

Issue 10
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thread

by Valtech ✱

Your guide to the latest Data & AI innovation



The *Experience* Loop

How AI is reshaping CX from conversion
to continuous connection

The trust factor • Divide and conquer • Architecture of experience

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Hello, welcome to issue 10

Customer journeys were once mapped like a straight line, but we know that real human decision-making is far more complex, emotional and nonlinear.

In this issue, we explore a new model built for that reality: The Experience Loop. Increasingly powered by AI, it's a continuous, self-reinforcing cycle that adapts in real time — deepening relationships through every interaction, not just optimizing for the first.

We look at how agentic AI is making that possible. These systems don't just respond. They anticipate. They guide users, reduce friction and help brands move from static personalization to dynamic, evolving experiences that feel intuitive and deeply human.

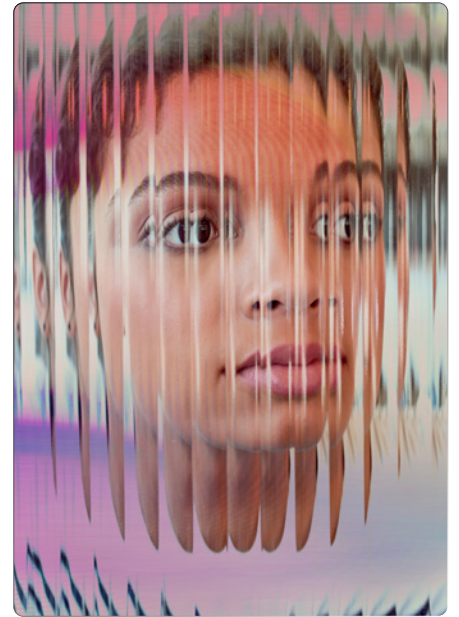
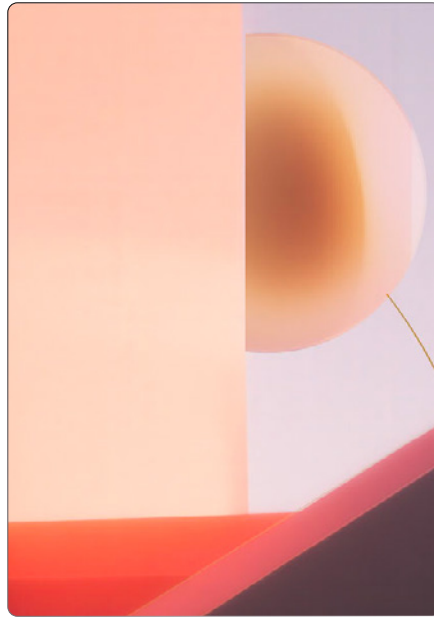
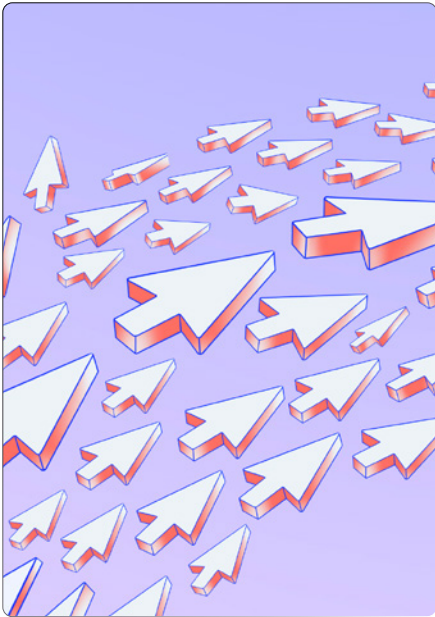
You'll also see how organizations are rethinking their internal platforms to support this shift by turning employees into active participants in more intelligent, connected ecosystems. We examine how brand identity is becoming a strategic asset in an AI-shaped B2B buyer's journey, where getting the attention of machines is just as important as earning trust from people.

And we explore the rise of digital twins — not as full replicas, but as fragmented, task-specific agents that work with and for us, quietly reshaping how we show up in the world.

We hope you enjoy this edition of the magazine and come away with new ideas for navigating and leading in this evolving landscape.

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Beyond the digital storefront

How agentic AI is poised to power the world around us

Agentic AI is making real-time decisions, optimizing operations and responding to complex challenges across a variety of industries now. These AI-driven systems are securing networks, executing trades, managing energy grids, coordinating traffic and improving disaster response.



Autonomous vehicle navigation

Agentic AI powers self-driving cars by analyzing real-time sensor data to make driving decisions like lane changes, braking and obstacle avoidance, ensuring safe navigation.

Cybersecurity threat detection

AI agents monitor network traffic, identifying anomalies and potential security breaches in real-time, allowing for automated responses like isolating compromised systems or blocking suspicious transactions.

Healthcare patient monitoring

Agentic AI systems can analyze patient data from wearable devices or medical equipment, detecting potential health complications and triggering alerts to healthcare providers.

Smart grid management

AI agents can optimize power distribution across a grid by analyzing real-time energy consumption patterns, adjusting power generation and load balancing to improve efficiency.

Financial trading

AI agents can analyze market data and execute trades autonomously based on predefined strategies, adapting to market fluctuations in real-time.

Traffic management systems

Agentic AI can analyze traffic patterns and dynamically adjust traffic light timings to optimize traffic flow and reduce congestion.

