



EPISODE 8

8: Agentic AI and the attention economy: Insights from Ryan Fleisch, head of product marketing for Adobe Real-Time CDP, and audience manager at Adobe

Host: Alan Hart, leader in marketing and customer strategy, Deloitte Consulting LLP

Guests: Ryan Fleisch, head of product marketing for Adobe Real-Time CDP, and audience manager at Adobe

Alan Hart: Are you ready to go beyond the basics of marketing? I'm Alan Hart and this is marketing beyond where we talk about the questions that spark change and share ideas that challenge the status quo. Join us as we explore the future of marketing and its endless potential.

Today on the show we have got Ryan Fleisch. He serves as head of product marketing for Adobe Real Time CDP and Audience Manager. His current role, coupled with his previous experience and roles in solution consulting and really helped him understand the technical nuances of marketing and advertising technology as well as the big-picture trends that were faced in our industry.

On the show today, we talk about the attention economy. How 5,000 messages per day are influencing us, and how to maintain people's attention in that overwhelming bombardment of messages and

Marketing Beyond | Episode 8

advertising. How relevance in the importance of data are linked to help make sure you can capture the right amount of attention. Talk about a new announcement that Adobe has around data collaboration tools that are really marketer-first tools versus say big clunky technology that takes a lot of technical know-how. And when you talk about the differences between GenAI, who we have all heard many times over and over again, versus this new agentic AI and how that is taking us from a notion of synthesizing data and understanding, to actually be acting on that data on our behalf, really allowing us to scale our impact as individuals and as departments. So, I hope you enjoy this conversation with Ryan Fleisch.

Well Ryan, welcome back to the show.

Ryan Fleisch: Thanks so much. Thanks for having me, Alan. Good to be here.

Alan Hart: Yeah. I'm excited to have this conversation. You have had a lot going on in your life recently. Moving, a new dog, a new baby. How are you adjusting? It's a lot of change.

Ryan Fleisch: Just about everything's different from the last time we caught up. Exactly right. I was in Manhattan for a long time. I said I was going to do one year there and that ended up being about 13 years, but this past year, my wife and I made the move out of the city. We moved to Connecticut. A week after we moved into the house, we got a little golden doodle and shortly after that had our first kid. So, welcome, Scarlet into the world.

Alan Hart: That's awesome. So a baby girl, it sounds like, that's awesome.

Ryan Fleisch: Yeah, it's been incredible. So I just got back from paternity leave a few weeks ago and is improbably blessed to have a few months to really just enjoy that time with the family.

Alan Hart: That's awesome. A lot of change. Enjoy. Because it goes really fast, especially with kids.

Ryan Fleisch: I'm already realizing that.

Alan Hart: The first couple of months, which you are in right now, like the sleep deprivation is real. So, it might be hard to remember, but like after you get the sleep under control, then definitely savor every little moment.

Ryan Fleisch: I will definitely blame sleep deprivation if I say anything incorrect today on the podcast.

Alan Hart: I love it. Let's talk about your career. Like what was the path? You are now the head of product marketing for Adobe Real Time CDP and Audience Manager at Adobe. Where did you get your start and kind of like how did you end up here?

Ryan Fleisch: Yeah, I always thought I wanted to go into traditional advertising, branding, that type of work, and then it wasn't till I discovered the world of digital marketing and the time things like paid search when it was in its infancy. Then I just really found a passion in that where for someone like me, who, I think has a creative bent to myself but doesn't have a formal training and things like graphic design or copywriting. I found that the digital side of marketing can still allow you to be very creative and what that strategy looks like, but still have that data-driven approach of what's working and what's not and really feeling the impact that you are making.

Marketing Beyond | Episode 8

So I started doing that on the agency side and then on the brand side. And after working it both of those types of companies, the thought of going to work for a technology company that was actually powering these types of campaigns and the tools that I was working in all of the time sounded really appealing. And Adobe was doing a lot of cool stuff in that space. So I made the jump over to Adobe and originally worked in solution consulting, which I really, really enjoyed. I got to go pretty deep on the technology. I got to be talking to clients all of the time and really understanding their needs. And after a while I realized my favorite aspect of that job was, you know, how do you position the value and find the right solution for someone? And product marketing seemed like a natural progression from that.

