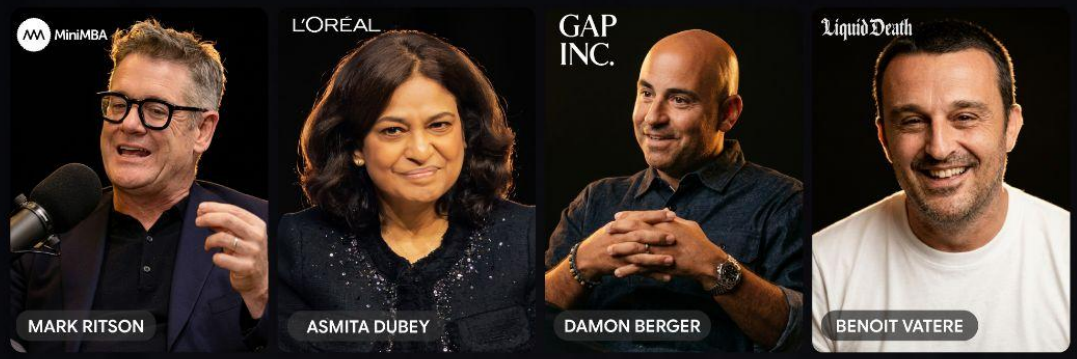


LESSONS FROM THE FRONTIER





A YEAR IN CONVERSATION

FRONTIER CMO

INTRODUCTION

*by **Joshua Spanier**, VP of AI and marketing strategy at Google, and host of Frontier CMO*

I can tell within 90 seconds of talking to a CMO whether they are actually working with AI or just faking it. And if I can tell that quickly, so can the reports, teams, and bosses of those individuals.

Heading into 2027, there is nowhere left to hide. Marketing leaders need to embrace this moment of change, or they (gulp) won't be around in 2028.

As the host of the Frontier CMO podcast, I've spoken with over 200 CMOs, CEOs, growth leaders, and creators. We've discussed our AI wins, misses, and marketing transformation.

The energy and complexity that all marketers are facing during this evolution is both inspiring and a little scary. The fun part is we are all learning together, and I know that the interviews and insights coming out of Frontier CMO content are contributing to our collective knowledge base.

Looking across those conversations, the bigger picture is coming into view: 2025 was the year of wow, all of us marveling at the parlor tricks generative models could perform, and 2026 was the year of experimentation across thousands of pilots and test kitchens.

Now, 2027 is the year to stand and deliver.

And, in truth, the hall pass has expired. Our CEOs, CFOs, and boards now expect all of that experimentation to translate into durable, measurable, revenue growth.

Consider this report a year of practical field notes from the leaders doing the hard work. Highlight it, argue with it, send the key takeaways to your CFO, and hand the checklists to your team on Monday morning.

Here are the seven lessons defining what comes next.



FRONTIER CMO

LESSON ONE

FRONTIER CMO



STOP DEFENDING MARKETING

BECOME THE CHIEF GROWTH OFFICER

LESSON ONE

STOP DEFENDING MARKETING

BECOME THE CHIEF GROWTH OFFICER

When **Aude Gandon** stepped into her role as executive vice president and global chief digital and marketing officer at the Estée Lauder Companies, she inherited a high-stakes turnaround mandate across an expansive global brand portfolio. Gandon told the Frontier CMO podcast that before setting her ambition for the brands, she first sat down with her commercial and financial counterparts. Why? To borrow the famous line from "Jerry Maguire," "show me the money."

Successful brands, she explained, are built on an understanding of where and how they create value. Financial fluency doesn't compete with brand building; it's what allows a CMO to invest in brands with conviction. After all, the strongest brands are also the best business cases.

A common myth is that CFOs are hostile to brand marketing. What we heard is much simpler, which is that CFOs hate fuzzy math. They bristle when marketers walk into a quarterly business review speaking an insular dialect of impressions, awareness scores, and Cannes Lions while the rest of the executive table is debating marginal return on investment, cash flow, and customer acquisition cost.

Chime's Chief Growth and Marketing Officer **Vineet Mehra**, who trained at Procter & Gamble, Unilever, and Johnson & Johnson, explained it clearly. The modern marketing leader has outgrown the functional silo to become a "full-stack marketer" who can judge creative craft in the morning, inspect data pipelines in the afternoon, and debate marginal return curves with the CFO before dinner.

"Think about the job of a modern CMO in two ways: being a capital allocator to drive growth and being a systems architect," Mehra said.

The CMO must design "a single system where human specialists, machine automation, and AI agents reinforce one another."



VINEET MEHRA
CGMO, Chime

As a capital allocator, the fastest way to win a CFO's trust is to say no. Walking into finance and saying, "No thank you, I can't spend that money efficiently," ends the adversarial ritual of budget begging, he said.

And when a CFO wants to move brand dollars into direct response to hit the quarter, Mehra can say "yes" and still name the trade-off.

When financial alignment and cultural ambition become one, the divide between brand and performance marketing vanishes.

Damon Berger, SVP of marketing shared services at Gap Inc., pointed to 11 consecutive quarters of positive same-store growth at the Gap brand. He put into practice the company's principle, "Relevance is revenue."

Gap's denim campaign with global girl group Katseye generated more than 83 million YouTube views. The follow-up campaign, with artist Young Miko around the classic gray sweatsuit, topped 80 million views and drove immediate sell-through.



MONDAY MORNING PLAYBOOK

FRONTIER CMO

LESSON ONE:
Turning marketing into a capital allocation engine

C-SUITE MOVE

Speak the CFO's language.

