

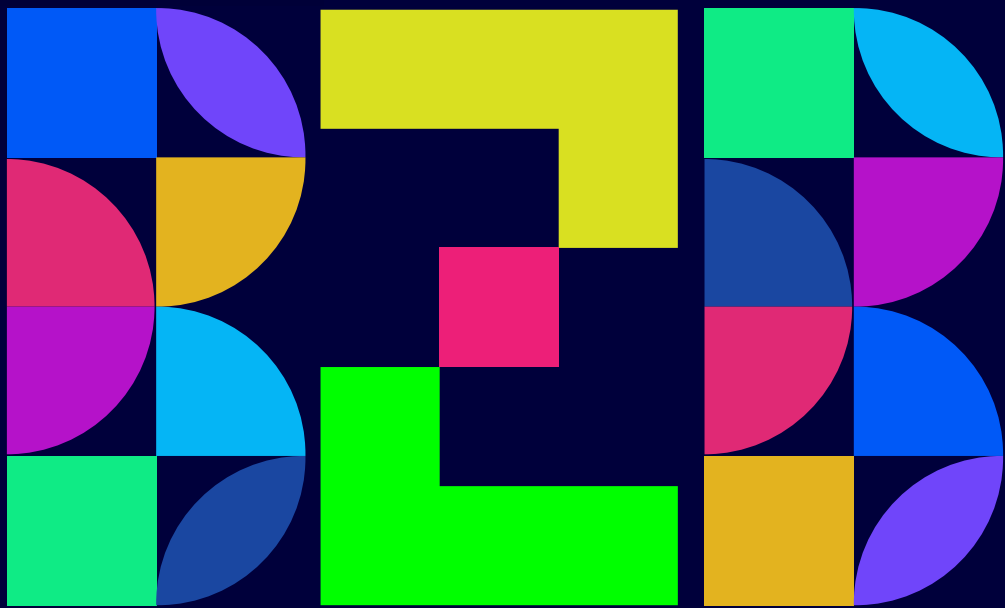
MARKETING WEEKENDER™

ISSUE #466 JULY 2026

THE NEXT FRONTIER!



THE ASEAN B2B



CONFERENCE 2027

12TH & 13TH JANUARY 2027
KLGCC CONVENTION CENTRE



<https://marketingmagazine.com.my/b2b/>

WEEKENDER

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www.marketingmagazineasia.com

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THE B2B TRUTHS

**“B2B ISN'T BORING.
BAD MARKETING IS.”**

**“NOBODY BUYS
FROM A LOGO.”**

**“B2B BUYERS ARE
HUMANS. THEY JUST
HIDE IT BETTER.”**

**“COMPANIES
DON'T SIGN
CONTRACTS.
PEOPLE DO.”**

**“PEOPLE BUY
CONFIDENCE
BEFORE
THEY BUY
PRODUCTS.”**

**“THE BIGGEST
COMPETITOR
ISN'T YOUR
RIVAL.
IT'S YOUR
PROSPECT'S
INBOX.”**

**“THE
BEST B2B
MARKETING
MAKES
SALES
PEOPLE
LOOK LIKE
GENIUSES.”**





WHERE GOES INTELLIGENCE?

On a Monday that looked suspiciously like every other Monday, Intelligence packed a small suitcase and slipped out of the human head.

Nobody noticed.

The traffic still flowed. Markets opened.

Office workers stared into glowing rectangles that knew more about them than they knew about themselves.

Somewhere, a machine answered a question before it had fully been asked, and the world applauded another miracle.

Only the old librarians sensed that something had changed. They claimed the books had become quieter.

Intelligence, it turned out, had not died. It had emigrated.

Like all migrants, it travelled lightly, crossing invisible borders through cables, satellites and silent clouds that were not clouds at all.

It settled inside servers that never

slept and learned to speak every language while belonging to none.

It became weightless, omnipresent and endlessly available, like rain that never touched the ground.

The human race celebrated the departure as progress.

Why remember when memory could be rented?

Why imagine when images could be summoned?

Why struggle with an empty page when a machine could fill it before the coffee grew cold?

THE BARGAIN SEEMED IRRESISTIBLE.

Every civilisation tells itself a story. Ours has chosen to believe that convenience is the highest form of wisdom.

Perhaps it is.

Or perhaps convenience is merely comfort wearing the mask of genius.

...The future will belong neither to silicon nor to flesh alone. It will belong to those who can still recognise wonder...

There was once a time when knowledge was earned slowly, like a tree persuading the seasons to trust it.

Now it arrives at the speed of light, immaculate and effortless. We have mistaken arrival for understanding. We confuse information with insight, answers with wisdom, velocity with vision.

Artificial Intelligence may become the greatest gift humanity has ever given itself.

ITS PRICE IS STILL BEING NEGOTIATED.

The strange thing about intelligence is that it grows by being

exercised, not by being stored.

It flourishes in uncertainty, in arguments that last too long, in mistakes that become discoveries, in the stubborn refusal to accept the obvious.

It is happiest when lost, because that is where curiosity begins its work.

A machine may know every map ever drawn.

Only a human wonders what lies beyond its edge.

So perhaps Intelligence has not abandoned us after all.

Perhaps it is waiting outside the door, amused, patient and slightly offended, wondering whether we still remember how to invite it in without first asking a machine for permission.

The future will belong neither to silicon nor to flesh alone. It will belong to those who can still recognise wonder without outsourcing it.

