# There’s a Better Way to Do Influencer Trips

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As influencer marketing has grown into a multibillion-dollar business, influencer trips have evolved into bigger and more lavish affairs, with brands looking to outdo their rivals.

But many consumers are wondering if there’s a ceiling to such extravagance.

Criticism hit a high note earlier this year when beauty brand Tarte flew influencers, along with their plus-ones, on private planes to Bora Bora. Upon arrival, they were greeted with so much swag from more than a dozen brand partners that they received a suitcase to take it all home in.

Is this over the top? Some say yes.

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# Disrupt the Annual Brand Prank War by Focusing on Strategy, Not Stunts

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Dunkin' is now Donuts'. If you were groggily scrolling social media on April 1, you may have briefly fallen victim to one of many brand pranks: Califia Farms unveiling a pickle-flavored creamer, the Duolingo owl starring in a multilingual musical on ice, and Nathan's Famous hotdogs coming aboard JetBlue.

April Fools' Day has evolved from a half-holiday hinging upon the gullibility of your friends to endless brand stunts. As brands have grown in their "self-awareness" on social media

(adopting more personable tones and trying to outbid each other for followers, attention and impact), their April Fools' stunts have also ramped up.

As a fan of brand pranks large and small, it's always a thrill to see who will cut through the noise. But it leaves one wondering: What if brands were to treat every day like April Fools' Day? Here's how they can do it.

## Know your audience

Now that brands are expected to perform on April Fools' Day, it has become harder and harder to stand out in a circus of stunts. However, the more in tune with your audience you are, the more you can strategically employ a stunt that will create enough conversation without having to do a multiday stunt or high-spend activation.

For instance, the pineapple on pizza debate has been raging for internet centuries. So when Domino's announced it was removing pineapple from its menu, the restaurant chain knew it would spark conversation and reignite debate in the comments—without having to lift much of a finger or try to top other brand stunts.

While Domino's prank was a clear winner, not all pranks are—and it comes down to knowing your audience. A well-executed joke that audiences want to share can increase brand loyalty and recognition, but one that purposely misleads the audience can do more harm than good. If you're not cognizant of what your audience will genuinely find funny, you could risk, at minimum, coming off as insensitive and, at maximum, become a member of the internet's Hall of Shame and lose reputability.

## Timing is everything

As the Dunkin' April Fools' post read, the brand was "going thru it rn" and felt like poking fun at its original name change from Dunkin' Donuts to simply Dunkin' in 2019. The post racked up tens of thousands of likes, with fans quickly catching that this name change was merely an April Fools' Day prank. A few hours later, the Dunkin' social team unveiled a new merch line to capitalize on the fun.

Dunkin's strategy is solid; it was contained to its socials to drive engagement, with a multiple-post ecosystem existing before the merch launch. Strategy, like a good story, always needs a solid beginning, middle and end. Without it, stunts can feel hollow.

Alternatively, Sour Patch Kids announced last week on X that it is rebranding to Sour Patch Adults, saying "it's time to grow up." The brand chose to initiate early and then revealed that it was "just kid-ding" on April 1.

We're seeing this more consistently; brands recognize that to capitalize on the now brand-dominated holiday that requires unawareness from the consumer, they have to start rolling out their stunt prior to the actual holiday itself.

The risk of the Sour Patch Kids strategy is that consumers are smarter than ever and can smell April Fools' Day a mile away. Although their stunt generated initial buzz, it can be difficult to maintain for days at a time. And if it doesn't lead to something big, like a new product or a merch line, fans can be left wondering about the point of the stunt. If conversation is the goal, then this can probably be at most a two-day stunt, to maximize the potential for conversation without running the risk of having to sustain over the course of four or five days.

## Go bigger

For brands, it’s much easier to justify doing something stunt-y if someone else has done something like it or if everyone’s doing it. And April Fools’ has become a blank check for agencies to do the ideas they’ve perhaps always wanted to but couldn’t, for a litany of reasons.

The best agencies, however, create content that meets clients’ needs and resonates organically among the brand’s audience at the same time. Brand participation in April Fools’ has tipped the scale too far in one direction and has often forgotten about the consumer. Audiences love a well-executed stunt, but as taste evolves and the space becomes filled, the cost of these stunts is going to continue to inflate.

Set your goals first, and craft the strategy to support those goals. Short-lived stunts may not provide much more payoff than increased engagement that is contained to one day, unless leading to an end goal, like Dunkin’s new merch. Engagement plays are not a bad call, but they need a clear narrative to feel rounded out.

