

The Future of Brands

2026

There is an old saying about never having favourites, but if I am being completely truthful, The Future of Brands has always felt a little bit like the favourite child.

Not because it is our biggest event, although it is certainly getting close, but because it was the first event I truly had the opportunity to shape after joining Adwanted in the summer of 2019.

After spending my first few months getting my feet under the table and understanding the business, I started work on The Future of Brands in early 2020. It very quickly became clear that while we had an event about brands, we did not yet have enough brands in the room, or on the stage.

So we set out to change that.

Our ambition was simple. Create an event built around a content-first philosophy where brand marketers with a vested interest in media and advertising could come together, learn from each other, challenge the industry, and build meaningful connections.

Back then, The Future of Brands was a 200-person event hosted inside a Japanese bank.

Fast forward to today, and it has evolved into a near 1,000-person industry gathering spread across three floors of content at 180 Studios. Bigger. Bolder. Better.

But while the scale has changed, the vision has not.

Our goal has always been to create the UK's leading conference that educates brands on the value of media and advertising. Proving media is an investment, not a cost, while delivering unmatched insight, impact, and influence.

What made this year's event particularly special was how clearly that vision came to life across every stage and conversation. Whether discussing AI's impact on discovery and search, the growing importance of measurement and effectiveness, the role of culture in modern marketing, or the long-term value of brand building, one theme consistently emerged. Brands are operating in a world that is becoming more fragmented, more complex, and more accountable than ever before.

And yet, despite all of that change, the fundamentals still matter.

Great brands are built through trust, creativity, consistency, storytelling, and smart investment in media and advertising.

That is exactly why events like The Future of Brands matter.

None of this would be possible without the incredible support of our sponsors and partners, whose backing allows us not only to deliver the event, but to continue evolving and growing it year after year. I would also like to thank all of our speakers and attendees for giving up their time to be part of the conversation. In an industry where time has become one of the

most valuable commodities of all, we never take that commitment for granted.

Most importantly, I want to thank the Adwanted Events team. The amount of work, energy, care, and passion that goes into delivering not just The Future of Brands, but multiple events across the year, is enormous. I genuinely believe we have the best team in the business right now, and this event would simply not be possible without them.

Finally, thank you to everyone who has been part of this journey over the years. The Future of Brands has gone through many iterations to become what it is today, and April 29, 2026 felt like another major step forward in that evolution.

I genuinely believe we are only just getting started.

Steve Scaffardi

Global CEO,
Events &
Publishing,
Adwanted Group





INTRODUCTION

Now in its ninth year, **The Future of Brands** has become a defining moment in the marketing calendar, bringing together leaders across media, creativity, technology and culture. In 2026, the event moved to a new home at 180 Studios, welcoming a senior audience of over 800 brand, agency, media owner and platform decision-makers to a day of keynotes, panels, workshops and masterclasses in a multi-stage, immersive environment.

Across the day, speakers examined the forces reshaping modern marketing: AI-led discovery, the future of measurement, the continued importance of brand-building, the changing role of culture and community, and the growing pressure to connect marketing investment to commercial outcomes.

TAKEAWAYS FROM THE FUTURE OF BRANDS 2026: AI, CULTURE AND MEASUREMENT TAKE CENTRE STAGE

The Article was authored by Vincent Thobel, deputy editor The Media Leader France



In late April, The Media Leader's annual Future of Brands conference brought together voices from Netflix, Sky, Omnicom, Reckitt, Tesco, the United Nations and more to discuss the opportunities and challenges facing brand marketers.

From the arrival of AI in the consumer journey to the measurement of advertising effectiveness, here is a look back at a day that outlined an industry in the midst of transformation.

AI REWRITES THE RULES OF MARKETING

It was Sean Betts, chief AI and innovation officer at Omnicom Media, who kicked things off with his session, 'How AI is Rewiring the Internet'. His verdict was clear: generative AI platforms are no longer emerging tools but fully-fledged marketing channels that deserve to be taken seriously.

"Around 20% of the global population uses an AI platform every week," he said, equivalent to around 1.5bn people, of whom 90% use one daily.

The market has currently centralised around two players: ChatGPT and Google Gemini, which together account for around 85% of usage. For Betts, this mass adoption means brands must rethink their online presence.

"You cannot optimise for both Google and AI models," he warned, noting that the two approaches to search are incompatible.

The Omnicom expert detailed several characteristics of how these models work. Where a human search averages three or four words, a prompt to an AI averages 23. Crucially, AI conducts searches in parallel and goes far deeper into the sites it consults.

Another notable finding: YouTube has become a critical source for Gemini, which draws on titles, descriptions, comments and transcripts, while ChatGPT has been locked out since OpenAI lost access in August last year.

Bett's final word of advice to brands: "The richness of your product listing will determine your visibility in ChatGPT."

Later in the conference, The Media Leader senior reporter Jack Benjamin prodded Publicis' head of AI operations Marcos Angelides, Heineken's global media and data director Olya Dyachuk, and Havas Media Group chief data and product officer Laura Kell for further advice on how brands win authority in AI search.

The trio agreed that benchmarking how your brand shows up in AI search is the first step, and that search and social media teams will need to better come together to understand and influence how brands show up in LLMs. But they also warned that brands will need to be nimble, as best practices are constantly being revised as AI search models develop.

SKY MAKES THE CASE FOR FULL-FUNNEL TV

Matt Hill, director of insight and research at Sky Media, followed Betts with an argument for addressable television. His angle: to demonstrate that TV is no longer purely a reach medium but can now drive short-term sales.

Drawing on Norman, Sky's normative database compiling more than 2,000 campaigns across 500 advertisers, Hill shared several findings. Addressable TV delivers an average 121% uplift in ad recall and a 200% increase in web traffic compared with linear television. What's more, the best-performing campaigns combine an average of 3.4 targeting



criteria for brand metrics, versus 2.7 for the least effective.

First-party data makes a further difference. According to Hill, its integration multiplies effectiveness by six for awareness uplift and by eight for sales generation.

His message to the audience: "If you have first-party data, use it."

NETFLIX: CULTURE CANNOT BE BOUGHT, IT MUST BE BUILT

Jordan Peters, senior director of marketing partnerships EMEA at Netflix, followed with an argument in favour of brands' embrace of cultural moments. His argument was structured around two core principles.