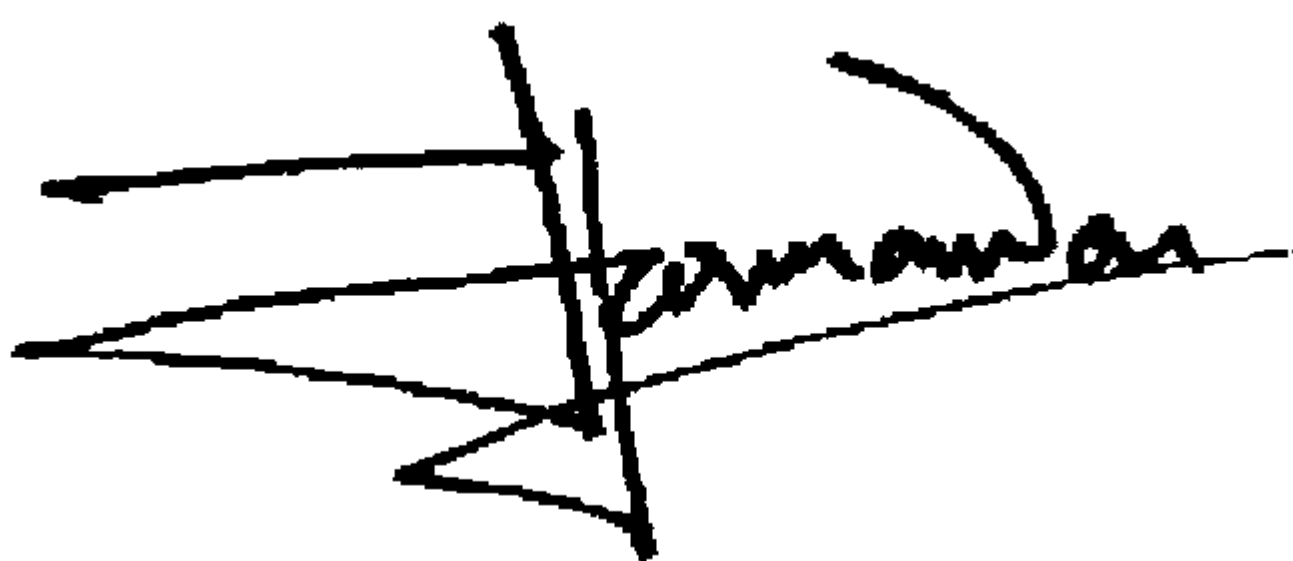
Which brings us to a question that sounds ancient even though it belongs to tomorrow.

Where goes intelligence?

And more importantly.

Will it remember the way home?

#SledgehammerSays



B2B MARKETING NOW TAKES CENTRE STAGE

For decades, business-to-business marketing lived in the shadow of consumer marketing. It rarely won the glamorous awards. It seldom produced television commercials people talked about over coffee. It was seen as rational rather than emotional, technical rather than creative, and practical rather than inspiring.





While consumer brands fought for attention, B2B quietly built economies. Factories kept producing. Supply chains kept moving. Technology kept advancing. Banks kept financing businesses. Logistics companies kept delivering. Manufacturers kept innovating. The world's commerce was being driven not by impulse purchases, but by business relationships built on trust.

Today, B2B marketing is one of the fastest evolving disciplines in modern communications. It is transforming how companies build trust, create demand and drive commercial growth across every industry. In an era where buyers complete most of their

purchasing journey before speaking to a salesperson, marketing has become the first conversation, the first impression and often the first competitive advantage.

THIS IS WHY THE INAUGURAL ASEAN B2B ELEVATE CONFERENCE ARRIVES AT PRECISELY THE RIGHT MOMENT.

For two days, Kuala Lumpur will become a meeting place for many of the world's leading B2B thinkers, practitioners and innovators, exploring how business marketing is being redefined for a new generation of buyers.

What Is B2B Marketing?

Merriam-Webster defines business-to-business as *commercial activity conducted between businesses rather than between businesses and consumers (B2C)*.

Technically, that is correct. Strategically, it barely scratches the surface.

Modern B2B marketing is no longer simply about selling products or services to another company. It is about influencing complex buying decisions through trust, expertise, education, relationships and measurable commercial value.

Unlike consumer purchases that may take minutes, B2B decisions often involve CEOs, procurement teams, finance directors, technical specialists and end users. Consensus replaces impulse. Confidence replaces curiosity.

Marketing therefore becomes a long game, earning belief long before a proposal is written or a contract is signed.

From Sales Brochures to Strategic Growth

Few disciplines have evolved as dramatically.

- The 1980s belonged to printed catalogues, brochures and trade exhibitions.
- The 1990s introduced customer databases, direct marketing and CRM systems.
- The new millennium brought websites, search engines and email marketing.

... **Modern B2B marketing is no longer simply about selling products or services to another company...**

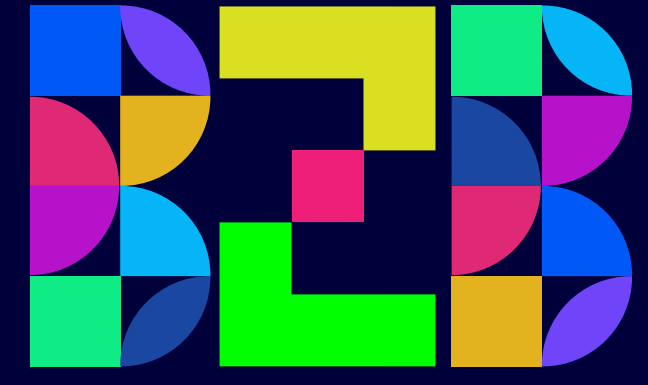
- The following decade transformed everything again through inbound marketing, marketing automation and LinkedIn.
- Today, artificial intelligence, predictive analytics, account-based marketing, first-party data and thought leadership are reshaping how businesses influence buyers.
- Marketing is no longer supporting sales.
- Marketing is driving sales.

Trust - the new Competitive Advantage

Consumers may buy brands. Businesses buy confidence. Every corporate decision carries risk.

- Will this supplier deliver?
- Can they scale?





- Will they still be around in five years?
- Can they solve problems rather than merely sell products?

Those questions are answered long before procurement issues a purchase orders.

They are answered through reputation. Through expertise. Through customer success stories.

Through industry leadership. Through the credibility of people.

The companies winning today understand that trust is no longer a soft metric.

It is commercial capital.

It is no coincidence that the opening keynote of the ASEAN B2B Conference belongs to one of the world's foremost authorities on this very subject.

Why Now?

- Several powerful forces have converged.
- Business buyers now conduct extensive research before contacting suppliers.
- LinkedIn has become the boardroom's preferred professional network.
- Content has overtaken cold calling as the first point of engagement.
- Artificial intelligence is changing research, personalisation and customer engagement.
- Economic uncertainty has made every investment more accountable.
- Marketing and sales are no longer separate disciplines.

The organisations mastering



... Southeast Asia has become one of the world's most exciting B2B markets...

these realities are outperforming competitors still relying on product brochures and price lists.

FOLLOW THE MONEY

The shift is reflected in marketing investments. Across the world, B2B budgets are increasingly flowing into:

- Content marketing
- Marketing technology
- Account-Based Marketing (ABM)
- Customer experience
- Marketing automation
- Data analytics
- Artificial intelligence
- Executive thought leadership
- LinkedIn advertising
- Events and communities

Success is no longer measured by awareness or impressions.

