

LESSONS FROM
THE MARKETING
SOCIETY AWARDS

MARKETING TRANSFORMATION 2024

BROUGHT TO YOU BY:



Accenture Song

REINVENTION IN THE AGE OF INTELLIGENCE

It is with immense pleasure that we introduce The Marketing Transformation Report following The Marketing Society 39th Annual Awards. This event has long stood as the benchmark for marketing excellence, showcasing how strategic and creative thinking not only builds brands but also drives significant business growth.

For nearly two decades, Accenture Song has proudly partnered with The Marketing Society. We share a common vision: to inspire and connect world-class marketing talent. We believe that exceptional marketers have the power to transform organisations through customer-centricity and indeed have a more meaningful impact in the world.

Empowering clients for future growth

Our mission is clear: to help our clients reinvent in an age of intelligence. Reinvention is about breaking industry norms, reimagining iconic brands and bringing new products, ideas and ways of working to life with emerging technology. By setting new benchmarks with emerging technology, we foster customer relevance and drive sustainable growth.

It is no surprise that this blend of creativity and technology featured in many of the award-winning papers in The Marketing Transformation report. It reflects our work with clients like [BBVA](#) where we are helping reinvent the bank to be more digital first and customer centric, and [Fortune](#), the

global media company, where we are reimagining new products and services for their customers powered by [Generative Artificial Intelligence \(AI\)](#)

Three notions on the creativity and tech interplay

As we continue to reflect on how creativity and technology can work together to transform our brands and businesses, there are three thoughts I would like to share on this age of intelligence:

1. [Technology and AI](#) enhance the potential of what creativity and people can do. We must continue to inspire a responsibility to care and to champion context, concept and craft
2. The responsible use of AI can supercharge and safeguard creativity. We must close the safety gap for greater empathy, humanity and ambition for individuals and organisations
3. We must unlearn and learn new ways to use technology to our advantage. The dream is to raise the bar, beat 'average', be audacious with ideas and experiment at scale

We must not worry that technology and AI will eclipse creativity, because, to borrow from [David Droga](#), global CEO of Accenture Song, there will always be a necessity for originality, for innovation, and for human understanding and empathy. All these facets of creativity can and will never be

replaced by AI. What is exciting is when we blend creativity and technology together, we reinvent industry norms and creative business transformation happens.

This is what we strive to do every day at Accenture Song and what we champion and recognise through The Marketing Society Awards. Let us celebrate the pinnacle of marketing excellence, brand leadership, and personal achievement within our industry. We recognise all the papers that demonstrate how great strategy, creativity, execution and leadership can profoundly and positively affect businesses and communities. Here's to another year of inspiration, marketing excellence and transformation as we all strive to make a more meaningful impact on the world.

Please [contact us](#) to learn more about how Accenture Song can help your business.



Sohel Aziz,
Regional Managing
Director, UK, Ireland
& Africa,

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WORKING FOR THE FUTURE



Sophie Devonshire,
Chief Executive Officer,
The Marketing Society

There is a place in Oslo called the Future Library created by artist Katie Paterson. It invites authors every year to submit a manuscript that no one will read until the year 2114. The first author was Margaret Atwood, best known for her dystopian novel, 'The Handmaid's Tale', she has been joined by writers including David Mitchell, Elif Shafak and Ocean Vuong. Every year, the chosen author writes something, but no one will read it for 100 years. That is the moment when the trees in a designated forest north of Oslo, planted to create paper for books, are cut down after growing for a century.

This library holds lessons for our industry: it makes us think about how to make our brands and our impact last. It also holds lessons for the rest of the world. These chosen authors must reflect on their duty to posterity and think about what they're leaving behind for future generations. And so, must we, as a community of Change Leaders, reflect on how we 'do good' and 'do well', not just for now, but for the future.

Marketing excellence matters

As we approach our 40th anniversary of The Marketing Society Awards, celebrating, marking and sharing marketing

excellence, it is worth reflecting on why these case studies matter. Our awards help us to recognise what great marketing can do, how it grows businesses and shapes positive impact. But also, critically, because it is a timely reminder that no matter how much technology and AI can be incredible accelerators for us all, real greatness is always driven by human leadership, by courage, by commercial sense and by sparks of creativity.

This takes us back to Katie Paterson, the award-winning artist behind Future Library who has also broadcast the sounds of a melting glacier live and mapped all the dead stars. It feels as if her own artistic sensibility, which includes collaboration with scientists and researchers, chimes with our own beliefs as well as Accenture Song's emphasis on the opportunity for our industry when we blend technology and creativity. Indeed, I would like to thank our fantastic long-term partners at Accenture Song who continue to support us to elevate marketing's positive impact.

Marketing transformation strategy

In this year's analysis of the winning papers, we have highlighted three key strategic insights that will help you

structure your own thinking, ideas and work. The first is to Be a Change Leader, looking to make a meaningful impact on your brand, business, industry and the world at large. The second is to Champion Customers, making marketing the most powerful growth engine of the business and the third is to Play the Long Game, holding onto the North Star of brand and customer truths in a swiftly changing landscape.

And I for one, will continue to reflect on lessons from the Future Library. It is not a coincidence that many of the award-winning papers featured in this report tell stories of growing pains, of balancing heritage with changing environments from brands that have been with us for centuries. Brands like Guinness founded by Arthur Guinness who signed a 9000-year lease on a disused brewery site in 1759. Brands like Cadbury, our Grand Prix winner this year, returned to the founder's seminal word, 'generosity' to rejuvenate its brand.

Celebrating our community

It is an honour to champion and celebrate not only the individuals involved in these award-winning papers but also the marketing profession itself. The Marketing Society is dedicated to elevating marketing's positive impact, helping

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people succeed in their careers, and making a difference within organisations, the economy, and the world. We are made by you, our members, and I know that we all care about making sure we all do well and do good, so thank you for continuing to be part of this community. Sharing our success stories, our learning curves, our failures and our big questions is how we become more ambitious, more confident and more able to face the future, whatever it may hold.

I hope you enjoy reading these inspiring success stories of brilliant brands and businesses led and driven by all the remarkable Change Leaders in our industry. Do share your perspectives with me at sophie@marketingsociety.com.

And please, together let's make our 40th Annual Awards in 2025 celebrate and mark our remarkable achievements as an industry with style and impact. Help us by spreading the word about next year's awards, if we can encourage even more people to enter, we can then share more insight, more inspiration, more illumination, more evidence about what great marketing can achieve.

THREE INSIGHTS TO GUIDE YOUR MARKETING

Sustainable growth led marketing results from three strategic insights which form the marketing transformation triangle. Understanding and applying these interconnected considerations will provide the impetus needed for long term business growth and brand building.