If you want to truly make an impact, consider a larger campaign that goes beyond an Instagram post. There’s nothing wrong with the short-lived engagement plays mentioned above, but they, by design, do not create lasting impact. They’re confined to the day, forced to live and die within hours or a few days leading up. Consider using April Fools’ as a day to launch, with the campaign finding legs outside of the half-holiday’s imaginary walls.

Consider the why: Does this stunt have to take place on April Fools’ Day? Would it make more impact when other brands aren’t doing similar activations? Is the only justification for the

stunt that it’s April Fools’ Day and brands have to participate? What does it look like to ladder the stunt under an overarching campaign?

Break through the walls of April Fools’ and use this as a massive blip on the radar to bring life to a longer campaign.

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# Social Commerce Platforms Are Facing Headwinds. Will TikTok Shop Prevail or Flop?

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Social commerce is quickly revolutionizing traditional ecommerce and radically disrupting brick-and-mortar retail.

It moves the entire shopping experience onto social media platforms, from finding and researching products to directly purchasing them. It integrates product showcases, in-platform brand pages and native checkout, all in one place. The obvious benefit to consumers is the uninterrupted social media content-viewing experience; they don’t have to navigate to a separate ecommerce platform to make purchases.

TikTok has the potential to pull ahead of the pack due to its 150 million users and the overindexing among Gen Z and other younger shoppers. The typical Gen Z consumer spends 10 hours per week on TikTok but just 5 hours on Instagram, for example. Brands should note that TikTok has become increasingly attractive as a social commerce platform. Research firm IZEA reported that in 2021, 33% of consumers named Instagram the best platform versus 19% naming TikTok. In 2022, these positions were reversed, with 24% favoring Instagram and 31% TikTok.

However, TikTok Shop also has unique problems to navigate. Here, we look at the social commerce space as a whole and what to consider when investing in this next wave of the shopping experience.

## The current state of social commerce

Social commerce is available on major platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest and TikTok, and it’ll only continue to expand. EMarketer forecasts that social commerce revenues will total $82.8 billion in 2024, nearly doubling to $144.5 billion by 2027, and growing from 6.6% of total U.S. commerce sales to 8.4% in that same timeframe.

Gen Z’s increasing purchasing power, online behaviors, shopping preferences and personal opinions drive them to social commerce sites. Their purchasing power in 2023 totals approximately $360 billion, 5% of the U.S. economy. That’s more than any other generation, and that percentage is expected to grow to 17% by 2030. Gen Z will continue to grow as social network users, from approximately 60 million in 2024 to nearly 66 million in 2027, which is significantly faster than other generations.

TikTok Shop also aligns with the products Gen Z consumers tend to purchase. An International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) survey released earlier this year found that 48% of Gen Z frequently shop at discount stores or off-price retailers, 25% often shop at dollar stores, and just 9% shop at luxury retailers.

Gen Z's attitudes about the U.S. economy and their financial situations are driving shopping behaviors. A Bank of America study from last fall found that 73% of Gen Z claimed the economy was making it difficult to save money, and 56% reported inflation had put stress on their finances.

Despite the promising forecast on Gen Z shopping habits, TikTok and other social commerce platforms are facing headwinds. According to the eMarketer report, annual growth in new social buyers is declining and expected to level off in the 2% range by 2025. Growth in per-capita social commerce sales is also expected to decrease from the 20% range today to 16% in 2027. Given current market dynamics, double-digit growth in social commerce may only be sustainable for the short term.

On top of that, TikTok Shop is expected to lose $500 million this year as parent company ByteDance invests in staff and infrastructure. Rumors about the abundance of cheap products remain rampant, with strong evidence that some products may be counterfeit. In just one example, a TikTok seller listed a face serum as available for $5 while the manufacturer's listed price was $25. A TikTok spokesperson could not confirm whether the discounted serum was real and heavily discounted or fake.

TikTok's parent company, China-based ByteDance, also raises significant data privacy concerns. The company delayed the public availability of TikTok Shop, which requires payment information, for several months due to concerns the U.S. government would issue an outright ban of TikTok. To address this in part, the company has separated U.S. consumer data

from other customer data and stored it on servers within Oracle’s U.S. Cloud infrastructure located in the U.S. Still, the House of Representatives voted on a nationwide TikTok ban as recently as March 2024, with its fate in the Senate to be determined.

## Where is there opportunity?

You have to look at the secular trends in the industry to understand the opportunity ahead for social commerce.