Today, boards expect marketing to contribute directly to pipeline, revenue and long-term customer value.

Southeast Asia Is Catching Up Fast

Southeast Asia has become one of the world's most exciting B2B markets.

Singapore continues to lead enterprise technology, financial services and digital transformation.

Malaysia is expanding rapidly across telecommunications, manufacturing, logistics, professional services and industrial technology.

Indonesia, Vietnam and Thailand are emerging as major centres of regional investment.

Among the organisations embracing sophisticated B2B marketing are CelcomDigi, Maxis Business, TM One, PETRONAS, Pos Malaysia, CTOS Digital, Sunway Business and Resorts World Genting in Malaysia, together with DBS, Singtel Business, Green Hat, Salesforce ASEAN, SAP Asia, Adobe APAC and HubSpot Asia in Singapore.

Supporting them are regional agencies and consultancies including Accenture Song, VML, Dentsu B2B, Merkle, NP Digital, H/ Advisors Klareco and WPP Media.

Together, they are reshaping how businesses attract, influence and retain customers.



SOUTHEAST ASIA

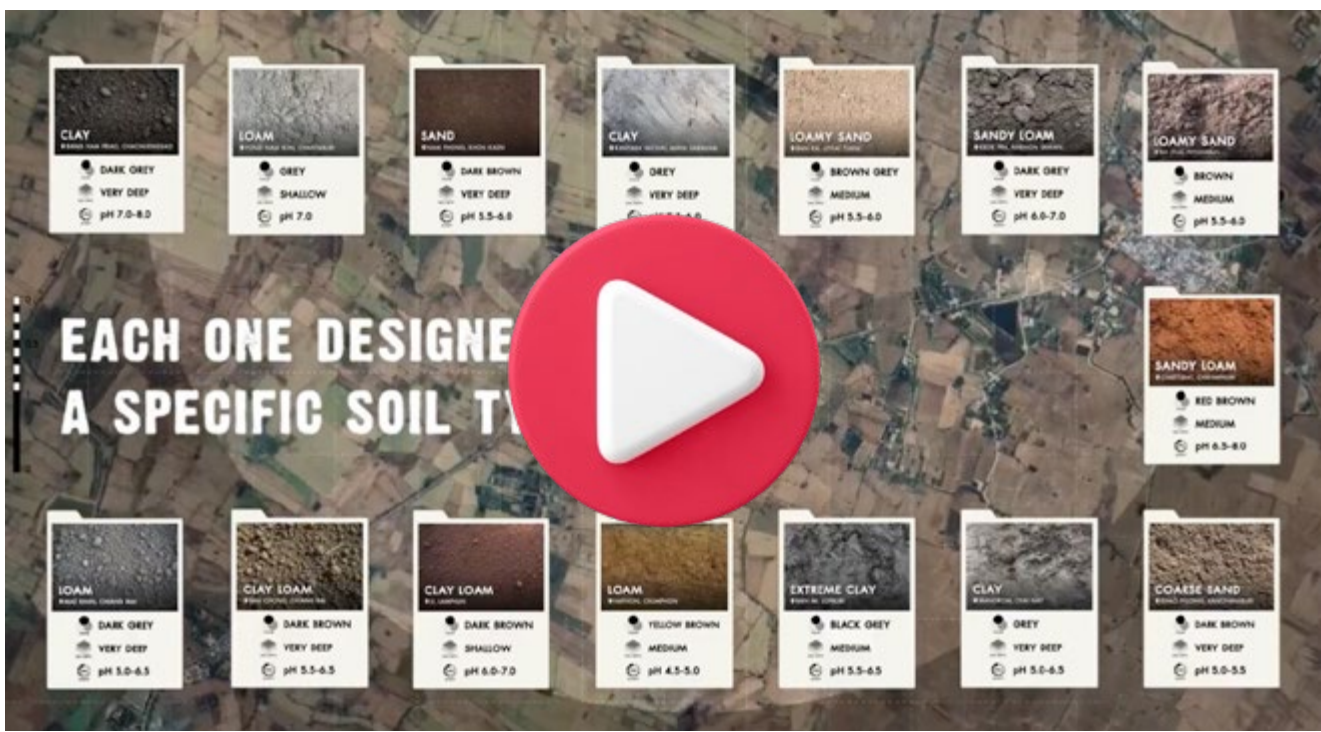


CAMPAIGNS THAT CHANGED PERCEPTIONS

Great B2B marketing proves creativity belongs in every category, not only consumer advertising.

The conference highlights several compelling examples....

VML’s Spikes Asia Grand Prix-winning ****Soil Stay**** campaign for Tra Mongkut Fertilizer demonstrates how an agricultural product became internationally celebrated creative work.



... Great B2B marketing proves creativity belongs in every category...

Great conferences are remembered not only for the ideas they inspire, but for the people who bring those ideas to life. The ASEAN B2B Conference gathers an exceptional group of practitioners, pioneers and storytellers from Europe and Asia. Together, they represent decades of experience across agencies, technology companies, consultancies, media organisations and global brands. More importantly, they have each helped redefine what modern B2B marketing can become.

8 remarkable B2B campaigns



Volvo Trucks: Epic Split
(agency Forsman & Bodenfors, Sweden)



Yaskawa Robots Bushido project



Tra Mongkut Fertilizer: Soil Stay
(agency VML)



Alliance Bank: Bizsmart Challenge
(agency Ampersand Advisory)