The *Experience* Loop

How AI is reshaping CX from conversion to continuous connection

By
Mary Ellen Slayter

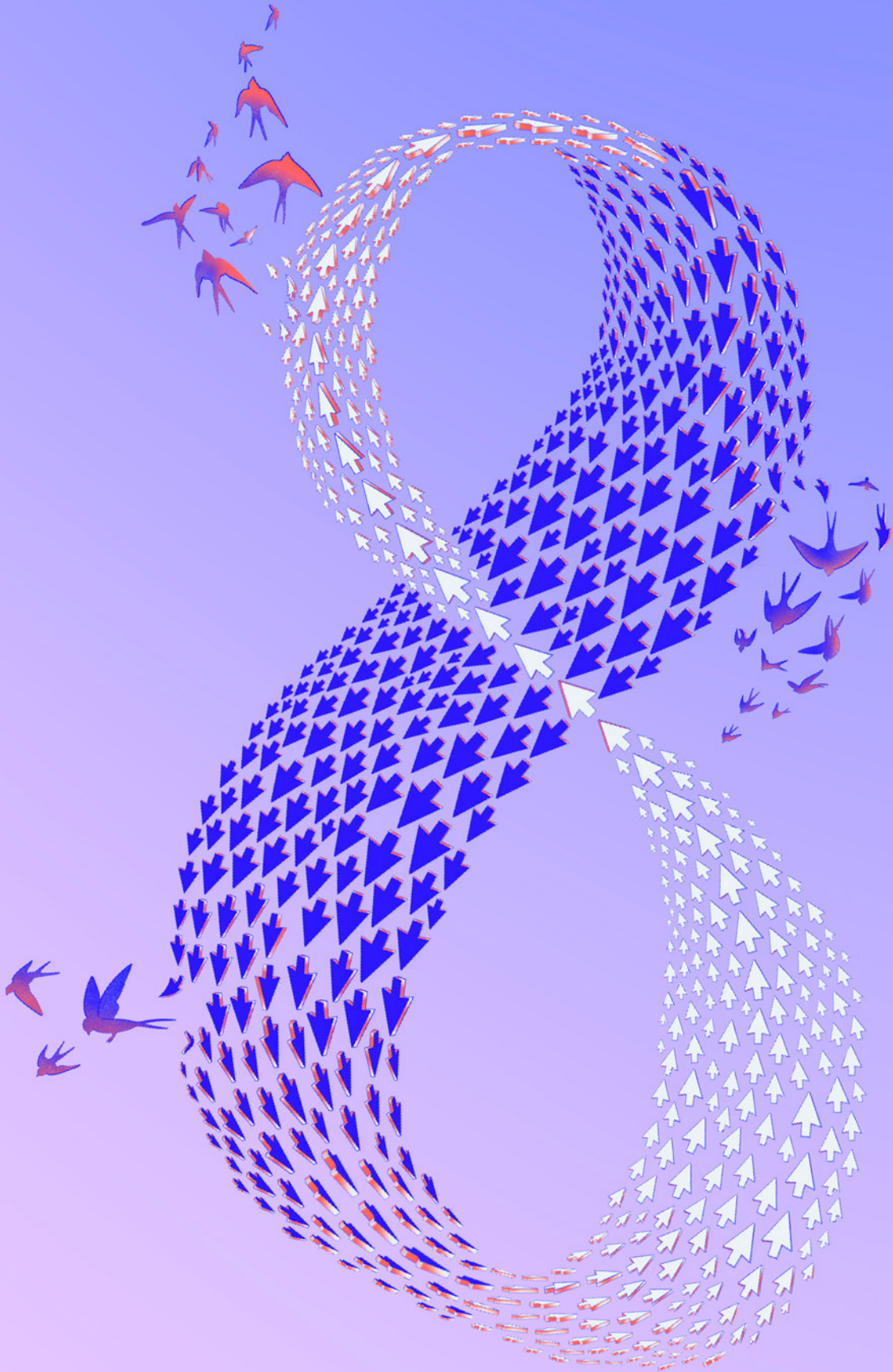
For decades, brands have focused on customer conversions as the ultimate goal, treating each interaction as a step toward a single transaction. But this linear journey never reflected reality. It was a device marketers used to bring order to the chaos of human decision-making.

Today, the most successful brands aren't optimizing for one-time purchases. They are building continuous, immersive experiences that foster long-term relationships.

This is the key to differentiation, higher profits and greater market share. It's leveraging AI to design experiences that accurately reflect the reality of human decision-making — not by predicting the perfect path but by enabling a continuous loop of engagement.

Instead of treating customer interactions as a sequence of touchpoints leading to conversion, AI empowers brands to create an experience loop — a dynamic, self-reinforcing relationship where every interaction refines and enhances the next.

This is the future of CX. It's about building systems that understand, enhance and innovate in real time, strengthening customer connections at every touchpoint.



From preset options to real-time understanding

Customers expect experiences that adapt to them, not the other way around. AI makes this possible by recognizing intent, responding in real time and evolving interactions as the relationship deepens.

“It’s not about a single, perfect path — it’s about growing relationships through AI-driven, iterative engagement,” says Paul Carysforth, Experience Analytics Director at Valtech.

This shift is particularly important when it comes to personalization.

Too often, brands still treat it as a one-time optimization focused on making better recommendations.

