

Your 2026 Playbook:

The New Operating System For Modern Marketing.

From the Building Brand Advocacy podcast.
In Partnership with **duel**.



Introduction

The Marketing Playbook is breaking, and CMOs know it.

Some conversations don't describe an industry shift, they diagnose it. This conversation from the Building Brand Advocacy Podcast, live on-stage at The Brand Advocacy Summit: New York, did something rare: Ana Andjelic & Nathan Jun Poekert articulated what senior marketers have been quietly feeling for years, but rarely say out loud.

Marketing is no longer a discipline governed by planning, segmentation, and message management. It is an environment shaped by:

- real-time culture
- fragmented attention
- unpredictable algorithms
- complex attribution
- consumers behaving as communities, not audiences

Most marketing organizations were not built for this world.

Nathan described the current system with painful clarity: **"The state of marketing is chaotic scrambling."** While Ana identified the structural flaw beneath the chaos: **"Departments have different metrics... what's measurable is not necessarily what matters."**

What they articulated on stage, and what this playbook expands, is a complete rewiring of how CMOs must operate:

- from calendars → to cultural responsiveness
- from siloed channels → to unified growth engines
- from centralized messaging → to decentralized influence architecture

Learn the 3 transformations required to build the modern CMO's Operating System.



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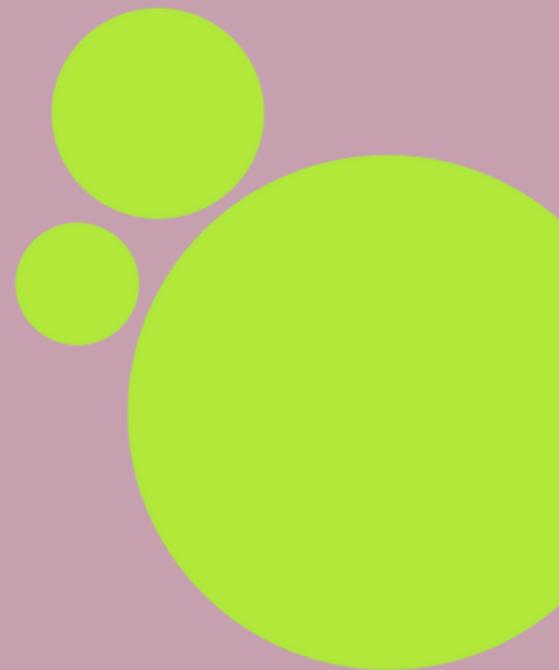
Ana @
ESPRIT



Nathan
(CMO Advisor)

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Theme #1 –

The State of Marketing: Chaotic, Reactive & Culture-Blind

The System Was Built for a World That No Longer Exists.

Marketing feels volatile. The real issue is structural misalignment:

- Algorithms reset every three months.
- Culture resets every few days.
- Planning cycles collapse under public scrutiny shifts.
- Influencer & creator ecosystems move faster than approvals.
- Brand safety risk forces defensive decision-making.

As Nathan explains: **“We no longer have the ability to plan more than three months in advance.”**

Instead of building systems for cultural speed, most organizations respond by:

- over-optimizing, over-measuring & over-controlling.
- under-thinking.

Which leads to the central failure: CMOs are asked to lead in culture-time while being measured in spreadsheet-time.

Ana captures it sharply: **“What’s measurable is not necessarily what matters.”**

Marketing is structurally unstable because:

- Planning rhythms are incompatible with cultural velocity.
- Teams operate as silos with incompatible KPIs.
- Dashboards dictate narrative.
- Efficiency has replaced meaning.
- The brand story gets subordinated to the algorithm.

Nathan’s summary is the indictment:

📖 **“The story has become secondary to the dashboard.”**



Strategic Implications for CMOs:

For modern CMOs, the campaign calendar has quietly become a liability. Culture no longer moves in quarterly rhythms, and any organisation still trying to schedule relevance will always be late. The real risk isn't speed, it's structure. Siloed teams destroy narrative coherence, forcing brands into reactive mode instead of cultural participation. Modern marketing must be rebuilt for tempo, not timelines, with systems designed to recognise cultural signals, respond in real time, and maintain a consistent brand truth across every touchpoint.

The Playbook.

Stabilising an Unstable Environment.

1. Replace Annual Planning with Rolling Cultural Responsiveness

A modern operating cadence:

- Quarterly direction (brand narrative, category prioritization)
- Monthly cultural focus (trend cycles, creator signals, product heat)
- Weekly signal reviews (search spikes, non-follower reach, creator patterns)
- Daily responsiveness windows (boosts, pivots, micro-collabs)

2. Rebuild Teams Around Proximity, Not Hierarchy

Nathan: "At the very least, organic and paid have to sit next to each other."

Cultural speed depends on removing micro-barriers:

- no separate reporting lines
- no incompatible metrics
- no asynchronous workflows
- no 48-hour approval chains

Proximity = faster signals, faster boosts, faster cultural capture.

3. Shift to Behavioural Metrics (Not Vanity Metrics)

Nathan's directive: "Views past three seconds, and total non-follower views." These measure, relevance, resonance, cultural pull & narrative spread.

In a world where followers don't guarantee attention, the only metrics that matter are the ones that prove your content reached beyond your bubble, and held people long enough to mean something.

Theme #2 –

Brand vs. Performance Isn't a Tension, It's the Failure Mode of Marketing

A system designed to fight itself.

