

CANNES UNCANNED 2026

THE B2B FIELD GUIDE TO CANNES

Three days' worth of B2B insights
around three of B2B's biggest pillars.

TRANSMISSION.



AN OVERVIEW

A TALE OF TWO FESTIVALS

Cannes has always been where businesses of all shapes and sizes strut their stuff. But this year, things felt different.

American brands turned up in full force, bringing athletes, DJs, and A-listers with them to the Palais. There was greater focus on creative merit amongst the awards - and fewer of them as a result (20,000 in 2026 vs. 27,000 in 2025). And Creators enjoyed as much representation as the Advertisers.

For B2B, though, buyers - and the fact they decide early, from a shortlist of three, mostly before they're in market - were on the mind.



86%

start with a Day One shortlist in mind

92%

buy from that Day One list

3

brands on the average Day One list

Key B2B Statistics

Marketing is moving from
an attention economy to an
intelligence economy – the old
game was grabbing attention;
the new one is being genuinely
useful at the right moment.

Colin Fleming, CMO, Business at OpenAI



THE TRENDS

WHAT'S SHIFTING IN B2B?

There's a lot of change happening in our industry. And taken together, they read less like trends and more like a job description for what the modern B2B marketing function should be.

CREATIVITY

Businesses are finally catching on to the fact that enterprise buyers are still humans making decisions, and that distinctive brands command pricing power.

TRUST

From a nice to have to a strategic objective, businesses gain a competitive advantage through expertise, authentic stories, and consistent behaviour.

CONTENT & STORYTELLING

Focus on joining things up across thought leadership, product, advocacy, events, and owned media as buying journeys get longer and messier.

CUSTOMER INTELLIGENCE

Otherwise known as your moat. First-party data still matters, but the edge is where CRM, buying signals, behavioural analytics, and AI inference are combined into one view.

INFLUENCE

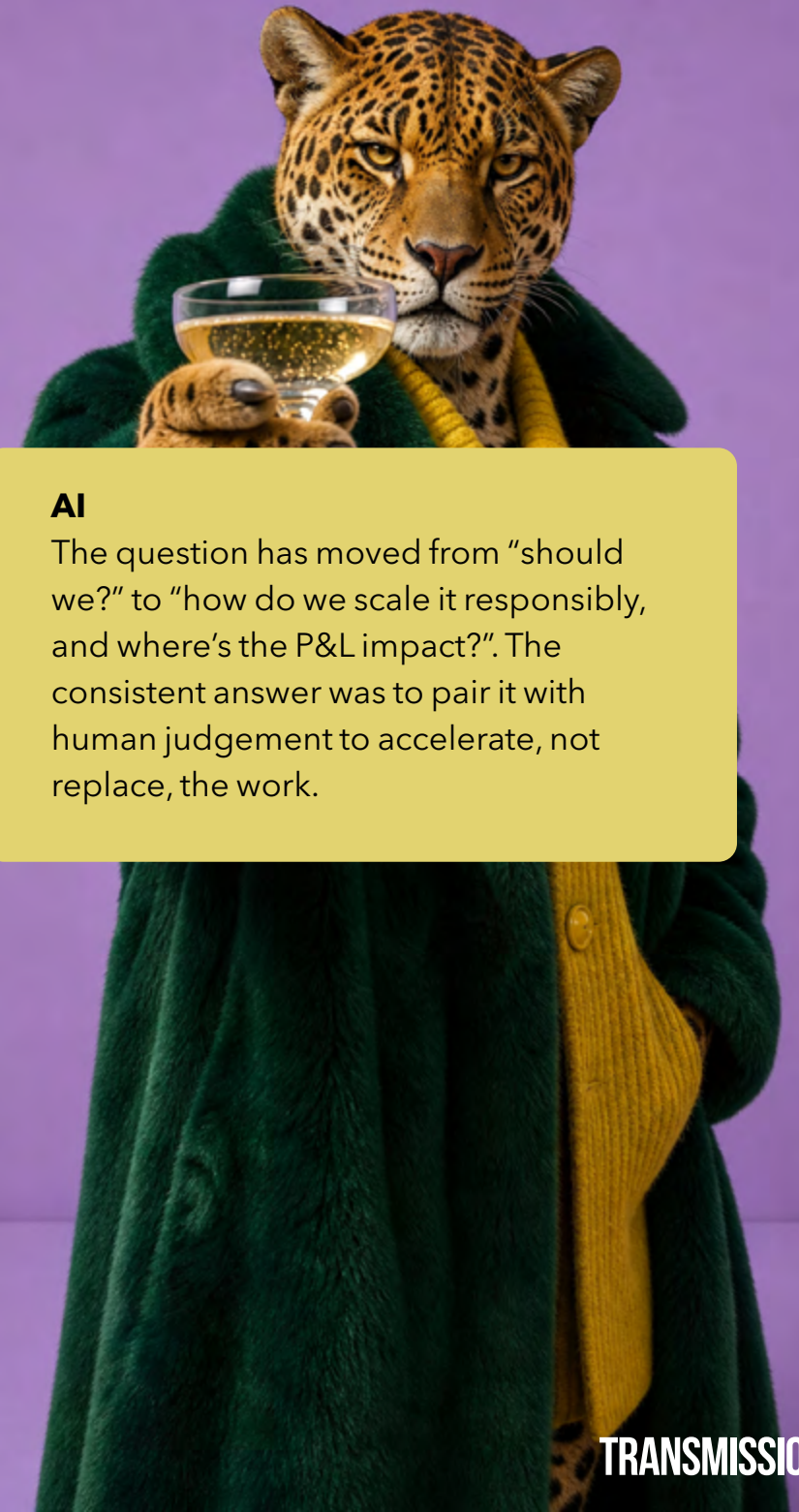
As AI makes content abundant, expert Creators are key to unlocking authenticity in B2B marketing. People trust people, making Creators a demand engine.