Easy access to technology, low-cost capital and the human drive to create have contributed to the growth of startups. The “creator economy” is thriving and accelerated by the explosion of new products and services. According to Goldman Sachs, there are over 300 million content creators, and the creator economy is expected to reach $480 billion by 2027. If you believe in the entrepreneurial spirit and the prospects of the creator economy, you have to believe in the power of social commerce.

Social commerce has a compelling proposition for upcoming brands. Yet, it also must be recognized that great businesses and brands are not built through a single-dimensional engagement with the audience. While social commerce and TikTok may be a great starting point, building a sustainable business outside the “latest trend” is about finding your audience across all channels and engaging them across their journey of awareness, research and consideration.

Great business strategy and marketing will challenge brands to be present across all channels and modalities, spanning display advertising, social media, connected TV, email/SMS and AR/VR as it becomes more mainstream. Leveraging every one of these strategies in your mix is not the answer, but neither is using just one of them.

## So what’s the prognosis for TikTok Shop?

It may take time, but it will likely be highly successful in the U.S. market due to its growth and appeal to a younger demographic. From 2021 to 2027, the number of TikTok Shop buyers will increase by more than 350%, while Instagram buyers will increase by 145%, and the Facebook buyer base will expand by 122%.

In addition to the large number of Gen Z users already taking advantage of TikTok’s features, there are other factors to consider. Younger shoppers place value on convenience and the ability to make purchases without needing to visit multiple platforms. The appeal also depends on the type of products being offered and their prices, with trendy, lower-cost items typically requiring less consideration before purchasing.

Younger shoppers also have different views about data privacy. While they are significantly concerned about revealing their personal information online, they’re much more relaxed about being tracked by websites or apps. Finally, despite recent rhetoric, the U.S. government is reluctant to restrict trade and commerce by banning platforms or other technologies without near airtight evidence that they pose a national security threat.

Social commerce is a rapidly maturing means for brands and retailers to market their products. TikTok has distinct advantages over other platforms when targeting Gen Z. Time will tell if the social platform continues its dramatic growth trajectory or succumbs to competitors and/or government pressure.

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https://www.adweek.com/social-marketing/social-commerce-platforms-headwinds/

# Creating With Purpose: 15 Brazilian Pioneers Challenging the Ad Industry

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Brazil consistently receives numerous awards at Cannes each year. AKQA Sao Paulo's "Never Done Evolving" campaign for Nike won the Grand Prix in the Digital Craft category in 2023. AlmapBBDO's "E4RTH" campaign for B3 Stock Exchange was recognized with a Grand Prix in the Creative B2B category.

Brazilian creativity has been recognized and celebrated for decades at festivals worldwide. However, beyond winning jurors' hearts, a lot of change is happening outside the industry's spotlight through professionals who are questioning the market in a very courageous way.

This list highlights some of these leaders and the change they brought about in the country throughout 2023. They are leaders who may never be awarded or honored by festivals like Cannes Lions but deserve to be remembered for their courage in confronting the status quo and their desire to transform the ad industry for the better.

## Changing the face(s) of Cannes

In May, the Publicitários Negros (PN) collective formed a partnership with Cannes Lions, after nearly a year of conversations with Lions CEO Simon Cook. The goal was to bring five Afro-Brazilian creatives from ad agencies to the 2023 festival. The initiative gained the support of brands and Black professionals, who donated resources to fund the all-expenses-paid experience for the five creatives. The PN collective currently has over 8,000 Black professionals and a board of 14 volunteers, including creatives like Luna Lima and Simone Bispo.

## Dining with purpose

Raphaella Martins found it uncomfortable to always meet with friends to discuss issues or demand better conditions in the industry. So, she started Toda Última Quinta (Every Last Thursday), a monthly dinner series focused on affection and connection. The dinners bring together about 30 Afro-Brazilian women in senior leadership positions. Even though more than half of Brazil's population is Black, Black women occupy only 4.6% of leadership roles at the largest agencies and advertisers.

## Opening doors for transgender creatives

For 14 years, Brazil has had the unfortunate distinction of being the nation with the most transgender homicides. Last year, Ariel Nobre wrote 14 letters to remind and question top agency leaders about what has been done to support the trans community. Through a video and over 100 handwritten pages, the initiative raised awareness among CEOs and created urgency within some agencies to develop goals and strategies to hire and promote transgender creatives.