We see how the power of making an impact, putting customers first and keeping a forward-thinking outlook (despite constant change) leads to elevated impact, brand rejuvenation and sustainable growth – as evidenced by the case studies of brands such as Cadbury, McDonald’s, Guinness, and the British Army.

And while technology and AI are powerful tools to aid our work, human leadership, courage, and creativity remain vital for true marketing excellence. Our case studies illustrate how brands have successfully navigated and adapted to the challenges and opportunities of our modern world through reinvention and reimagining, bringing new products, ideas, and ways of working to life.

In this joint report between The Marketing Society and Accenture Song, three key themes emerged:



▶ BE A CHANGE LEADER

Change Leaders are driven by the desire to make a meaningful impact for themselves, their teams, their industry and the world at large.

- Be ambitious, dynamic and generous with your thinking and time
- Explore and expand what brilliant marketers can achieve
- Know that together we can achieve more than alone

“It is not a coincidence that many of the award-winning papers featured in this report tell stories of growing pains, of balancing heritage with changing environments from brands that have been with us for centuries. And so, must we, as a community of Change Leaders, reflect on how we ‘do good’ and ‘do well’, not just for now, but for the future.”

Sophie Devonshire,
Chief Executive Officer,
The Marketing Society



▶ CHAMPION CUSTOMERS

Customer champions ensure their organisations are designed around the customer, making marketing the most powerful growth engine of their businesses.

- Place customers at the heart of everything
- Be inclusive in every decision you make
- Make customers feel good

“Accenture Song and The Marketing Society share a common vision: to inspire and connect world-class marketing talent. We believe that exceptional marketers have the power to transform organisations through customer-centricity and indeed have a more meaningful impact in the world.”

Sohel Aziz,
Regional Managing Director,
UK, Ireland & Africa,
Accenture Song



▶ PLAY THE LONG GAME

In an era of complexity and constant change holding onto the compass of brand and customer truths requires a steady nerve and an eye on the horizon.

- Remember the core truths of marketing remain the same
- Take responsibility to make the world a better place
- Convince stakeholders of the importance of long-term brand building

“Can you see a future where you are making a difference, achieving remarkable goals, creating real change, and leaving a legacy you are proud of? We need to surround ourselves with people who give us energy and cheer us on. And we need to be that person for others.”

Syl Saller CBE,
President of The Marketing
Society, Executive Coach & Mentor



[View the full list of The Marketing Society Awards winners and highly commended](#)

CHAPTER ONE ►

BE A CHANGE LEADER

BE A CHANGE LEADER

It is not a coincidence that many of the award-winning papers featured in this report tell stories of growing pains, of balancing heritage with changing environments from brands that have been with us for centuries. And so, must we, as a community of Change Leaders, reflect on how we 'do good' and 'do well', not just for now, but for the future. *Sophie Devonshire, CEO, The Marketing Society*

At The Marketing Society, we have been talking about Change Leaders and Changemakers for a long, long time. We know that our visionary Change Leaders are those who make the difference to our brands, our teams, our industry, our organisations and the world at large. As entrepreneur Martha Lane-Fox said at our Annual Conference in 2023 it is the first thing she asks herself: 'Will I be proud of myself in 5-10 years, does what I am doing matter?'

Change Leaders are driven by the desire to make a meaningful impact. They are visionary thinkers, seeking to engage with cutting edge perspectives, exploring and expanding what great marketers can achieve. While they feel an urgency and burden to raise marketing's credibility and positive impact, they know that together we can achieve more than alone. Change Leaders are ambitious, generous with their time and thinking, and dynamic.

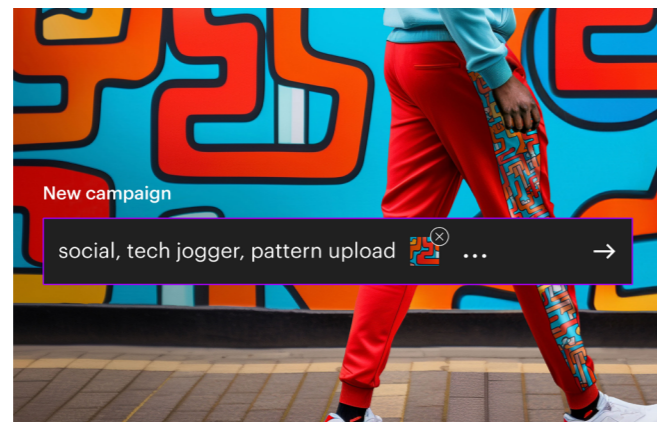
Back to Martha Lane-Fox. She had three tips for successful decision making that chime with the ethos of Change Leaders. Before she makes an important decision, she always asks herself three questions:

- Does it matter?
- Do we have the right people in the room?
- Am I using tools of the modern age?

And perhaps to this we add the importance of a customer lens, because Change Leaders are always customer champions too.

Viewing disruption as an opportunity

Accenture's report '[Reinvention by Numbers](#)' makes the critical point that while the current pace of change represents a challenge, it is also an opportunity. The rate of change affecting businesses has increased by a staggering 183% since 2019, and viewing disruption as fertile ground for innovation and new strategies is another calling card of Change Leaders determined to stay ahead. According to Accenture's research, the three top disruption drivers viewed as potential opportunities by executives were all technological. 77% named the adoption of emerging technology such as [Generative AI](#), 73% named the accelerated adoption of technology innovation, and 70% increased data protection.



Change Leaders learn to walk the high wire between constant external change and clear customer focus. Two of The Marketing Society award-winning case studies, Vanish and

GENERATIVE AI FOR CUSTOMER GROWTH

Could Generative AI become a vital tool for Change Leaders? Accenture Song recommends using AI to unlock customer value and kickstart innovation. Companies applying Generative AI to customer-related initiatives can expect to achieve:

25%

higher revenue after five years than companies that focused only on productivity.

Five imperatives to succeed at reinvention in the age of Generative AI:

1. Lead with value
2. Understand and develop an AI-enabled, secure digital core
3. Reinvent talent and ways of working
4. Close the gap on responsible AI
5. Drive continuous reinvention.

Source: Accenture, [Generative AI for customer growth](#)

Change Leaders learn to walk the high wire between constant external change and clear customer focus.

Lidl, were able to demonstrate change leadership in their bold strategic decisions that responded to the changing world yet continued to hold true to their brands and customers.