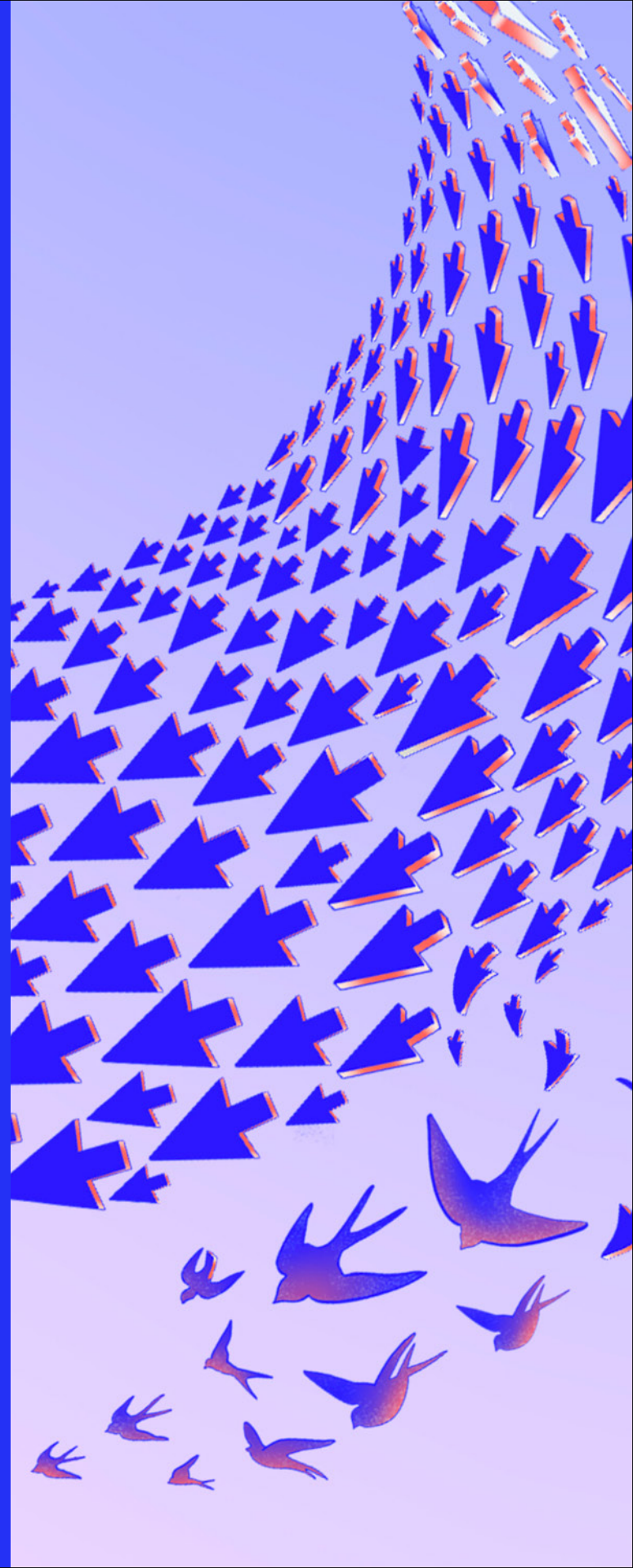
But personalization should be much more than that. “All we want is to be seen as individuals. AI has the potential to finally make that happen — not by pushing products, but by designing experiences that actually reflect who we are and what we care about,” says Helle Jensen, Nordic Executive Director, Experience Design at Valtech.

Lexus has embraced this shift by applying the philosophy of Omotenashi, the Japanese art of hospitality, to digital experiences. Known for anticipating customer needs and delivering seamless, deeply personal service, Lexus is now extending that same approach into its strategy with agentic AI.

“We are obsessed with the customer,” says Loïc Charlon, Senior Manager, Lexus & Kinto Digital Experience at Toyota Motor Europe. “We try to treat them as if they are guests in our own home, anticipating their needs and answering exactly what they are looking for. And there is no better way to achieve this than having an AI agent search our entire database of Lexus information to craft responses that precisely meet their needs.”

By deploying agentic AI, Lexus ensures that every interaction refines and enhances the next — just like a conversation with a trusted advisor.

“Our vision is to make luxury personal,” Charlon explains. “We wanted to offer a more personalized experience on the website. Unlike a standard page, where everything is predefined and customers must find their own way to the information they need, our AI agents guide the customer more intuitively, creating less friction.”



“We are obsessed with the customer. We try to treat them as guests in our own home, anticipating their needs and answering exactly what they are looking for. And there is no better way to achieve this than having an AI agent.

Loïc Charlon, Senior Manager, Lexus & Kinto Digital Experience at Toyota Motor Europe

This is the Experience Loop in action. Lexus is using AI to ensure every moment of engagement strengthens the long-term connection with customers.

From borrowed spaces to owned experiences

While AI-powered personalization has traditionally focused on improving efficiency, real differentiation comes from building ecosystems that sustain long-term engagement. Brands that fail to take control of this shift risk becoming interchangeable, losing customer relationships to AI-powered aggregators and search engines.

“The way these technologies are built is to provide the most pleasing response to the largest number of people. But if you’re tailoring for the masses, you end up with a perfectly average experience — which is ironic, because customer experience is supposed to feel highly personal,” says Joe Sutherland, Director of the Emory University Center for AI Learning.

That’s why leading brands are shifting their focus from transactional optimization to AI-driven Experience Loops that they own. “Brands have an opportunity to craft

specialized AI-driven experiences that set them apart from AI search engines like Perplexity or ChatGPT,” says Karl Hampson, Valtech’s Data & AI CTO. “The ones that don’t will get disintermediated out of relevance.”

