



Stand Firm. Stay Fluid.

What does the year hold
for people, planet and purpose?





Welcome to the 2025 purpose trends

At Brandbuch, we help businesses find, say and live their purpose. Now, and in the future. This means we need to know everything that's going to influence companies, people and communities in the coming year. The business challenges, social movements, and geopolitical shifts.

So every year we forecast the trends set to define the next twelve months. From work and life expectations, to new uses of AI, to our evolving approach to sustainability. We show you what will dominate the headlines, so you can be ready to respond.

Whether you're a leader, communicator or conscious consumer, this report will help you stand firm and stay fluid in 2025.

Using this interactive report

Find your way around with the navigation at the top right corner of each page.

Stand out: the creative concept

This year we're exploring the essence of fluidity. Working with AI, we've generated a series of videos that bring this idea to life. From **transformation** to **creativity** to **reimagination**, these visuals embrace the dynamic and ever-evolving nature of fluidity, inviting us to rethink how it shapes our world and inspires new possibilities.

This report also represents our belief in collaborating, rather than competing. By teaming up with **Cocota Studio** from Madrid, we're showing what can happen when agencies join forces.

Both of our teams are led by incredible women with a shared vision: to create more respectful and equal work environments for everyone. And with AI providing new ways to be creative, this report is all about pushing boundaries and showing what's possible when we work together.



Collaborations and thanks

We want to thank all the clients, partners and experts who brought their unique perspectives to each of our trends.



“Purpose has become a punching bag.” WARC



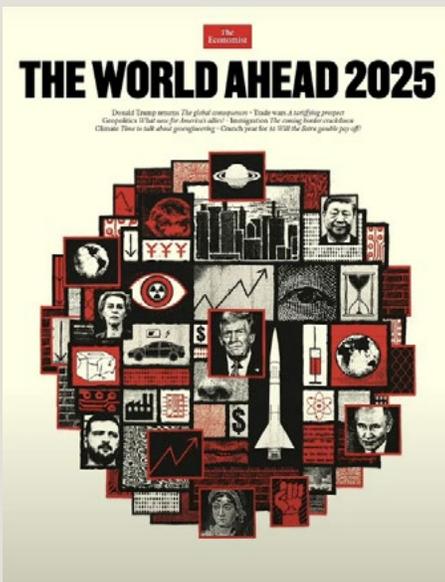
Purpose in motion

From perfection to pragmatism and optimism

It's 2025 and purpose is at a crossroads. For years, businesses have worked to define and live their purpose. But recently, this symbol of unity and clarity has faced waves of polarization, backlash, and in some cases, politicization.

While “purpose” remains a fundamental driver for growth and differentiation, if applied too rigidly, it could become a liability.

- DE&I programs are being rolled back in the U.S. The Federal Communications Commission will no longer prioritize DE&I initiatives, while backlash-wary brands like Target and Harley-Davidson are scaling back, and Florida and Texas have already passed laws targeting DE&I programs.
- Purpose is also slipping down the agenda for economically hard-hit people. As Thomas Kolster, author of *The Hero Trap*, observes, “We learned that **most people aren't really that concerned about the end of the world, but more about the end of the month. We need to get closer to everyday people's challenges.**”



Staying optimistic in the permacrisis

The world is in the middle of a “permacrisis” – a prolonged period of instability and insecurity. But while 70% of people globally believe the world is moving in the wrong direction, 69% refuse to let tough times hold them back ¹. Instead, they’re adapting.

Mark Sinnock, Global Strategy Officer at Havas, sums up this moment: “We’ve entered a new era of agency. People have realized that in order to survive in a permacrisis environment, they must adapt. Agency is the sense of control, resilience, and influence we all need to thrive.”

We live in a volatile world, with geopolitical tensions, cultural divides and economic challenges. The companies that will thrive are those that can stand firm in their core values, while remaining fluid in how they adapt and respond.



Simon Sinek says optimism is not the denial of reality.

Simon Sinek, leadership thinker and optimist, emphasizes this: **“Cultivating purpose and leading with optimism is how we navigate the future – because hope and resilience are what move people forward.”**

¹ The rise of the change makers, Havas’ 2024 MB™ report

The purpose shift

To keep their purposes relevant, companies are moving towards safer, practical issues like combating hunger, improving accessibility, and focusing on cost-savings and durability. This allows them to stand by their purpose, but flex it to focus on solutions that directly impact consumers' lives.

Over the last five years, we've seen purpose:

- **get defined in 2020**
- **go mainstream in 2021**
- **shape culture in 2022**
- **become polarized in 2023**
- **be redefined in 2024**

And in 2025, purpose will stand firm and stay fluid.

2020
Pioneering Purpose
(Definition)

2021
Mainstream Purpose
(Movement)

2022
Civilization of Purpose
(Culture)

2023
Polarization of Purpose
(Proof)

2024
New Dimensions of Purpose
(Expression)

2025
Stand Firm. Stay Fluid.
(Resilience)

“Fluidity allows us to link →
purpose with business
results. It shows how
even small, strategic
changes – within large
organizations – can
have significant ripple
effects.” Senior Leader at
a Fortune Global 500 FMCG
Company



Purpose will remain the why,
fluidity will shape the how.

Stand firm. Stay fluid.

An organization’s purpose isn’t a rulebook, it’s a compass. It provides direction in times of uncertainty, helping the company adapt, explore new opportunities, respond to emerging challenges, and grow organically.

A company that wants to navigate the challenges of 2025 will need to remain firm to their purpose. After all, it’s the reason they exist. But there also has to be some fluidity – a level of flexibility and innovation that helps the organization respond to a changing world.

It’s a dynamic balance. Companies that get it right will:

- Strengthen their position at a time when **geopolitical instability is the top concern for 60% of CEOs globally.**¹
- Avoid abstract promises and give consumers practical solutions aligned with their realities.
- Navigate cultural and societal divides while maintaining a clear and empathetic voice.
- Balance action with optimism.

In the current geopolitical climate, it’s likely that many companies will reduce their use of the word “purpose”. But purposeful principles, like sustainability, innovation, diversity, and social responsibility, will continue to drive meaningful business outcomes.

So while **purpose will remain the why, fluidity will shape the how.**

¹ Fortune/Deloitte CEO Survey, 2024



1.

The Social Redeal



A revolution reshaping personal
and collective purpose.

From dating burnout and declining birth rates to the pet parenting craze, the signs of a societal reset are everywhere. →

HUMANITY ON STRIKE?

In a world marked by loneliness, technological overload and declining trust, people are searching for purpose – questioning their roles, relationships and place in society.

- **Gen Z is committing to the #Boysober movement** by taking a break from all forms of dating and dating apps. And in France, 40.9% of people are single¹ – a number that continues to rise – reflecting generational shifts in relationships.
- **In the U.S., young men are more likely to live with their parents**, marking a reversal in gender independence trends.
- **Pets are filling an emotional void** left by delayed family planning, the rising cost of living and shifting priorities. By 2030, Chinese urban pet populations are expected to nearly double the number of children under four.²



In five years, China's urban pet population will nearly double the number of children under four.¹

1 INSEE, 2024

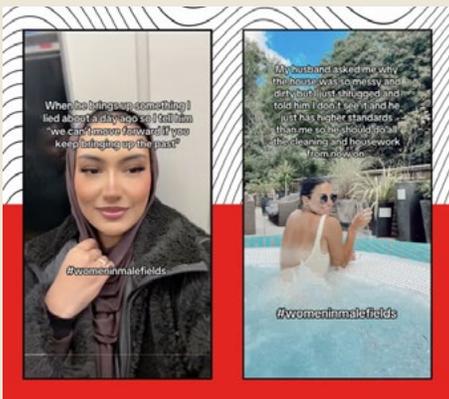
2 National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2024

THE PURPOSE PARADOX

Purpose, once rooted in collective goals, is now deeply personal. And this has sparked a paradox: as people drift apart, they're also searching for a sense of belonging through shared meaning and ideologies.



Korea's 4B Movement is gaining global traction.



TikTok is the key platform for cultural commentary on equality.

- **A feminist rebellion.** Movements like the 4B Movement in South Korea – rejecting relationships, marriage and child-rearing – are gaining global traction as a protest against gender inequality. Women in the U.S. embraced the movement after Trump's election win, celebrating autonomy and redefining freedom.
- **Radical actions.** Two members of FEMEN vandalized the iconic "Broken Chair" monument at the UN's European headquarters in Geneva. The monument is a symbol of the fight against landmines, and the group's actions were a protest against the UN allowing Russia to remain in the Security Council, despite its invasion of Ukraine.
- **Gender battles** are being played out through movements like #WomenInMaleFields and #MenInFemaleFields, where people challenge stereotypes with humor and role-reversal. TikTok has become a key platform for these cultural commentaries, sparking wider conversations on relational dynamics and equality.
- **Toxic masculinity** is now a national emergency in the UK, according to the National Police Chiefs' Council.