Schedule a meeting with your CFO that isn't about asking for budget. Walk in with your measurement model, align upfront on the split between near-term performance and multiquarter brand investment, and agree on the exact commercial metrics that will govern both.

TEAM MOVE

Bring finance into the weekly room.

Embed your finance partner directly into your weekly marketing leadership sync to co-own scenario planning, shifting QBRs from defending past spend to allocating the next marginal dollar.



THE AUDIENCE IS THE BOSS NOW

GIVE UP CONTROL TO WIN WITH AUTHENTICITY

LESSON TWO

THE AUDIENCE IS THE BOSS NOW

GIVE UP CONTROL TO WIN WITH AUTHENTICITY

Not long ago, creators **Colin Rosenblum and Samir Chaudry** posted a YouTube Short that racked up 41 million views. On paper, it was a triumph. Yet when the hosts of "The Colin and Samir Show" looked at each other a week later, Rosenblum told us, they asked an uncomfortable question: "Is anyone going to remember that video?" The answer was no.

That realization prompted Colin and Samir to abandon raw view counts, the currency of the attention economy, in favor of what they call the connection economy, anchored by a new North Star metric: memorable minutes. Roughly half of their viewership happens on YouTube on connected TV screens, where people watch their long-form episodes for an average of 48 uninterrupted minutes.

For CMOs, the question is: How does a brand earn a place inside those 48 living-room minutes when people are now tuning out traditional ads? When we asked Chaudry whether the ad industry is suffering from a crisis of creativity, he diagnosed a different problem: a loss of institutional nerve.

Inside a traditional company, by contrast, we'd argue that layers of reviewers tend to sand campaigns down until no one can be criticized, making work safe for the conference room and invisible to the public.

Worse, brands still treat creators like media placements rather than showrunners who know their communities intimately. The job of a marketer now is to understand, find, and recognize the creators and the niches on YouTube and across platforms that have consistent excitement, energy, and viewership, said Rosenblum. Then a brand must show up in an authentic way.

Chaudry compared a creator's channel to a party hosted for their audience. If the host brings a friend along, like a brand, and they show up and do all the wrong things, "you're probably going to stop letting me have a plus one, and then eventually maybe you'll stop inviting me to the party."

Your job as a brand is to be a worthy plus-one.

"From a marketing perspective, there's a loss of conviction of what is interesting and what is good. Marketers now operate in a place of fear of missing the mark, where the audience is all of our bosses now and the only one who can fire us as creators is the audience."



COLIN ROSENBLUM & SAMIR CHAUDRY
THE COLIN & SAMIR SHOW WITH PRESS PUBLISH

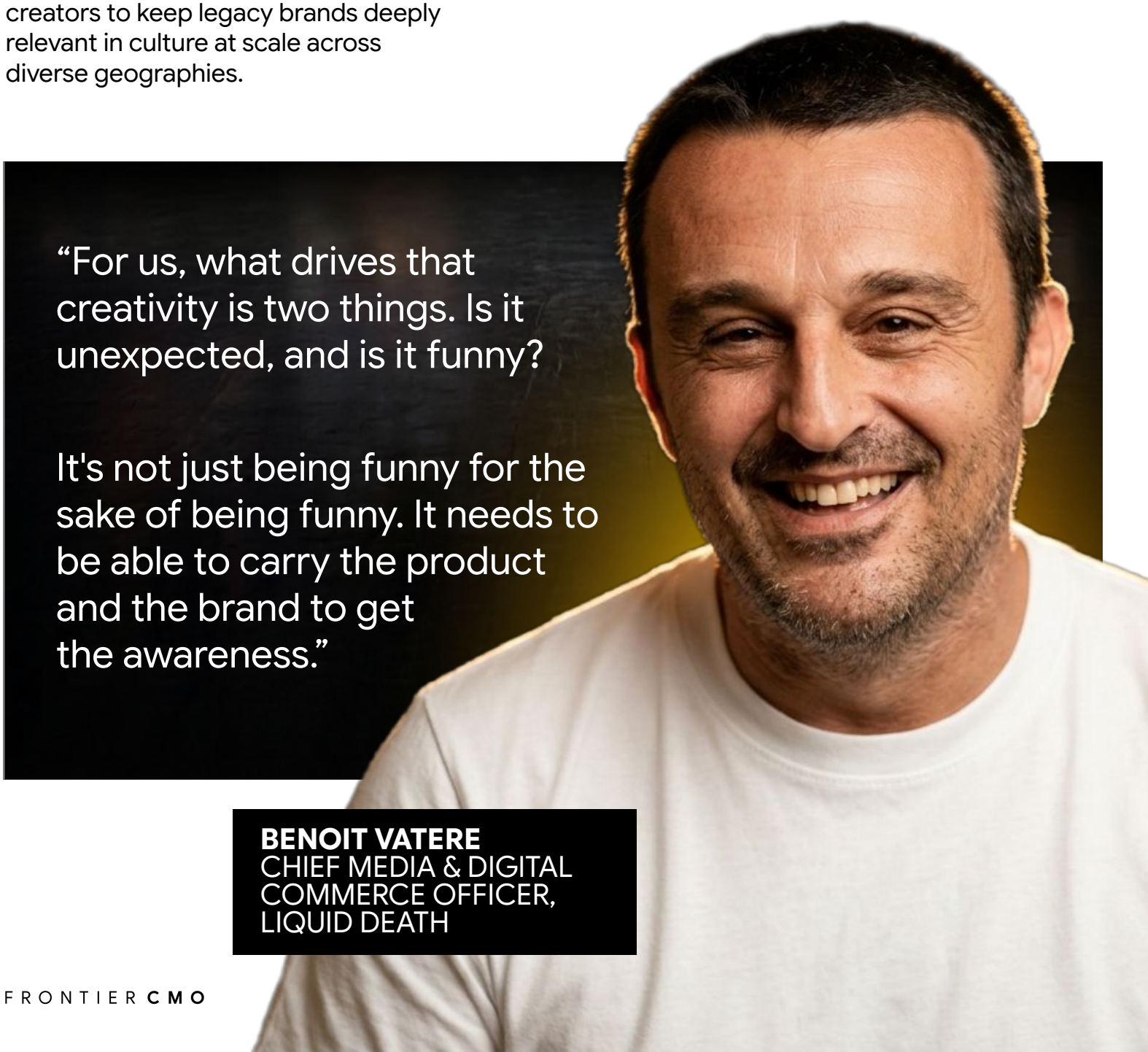
Unilever Global CMO **Leandro Barreto** explained how Vaseline Verified grew to some 300,000 mostly organic creators. It started by verifying content that already existed, then creators started pitching back.