## Creating spaces for people with disabilities

Pedro França is a gay man with dwarfism who works as a

director and screenwriter through his production company, Representa. In August, he launched, with Benedita Casé, the first videocast for people with disabilities in Brazil, PcDPod. Consisting of eight episodes and interviews with around 20 guests, the project creates space for a public debate about ableism by welcoming people with disabilities to talk about their experiences.

## Playing the longevity game

Brazilians over 50 still do not feel represented by advertising. This was one of the discoveries brought to light by The Longevity Revolution study of more than 1,300 people conducted by Rita Almeida and Brazilian agency AlmapBBDO. Since the launch, Almeida has already given lectures and participated in an alignment with the UN Global Compact, with plans for further initiatives.

## Widening the aperture to spotlight Indigenous people

Last year, Indigenous filmmaker Edivan Guajajara premiered We Are Guardians in Canada, his first documentary as a director. Made in conjunction with Appian Way Productions (Leonardo DiCaprio’s film production company) and Fisher Stevens, who has won the Oscar for Best Documentary, the success of the film demonstrates how important it is to have an Indigenous voice behind a production that discusses the struggles of forest people. Guajajara became the first indigenous Brazilian with a documentary film on Netflix Latin America with this production.

## Driving tough conversations on inclusion

Liliane Rocha is the CEO of Gestão Kairós, a sustainability and diversity consultancy. In partnership with the Observatory of Diversity in Advertising, she launched the Inclusive Advertising: Brazilian Agencies Diversity Census 2023. The survey interviewed 24 of the largest agencies in the country,

which reported their diversity data in an analysis of more than 6,200 employees. The results generated discussions with agency leaders, which led to a public commitment in April 2023.

## Mapping content creators from the North of Brazil

In Brazil, brands always seek to connect with the Amazon Rainforest, but that doesn't mean they hire content creators from the northern part of the country to do so. In January, Victor Israel created Vem do Norte (Comes from the North), the first agency specialized in content creators from Brazil's northern region. Last year, in addition to connecting creators from the region with brands such as Google and Coca-Cola, the agency sent its team of creators to attend UN events during New York Climate Week.

## Helping brands create memes

Alan Pereira, Daví Vosk, Luis Porto, Júlio Emílio, Sofía de Carvalho and Rodrigo Almeida created the Saquinho de Lixo meme page in 2018, which today has 2 million followers on Instagram alone. Last year, they launched the creative hub Saquinho to develop scripts, map content creators and produce memes for various brands. Thus far, Saquinho has created campaigns for Ambev, TikTok and Coca-Cola, always to create connections with Gen Z and millennials in a fun and authentic way.

Recommended articles
https://www.adweek.com/creativity/brazilian-creative-agency-pioneers-challenging-ad-industry/

# There’s A Revolution Transforming Women’s Sports. Are Retail Brands Keeping Pace?

Women’s sports are breaking through age-old barriers.

In the past few years, we’ve witnessed significant progress, notably highlighted by the 2023 Women’s World Cup, which saw women’s sports take center stage. That momentum gained further traction when EA Sports included women’s teams and players in their video game for the first time with EA FC 2024. Soon, the Kansas City Current’s $117 million stadium will become the first facility specifically built for a women’s pro team when it opens in the spring of 2024.

We’re also seeing a remarkable uptick in viewership; the numbers speak volumes. Take the WNBA, which smashed their highest viewership records ever this season. Or consider the game in late January between No. 9 LSU and No. 1 South Carolina in women’s college basketball, drawing over 1.56 million viewers. It even eclipsed the NBA game airing at the same time, which only averaged 1.38 million viewers.

According to research by Deloitte, women’s sports will generate revenue of $1.28 billion in 2024, up nearly 300% from just three years ago. This data should be sounding alarm bells for brands. The surge in women’s sports interest isn’t a future trend; it’s happening now. If brands wait any longer to take advantage of the potential growth associated with this change, it will be too late in the game.

One sector that urgently needs transformation in light of this cultural shift is retail. If it’s clear that the game is

growing for a commercial broadcast audience, why aren't retailers taking advantage to grow their female audiences? Many are trying, but the approach needs a shift.

## Room to grow: Women's sports apparel

The fact is, women athletes have unique needs, and a one-size-fits-all approach to women's sports apparel is not going to cut it.

Sports equipment designed specifically for young girls often tends to mimic pink versions of the products made with boys in mind. This not only limits choice but also reinforces (very) outdated stereotypes. Our collective responsibility as marketers is to challenge this way of doing things.

