

GRAYLING  
creating advantage

# GAINING ADVANTAGE IN 2023

How to reach and influence audiences

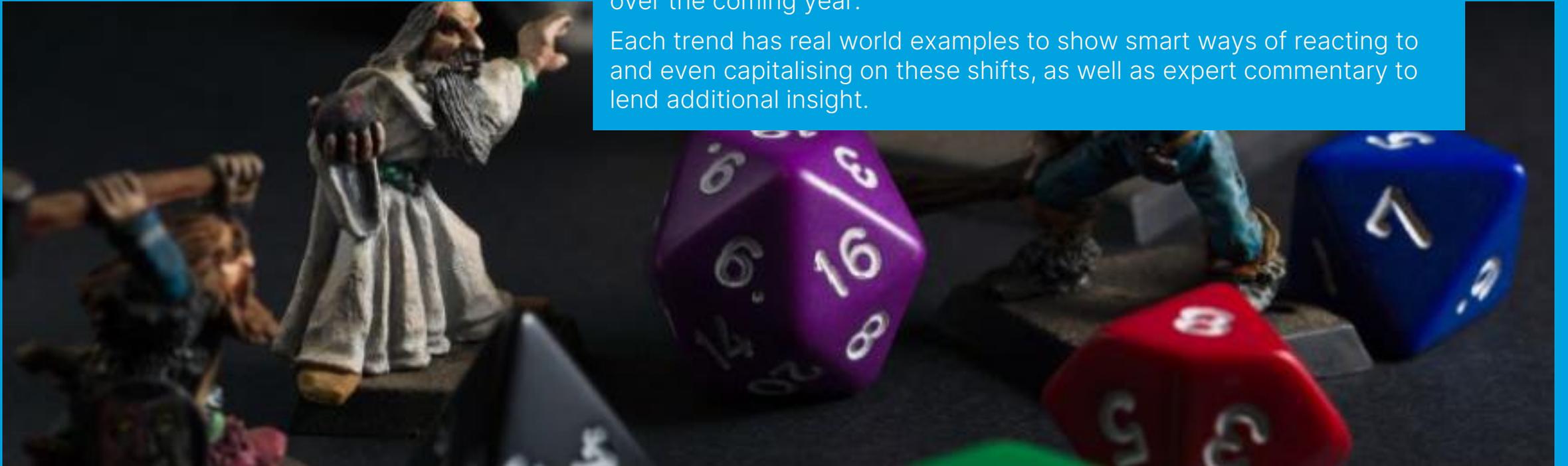
# THANKS FOR READING.

Grayling has a deep connection to people, places and culture around the globe – it gives us a powerful perspective that we harness to help create advantage for our clients.

Using this insight, we've tried to provide a snapshot of the key themes shaping the landscape for brands, businesses and organisations this year.

Featuring five insights, we provide a rundown of the important drivers you should consider when it comes to better reaching audiences, creating winning digital strategies and activations, leveraging powerful, fast-evolving technologies and communicating with savvy consumers over the coming year.

Each trend has real world examples to show smart ways of reacting to and even capitalising on these shifts, as well as expert commentary to lend additional insight.





## CONNECTING WITH FRAGMENTED AUDIENCES

The clashing of two trends from the last decade – hyperlocal communities and the digitisation of all mainstream media - is ironically making relevant targeting of audiences harder.

# WHAT'S THE TREND? MACRO

The last five years have seen increasing inefficiency of paid media targeting as audiences have continued to fragment and silo, and the application of personal data for relevant targeting has become more competitive and questioned, both ethically and legally.

The growth and dominance of big tech forced us to seek more niche, hyperlocal and dark social communities in the search for real humans, consuming by interest rather than simplistic demographics. Their response to this was to drive engagement through personalisation of all content feeds.

The steady normalisation of personalised news and social feeds made targeting by media and demographics even harder in 2023. An individual user might be a heavy consumer of news but if they are receiving their news by Google, Apple or Microsoft aggregators, they likely never see homepages or front pages of even their favourite media titles and see only what relates to their interests and search behaviours.



# WHAT'S DIFFERENT NOW?

## WHAT'S HAPPENING RIGHT NOW THAT EVIDENCES THIS?

Sociologists in the US wrote an open letter to the Pew Research Centre a year ago to say demographics were outdated. And TikTok's interest-based algorithm has blown up the idea of generational demographics by showing that humans are more likely to engage through a sense of community than by age. But the reality of moving from big brand campaigns to online community engagement risks diluting budgets and prevents businesses from making the long-term investment to engage those communities.