Ana described the structural flaw: “Brand and performance... sit under different departments... they compete for budget.”

Inside most organizations:

- brand chases meaning.
- performance chases efficiency.
- influencer chases engagement.
- social chases reach.
- finance chases certainty.

Each team optimizes a different reality. None optimize the consumer's reality.

Brand & Performance Are One Memory System.

Brand creates memory. Performance activates memory. Culture distributes it.

Split these functions, and...

- brand loses relevance.
- performance loses capacity.
- narrative collapses.
- attribution shrinks.
- teams become adversaries.

Ana's provocation: “Just because you can't measure it doesn't mean it's not measurable.”

Strategic Implications for CMOs...

If brand and performance remain separated, the organisation will continue to chase activity instead of creating demand. CMOs must rewire their engines so that demand creation and demand capture run through the same system, with shared KPIs, shared context, and shared definitions of value. Culture must become quantifiable, not decorative, and the PDP must replace the homepage as the point where influence, context, and conversion converge. Without this integration, brands will continue optimising into irrelevance.

The Playbook.

The Unified Growth Engine.

1. Replace Brand/Performance with: Demand Creation → Demand Capture

Demand Creation: Creators, social, community, culture, content.

Demand Capture: Paid media, PDP, CRM, CRO, retargeting.

Both share:

- KPIs, budget, narrative ownership & sprint cadence.

This eliminates internal warfare.

2. Build a Cultural Influence Index

Ana: "Put all metrics together; that's your cultural influence index."

The index blends:

- search appetite
- non-follower reach
- save/share velocity
- conversation clusters
- community density
- advocacy signals
- PDP behavior
- repeat visit frequency
- revenue quality

This is the first metric system built for cultural growth.

3. Redesign Paths to Conversion: PDP Is the New Homepage

Ana: "If traffic comes from social and influencers, they need to go to PDP... that is your new homepage."

Shift from:

- homepage → irrelevant
- category pages → slow
- PDP → contextual, conversion-ready

Fashion, beauty, and retail brands routinely see 15-40% conversion lifts with this shift.



Theme #3 –

The Future of Growth Is Decentralised

The Social Franchise & Community Operating Model.

Centralised marketing is disappearing as consumers no longer behave as audiences. They behave as communities, operators, franchisees of taste.

Ana articulated the next decade-defining idea:

“People buy from people. Creators should have vertical integration on your site, your messaging, your look, through their personality.”

This is the Social Franchise Model, where creators become distributors inside your ecosystem; not external amplifiers.

Imagine:

- your brand, their aesthetic
- your product, their conversion path
- your margins, their cultural resonance

A Sephora storefront, but for your brand.

Nathan added the perfect proof point: “Stanley’s explosion came not from media, but from mom Facebook groups where the community advised the company and acted as decentralised operators.”

Influence Now Spreads Sideways, Not Top-Down.

Centralized influence (media → brand → consumer) is dead.

Today, culture spreads through:

- group chats.
- micro-communities.
- closed networks.
- niche creators.
- subcultures.
- everyday advocates.

Brands must stop trying to own influence. They must architect it.

Strategic Implications for CMOs

Not every community needs a campaign; many need infrastructure, space, and support to do what they already do brilliantly on their own. As public social becomes more fragmented and private behaviour rises, the most powerful cultural engines will happen off-feed: running clubs, micro-collectives, creator storefronts, neighbourhood groups, Discords, WhatsApp circles. Some of the most influential “teams” shaping your brand’s perception will never appear on your payroll, they sit in communities whose trust you borrow, not buy. This means the role of the CMO expands beyond marketing into ecosystem design: building systems where advocates, creators, subcultures and customers co-produce brand meaning.

The Playbook.

Building Your Decentralised Growth Engine.

1. Treat Subcultures as Creative Partners, Not Targets

Ana: “Your aesthetic has to be interactive, filtered through subcultures, not imposed on them.”

Shift from:

- demographics → communities
- messaging → dialogue
- personas → operators

Subcultures are distribution, not decoration.

2. Build a Social Franchise Layer Inside Your Commerce Ecosystem

The model:

- Creator storefronts
- Personalized bundles
- Creator-led PDP content
- Brand-approved creative
- Shared attribution

It blends: trust of creators, margin of DTC & control of brand asset systems.

This is the next evolution of digital distribution.

3. Prepare for the Shift from Public Social → Analog Culture

As feeds close and DMs rise, Ana warns: “Strategy must move to running clubs, book clubs, and community leaders.” These are not ‘events’. These are retention engines.

4. Identify Your Natural Community Operators

Every brand has the organizer, the curator, the explainer, the storyteller & the early adopter. These become your decentralised marketing arm, without being hired.

Closing Note

The future of marketing will belong to CMOs who rebuild the operating system, not the campaign calendar.

The shift underway is profound: from channel-first plans to culture-first organizations, from top-down messaging to sideways influence, and from siloed brand-performance structures to a unified growth engine with a single story and shared incentives.

Nathan captured the requirement simply: modern CMOs must possess social and cultural fluency “at an associate manager level”; not because they need to run the channels, but because they must understand the rhythms and mechanics of the environment their teams operate within.

The next generation CMO is no longer just a storyteller.

They are a cultural architect, a measurement designer, an ecosystem builder, a community orchestrator, and an operator of distributed influence.

Marketing didn’t suddenly get harder; the operating system simply stayed the same for too long. The leaders willing to rebuild it will define the next era of brand growth.



Building Brand Advocacy

Listen to the full episode.