First: "Don't shop, build."

For Peters, brands that simply buy a licence and bolt it onto an existing creative platform miss the point.

"No football fan genuinely thinks a brand is authentically engaged with the FIFA World Cup if you just add football to your usual communication," he said.



The Bridgerton universe, for example, is not simply about corsets: it is an exploration of romance, strong women, identity and class.

Second: think like a screenwriter.

Netflix had 32 of its partnership campaigns evaluated by creative effectiveness measurement company System1. In the UK, those campaigns ranked in the top 1% of the 125,000 ads tested on its Star Rating, which measures long-term brand impact. On the Spike Rating, which assesses short-term sales impact, they also reached the top 15%.

“When you entertain your audience, you earn the right to sell them something,” Peters concluded.

BRAND BUILDING VERSUS THE TYRANNY OF THE SHORT TERM

A midday panel, ‘Linking Brand Building to Business Outcomes’, was moderated by Rachel Forde, co-founder of TheZoo.London. It gave advertisers the opportunity to share their approaches for defending brand investment in front of finance directors.

Tom Mardon, head of media and campaign planning at Tesco, offered a revealing account. His team invited finance colleagues to open up the econometric models and build a shared understanding.

He said: “Now, when we go into a budget meeting, the conversation is no longer ‘how much is that going to cost?’ but ‘I know I can spend X and here’s how you can improve it.’”

Gordana Buccisano, global brands strategy director at Reckitt, stressed the need to reposition brands as risk-mitigation tools.

“When times are tough, CFOs want stability, consistent demand, and no drama. Strong brands are resilient, strong brands survive,” she said.

Darren Thompson, vice president of sales UK at Adlook, made the case for a data-driven approach, highlighting how AI-based platforms can reduce customer acquisition costs.

He said: “The metric that interests a CFO is a lower cost of acquisition. That’s the language you need to speak.”

OOH: MEASUREMENT CATCHES UP WITH CREATIVITY

Sarah Robson, global head of advertising effectiveness at On Device, Emily Alcorn, chief effectiveness officer at Talon, and Jennifer Carey, director of media and effectiveness at Channel 4, devoted their session to the measurement revolution in out-of-home (OOH) advertising.

On Device’s panel methodology, called Curious Cat, is based on GPS tracking of verified British panellists. An exposure zone is defined around each site,

alongside a control group positioned around 100 metres away.

This methodology, now cross-referenced with programmatic delivery reports, enables granular measurement of actual exposure.

For Channel 4, the results are telling. Carey cited several campaigns in which favourability and consideration metrics improved significantly relative to the competitive benchmark.

The broadcaster also found that, at the moment of switching on their television, around 60% of viewers do not know what they want to watch.

She said: “It is crucial for us that Channel 4 is at the top of their consideration.”

Alcorn drew a broader conclusion from Talon’s database: contextual campaigns, which use the real-world environment to amplify the message, consistently outperform standardised approaches.

ZEHRA CHATOO WARNS ON AI BIAS

The afternoon took a more political turn with Zehra Chatoo, founder of Code for Good Now. Her presentation, titled ‘Who Shapes AI, Shapes the Future’, addressed head-on the question of representation and bias in AI models.

Chatoo highlighted the adoption gap between men and women. Despite equivalent access and skills, women use AI 20% less than men. The primary cause Chatoo identified was fear of judgment.

An experiment conducted with 1,000 adults confirmed the bias. When shown as identical TV ads, female protagonists named ‘Emily Clark’ were judged 22% less confident than their male counterparts named ‘James Clark’, and their competence was called into question twice as often.

In response, Code for Good Now has developed the ‘Permission to Prompt’ programme, which creates safe spaces for experimentation. Chatoo also presented ReplIQ, a tool for measuring representation in AI-generated advertising.

Her conclusion: the composition of the teams that develop and train models will determine the fairness of the models’ outputs.

THE UN CALLS THE INDUSTRY TO ACCOUNT

The ‘Guarding the Open Web: AI, Information Integrity and Performance’ roundtable, moderated by Jack Benjamin, senior reporter at The Media Leader, brought together Charlotte Scaddan, senior adviser on information integrity at the United Nations, and Harriet Kingaby, co-founder of the Conscious Advertising Network.

Scaddan noted that the UN now considers information risks, including disinformation, hate speech and polarisation, as threats to social stability, democratic processes and climate action.

She warned: “Nobody knows which sources of information to trust any more. Recent advances in AI are making this worse.”

Kingaby cautioned against the financial urgency facing major AI companies, which must generate returns on enormous investments. “If you found certain behaviours on social media problematic, this is just a taste of what is coming with AI,” she said, citing addictive design choices and the proliferation of inaccurate information.

Her prescription for responsible advertising came down to three words: “Transparent, accountable, thoughtful.”

TV: STILL A FRONTIER WORTH CONQUERING

The day closed with a panel hosted by James Longhurst, content director of The Media Leader, on the relevance of television for emerging brands.

Deirdre McGettrick, founder of Ufurnish.com, was characteristically candid. Coming from a performance marketing background, she had long hesitated before making the switch to TV.

She said: “I look at all the money we spent on performance, and I have regrets. I wish we had gone there sooner.”

For her, television made it possible to tell a story and create a category that did not previously exist in the furniture sector. An unexpected bonus: TV proved a powerful lead generator among supplier partners.

Mike Pearson, associate director and head of creative and promotions EU at Wayfair, echoed the approach. For him, the move to TV comes when you hit a ceiling where performance alone can no longer create demand. “It is by quantifying the brand that you gain legitimacy with consumers.”

Julie Selman, SVP and head of EMEA at Magnite, detailed how TV has become more accessible through Streamr.ai, the solution launched by her group to allow brands to produce TV creative at a manageable cost. “You have fewer assets than you think. You don’t need a big production to exist on screen.”

Parul Goel, territory head Europe at Zee Entertainment, captured the spirit of the panel in a single line: “On television, you are not seen, you are watched. That is a responsibility.”

ONE THREAD RUNNING THROUGH IT ALL: THE URGENCY OF COHERENCE

Beyond the diversity of topics covered, a single throughline emerged from The Future of Brands 2026.

Whether on AI, advertising measurement, cultural partnerships or brand investment, every speaker made the case for greater simplicity, coherence and accountability.