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Big media budgets and homepage news coverage are not enough to connect to the breadth and diversity of the communities within traditional target audiences.

**LAURA THOMAS**  
HEAD OF STRATEGY, GRAYLING

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# TREND IN ACTION

## → COMMUNITY AND PURPOSE-DRIVEN AUDIENCES

Lewes FC turned themselves from a coastal football club into a global phenomenon by shifting their targets beyond geographic and gender, to focus on broader football fans, community and purpose-driven audiences. They became the first club in the world to resource its men's and women's teams equally. By sticking to their roots of being a community institution, they've built a global fanbase and attracted sponsors including Curve, Lyle & Scott, Lucozade and FZ.



## → AGAINST THE NORM

Marketers often assume that older Gen Z and younger Millennials are all the same – liberal, independent, with nine-to-five jobs and side-hustles galore, but that's not the case. There is a growing movement of young, often conservative, 'stay-at-home girlfriends' who, despite others calling them out for promoting anti-feminism, have chosen to be homemakers. They likely don't consume the same content as their generational counterparts and may see more in common with traditionally older audiences, so are "missing" in large scale campaigns that rely on generational demographic targeting.

# EXPERT OPINION

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The supposed boundaries between generations are no more meaningful than the names they've been given. There is no research identifying the appropriate boundaries between generations, and there is no empirical basis for imposing the sweeping character traits that are believed to define them.

**Philip N. Cohen**

Author of *The Family: Diversity, Inequality, and Social Change*

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# ACTING ON THE OPPORTUNITY

When it comes to campaigns and media spend, the choice doesn't need to be everyone or a small few.

We need to make campaigns and content for communities with similar values or interests who may represent various demographics.

The key is in defining audiences by similar motivations, shared thinking, aligned beliefs or communal experiences or even feelings—and building campaigns, stories and influencer strategies that help reach and engage through these psychographic commonalities.



# #2

## THE DIGITAL HYPERLOOP

Long-term planning has become near impossible... the insane speed of innovation and global competition is pushing tech platforms to the limit to keep up with the pace of change.



# WHAT'S DIFFERENT NOW?

## WHAT'S HAPPENING RIGHT NOW THAT EVIDENCES THIS?

A stagnation of legacy platforms in 2022 led to the disruption and panicked copycatting we saw in new formats, features and functionality within platforms. It made 2022 a year of seeing the latest trends peak and fail in a few months. As soon as Be Real launched, it was copied, and its users moved on before it could even consider an IPO. Twitter was dead, Mastodon was the next thing and then Twitter was back.

TikTok is no longer a disruptor but leader in the game, driving innovation. Yet even TikTok finds itself already embroiled in controversy over heat buttons, in competition for European advertisers and content creators (e.g. sister company Lemon8), and constant competition from YouTube, with Shorts.

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Original content ideas will be a priority this year with creators opting to spend more time crafting and producing unique concepts for their audience instead of reactively jumping on the latest trending format hamster wheel.

**JADE BEATY**  
CREATIVE CAMPAIGN  
MANAGER AND TIKTOK  
CREATOR, GRAYLING  
(@live\_thedash)

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**How I Gained  
1 MILLION  
Subscribers in 60  
Days Through  
YouTube Shorts**



**Steal my  
5-step method**

GRAYLING

# TREND IN ACTION

## → TIKTOK + LEMON 8

It might not seem like that long ago when TikTok was unstoppable, and yet it is already facing direct competition from ByteDance's own Lemon8. The platform has targeted TikTok to lure away its top talent and digital creators.



## → INSTAGRAM BACKTRACKS

With three different formats in one app, it's no secret that Instagram has been guilty of copycatting competitors to try to maintain its dominance in the social media space, but for the first time Instagram chief, Adam Mosseri, has admitted the platform has gone too far from its photo-sharing roots. Mosseri says in 2022, the platform focused too heavily on promoting videos, and some speculate it has lost the identity and focus it used to have when predominantly a photo-sharing platform. The answer? Mosseri says he's working on rebalancing the platform to make photos more of a focus again in 2023.



# ACTING ON THE OPPORTUNITY

Long-term channel and format planning is hard when platforms and features are constantly evolving. Ideas are what people connect with and they need to be adaptable.