Vanish shines a light on autism

Vanish, the stain remover brand, won The Marketing Society award for Marketing for Positive Change with a groundbreaking campaign that shone a light on autism for girls. As Vanish searched for a more meaningful way to differentiate itself in a crowded market, it identified both a misrepresented and underrepresented group who rely on clothing to look and feel the same, wash after wash. Vanish took a risk entering the space of autism, but it paid off. Not only for the brand but for the autistic community at large. There was a 41% increase in traffic to the charity website on autism diagnosis resources. The morning after launch, the campaign went viral on TikTok gaining 5m+

views. And the campaign drove important organisational change too. For the first time ever, Reckitt provided neurodiversity training to its line managers. The Marketing Society Awards' judges congratulated Vanish on a world-class campaign; they felt it was outstanding in so many elements from conception to creation.

Change leadership for challengers like Lidl

Many Change Leaders tend to also have experience with challenger brands. But what happens when your challenger brand becomes a mainstream player? How do you hold onto these values as you grow larger? Lidl won The Marketing Society award for Brand Communication (Large - £15m+) with a bold brand positioning that differentiated the low-cost retailer with a focus on optimism, discovery and democracy rather than price. The brand was able to continue to grow, seize market share from its rivals and evolve from challenger to main player.

The results speak for themselves. Lidl increased shopper penetration by 3.7% points and increased spend per trip by 34%. The Marketing Society Awards' judges saw this entry as a highly successful coming of age story. Lidl, the German discounter challenger brand, had grown up and become part of the British establishment.

A community of Change Leaders at The Marketing Society

Finally, the last word on Change Leaders takes us back to

The Marketing Society Annual Conference in November 2023. Uncertainty expert Sam Conniff was asked for the best approach to solve the problems that we all face in an increasingly uncertain world. He said: 'I don't know, but we'll work it out together.' And that's what we will do.

CHANGE LEADERS CREATE SIGNIFICANT VALUE

Accenture's study of 'Reinventors', a group of executives who turned to reinvention as a core strategy discovered that:

[A reinvention strategy drives greater value](#)

15PP

higher revenue growth realized vs. the rest (2019-2022)

2.4X

projected growth gaps vs. all other companies by 2026.

Source: Accenture, [Reinvention by Numbers](#)

THE GERMAN DISCOUNTER THAT WON BRITISH HEARTS

- ▶ 7.8% MARKET SHARE UP FROM 5.7%
- ▶ 34% INCREASED SPEND PER TRIP

CASE STUDY 1: WHEN THE CHALLENGER BECOMES A BRITISH STAPLE FINDING A WAY TO GROW IN BRITISH RETAIL FROM LIDL AND ACCENTURE SONG

AWARD: BR AND COMMUNICATION (LARGE - £15M+)

After four years of staggering growth, Lidl, the German discount retailer, was stalling. No longer the disruptive challenger brand, Lidl needed to find a way to grow into the beating heart of British retail and join the establishment. The supermarket's main competition came from 'the big four', Asda, Tesco, Sainsbury's and Morrisons and fellow discounter, Aldi. Lidl needed to establish its brand as a main player. With a bold brand differentiation focused on optimism, discovery and democracy rather than price, Lidl drove growth and seized market share.

What happened?

Like many challenger brands, Lidl suffered from growing pains for its next phase of development in a mature category. Despite doubling its market share from 2013 to 2017, Lidl faced significant challenges. It lacked both the financial heft and an online proposition to lure customers unlike Tesco, Asda, Sainsbury's and Morrisons. Lidl needed to persuade its customers to spend more money on their weekly shopping than just £5.21 a basket. This basket spend lagged 17.7% points behind the big four supermarkets. And it was not just



Big on love at first bite

Always Lidl on price

about being a discounter, Lidl also lagged 2.2% points in market share behind Aldi which was commanding £5.54 in basket spend.

YouGov research in 2018 discovered only 35% of Britons held a favourable view of Lidl, ranking the discounter the lowest in terms of positive impressions. Despite this, customers did believe that Lidl could work for them as a main shop rather than just a top-up shop destination.

Lidl's strategy of democracy chimed with its vision to make good food available to all. Rejecting discounter conventions to focus advertising on price, Lidl's 'Big on quality, Lidl on price strapline' differentiated the brand for its generosity. Similarly, Lidl's strategy on discovery amplified industry-awarded products and focused on customer favourites such as the Lidl bakery. Meanwhile, Lidl's constant focus on optimism made the retail brand a hopeful beacon for customers, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Lidl held onto its challenger brand credentials with a number of risky decisions. For example, it did not launch an online offering like its competitors despite the surge in online shopping during UK lockdowns. Similarly, its playful, creative experiments from Lidl TikTok to campaigns that did not directly link to footfall went against the heartland of a German discounter known for hyper efficiency. Yet another example of the retailer's coming of age story.

Results

Between 2019 and 2024, Lidl evolved from a challenger brand into an established retailer. The retailer's market

share grew from 5.7% to 7.8%, with more Lidl shoppers and bigger Lidl baskets. While it would be easy to discount this growth as a result of the cost for living crisis, it is notable that rival discounter's Aldi's market share has grown by 1.1% points, compared to Lidl's 2.1% points over the same period. Similarly, Lidl's proportion of main shops versus top-up shops has increased by 5% points since July 2019; this compares to a 2%-point increase for Aldi, Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda and Morrisons. Remarkably, this means 46% more people claim Lidl as their main shop compared to 2018. The Marketing Society Awards' judges saw this entry as a highly successful coming of age story. Not only were more people inspired to choose Lidl for their weekly shop, but the German discounter was cemented into the heart of British culture.

- Increased shopper penetration by 3.7% points
- Increased spend per trip by 34%
- Market share increased from 5.7% to 7.8% between June 2019 and March 2024
- Improved consideration by 5% points
- Awarded Supermarket of the Year 2023.

Learnings:

- Challenger brands should continue to be playful as they grow
- Do not stop marketing after meteoric growth, keep investing in the brand
- Discovery and surprise create cut through.

FROM STAINS TO SOCIAL CHANGE

► POSITIVE ROI: £1.25 FOR EVERY £1 INVESTED

CASE STUDY 2: CHAMPIONING THE RIGHTS OF AUTISTIC GIRLS. ELEVATING BRAND PURPOSE TO SHIFT MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT AUTISM FROM VANISH AND HAVAS LONDON

AWARD: MARKETING FOR POSITIVE CHANGE

Reckitt's stain removal brand, Vanish, was losing relevance with the British public. The combination of fast fashion and laundry detergents muscling in on stain removal was taking its toll. Traditionally, this category relied on functional claims such as the miracle cleaning of stains. While Vanish had some success with a more emotional approach to branding by focusing on well-loved clothes, the brand needed something else to compete against the big spenders in the laundry sector. Research identified an intriguing story that people with autism lean on the familiarity of their clothing to help them self-regulate and navigate the world. Broadcasting through the lens of autistic girls, Vanish shone a light on an underrepresented group and ultimately shifted perceptions and drove business.