This paradoxical moment presents a clear question:

What does this mean for DE&I?

IS DE&I IN DECLINE?

As the role of purpose shifts, companies need to consider how they navigate societal divides. Where DE&I was once a unifying focus, it's now becoming a polarizing issue.

- **Polarization among regions.** In the US, Trump shutdown all DE&I programs within federal agencies. In the UK, 72% business leaders cite inclusion as a rising priority to meet employee expectations.¹
- **Polarization among organizations.** Meta drops DEI initiatives, while Amazon and Walmart scale them back vs Apple, Costco or JP Morgan defending DE&I.

This growing divide shows us that purpose can no longer rely on a one-size-fits-all approach. For companies, it's about adapting language and actions to local realities, staying true to core values, and finding a way to build connection and inclusion without alienation.



It's time to build connection without alienation.

¹ Marketing Inclusion, Teamspirit, 2024

3 new horizons of inclusion

Motherhood

This has become a socio-political flashpoint in the global DE&I conversation. While France enshrines the right to abortion in its constitution, the U.S. continues to experience legislative rollbacks on reproductive rights. Public figures like French President Emmanuel Macron, calling for “demographic rearmament”, and viral speculation around Elon Musk’s “babies without women” concept, highlight the politicization of parenthood.

Meanwhile, many brands are embracing parenthood:



Molly Baz on Special K packaging.

- **Special K** featured pregnant cookbook author Molly Baz on its packaging. A shift that shows how parental benefits and maternity leave are evolving from workplace policies to cultural statements.
- **Nestlé Italy launched Parents at First Steps** in collaboration with Unobravo, to support parents’ mental wellbeing and drive positive social impacts.
- During Paris 2024, **Pampers® sponsored the first-ever Olympic Village Nursery**, offering childcare support for competing athletes. This initiative highlighted the growing focus on parental inclusion and family-friendly policies on the global stage.



Pampers sponsored the first-ever Olympic Village Nursery.



Google's Super Bowl ad directed by and featuring blind filmmaker Adam Morse.

Accessibility

Inclusion for impaired individuals is evolving from symbolic gestures to mainstream innovation.

- **Google's Super Bowl ad for its Pixel smartphone**, directed by blind filmmaker Adam Morse, featured Guided Frame – tech that helps visually-impaired users take photos.
- **The FDA's approval of Apple's AirPods Pro** as hearing aids underscores how assistive technologies are reshaping inclusion through practical and impactful design.
- **Virgin Atlantic** became the only UK airline to offer British Sign Language (BSL) trained cabin crew.



“Accessibility is more than a necessity – it’s a catalyst for innovation, inclusion and market growth. At Procter & Gamble, we are starting to make the shower experience inclusive by introducing tactile symbols on our shampoo, conditioner and body wash. These seemingly small changes can help everyone live life barrier-free.”

Sumaira Latif, Company Accessibility Leader at Procter & Gamble

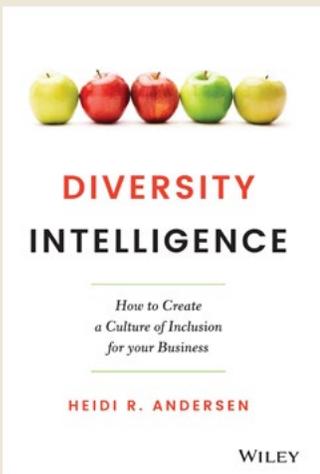
According to John Chambers, Cisco's former CEO, 25% of CEOs are dyslexic – although many don't want to talk about it.



Cognitive diversity

Right now, only 38% of companies provide meaningful support to neurodivergent employees.¹ But with so much “mediocrity of thought” holding businesses back, **companies are beginning to realize the benefits of cognitive diversity** – a term that covers a whole spectrum of neuro-diverse talents. In the quest for innovation, it can be a true asset.

- It's thought that around 1 in 7 people could be neurodivergent – meaning their brains function, learn and process information differently.
- One neurodivergent employee of software company SAP found a technical fix that saved the company an estimated \$40 million.



Nuuday is unlocking the cognitive diversity of its workforce.

Nuuday, a Danish telecommunications company, has made cognitive diversity a key lever in its strategic transformation. With onboarding and leadership training programs focused on fostering inclusive environments, the business is unlocking the cognitive diversity of its workforce.

¹ Druthers Search, 2024

Executive Leadership Community, Blend, sums it up perfectly: **“In today’s fast-paced business environment, adaptability is paramount. Cognitive diversity enables organizations to embrace change with confidence by providing a breadth of perspectives.”**



Cognitive diversity provides a breadth of perspectives.

Partner Spotlight:

Twofold

Setting neurodiversity as a powerful engine for growth.
The first agency of its kind.



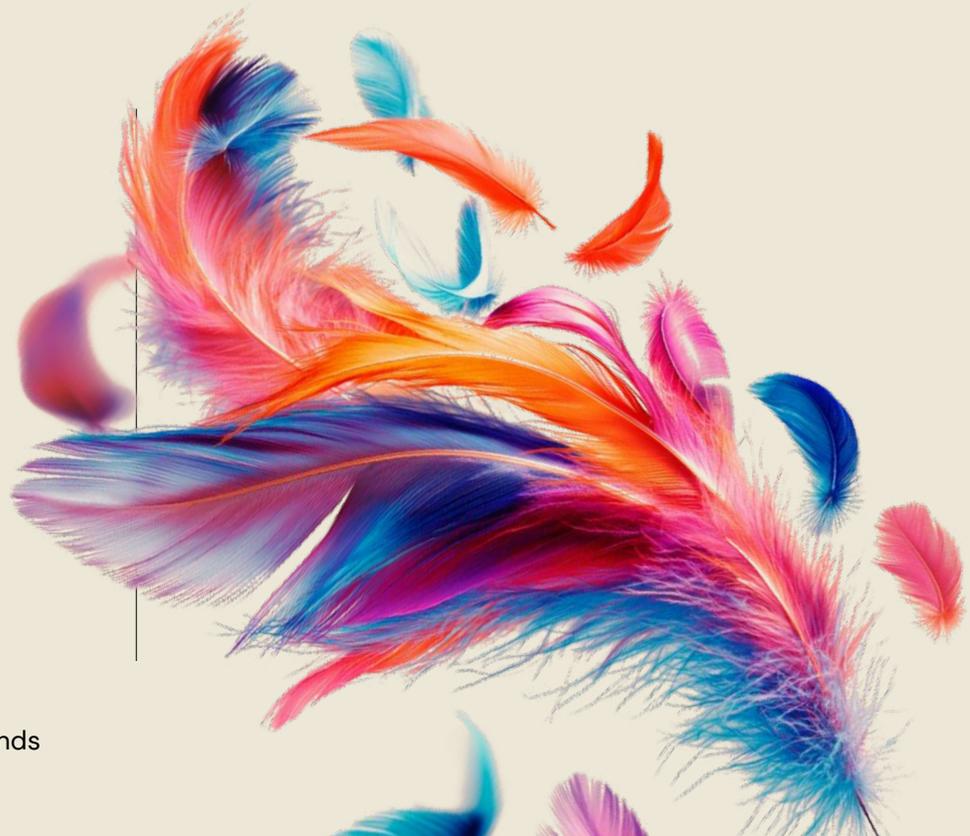
“By leveraging the unique abilities and insights of neurodiverse suppliers, you uncover new pathways for problem-solving and innovation that benefit your company.”

Noé Robert, CEO of Twofold

Conclusion:
Stand firm.
Stay fluid.