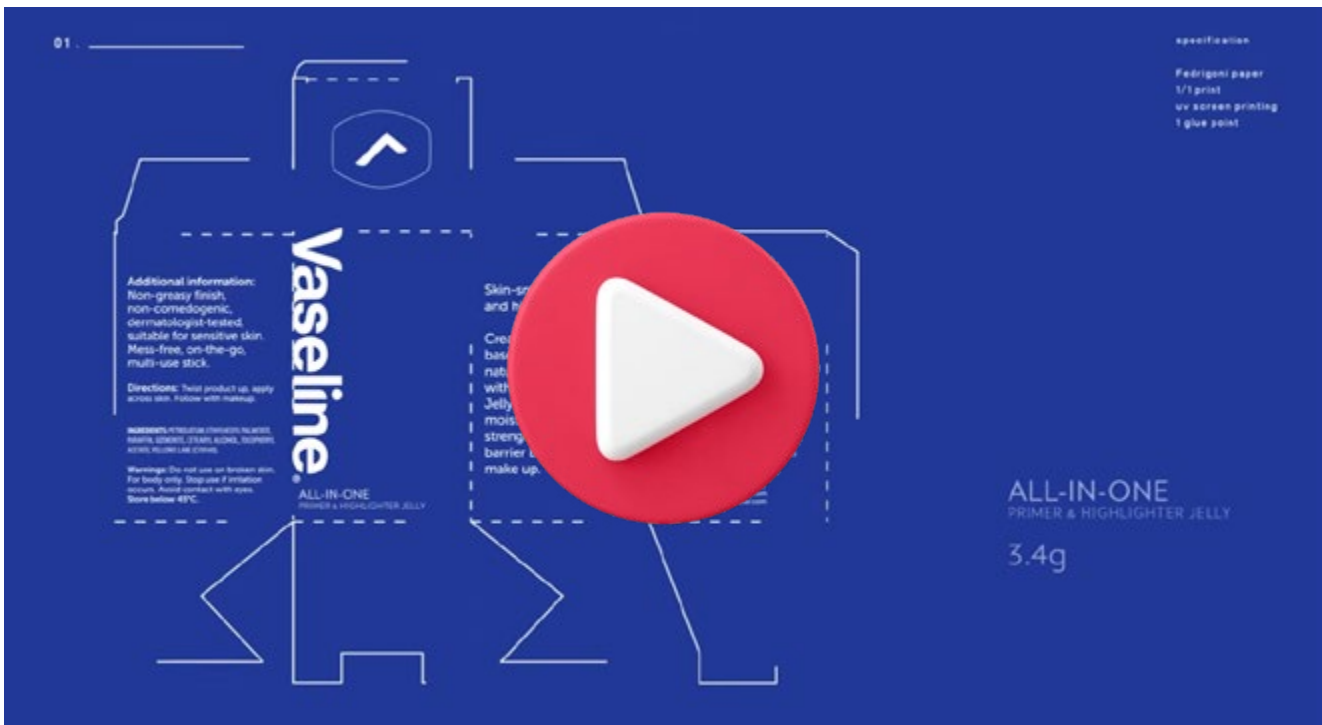
MailChimp: Kale Limp
(agency Droga 5, USA)



Roland DG: 50 Shades of Ginger
(agency Fight or Flight)



VW New Zealand: Bee to B2B
(agency McCann New Zealand)



Vaseline Originators
(agency Ogilvy Singapore) - 2026
Cannes Creative B2B Silver Award)



JOEL HARRISON

Guardian of Trust

Long before trust became marketing’s favourite buzzword, Joel Harrison understood its true worth. While others chased campaigns, awards and applause, he spent two decades building something far more enduring. A global community of marketers who believed that credibility outlasts cleverness.

As founder of *B2B Marketing*, Propolis and the prestigious B2B Marketing Awards, Harrison has watched the discipline evolve from product promotion into business transformation. Few people have witnessed that journey as closely. Fewer still have helped shape it.

He comes to Kuala Lumpur not simply to speak about trust, but to remind us that every meaningful business relationship begins there.



SPEAKERS

SPEAK



TUOMAS PELTONIEMI

Architect of Change

Transformation is one of business’s most overused words.

Tuomas Peltoniemi has spent a lifetime giving it meaning.

Across Europe and Asia, he has guided organisations through technological revolutions, digital disruption and changing customer expectations. Yet his philosophy remains refreshingly simple. Technology changes businesses only when people choose to think differently.

Today, as a leader at Accenture Song APAC, he stands at the crossroads where strategy, creativity and customer experience meet.

His message is clear.

The future belongs not to those who move fastest.

It belongs to those who evolve with purpose.



PAUL NAGY

The Poet of Possibility

Great creative leaders rarely begin with answers.

They begin with questions.

What if?

Why not?

Could this become something unforgettable?

Paul Nagy has built an international reputation by asking exactly those questions. As Chief Creative Officer of VML Asia-Pacific, he has transformed complex business challenges into ideas recognised around the world.

His celebrated *Soil Stay* campaign proves that inspiration is not reserved for glamorous brands.

Even fertiliser can become extraordinary when imagination meets courage.

His work reminds us that creativity has never been about decoration.

It has always been about changing minds.



SHAWN LOW

The Quiet Strategist

Singapore is one of Asia’s most demanding marketplaces.

Ideas are tested quickly.

Mediocrity survives briefly.

Shawn Low has spent his career helping businesses thrive in precisely that environment. His work is grounded not in fashionable theories, but in disciplined thinking, thoughtful content and measurable commercial outcomes.

He believes attention is never demanded.

It is earned.

His lessons travel well beyond Singapore because the principles never change.

Understand your audience.

Respect their intelligence.

Build relationships before expecting results.



HANDO SINISALU

The Story Collector

Some people publish content.
Hando Sinisalu publishes curiosity.

For more than twenty-five years, he has travelled through journalism, conferences and marketing, always searching for conversations worth having. He has built media platforms, launched influential events and connected thousands of marketers through ideas rather than advertising.

His gift has never been writing stories.

It has been recognising them.

Because every successful company has one.

Every remarkable leader has one.

Every enduring brand has one.

And every memorable conference begins with one.



CHRISTOPHER STRANDELL

Master of Precision

In an age obsessed with reaching everyone, Christopher Strandell prefers reaching the right people.

His work in Account-Based Marketing is built on a simple belief.

Relationships matter more than reach.

Focus beats volume.

Patience outperforms noise.

Working with organisations across Scandinavia and Europe, he has shown that sustainable growth is rarely accidental. It is carefully chosen, thoughtfully nurtured and relentlessly pursued.

There is elegance in that discipline.

There is also remarkable commercial success.



BOB LOW
Homegrown Evangelist

Every movement needs someone who understands the local landscape.

Bob Low has become one of Malaysia’s strongest advocates for practical B2B marketing, showing businesses that LinkedIn is far more than a networking platform. It is a place where credibility is earned, conversations begin and opportunities take shape.

His strength lies in translating global thinking into local action. He speaks the language of Malaysian businesses because he has worked alongside them, helping organisations replace hard selling with relationship building and visibility with genuine influence.

His message is reassuringly simple.

The world’s best B2B practices work here too, provided they respect local culture, local relationships and local trust.



CHAN MAY LING
Making Complexity Beautifully Simple

Technology often intimidates. Great marketing never should. As Chief Brand and Marketing Officer of CelcomDigi, Chan May Ling has helped one of Malaysia’s largest technology companies speak with clarity in an increasingly complex world.