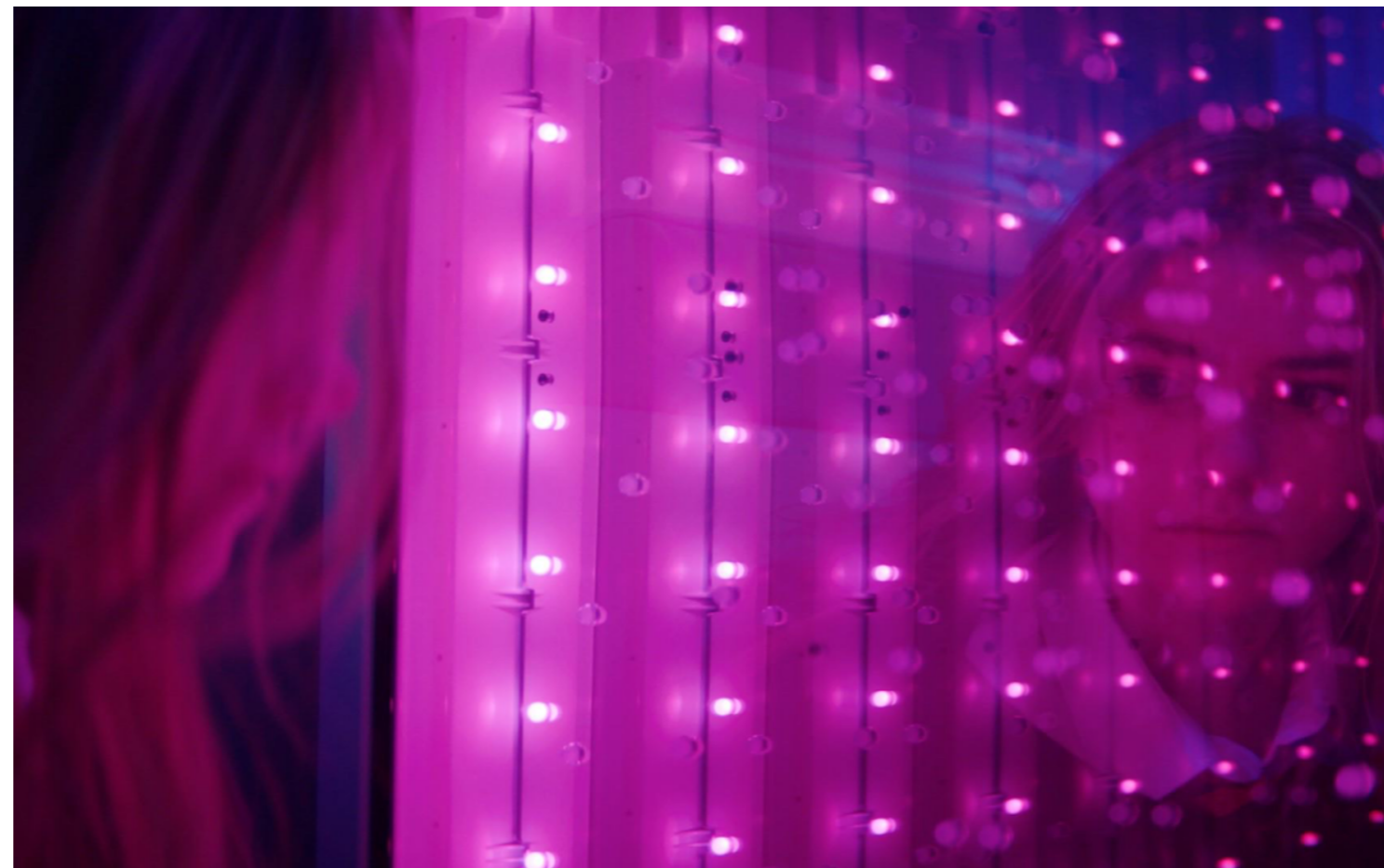
What happened?

As Vanish searched for a more meaningful way to differentiate itself in a crowded market, it identified people with autism as both a misrepresented and underrepresented group who rely on clothing to look and feel the same, wash after wash. Indeed, for 73% of autistic people clothing helps



to regulate their senses and navigate the world. It was the perfect brand fit. The insights did not stop there. Vanish discovered that girls are three times less likely to receive an autism diagnosis than boys. Here was an opportunity for Vanish to help address the gender gap in autism diagnoses by telling the stories of girls and their clothing.

Vanish partnered with the charity, Ambitious about Autism, to ensure its campaign was authentic. This was critical with 98% of autistic people stating that their lives would improve if people better understood autism. Research with the charity confirmed the initial findings that familiar constant clothing relieved anxiety. Respondents revealed insights such as, 'Whenever I'm anxious rubbing the textures of clothing helps me' and 'I have clothes I still wear when I was 21 and I'm now 31.'



This is a case that proves the benefit of our industry embracing neurodiversity.

The campaign launched during World Autism Acceptance Week to magnify the important role clothing can play in autistic lives. The hero film told the story of Ash, an autistic girl and the visceral importance of her hooded jumper to her wellbeing, casting her family and friends alongside her. The film was supported with stories from autistic girls and non-binary people across social, an exhibition on London's Southbank, a partnership with Christine McGuinness and a content series on YouTube. Vanish also partnered with retailer, Asda, to donate 25p per pack supporting Ambitious about Autism's charity.

Vanish was confident of its right to tell a brand story within the space of an important cause. The team seized the opportunity to drive social change by making the right call for their mainstream customers, for the autistic community and for the brand itself.

Results

Vanish's campaign was an overwhelming success, boosting awareness for the autistic community, enhancing Vanish's

brand and sparking significant conversations within Reckitt's internal business. It created momentum and conversations about autism across national tabloids, academic journals and disability websites. The morning after launch, the film went viral on TikTok gaining 5m+ views, 538k likes, 9.1k shares, 1650 comments and 66.2k saves. The campaign helped autistic girls feel seen and shifted awareness across the UK. The success of the campaign was also reflected in important internal changes. For the first time ever, Reckitt provided neurodiversity training to its line managers.

- 41% increase in traffic to charity website on autism diagnosis resources
- +3.5% sales revenue in Asda in terms of absolute units
- Highest Google searches for Vanish in the past five years
- 5m+ views TikTok, 538k likes
- +2000% increase in engagement on Vanish website's landing page
- +2% points increase of Vanish share of stain category during campaign.

Learnings:

- Make your work advocate the marketing industry's force for good
- Marketing for positive change should be reflected within your own organisation
- Consider your customers who are being misrepresented, misunderstood or overlooked. How can your brand help?