So I was able to then think about not just the deal that I was working on at the time, but the overall business of what are the opportunities that we could pursue? How do we really provide value for our clients and how do we communicate that message and that value and that story out to the market at large. So I did that on the advertising cloud and now Adobe advertising for a while. And then made the move into our customer data products and our CDP, our DMP and have just been loving it ever since. We have had a lot of new innovation lately, a lot more forthcoming and kind of sing seeing it go full circle between bridging the data and the content, the creative side of the equation.

Alan Hart: I love it. Well, I know we will get into maybe a couple of announcements that are underway, but before we get there, the customer data and audiences. You can't really talk about audiences. I think without talking about attention. And how do I get, maintain, keep attention? And I know I think you have talked about this thing of known as an attention economy. What should we be thinking about as marketers, as we think about the attention economy today?

Ryan Fleisch: Yeah, I think back a few years we had the former CMO of Beats, the headphones, speak at an Adobe event. He said something that's really resonated with me. He's like, people ask me who my competitors are. And you think I would say other brands of headphones. He's like, but really my competitors are anybody else who's competing for attention on the places that I'm running my brand messages and my ads. And I think that's the world that a lot of brands are in now, is you are in a place where studies have shown consumers only spend 400 milliseconds when an ad is put in front of them, if they deem that something is relevant to them and they want to engage with or if they're just going to let it fly by the other thousands of ads they might have seen that day. And I think that's high stakes. And we think of us as marketers where we have probably spent weeks, months, longer building and strategizing a campaign and a plan and an audience strategy and the content behind that for all of it to come to this culmination of a few milliseconds and say did we get it right or not? So that's where I think to your point, yes, when you think of an audience strategy or a data strategy that has to be the underpinning of, is this actually going to make the most of those last milliseconds and be relevant for those folks.

Alan Hart: Well, getting and understanding customers, you have got to know who they are, right? You have to know how you are transacting with them. What are the natural breaks of segments or audiences that I can start to think about marketing to to drive up my relevancy, because relevancy, I think is correlated with attention in my mind.

Ryan Fleisch: Absolutely.

Alan Hart: And all of that requires first-party data. And so, I'm curious now that we have kind of got first-party data under our belt, where can we go from there? Like what's new in data collaboration with partners that I might have or thinking about third-party help if you will. How are you guys at Adobe and specifically, I guess around audience and CDP thinking about that?

Ryan Fleisch: Yeah, there has always been a trade-off: scale and accuracy historically when it comes to data. I've got my first-party data, which is typically limited in size relative to other types, but it's probably going to be extremely accurate. I've worked directly with those prospects or customers, collected it with consent. I know what they're interested in. Third-party data, specifically third-party cookies historically have made it easy to buy just broad swaths of data, but the accuracy you know of those has often been in question. So it can certainly help you get that scale, but it's not going to be as pinpointed to delivering that right message as your first-party data.

So then after years of talking about this cookieless future, so much so that when Google announced they weren't going to deprecate cookies, my wife walked into the room. She had seen the headline and said, does this mean I have to still hear about the cookieless future for longer now, I thought this was over with. But I think, even most of the studies now are saying, okay, the portion of the internet that's going to be accessible by third-party cookies is somewhere between 15% and 20% depending on what study you look at. So that's really left brands at a place where, okay, if I don't have the same scale that I did before on third-party data, how do I get more extensibility out of my first-party data and make sure I have the reach with that where I can use that as not just my highest-value data for reengaging or building loyalty, but also as a seed for how I'm going to find more users that might look like that.

So that's one of the things that we have been really, really excited about and we just launched in general availability a few weeks ago. Is real-time CDP collaboration. So it's a product within a product. Our CDP at large, we have said look, if customers are building a data strategy, hundreds of the top global brands have done that with Adobe already on our CDP, wouldn't it make sense to say, hey, there's new ways now that you can use that first-party data to go work with the second party. And understand in a privacy-safe way more about those same users or find more users that look like them. And this is we've done this in a way where it doesn't require spinning up an entirely separate solution that introduces a new silo in your business and requires a lot of technical work. Think it's a very natural progression to say if you already have data sitting somewhere, let's give you new ways to use that and make that extensible.