Enterprise connectivity, digital infrastructure and business solutions are rarely simple subjects.

Yet she believes every sophisticated technology can become understandable when marketers begin with the customer’s problem rather than the product.

That philosophy transforms complexity into confidence.

And confidence into business growth.



SPENCER LEE

Builder of Experiences

Some marketers sell products.

Spencer Lee creates destinations.

From aviation and loyalty programmes to one of Asia's most recognised integrated resorts, his career has been built around understanding why people choose one experience over another.

His perspective reminds us that every business, whether selling hotel rooms, conferences or enterprise solutions, is ultimately in the business of creating memorable experiences.

Because people may sign contracts with companies.

But they remember how those companies made them feel.

visit <https://marketingmagazine.com.my/b2b/>



MEETING OF MINDS

Together, these speakers represent more than a conference programme.

They represent decades of experience earned across continents, cultures and industries.

Some have built global movements. Some have transformed businesses.

Some have changed the way marketers think.

All have one thing in common.

They understand that B2B marketing is no longer the quieter cousin of consumer marketing.

It has become one of the most influential forces shaping modern commerce.

For two days in Kuala Lumpur, they will share not only what they know, but what they have learned.

Knowledge can be downloaded. Experience cannot.

And perhaps that is why the ASEAN B2B ELEVATE Conference matters. Not because it predicts the future.

But because it brings together the people who are already creating it.

EARLY BIRD SPECIAL* All registrations confirmed before September 30 will be offered special pricing on group bookings!

COVER STORY



“Trust in B2B marketing is key. And AI is a key reason it’s becoming really important. AI-generated content is flooding everything, so it’s very easy to settle for average and produce loads of generic content that looks like everything else. That’s why you need to invest in content that rises above that: content with authenticity, created by a human rather than an AI platform.”

Joel Harrison, Founder of B2B Marketing, Propolis and the B2B Marketing Awards.

“In B2B, don’t just build an audience, build a community. If you have a real group of people around you, then your content has a much stronger foundation. Hence, when I post something online, those people are already part of the wider circle around me.”

Bob Low, specialist in B2B Marketing, LinkedIn Lead Generation and Training.



“Account-based marketing (ABM) means a company does not market to everyone at once. Instead, it selects a handful of its most important target customers and markets specifically to them. ABM is not expensive: Five hundred dollars’ worth of advertising will carry your message to the right people even inside a giant global corporation. Even a small Malaysian company can reach the top decision-makers at Microsoft or IKEA.”

Christopher Strandell, Advisor at InZynk Sweden in account-based marketing and B2B growth.

“We’re coming back to an old-school world of brand building and brand content. In a world where you can technically have access to almost any content, your brand matters more than ever.”

Tuomas Peltoniemi, Accenture Song APAC.



“If you are an established brand, brand is about reassurance. It tells the buying party, the decision-makers, the people whose jobs are on the line, that this is a safe bet. If you are a challenger brand, brand plays a different role. But no brand lives in isolation. Good B2B marketing is about knowing when brand matters, when to shift into demand, when to hand over to sales, and how to align your metrics with that journey.”

Shawn Low - Regional Director Asia, Green Hat.

OOH Creativity: Why Simplicity Still Wins

You don't need loud execution to capture attention.

Distinctive brand assets + simple messaging can drive instant recognition, relevance and shareability.



1) MR.D.IY Malaysia



Turned its iconic yellow shopping bag into a giant billboard



Simple line: 'Satu Bag, Seribu Cerita'



Instantly recognizable. Emotional. Talk-worthy.



2) IKEA – FRAKTA Point-Of-You



Used the iconic blue FRAKTA bag as a recurring visual frame



Everyday moments, minimal copy, unmistakable brand cues



Less noise. More recall.

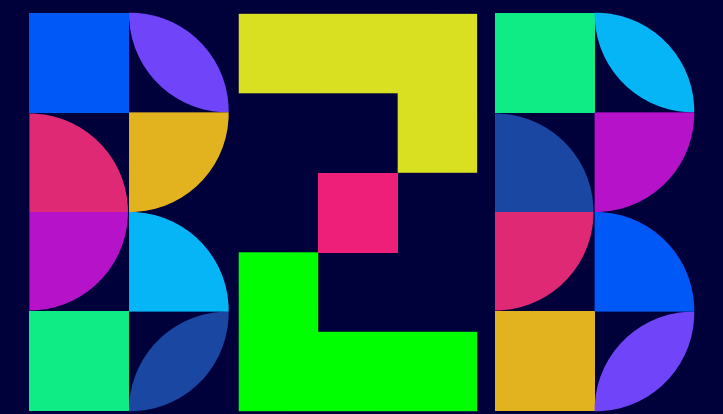


The takeaway

When a brand owns a distinctive asset, simplicity can do the heavy lifting. The best OOH often wins not by shouting louder, but by being instantly recognizable, memorable and easy to share.

**B2B IS NOT
BHAI2BHAI
B2B IS BUSINESS
TO BUSINESS**

THE ASEAN B2B



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ELEVATE



▼ Let's go!
Judging day 1.



▲ Make History. My jury kit

Make history.

Those were the words printed on a cap inside my jury kit as my ride cruised along the French Riviera towards Cannes.

