Driving Change Beyond Marketing With SponsorUnited's Michelle Harmon-Madsen

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In this episode of Yeah, That's Probably an Ad, presented by Ally, community editor Luz Corona sits down with Michelle Harmon-Madsen, chief marketing officer at global sports and entertainment intelligence platform SponsorUnited.

As the company's first CMO, Harmon-Madsen is charged with showing how SponsorUnited's products allow clients such as PepsiCo and the National Football League to glean actionable data and insights in order to build strong marketing partnerships.

In this episode, she discusses how marketers can drive change inside their company and in the wider world. This, she says, comes down to an intricate blend of authenticity, genuine connections and data-backed decisions. She also discusses her golden data-gut ratio for making decisions and how to get buy-in from the C-suite.

This is the first part of a three-episode sports marketing series presented by Ally. Listen to the full episode here, on Spotify or Apple Podcasts to hear Harmon-Madsen's insights on being a pioneer in sports marketing equity and

creating real change.

4 Key Takeaways

Make sure your brand purpose is purposeful

Harmon-Madsen said authenticity is key to building any purpose-driven business; it should feel like a natural part of a brand's identity. Any social impact strategies should integrate seamlessly into storytelling and fan engagement. It is wise to experiment and try new methods to find what this looks like for your brand—sponsorship and partnership spaces are good testing grounds, since marketers can observe consumer reactions to determine successful elements that can be refined and built upon.

There's a golden data-intuition ratio

Marketers are inundated by data, but they should still follow their gut. Harmon-Madsen said decisions should be based on 70% data and 30% intuition, because CMOs never have 100% of the data they need at their fingertips.

How to get buy-in from the C-suite

When it comes to getting buy-in from the C-suite on marketing plans, Harmon-Madsen recommends bouncing ideas off other teams to get a holistic view of how any new strategies might affect them. Having the right data to back up your decision is also important.

Driving inclusivity

A small act can drive inclusivity and break down barriers. Harmon-Madsen starts every meeting by asking each person in the room what caught their attention that day. This icebreaker encourages input and discussion from team members across the business, promoting a culture of inclusivity and support.

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