This is where PR and communications-led ideas and campaigns have the greatest strength over media buying and advertising.

Campaign planning that starts with what the story is, rather than the channel plan, has a better chance of cutting through an ever-evolving media landscape, no matter what the latest platform feature or format might be or what algorithms are prioritising.

Communications teams need to be involved at the beginning of planning, collaborating with Above The Line (ATL) teams. Working together is the only way to tackle what will still likely be a year of constant flux in media.

# EXPERT OPINION

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This year will continue to be competitive for platforms and, as marketers, we need to be fluid, flexible and nimble in developing campaigns with cross-channel relevance. Always ensure you have breadth; you prioritise ideas and creative and don't invest too much in any single platform. Algorithms change, organic reach drops, users age and technologies update...history is repeating itself but at high speed.

**SARA BEIRNE**  
HEAD OF DIGITAL, GRAYLING

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Trend #2 Trend #2



# #3

## LEVELLING UP INTERNAL COMMS

We may be out of lockdown, but we're far from business-as-usual - or even business as it used to be. The ways we work have changed, and so have the expectations of employees. In response, the way businesses communicate with their people about what they do, what they stand for and why, needs to change.

Failure to communicate effectively with current (and future) staff has become a major commercial issue in 2023.

# WHAT'S THE TREND MACRO



Trend #3  
Trend #3

In the wake of the disruption of the past few years, new expectations and new norms have arisen around our jobs and their place in our lives, resulting in a drastic shift in how many perceive and carry out their work.

Pay, benefits, well-being, development, business values and their embodiment, have all seen greater scrutiny from staff since 2020. With power having shifted towards employees in the job market, the ability of businesses to communicate effectively and empathetically with staff has never been greater.

This is a year in which businesses will need to level up their internal communications to stay competitive.

# TREND IN ACTION

## → DISHOOM

UK restaurant chain Dishoom used to run all internal comms through a network of Facebook Groups, but as the profile of the workforce became younger these were losing traction. So they developed new channels; content and functionality remained largely the same, but on platforms more appropriate to the needs of staff, including a dedicated staff app



## → NESTLÉ

Regular communications from the C-Suite is a key facet of modern internal comms. The key is making these moments more engaging and accessible to all! Nestlé, for example, runs regular 'Ask Me Anything' video sessions where senior leaders respond to staff questions in an informal video Q&A.





# ACTING ON

# THE OPPORTUNITY

Your internal comms is your external comms - consistency of message and activity has never been more vital for the creation of a credible corporate identity and an engaged workforce.

Staff - especially younger workers - expect to be consulted and listened to, so involve them in decision-making.

Employees expect their employer to take a stand on social and geo-political issues. Whether Russia's invasion of Ukraine or the cost-of-living crisis, organisations should get ahead and engage employees rather than waiting to be pushed.

All internal comms need to be available remotely, on mobile. It also needs to reach those who work offline. Factory floor or technical staff shouldn't be excluded because they don't work at a computer.

Your younger staff are new communications superstars - in-house influencers are a new way of bringing advocacy to internal and external communications alike and should be cultivated and encouraged.

# EXPERT VIEW

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Internal comms have typically been overlooked when compared to external communications. However, workforce disruption during the pandemic led to a well-documented focus on building an employee-centric culture, better work-life balance and greater recognition of people as an important audience. How you communicate and engage with employees can be what sets companies apart.