Brands no longer build self-contained corporate worlds; they join communities that already exist.

Ultimately, this community-first approach is what empowers local creators to keep legacy brands deeply relevant in culture at scale across diverse geographies.

At Liquid Death, Chief Media and Digital Commerce Officer **Benoit Vatere** shared with Frontier CMO how he took antibureaucracy even further: no creative briefs, no brand guidelines, and no brand book. Every Thursday for four phone-free hours, comedy writers and producers gather around a single prompt: "What is the dumbest, funniest thing we could possibly do to win the internet for a day?"

Entertainment earns the attention; distribution math rings the register.



BENOIT VATERE
CHIEF MEDIA & DIGITAL COMMERCE OFFICER, LIQUID DEATH

MONDAY MORNING PLAYBOOK

FRONTIER CMO

LESSON TWO:
Earning conviction in the connection economy

C-SUITE MOVE

Tie creator partnerships to commercial velocity.

Stop pitching creator budgets to the C-suite on raw view counts. Bring your CFO and CEO a scorecard that connects “memorable minutes” and creator-led cultural spikes directly to search demand and retail velocity.

TEAM MOVE

Kill the rigid script.

Audit your creative approval chain to strip out “hallway safety” reviewers, and shift creator briefs from word-for-word scripts to business outcomes, so creators can bring your brand to their community as a worthy plus-one.

LESSON THREE

FRONTIER CMO



STRATEGY BEFORE SPEED

DON’T RIDE A FAST HORSE WITHOUT A MAP

LESSON THREE

STRATEGY BEFORE SPEED

DON'T RIDE A FAST HORSE WITHOUT A MAP

Mark Ritson, founder of MiniMBA, partnered with Ipsos to test practicing marketers on basic marketing principles. Nearly 70% flunked the exam, said Ritson. He cheekily estimates that 90% of marketers never have a strategic day in their lives. They live in the tactical bushfires that surround them.

As companies rush to hand generative AI tools to their teams, Ritson's research exposes an uncomfortable truth. For most organizations, the bottleneck was never execution speed; it was a clear strategy. AI is the ultimate amplifier.

Hand it to a team with sharp customer understanding, disciplined segmentation, and distinctive brand positioning, and you get breathtaking velocity. Hand it to a team whose strategy is mush, and AI simply generates mush at the speed of light.

Ask the foundational questions: Who are we reaching? Who are we explicitly not trying to reach? What is our competitive position, and what are the three objectives we aim to achieve over the next 12 months?

We like to think of AI as the Iron Man suit, powering the marketer, Tony Stark. The suit gives you superhuman speed, synthetic audience data, and predictive power, but a human strategist still has to wear the suit, deciding where to fly. When a brand can distill its strategy onto a single page, handing that one-page playbook to AI turns speed into an unfair advantage.



"AI is the fastest racehorse we've ever seen. But if you get someone that hasn't ridden before ... to ride that horse, it's gonna end very badly."

MARK RITSON
FOUNDER, MINIMBA

Nowhere is a lack of strategic clarity more expensive than on the most neglected piece of real estate in marketing today: your own website. Today, company websites pull double duty. It is where highest-intent human buyers go to validate a purchase, and it is the primary source of truth, teaching AI models what your brand actually stands for.

Anda Gansca, CEO and co-founder of Knotch, delivered a hard truth. Imagine inviting guests to a summer party at your home, and 80% of them walked out within 30 seconds of arriving.

You wouldn't go buy more party invitations; you'd ask what was wrong with your house. Yet, when we show up to websites, about 80% of us end up leaving immediately and that's treated as totally normal, she said. It shouldn't be.

Yet across hundreds of major brands analyzed by Knotch, roughly 60% of enterprise brand content is "corrosive." Gansca defines "corrosive" as high-traffic, hyperoptimized SEO content that tricks a human into clicking, wasting seconds of their life reading corporate fluff.

The antidote? Being intentional, writing for the real person and with an authentic voice. This will help marketers reach today's consumers, now conditioned with LLMs, and who are arriving on websites expecting to ask natural-language questions like, "I want an electric car that doesn't look like a mom van," and get a straight answer in three seconds.

If your digital front door can't answer a human question with clarity and personality, neither the buyer nor the AI assistant helping them shop will recommend you.



MONDAY MORNING PLAYBOOK

FRONTIER CMO

LESSON THREE:
Putting strategy ahead of speed

C-SUITE MOVE

Strategy should guide AI usage vs. AI guiding strategy.