For brands, that means updating strategies to be more inclusive and avoiding antiquated gender profiles. You can see constant specialization in men's sports equipment, but adoption for the women's sector is lagging.

From menstruation to breast development, brands in the sports retail sector must innovate clothing to address the physiological differences women have from men and the changes they endure throughout their lives, empowering female athletes to perform at their peak. Sports technology and products must invest in research and evolve quickly to better cater to the female body and drive inclusivity in the sports world.

Consider sports uniforms and you'll notice the stark differences between men's and women's sports attire. Uniforms for women tend to be tight-fitting, small, uncomfortable and not practical for high-level athletes. In sports like gymnastics, poorly fitting attire is not only the norm but also expected and encouraged, potentially turning girls away

before they even try to participate. At the highest level of competition, uniforms must be optimized for performance, but athletes frequently must advocate for uniform changes to perform at their best.

Last year, the England Women's Field Hockey team had to campaign for the option to wear shorts during competitions. This issue goes beyond personal preferences or minor fit adjustments—it reflects systemic barriers keeping girls away from sports.

Nike tried this gender-specific approach with their Phantom Luna soccer cleats released before the 2023 World Cup. According to Nike, they were the most researched women-led cleats in history and took over two years of research to create. The sportswear brand tackled the challenge head-on, introducing a women-specific stud pattern on the cleat to avoid injury, a new fitting system to better fit women's feet and new advancements in how the ball will feel for athletes while wearing them. The cleat was made by women, for women and overall the move paid off with the Phantom Luna being one of the most popular models among Nike's women athletes.

In addition to Nike, numerous other brands are actively addressing this issue, boldly confronting specific pain points encountered by their owners; issues that often escape the radar of larger corporations. While this trend is laudable, ideally more major brands will adopt a similar approach to purpose-driven innovation.

## Addressing outdated marketing narratives

Unfortunately, gender stereotypes are still present in the marketing narratives of products and clothing, affecting children's behavior from a young age. Brands, especially in toys and clothing, often reinforce outdated gender norms by promoting messages of action, physicality and competition for products aimed at boys, and socializing, domesticity and

appearance for products aimed at girls. This pervasive messaging significantly shapes how girls feel about themselves and sports, with many feeling like sports ‘aren’t for them’ from a young age.

Regulations may also be necessary to address anti-gender bias in school curriculums and prenatal education, fostering a more inclusive environment from the start of a girl’s life. At school, there’s usually a men’s sports team for almost every sport the school competes in, but there are not the same options for girls. There are 1.3 million fewer opportunities to play high school sports for girls than for boys.

## Reimagining the market

In the past, brands have argued that the women’s market wasn’t big enough to warrant more options and investments, but today the data says otherwise.

It’s time to redesign, innovate and invest in understanding the diversity of your audiences. You can outpace the evolution of women’s sports if you approach it in the right way. The businesses that understand the full potential of their female audiences will win in the long run.

Recommended articles
https://www.adweek.com/commerce/theres-a-revolution-transforming-womens-sports-are-retail-brands-keeping-pace/

# The 10-Year Tension: Women Need More Time, Not More Balance

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Organizations nationwide, especially ad agencies, say offering balance is key to attracting and retaining women talent. From unlimited PTO and job-sharing opportunities to remote work and childcare allowances, we've received many undeniably excellent benefits to support caregiving responsibilities and promote well-being.

But the fact is, women still can't have it all.

Promoting work/life balance as the path to leadership only compounds the pressure and onus placed on women to do it all, while concealing the real issue impacting the growth trajectory of our careers: Biology.

While flexibility on the job is greatly appreciated, it simply can't solve women's physiological limitations and society's expectations. To level the professional playing field, we've got to hack biology. And with the right resources, like unfettered access to exceptional healthcare and fertility benefits, the ad industry can accomplish this major feat.

## The 10-year tension

For women, ages 25 to 35 are considered the golden years during which our career trajectories and earning potentials are established. They're also the years during which our fertility is highest. That presents an issue we call the 10-Year Tension.

Unfortunately, the motherhood penalty still exists, and women must choose between money and motherhood within a decade. Conversely, men have 20 years, roughly between the ages of 25 and 45, to build their careers, grow their incomes and welcome children.

With half the time to build what we aspire to, and half the time to decide what our aspirations are in the first place, women are at a loss. Faced with a physiologically imposed time constraint that puts ambition and parenthood on opposing paths, women are forced to make life-changing decisions under enormous pressure.