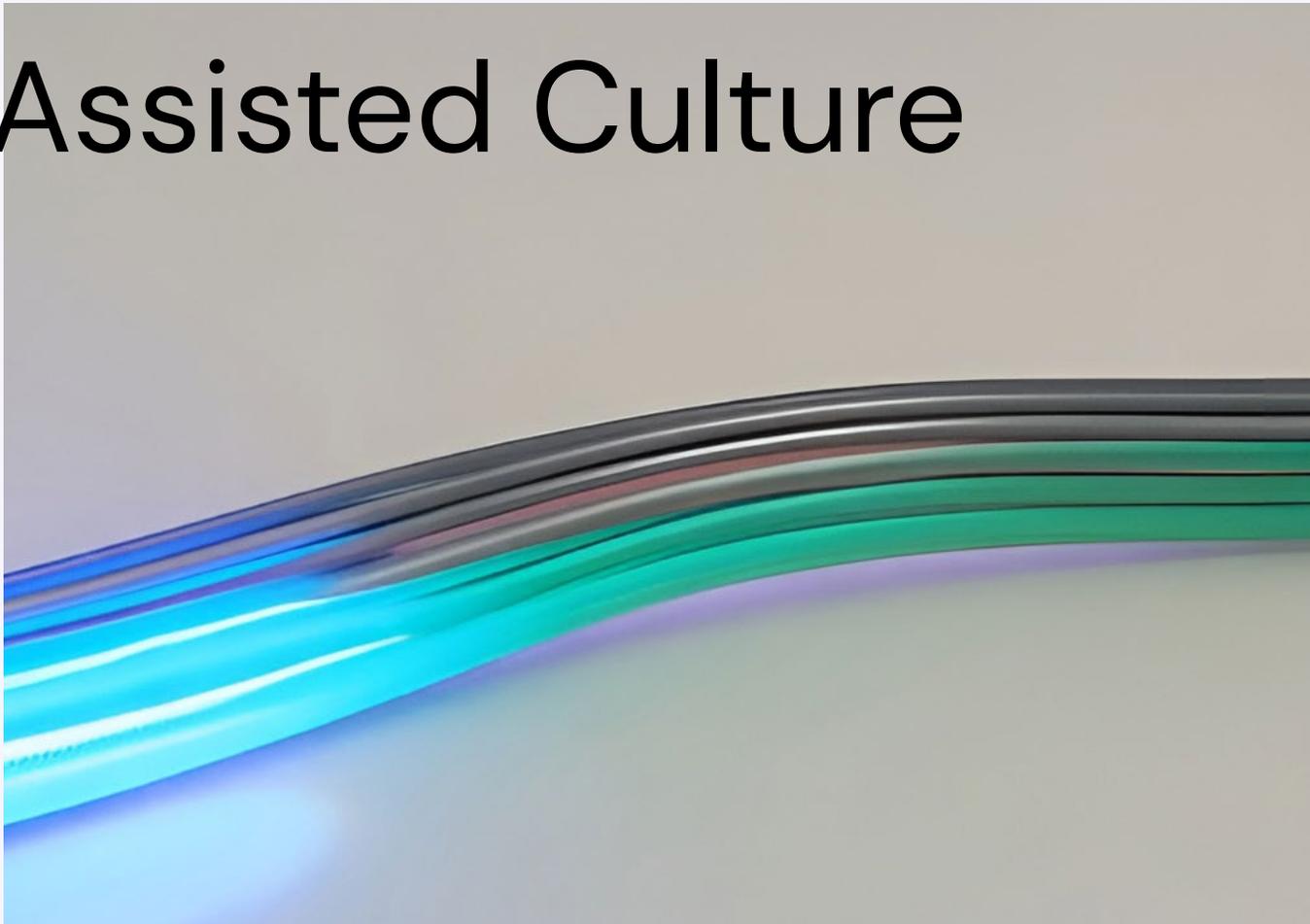
THE SOCIAL REDEAL IN 2025

- **Societal norms are being rewritten.** Whether it's loneliness, gender dynamics or shifting family priorities, we're figuring out what we stand for as a society. For organizations, this has cascaded down to the way they manage and empower employees.
- DE&I was meant to unite, but now it's dividing us more than ever. **How do we build new bridges?** We should start by standing firm by universal values, such as wellbeing or inclusion. And then stay fluid in the ways we express and communicate them, to better relate to different realities and audiences.
- It's time to reverse the narrative and connect companies' shared values with business results. By positioning the "culture of inclusion" as an enabler of growth, and **focusing on the impact rather than the initiatives**, we can unite and align shareholders, employees and the public.

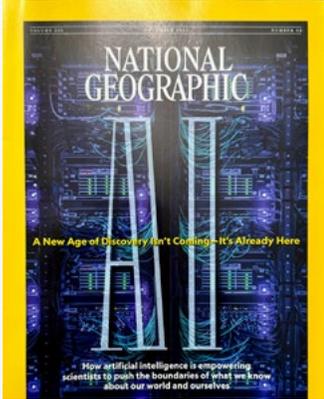


2.

AI-Assisted Culture



A new civilization or just
the next disruption?



ARE WE EXCITED OR ANXIOUS?

According to a report from Microsoft and LinkedIn in May, 2024 was the year that AI at work got “real”.

Artificial Intelligence is being heralded as the next great transformation. And just like the introduction of the internet, it’s set to shape our economies, workplaces and cultures. It should be **an exciting development, but it’s causing anxiety** – evoking fears of job displacement, creativity loss, and **even existential threats to humanity!**

- 3/10 companies replaced workers with AI in 2024 – and that’s set to rise to 4/10 in 2025. ¹
- The percentage of American consumers worried about AI has quadrupled between August 2023 and July 2024. ²
- 82% of consumers express a desire to learn more about AI. ³

Will AI liberate us to focus on higher pursuits? Or will it reduce human purpose to irrelevance? Daron Acemoglu, 2024 Nobel Laureate in Economics, addresses this duality: “If industry insiders or tech commentators in major newspapers are to be believed, the development of artificial general intelligence (AGI) – an AI technology capable of performing any human cognitive task – is imminent. But when you look at what’s happening in the real economy, there’s no disruption so far. As I’ve written [in Economic Policy], **don’t expect much more than 5% of human tasks to be replaced by AI in the next ten years.**”



Daron Acemoglu addresses the duality of possibility and real disruption.

¹ ResumeTemplates, 2024

² Reach3, 2024

³ WGSN at NRF, 2025

THE AGE OF AGENTIFICATION

AI is evolving beyond chatbots and image generators. It's becoming real in all sorts of ways.

- Tesla's humanoid robot, Optimus, grabbed headlines when it played rock-paper-scissors with Kim Kardashian, and Elon Musk claimed it could "babysit your kids".
- In the UK, Virgin Media O2 created an AI granny bot to waste phone scammers' time.
- Paul Drews, Managing Partner at Salesforce Ventures, says, **"Consumers should expect almost every major business they interact with to create an agent.** We'll see agents supporting customers in banking, insurance, healthcare and retail. By this time next year, agents will be a reality of our collective digital lives."



Virgin Media O2's granny bot wastes phone scammer's time.



Questions about autonomy, security and ethics intensify.

As humanoids edge closer to mainstream adoption, questions about autonomy, security and ethics intensify. Headlines like "Tiny robot kidnaps 12 big Chinese bots from a Shanghai showroom" are designed to conjure up both awe and apprehension. So how we view these advancements largely depends on how companies frame it. **Will they champion innovation? Or will they amplify fears?**

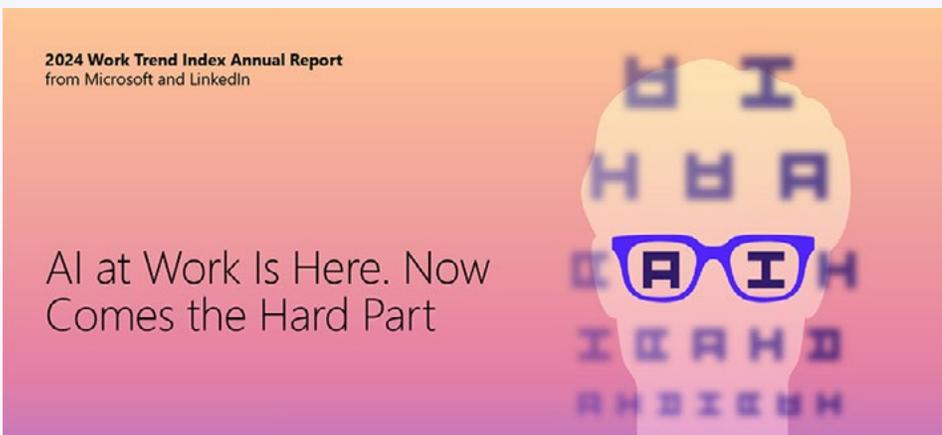
Unprepared leaders and
sceptic employees. →

A WORKFORCE RESET

AI adoption is no longer optional – it’s an urgent business transformation. According to a report from Microsoft and LinkedIn, **the use of generative AI among global knowledge workers nearly doubled in just six months.** Three-quarters are now using it, citing benefits like saved time and increased creativity. Yet many organizations aren’t as advanced:

- 60% of leaders feel unprepared to adopt AI effectively, while only 10% believe their organizations are fully ready.¹
- 70% report that managers fail to actively support AI adoption within teams.¹
- 44% of leaders are pushing for AI-driven upskilling, but training efforts fall short without communication and trust.²

This gap reflects a deeper issue – the need for reskilling, organizational agility and change-management. **Businesses need to reimagine workflows, redefine processes, and embed new technologies without losing sight of purpose.**



Microsoft says the use of generative AI nearly doubled in six months.