In a fragmented and saturated media environment, where AI models are rewriting the rules of search and audience trust is eroding, the brands that will come out on top will be those able to articulate a strategy that is legible, measurable and true to their values.



EDITORIAL THEMES FROM THE DAY

The day was structured into talk tracks to signpost conversations relating to the industry's biggest topics. Throughout this booklet you will get to read a summary of each of the sessions within each track, discover the takeaways you can implement to ensure relevance and growth within your business, and, where possible, click out to watch the session in full.

In short, the themes discussed throughout the day were:

- AI is becoming infrastructure for discovery, creativity and marketing operations.
- Brand and performance are increasingly part of the same growth conversation.
- Measurement remains fragmented, but marketers are prioritising usable evidence over perfect answers.
- Culture is no longer something brands simply borrow from; it is something they need permission to participate in.
- Distinctiveness, trust and human judgement are becoming more valuable as automation scales.



BRANDS AND AI

AI is changing how brands are discovered, evaluated and recommended. Across the track, speakers explored how marketers can build visibility in LLM-led environments, regain control of algorithmic decision-making and protect distinctiveness as automation moves deeper into content, commerce and media planning.



HOW AI IS REWIRING THE INTERNET

This presentation explored how AI platforms are rewiring the internet and becoming a new layer of discovery, influence and decision-making. It looked at why the shift matters now, how platforms such as ChatGPT and Gemini find and prioritise information, and what brands should do to improve visibility across onsite, offsite and commerce.

Takeaways

1. AI is fundamentally restructuring how people find and access information. Search as we know it is being replaced by AI-generated answers.
2. Brands that don't adapt to AI-driven discovery risk becoming invisible. If AI doesn't surface you, your audience may never find you.
3. The internet's architecture is shifting — brand strategy must shift too. Presence, trust and authority must now be built for AI systems.

WHOSE ALGORITHM IS IT ANYWAY?

Every algorithm in a media plan is optimising for someone else's priority. This session explored what happens when brands take greater control of algorithmic decision-making, why the next 24 months are critical, and how marketers can rethink optimisation around brand outcomes rather than platform objectives.

Takeaways

1. Algorithms shape what audiences see — brands must understand who controls them. Ceding creative decisions to platforms means ceding control of your brand.

2. The relationship between brands and platforms is increasingly unequal. Algorithms serve platform goals first — brand goals come second at best.

3. Reclaiming brand power means investing in owned channels and direct relationships. Don't build your entire audience on someone else's algorithm.



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FROM SEARCHING TO SELLING: HOW AI IS CHANGING THE WAY MOTORWAY REACHES AND SERVES CAR OWNERS

As AI changes how consumers discover and research brands, Motorway shared how it is responding across visibility, data and customer experience. The session examined how the brand is showing up in AI-powered search and using AI to guide sellers through the platform, with brand and analytics teams working closely together.

Takeaways

1. Brands must now be built for both humans and the AI they rely on. Priming awareness and proving credibility to AI are equally essential strategies.

2. AI-qualified visitors are worth far more than traditional search traffic. Intent already formed means higher value — but you must be the answer.

3. On-site AI experience must deliver on the brand promise it created. The AI flywheel only works when discovery and experience reinforce each other.

PANEL: WINNING AUTHORITY IN LLMS

This panel examined how AI is changing brand discovery, online research and search behaviour. With AI summaries becoming a larger part of the search experience, speakers explored how marketers can prepare for LLM recommendation ecosystems, build authority and make sure their brands remain visible as buying journeys change.

Takeaways

1. Authority in AI is earned through credibility, trust and cited sources. LLMs recommend brands that authoritative, high-quality sources already vouch for.
2. Traditional SEO thinking must evolve to include AI visibility strategies. Ranking on Google and being recommended by AI require different approaches.
3. Brand reputation and expertise signals are now more valuable than ever. What others say about you matters more than what you say yourself.



PANEL: BUILDING DISTINCTIVE BRANDS IN THE AGE OF AI



This panel explored how marketers can use AI without losing the qualities that make brands human, distinctive and culturally relevant. Speakers discussed the risk of category sameness, how to identify a brand's unique human signals, and how to bring those signals to life across consumer touchpoints.

Takeaways

1. Distinctiveness is a brand's strongest defence in an AI-driven world. What makes you unmistakably you cannot be replicated by algorithms.
2. AI is a tool for brand building, not a replacement for strategy. Technology amplifies great brand thinking — it can't substitute for it.
3. Human creativity and judgment remain the source of true differentiation. AI levels the executional playing field — ideas and identity still win.

BUILDING FAMOUS BRANDS

This track focused on the foundations of long-term brand value: creativity, cultural relevance, effectiveness and media choices that build demand. Sessions examined how famous brands earn attention, prove commercial impact and make decisions about investment, differentiation and growth in a fragmented market.

THE 100 BEST GLOBAL BRANDS

Interbrand opened the event with its ranking of the top 100 global brands, exploring who rose, who fell and what the results reveal about brand value. The session examined how brand drives revenue, market value and share price, and how rankings may evolve as brands market to humans, bots, algorithms and LLMs.

Takeaways

1. AI is collapsing the marketing funnel. AI is turning the purchase journey into a single transaction.
2. "Role of Brand" is now the most critical marketing metric. How much your brand alone drives choice now matters most.
3. Brand value is concentrating around technology and culture. Strong brands are becoming more valuable in an AI world.

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WHAT SUPERCHARGES TV ADVERTISING EFFECTIVENESS

Sky Media shared evidence from a large body of TV advertising research to identify what separates outstanding campaigns from average ones. The session challenged assumptions about budget and creative scale, showing that the gap between good and exceptional performance can be narrower - and more actionable - than many advertisers expect.

Takeaways

1. Creative quality and targeting drive the highest TV ROI. High creative quality delivers 60% better ROI than low quality.
2. Premium, brand-safe content placement supercharges ad effectiveness. Ads around award-winning content see 43% higher effectiveness uplift.
3. TV works hardest when combined with digital and social. TV plus digital and social delivers 52% higher ROI.

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Matt Hill,
Sky Media



HOW TO STOP CHASING CULTURE, AND START STARRING IN IT

Netflix examined how brands can show up authentically in the cultural moments that matter. The session set out three principles for engaging fandoms, adding to culture rather than interrupting it, and converting attention into business impact through partnerships that feel credible, relevant and additive.