Because of our biology, and the way our culture is structured, it feels like men have more choice in life and at work because they have more time to make their wants and needs reality. Meanwhile, women are left to answer a difficult question: Will it be having kids or a career? Will it be now or never?

No matter what we choose, we're sacrificing something we want or could want later. If agencies truly care about equity, they must stop promoting balance alone and shift focus to helping women buy more time.

## Advertising is behind

Right now, the tech industry is leading the pack in closing the gender gap by rolling out robust healthcare plans encompassing the many facets of women's health, from infertility to menopause.

Adobe is doing it right, offering adoption and surrogacy reimbursements with lifetime maximums of $50,000 for each event and fertility benefits including coverage for artificial insemination, ovulation induction, egg freezing and storing, IVF and much more.

Within the ad industry, Mekanism is helping drive awareness around the impact a woman's biology has on her job with "The Menoclause," a movement to make workplaces more menopause-friendly. But that's just a starting point.

If advertising wants to attract and retain female talent, grow female leaders and set the workplace's wellness standard, it must step up and provide comprehensive care for all routes to motherhood. It's not enough to recognize that we're built differently than men and that our biology does indeed impact our livelihood. We have to do something about it.

Decision-makers, hold your agencies accountable when it comes to investing in benefit portfolios that give women the same personal and professional opportunities as men; benefits that overwrite the traditional system by helping extend women's fertility, giving us the time we need to fully engage at work while still planning for and starting families beyond 35.

Egg-freezing, egg-storing, IVF support, genetic testing and expanded coverage (including surrogacy) for geriatric pregnancies and LGBTQ+ talent shouldn't be considered perks that some progressive companies offer; they should be promises. Across the board. Especially in the ad industry, where better representation internally leads to more effective campaigns, campaigns that successfully reflect the voices of the audiences so many brands are trying to reach.

### How the ad industry can reflect today's world

Women drive around 80% of purchasing decisions but account for less than 40% of C-suite positions in advertising. Ensuring women have the chance to work without sacrificing the desire to become mothers means alleviating the pressure we're under. It means sustained career growth. It means opening the door for more women at the top.

10 years isn't enough time to do it all and be it all. So, give us 20 like the boys and let us decide what we'll accomplish.

Recommended articles
https://www.adweek.com/agencies/the-10-year-tension-women-need-more-time-not-more-balance/

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# What Does a Chief AI Officer Look Like in the Marketing World?

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For all of the talk about the jobs AI is expected to replace

(that’s 85 million, according to the World Economic Forum), it’s also expected to create some 97 million new roles by 2025.

And the buzziest of these new roles is the position overseeing it all: the Chief AI Officer (CAIO).

Major brands like UnitedHealth, Deloitte and Intel have already tapped big names. Even the U.S. government is on board, announcing computer scientist and attorney Jonathan Mayer will serve as the Department of Justice’s first CAIO.

Marketing agencies need to get on the bandwagon too. Given the recent Under Armour controversy over allegedly reusing the work of others without proper credit in its new AI-powered commercial featuring boxer Anthony Joshua, brands must decide how they want to incorporate AI into the organization, especially marketing and creative services.

The music industry has demonstrated the power of a great mashup; AI-generated art has the potential to be the marketing version of this success, as long as the CAIO helps the organization establish rules of conduct and disclosure principles.

But what should the role look like? What does a CAIO do? Here are some of the key elements and responsibilities brands must consider in candidates for this role.

## Serve as a liaison between departments

The ideal CAIO will collaborate with different departments in all the major functions of the company. That includes HR, marketing, sales and product development, because anytime there is a piece of content created, AI can help make it better and faster.

And, just as agencies have social media control rooms to cover key events in real time, there needs to be an equivalent for AI. The chief AI officer should be the point person connecting each key department to AI supply chains.

Marketing is currently the easiest way for AI tools to have an immediate impact. The CAIO should be building relationships with the marketing team first, because that's where most of the internal and external-facing content is generated.

Next, they should look at HR for job descriptions and posting material to internal websites, employee manuals and onboarding materials, before finally examining enablement and sales materials.

## Lead experimentation and deployment

The CAIO's team should experiment with building partnerships and relationships with all the latest AI tools (there are thousands of them) before deciding where and how they should be deployed.

That experimentation needs someone who can prioritize, streamline and guide the process. There are many AI options out there, and an intelligent filtration system is essential to stay competitive.

## Understand the intricacies of an organization

For this unique position, employers must prioritize a sense of curiosity from potential candidates. This includes a passion for innovation—someone who could have been a technologist if they'd chosen a different path.