**CHARLOTTE HARVEY**  
HEAD OF CORPORATE, GRAYLING

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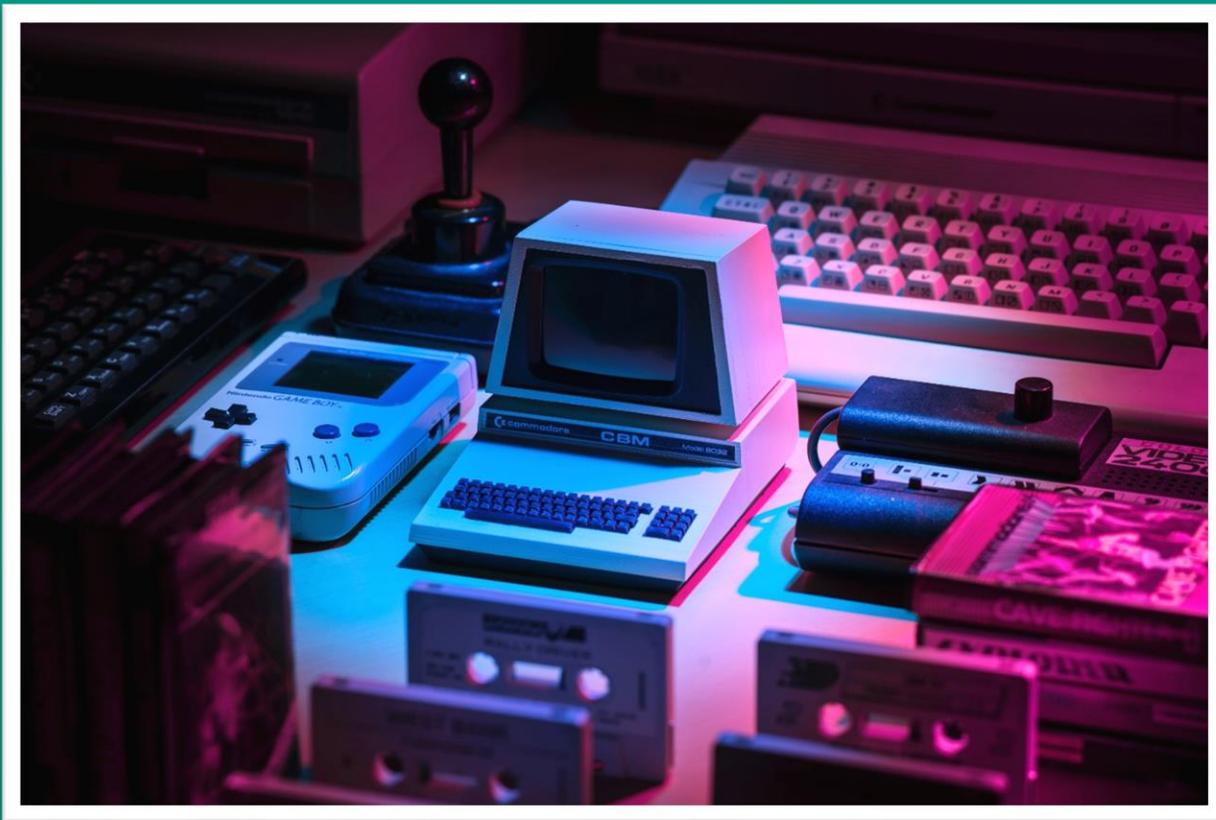


# #4

## THE AI EVOLUTION

The past few months have seen excitement - and anxiety - over the impact of AI-based tools on the way we work and create. We're at a point at which AI technology can and will make a meaningful difference in delivering high-quality work as well as creating real, defining advantage.

# WHATS THE TREND MACRO



AI has been around for a very long time, whether serving up search results on Google or entertaining the world as Watson on hit American gameshow *Jeopardy!*

2023 is going to see even more new technologies being introduced and offers a huge opportunity for smart brands and businesses to harness the evolving capabilities of AI for commercial gains.

There are two main branches of AI currently capturing people's imaginations - text generation AIs, of which OpenAI's ChatGPT is the most well-known, and text-to-image AIs such as Dall-E (also by OpenAI), Stable Diffusion and Midjourney.

We are seeing an explosion in the number of creative explorations of these technologies - and this is only the very beginning. OpenAI recently announced its paid for 'Premium' access, offering an opportunity for businesses to experiment with them before they become considerably more costly to trial.

# WHAT'S DIFFERENT NOW?

## WHAT'S HAPPENING RIGHT NOW THAT EVIDENCES THIS?

The iteration innovations of image or text-generation AI are happening at a breakneck pace. There are tools that enable you to automatically generate Tweets in the style of anyone you like and even platforms that let brands create animated virtual influencers capable of having natural language conversations with customers in literally hours.

We are standing on the threshold of a genuinely seismic shift in the way in which we use technology to communicate and at speed.

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Artificial Intelligence (AI) is developing powerful assistants. The way we use it will continue to shape the support it can provide to everyday PR and communication efforts. And it will continue to improve on everything it's asked to do: from writing a company boilerplate to undertaking reputation research and assessment. It could also prove to be a useful mechanism to kickstart your own creative process by helping brainstorm ideas.