Shift the CEO's focus so they see AI as an engine for growth, not just a tool for marketing efficiency. Identify the top business problems and explore how AI usage in marketing will help unlock them, rather than committing to random acts of AI usage.

TEAM MOVE

Run the 30-second "party test" on your website.

Audit your top 20 landing pages for "corrosive" SEO fluff where 80% of visitors bounce, or leave the party. Rewrite them in plain human language so both shoppers and AI platforms get a clear, honest answer in three seconds.

LESSON FOUR

FRONTIER CMO



HUMAN SOUL + MACHINE SCALE

WHY TASTE IS THE ULTIMATE MOAT

LESSON FOUR

HUMAN SOUL + MACHINE SCALE

WHY TASTE IS THE ULTIMATE MOAT

When generative video and image models first arrived inside creative departments, many of the industry's best art directors and filmmakers crossed their arms. Rather than issuing a top-down mandate at the Google Creative Lab, longtime VP **Robert Wong** tried a different tactic: bribery with New York bagels.

Speaking with me at Google Marketing Live, Wong described launching a Friday morning ritual called the AI Breakfast Club. With no client deadlines and no executive reviews, writers, filmmakers, and designers spent an hour eating bagels and showing off strange prototypes they had built or broken that week.

Across the industry, creative leaders are asking where differentiation comes from when every competitor has access to the same models. At Cannes, musician Wyclef Jean gave a room of marketers a nine-word answer we haven't stopped thinking about: "There's one thing you have over AI: a soul."

Watching the Creative Lab's Friday sessions also showed **Josh Woodward**, VP of Google Labs, why early generative video tools frustrated serious filmmakers. The prompting felt like pulling a slot-machine handle, where fixing a character's jacket ruined the lighting of the entire shot. That's why Google Labs engineers and Creative Lab filmmakers built Flow together. As Woodward put it, using it should feel like "a chef cooking for chefs," giving directors camera control, character consistency, and scene continuity.

For CMOs briefing their agencies, Wong offered a fundamental marketing rule.

"Ask for great work," he said. "Don't ask for great AI work. That'd be like asking for great Photoshop work. The tools don't matter.

Ask for the work that will connect people in new and better ways."



Taste, that irreplaceable human judgment, is just as decisive in product and retail. **Emma Grede**, CEO of Good American and founding partner of $5-billion brand SKIMS, told us how her teams use AI to help develop their go-to-market strategy.

Yet she draws a hard line around what AI never touches: brand voice, core creative concepts, and founder gut instinct. Early at Good American, Grede paired customer comments with returns data and spotted a spike in returns on sizes 14 and 16.

Grede realized that women in between were underserved, and she decided to invent size 15. Retail buyers pushed back immediately, warning that odd numbers signify junior apparel and the market wouldn't get it.

"And I was like, 'But it will be understood by the body.' And that's where you've gotta take your gut instinct," she said.

For Grede, taste is an operational muscle built by the wisdom and confidence of actual decision-making.

At AT&T, CMO **Kellyn Smith Kenny** won over the C-suite by reminding them what it means to put the customer above the industry standard of playing promotional price games.

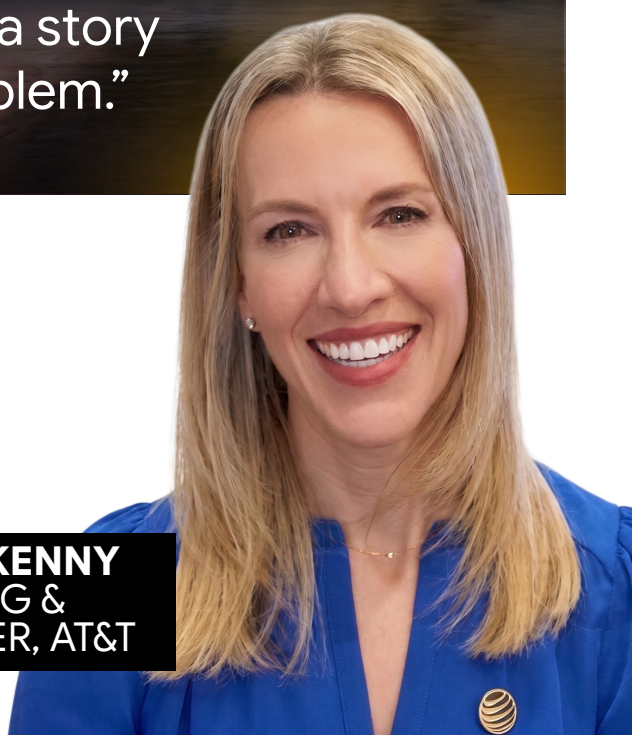
That insight became the "AT&T Guarantee," which proactively credits customers a full day of service after an outage as short as 20 minutes, no ask required.







EMMA GREDE
CEO, GOOD AMERICAN



KELLYN SMITH KENNY
CHIEF MARKETING & GROWTH OFFICER, AT&T

MONDAY MORNING PLAYBOOK

FRONTIER CMO

LESSON FOUR:
Protecting human taste at machine scale

C-SUITE MOVE

Fix the “story problem” before the “storytelling problem.”

Sit down with your CTO, COO, and CEO to identify the no. 1 customer friction point your product experience actually needs to solve, and lock in the nonnegotiable brand voice and guardrails AI will never touch.

TEAM MOVE

Launch a Friday AI breakfast club.

Create a zero-stakes “foam pit” with no client deadlines or executive approvals, where creatives, marketers, and engineers spend an hour testing new tools and sharing what they built and broke.