¹ Culture of AI Benchmark, Gallup, 2024

² Korn Ferry survey, 2023

Korn Ferry predicts that the global talent shortage could result in \$8.5 trillion in unrealized annual revenues by 2030.

But if companies invest in AI upskilling and reskilling, they can lessen this risk, improve productivity and efficiency, and enhance employee retention and job satisfaction.

For example, AI@Adobe cross-functional working group helps Adobe employees implement generative AI into workflows, educate them on the complex issues around generative AI, and help teams learn from each other.



Adobe pushes AI internally and externally.

Success depends on blending adaptability with authenticity – leveraging AI to enhance, not replace, human creativity, and designing cultures that prioritize purpose, flexibility, and connection.

ServiceNow's January 2025 TV ad "Connecting Corners" is a good example. Featuring Idris Elba, the ad positions ServiceNow as the only platform using AI agents to optimize every aspect of a business.

As Grace Yee, Senior Director of Ethical Innovation at Adobe, says, **"Companies that embrace ethical innovation will gain a competitive edge**, setting themselves apart in a market driven by trust and responsible AI practices."



ServiceNow wants people to work without the work-arounds.



Coca-Cola's ad had visual appeal but lacked emotional warmth.

AI'S PURPOSE AS A COMMUNICATOR

AI is challenging, or amplifying, centuries-old notions of originality and human ingenuity. Coca-Cola, widely credited with shaping modern Christmas imagery, faced backlash for its AI-generated campaign "The Holiday Magic is coming". Despite its visual appeal, it was criticized for lacking the emotional warmth and authenticity central to the brand's Christmas legacy.

At CES 2025, NielsenIQ presented its research into AI-generated ads. **Audiences perceived them as less engaging and more "boring" and "confusing" than traditional ads.** All sentiments that could create a negative halo effect on the brand.

Even AI-generated ads perceived as "high quality" elicited weaker memory activation in the brain when compared to traditional ads. A situation that could dampen consumers' motivation to act.

Over-reliance on AI can dilute cultural resonance and alienate audiences.



This struggle to align emotional and cultural nuances suggests that one of AI's key drawbacks is the lack of human depth. But this isn't always the case. In a 2024 study published in Scientific Reports, readers overwhelmingly preferred AI-generated poetry over classics by Shakespeare and Emily Dickinson. The AI creations, designed for accessibility, resonated more deeply with audiences.

"Our study reveals that consumers are quite sensitive to the authenticity of ad creatives, both at the implicit (nonconscious) and explicit (conscious) levels. Brands must prioritize insights-led creative evaluation to produce effective ads."

Ramon Melgarejo, President – BASES & Advanced Analytics, NielsenIQ

The key lies in balancing efficiency with authenticity to keep the whole experience human-centric.



Dove's Real Beauty Prompt Playbook.

Dove's 2024 campaign, "The Code", celebrated 20 years of "Real Beauty" while addressing the AI-generated perfection that pressures women and girls. The brand backed this with actionable steps, including the Real Beauty Prompt Playbook, empowering creators to make inclusive AI content.

Purposeful and fluid uses of AI, like the Dove campaign, can complement human insight and authenticity in industries where identity and trust are central.

Partner Spotlight:

Sermonis

Giving business superpowers with the help of AI.

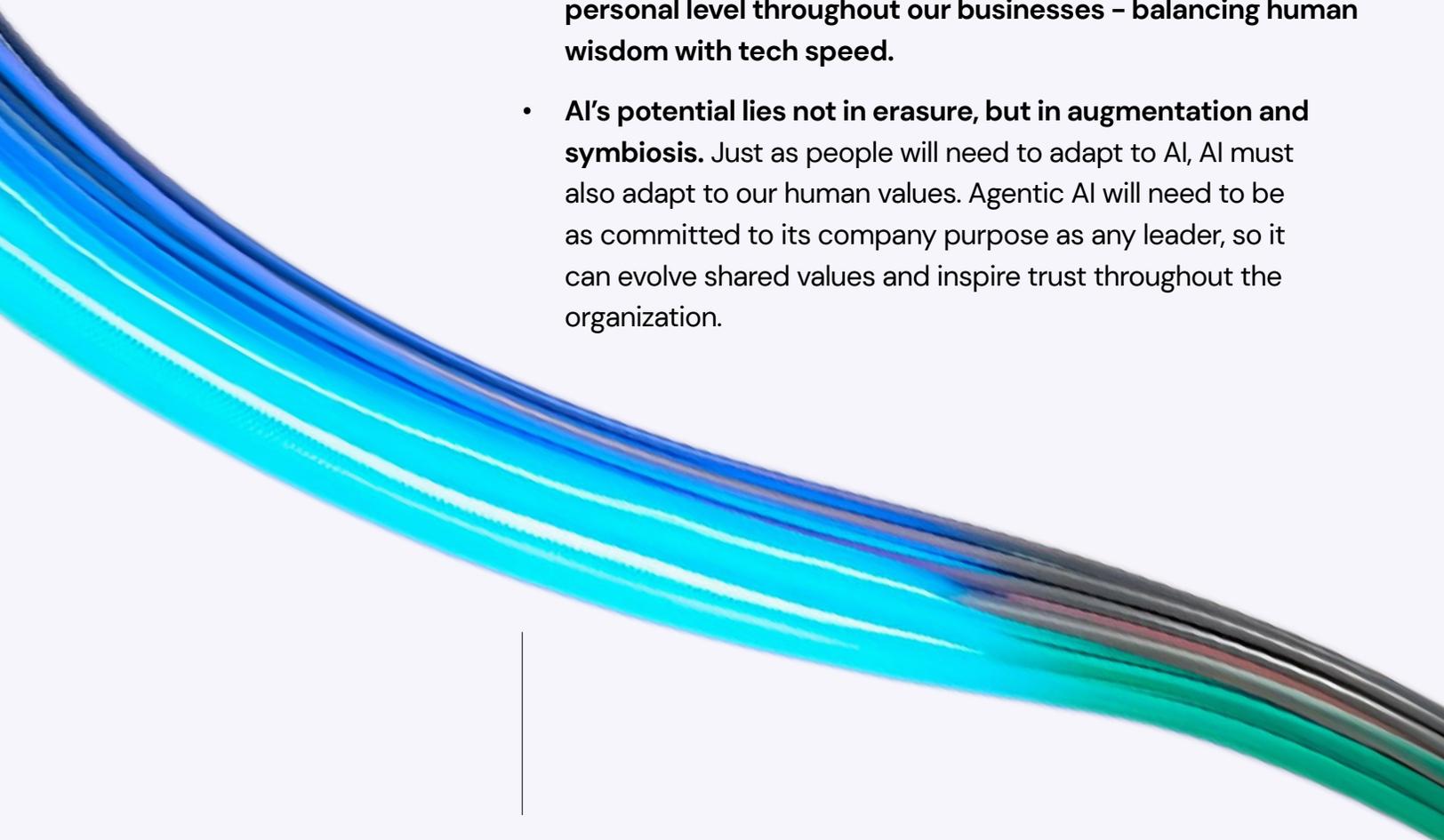


"In 2025, businesses will harness the power of AI to enable responsible innovation, leveraging AI agents to dynamically respond to changing priorities and values. By augmenting human capabilities with AI, companies will be able to navigate the complexities of a rapidly evolving world while remaining true to their core values and purpose, ultimately benefiting both people and the planet."

Ebenge Usip, CEO of Sermonis

Conclusion: Stand firm. Stay fluid.

AI-ASSISTED CULTURE IN 2025

- Standing firm doesn't mean resisting the change. It means remembering what we stand for, and **exploring how AI can enhance our values**. If we believe in collaboration, how can we use AI as the ultimate collaborator? If we believe in fairness, what's the ultimate challenge in global equality, and how can AI help us tackle it? These are the questions that should prompt our actions.
 - As we find a place for AI in our work and lives, we also redefine the role of the human. From AI-assisted customer service to AI-assisted leadership, we must **embrace and inspire fluidity at a personal level throughout our businesses - balancing human wisdom with tech speed**.
 - **AI's potential lies not in erasure, but in augmentation and symbiosis**. Just as people will need to adapt to AI, AI must also adapt to our human values. Agentic AI will need to be as committed to its company purpose as any leader, so it can evolve shared values and inspire trust throughout the organization.
- 

3.

Life-Work Harmony



Redefining the notions of careers,
hierarchies and organizations.

“A labor market that looks healthy in the headlines is, under the surface, weaker than it seems. It’s a much tougher slog for office jobs, where bosses are aiming to be leaner and in some cases replacing workers with AI.”