Takeaways

1. Brands that shape culture outperform those that chase it. Lead culture don't follow it — that's where value lives.
2. Relevance requires genuine participation, not opportunistic trend-jumping. Authentic cultural contribution beats reactive, surface-level brand moments.
3. The best brand stories are human stories told boldly. Bold, human storytelling is what makes brands culturally unforgettable.



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THE HARE VS THE TORTOISE: IS THE RACE FOR DIFFERENTIATION OVER?

Santander challenged the traditional brand-building playbook in a world shaped by LLMs and category sameness. The session explored how behavioural science, new methods of brand tracking, emotional engagement metrics and platform thinking can help marketers understand audiences differently and build brands that are more distinctive.

Takeaways

1. Slow, consistent brand-building still wins over short-term sprints. Long-term brand differentiation outlasts any fast-moving competitor.
2. Distinctiveness and differentiation are not the same thing. Being memorable matters as much as being meaningfully different.
3. The brands that endure invest in both speed and consistency. Winning brands balance agility with a stable, long-term identity.

CREATE LIKE KIDS

This session asked whether human creativity still has a future in an age of generative AI. Using drawings and quotes from children, the speakers challenged conventional thinking and invited marketers to rediscover creativity by embracing a more fearless, less judgemental and more childlike approach to ideas.

Takeaways

1. Childlike curiosity unlocks more original, effective creative thinking. Creativity flourishes when you remove fear and embrace play.
2. Constraints and rules are the enemy of breakthrough ideas. The best ideas come from asking "what if?" without limits.
3. Brands that think like kids stay culturally fresh longer. Playful, uninhibited thinking keeps brand creativity ahead of convention.



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FROM CHALLENGER TO £10BN CATEGORY LEADER IN 10 YEARS: THE OCTOPUS ENERGY STORY

Octopus Energy shared the strategy behind its rise from challenger to the UK's largest energy supplier. The session explored the role of product-first thinking, trust-building in a low-trust category and long-term brand strategy in creating a company that could challenge and overtake established incumbents.

Takeaways

1. Genuine customer obsession, not marketing spend, built Octopus into a category leader. A brilliant product and real transparency proved more powerful than traditional advertising.
2. Challengers win by making the incumbent's complexity their own simplicity. Exposing what's broken in a category is itself a powerful brand strategy.
3. Technology and brand are not separate — at Octopus they are the same thing. The product experience is the brand; investment in one is investment in both.

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THE POWER OF NOW: TURNING CULTURAL TV MOMENTS INTO BRAND OPPORTUNITIES

Samsung Ads explored how big sporting events and shared TV moments create powerful opportunities for brands. The session looked at how scale, audience diversity and collective attention can be used to connect with consumers in real time and turn cultural moments into meaningful brand opportunities.

Takeaways

1. Live TV creates irreplaceable shared cultural moments brands can genuinely own. No other medium delivers the same scale of simultaneous, collective audience attention.
2. Speed and relevance are everything — brands must be ready to act instantly. Cultural moments are perishable; slow creative and approval processes miss the window entirely.
3. Earned cultural relevance through TV moments delivers outsized brand impact. Brands that show up authentically in live moments generate attention money alone can't buy.



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MOVING FROM SILOED METRICS TO TOTAL AV INSIGHT



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ViewersLogic examined how fragmented media consumption has exposed the limits of siloed measurement across TV, digital and retail. The session showed how platform-by-platform reporting can lead to misleading conclusions, and how a unified AV approach can reveal what is truly driving campaign performance.

Takeaways

1. Siloed measurement routinely leads to wrong budget decisions and missed growth. Flat sales can mask a campaign that's actually preventing a catastrophic decline.
2. TV consistently primes audiences for conversion on digital channels — measure the full journey. People clicking Facebook ads watched 50% more TV the week before clicking.
3. Single-source people-based measurement is the only way to see true campaign causality. Fusing datasets gives correlation; measuring the same individual gives the real answer.

PANEL: IS YOUR BRAND FIT FOR TV AND IS TV A FIT FOR YOUR BRAND?

This panel explored the moment when growing brands move beyond social and performance channels into demand-generation media. Using research and brand examples, speakers discussed what triggers the decision to invest in TV, how businesses make the internal case, what they measure and what they would do differently.

Takeaways

1. TV remains unmatched for building brand fame and mass market trust. No other channel delivers credibility and scale in the same single moment.
2. The question isn't whether TV works — it's whether your brand is ready for it. Creative quality, brand clarity and budget commitment determine TV's effectiveness for you.
3. TV and digital are most powerful when planned together from the very start. Treating TV as standalone rather than integrated is where most brands underdeliver.



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THE MEDIA LEADER'S BRAND COLUMNISTS LIVE!

The final panel brought together brand-side media leaders to discuss the industry debates shaping 2026 and beyond. Topics included agency models, AI-driven consumer change, media investment during economic uncertainty, advertising control, World Cup opportunities and the role brands can play in driving change.

Takeaways

1. The best brand thinking comes from honest, opinionated industry debate. Groupthink is the enemy of progress — marketing needs more fearless critical voices.
2. Too many brands are playing it safe at exactly the wrong moment. Bold, distinctive brand decisions are what separate category leaders from followers.
3. The industry talks about effectiveness but still rewards the wrong behaviours. Awards and incentives must better reflect real business outcomes, not creative vanity.



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CULTURE, COMMUNITY AND INFLUENCE

Track insight: This track explored how brands earn relevance by participating in communities, cultural moments and content ecosystems. Speakers examined sport, podcasting, audio, social, experiential and entertainment-led marketing, showing how influence is built through credibility, creativity and contribution rather than interruption.

FROM FANDOM TO COMMUNITY: HOW TO TURN SPORTS PASSION INTO BRAND PARTNERSHIP GOLD

Sport by Global explored how brands can move beyond showing up around sports moments to earning a place in sports communities. The session examined the role of talent, content and passion points in building credible connections, with examples from Team GB, F1 fandom, The Overlap and future Olympics plans.

Takeaways

1. Sports fandom offers brands unmatched emotional connection and loyalty. No other context delivers audience passion at this scale.
2. Successful sports partnerships go beyond logos to genuine community value. Brands win when they serve the fan, not themselves.
3. Fandom is a community — brands must earn their place. Respect the culture first, then the partnership will follow.

