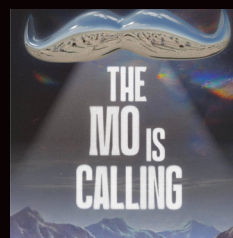
CAMPAIGN: EMBRACING THE MO-MENT



The MO is calling 2023

In 2023, Movember is celebrated 20 years of changing the face of men's health and marked the occasion by launching a bold, new creative direction calling on everyone to raise funds and save lives. Co-created by myself and the Movember Creative Studio, DDB Group Melbourne and Revolver. This campaign ran across the UK, Canada, Ireland, NZ and Australia across TV, OOH, PR, social, online and experiential.

The film tells the story of radical inclusivity and belonging to something greater than oneself—a force for good known as The Order of Mo. The brief was straightforward: 'bring back Movember's edge and put a smile on people's faces.'





Coca-Cola's 2024 Christmas advert has received significant backlash thanks to its use of AI footage – and the notable absence of Santa Claus himself. With brief flashes of faces to avoid the inevitable 'uncanny valley' effect, many are scathing over its 'lack of warmth and humanity'. Yet, System1's annual testing shows that the vast majority love the ad, giving it top marks. Love it or hate it, it's whipped up quite the frenzy online.



TRENDS: A CONTROVERSIAL CHRISTMAS



Boots' Christmas ad has divided the nation, with its diverse cast and celebration of the invisible work done by women to make Christmas magical. Starring Bridgerton's Adjoa Andoh as Mrs Claus, it has stirred up an 'anti-woke' movement fuelled by racism, bigotry and sexism, whereby many are opting to #BoycottBoots to make their voices heard. Yet, for the vast majority of Boots' target audience, it's a heartwarming acknowledgement of women's hard work during the festive season. And what's not to love about Adjoa Andoh?!



LIKE WHAT YOU SEE?

**There's more where that came from.
Sign up to access an exclusive bonus
chapter unpacking our top predictions
for 2025 and beyond.**

MOI