CHAPTER TWO ►

CHAMPION CUSTOMERS

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Accenture Song and The Marketing Society share a common vision: to inspire and connect world-class marketing talent. We believe that exceptional marketers have the power to transform organisations through customer-centricity and indeed have a more meaningful impact in the world.

Sohel Aziz, Regional Managing Director, UK, Ireland & Africa, Accenture Song

Accenture Song and The Marketing Society share a common vision: to inspire and connect world-class marketing talent. We believe that exceptional marketers have the power to transform organisations through customer-centricity and indeed have a more meaningful impact in the world.

If there is one thing throughout the ages that every single The Marketing Society award-winning brand has in common it is this: a forensic focus on and an active championing of customers. When great marketers ensure their organisations are designed around customers, marketing becomes the most powerful growth engine of their business.

Yet in an era of complexity and constant change, continuing to champion customers does not get any easier. 'A Life-Centric Approach to Growth' by Accenture Song reveals that marketers must also battle against a crisis of relevance. Over 70% of customers say that external factors are impacting their lives more than ever. Indeed, 60% say their priorities keep changing based on what is going on in the world. And a staggering 95% believe customers are changing faster than they can keep up.

Customer-facing companies have always been grounded in their relationships with customers, and those relationships are constantly changing. Customers are continuing to feel paralysed by choice and want brands to help them make decisions. Indeed, in the last quarter of 2023, 74% of

customers surveyed walked away from purchases simply because they felt overwhelmed. Despite a focus on customer-centricity and personalised experiences over the past few years, 71% of people see no improvement or an increase in the time and effort required to make a purchase decision.

Set against the backdrop of a world in flux following a global pandemic, both McDonald's and Guinness demonstrated commendable bravery in responding to the changing needs of their customers. Championing customers is often about pre-empting as well as responding to changing pressures and priorities to ensure brands remain relevant.

A perfect pour at yours – Guinness comes home

The winner of The Marketing Society's Innovation award, Guinness, is a pertinent example of a brand that understands the importance of championing customers, even if that might mean taking risks. The Guinness experience was intrinsically linked to pubs, with the iconic ritual of the long pour and the pint settling. With pub closures and more customers drinking at home, the brand needed to reconsider its position. Diageo was determined to deliver the same ritual to its customers at home in a simple and affordable way.

The answer came with Nitrosurge, a small handheld device which uses ultrasonic technology to deliver the same surge and settle to its cans so that drinkers could experience a pulled pub pint. Nitrosurge flew off the shelves, shattering



the myth that people do not buy beer online and that Guinness tastes different from the can. The concept of championing customers constituted the heart of the campaign as well, with the initial launch relying on 'show don't tell' and asking the Guinness community to create their own content to reveal Nitrosurge's effectiveness.

Some of the reasoning behind Nitrosurge's success was reflected in Accenture Song's research stating that, 'Technology that is human by design has tremendous potential to transform the buying experience — and people are increasingly open to it.' While Accenture Song was considering ways to make the purchasing process less painful for customers, the idea of harnessing technology that is human by design, and focused on improving the customer experience is precisely what Nitrosurge was able to achieve.

An eyebrow raising strategy at McDonald's

Similarly, the winner of The Marketing Society's Creative Strategy award, McDonald's, is another brilliant example of a brand that understands the importance of championing customers. In a significant shift in strategy, McDonald's invested deeply in ethnography to uncover some surprising and important customer insights that informed a new marketing approach. When the fast-food brand faced multiple challenges post-Covid to boost the sales of its restaurants whilst being mindful of looming advertising legislation, it knew that the sustainable, transformational solutions lay in the hands of customer insight.

Pressure emerged as a common theme for millions of people, especially post-Covid. Ethnography revealed that customers felt more intense emotions towards the brand at the moment they decided to visit. A bold shift in creative, that focused on a mischievous eyebrow raise, was also able to sidestep the legislative issue of using the product in advertising. McDonald's could have sat on its laurels, but the brand's determination to drive exceptional growth for its franchisees led to a deeper understanding of its customers and a futureproof advertising strategy that addressed legislative concerns. The fast-food retailer did not simply return to pre-Covid growth levels as intended but exceeded them with a growth rate of +10.6% by the end of 2023.

A lighter load

Accenture Song's research, 'A Life-Centric Approach to Growth', also emphasises the importance of viewing customers through a lens that sees people in the fullness of their lives. The award-winning examples of McDonald's and Guinness reveal the importance of developing a deep customer understanding to boost both the relevance and the resonance of our brands, products, and ideas. Championing customers is about making their lives easier by designing better products, improving the user experience with frictionless technology, and ultimately making them feel good. And what could be more important than that?

THE CRISIS OF RELEVANCE

72%

of customers say external factors are impacting their lives more than ever.

60%

say their priorities keep changing based on what is going on in the world.

95%

of B2C and B2B C-suite executives believe customers believe customers are changing faster than they can keep up.

Source: Accenture Song, A Life-centric approach to Growth

CHAMPION CUSTOMERS

FROM GIFT PURCHASE TO MASS MARKET SUCCESS

- ▶ +10.6% REVENUE GROWTH RATE BY END OF 2023
- ▶ £43.7M EARNED IN TOTAL INCREMENTAL REVENUE

CASE STUDY 3: PERFECT POUR AT YOURS CHANGING THE WAY WE DRINK AT HOME FROM GUINNESS AND DIAGEO

AWARD: INNOVATION

Guinness needed to dispel some potent myths when it launched Nitrosurge, a product innovation that enabled drinkers to enjoy a pint of their favourite black stuff from home. For decades, Guinness's marketing had centred around the iconic pour of the black and white draught pub pint. This unwavering commitment had led to market-leading success in the trade market, yet at a time when pubs were closing and people were increasingly drinking at home, Guinness needed to persuade its fans to take a chance with Nitrosurge. But would Guinness customers buy it? A bold digital-only launch saw Nitrosurge fly off the shelves shattering two myths in the process: that people do not buy beer online and that Guinness tastes differently from the can.

What happened?

Guinness was stuck between a rock and a hard place. As the number one beer brand in British pubs and the 13th beer brand at home, there was a disparity between its success. Guinness's iconic poured experience of its black and white pint in pubs had led to issues in the home market. However, Diageo was determined to deliver the same ritual to its customers at home with Nitrosurge, a small handheld device which uses ultrasonic technology to deliver the same surge

and settle to its cans as a pulled pub pint.

Post-Covid, Guinness was surging in popularity. After nearly three years of lockdown, people were craving the iconic ritual of a pub-poured Guinness and its sense of communion. This insight enforced the importance of recreating the same two-part pour ritual at home with 'Perfect Pour at Yours'. Working with digital content creators, Guinness asked fans to create their own Nitrosurge advertising. This was backed up with a large press campaign persuading customers to buy the device for £30.