HOW BRANDS CAN BOLDLY INVEST IN CULTURE

Diageo explored how brands can build confidence to invest at the intersection of community and culture. Drawing on work with Don Julio, Casamigos and Johnnie Walker, the session examined how brands can identify their permission to play, avoid opportunism and measure cultural impact alongside traditional media metrics.

Takeaways

1. Cultural investment requires long-term commitment, not one-off activations. Brands that show up consistently in culture build lasting equity.
2. Bold cultural bets pay off when rooted in brand truth. Authentic cultural investment must connect back to what you stand for.
3. The biggest risk in culture is playing it too safe. Timid cultural investment delivers timid returns — boldness is the strategy.

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Becks Martin,
Global



Andre Bogues,
Diageo

VIVA LAS INFLUENCE: COMMUNITY, CULTURE AND CONTENT IN ACTION

Sky Media shared evidence from a large body of TV advertising research to identify what separates outstanding campaigns from average ones. The session challenged assumptions about budget and creative scale, showing that the gap between good and exceptional performance can be narrower - and more actionable - than many advertisers expect.

Takeaways

1. Influence is most powerful when rooted in genuine community. Real influence grows from trust, not reach or follower count.
2. Culture and content must work together to drive impact. Content without cultural relevance fails to move people or brands.
3. Creator partnerships work best when creators have real creative freedom. Authentic creator voices outperform scripted, brand-controlled influencer content always.



I LIKE MINE WITH A KISS: TYLER WEST & CHLOE BURROWS

This session explored the new-look KISS brand and how Tyler West and Chloe Burrows are connecting with younger audiences on breakfast radio. The discussion covered presenter chemistry, brand relationships, the blending of audio and social, and practical lessons for communicating with youth audiences across platforms.

Takeaways

1. Authentic brand partnerships outperform transactional sponsorship deals every time. Brands win when partnerships feel genuine, not forced or scripted.
2. Give influencers creative freedom — audiences instantly spot inauthenticity. Don't make the influencer fit the brand; do the opposite.
3. Young audiences are savvier than brands give them credit for. Treat them as smart, and they'll reward you with loyalty.



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presented by
The Media Leader

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THE LONG AND THE SHORT OF ATTENTION AND MEMORY

Dentsu, Lumen and Kantar presented findings from Brand Reset, a study measuring the relationship between attention and both long-term and short-term memory formation. The session explored what the findings mean for media planning, advertising effectiveness and the balance between immediate response and longer-term brand effects

Takeaways

1. Attention without memory encoding has little long-term brand value. Grabbing attention means nothing if nothing is remembered afterwards.
2. Short and long-term memory work differently — plan for both. Effective creative must work in the moment and over time.
3. Emotional resonance is the most reliable driver of memory encoding. Feelings, not facts, are what audiences remember about your brand.

PRACTICAL WAYS TO EXERCISE YOUR CREATIVE MUSCLES

Global Street Art's Lee Bofkin offered a practical session on how people can generate better ideas by learning simple creative skills and principles. Combining exercises, examples and humour, the talk gave marketers tools they could use immediately to strengthen creative thinking and unlock more original work.

Takeaways

1. Creativity is a skill that requires regular, deliberate practice. Like any muscle, creative thinking weakens without consistent exercise.
2. Small daily habits build the creative capacity for big ideas. Creativity compounds — tiny practices lead to breakthrough thinking over time.
3. Diverse inputs and experiences are the fuel for original output. The best creative thinkers actively seek inspiration far outside their field.



CULTURE HACKING: HOW MEDIA CAN HELP YOUR BRAND OWN EVERY MOMENT

This session examined how audio, out of home and publishing can help brands become part of cultural moments. Speakers explored how media channels create national conversations and how marketers can use their influence to build relevance, visibility and stronger connections with audiences.

Takeaways

1. Culture hacking means engineering brand relevance rather than waiting for it. The most culturally present brands plan their moments — they don't stumble into them.
2. Media placements chosen for cultural context amplify brand impact exponentially. Where and when you show up matters as much as what you say.
3. Owning cultural moments requires speed, creativity and organisational courage. Brands that move fast and commit fully are the ones culture remembers.

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TRAITORS VS GLADIATORS: THE ULTIMATE SHOWDOWN

The BBC and Talon explored how experiential marketing and creative out of home turn major shows into participatory cultural moments. Using Gladiators and The Traitors, the session showed how real-world activations can fuel fandom, earn media attention and create shareable experiences audiences feel part of.

Takeaways

1. Tentpole TV formats create rare, shared cultural moments brands can genuinely leverage. Few things unite mass audiences today — blockbuster formats still reliably do it.
2. Audience passion for hit formats transfers directly to brands brave enough to align. The right association with a cultural phenomenon earns attention no media buy can replicate.
3. Format longevity depends on authentic evolution, not simply repeating what worked before. The shows that endure keep surprising audiences while staying true to their core appeal.

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PANEL: HOW THE SOCIAL PLAYBOOK IS CHANGING

This panel unpacked what is working in social media in 2026, from TikTok and Instagram to Reddit and beyond. Speakers discussed trends, platform behaviours, team culture, senior leadership, KPIs and the balance between brand safety, creativity and the lowkey unhinged content that can drive attention.

Takeaways

1. The social playbook that worked three years ago is already out of date. Platform behaviour, algorithms and audience expectations have fundamentally shifted since then.
2. Creator-led content now outperforms brand-produced content across almost every metric. Audiences trust people over logos — the smartest brands have accepted this and adapted.
3. Social success today demands a test-and-learn culture, not a campaign mindset. Always-on experimentation beats the quarterly hero content drop every single time.

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DRIVING BUSINESS OUTCOMES

Track insight: This track focused on the relationship between marketing activity and commercial impact. Sessions explored how effectiveness becomes embedded in organisations, how brand and performance work together across the funnel, and how marketers can make a stronger case for investment to leadership and finance teams.

EFFECTIVENESS ISN'T A TOOLING PROBLEM. IT'S A CULTURE PROBLEM

Lloyds Banking Group argued that marketing effectiveness fails less because of poor tools than weak organisational culture. The session shared five lessons from building effectiveness at scale, showing how belief, accountability and clarity turn measurement into better decisions and make effectiveness a source of competitive advantage.

