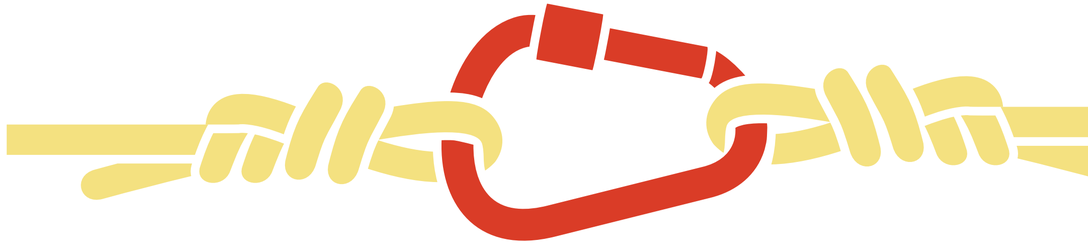
STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

A HIGH-LEVEL LOOK AT WHERE THE INDUSTRY STANDS TODAY AND WHERE IT'S HEADING NEXT.

Mitch Henderson | Director of Brand & Communication Strategy

INDUSTRY INSIDER summit



The consumer evolved.
But the marketing didn't.

CONSUMER SHIFT #1

Trust has collapsed upward and outward.

- Consumers no longer trust institutions. They trust peers, creators, and their own research.
- According to Nielsen, 92% of consumers trust recommendations from friends and family over any form of paid advertising.



CONSUMER SHIFT #2

The consideration phase got longer and weirder.

- The funnel didn't die. It's just non-linear.
- Before a purchase, the average consumer now touches a brand across 7 different interactions, and jumps between 3 or more platforms to do it."

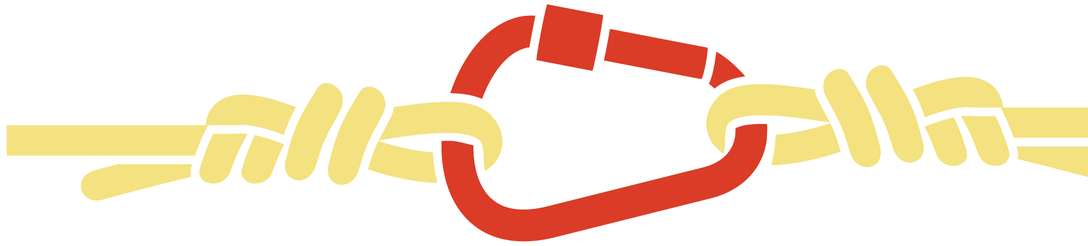


CONSUMER SHIFT #3

Consumers are hyper-aware of what's AI-generated vs. what's human.

- AI is incredible for increasing efficiency and automating busy work
- Be HUMAN when it really counts
- Marketing that denotes humanity becomes exceptionally desirable





Where Brands Are Getting It Wrong

The ROAS Doom Loop

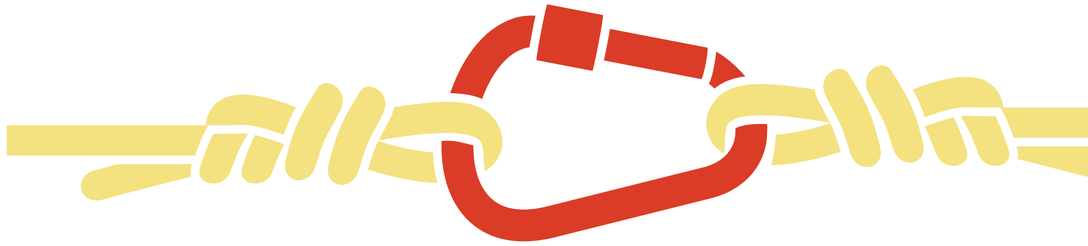
Over-indexing on performance media because it’s measurable. When the top of the funnel starves, brand equity quietly erodes, and customer acquisition costs keep climbing. You're not growing. You're harvesting.

The Content Volume Trap

Treating AI-enabled scale as strategy. Brands need to get smart about how they integrate AI into their marketing workflows. More content does not equal more resonance. If it’s not rooted in human truth, it likely won’t resonate.

The Safety Default

Every word approved by committee. Every idea sanded down until it offends no one—and moves no one. When a brand sounds like every other brand in the category, the market doesn't notice you're there. Safe is just a slower way to disappear.



The brands winning in 2026 don’t need to outspend everyone in the category.

But they do need to “out-understand” their customers.