REESE MAABICH

HEAD OF DIGITAL MARKETING & BRAND CONTENT,  
CONTINENTAL EUROPE, GRAYLING

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# TREND IN ACTION

Trend #4  
Trend #4

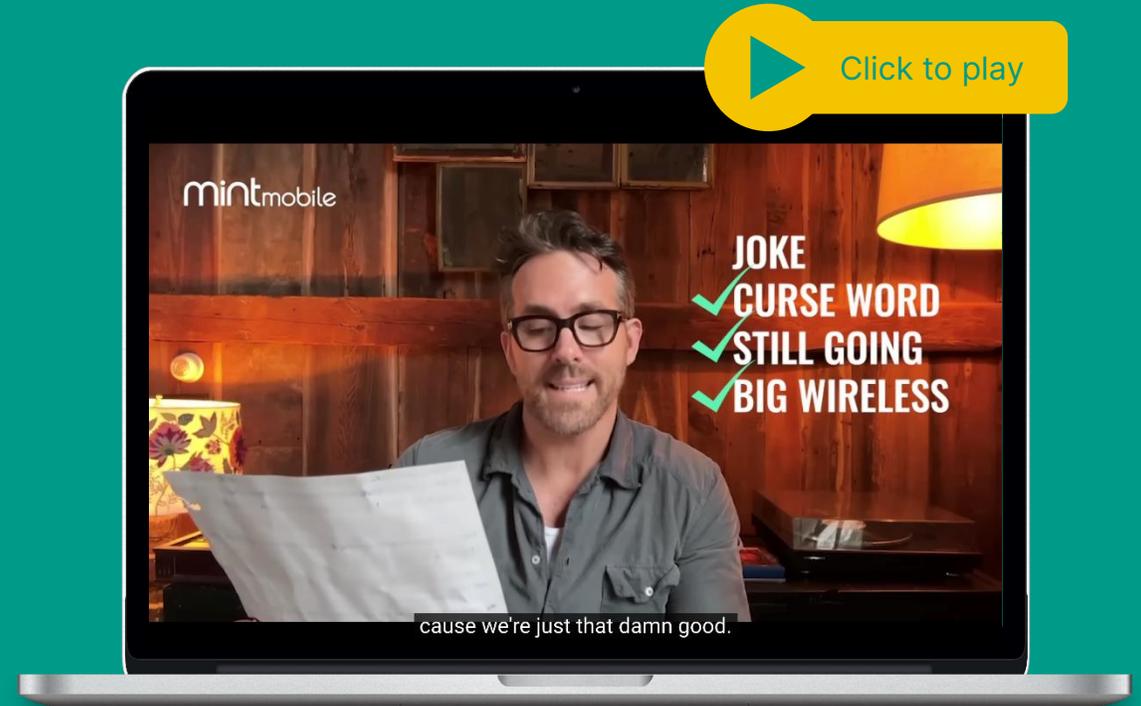
## → AI TOOLS

When it comes to visual AI tools, the opportunities for developing creative work are vast; using tools such as Dall-E or Midjourney to help develop scamps allow for more democratic creative input thanks to visualisation tools now being available to anyone, regardless of artistic ability. Examples such as this, where a designer uses AI tools to quickly and easily develop product shots for social will become the norm.



## → MINT MOBILE

Quick off the mark, Mint Mobile, living up to its promise to save customers money, become one of the first brands to use Chat GPT to create an ad, featuring its celebrity founder Ryan Reynolds. (We accept that's pretty good content to work with but nonetheless we quite liked it!)





# ACTING ON THE OPPORTUNITY

Be creative! This is just the beginning of what it will be possible to achieve and at the moment, the cost for experimentation is relatively small...so let your imagination go wild and see what these new AI tools can do for your business.

It's not just the shiny stuff...beyond the eye-catching image generation and comedy ChatGPT dialogues, there are some hugely useful applications of these technologies for B2B, internal communications and innovation purposes.

Whilst AI tech is still a novelty, it can be a great way to drive coverage and talkability - whether through product innovation or creative storytelling, AI innovation can drive awareness and create advantage!

More generally, it also makes sense for larger organisations - and those with large swathes of important or sensitive data at their disposal - to start having internal conversations about their position on AI and its uses within their field, sector or organisation.

It's increasingly clear that the ethical dimensions of AI's usage are still in progress, and that there are significant communications challenges ahead for organisations that wish to operate at the cutting edge of these technologies.