Takeaways

1. Marketing effectiveness only scales when leadership genuinely believes in it. Without top-down commitment, measurement stays a reporting exercise, not a growth driver.
2. Effectiveness must be everyone's responsibility, not just a specialist team's. When accountability is shared, effectiveness becomes a behaviour not a department.
3. Tools mean nothing without adoption — design for behaviour change first. Stop chasing perfect capabilities; start embedding the ones you already have.

WATCH THE SESSION



FROM BRAND TO PERFORMANCE: HOW WISE MEASURES WHAT WORKS

Wise explored how to measure what drives impact in financial services, where trust, consideration and long-term value are critical. The conversation examined how channel strategy and measurement need to reflect real customer behaviour across the funnel, rather than relying only on short-term performance signals.

Takeaways

1. Last-click attribution systematically undervalues the channels that drive demand. Build measurement models that reflect how channels actually work together.
2. "Payback" is the one metric that aligns marketing and finance teams. Speak the finance language and brand investment becomes much easier to defend.
3. Triangulating tracked data, modelling and incrementality testing unlocks true channel value. No single methodology tells the whole story — rigorous triangulation does.

WATCH THE SESSION



PANEL: LINKING BRAND-BUILDING TO BUSINESS OUTCOMES

This panel examined how marketers can prove brand-building delivers business growth. Speakers discussed the commercial levers brands use to grow, how media affects company value, which metrics CFOs care about and how marketing leaders can reframe brand investment as an engine of future growth.

Takeaways

1. Brand investment only gets boardroom support when linked to commercial outcomes. Marketers must connect brand metrics to revenue, not just awareness scores.
2. Long-term brand building and short-term performance are not opposing forces. The strongest businesses run both in parallel, not in competition.
3. Shared measurement frameworks break down silos between brand and performance teams. Common metrics create common purpose — and better business decisions overall.



WATCH THE SESSION



CHANNEL STRATEGY & MEASUREMENT

Channel strategy and measurement are converging into a single system of decision-making. As fragmentation increases, brands are rethinking how they allocate spend and evaluate performance, moving away from siloed metrics towards more holistic, actionable insight. Success now depends on balancing proven channels with informed experimentation, supported by stronger use of data and collaboration.

THE BIG 2026 CHANNEL AUDIT: DECIDING WHAT'S IN AND WHAT'S OUT

WATCH THE SESSION



This session tackled the growing complexity of channel planning in a fragmented media landscape. Speakers explored how brands are evaluating platform effectiveness, balancing proven channels with emerging opportunities, and aligning investment decisions with measurable outcomes. The discussion highlighted the increasing need to connect channel strategy with measurement frameworks to drive sustained performance. This session tackled the growing complexity of channel planning in a fragmented media landscape. Speakers explored how brands are evaluating platform effectiveness, balancing proven channels with emerging opportunities, and aligning investment decisions with measurable outcomes. The discussion highlighted the increasing need to connect channel strategy with measurement frameworks to drive sustained performance.

Takeaways

1. Regular channel audits are essential — media habits and effectiveness shift constantly. What worked in your 2023 mix may be quietly draining budget today.

2. Channel decisions must be driven by evidence, not habit or convention. Too many brands keep channels because they always have, not because they work.

3. The best channel mix is the one built around your specific audience and objectives. There is no universal answer — context, category and customer always determine the right mix.

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**THE BIG 2026 CHANNEL AUDIT:
DECIDING WHAT'S IN AND WHAT'S OUT**



FROM BILLBOARDS TO BRAND LIFT: THE MEASUREMENT REVOLUTION IN OOH

This session explored how measurement in out of home is evolving from exposure and delivery toward brand impact. Speakers examined how advertisers can better understand effectiveness, connect OOH to broader outcomes and use improved evidence to make the medium more accountable within modern media plans.

Takeaways

1. Out-of-home measurement has been fundamentally broken — until now. Ad recall as a proxy for exposure produces false positives and unreliable data.
2. GPS-verified real exposure finally lets OOH compete fairly with other channels. Measuring actual physical exposure unlocks meaningful, comparable brand lift data.
3. Purpose-led and inclusive OOH creative drives significantly deeper consumer resonance. Brands showing up authentically in public spaces are rewarded with stronger trust.



WATCH THE SESSION



WATCH THE SESSION



HOW TO AVOID WASTE AND DRIVE OUTCOMES

Meta addressed the challenge of wasting budget on sales that would have happened anyway. With advertisers using multiple measurement approaches and often receiving contradictory results, the session explored how to align measurement with business goals and media investment so marketers can make clearer decisions about growth.

Takeaways

1. Most ad spend is wasted through poor measurement and misattribution. Without the right metrics, you're optimising for the wrong outcomes.
2. Outcomes-focused planning replaces vanity metrics with real business results. Impressions and clicks don't pay the bills — outcomes do.
3. Reducing waste starts with ruthless clarity on campaign objectives. Know exactly what success looks like before spending a penny.

EVERY GBP TWICE: WHAT OVERLAPPING REACH IS REALLY COSTING YOUR MEDIA BUDGET

The session broke down approaches to cross-media measurement, explained why no single method is sufficient, and argued for a hybrid model using panel data, big data and AI to support faster, more actionable decisions.



Takeaways

1. Overlapping reach is silently wasting a significant portion of media budgets. Reaching the same people twice costs double but rarely delivers double the impact.
2. Cross-channel deduplication is now essential, not optional, for efficient planning. Without it, frequency builds on the same audience while others go untouched.
3. Smarter reach planning drives better outcomes without increasing spend. Eliminating overlap unlocks growth — the budget was there all along.

PANEL: CAN INDUSTRY CURRENCIES SURVIVE IN THE PLATFORM ERA?

Platforms exert greater control over data and reporting. Speakers debated whether independent, jointly governed currencies remain essential, the role of third-party solutions, and what platform-defined measurement means for trust, transparency and comparability.

Takeaways

1. Platform walled gardens are fragmenting the shared measurement standards brands need. Without common currencies, cross-channel comparisons become unreliable and politically charged.
2. Industry currencies only survive if they evolve to reflect modern media consumption. Legacy measurement frameworks were not built for streaming, social or connected TV.
3. Collaboration between competitors is essential to protect shared measurement infrastructure. No single brand or platform can fix industry currencies alone — it takes collective will.