Alan Hart: Awesome. So I mean, how does that, if I think about like, what is it look like—you're thinking about like a clean room-type functionality where I can connect to my partner or connect to another data source that I may not own, but I can help use it to marry with my data and make it more actionable. Is that the best way to think about it?

Ryan Fleisch: Great question because clean rooms have been around for quite some time. What we have realized is that when folks set up a clean room, there can be a mismatch between the resources required to set it up and the beneficiaries of that. Meaning, if I'm someone who works in advertising or not a technical marketer, I have some pretty straightforward objectives. So, if I had an audience, I want to reach them. I want to target them. I need to fill the top of my funnel. But in order to do that, if I set up a clean

Marketing Beyond | Episode 8

room, these are very technical systems that often require a lot of resourcing from IT. And every time I want to work with another party, depending on what their tech stack looks like versus mine, I'm having to go through a whole sequence of events. If they're on one database and I'm on another. If they're already using a different clean room ... like the handshake between those can be very cumbersome.

So what we wanted to do is say, well, is there a different approach we can take where we can create a layer of data collaboration that's interoperable, where the interface is very user friendly for nontechnical roles. I can see overlaps of audiences. I can see recommended audiences. I can get measurement back on that. And I can work with parties that might have a different tech stack than me without a lot of work on a one-to-one fashion each time. So the interoperability is huge.

And the third piece is making sure that we don't have to actually send all of one company's data somewhere else, which is typically what happens in a clean room style setup. You are putting all of your data into someone's clean room instance, and then the process is run from there. Our brilliant engineering team and the multiple patents they've taken this approach now, have basically constructed a way where through what we are calling Adobe "clean sketches," we can create a very highly accurate representation of the data without it having to move. So, we are talking like 99% accuracy where two parties can work together and understand these overlaps and be able to get more extensibility out of their data without having to go through all of those steps that we just went through for, what, setting up a clean room and working with different parties might look like in a previous version.

Alan Hart: I mean it seems like a pretty big step forward for functional users—the marketers of my life if you will.

Ryan Fleisch: And coming from an advertising background myself, it's music to my ears.

Alan Hart: Yeah, exactly. Well, we have been talking about data. I mean data both our own first party as well as now the extensibility you can get with partners and collaborators. I mean it keeps growing exponentially. How do you keep up with all of that data?

Ryan Fleisch: There has got to be some help from technology there, because if you look at IDC puts out a study that just looks at the global data sphere as they call it, and they're saying that the amount of data in the world is going to double in size just from the years 2024 to 2026, which were smack dab in the middle of right now. So if you think of this exponential growth on the data side, contrast that with hey, even though STEM jobs are growing faster than many other sectors, there becomes this deluge between can we keep up with just the amount of data and the amount of breadcrumbs that are getting strewn across more channels and more devices than ever before to make sense of actually really understanding a customer and creating the right experience for them. And so to me that can only be really empowered by leveraging AI to say, can we cut through some of this noise and really help humans extract the right insights and let them still focus on what humans do best of the strategy behind this, the creativity behind this, all of those elements. Right? But be able to surface the right insights from the overwhelming amount of data that's out there right now. So that's been a really exciting you know focal point for Adobe as well. And that spans in our creative cloud, or digital experience products of how is AI really embedded—and

Marketing Beyond | Episode 8

not just AI, but Generative AI and agentic AI—in all of these systems in a way that can empower humans to make the most of every touch point.

Alan Hart: Yeah. We have been hearing about AI and particularly GenAI and marketing for quite some time. Can you help me understand like the differences between GenAI and agentic AI? Like, how do I think about it working?