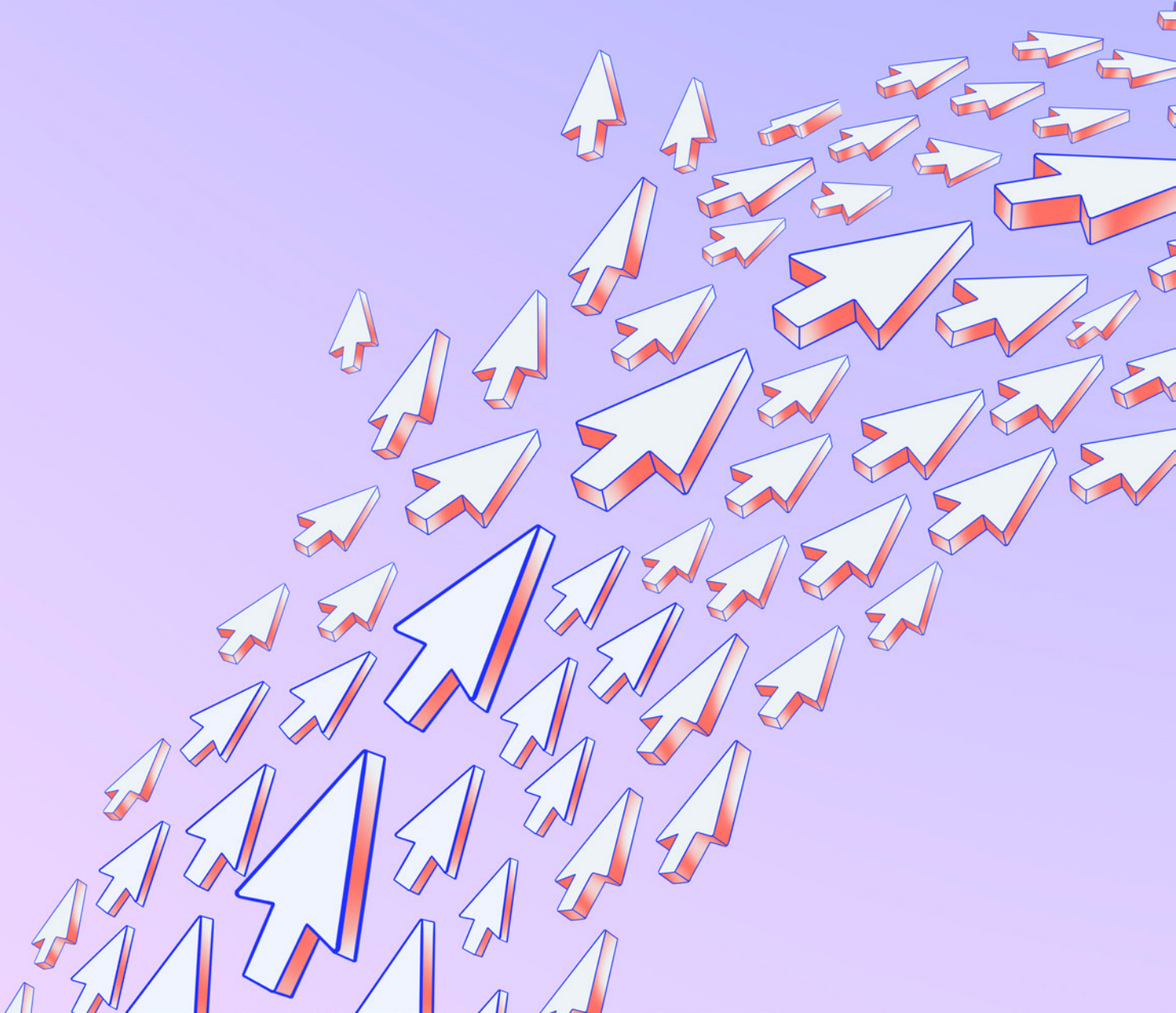
Not On The High Street (NOTHS), a curated online marketplace featuring over 5,500 small creative UK businesses, is doing just that. Faced with the challenge of surfacing more than 350,000 unique products without overwhelming or underwhelming their audience, NOTHS implemented Google Cloud’s Vertex AI Search for retail.

The results were transformative. Within just 12 weeks, a production-ready AI search tool was live. Search conversion rates increased by 10% year-over-year, and revenue per user rose by 2.2%

But what makes the NOTHS transformation especially powerful is the strategic intent behind it: Rather than relying on borrowed digital spaces to grow, NOTHS built an owned Experience Loop, one that turns every search query into a smarter, more personalized discovery, and strengthens the bond between the customer and the brand with each interaction.

“It’s not about a single, perfect path — it’s about growing relationships through AI-driven, iterative engagement.

Paul Carysforth, Experience Analytics Director



From omnichannel ubiquity to multimodal immersion

Omnichannel has been the gold standard for digital experience for years. But today's customers expect more than just compatibility across devices. They want connection across every mode of interaction.

AI plays a critical role in helping businesses meet that expectation. Gartner predicts that by 2027, 40% of generative AI solutions will be multimodal, encompassing text, image, audio and video. Google's Project Astra and GPT-4o's latest advancements illustrate how AI is now capable of interpreting and responding to multimodal inputs in real time. They understand images, video and voice all at once. This shift transforms how brands communicate, moving from static interactions to fully immersive, adaptive engagement.

"Multimodal is replacing omnichannel," says Jensen. "Omnichannel was about making sure you had a desktop and mobile-friendly experience. Multimodal is about how all your devices, all your senses and all your contexts interact in a seamless way."

Wayfair is applying multimodal AI to improve how its customers search and shop. By blending text, image and preference-based inputs, the company is making it easier to navigate categories in which products are often unbranded or hard to describe. This approach enables more visual and intuitive discovery than basic keyword search, which is especially helpful in home décor and furniture, where style and context matter as much as specifications.

Closing the loop

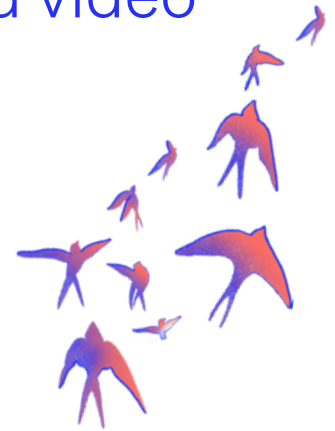
Winning brands build systems for continuous connection. The Experience Loop is how they do it: a self-reinforcing cycle where every interaction feeds intelligence back into the ecosystem, improving the next touchpoint automatically.

Creating that kind of loop doesn't require a massive overhaul from day one. It starts with a few key moves:

- Start small and iterate. Launch focused AI pilots. Test, learn and scale what delivers real value.
- Invest in your data foundation. But not at the cost of productivity. Deliver just enough data foundations to

40%

of generative AI solutions will be multimodal, encompassing text, image, audio and video by 2027.



support each use case whilst incrementally following a strategic approach.

- Design for feedback. Make every interaction (internal or external) an opportunity to learn and improve.
- Stay flexible. Choose tools and platforms that allow your systems to evolve as customer expectations and business needs shift.

The result? A smarter, more responsive brand that deepens trust, sharpens personalization and strengthens customer relationships over time.

The brands that win will build loyalty and growth through continuous connection, powered by AI and fueled by every meaningful interaction across the experience ecosystem.