An initial successful product launch in Tesco using disruptive point of sale (POS) started well but then sales slowed. Diageo realised that the initial flurry of sales was due to superfans. Guinness changed approach in the run up to Christmas, directing all marketing and sales to Amazon to tap into additional sales from the gifting market. This pivot into digital-only channels was a first for Guinness and also a challenge to traditional beliefs that people do not buy beer online. Guinness's bravery changed the way customers drink and placed a much-loved brand ritual into the hands and homes of its loyal customers.

Results

The Marketing Society Awards' judges commended an innovative approach to a much-loved brand. Guinness sold 500,000 cans in the first month of launch to become Amazon Europe's number one beer, wine and spirits brand, despite only being sold in the UK. Supermarket sales of Nitrosurge cans tripled following the move to online retail because so

'We saw this as an AND not an OR for our drinkers.'

many more people owned the product. Critically, over 90% of Guinness drinkers who tried Nitrosurge said it made them more likely to drink Guinness at home. And the number of drinkers who consumed Guinness both at home and in pubs increased by over one third.

- 73% shoppers bought the device on an online platform
- 79% buyers gifted the Nitrosurge device or bundle
- Supermarket sales of cans nearly tripled
- One third increase in Guinness drinkers at home and in bars
- 90% Guinness drinkers who tried Nitrosurge were more likely to drink Guinness at home
- 500,000 cans sold in the first month.

Learnings:

- Embrace digital
- Show don't tell by harnessing the power of fans and communities
- Be bold and embrace innovation, continually evaluate how to offer valuable brand experiences to your loyal



FROM STRICT LEGISLATION TO STRATEGIC INNOVATION

▶ **+10.6% REVENUE GROWTH RATE BY END OF 2023**
 ▶ **£43.7M EARNED IN TOTAL INCREMENTAL REVENUE**



**CASE STUDY 4: RAISE YOUR ARCHES
 AN EYEBROW RAISING STRATEGY FROM
 MCDONALD'S AND LEO BURNETT UK**

AWARD: CREATIVE STRATEGY

Following a successful brand turnaround in 2006 which re-established McDonald's position and delivered 15 years of unbroken growth, the restaurant business was once more at crisis point. The Covid-19 pandemic hit. Outlets closed, sales disappeared, and the race was on to make up lost ground. Alongside this business challenge, lay a brand health issue: love for the McDonald's brand was flatlining. Moreover, the spectre of future government legislation raised questions over the brand's existing creative strategy. McDonald's returned to its customers, using ethnography to delve deeply into their lives. A bold shift in creative, that focused on a mischievous eyebrow raise, resuscitated love for the brand, driving much-needed sales growth.

What happened?

With 80% of McDonald's run by franchisees, most of whom small business owners, the challenge of a pandemic was a bitter blow. Meanwhile, customer love for the brand was slowing at +1.2% from 2019-2021 compared to the previous +4.5% growth from 2011-2019. In June 2021, the government published their intention to ban advertising

showing high fat and high salt products (HFSS) on channels before 9pm as early as January 2023. This posed obvious problems for McDonald's advertising which had always featured its products. The brand needed to discover a new creative heartland that would capture the emotions of its customers without depending on its iconic food and drink.

A step change in customer research investment led to a year of ethnography. It became clear that McDonald's could play a vital role in people's lives as a pressure valve as a place where they could put aside their worries and just enjoy themselves. The subsequent 'Laughter' campaign tapped into this insight and offered a creative focus beyond food. However, this change in strategy was not yet delivering transformational growth. Four more months of ethnographic research revealed two critical insights. First, that customer's strongest emotional response to the brand happened at the moment of invitation rather than consumption. Second, that this rarely emerged as a spoken invitation but a subtle unspoken gesture.

It was all about the brows and 'Raise Your Arches' was born. The campaign was seeded with three tactics. Firstly, sparking interest with speculation that the brand was about to ditch its logo for 'golden eyebrows'. Secondly, the launch of a film as a disruptive Out-of-Home (OOH) campaign flooding streets in the UK with eyebrows and thirdly, a social campaign encouraging participation. Three subsequent TV advertising campaigns tapped into the UK's zeitgeist featuring post-Covid office life, the joys of the Bank

The UK's Raise Your Arches was adopted by 35 markets worldwide.

Holiday traffic jam and a Christmas advertisement acknowledging that festivities can feel overwhelming.

Results

McDonald's could have sat on its laurels but the brand's determination to drive exceptional growth for its franchisees led to a deeper understanding of its customers and a futureproof advertising strategy that addressed legislative concerns. The Marketing Society Awards' judges said this was a brilliant creative strategy in response to declining brand love and impending HFSS legislation. They commended its brave approach, rooted in research-led insight.

The fast-food retailer exceeded pre-Covid growth levels at +10.6% by the end of 2023. Indeed, McDonald's was able to make up 69% of the sales lost during the pandemic from

March 2020 to June 2021, offering a commercial lifeline to the 1,300 McDonald's franchisees across the UK. 30% of customers said the campaign made them feel good about the brand, nearly double that of the previous three 'Love' campaigns. Following the success of the British campaign, it was adopted by 35 countries worldwide, making it the most successful global campaign ever for McDonald's.

- +10.6% revenue growth rate by end of 2023
- £43.7m earned in total incremental revenue
- 84% brand linkage scores
- 30% customers said, 'It made me feel good about the brand'
- 1.2bn views of film worldwide
- 200m unique impressions during campaign.

Learnings:

- Be brave with creative strategies in turbulent times
- Ethnography can give brands a fresh perspective. Keep digging
- View legislation as a creative opportunity rather than a barrier.

CHAPTER THREE ►

PLAY THE LONG GAME

PLAY THE LONG GAME

Can you see a future where you are making a difference, achieving remarkable goals, creating real change, and leaving a legacy you are proud of? We need to surround ourselves with people who give us energy and cheer us on. And we need to be that person for others. *Syl Saller CBE, President of The Marketing Society, Executive Coach & Mentor*

It was Victorian poet, Lady Mary Montgomerie Currie, using the pen name Violet Fane who revived the ancient proverb 'Good things come to those who wait' in her poem 'Tout vient a qui sait attendre'. A century later, Guinness adopted the wisdom as its advertising slogan. But the idea of playing the long game is relevant to all brands, beyond the Diageo stable.

Amidst the myriads of short-term pressures and changes – political, financial, technological – the core truths of marketing remain the same. Experts including Les Binet and Peter Field have proven the importance of long-term brand building objectives, especially when short-term metrics can give marketers a false sense of security.