LESSON FIVE

FRONTIER CMO



REBUNDLE THE WORK

DON’T PUT AI ON A BROKEN PROCESS

LESSON FIVE

REBUNDLE THE WORK

DON'T PUT AI ON A BROKEN PROCESS

When generative AI tools first became available to enterprise teams, managers across JPMorgan Chase wanted to plug them into their daily routines immediately.

CMO **Carla Hassan**, who leads thousands of marketers across one of the most heavily regulated institutions on earth, refused to let them rush.

Even when a company has a sharp one-page strategy and great taste, campaigns still move like molasses because of how our industry organized itself over the past 20 years: unbundling strategy, creative, production, and media into separate silos. Strategy writes a brief and throws it over the wall to creative; creative spends three months making a hero film and hands it to production; and two weeks before launch, someone emails finished assets to a media agency with instructions to buy impressions and make the numbers work. Bolting high-speed AI onto that relay line just creates a faster traffic jam.

Inside Google Marketing, we have a saying for what happens when a siloed campaign flops: Media is always at the scene of the crime. Executives immediately scrutinize the media dashboard and blame the media plan, because media is where the live numbers sit, even though attribution research consistently proves that creative quality and relevance drive the lion's share of ROI.



When we sat down with VaynerMedia CEO **Gary Vaynerchuk**, he traced the dysfunction straight to agency history. “Media, creative, and production should be under one roof,” he said.

When media and creative sit at the same desk, the feedback loop collapses from quarters to hours. Imagine them side by side at 10 a.m. on a Tuesday.

A media analyst spots one audience overindexing on a particular product cut and asks the creator at the next desk for three new variations before lunch.

Any industry would benefit from rethinking the workflow and not just the work.

Before deploying AI at JPMorgan Chase, Hassan mapped every end-to-end marketing workflow from scratch, auditing handoffs, compliance bottlenecks, and questioning why multiple stakeholders were reviewing the same brief sequentially rather than in parallel.

Only after stripping out those broken steps did the bank embed AI, retraining content writers as strategic editors using models aligned to brand and regulatory guardrails.

The result? A 30% efficiency gain and 2X content output, while abolishing separate creative and media briefs so both teams start in the same room on day zero.



“They had it right in 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, until they split apart in the early ’90s. The separation of creative and media is the problem, and production for that matter. When we make creative, we have to know what's going on with the platform.”

GARY VAYNERCHUK
CEO, VAYNERMEDIA

MONDAY MORNING PLAYBOOK

FRONTIER CMO

LESSON FIVE:
Rebundle the work

C-SUITE MOVE

Bring the board a workflow rewiring plan, not a tool list.

Before asking for more AI budget, map your end-to-end campaign process from brief to legal review. Show your CEO which sequential handoffs and agency silos you are eliminating, so AI accelerates growth instead of speeding up a broken relay line.

TEAM MOVE

Put creative and media in the same room on day zero.

Abolish separate creative and media briefs starting with your next major campaign, uniting strategy, creative, production, and media around one shared business outcome and a live daily feedback loop.



BANK THE EFFICIENCY DIVIDEND

INVEST $2 IN TALENT FOR EVERY $1 IN TECH

LESSON SIX

BANK THE EFFICIENCY DIVIDEND

INVEST $2 IN TALENT FOR EVERY $1 IN TECH

Across 40 global beauty brands at L'Oréal, Chief Digital and Marketing Officer **Asmita Dubey** deconstructed the modern marketing job into more than 50 specific skills and built communities around each of them.

They built hands-on learning through their "Augmented Marketing and Communications University," where over 30,000 people were upskilled in 2025 alone, she said.

Today, 75,000 L'Oréal employees across the company actively use the group's enterprise generative AI companion, and over 20,000 users leverage L'Oréal's CreAITech Gen AI content platform.

Marketers and creatives use it to ideate, create, and test 3D digital twins and localize creative assets.

Just as important, Dubey said L'Oréal drew an unbreakable ethical guardrail so every marketer knows where machine generation stops. The company never uses AI-generated life-like face, body, hair, or skin to demonstrate product benefits in external communications.



"We want to flex the dual muscle. We want to do it with creativity and technology. And also, while we embrace technology, we want to keep everything that is creative in the DNA of our brands and brand marketers, and therefore we call this math and magic."