This sense of imagination needs to be balanced with a practical approach. The successful candidate should be an "organizational psychologist," someone who understands how organizations are run, how different groups interact with each other, and how they contribute to the greater good. They

should also always keep the larger organizational mission in mind.

The one thing your potential CAIO doesn’t need is a knowledge of how large language models are written. They don’t need to know how neural networks are built; they just need to have enough understanding to allow them to be an applied scientist. This opens the position to more diverse and varied candidates.

## Set standards for success

Following the onboarding process, establish the time it takes for basic, core functions within each department, then compare the overall quality of the output before and after AI deployment. This can develop into new thinking—is there a way to evaluate new output with and without the use of AI? More ideas, better ideas, faster ideas. These should be the priorities of a successful CAIO.

## The bottom line

The CAIO role is about to become an essential component across all industries, but marketing is where the position can make the most immediate impact.

By defining what the job should look like, as well as the type of candidate you’re looking for, you can create a position that will allow you to stay competitive in this fast-moving space.

Very quickly this role will become obsolete. Eventually, there will be no distinction between a process and whether AI contributed; there will just be the process. Just like we no longer use www in front of a website address, we won’t have to have someone designated as CAIO. But for the time being, we need an insurgent and a champion and very quickly, we won’t.

Recommended articles
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# Marketers, Here Is Why the Term ‘Marginalized’ Is Uncomfortable But Necessary

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Some of the biggest personal and professional achievements of my life have come out of a period that was uncomfortable or tough, teaching me valuable lessons through a moment for self-reflection and maturation.

To understand, advocate for, represent and amplify diverse voices and communities globally, I have learned that something to remain adamant about is the language used to identify and refer to oppressed groups.

I remain committed to using the phrase marginalized communities. Even hearing the word “marginalized” may make some wince, or feel a flash of discomfort, and I assure you that is precisely why it’s so important.

## A closer look at today’s terminology

Diverse communities and voices have existed under the active practice of societal marginalization and oppression in many ways for centuries across the globe.

Voices at the intersection of Black, Latinx, LGBTQ+, Native/Indigenous and disabled communities have to fight to be recognized, listened to and included in many industries. This is when phrases like “excluded communities” do not suffice. Exclusion means one may or could be coexisting equitably, but cannot intermingle with another group. It’s still problematic but not exactly what accurately describes the experiences of these marginalized groups.

A colleague and friend of mine, Myles Worthington, has made a passionate plea to describe these groups as “underestimated.” I can completely understand the thought direction. However, the true root cause for these groups’ collective experience is still evaded through this term.

These groups are not always particularly underestimated, as there have been decades of clear proof points that showcase the immense level of innovation, creativity, purchasing power and societal influence that diverse groups wield, which means their absence in certain business and societal institutions has been a deliberate choice or pattern. There goes that uncomfortable feeling again, but we must feel it to fix it.

## The real discomfort: Not acknowledging systemic oppression

The definition of the word marginalize is “to relegate to an unimportant or powerless position within a society or group.” This means there is an operating force and decision made by those with power to affect these communities this way. And

here we meet the real discomfort.

We must look at those who hold power within society and our institutions and recognize that systems and actions have been built and maintained to withhold and strip that power away from other groups. Marketers must not forget this every time we speak of these communities, and we must speak the truth of what has created our reality every time we address rectifying it.

This means that those in power will feel uncomfortable, as might those who have been affected by it, but that doesn't mean we should soften the blow for ourselves. We need to feel it to fix it.

This is in no way an attempt to say that marginalized communities are only shaped by or relegated to be defined by the systemic circumstances that have affected their existence. There are so many more layers to who they are, including joy and ingenuity, alongside resilience and perseverance.

The term "marginalized" instead honors them and anchors their story in its truth. They have been more than ignored, more than excluded, more than underestimated—they have been systematically marginalized, and marketers must continue to confront this to enact the real change needed to undo the damage that has been done and fight for a truly equitable future.

I know I'm ready to stay uncomfortable if it means things will evolve. As a Black woman, and a marginalized person myself, we have no choice—our future depends on it.

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# Not All Performance Marketing Tactics Are Created Equal

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Marketing has never been easy, but inflation has challenged the majority of CMOs to do more with less and stretch their constrained budgets without compromising results. Now more than ever, marketers must spend smartly and hit their KPIs in the most cost-effective way possible.

And yet, over one-third of CPG marketers are unsure if they've made the right trade spend allocations, invoking the classic John Wanamaker quote: "Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is I don't know which half."