WATCH THE SESSION



e Future Brands



JACK BENJAMIN
Digital Marketing
The Studio Leader



EMMA MOORHEAD
Head of Content Planning
West Media



INAM MAHMOOD
CEO & Managing Director
Masthead



PETER ROWE
Head of Media
Halford Group



TIM CADY
Managing Partner
of PWC Ltd.
Preston Media



PANEL: CAN INDUSTRY CURRENCIES SURVIVE IN THE PLATFORM ERA?



RESPONSIBILITY IN THE AGE OF AI

Track insight: This track examined the responsibilities that come with AI-led marketing transformation. Sessions focused on bias, governance, information integrity, trust, human oversight and the role brands can play in shaping technology in ways that are effective, inclusive and accountable.

GUARDING THE OPEN WEB: AI, INFORMATION INTEGRITY AND PERFORMANCE

The United Nations and Conscious Advertising Network examined how generative AI is putting pressure on the open web, trust in journalism and advertiser-funded media environments. The session made the business case for information integrity and gave advertisers practical tools to protect trusted media while improving performance.

Takeaways

1. The open web is under threat from AI-generated misinformation at scale. Brand safety means nothing if the wider information ecosystem is broken.

2. Where ads appear online has direct consequences for information integrity. Ad spend inadvertently funding misinformation undermines both brands and democracy.

3. Responsible media buying is now a brand and reputational imperative. Brands have real power to protect the open web — use it.

WATCH THE SESSION





WHO SHAPES AI, SHAPES THE FUTURE

Zehra Chatoo explored how brands can take ownership of AI before the prompt, through the decisions that shape systems, data and governance. The session set out practical ways teams can brief, build, train and co-create with AI in ways that minimise bias and support inclusive, accountable marketing.

Takeaways

1. AI mirrors and scales existing biases — brands must choose models wisely. Not all AI models are equal when representing people in advertising.
2. Women face a proven "AI judgment penalty" that brands must address. Same CV, same AI use — women's competence was doubted twice as often.
3. Diverse voices shaping AI today will determine fairer outputs tomorrow. The table building AI is too narrow — brands must widen it.

KEEPING HUMAN AT THE HEART OF BARILLA'S AI TRANSFORMATION

Barilla shared how it is building practical AI applications for everyday marketing while managing risks around guidelines, data protection, bias and duplication. The session explored how to set boundaries for AI use, train marketers to prompt inclusively and keep human review central to creative excellence..

Takeaways

1. AI capability building must include everyone, not just the tech-savvy. Bring every level of the business along on the AI journey.
2. AI outputs default to bias — inclusive prompting is non-negotiable. Human oversight of every AI output must be built into process.
3. Brands must now optimise for AI agents, not just human audiences. How AI represents your brand to consumers is the new frontier.

WATCH THE SESSION



TRUST ME, I'M IN ADVERTISING

Advertising Association president Andria Vidler explored what 100 years of advertising can teach the industry about truth, trust and storytelling in an AI-powered world. The discussion covered consumer trust, regulation, advertising's economic contribution and the role of human stories in building better business outcomes.

Takeaways

1. Trust is now the scarcest and most valuable currency a brand can hold. In a world of misinformation and AI, consumer trust is harder won than ever.
2. Advertising's credibility crisis is real — and the industry must own it. Consumers are increasingly sceptical of ads; authenticity and consistency are the only antidote.
3. Trusted brands are built through actions and consistency, not claimed in campaigns. You cannot advertise your way to trust — you have to earn it over time.

WATCH THE SESSION



WITH THANKS TO THE SPEAKERS WHO BROUGHT THEIR SESSIONS TO LIFE DURING THE DAY.

HOW AI IS REWIRING THE INTERNET

SEAN BETTS,
Chief AI & innovation officer
Omnicom Media UK

WHOSE ALGORITHM IS IT ANYWAY?

FREDDIE TURNER,
Managing director, EMEA,
Chalice AI

JOHN THANKAMONY,
Managing director, total addressable,
dentsu

FROM SEARCHING TO SELLING: HOW AI IS CHANGING THE WAY MOTORWAY REACHES AND SERVES CAR OWNERS

ELLY EVANS,
Director of analytics,
Motorway

JEN REEVES,
Head of communications,
Motorway

PANEL: WINNING AUTHORITY IN LLMS

JACK BENJAMIN,
Senior reporter,
The Media Leader

LAURA KELL,
Chief data & product officer,
Havas Media Network

MARCOS ANGELIDES,
Managing director of L'Oreal lab & head of AI
operations,
Publicis Media

OLYA DYACHUK,
Global media & data director,
Heineken

PANEL: BUILDING DISTINCTIVE BRANDS IN THE AGE OF AI

DOM DWIGHT,
Former strategy & innovation director,
Bettys and Taylors of Harrogate

CHARLOTTE LANGLEY,
Chief marketing officer,
Bloom & Wild

DAVID PULLAN,
Managing director,
People's Postcode Lottery

RACHEL MOSS,
Head of international marketing,
TUI

THE 100 BEST GLOBAL BRANDS

MANFREDI RICCA,
*Global chief strategy officer,
Interbrand*

WHAT SUPERCHARGES TV ADVERTISING EFFECTIVENESS

MATT HILL,
*Director of insight and research,
Sky Media*

HOW TO STOP CHASING CULTURE, AND START STARRING IN IT

JORDAN PETERS,
*Senior director for marketing partnerships, EMEA,
Netflix*

THE HARE VS THE TORTOISE: IS THE RACE FOR DIFFERENTIATION OVER

JOE GOLDBERG,
*Head of brand, marketing
and communications strategy,
Santander*

CREATE LIKE KIDS

LINDSEY JORDAN,
*Head of creative strategy,
EssenceMediacom*

TOM CURTIS,
*Executive creative director & content creator
@thingsihavedrawn,
WPP Media*

FROM CHALLENGER TO £10BN CATEGORY LEADER IN 10 YEARS: THE OCTOPUS ENERGY STORY

REBECCA DIBB-SIMKIN,
*Chief product and marketing officer,
Octopus Energy*

THE POWER OF NOW: TURNING CULTURAL TV MOMENTS INTO BRAND OPPORTUNITIES

LAUREN BARNETT,
*Head of UK sales,
Samsung Ads*
MINAI BUI,
*Director of product marketing EMEA,
Samsung Ads*

MOVING FROM SILOED METRICS TO TOTAL AV INSIGHT

RONNY GOLAN,
*CEO,
ViewersLogic*

PANEL: IS YOUR BRAND FIT FOR TV AND IS TV A FIT FOR YOUR BRAND?