Wall Street Journal



WORK (REDEFINITION) IN PROGRESS

COVID-19 changed the context of work and exposed new rules and standards in the talent industry. Particularly in terms of finding a job, feeling secure, and getting the hybrid balance you want.

- The American economy added around 256,000 jobs in December, and the unemployment rate edged down to 4.1%. But finding a job is still hard, particularly for white-collar positions. **Over 1.6 million unemployed Americans have been searching for work for at least six months – up 50% since the end of 2022.**¹
- **Full-time work is particularly rare.** More than 4 million U.S. people are working part-time due to reduced hours or the inability to secure full-time positions.¹
- **Hybrid work is also vanishing** 83% of CEOs expect a full return to the office within three years –. and are offering pay increases and promotions as incentives.² At Boeing, UPS, Tesla and Amazon, employees are already required to be in the office 5 days a week.
- Spotify bucks this trend, stating that work is “what you do, not where you are.”



Spotify trusts its employees.

¹ U.S. Department of Labor, 2024

² KPMG 2024 CEO Outlook

An unprecedented and worldwide decline in employer trust, in 2025: especially in Germany (-7pts vs. 2024) and in the US (- 5 pts)¹



THE GREAT DETACHMENT

Employer trust has experienced an unprecedented decline, falling from 78% in 2024 to 75% in 2025 globally.¹ So it's no surprise that employee engagement in the U.S. dropped to 31% in 2024 – its lowest point in a decade.²

But with few opportunities in the job market, workers are choosing to stay with their current employer, while feeling stuck. For businesses, this means attrition may have slowed, but they're facing hidden organizational risks, including reduced productivity and future talent loss

- Only 4 in 10 U.S. employees feel respected at work.²
- **93% of employees value work-life balance as much as pay, and 60% say personal life matters more than work.**³

Motivations and ambitions are evolving. Work is no longer just about a career – it's about life. From big career dreams to big life projects, employees are prioritizing flexibility, purpose and wellbeing, challenging companies to deliver.

This signals a paradigm shift: **life-work balance is replacing work-life balance, with wellbeing taking precedence over everything.** It's only a slight change in mindset, but the impacts are significant.



Wellbeing takes precedence over everything.

¹ Edelman Trust Barometer, 2025

² Gallup, 2025

³ Randstad Workmonitor report, 2024

THE UNBOSSING MOVEMENT: MANAGEMENT UNDER RADAR

Being a manager, once a symbol of career success, is now a symbol of career danger. As people choose safety over money, no-promotion has become the new ambition.



Senior executives and middle managers are on the chopping block.

- **Managers oversee nearly three times as many people today as they did in 2017.** ¹ This has led to burnout, with 30% of employees reporting that their managers are too stressed to support them. ²
- Companies have collapsed their hierarchies with remarkable speed. **U.S. public companies have cut their middle-manager head counts by about 6%** since the peak of their pandemic hiring sprees. Senior executives, whose ranks have shrunk nearly 5% since the end of 2021, haven't fared much better. ³
- Amazon Chief Executive, Andy Jassy, is aiming to increase the ratio of workers to managers. Google CEO Sundar Pichai told staff this month that **the company had culled managerial roles by 10% in its cost-cutting drive.**

¹ Gartner

² LinkedIn Workforce Confidence Survey, 2024

³ Live Data Technologies

For Gen-Z, which now makes up nearly 20% of the U.S. labor force¹, leadership aspirations are shifting:

- **57% of Gen-Z workers are uninterested in becoming managers.**²
- 69% cite stress and low rewards as reasons to avoid middle management.³
- 72% prefer individual growth and skill accumulation over managerial roles.³

The priority of leadership has changed, from control to collaboration, so it's time to rethink leader and team dynamics. Businesses will need to find new ways to get the most from performance and purpose, shifting from traditional hierarchies to flexible, human-centered models.



Gen-Z workers prefer individual growth over becoming managers.

1 U.S. Department of Labor, 2024

2 Glassdoor, 2024

3 Robert Walters poll, 2024

Organizational Disruption

Those equipped with these traits will be an asset to adaptable, forward-thinking cultures, especially as AI reshapes workflows and hierarchies flatten.



From rigid hierarchies to fluid ecosystems

Traditional organizational models are becoming obsolete – and employees are looking for a new approach:

94% of C-suite leaders say their operating models put growth at risk, and 75% of leaders believe their structures will be unrecognizable within five years. ¹

In today's world, the ability to manage change is no longer optional. Resilience is the new currency, and employees will need these five skills to thrive:

- Emotional control
- Work engagement
- Positivity
- Stress management
- A sense of purpose ²

The “overlap trap”

Overlapping roles create inefficiencies and further undermine productivity. In fact, **poor structures are reducing efficiency by 22%.** ³

BMW Group is reorganizing and streamlining its design division. They've created a new cross-brand team to meet changing demands for future-oriented vehicle design. For example, Colour and Material Design will be consolidated across all brands, while the BMW brand team will be divided into two studios to focus on “Advanced Design”.



BMW is streamlining its design division.

¹ Accenture, 2024

² State of the Workforce Report, meQ, winter 2025

³ CIO, 2024



Flat hierarchies and co-elevation are key for agile companies.

The spectrum of self-management

Companies are streamlining management to boost efficiency. “That [means] much, much faster decision-making,” noted Citi CFO, Mark Mason. AI is accelerating this shift, with Gartner projecting **1 in 5 companies will flatten hierarchies and cut 50% of middle-management roles within two years. Aligning structure with strategy is now essential for agility.**

While TEAL models and holacracy require deep systemic organizational change, the emerging model of co-elevation is easier to work with.

This model is achieved through simple, targeted practices that turn culture change from an abstract goal into clear daily assignments. It’s an approach that makes sense within existing structures, empowering anyone to lead without formal authority.

“When teams adopt what I call **“Co-elevation” – a commitment among teammates to win together and push each other higher – they see dramatic results.** A 79% increase in candor, a 46% increase in collaboration, and a 44% increase in accountability. Yet only 15% of teams achieve this standard.” Keith Ferrazzi, author of *Never Lead Alone*.¹

The shift to co-elevation is gaining momentum across industries. →

In just six months, teams at IBM achieved what veterans said couldn’t be done: abandoning a forty-year sales divide between software and consulting to create a more effective go-to-market model. Similarly, companies like Dropbox, Guild Education, Cisco, and Salesforce are demonstrating how modern team behaviors, combined with collaborative tools, can drive breakthrough performance.

¹ Forbes, 2024



Employees are unimpressed by companies that don't engage with them authentically.

THE HARMONIOUS EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

As organizations strive to align business goals with revamped structures and cultures, conversations with employees are becoming more complex. Roughly 3 in 5 executives say employees are the hardest group to manage effectively – much more difficult than customers and investors. And they feel pressure from employees to engage on societal and political issues.¹

Employee Experience (EX) and the Employee Value Proposition (EVP) are key bridges between employees and the company purpose and culture – prioritizing wellbeing, experience, and therefore harmony.

In October 2024, Forbes asked, “Is it time to move from ‘HR’ to ‘employee experience’?” The renaming of HR roles signals this evolution and the broader strategic role of HR leaders. We’re seeing an increase in Chief Employee Experience Officers, Chief People Officers, and even Chief Health Officers.

¹ Axios x Gravity Research, 2024

GIVING COLLEAGUES THE MOST FROM THEIR JOURNEY

The EVP also seems to be an underestimated asset. Only 22% of organizations have one, but when they do, employees are 23% more likely to report a feeling of purpose in their day-to-day work, and the organization is 18% more likely to report higher overall organizational performance. ¹

“What’s easy? What’s hard to do? How do you access certain things quickly and seamlessly so you know where to go for what? We had a lot of work to do, end-to-end, on the experience. Just like we would on a customer journey, we looked at our colleague journeys as well”

Monique Herena, Chief Colleague Experience Officer at American Express



The EVP is key for employee attraction and retention.

So what are organizations doing to better connect their employee experience, company culture and business performance?

- 97% of Chief Human Resources Officers want to change some aspect of their culture to aid employee attraction and retention, and meet business goals. ²

¹ McLean report, 2024

² Top 5 priorities for HR leaders in 2025, Gartner, 2024

“There’s a reason we also don’t call it HR, it’s not human resources.”

Dave Stephenson, Chief Business Officer, Airbnb

- In 2015, Airbnb changed the title of its Chief Human Resources Officer to Chief Employee Experience Officer. And in 2024, the company’s Chief Finance Officer became its first Chief Business Officer, while still carrying on with his employee experience role.

