The Power of Founder-Led Brands

This post was created in partnership with SolComms

Authentic founder-led brands that are mission-driven and customer-focused have an edge in today's competitive landscape. That is, if they can stay grounded and lead with heart.

During an ADWEEK House Austin panel co-hosted with SolComms, three founders shared how they balance cultural relevance while trying to build top-of-funnel awareness.

Meet the founders

Bruno Solari, founder of SolComms, helps brands with their public relations and communications. He kicked off the panel touting the importance of brands having a clear mission.

"You can't just be a brand without standing for something today," he said.

Solari shared he's fortunate that he gets to work with well-defined, authentic brands, including the two led by his fellow panelists. "We talk a lot about brands that have fake missions, smoke and mirrors, and that is not the case with these women," added Solari. (6:19)

Kim Vaccarella, founder and CEO of Bogg, shared how she became more motivated to launch the company after multiple rejections.

"I thought I was going to just develop the idea, sell it to somebody, and make a ton of money," Vaccarella said.

But when the men she pitched didn’t get the appeal of her unique Croc-like beach bag concept, she decided to develop the product herself.

Amy Errett, CEO of Madison Reed, had founded companies before shifting into the venture capital (VC) world. But after passing on a business that turned out to be Dollar Shave Club (which later sold to Unilever for $1.2 billion), it inspired her to give one more new venture a shot.

“I started to look at what the women’s analog to the repetitive nature of shaving was,” Errett explained, and she came up with hair color. She left the VC firm and founded Madison Reed, a brand with key differentiators that include fewer harsh ingredients and technology that helps customers find a color match.

“What I really wanted to do was democratize prestige hair color for everyone and make it accessible,” Errett explained.

The campaigns

While Bogg and Madison Reed have done well, both are launching new campaigns this year to scale further.

For Madison Reed, the campaign is called “The Future of Hair Color Is Here.” And it doesn’t involve using a box of highly toxic dyes or going to a salon and spending $300 and three hours, shared Errett.

“We’re changing that whole thing,” she said. “The product is the hero.”

For Bogg, what began as one bag has expanded into numerous products and accessories, all inspired by customer feedback.

“It’s been listening to the customer, listening to the stores that carry us. What are they missing? Where’s their white space? Where can we fill that void?” said Vaccarella. This

year’s 32 new products will be led by a new marketing message: “The world of Bogg.”

Founder-led brands are in

Solari shared some details from SolComms newly released “The State of Brand 2026” report, written in partnership with Allison Ellsworth, co-founder and chief brand officer of Poppi. Among the attributes that are listed as “in” for 2026 are being founder-led and being zeroed in on community, he said, pointing out that both Bogg and Madison Reed fit the bill.

Solari then wrapped up, sharing a key tip he gives his clients: “Be in the conversations that matter for your brand and your community, and that’s going to go a lot further.”

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