ASMITA DUBEY
CHIEF DIGITAL & MARKETING OFFICER, L'ORÉAL

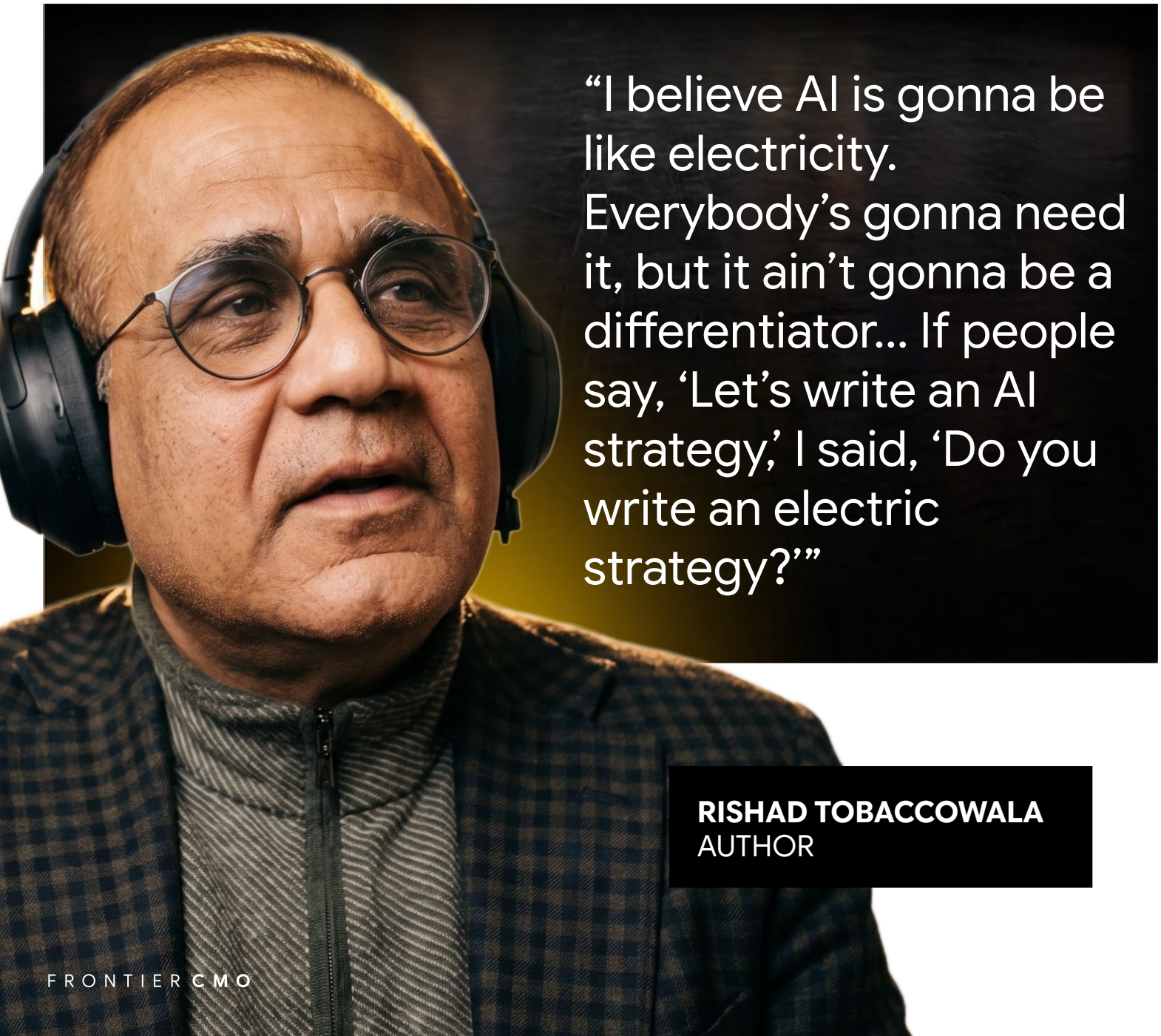
LESSON SIX: BANK THE EFFICIENCY DIVIDEND

You have to clear out the legacy tech debt. And when you invest in new AI capabilities, you cannot spend all your money on software and zero on the humans who use it.

As author **Rishad Tobaccowala** explained, every corporate transformation rests on six keys: Have a strategy, build or buy the skills (M&A), reorganize, explain to teams why the change is good for them, align incentives, and train people.

Most transformations stall after the press release because, as Rishad put it, “everything is easy until people get in the way."

Executives nail strategy, M&A and the reorg, then underinvest in explaining, incentives and training. To avoid that lag, Tobaccowala gave CMOs, CEOs, and CHROs a hard math rule for annual planning: For every $1 you spend on technology and AI licenses, spend $2 on training, reskilling, and workflow change management for your people.



MONDAY MORNING PLAYBOOK

FRONTIER CMO

LESSON SIX:
Bank the efficiency dividend & invest in talent

C-SUITE MOVE

Fund your AI talent budget by purging "zombie" martech.

Audit your legacy marketing tech stack with your CFO and CIO to cut bloated tools nobody uses, and apply the $1 to $2 rule to your 2027 plan: for every $1 approved for AI software, earmark $2 for reskilling and workflow change management.

TEAM MOVE

Map the skills and draw a one-page ethical line.

Break down the specific AI skills your marketers need by role, back them up with hands-on lab training, and publish a clear one-page guardrail on where AI generation stops, so teams can experiment with confidence.

LESSON SEVEN

FRONTIER CMO



LEAD AS A HANDS-ON LEARNER YOU CAN'T DELEGATE AI TRANSFORMATION

LESSON SEVEN

LEAD AS A HANDS-ON LEARNER

YOU CAN'T DELEGATE AI TRANSFORMATION

As Google's CMO, **Lorraine Twohill** is in a unique position: her team tests the very AI tools they market.

She cares deeply about Google's marketing team being "customer zero" for the industry, collaborating directly with product and engineering to understand the tools and features they're building, providing feedback to make them better, and ultimately showing the rest of the industry how to adopt them.

While not every CMO is at a company where the tools driving AI transformation are being built within their own walls, the underlying mindset remains the same. Leading the way for others and helping them navigate tough moments of change hands on is critical.

We're in one of the most transformative periods for technology and marketing, and Frontier CMOs need to have the agility and attitude to lead from the front and say, "OK, here we go. Let's figure this out together."



LESSON SEVEN: LEAD AS A HANDS-ON LEARNER

When we spoke with **Shelly Palmer** at CES, he framed the executive bottleneck bluntly.

"If absolutely all AI research and all AI advancements stopped today, as if we just put a stop to it … we're [still] five years away from realizing the efficiencies that can be achieved right now," he said.