MEASUREMENT & ALIGNMENT

Work with Sales, Product, and Customer Success teams for alignment between marketing metrics and commercial outcomes.

AI

The question has moved from "should we?" to "how do we scale it responsibly, and where's the P&L impact?". The consistent answer was to pair it with human judgement to accelerate, not replace, the work.



MEDIA

NEW CHANNELS TO KNOW

Our first day dived into all things media, with key themes like: the increasing domination of platforms, data, and tech; streaming and CTV; B2B Creators; and Reddit and TikTok.

The pattern? B2B brands are already executing, whereas platforms are still launching – changing the ask from ‘which channel?’ to ‘who helps us join it all up, and how?’



	The croisette	Our room	The gap
Reddit The channel nobody owns	Recently brought out new ad tools, and Reddit’s own research found half of buyers check AI recommendations there before making a decision. Also brought out ABM measurement.	A key platform for research and one of the most-cited sources feeding LLMs. The challenge? No single person owns, and any kind of marketing speak is immediately flamed.	It’s an organisational design problem before it’s a media one. Who owns Community, and how does a brand earn trust there without the polished line?
Streaming & CTV Are you brave enough for the living room?	Agentic CTV and ‘brand inside the show’ – with the living room pitched as the next B2B channel.	Real appetite, grounded by hard questions on TAM maths, and whether the brand belongs there. Essentially, ‘relevance beats raw reach’.	Easy to say yes in the room. But once everyone leaves, would any B2B brands really do it?
B2B Creators The necessary discipline to let go	LinkedIn launched a Creator Marketplace built around credible experts and practitioners, not the cheapest reach.	Some B2B brands are already there. Some found that smaller community voices out-engaged the big names. Important to agree about briefing tightly, and letting Creators keep their own voice.	Use metrics that matter: One attendee found referral traffic jumped from 7% to 30% across a three week period – enough to convince a sceptical CEO.
TikTok The wild west, and a quiet success story	Hard to predict what breaks through. The same content can flop three times and land the fourth, making it tough to defend the ROI.	Audiences like developers already live there and use it to learn.. That turns TikTok into a credible route to technical audiences.	Narrow the audience, speak its native language, and treat it as a long game – not a single bet.



MEDIA

THE FUTURE OF MEASUREMENT

We've covered which channels to trust. Now, the question becomes: who's neutral when every platform has its own agenda? The answers had less to do with data and more to do with people.

SHORT-TERM PROOF FOR LONG-TERM BETS

How do you defend a channel whose payoff is 12-18 months out, within a business that runs quarter to quarter? Find the small metrics that matter to the person signing the cheque, use it to buy another quarter, and keep the long-term work running quietly underneath.

THE BUYING GROUP BLIND SPOT

Events are easy - you know the accounts and personas in the room. Everywhere else, B2B marketers admit they can't measure how much of the buying committee they've actually reached, calling it a data unification problem, not a data availability one.

TRUST, NOT DATA, IS THE TALLEST HURDLE

Data quality isn't the hard part when it comes to attribution. It's whether Sales and Marketing decide to trust each other. In B2B, there's a temptation to overcomplicate the story with MQLs and models that lose internal Sales stakeholders in the first two minutes.

The counter-intuitive winner?

Saying 'we got this wrong, let's pivot' builds more credibility with the C-suite than any polished dashboard.

SALES

THE REALITIES OF MARKETING-SALES ALIGNMENT

For the conversation we keep having, some familiar goals: alignment, a seat at the table, and Marketing as a value driver. But also three moves that can truly move it forward.

SELL THE BUDGET TO THE CRO, NOT CFO

Don't defend budget in isolation. Let the person who sells for a living advocate the investment that protects their number and builds next year's pipeline.

DON'T DEFEND THE BUDGET IN ISOLATION

Agree on one to two metrics the Marketing, Sales, and Finance teams sign up to. Go beyond 'alignment' as a word on a slide and get everyone following the same north star. 'Marketing up, P&L down' is the scenario every CFO fears.

MAKE DATA UNIFICATION THE UNSEXY PRIORITY

Unglamorous but essential: tie marketing data to sales data so everyone sees through to pipeline and closed deals. Terminology also matters: agree on what key metrics and terms really mean.





CREATIVITY

FINDING A STORY ONLY YOUR BRAND CAN TELL

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Few B2B marketers can, and that gap is the point. That unique narrative becomes your north-star 'big idea', earning its keep as something you run campaigns under for a couple of years – allowing you to experiment elsewhere.

THE RISE OF COMMUNITY INFLUENCERS

'Community building' was everywhere on the Croisette. But not every business has a large marketing team. For smaller operations, try advisory boards. They aren't necessarily easy to manage, but they also don't need the scale necessary to build a community.

Leveraging your C-suite is a good start. They tend to be leaders in their own field, giving your business access to their network of decision-makers.

IS THE 'BIG IDEA' STILL A STRATEGY?

The 'big idea' is great in theory. But does it still hold up today? AI makes it easier to do more in less time. However, exceptional ideas take longer to produce – and only exceptional ideas have the legs to last more than 12 months.

To earn that time, try joining up everything we covered in this field guide in your business. It works for our guestlist of senior B2B marketing leaders, and does for our clients.

THE PLATFORMS
WILL KEEP SELLING
THE ANSWERS.
OUR JOB IS TO HELP
YOU NAME THE
PROBLEMS - AND
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TRANSMISSION. ■