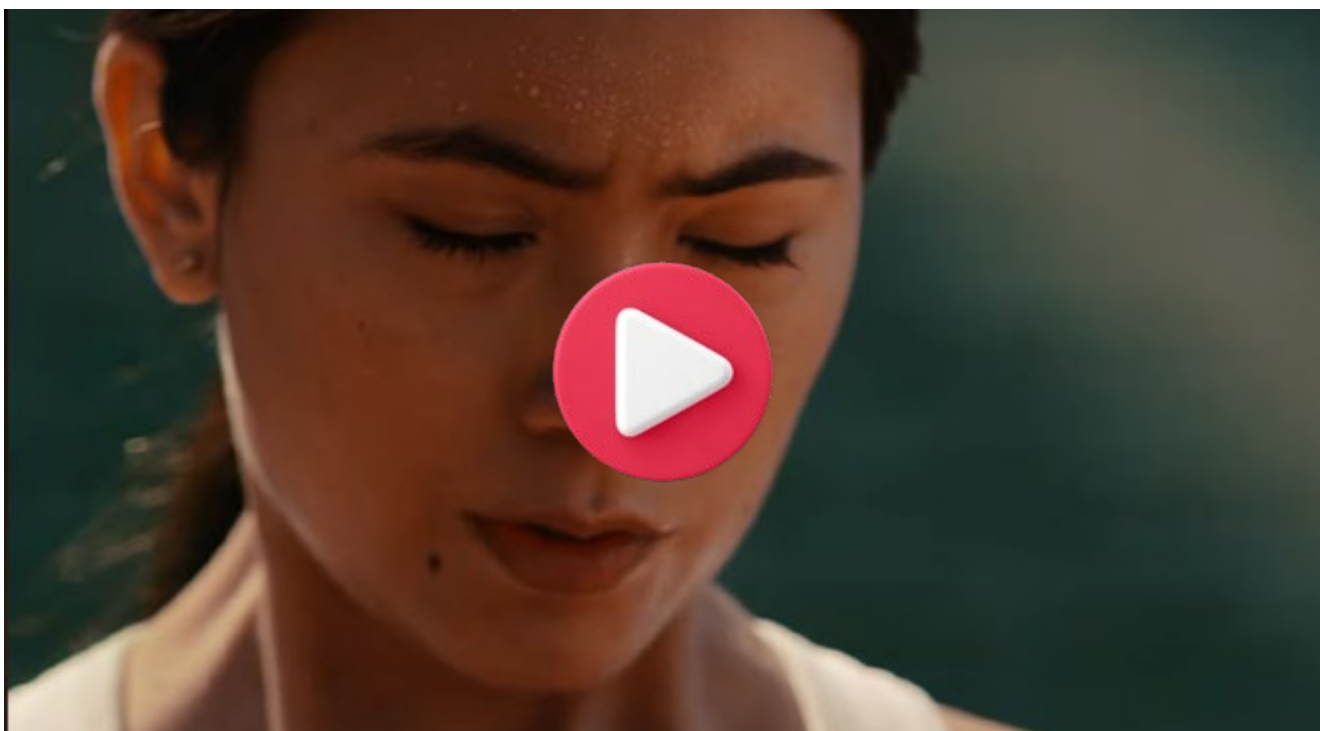
As I sat quietly, watching the coastline roll by, it finally sank in. One of my biggest career dreams had come true: Judge at Cannes Lions, check. History, made.

For the next three days, my jury members and I would stroll along a relatively quiet beach towards the Palais des Festivals. And there we stayed from morning till night. Soaking up the crème de la crème of ideas in the Health & Wellness Lions, instead of soaking up the sun at the beach.

The ideas that rose to the top all had one thing in common: they stood for something bigger than the brand.

Love Hurts was pure, unadulterated, cultural insight, beautifully crafted. **Own Your Flow** actually made periods feel simply empowering. Love the anthem.

See the work:



The Periodic Fable by Uncommon Creative Studio deservedly took home the Grand Prix. It had the courage to challenge the beauty industry. Every juror who had teenage daughters could relate to the absurdity of modern skincare trends and ingredient claims.

Watch the film here:



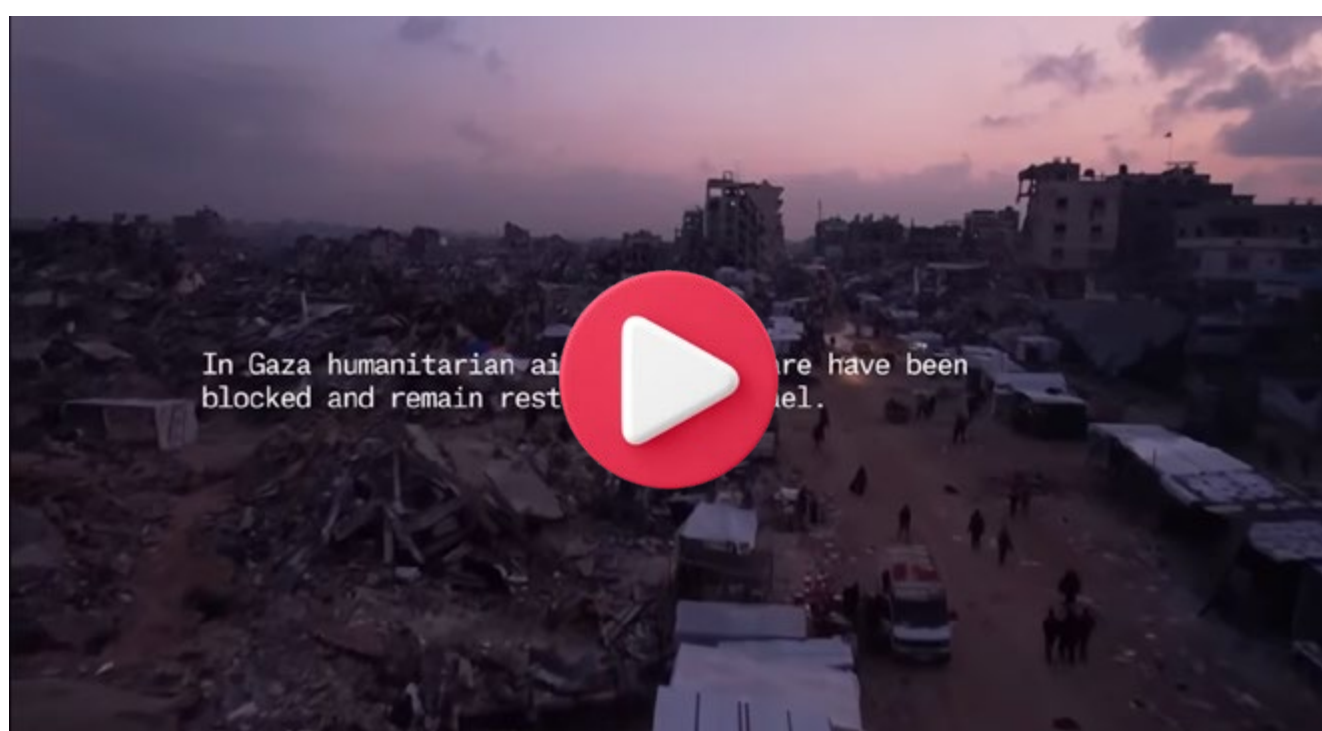
My personal favourite was the **Infinite Saree**. Every inch of it was hand-crafted to perfection, telling a beautiful cultural story from our part of the world. The only irony? It was a Canadian agency who told the story.