When time-strapped CMOs ask Palmer how to build AI fluency, his advice is simple.

Pick a personal project, "something you really care about where you would know what the output looks like," he said.

One of Palmer's clients is the snack parent for her kids' travel-soccer team, and she built a sign-up app herself. You have to lead from the front, which means every senior leader has to put hands on the keyboard every single day, Palmer told Frontier CMO.

To carve out time for experimentation, Rishad Tobaccowala urged every executive to audit their calendar in two columns.

Column one is the time you spend allocating, delegating, measuring, monitoring, and checking in; column two is building, selling, mentoring, creating, making, and guiding. If the first column is "more than 50 percent, reduce it. That's gonna be done by machines. That's a real added value."

In 2027, his words will become a promise: "If you aren't spending an hour a day learning, you're falling behind. You're faking it."



MONDAY MORNING PLAYBOOK

FRONTIER CMO

LESSON SEVEN:
Lead as a hands-on learner

C-SUITE MOVE

Lead AI transformation. Don't delegate it.

Pick one business problem your CEO already cares about. Personally lead a 30-day AI sprint against it and present the results yourself. Credibility comes from doing the work, not signing off on it.

TEAM MOVE

Run the two-column calendar audit and go first.

Block one hour a week on your calendar for hands-on building, and open your next leadership stand-up with a 10-minute, "no-slides" live AI workflow demo, going first yourself.

FINAL NOTE FROM THE FRONTIER



Our biggest conclusion is slightly inconvenient: The most interesting thing about AI isn't AI. It's what people can now do that they couldn't before. Be more creative, be more inventive, find more opportunities for growth.

And, hopefully, discover more human potential.

We are leaving the era of AI tricks and entering the era of growth receipts. The CMOs poised to win in 2027 aren't the ones chasing every shiny point solution or commissioning a 90-slide transformation deck.

That's why we hope you'll put this report to work. Highlight it. Argue with it. Share it with your team. Steal what works. Challenge what doesn't. Use it to change a decision, start a conversation, or try something new. We'll keep doing the same on the Frontier CMO podcast and in the newsletter.

We'll see you on the frontier.

FRONTIER CMO

SIGNAL OR NOISE?

FRONTIER CMOs IN THE KNOW.

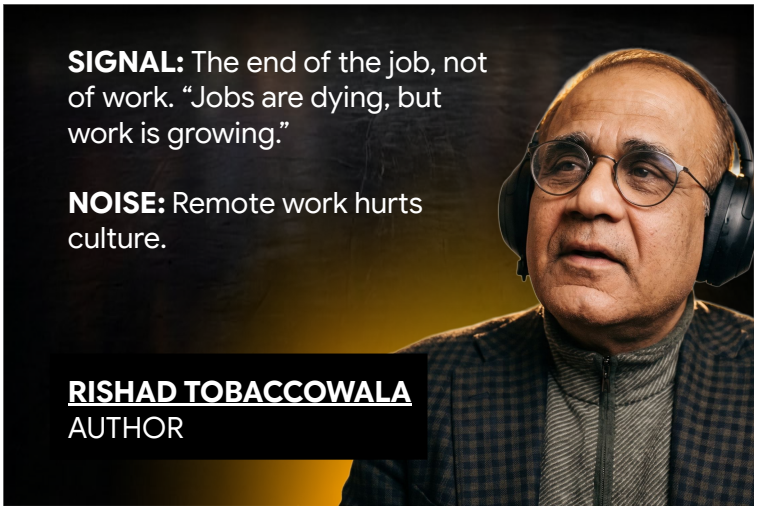
Here's how marketing's top leaders called it. **Click a name** to watch the episode.



SIGNAL: Brands that swear off AI-generated humans. "It's a signal that these companies are idiotic."

NOISE: TV is dead. "A TV is the thing on the wall, the end."

MARK RITSON,
FOUNDER, MINIMBA



SIGNAL: The end of the job, not of work. "Jobs are dying, but work is growing."

NOISE: Remote work hurts culture.

RISHAD TOBACCOWALA
AUTHOR



SIGNAL: AI is the biggest communications breakthrough since the telephone.

NOISE: CMOs becoming celebrities. "Celebrity status is not where the leverage is for high-impact CMOs."

KELLYN SMITH KENNY
CHIEF MARKETING & GROWTH OFFICER, AT&T



SIGNAL: The impact of AI in 2028. "I think we're underestimating what's gonna happen."

NOISE: Marketers needing to code. "The agents will do it for you."

VINEET MEHRA
CHIEF GROWTH & MARKETING OFFICER, CHIME



SIGNAL: YouTube is still underleveraged by most brands. "The loudest signal possible."

NOISE: Agentic commerce killing brand loyalty. "Brand is paramount all the time."

DAMON BERGER
SVP, MARKETING SHARED SERVICES, GAP INC.



SIGNAL: CMOs need to get curious about AI. "They need to learn about it and not just be spectators."

NOISE: Speed matters more than craft.

CARLA HASSAN
CMO, JPMORGAN CHASE

THE 2026 EPISODE LINEUP

Every full episode referenced in this report is available on the Frontier CMO YouTube channel or our Think with Google page, Apple Podcasts, and Spotify.

Click any thumbnail to watch the video.