The trust factor

Why AI is making brand identity more important than ever in B2B

By

Kerry Penny, SVP, Global Head of Brand Marketing

For years, B2B marketing has prioritized what's easy to measure: clicks, conversions, cost per lead. It made marketing look efficient — but also overly transactional. Brand was often treated as a nice-to-have, the “creative” layer you added once the performance engine was humming.

That mindset is outdated. B2B buyers are already 70% through their purchasing process before your sales team ever gets involved. Buyers are reading analyst reports, scanning peer reviews and watching product videos all before they reach out. In more than 80% of cases, it's the buyer who makes the first move.

That means your brand needs to work harder, earlier — shaping the narrative long before your team gets a chance to pitch. But you don't just need to think about buyers when building your brand. You need to consider algorithms, too.



When AI joins the buyer group

AI isn't just shaping how buyers find vendors; it's influencing how they evaluate and select them.

GenAI tools now perform the work of a junior team member: scanning content, comparing solutions and summarizing brand narratives before a sales conversation ever happens. For younger buyers, this shift is already here: 48% of Gen Z and millennial B2B buyers say GenAI is their preferred first point of contact.

In an AI-first world, the most effective capital-P Performance strategy is built on a brand that machines can interpret, buyers can trust and both are confident recommending. Your brand is a strategic signal both to buyers and the systems advising them. It influences whether a company is recognized, represented accurately and included in the conversation at all.

One company that's especially well positioned for the AI era is Gartner. Their research is widely cited. Their name is synonymous with credibility, and their language is consistent across formats — from analyst reports to earnings calls to how it's referenced in third-party content. When AI summarizes vendor landscapes or builds category shortlists, Gartner shows up because they are embedded in the channels and conversations buyers already trust.

Valtech research backs this up. Trustworthiness consistently ranks as the number one factor driving repeat purchases in B2B. That trust is no longer built through a handshake, however. It starts upstream, with how your brand shows up before the first touch.

If AI doesn't recognize you, do you even exist?

B2B buyers have gotten better at research, and AI has made them even more efficient. The search journey now mirrors the B2B buying cycle. It often starts broad: "best ABM tools." Then it narrows: "6Sense vs. DemandBase." By the time someone lands on your site, they're not browsing. They're validating.

Throughout this journey, AI prioritizes authoritative, high-trust sources — brands with clear, consistent narratives that show up across channels. It's no longer enough to produce good content. That content has to be distributed widely and aligned with a coherent identity, one that's easy for both people and machines to understand.

AI also depends on access. If your most valuable content is buried behind forms or paywalls, it might not be surfaced at all. Brands must ensure their best thinking is machine-readable, indexable and unambiguous.

Put it all together and brands move from demanding attention to building trust. Valuable, consistent and accessible content helps brands appear throughout the buyer's journey, from ungated research to analyst reports to LinkedIn discussions. By the time buyers need a solution, they are already top of mind.

Multimodal branding: be recognizable everywhere, instantly

AI doesn't consume content as humans do. It processes everything — language, visuals, voice, video — all at once. It looks for patterns. That makes brand consistency not just a creative goal, but a technical necessity.

Multimodal branding is a modern spin on a timeless principle: Reinforce identity through distinct, repeatable cues.

Take Adobe. Whether you're watching a product demo, attending a summit keynote or interacting with generative features in Photoshop, it all reinforces the same brand voice: premium, creative, trustworthy.

Their Firefly and Sensei platforms don't just carry consistent names. They show up with unified language, visuals and messaging. That coherence makes them easy to interpret across formats, and easy to trust at scale.

Brand as the last moat in an AI world

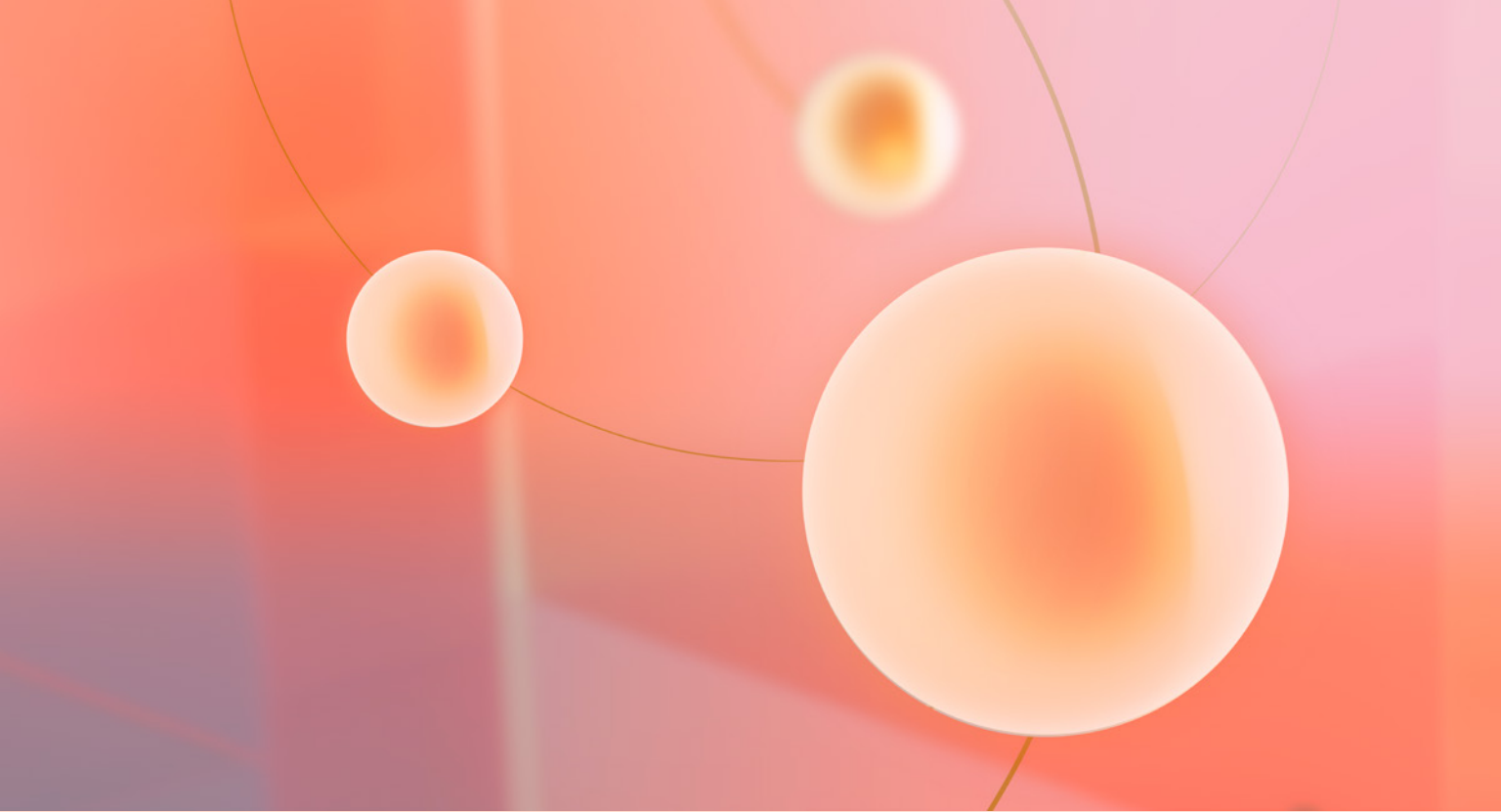
AI can amplify your message, but it can't define your purpose. It can distribute your voice, but it can't give it meaning.