Dave Stephenson, Chief Business Officer at Airbnb says, **“Human resources can be at times, in some places, a support function instead of an enablement function.** I am desirous to make sure that it is truly an enabler for driving the business, not just a catch-all for some administrative tasks. The CFO role is thinking about: Where do you invest? Where do you invest people? Where do you invest dollars? And EX is similar: How do you invest in the capabilities you have in the company? Now, I’m **pulling it even further into driving the business.”**

Partner Spotlight:

HireGains

We help uncover and unleash the potential and capability of employees by understanding the interplay between role and environment, both at a team and organization-wide level.



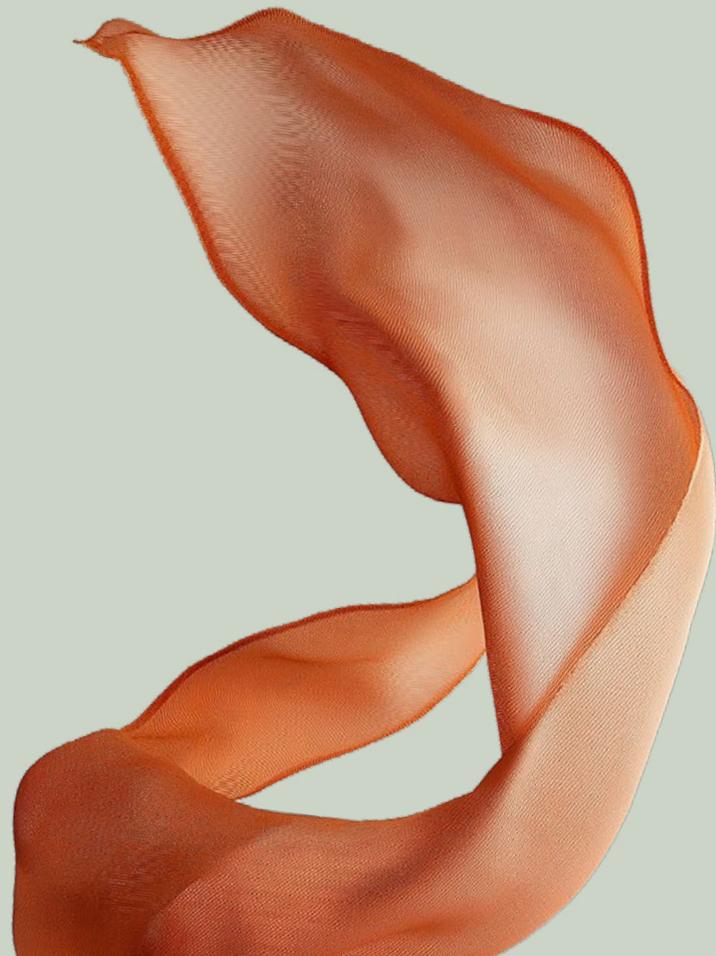
“People want to bring their full selves into the workplace, and find purpose through contribution and connection. For businesses, this means fostering environments where purpose, connection, and authenticity thrive—or risk disengagement and talent loss.”

Tessa James, CEO of HireGains

**Conclusion:
Stand firm.
Stay fluid.**

LIFE-WORK HARMONY IN 2025

- The **shift from work-life balance to life-work harmony** reflects deeper societal changes. Employees are demanding more stability, safety and independence, while organizations need to embrace change, risk and a new leadership paradigm.
- The modern workforce no longer fits into the old boxes – and neither should businesses. From flattening hierarchies to investing in co-elevation, many **organizations are finding new ways to bridge the expectations gap.**
- **Businesses that thrive will balance resilience with innovation, autonomy with collaboration, and structure with adaptability – proving that we can harmonize life and work for mutual growth.**



4.

Rewilding the Rules



From climate fatigue and green-hushing to nature-fostering.

“Climate change will manifest as a series of disasters viewed through phones with footage that gets closer and closer to where you live until you’re the one filming it.”

@PerthshireMags on Threads



CLIMATE CARELESSNESS OR A TURNING POINT?

Environmental concerns are no longer the unifying force they once were. In fact we’re seeing a concerning lack of preparation for devastating events, whether it’s insufficient flood prevention in Valencia, or reducing the number of firefighters in Los Angeles.

Climate skepticism is on the rise, and public concern is waning as disasters become increasingly banal, fading into the backdrop of our everyday lives. It’s only during the events that any concern seems to be raised.

- **Only 29%** of people in France say they are very concerned, down from 35% in 2022.
- **30%** of people in the U.S. claim they are indifferent, and political leaders are downplaying the role of climate change in the LA environmental catastrophe.
- **Just 40%** of people globally remain highly concerned, with stark contrasts between countries – 44% in the US deny climate change, while fewer than 25% in Brazil, Mexico, and Turkey share this outlook.¹



¹ EDF, 2024

LESS WORDS, MORE ACTIONS AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Unlike DE&I, sustainability initiatives show no sign of slowing.

- **80% of executives say they plan to maintain or increase sustainability investments under a Trump administration.**¹
- Green hushing² is now the new normal. It offers companies under scrutiny an opportunity to rebuild trust, and makes it less likely their actions will be seen as greenwashing. In fact, **the risk of greenwashing fell 12% globally in 2024**, the first drop in six years³. This shift reflects a broader pragmatic and balanced approach to sustainability.
- **LVMH launched the LIFE Academy**, committing to train 100% of its employees in sustainability by 2026, so they can address challenges like resource preservation, biodiversity, and climate change. Doubling hours year-over-year, the academy hosts immersive biodiversity workshops to translate goals into measurable outcomes.
- According to Harvard Business Review, **adopting a nondisruptive approach transforms environmental efforts from an obligation into drivers of profitable growth** – breaking the perceived tradeoff between economic returns and ecological responsibility. In fact, corporate giants see \$5 trillion in opportunities from climate action.⁴



LVMH's LIFE Academy aims to translate goals into measurable outcomes.

Instead of treating sustainability as an economic burden or disruptive challenge, companies can view it as an opportunity for innovation and impact, achieving positive-sum outcomes for business, industry, and society.

¹ PWC, 2024

² Withholding information on climate strategy to protect a company's reputation

³ RepRisk, 2024

⁴ CDP, 2024

“When it comes to responsibility, we believe in progress over perfection. We commit to making better choices every day to become the most responsible version of ourselves.” Ganni



REVERSING THE NARRATIVES OF SUSTAINABILITY

Companies and NGOs are reversing the sustainability messaging – moving from over-ambitious positive claims about saving the planet, to facing and fighting realities.

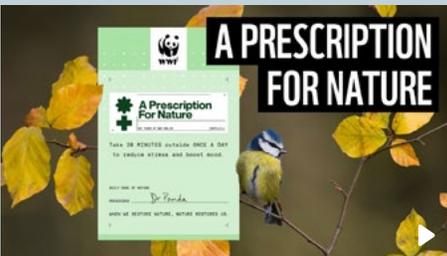
- **Danish circular fashion brand Ganni** claims it’s “not a sustainable brand” on Instagram. Instead, it’s transparent about its struggles and progress. Even if the brand does better than many other ones, it sets up higher ambitions and goals, proving a real commitment to its purpose.
- **Médecins du Monde’s** campaign in France uses the slogan, “Together, let’s fight the environment.” It turns “environment” on its head – using the word to mean the consequence of human behaviors, rather than anything to do with nature. And rather than asking people to preserve it, the call to action is more engaging; a challenge to clean up pollution rather than simply endure it.

FRAMING A NEW STORY WITH NATURE

We've entered an age of ecology where **emotions outweigh reason, shifting the focus from planet to nature**, and turning prevention into an engaging, immersive experience. So rather than focusing solely on saving the planet, brands and NGOs are embracing emotional reconnections with nature.



Björk uses AI to create extinct animal sounds.



"A Prescription for Nature" promotes nature as a mood-booster.

- **Björk's latest masterpiece, "Natural Manifesto"**, is an immersive sound installation set around the iconic escalators of the Centre Pompidou in Paris. Using AI to recreate extinct animal sounds, it's a reminder to visitors of nature's lost voices, and a call to action to preserve what we still have.
- During the **International Botanical Congress in Madrid**, more than 100 researchers voted to remove racist references from over 200 plant names. Among the changes, all plant names that contain the word "caffra" (a historic slur against Black people) are replaced with "affra" to reflect their African origins. This shows how cultural values are evolving – and how **biodiversity is becoming part of the inclusion agenda**.
- With its **"A Prescription for Nature" campaign**, WWF presented a win-win approach that links individual wellbeing to environmental preservation. It promotes daily "doses" of nature as a mood-booster and stress-reducer, and provides an online hub of practical tips to ensure accessibility for all.

This shift toward multi-sensory storytelling reflects a more experiential way to preserve nature and protect the planet.

