

Scaling Brands Inside the Story

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Consumers aren't just avoiding ads—they're choosing content that feels worth their time. To earn that attention, brands have to show up inside the stories people love, not as interruptions but as meaningful parts of the experience.

During an ADWEEK House Cannes Lions fireside chat, co-hosted with EightPM, Zoë Ruderman, chief content officer of ADWEEK, sat down with marketing executives to discuss how brands can excel in the content economy through authentic storytelling environments and proactive integration strategies.

From one-off placements to always-on presence

Marketers often approach entertainment placements reactively, but scaling those efforts requires constant monitoring.

Grant Regillo, VP of EightPM, shared that his company works with 300 to 350 shows and movies every year. He encourages companies to look across the entertainment market and ask, "How can I be involved in as many conversations as possible?"

Samantha Catalina, a fractional CMO working with Happy Dad and

Noble Pacific, said that these integrations must remain genuine. “You have to integrate it properly, and you have to integrate it authentically, and so whoever you’re doing that with has to actually believe in whatever product they’re marketing,” she said.

Production crews work on short schedules and frequently have only two or three weeks to secure items for a shoot. Regillo explained that having digital assets, inventory, and guidelines prepared in advance allows crew members to make immediate selections.

“We execute fast so they can film that scene, and they don’t need to look at any other options,” he shared. This preparation helped the prebiotic soda brand Olipop scale when it first entered Whole Foods. Regillo noted that the company “prioritized entertainment and gave us a lot of creative freedom to move really fast” so the brand could present itself as a modern soda instead of a basic health drink.

The art of the subplot—giving up control

Successful placements can mean letting go of corporate control while still adding real value.

Patrick O’Keefe, chief integrated marketing officer at e.l.f. Beauty, shared how the brand responded when creator Oliver Widger’s solo sailing voyage with his cat Phoenix started blowing up on TikTok.

The team hired a plane to airdrop a care package with Pringles, cat food, and e.l.f. sunscreen for Oliver, deliberately avoiding any oversized logo or heavy-handed branding. “We were the subplot, not the main plot. It was in that moment that you truly do give up control,” O’Keefe said, emphasizing that the moment actually belonged to Oliver’s journey. The partnership continued after Oliver landed in Hawaii, with a Twitch livestream to unpack his story.

Tangible business growth

Entertainment partnerships only matter if they move the business, not just generate buzz. Jackie Widmann, SVP of marketing and commercial at BERO Brewing—actor Tom Holland's NA beer brand—said her team looks beyond impressions to the doors a film collaboration can open.

“When we look at the success of a campaign, it's not just about how many people saw it—it's about whether it drives real leads, retail interest, and forward momentum for the business,” Widmann explained. She added that the goal is for buyers to see a collaboration, want to try the product, and ultimately help expand BERO's reach in a meaningful way.

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