Watch the case video here:



Then there was **Vehicle of Hope**—the idea that made the entire jury wonder, “How on earth did they pull that off?”

Watch the case video here:



Someone had to be crazy enough to come up with the idea. Someone crazier to approve it. And someone had to have the nerves to call the Pope!

Miraculously, Pope Francis gave the project his blessing. But he passed away before the completion of the project. With no certainty about what the next Pope’s stance would be, the team had just ten days to launch it and hope the world embraced it.

There were countless moments the idea could have died. Instead, the team ignored every sensible reason to stop and kept going. It eventually won the Lions Health and United Nations Foundation Grand Prix for Good.

There’s a lesson in that. Sometimes being a little delulu really is the solulu.

As Fernando Machado aptly put it: “Every lion begins its life as a little cub. It is very easy to kill.” Kill an idea because it feels uncertain, and you’ve killed a baby lion. Protect it, nurture it, and it just might grow into a lion.

The following week, the quiet beach outside the Palais transformed into a playground of elaborate brand activations, and the solitude inside it was drowned out by the buzzing of crowd as the Cannes Lions Festival officially began.

Here are my festival highlights:

Starstruck moment:

Watching Oprah Winfrey from the front row. She spoke about living

► With Korean buddy
Chad and Simon Cook,
CEO of LIONS.

▼ The judging room



▲ It's a wrap! Health & Wellness jury finally out in the sun.



◀ My LIA Creative Liaison mantee, Silver Lion winner - Andrew Bao, VML Sydney.

► Lunch with ad legends of Asia.



▲ With David Guerrero & Joji Jacob.



▲ With Eugene Cheong, author of ad bible "Cowards Don't Go To Heaven"



► With Park Wannasiri, winner of the first B2B Gold Lion for Thailand.





▲ With Ronald Ng



◀ Didn't get a car, but got my mind blown by Oprah.



▲ History made. Cannes Lions 2026 closing party.

with intention, and it struck me that our intentions have a great influence on the outcome of everything we do. Creating work just to satisfy the client feels very different from creating something you're genuinely proud of. Note to self: before tackling the next brief, think about 'what do I really want this work to become?'

Favourite speakers:

Surprisingly all were clients. Marcel Marcondes (CMO, AB InBev), Fernando Machado (CMO, Chipotle, formerly Burger King), Leandro Barreto (Global CMO, Unilever) and Luiz Sanches (Chief Creative Officer, Kimberly-Clark). They shared one belief: creativity isn't a nice-to-have—it's the whole point. They reimagined their organisations into a place where great ideas could thrive and, more importantly, had the courage to protect those ideas when it mattered most. Every agency's dream clients.

My five seconds of fame:

Hearing my name echo through the Palais during my Jury President's congratulatory speech during the awards show.

Favourite quote: "Sh*t that arrives at the speed of light, is still sh*t." by ad legend David Abbott.

I left Cannes with so much inspiration and fond memories – I probably exceeded my baggage allowance if the airline weighed me.

I came home with a renewed believe that Malaysia have unique stories waiting to be told. And the world is waiting to hear them. We need agencies and clients to work closer together. To believe and to give those little cubs of ideas a chance to grow into majestic lions.

Let's start somewhere. Start small. Build confidence through little wins. And slowly, creative hops become creative leaps. That's when we will see how creativity turns consumers into fans, brands into cultural icons, and our jobs into a reason for being.

Finally, a special shoutout to everyone who has supported me in this journey - my mentors, teams, industry friends, clients and my ever-supportive family. It's true that journeys are made by the people you travel with.

Donevan Chew, Chief Creative Officer of Havas Malaysia, served as a jury member for the Health & Wellness category at the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity 2026.



Will AI Ruin Google?

Could this be
the beginning of
the end?

Last month, a court in Germany ruled that in producing “AI Overviews” Google was no longer protected by Section 230.

Hang with me for a minute and I’ll try to explain why this might be a bombshell.

“AI Overview” is the stuff at the top of a Google page before you get to the search results.

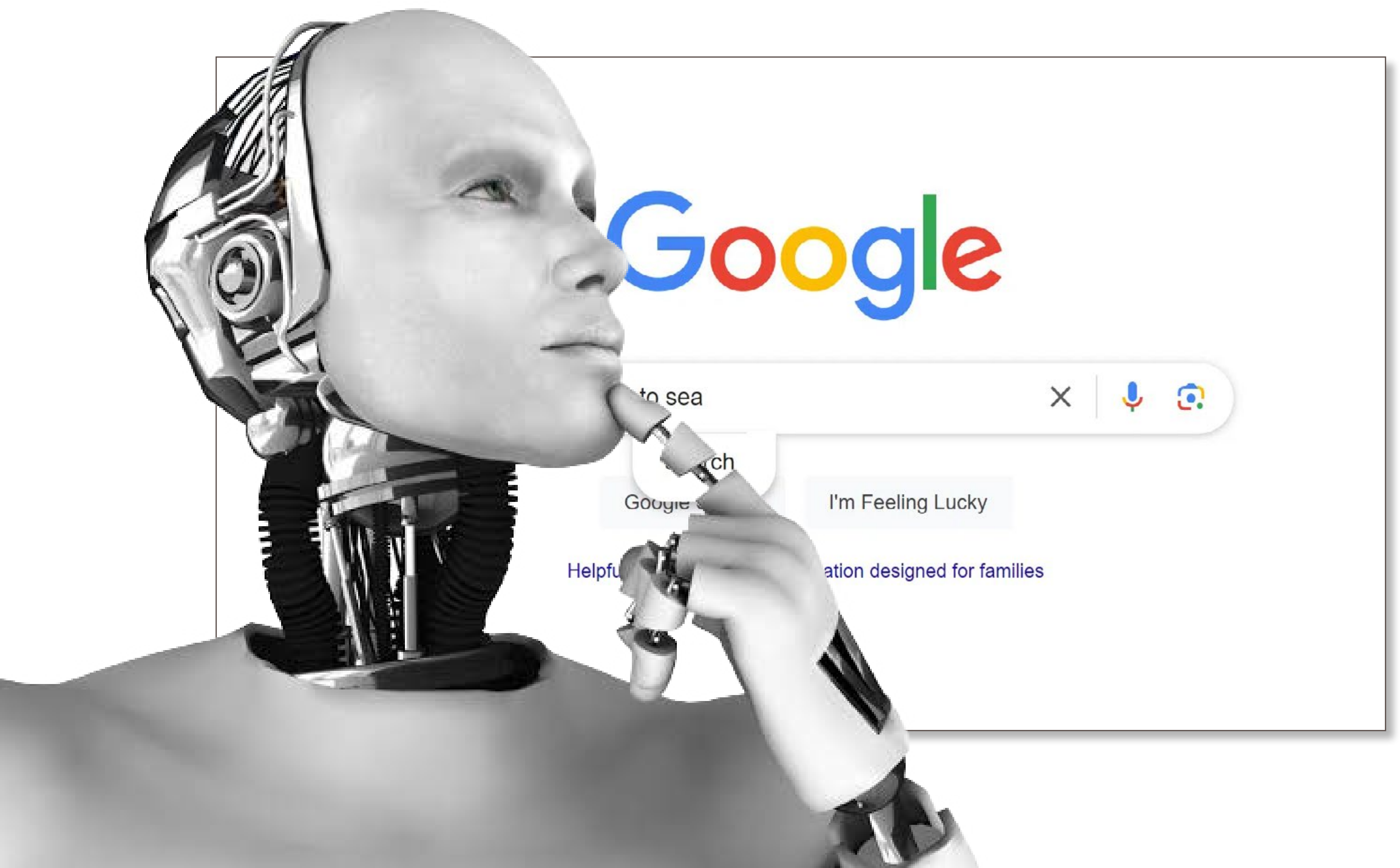
Google has been working very hard to replace traditional search results with “AI Overviews” because the overviews provide them with more potential revenue.