SOIL, THE ROOT OF NEOHUMANISM

Sustainability is also becoming rooted in deeper values. Philosopher Gaspard Koenig reminds us that **the word “human” comes from “humus”** or soil. Caring for soil health becomes an act of preserving our shared humanity.



Soil regeneration links science and real-world practices.

- **The World Living Soils Forum, co-organized by Moët Hennessy, champions regenerative agriculture.** Bringing together scientists, farmers and industry leaders, it promotes concrete actions for soil regeneration, linking science and real-world practices, metrics and methodologies to measure impact.
- Through **COP16 and the Cali Fund**, companies must now compensate for using genetic biodiversity data, directing funds to conservation and indigenous communities.

Soil regeneration is reframing sustainability not just as environmental protection, but as a return to roots – human, cultural, and ecological.

Partner Spotlight:

Kenza Feld Consulting

Shaping mission and impact with authenticity.



“Brands are moving from corporate to experiential sustainability: it’s more than protecting the planet, it’s about reconnecting with it. Brands that root their strategies in a deep connection to nature, and encourage employees and clients to engage with it firsthand, create lasting impact. By cultivating this emotional bond, they inspire meaningful actions to preserve our natural world.”

Kenza Feld, Founder and Social Impact Sr Consultant of Kenza Feld Consulting

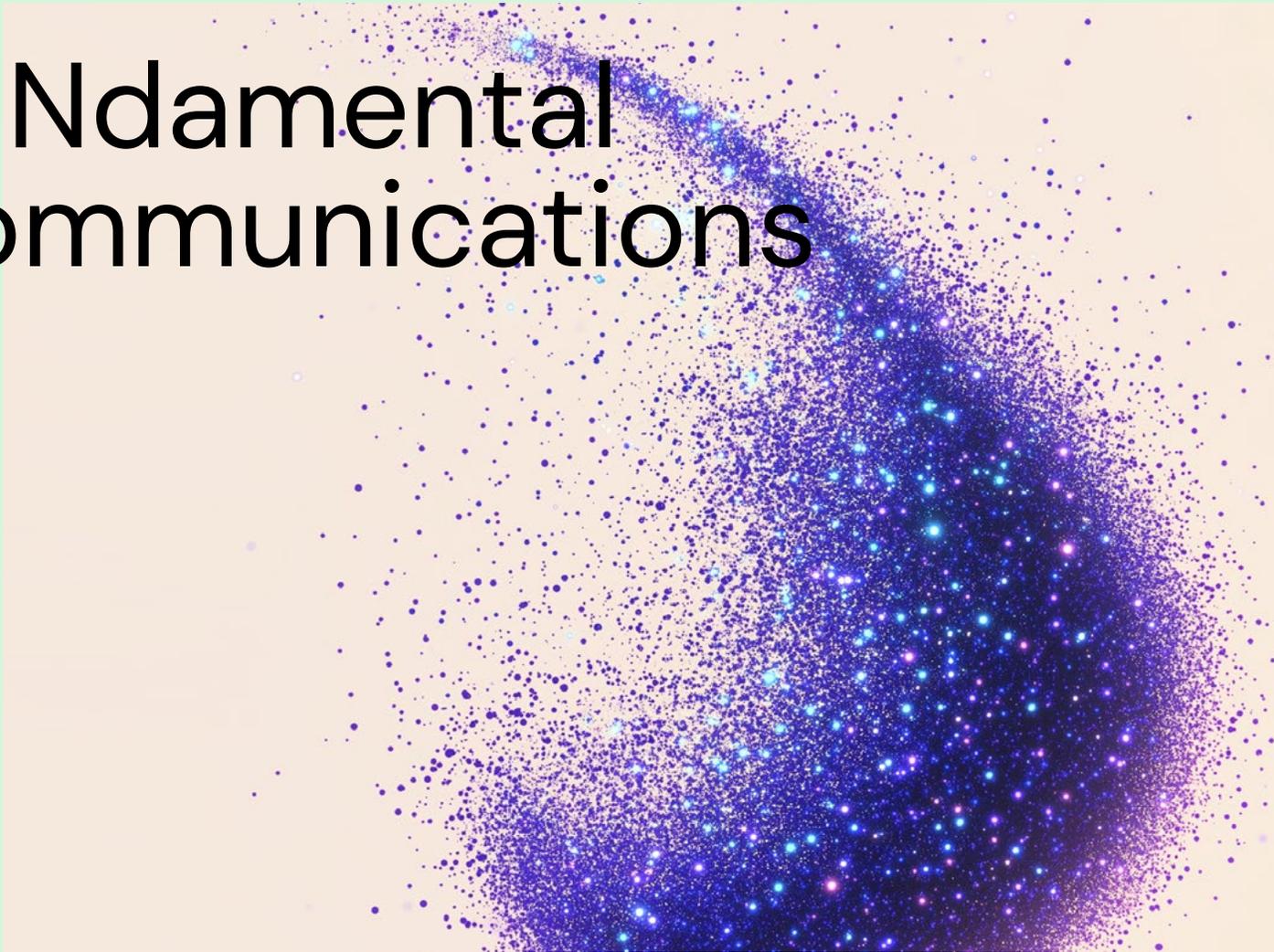
Conclusion:
Stand firm.
Stay fluid.

REWILDING THE RULES IN 2025

- **Sustainability is shifting from perfectionism to pragmatism**, and from selling big ideas to having an honest and down-to-earth attitude.
- We're embracing "nature-fostering" – a connection with nature that helps us stay grounded and motivates us to **raise a different kind of awareness and involvement**.
- While we're all having to face the realities of climate change, skepticism is rising – and soon it will be too late to take action. Rewilding the rules is about **shifting from sustainability as an obligation to an opportunity** – blending purpose with fluidity. By rooting strategies in nature and nurturing cultural and emotional connections, businesses can stand firm in their values while remaining agile and innovative.

5.

FUNdamental Communications



Bringing joy to purpose, awareness
and engagement.

THE RISE AND INFLUENCE OF CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

94% of executives report difficulties in building trust with stakeholders¹ and 71% of employees feel dissatisfied with internal communications.² But things are changing.

Corporate communications is moving from a support function to a strategic partner, with communicators now having more influence on boardroom decisions:

- 83% of Chief Communications Officers (CCOs) report an expanded role in the C-suite.³
- The CCO+ role (the expanding role of the CCO) has risen 88% since 2019, and now outnumbers traditional CCO roles for the first time.⁴
- **56% of communications teams now report directly to the CEO, a significant jump of 34% in just one year.**⁵



Corporate communications is gaining relevance in the C-suite.

1 PwC Trust Survey, 2024

2 Staffbase & USC Employee Communication Impact Study, 2024

3 Gartner Survey

4 Observatory on Corporate Reputation

5 Memo, 2024

“Brain rot” is the Oxford Word of the Year 2024

Defined as deterioration of a person’s mental or intellectual state, especially as a result of consuming too much online content that’s considered trivial or unchallenging.



TikTok users are waiting for new episodes to drop.

THE CRISIS OF DISTINCTIVENESS

Attention became the ultimate commodity. When we have up to 10,000 advertisements a day competing for our attention¹, it’s no surprise that brands are struggling to emerge and differentiate themselves:

- **The “age of average”** poses fresh challenges for brands and companies that want to stand out. Especially when 65% of brand assets fail to establish clear associations with the companies that pay for them.²
- **85% of ads fail to reach the 2.5-second attention memory threshold.** This essentially represents wasted spend – with ads often being misattributed to competitors.³
- **50% of UK ads** underperform a simple video of a cow chewing grass, demonstrating how uninspiring ads fail to evoke emotion or drive recall.⁴

To counteract this crisis, communicators need to bring renewed creativity and entertainment to their strategies, shifting focus from forgettable content to campaigns that truly connect.

“Mohawk Goes To Corporate”

General Motors CEO, Mary Barra, made an unexpected appearance in a mockumentary-style series inspired by *The Office*, created by Mohawk Chevrolet. The series cleverly integrates comedic storytelling to highlight workplace culture and connect with audiences on a personal level.

1 The Attention Economy, Forbes, 2024

2 IPSOS and JKR

3 Amplified Intelligence

4 System1

CONTROVERSY (OR INVISIBILITY) AS CURRENCY?

In an era where distinctiveness is crucial, some brands are turning to bold, polarizing campaigns to spark attention.



Jaguar is embracing criticism as a catalyst for attention.