**This is going to change EVERYTHING, eventually - now's a good time to get ahead of the curve.**

# IMPACT ON THE YEAR AHEAD

It is difficult to predict the exact impact ChatGPT will have on the PR industry in 2023, but it could potentially:

1

Streamline media monitoring and analysis

2

Automate press release generation

3

Enhance crisis management responses

4

Improve personalisation and targeting of PR campaigns

However, it's important to note that ChatGPT is just a tool and the success of its impact on the PR industry will depend on how it is utilised by PR professionals.



# EXPERT VIEW



With the capacity for natural language understanding and generation, OpenAI will empower organisations to efficiently and effectively generate written and spoken materials, such as press releases, speeches, and customer communications in multiple languages. This will allow for a more global reach and personalised approach to public relations and communication efforts.

**IAN POE**  
Global AI Expert





# #5

## A POST-PURPOSE WORLD

Consumers and stakeholders have become used to brands claiming that there is a 'higher purpose' to the work they do - and are becoming increasingly cynical about claims that seem too good to be true.

Consumers, governments and stakeholders increasingly want to see examples of businesses that are doing more than paying lip-service to 'the challenging times we face' or telling us 'we're all in it together', and which instead are taking practical steps to offer help and hope to their customers.

# WHAT'S THE TREND? MACRO

Whilst there is strong in principle support for net zero and the technology required to deliver on those ambitions, when local communities face the reality of new or proposed renewable energy infrastructure projects there can be strong opposition. Whether expanding housebuilding to 'build homes for the next generation' or 'delivering net zero for our children and grandchildren', the principle is not in question, but the reality of delivery remains a challenging issue for politicians.

Compounding this is a consumer audience that can easily 'de-influence' a brand that hasn't done its due diligence. The potential pitfalls of purpose-led communications range from patronising messaging to being downright disingenuous. Brands obviously *have* to first walk the walk and then comes talking the talk...appropriately.



# WHAT'S DIFFERENT NOW?

## WHAT'S HAPPENING RIGHT NOW THAT EVIDENCES THIS?

Consumers worldwide are less inclined to focus on 'green' questions in the midst of a global recession; not only that, but the European Union (EU) is set to clamp down on greenwashing via legislation.

It is now more vital than ever for business to deliver concrete action to make things better in the sector or service area that a business works in - tangible benefits now rather than intangible benefits tomorrow, no weasel words, no 'made up' solutions (carbon credits!), no commitments that only last a year.

Consumers want to be made to feel that it's going to be ok and brands can help them feel that through meaningful, targeted activity that cleaves close to the brand's area of activity or central truth.

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Going green can be massively profitable, but so is greenwashing. The Commission's proposal targets the companies who misleadingly advertise their products as environmentally friendly to provide a level playing field and help customers identify truly green brands.

**TAMÁS ORBÁN**  
Political journalist



# TREND IN ACTION

## → BARILLA

You don't have to save the whole world, just make a difference that means something. Pasta manufacturer Barilla developed this simple tool in response to the European energy crisis, which helped home cooks prepare pasta using a fraction of the gas or electricity they might have used cooking it in the more traditional fashion.



▶ Click to play

## → BREWDOG

Inauthenticity will now get called out. Beer company Brewdog sought to claim the moral high ground over the World Cup in Qatar, setting itself up as 'anti-sponsor' to the tournament. Unfortunately, these PR efforts were somewhat undermined when it was pointed out by consumers and the media that Brewdog was continuing to sell its products in Qatar throughout the games.



▶ Click to play

# EXPERT VIEW

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Greenwashing, Pinkwashing, Sportswashing...consumers have seen it all, and are increasingly jaded. Positive outcomes from purpose-first campaigns are still possible, but brands in 2023 should look to deliver two things when thinking of their 'purpose' activity - hope and help.

**ESTELLE BOON**  
HEAD OF BRAND,  
GRAYLING

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# ACTING ON THE OPPORTUNITY

Assess your current green/DEI activities and ditch the ones that don't mean anything - now's the time to spring-clean your CSR.

Work to define the pain-points of your stakeholders - customers, suppliers, staff or the wider industry in which you operate - and then develop tactics that work to solve them.

Define what 'good' means in the context of the actions of your business, and how best to articulate and deliver that through strategic action.

Consumers are sleuths in 2023, and your actions will be scrutinised - so brands need to make sure the positive action they are referencing in their communications can stand up to the rigorous examination of a new breed of online investigator.

# THANKS FOR READING.

For any further information please get in touch:

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