Seeking more certainty, we asked marketers in our recent State of Spend survey about where and how they're spending to achieve their goals. We found marketers are still investing evenly across the top and bottom of the funnel, but are trading traditional channels for shiny new performance tools that promise to engage and motivate consumers at scale.

However, not all performance marketing tactics are created equal.

## (Re)defining performance marketing

Earlier in my career, I was part of the Whole Foods global marketing team that developed some of the first performance marketing programs, including the first card-linked offers. Even in the early days, these programs were true pay-for-performance solutions, where we as the retailer only spent money when we drove the desired customer behavior.

These programs were also measured using direct, deterministic purchase data, rather than inferred or modeled behavior. As a data-driven person who subscribed to the philosophy of "buy what you can measure and measure what you can buy," I loved the targetability and measurability of these campaigns relative to any other marketing tactic available to us at the time, including the ability to measure incrementality through A/B testing.

These programs both attracted new customers and drove them up the loyalty continuum. The performance solutions were powerful.

The primary objective of any marketer is to drive incremental sales, not impressions, clicks or even brand awareness. Those actions may lead to sales, but you can have strong brand awareness and still go out of business (i.e.: Blockbuster, Hostess, Toys R Us).

Impressions are irrelevant if they don't convert to actual sales. I'm perplexed by marketers' continued aggressive investment in top-of-funnel tactics before they've exhausted smarter, more effective performance options. It's also why many pay-per-click platforms attempt to position themselves as performance marketing, despite their inability to guarantee sales.

This positioning is misleading. After all, the term “performance marketing” comes from “pay-per-performance marketing,” not “pay-per-clicks-that-hopefully-lead-to-performance.” The performance that brand marketers are looking for is revenue growth, not more clicks.

## Flipping the funnel

If at the start of a campaign, you know every dollar spent on tactic A will result in a 7X ROAS, and you hope (but won’t know until the modeling results come back several months later) that every dollar spent on tactic B will yield the same return, you should first exhaust the available spend for tactic A and only invest in tactic B if budget allows. Otherwise, there’s a good chance of throwing money away.

And yet, brands continue to prioritize upper funnel tactics for a few reasons.

First, there’s momentum. Many marketing teams invest in certain channels simply because “it’s what we’ve always done.” Second, it’s sexy. What CMO doesn’t want to add a cool, splashy campaign to their portfolio?

Lastly, brands have been swayed by upper funnel media and MMM platforms, arguing that brand media helps educate consumers on the benefits of a product, creating sticky purchase behavior over time.

That may be true, especially in high-consideration categories like cars. But the most effective way to educate consumers, grow awareness and inspire them to spread the word about your brand is by getting the product into their hands. This is particularly true in lower consideration categories such as grocery CPG. And given the mounting pressure on marketers to be more efficient and prove the results of their spending, the first dollars should always go toward the most measurable and proven performance tactics for driving incremental sales.

Smart digital rewards are among the best tools in a marketer’s toolkit for converting people into purchasers, especially now when 64% of shoppers say price outweighs brand name and 75% are willing to try a brand if it’s offered at a lower price.

That’s not to say brands should ignore upper-funnel media altogether. Retail media has helped close the attribution gap and is much closer to performance marketing than the tools that came before.

However, the most successful strategies utilize digital and cash-back rewards up and down the funnel, combining brand media with a stronger call to action that drives conversion and pulls consumers through the purchase consideration process. We see this often as brands have shared that media, paired with an offer, drives improved ROAS compared to that media alone.

Of all the findings in our latest survey, the most promising is this: Digital rewards are on the rise and projected to see the highest increase in spend over the next few years. In an environment where CPG brands must be as strategic as possible with their dollars, the savviest marketers are flipping the funnel, maximizing the power of promotions to unlock true efficiency and performance at every phase of the customer journey.

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# Retail Media's New Secret Weapon Is Incremental ROAS

Introducing the Adweek Podcast Network. Access infinite inspiration in your pocket on everything from career advice and creativity to metaverse marketing and more. Browse all podcasts.

Retail media is having a moment. Global spending in the category is expected to hit $140 billion in 2024, per eMarketer. That's a 22% increase versus 2023, and it's predicted to jump another 18% to nearly $166 billion in 2025. To give those numbers some context, retail media now makes up roughly one-fifth of global digital ad spending.

While these trends indicate that brands increasingly see the value of retail media in driving sales, major challenges remain.

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