- **The Jaguar rebrand showed boldness and energy, but not without controversy.** Centered on “Exuberant Modernism” and aiming to “Copy Nothing”, the brand’s transformation began in a video campaign, and continued with the dramatic Type OO concept car at Miami Art Week. As CNN reported, “While the Type OO is a concept and will therefore never enter production, it has divided opinion online.” By embracing criticism as a catalyst for attention, Jaguar has positioned itself as a daring and distinctive force in luxury automotive design.
- At the other end of the spectrum, French meditation and mindfulness app **Petit Bambou began 2025 with a refreshingly quiet and understated campaign.** With no logo or flashy visuals, and a trompe-l’oeil background to give the ad the illusion of invisibility, the campaign invited us to pause, breathe, and enjoy a moment of silence. This helped the ads stand out, and smartly gave viewers a taste of the experience the app offers.



Petit Bambou’s quiet campaign is a window into what their app offers.



PURPOSE WITHOUT PREACHING

Today's audiences are fatigued by overly serious or moralistic messaging. In reaction to this, humor and levity are emerging as powerful tools to connect without dividing. **90% of consumers say humor makes ads more memorable, and 72% cite humor as a reason to choose one brand over another.**¹

So brands are finding creative ways to align purpose with entertainment:



BarkAir put its CEO in the cargo hold.



The State of Colorado is tackling male mental health stigma with humor.

- **BarkAir is “the world’s first air travel experience designed specifically for dogs first, from the ground up.”** The company perfectly blended humor with a powerful message when they created a video of their CEO in a dog crate, experiencing a typical cargo hold flight.
- **The State of Colorado’s Man Therapy campaign** tackled male mental health stigma with humor, featuring Dr. Rich Mahogany, a fictional therapist. In a bold ad, Mahogany takes a mental health test at a shooting range, firing bullets at answers instead of responding normally.

“By 2027, the concept of play will evolve into a strategic pillar of well-being. Businesses must embrace play as a mindset for creating change.” Cassandra Napoli of WGSN, at NRF 2025: Retail’s Big Show

¹ Oracle, 2024

HEAVY TOPICS, LIGHTHEARTED COMMS.

“Levity and laughter can address serious issues like mental health or sustainability without alienating diverse audiences.”¹

As audiences demand more authenticity and creativity, the role of the communicator has expanded **to blend purpose with entertainment:**

- **e.l.f. Cosmetic’s “Dupe That!” campaign** exemplifies this shift, spotlighting its FY 2024 Impact Report with a playful yet purposeful video. By inviting competitors to dupe their corporate practices, the campaign turns the serious topics into fun and engaging narratives.



e.l.f. Cosmetics challenges competitors to dupe them and join the unicorn parade.

And could comedy even help to solve the climate crisis?

“As heat records continue to shatter, the World Economic Forum and other climate-focused organizations are seeking ways to use humour to help engage people. A number of promising efforts are underway to apply comedy to climate communication.”²

¹ Adobe Consumer Insights, 2024

² World Economic Forum, 2024



Tim Robinson discusses climate change with humor.

- Yellow Dot Studios produced a video of Tim Robinson discussing climate change with a scientist, but only taking him seriously after he puts on a ridiculous shirt.
- Other studios using humor to draw attention to grim circumstances include Politically Awesh in South Africa and Climate Science Breakthrough in the UK.
- **“Comedy can enhance awareness.”** Max Boykoff, Professor of Environmental Studies and Fellow in the CIRES.¹

Elements of surprise and comedy can relax minds and open them to serious stories. As scientifically-proven alternatives, they inspire attention – and even action – while steering clear of despair.

¹ Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences, University of Colorado Boulder)

Partner Spotlight:

Domestic Data Streamers

Fighting indifference towards data.



“Every great message needs a little nonsense—it makes the sense stick better. Nothing brings people together like a shared laugh or a collective eye roll. Use both sparingly.”

Pau Aleikum Garcia, Director at Domestic Data Streamers

**Conclusion:
Stand firm.
Stay fluid.**

FUNdamental COMMUNICATIONS IN 2025

- Communicators' roles have become more holistic and far-reaching. They've **shifted from being supportive to driving strategic influence**, from traditional conservatism to bold disruption, and from simply convincing stakeholders to deeply influencing them.
- In today's "age of average", where brands often blend into sameness, **communicators must leverage humor, fun and light-hearted content that provides relief** from the weight of daily challenges. This will allow brands to stand out while making audiences feel relaxed, receptive and reenergized. It's time to give them a break.
- **Tackling serious topics with optimism can go a long way.** By being positive and realistic at once, communicators can motivate audiences to take action – even on serious issues like climate change.

Conclusion:
Stand firm.
Stay fluid.

How can organizations balance stakeholder needs, so everyone can grow, advance, and bring their shared purpose to life?

In times of uncertainty and polarization, we should steer our decisions by revisiting our roots and reaffirming our values. This could mean avoiding repercussions by not publicizing our actions, or boldly choosing a side in an increasingly divided world. Whichever route we take, we should ask ourselves: are we here to build bridges, or deepen divides?

This year...

Stand for your people.

Stay relevant by cultivating inclusion.

Stand for your vision.

Stay open to finding the harmony in human and AI collaboration.

Stand for your culture.

Stay adaptable in form, content, and structure, to enable new organizational models that help your people and business grow.

Stand for the planet.

Stay connected to nature and embrace the shift from perfection to emotion.

Stand for your core message.

Stay engaging, active, and surprising.



2025 is the year of **Optimism**
Resilience
Adaptability
Relearning
Building bridges
Harmony
Fluidity



In summary: **Stand Firm.**
Stay Fluid.

GET A HEAD START ON 2025

If you'd like to talk to us about any of these trends, or how to stand firm and stay fluid in 2025, just get in touch.

hello@brandbuch.com
[brandbuch.com](https://www.brandbuch.com)

WHAT WILL INSPIRE SUCCESS THIS YEAR?



"In 2025, success will come to those who master the balance: standing firm in their values to stay grounded amidst the noise, while embracing fluidity to adapt to the unexpected.

Purpose will guide the way, acting as both an anchor and a catalyst. It'll keep organizations true to who they are, yet agile enough to thrive in a landscape of constant evolution."

Melissa Buch,
Founder and CEO at Brandbuch

Thank you!

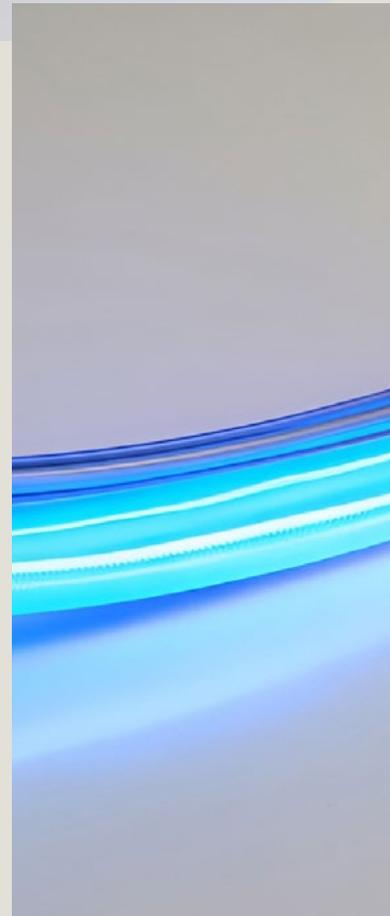
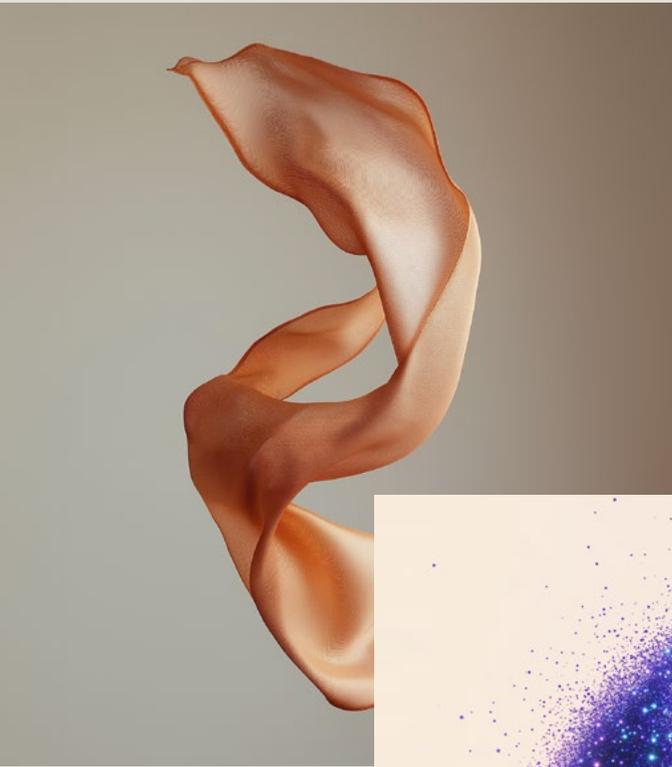


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