Ryan Fleisch: Yeah, I am remembering. I think the last time we talked, Alan, it was the last time we did this podcast. I think that was like a month after kind of the explosion around ChatGPT had just happened. And everybody was like, oh my God, what's this? This Generative AI? It's incredible how far it's come and widespread it's come since then because we've had Generative AI in market for a while. We had AI assistant as a big announcement in previous Adobe Summits. And you can think of agentic AI now is still building upon that, but in a few really interesting ways. When you think of Generative AI, or AI assistant like we build, it's kind of a single pane of glass where you can interact, ask questions, get answers, find really interesting insights there.

But when you take that to the next level, it's "What can the AI on the other side of that pane of glass really do for you?" So, I think the few things that I think of is, how proactive is it versus reactive? With Generative AI, I might ask a question and it might generate an answer in a reactive way. Where in agentic AI, it doesn't just understand my business data, it actually understands my business processes and my goals. So it could come to me proactively and say, hey, we know you are trying to hit this acquisition target. We are recognizing that there's an audience segment that might be really ripe for conversion that we'd recommend targeting here that could help you hit those goals. Would you like me to set a campaign for that?

And so that second piece then of actually going and executing on tasks versus just providing the information for you to go execute on them is kind of the other, I think, vector to look at this through of how much is there a degree of freedom where an AI agent can go execute on your behalf to help you hit those business objectives, not just sift through the data. So that's where we are at now with agentic AI. And I always kind of think it makes more sense when you put it just in the lens of a maybe consumer problem that all of us have encountered. Like if I were to as, you know, a reservation app, is there a table available at this restaurant on this time? Sure, it can give me an answer to that, and that's somewhat helpful. But if I had the ability to have, say look, I need a table for my wife and I, it's our anniversary on Friday, find a romantic restaurant that has availability between the hours of 7:00 and 9:00. And recommend a list of three places for me, and I'll let you know which one I want you to go book, and then go do that. Well, that's a completely different paradigm shift of now how AI can really help me work through a whole problem that I'm trying to solve rather than just a reactive approach on step by step.

Alan Hart: Yeah. No, that's a really good example. I think about it at my simplistic analogy is like a way to scale some aspect of myself to take action on something based on the criteria I'm looking to take action around. So it's that, not only knowledge synthesis that we get with GenAI, but knowledge synthesis plus action, which is kind of cool, very cool.

Marketing Beyond | Episode 8

Ryan Fleisch: And I think aside from just the marketers using it, it's also ... you know going back to what we were just talking about with consumers. It's not just that they're leaving behind more data than ever, it's that they're getting targeted with more ads than ever. There's studies that are saying if you live in a city like New York or large metropolitan city, you're likely getting targeted between 5,000 to 10,000 ads every single day. Which, to put that in perspective, Alan, if you remembered all of the ads you saw, you would use over half of your brain's entire mental capacity in under two years.

Alan Hart: So wow. Yeah.

Ryan Fleisch: Yeah, exactly. If you forget a birthday or an anniversary or something to say, you got targeted with too many ads. That hasn't worked for me yet.

Alan Hart: I don't think that's going to work with my wife. But my wife has another view.

Ryan Fleisch: Exactly. But I mean, when you think of cutting through that noise back to the attention economy and everything, having that understanding of a consumer—but again, making the most of the last milliseconds not just with the data, the data will only take you so far. It's then about, are you actually putting the right content in front of that person? And a previous co-worker in Adobe—just brilliant creative named Adam Morgan, he wrote a book called "Sorry Spock, Emotions Drive Business," but he kind of put it down to a formula that if you want a lasting memory or lasting impression, it has to be some combination of an anomaly plus a memory.

So you have to think of, is there some type of match that you are drawing with the data to someone? But then can you do something that's in its own way, an anomaly that stands out with the creative that you are serving them. And I think that's the piece that has been frankly underindexed for a long time. Since we have had so much data that we have just gotten so data-driven that we have forgotten that hey, all of this is really a means to an end. That it should just inform a better experience that you are putting in front of someone. It's not an excuse to build microsegments and segments of one, and only to then have the same web experience or the same ad or the same email be sent to them.

Alan Hart: It's fascinating. Well, I mean, I guess first of all, kudos on the technology advancements you guys are making at Adobe for folks like myself and the folks that I work with, marketers every day. It's super important to make sure we are empowering marketers of the future with the tools they need to do their job. So, kudos on the advancements you guys are making.