And, ya know, when you’re only worth 4 trillion bucks you need to squeeze every penny.

But this latest act of greed could come back and bite them in the ass very deeply.

Let’s have a look at why this is so dangerous for Google.

We need to start where all the online corruption starts: Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act of 1996.



For those not familiar, Section 230 exempted online media from responsibilities that every other medium is subject to.

In essence it told platforms they could publish virtually anything they wanted without liability. It was unprecedented in the history of the nation.

The fiction that 230 created was that online platforms were not publishers (in fact, they are the largest publishers in the world.)

But the fiction has allowed them to accumulate trillions of dollars by publishing lies, porn, deep fakes, hate material, violent material, libels, and mountains of despicable trash without any responsibility or liability.

The judge in Germany ruled that by using their AI systems to produce new content, Google was no longer protected by 230 and were clearly publishers.

The court said that displaying third-party links is “search,” but

having AI systems create and rewrite information creates new content, and that makes Google legally a publisher.

Google probably has every lawyer who can draw breath working on an appeal to this ruling. And who knows whether courts in other countries will reach the same conclusion.

But the possibility is there. And if other courts agree, this may not just upset Google’s stranglehold on the world’s information, it may also upset the entire AI apple cart.

If any social media platform uses AI to create new content, they may also be legally defined as a publisher and held responsible for the trash they purvey.

Wouldn’t that be nice.



Bob is a writer and speaker. He has written seven books about advertising, each of which has been an Amazon #1 seller.

Is Less More?

THE HAMMER

There was a time when winning an advertising award meant something extraordinary.

One campaign. One trophy. One unforgettable night.

Today, a single campaign can collect dozens of awards across multiple shows, categories, disciplines, regions and continents. Gold becomes Grand Prix. Grand Prix becomes Best of Show. Regional winners become global winners. The same idea returns, dressed in a different tuxedo, to collect another standing ovation.

Which raises an uncomfortable question.

Have we become better at recognising creativity, or simply better at rewarding the same work repeatedly?

This is not an argument against awards. Far from it.

The advertising industry needs awards. They inspire better work, celebrate excellence, motivate talent and provide clients with tangible proof that creativity delivers

commercial value. Every great industry needs a benchmark for greatness.

But perhaps it is time to ask whether we have confused quantity with quality.

When one campaign wins 30 or 40 trophies around the world, has the industry recognised 40 examples of excellence, or one?

Imagine the film industry handing the same Oscar to the same movie every month in a different theatre. Or football awarding the World Cup every quarter to the same team. Eventually the celebration would lose its meaning.

Scarcity creates value.

That is true of diamonds, vintage wines and Olympic gold medals.

It is equally true of awards.

There is another consequence



... It is whether that idea changed the way we think...

that deserves attention.

Every trophy awarded repeatedly to the same campaign is a trophy that cannot recognise another deserving idea. Every repeated celebration narrows the spotlight. The long tail of excellent work disappears behind a handful of international blockbusters.

The industry begins to look less diverse than it really is.

Young agencies struggle to be noticed. Independent shops fight for visibility. Brilliant local ideas are overshadowed by campaigns travelling endlessly through the global awards circuit.

The irony is that our business celebrates originality while often rewarding repetition.

Perhaps the answer is not fewer awards shows. They each have their own purpose, audience and perspective. Nor is it limiting creativity to a single competition.

Perhaps the answer is measuring achievement differently.

What if we celebrated unique Gold-winning campaigns rather than the total number of trophies won?

What if we valued breadth of excellence instead of accumulation?

What if success were measured not by how many awards one campaign collected, but by how many different campaigns demonstrated outstanding creativity?

Such a shift would reward consistency over concentration.

It would encourage agencies to produce ten remarkable ideas instead of one idea that spends two years touring the awards circuit.

Clients would benefit from a broader culture of innovation.

The industry would celebrate more winners, more diversity and more fresh thinking.

Awards would regain something they may have quietly lost.

Exclusivity.

The purpose of an award has never been to decorate a cabinet.

Its purpose is to define a moment.

To say that, in this place, at this time, this piece of work moved the industry forward.

Perhaps that moment should happen only once.

Because the true measure of creativity is not how many trophies an idea can collect.

It is whether that idea changed the way we think.

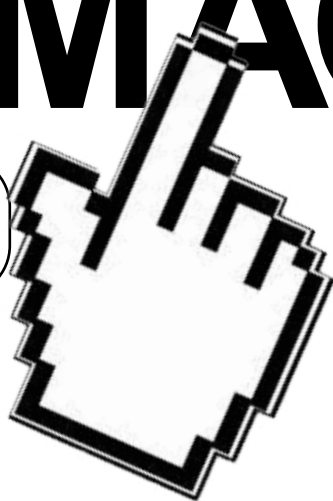
Sometimes less really is more.

As a convenor of awards show this is also a note to myself on how my own organization can or should promote creativity and originality without compromising standards or rewarding or appeasing everyone except for the very best.

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