Yet holding onto these core, long-term truths can feel increasingly challenging. And it is getting harder. Accenture reveals that the only constant in today's world is that the pace of change is accelerating. Their research states that the rate of change affecting businesses has risen sharply since 2019 by 183% over the past four years and 33% in 2023 alone. Technology disruption increased the most in 2023, rising from number six in 2022 to become the primary cause of business change.

Bravo to those brands, marketers, and companies who, though adapting to change, are able to hold onto the beating heart of their business and the core truths of their brand DNA. Both Cadbury and the British Army leaned into environmental changes while harnessing the core truths of

their brand DNA, proving that often a founder's purpose that is rooted in history can resonate with today's customers.

The generosity of Cadbury founder rings true

The winner of The Marketing Society's Grand Prix and Brand Evolution award, Cadbury, is a brilliant example of a brand that understands the importance of playing the long game. When

the chocolate brand faced a downward spiral in 2017, a change in strategic direction inspired by the founder's original purpose transformed Cadbury's long-term fortunes. The Marketing Society Awards' judges commended Cadbury on an evolution that took them back to the original heart of the brand. VCCP delved into the brand's archives by focusing attention on the core brand, Dairy Milk, which was intentionally designed

back in 1905 to make chocolate accessible for everyone, and the purposeful behaviour of founder John Cadbury, who built Bournville to give his workers a better quality of life.

A strategic focus on one word, 'generosity', gave Cadbury the sweet spot it needed with a nod to the past that remained utterly relevant to its present and future. Activations including a Dairy Milk partnership that raised funds and awareness for loneliness with Help the Aged, while the Big Win-Win rewarded local corner shops as well as customers drove growth and recovery for the much-loved brand. It is notable that playing the long game requires brands to carefully balance long-term brand building activity with shorter-term focus on sales performance which is a balance clearly demonstrated by Cadbury.

British Army's traditional values chime with younger generation

Similarly, the British Army's successful recruitment campaign was the well-deserved winner of The Marketing Society's Not for Profit Marketing award and an excellent example of a brand that played the long game. The Marketing Society Awards' judges were convinced that marketing was the catalyst behind the Army's recruitment surge and commended the brand on its clear objectives.

Faced with research that showed that only 33% of 18-24-year-olds viewed the British Army as a source of pride, reflecting their complex relationship with British history and

institutions. Set against the backdrop of the Black Lives Matter movement and knowing 41% of young people believed they would fit into the military life; it would have been tempting for the British Army to rewrite everything it stood for in order to appeal to the next generation.

By focusing on finding the connections between a young audience and its timeless 300-year-old values, the British Army was able to buck the trend and boost recruitment, without changing what it stood for. The 'You Belong Here' campaign reached the sweet spot of appealing to younger audiences without having to alter the beating heart of the 300-year-old brand. Recruitment awareness was boosted to a four-year high following the campaign. It demonstrated an acute awareness that playing the long game is about a deep understanding of how a brand's core values can be timeless and chime with a modern, youthful audience.

Good things come to those who wait

Playing the long game will always be a struggle for marketers fighting to stay relevant to their customers in a world that is constantly changing. However, the core truths of marketing will remain the same. A steady eye on long-term brand building will drive long-term brand preference, long-term sales, revenue, and profit growth, and increase margins. In today's era of complexity, holding onto the compass of brand and customer truths while breathing life into ideas, products, brands, and strategies will ensure brands remain relevant.

CAUSES OF BUSINESS CHANGE RANKED 22/23		
2022		2023
TALENT	#1	TECHNOLOGY
ECONOMICS	#2	TALENT
GEOPOLITICS	#3	CLIMATE
CONSUMER & SOCIAL	#4	ECONOMICS
CLIMATE	#5	GEOPOLITICS
TECHNOLOGY	#6	CONSUMER & SOCIAL

Source: Reinvention by the Numbers, Accenture

**THE ONE CONSTANT?
THE PACE OF CHANGE IS ACCELERATING**

183%
increase in rate of change affecting business since 2019

33%
increase in rate of change affecting business since 2023

52%
of executives feel they are not fully prepared to respond to the change they will face

Source: Reinvention by the Numbers, Accenture

FINDING PURPOSE IN THE PAST

CASE STUDY 5: JUST ONE WORD MAKING CADBURY FEEL LIKE CADBURY AGAIN FROM CADBURY AND VCCP

AWARD: GRAND PRIX, BRAND EVOLUTION

Since its foundation in 1824, Cadbury has been an integral thread in the fabric of British society, notable for its presence in summer picnic baskets, Christmas stockings and morale boosting supplies for the British Army. However, by 2017 the chocolate brand had settled into a downward spiral. A change in strategic direction characterised by the single word 'generosity' transformed the brand's long-term fortunes.

What happened?

The British public was falling out of love with the chocolate brand. As one research respondent revealed, 'Cadbury doesn't feel like Cadbury anymore.' A combination of factors led to spiralling sales of the chocolate brand. Cadbury was 3% down compared to 2013, which was equivalent to more than £41m in annual sales.

There was not a single catalyst for Cadbury's declining fortunes but a number of issues. In 2010, Cadbury was the subject of a hostile takeover by US giant, Kraft, leading to a slew of negative headlines and concern that the British brand was being lost. This was compounded by a raft of Willy Wonky-esque extensions that were diluting the core brand, Dairy Milk. Moreover, Cadbury had failed to replicate the unprecedented creative success of the iconic Gorilla



Dairy Milk was intentionally designed back in 1905 to make chocolate accessible to everyone.

advertising campaign in a cluttered market and was indistinguishable from competitors like Mars, M&M's and Snickers.

Reviving the chocolate brand's fortunes could only happen if the brand recaptured the hearts of the British public, making Cadbury feel like Cadbury again. VCCP delved into

the brand's archives focusing attention on the core brand, Dairy Milk and the purposeful behaviour of founder John Cadbury, who founded the village Bournville to give his workers a better quality of life with well-built cottages and large gardens.

It soon became clear that the single word 'generosity' not only chimed with Cadbury's beginnings but also resonated with the needs of the British nation in 2017, who faced the shock and sadness of national tragedies including the Grenfell Tower fire and the Manchester bombing. It was important and timely to remind everyone of the fundamental human instinct of kindness in adversity.

Alongside an emotionally engaging advertising campaign featuring ordinary people using Dairy Milk as a means of being generous to one another, VCCP created a number of initiatives across digital and retail platforms to bring the new strategy to life. For example, while the Cadbury Worldwide Hide campaign enabled people to virtually hide an Easter egg for a loved one, the Cadbury Secret Santa campaign encouraged people to send chocolate secretly and at no cost via interactive post offices (OOH websites sent 120,000 bars across the country). Similarly, a campaign to tackle loneliness among the UK's 1.4m ageing population hit the shelves on Dairy Milk with a 30p donation to Age UK and a plea to donate time and conversation.