Ryan Fleisch: Thank you.

Alan Hart: Of the things I love to do on this show is get to know you and whoever we are talking to a little bit more. And my favorite question to ask everybody that comes on the show is, has there been an experience of your past that defines or makes up who you are today?

Ryan Fleisch: That's a big one. I don't know if it makes up everything about who I am today, but I guess the one that stands out is when I was graduating college, I really knew I wanted to end up in New York City. And it was the game of how do you get there and how do you make it work financially and everything? And I had a group of friends that were like and they all worked in finance ... they were doing

Marketing Beyond | Episode 8

fine in college. They were like "hey, we have one room become available in this apartment." It felt like about 30 people lived there. I think it was six, six of us. But another one of my friends that wanted to work in marketing as well. We looked at this and we were like, well, we could make this work if we split the room. And so the next thing you know, two grown men are Googling: Do they make queen-over-queen-sized bunk beds? And, we made it work. It was a fun experience for a year. I don't think we would have wanted to do it much longer than that. But I think back, like if I hadn't have done that and just found a way to make it work to get to New York and start a career here and take an opportunity in digital marketing, I think I would have ended up in a wildly different place right now. And so, I think the kind of just resilience or overcoming, yeah, it's not always going to be perfect every step to get somewhere but look at the long-term horizon to that. Is this still taking you where you want to be? Sure there's going to be temporary speed bumps, that might get you there, but just overcome those and keep your eye focused on the long term.

Alan Hart: Yeah. Don't fear the bunk bed.

Ryan Fleisch: Don't fear the bunk bed.

Alan Hart: Well, I'm curious. Did you find a queen-over-queen bunk bed or did you have to make something?

Ryan Fleisch: And so, no. That's a very funny question because we did.

Alan Hart: Wow, okay.

Ryan Fleisch: And with a caveat. It was like, oh, mattresses are included. Well, this thing gets delivered. And we're like, where are the mattresses? And the guy points to these small little boxes that are like 4 inches by 4 inches, like they're rolled up in that. So the mattresses were a thick sheet basically. They were like 1-inch thick. Like okay, we will buy different mattresses. And then we realized that there's a weight limit and we couldn't. So that was not the most comfortable year of sleep there, but.

Alan Hart: But it worked, it worked I guess, to some degree.

Ryan Fleisch: Anything for the future of marketing, right?

Alan Hart: I love it. I love it. Although what advice would you give your younger self if you are starting this journey, Oliver besides mattress clarity.

Ryan Fleisch: Besides, don't fear the bunk bed? I would say look at and I know this is a little bit cliché but plan out your goals and your objectives and look back on your success. Not by one year at a time, but by much longer horizon, five, 10 years. Because if I would have only looked at what is that one year going to look like moving to New York versus maybe a comfort of where I already was or staying in one job and not trying something new that I thought was going to be a little bit scary at the time but maybe even take me closer to where I wanted to be. I look back now, just being at Adobe alone coming up on 11 years next month and I think the longevity when you look back on that, you are like sure there was other opportunities or paths I could have taken in that horizon. I look back now, I'm like, I'm so happy that I kept my eye focused on the long term here. That I've had a company I believe in and that believes in me

Marketing Beyond | Episode 8

that it has been able to help me achieve my objectives and that I've been able to see so many talented people come through here and hopefully help them in a small way achieve their objectives as well. I think that's been the most rewarding piece to me. So, I know it's easy when you are younger to say everything has to be now and here and instant. But just slow down. Look at the long term and really keep that in focus.

Alan Hart: Yeah, it's great advice. Great advice. Is there either something you are trying to learn more about yourself, or a topic you think marketers need to really be learning more about today?

Ryan Fleisch: I think on the marketing side, the agentic AI piece I think is absolutely critical, whether you work in marketing technology and you need to learn more about the opportunities with how that can be leveraged in the platform. Or if you are a marketer at a brand or an agency or anywhere else, right?, thinking about how can agentic AI, as you put it Alan, be a force multiplier for yourself and help you scale. There's a huge amount of opportunity that's already here and quickly coming with that. So that would be the thing I would learn more about.