JAMES LONGHURST,

*Content director,
The Media Leader*

DEIRDRE McGETTRICK,

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JAMES LONGHURST,

*Content director,
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NIAMH FOLEY,

*Head of media,
Smart Energy*

NICKI BROWN,

*Director of media,
BBC*

FROM FANDOM TO COMMUNITY: HOW TO TURN SPORTS PASSION INTO BRAND PARTNERSHIP GOLD

BECKS MARTIN,

*Branded sport director,
Global*

HOW BRANDS CAN BOLDLY INVEST IN CULTURE

ANDRE BOGUES,

*Acting global head of luxury culture,
Diageo*

VIVA LAS INFLUENCE: COMMUNITY, CULTURE AND CONTENT IN ACTION

GABBY COX,

*Sales director,
Acast*

SUMMER BAXTER,

*director of brand partnerships,
Acast*

I LIKE MINE WITH A KISS: TYLER WEST & CHLOE BURROWS

JAMES BARR,

*Presenter,
Hits Radio Breakfast*

CHLOE BURROWS,

*Presenter,
KISS*

TYLER WEST,

*Presenter,
KISS*

THE LONG AND THE SHORT OF ATTENTION AND MEMORY

MIKE FOLLETT,
CEO,

Lumen Research

BRAM MEULEMAN,

Head of strategy,

Carat Global

EWA ZAWOL,

Global partnership director,
dentsu

LES BINET,

Global marketing effectiveness expert

PRACTICAL WAYS TO EXERCISE YOUR CREATIVE MUSCLES

DR. LEE BOFKIN,

CEO & janitor,

Global Street Art

CULTURE HACKING: HOW MEDIA CAN HELP YOUR BRAND OWN EVERY MOMENT

AIMEE MCKAY,

Client partnership director & europe lead,

Bauer Media Outdoor

GEORGE BUTLER,

Head of marketing & presenter,

Bauer Media

HATTIE BRETT,

Editor-in-chief,

Grazia

SONALI SHAH,

Presenter,

Magic Radio

TRAITORS VS GLADIATORS: THE ULTIMATE SHOWDOWN

DILKI WEERAKOON,

Head of client strategy,

Talon

CELINE MAKHLOUF,

Marketing executive,

BBC

KARENJEET KAUR BAINS,

Athena, Gladiator,

BBC

LINDA RANDS,

Traitor,

BBC

PAUL DAVIES,

Director of marketing & audiences,

BBC

PANEL: HOW THE SOCIAL PLAYBOOK IS CHANGING

NDUBUISI UCHEA,

CEO & co-founder,

Word On The Curb

AJAY KUMAR,

Senior social media manager,

Jet2

KRISTIE NAHA-BISWAS,

Global head of media and digital marketing,

Karo Healthcare

RYAN TODD,

Head of social media & PR,

Currys

EFFECTIVENESS ISN'T A TOOLING PROBLEM. IT'S A CULTURE PROBLEM

SEENA SAMANI,

Head of marketing effectiveness,

Lloyds Bank

FROM BRAND TO PERFORMANCE: HOW WISE MEASURES WHAT WORKS

LI PENG,

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Wise*

SIMONE KRAKOWIAK,

*General manager client services,
The Trade Desk*

PANEL: LINKING BRAND-BUILDING TO BUSINESS OUTCOMES

RACHEL FORDE,

*Co-founder,
TheZoo.London*

BHAVESH PATEL,

*Director of media,
Sky*

DARREN THOMPSON,

*Vice president of sales, UK,
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GORDANA BUCCISANO,

*Global brands strategy director,
Reckitt*

TOM MARDON,

*Head of media & campaign planning,
Tesco*

FROM BILLBOARDS TO BRAND LIFT: THE MEASUREMENT REVOLUTION IN OOH

EMILY ALCORN,

*Chief effectiveness officer,
Talon*

JENNIFER CAREY,

*Director of media and effectiveness,
Channel 4*

SARAH ROBSON,

*Global head of advertising effectiveness,
On Device*

THE BIG 2026 CHANNEL AUDIT: DECIDING WHAT'S IN AND WHAT'S OUT

MARCO BERTOZZI,

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LISA WALKER,

*Head of media & sponsorship,
Vodafone*

PETROS SALIBAS,

*Media director,
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SARAH PATTINSON,

*Enterprise director: retail,
health and beauty,
LiveRamp*

HOW TO AVOID WASTE AND DRIVE OUTCOMES

EMILY TANTOT,

*Marketing science partner,
Meta*

PETE BUCKLEY,

*Connection planning director,
Meta*

EVERY GBP TWICE: WHAT OVERLAPPING REACH IS REALLY COSTING YOUR MEDIA BUDGET

BRUNO FURNARI

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PANEL: CAN INDUSTRY CURRENCIES SURVIVE IN THE PLATFORM ERA?

JACK BENJAMIN,

*Senior reporter,
The Media Leader*

DIEGO SEMPRUN DE CASTELLANE,

*Chief revenue & operations officer,
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EMMA MOORHEAD,

*Head of channel planning,
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PETER ROWE,

*Head of media,
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WHO SHAPES AI, SHAPES THE FUTURE

ZEHRA CHATOO,

*Founder,
Code for Good Now*

GUARDING THE OPEN WEB: AI, INFORMATION INTEGRITY AND PERFORMANCE

JACK BENJAMIN,

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CHARLOTTE SCADDAN,

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HARRIET KINGABY,

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KEEPING HUMAN AT THE HEART OF BARILLA'S AI TRANSFORMATION

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NATALIE HOWELL,

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TRUST ME, I'M IN ADVERTISING

JAMES LONGHURST,

*Content director,
The Media Leader*

ANDRIA VIDLER,

*CEO & president,
Advertising Association,
Allwyn UK
& The National Lottery*

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Strategic Partnerships Director



VICKY BLOYCE
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