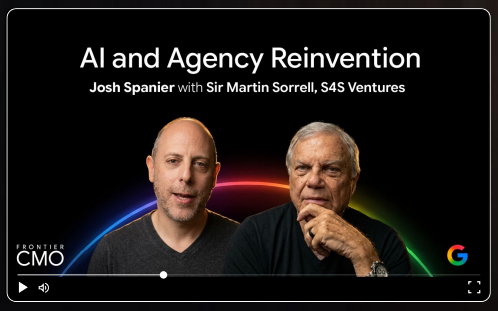






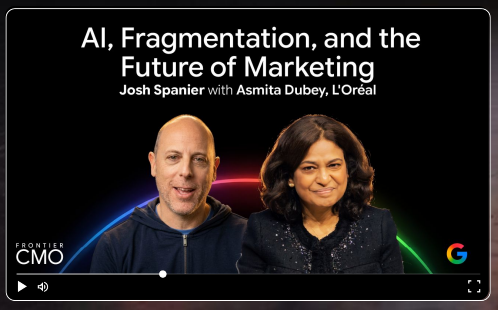














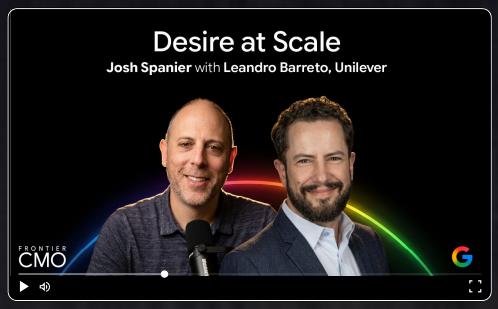


THE 2026 EPISODE LINEUP

Every full episode referenced in this report is available on the Frontier CMO YouTube channel or our Think with Google page, Apple Podcasts, and Spotify.

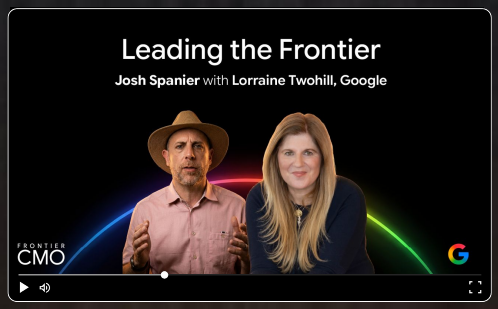
Click any thumbnail to watch the video.























MONDAY MORNING PLAYBOOK: **The C-Suite moves**

1 Speak the CFO's language	Schedule a meeting with your CFO that isn't about asking for budget. Walk in with your measurement model, align upfront on the split between near-term performance and multiquarter brand investment, and agree on the exact commercial metrics that will govern both.
2 Tie creator partnerships to commercial velocity	Stop pitching creator budgets to the C-suite on raw view counts. Bring your CFO and CEO a scorecard that connects "memorable minutes" and creator-led cultural spikes directly to search demand and retail velocity.
3 Put strategy ahead of speed	Strategy should guide AI usage vs. AI guiding strategy. Shift the CEO's focus so they see AI as an engine for growth, not just a tool for marketing efficiency. Identify the top business problems and explore how AI usage in marketing will help unlock them, rather than committing to random acts of AI usage.
4 Protect human taste at machine scale	Fix the "story problem" before the "storytelling problem." Sit down with your CTO, COO, and CEO to identify the no. 1 customer friction point your product experience actually needs to solve, and lock in the nonnegotiable brand voice and guardrails AI will never touch.
5 Rebundle the marketing workflow	Bring the board a workflow rewiring plan, not a tool list. Before asking for more AI budget, map your end-to-end campaign process from brief to legal review. Show your CEO which sequential handoffs and agency silos you are eliminating so that AI accelerates growth instead of speeding up a broken relay line.
6 Bank the efficiency dividend & invest in talent	Fund your AI talent budget by purging "zombie" martech. Audit your legacy marketing tech stack with your CFO and CIO to cut bloated tools nobody uses, and apply the $1 to $2 rule to your 2027 plan: for every $1 approved for AI software, earmark $2 for reskilling and workflow change management.
7 Lead as a hands-on learner.	Lead, don't delegate, AI transformation. Pick one business problem your CEO already cares about. Personally lead a 30-day AI sprint against it and present the results yourself. Credibility comes from doing the work, not signing off on it.

MONDAY MORNING PLAYBOOK: **The team moves**

1 Bring finance into the weekly room	Embed your finance partner directly into your weekly marketing leadership sync to co-own scenario planning, shifting QBRs from defending past spend to allocating the next marginal dollar.
2 Kill the rigid script	Audit your creative approval chain to strip out “hallway safety” reviewers, and shift creator briefs from word-for-word scripts to business outcomes, so creators can bring your brand to their community as a worthy plus-one.
3 Run the 30-second “party test” on your website	Audit your top 20 landing pages for “corrosive” SEO fluff where 80% of visitors bounce. Rewrite them in plain human language, so both shoppers and AI platforms get a clear, honest answer in three seconds.
4 Launch a Friday AI breakfast club	Create a zero-stakes “foam pit” with no client deadlines or executive approvals, where creatives, marketers, and engineers spend an hour testing new tools and sharing what they built and broke.
5 Put creative and media in the same room on day zero	Abolish separate creative and media briefs, starting with your next major campaign, uniting strategy, creative, production, and media around one shared business outcome and a live daily feedback loop.
6 Map the skills and draw a one-page ethical line	Break down the specific AI skills your marketers need by role, back them up with hands-on lab training, and publish a clear one-page guardrail on where AI generation stops so teams can experiment with confidence.
7 Run the two-column calendar audit and go first	Block one hour a week on your calendar for hands-on building, and open your next leadership stand-up with a 10-minute, “no-slides” live AI workflow demo, going first yourself.


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