Generosity has become the touchstone for everything Cadbury does as a global brand, from Research and Development to internal award programmes, retail partnerships and more.

Results

Cadbury's new strategy exceeded its objectives, emotionally reconnecting customers with the British brand and growing sales in the process. British people feel more positive towards the brand, with an increase of 51% in willingness to recommend Cadbury to friends and family and a 46% increase of positive impression of the brand. Notably, a commercial target to grow annual sales by 9% over five years was exceeded. The Marketing Society Awards' judges commended Cadbury on an evolution that took them back to the original heart of the brand. A true demonstration of the power of playing the long game.

Annual value sales increased by 37% since pre-campaign levels in 2017 to £1.6bn, equivalent to an additional £437m per year

Three times more people say they are hearing something positive about Cadbury

- Named Britain's second most loved brand
- 19% increase in consideration in 2023 since 2017
- 27% increase in purchase intent in 2023 since 2017.

Learnings:

- Define your brand with simplicity, clarity, brevity and confidence
- Find one word that might help to galvanise your whole business
- Look to your brand's heritage for purpose and inspiration.

AUTHENTICALLY APPEALING TO YOUNG AUDIENCES

- ▶ 58% MORE APPLICATIONS TO THE ARMY THAN THE PREVIOUS YEAR
- ▶ 15% INCREASED AWARENESS AMONG 14-24-YEAR-OLDS

CASE STUDY 6: YOU BELONG HERE
BELONGING BRIDGES THE GAP FOR THE ARMY
FROM CAPITA X THE BRITISH ARMY AND
ACCENTURE SONG, ESSENCE MEDIACOM
AND OMNIGOV

AWARD: NOT FOR PROFIT MARKETING

For the last 300 years, the British Army had relied on recruiting enthusiastic, patriotic young people looking for camaraderie. Yet, it was becoming harder for the British Army to persuade young people to sign up. In 2023, at a time of increasing political instability, with rising potential threats from Russia and unrest in the Middle East, the Army needed 24% more regular soldier applications than the previous year. By focusing on finding the connections between a young audience and its timeless values, the British Army was able to buck the trend and boost recruitment, without changing what it stood for.

What happened?

The world had changed. Young people had less affinity to the British Army and a clear generational gap was emerging. Only 11% of 18-24-year-olds had a very favourable opinion of the Army compared to 34% of 65+ year olds. Press reports suggested that the Army was significantly downsizing, and 20% of 14-24-year-olds believed the Army was not actively recruiting. Moreover, at a time when young people are



bombarded with over 3000 daily advertisements, it was going to be difficult for the Army to demonstrate its relevance to this young audience.

Despite efforts to foster camaraderie through the successful recruitment platform 'This Is Belonging', only 41% of 14-24-year-olds felt they would personally fit in the Army. Ethnographic research revealed that this digital generation found belonging differently. It became clear that young people did not want to try to 'fit in', they wanted communities and careers that fit them and their values already.

To keep pace with young people, a shift was required. Digging further revealed a hidden commonality between the Army's long-standing values and those of a new generation – respect, fun, hard work and helpfulness – traditional values that appeal to a modern audience.

With this fresh understanding of belonging, 'You Belong Here' launched in September 2023, spotlighting the shared values through instincts across OOH, TV, audio, social, job boards, as well as across owned assets such as the Army Jobs website and Army Career Centres. The British Army also deepened relevance and connection through social platforms, focusing (for the first time) on Reddit communities with category takeovers in sports and gaming.

The campaign did not sugarcoat reality but offered a genuine glimpse into Army life. Using a first-person perspective, communications immersed the audience in Army scenarios like evacuations and natural disasters, tapping into their natural inclinations and proving their compatibility with Army life.

Results

The 'You Belong Here' campaign reached the sweet spot of appealing to younger audiences without having to alter the beating heart of the 300-year-old British Army. It demonstrated an acute awareness that playing the long game is about a deep understanding of how a brand's core values can be timeless and chime with a modern, youthful audience. It was able to communicate with young people without losing authenticity by finding common ground and recruitment awareness was boosted to a four-year high following the campaign.

- The campaign created 58% more applications to the Army than the previous year (April 2022-2023) and 45% more than 2021-22
- It led to 15% increased awareness among 14-24-year-olds
- It led to a 13% increase in 14-24-year-olds believing the 'Army is modern'
- Online website registrations increased by 90%, year on year.

Learnings:

- Your brand's core values should be timeless
- Stay authentic and true to what your brand really stands for
- Don't assume to know the audience, use research to truly understand them and find ways to build genuine and real relevance
- Never automatically presume that you need to modernise a brand for the sake of it.

A NOTE FROM THE 2024 CHAIR OF JUDGES



Syl Saller CBE, President of The Marketing Society, Executive Coach and Mentor

The Marketing Society Awards continue to shine a light on the best practice, achievements and significance of our industry. They inspire us all to strive for marketing excellence, year in, year out. The Marketing Transformation Report showcases great work alongside the other best practice papers from our awards.

What a wonderful experience it was to chair The Marketing Society Awards again this year. The quality of the entries was superb, making our job as judges even harder.

What moves me most about the Awards is knowing that each of these case studies reveals an inspiring story of the client and agency teams who were behind these successes. It is vitally important to recognise that none of this great work happens without brave people stepping up, challenging thinking, and pushing boundaries.

Our world is changing faster than we can imagine, and these challenges call for bold leadership. How we frame this uncertain future, whether personally or professionally, depends a lot on our mindset. If we think it will be hard and insurmountable, it will be. How different would it be if we acknowledge the challenge but see it as an opportunity to learn and grow in ways we could never have dreamed of?

Given the challenges we face across the world, I will quote Winston Churchill who said, 'The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees opportunity in every difficulty.'

What do you see?

Think about all the job interviews you've ever had. Is the question, 'Tell me about when it all went perfectly and you rode the wave,' or is it always, 'Tell me when you overcame a big challenge?' It is the harder times that are the making of us. So, take a moment to ask yourself: What is my mindset? Can you see a future where you are making a difference, achieving remarkable goals, creating real change and leaving a legacy you are proud of? And who is in that future with you? Who is helping you? None of us can do it alone. We need to surround ourselves with people who give us energy and cheer us on. And we need to be that person for others. The Marketing Society is here to be that support. But remember, the Society is its members. It is you who make it great. We know that together we can achieve more than alone. And that makes me hugely proud to be your President.

<https://awards.marketingsociety.com>

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