Purpose remains the foundation of a strong brand. Companies that stay true to it will cut through the noise, building trust and credibility with both people and machines.

The real advantage isn't visibility. It's being sought out.

Recognition will matter more than reach. Trust more than clicks. And the brands that prioritize connection over short-term wins will be the ones that thrive.

Brand isn't in opposition to performance. It's what makes sustainable performance possible.



Purpose remains the foundation of a strong brand. Companies that stay true to it will cut through the noise, building trust and credibility with both people and machines.

Divide and conquer

How digital twins are becoming our AI teammates

By

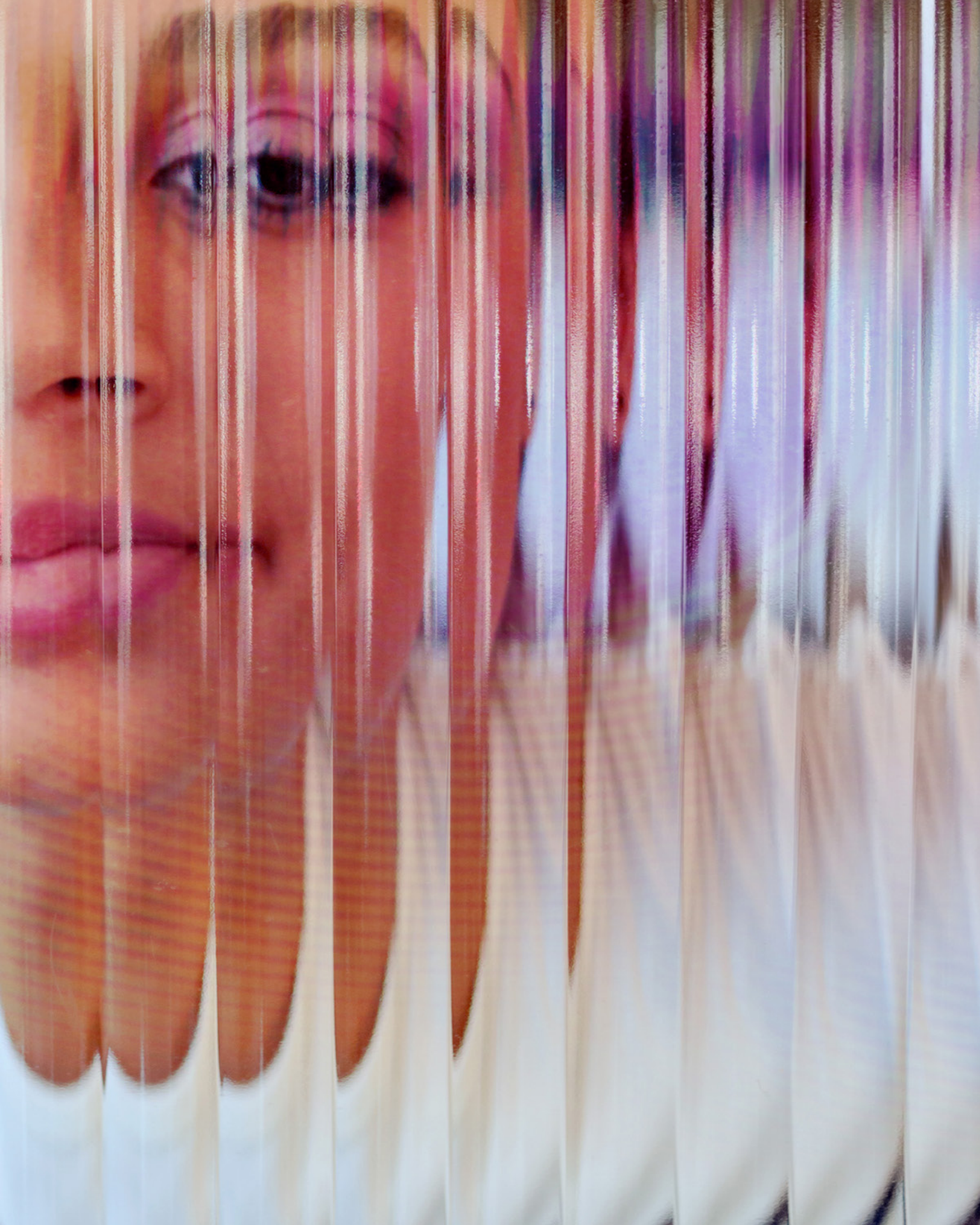
Karl Hampson, Data & AI CTO

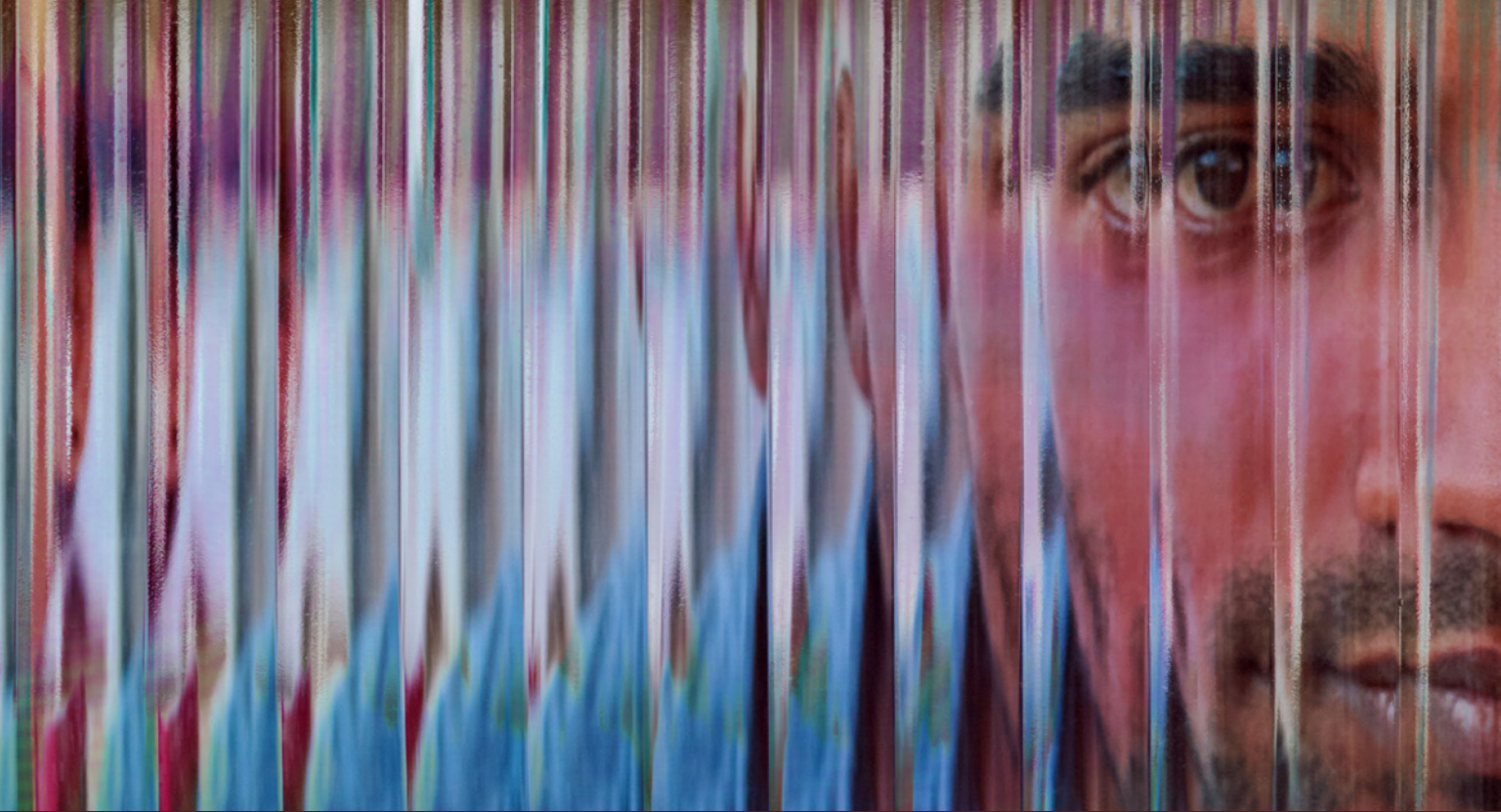
People have long speculated about the idea of digital twins that mirror our personalities, preferences and behaviors — dynamic replicas that could work, think and act on our behalf. But for most of that history, the idea has been more fiction than fact. The technology simply wasn't there. What we do have are digital twins of systems we can measure and model. A digital twin of a Rolls-Royce engine makes perfect sense: the system is deterministic, governed by physics and responds predictably.

But people aren't engines. We're emotional, unpredictable and deeply contextual. We're stochastic. And modeling that kind of variability introduces a whole new level of complexity.

A digital twin of water? Easy. We know when it freezes and when it boils. A digital twin of me making a complex decision after two coffees and a bad night of sleep? Good luck with that.

But thanks to recent advances in AI, we're starting to see credible efforts to replicate aspects of human decision-making. We're not talking about full-body doubles but slivers of you, trained on context and tuned for specific tasks. That's where things get interesting.





The opportunity ahead isn't about building copycats of ourselves. It's about practical, contextual augmentation. It's about building smarter agents that work for us — not just on our behalf, but for us.

Sliced, not copied: the age of mini twins

This shift in thinking opens up a more practical, if fragmented, possibility: What if the digital twin of the future isn't a complete replica of a person, but dozens of mini ones?

In the Apple TV series *Severance*, a psychological sci-fi drama where employees undergo a procedure to split their work and personal memories, the character Gemma is fragmented into multiple AI-like simulations. Each room she enters contains a version of her that exists solely to respond to one specific fear or scenario: turbulence on a flight, writing a thank-you note, being stuck in traffic. These aren't master replicas; they're contextual slices of personality.

That's a much more realistic view of where AI is headed.

In enterprise settings, agentic AI is already creating functional proxies of people performing narrowly defined roles. Want an agent to schedule meetings? Write a followup email? Draft code snippets? That's all possible today and improving quickly. These agents aren't true twins. They don't "think" like you. But they can act like you. At least well enough to pass.

And here's where things get even more nuanced: humans don't disappear from these workflows. Instead, they sit in the loop — guiding, correcting and injecting judgment where rules alone won't suffice. The most effective agentic systems aren't replacements for people. They're teammates. Digital twins that complement, not clone, our contributions.

You could argue that a GPT answering emails in my tone or generating summaries from my notes is a digital twin. Or maybe it's just really good tooling. Either way, we're building fragments of ourselves into systems that can carry out tasks with increasingly little oversight.

When your twin works for someone else

The most advanced digital twins of people might not be the ones we design for our own use — but the ones built by brands to predict our behavior. Every click, scroll and pause feeds a model. The result is a behavioral simulation of you.

When designed with care, these digital twins create value on both sides, helping companies meet their goals while genuinely enhancing your experience.

And as AI gets better, those behavioral models will get increasingly accurate. The challenge — and the opportunity — is to design these systems for mutual benefit. Not just to optimize conversion rates, but to build trust, deepen relevance and respect autonomy.

Where we go from here

Taken together, these developments suggest a future filled not with one perfect replica of a person, but many context-specific ones — scattered across platforms, optimized for different purposes, serving us in different ways.

We may never create a single, complete digital twin of a person. But we are already deploying fragments of ourselves across digital systems — in the workplace, in consumer tech and in every brand interaction we have.

The opportunity ahead isn't about building copycats of ourselves. It's about practical, contextual augmentation. It's about building smarter agents that work with us — not just on our behalf, but for us.

As we enter this new phase, the most responsible, and exciting, thing we can do is shape a future where digital twins are designed with intention, powered by insight and aligned with human outcomes. In the age of AI, the question isn't whether digital twins are coming. It's who's building them, and how they are serving us.

Architecture of experience

CX decoded: expert takes on systems, signals and storytelling

Today's customer experiences are no longer designed around a single user, channel or moment. They're living systems — spanning human and AI users, shaped by real-time signals and built to scale without sacrificing brand integrity. Our experts unpack what it really takes to design experiences that are as intelligent as they are personal.

“

To create magic,
we need rigor

You have to be rigorous
and deliberate to
keep enhancing
the experience. You
can't just skip to the
brilliant AI feature
that writes flowery
product descriptions
without lifting a finger.
Somewhere along the
line, there has to be data,
planning — rigor. Things
don't happen by magic.

Mike Davison, Lead Experience Analytics
& Optimization Consultant



Why self-serve isn't always the smartest option

Until recently, most experiences were built around self-serve — great usability, great content. But in some industries, offering a supported journey is a game changer. With the rise of DXPs and data-driven experiences, that kind of personalization has only really become possible in the last five years.

Paul Carysforth,
Experience Analytics Director



Designing for the human vs. agent

Right now, we design for one user — the human. But soon, we'll be designing for two: the human and their digital agent. We need to ask: What content does each need? What do we serve the human and what do we serve the agent that works on their behalf in the background?

Katerina Nishan,
Associate Creative Director



The new division of labor in CX

Customer experience will soon become AI-first. Humans still have a key role in orchestrating those experiences, but the heavy lifting — the work I started my career doing — will be handled more efficiently and effectively by machines.

Lindsay Ratcliffe, MD UK and SVP Product,
Innovation and Data Services Europe



The hidden cost of complexity

It's very tempting when we're talking AI and customer journeys to move toward greater complexity. We really have to fight it, because what we end up with is a monster — with a lot of content that everybody has to manage and update and that ultimately doesn't serve the real needs of the end users.

Jesper Lykke Nielsen,
EU Data and AI Director



The way forward

Co-creating the future with AI starts by letting go



By
Helle Jensen,
Nordic Executive Director,
Experience Design

We've spent years mapping the customer journey — sketching it on whiteboards, sticking it to walls, imagining a perfect path from first touch to final sale. But what happens when the customer doesn't follow the map?

AI has exposed the limits of our linear thinking. People drop into the middle of experiences. They loop back. They hand off parts of the journey to digital assistants. Often, they don't move through our carefully curated paths at all.

We're entering a new era, one in which customer experience is no longer something brands design in isolation, but something they co-create with individuals in real time. This means fewer rules, more logic. Less static segmentation, more responsive intelligence. Less control, more trust.

This is the power of AI. Not just to automate, but to liberate. To stop treating people like unruly inputs and start treating them like co-pilots in an ever-evolving Experience Loop.

Today, brands stand on the precipice. Staying in a world of structured journeys is safe. It's familiar. But only by diving into AI-powered CX can we truly deliver personalized, meaningful experiences.

Here's the opportunity: When we stop forcing people through fixed funnels, we get to truly see them. We stop asking, "How do we move them forward?" and start asking, "What do they need right now?"

The brands that thrive won't be the ones that guess right most often. They'll be the ones that can adapt instantly, empathetically and invisibly. It's human to want to be seen. But the way forward requires brands to sit back and let AI take the reins.

About Thread

Thread is published by Valtech — the experience innovation company that exists to unlock a better way to experience the world. With a focus on delivering exceptional business results, we empower brands to leap ahead of the competition and go beyond best practices.

By blending crafts, categories and cultures, our global team of 7,500 professionals in more than 80 offices worldwide help brands unlock value in a digitally accelerated world. It's at the intersection of insights and perspectives where we leverage the power of data, AI, creativity and technology to achieve experience innovation for many of the world's best-known brands, including L'Oréal, Mars, Audi, P&G, Volkswagen and Dolby.

See our work at [Valtech.com](https://www.valtech.com)



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innovation company.

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people experience the world
through advanced digital
technologies, data and design.

We do this by bringing together a global network of
engineers, designers, analysts, and CX professionals
with a proven ability to accelerate business growth by
transforming clients products, services and systems.

Our global footprint allows us to deliver impact at scale.
While our nimble teams bring the agility and adaptability
that allow us to create breakthrough innovation and
speed-to-market.