On the first part of your question, the personal front, I found that in the wake of Generative AI and everything from just incredible image generation and video generation and everything else, I've actually also found myself appreciating physical art more than I ever have before. I think that's been kind of over the past year, my increase in just personal passion there of learning more about art history and new artists that are out there today that I've wanted to collect. It's taken on a whole new appreciation for me and my dad was actually an artist as well. He worked in acrylic paints and did still lifes and just incredible work. And I've found now that while there can be amazing generation of content so quickly, when you actually start to understand the story and the piece of someone that they have poured into a painting or any other form of art from a physical standpoint that I think it's something I've come to appreciate even more these days.

Alan Hart: That's beautiful. It may be related to art, but are there any trends or subcultures that you are following, you think other people should take notice of?

Ryan Fleisch: I would say it's that. I think there's been a rise in art. And we're seeing a rise across all aspects of it, I think you have seen a rise, maybe more so in some of the digital trends of art like NFTs and the like. But I would encourage you like find some artist. It doesn't have to be painting, but writing whatever form it might be, and kind of step back and appreciate the work and again the piece of themselves that they've literally poured into that that couldn't be learned from just data there.

Alan Hart: Awesome. Last question for you. What do you feel like is the largest opportunity or threat facing marketers today.

Ryan Fleisch: I think the opportunity is actually pairing the content with the data because the abundance of data that we have as we just talked about a few minutes ago, Alan, you know it's, I think we have over the years taken John Wanamaker's quote too seriously (that's along the line) of *I know half my marketing, half my advertising works. I just don't know which half.* We have all heard this cliché a million times. But I think we have A/B tested ourselves so much that we have made John Wanamaker very sad. That we've

Marketing Beyond | Episode 8

said, well, okay, I can track this channel over here, so I'm going to put more dollars into it and move them from another channel via television or whatever else that might be a more creatively engaging channel. Because in the years past, maybe I couldn't track it with the same level of data.

I think now that there are a number of ways. We just talked about the data collaboration aspect. There are a number of other ways where you can get that data-driven approach across channels. So rethinking what is the creative strategy that goes into these now? Where it doesn't just have to be something that historically we have been able to track, since ... the exception of the channel, like paid search, still an extremely important channel, but how do I now kind of step back and say I have all this data—what is that really telling me that I should be creating across a channel like connected television or programmatic audio or whatever else that it might be.

Alan Hart: No, `very thought provoking. My brain is going down the rabbit hole there.

Ryan, I just want to say thank you. It's always fun to talk to you. I feel like you are my technology whisperer these days. So thank you for coming on explaining stuff to me.

Ryan Fleisch: Thanks so much for having me, Alan. Always a pleasure to talk.

Alan Hart: The views, thoughts and opinions expressed are the speaker's own and do not represent the views, thoughts and opinions of Deloitte. Material and information presented here is for the general information purposes only and does not imply endorsement or opposition to any specific company, product or service.

Hi, it's Alan again. Marketing Beyond is a Deloitte digital podcast. It's created and produced by me with post-production support from Sam Robertson. If you are new to Marketing Beyond, please feel free to write us a review and subscribe on your favorite listening platform. I also invite you to explore the other Deloitte Digital podcast at deloittedigital.com/us/podcast and share the show with your friends and colleagues. I love hearing from listeners. You can contact me at marketingbeyond@deloitte.com. You'll also find complete show notes and links to what's discussed in the podcast today, and you can search our archives. I'm Alan Hart and this is Marketing Beyond.

Learn more



Visit the Marketing Beyond library:

www.deloittedigital.com/us/marketingbeyond

Marketing Beyond | Episode 8

This podcast contains general information only and Deloitte is not, by means of this podcast, rendering accounting, business, financial, investment, legal, tax, or other professional advice or services. This podcast is not a substitute for such professional advice or services, nor should it be used as a basis for any decision or action that may affect your business. Before making any decision or taking any action that may affect your business, you should consult a qualified professional advisor. Deloitte shall not be responsible for any loss sustained by any person who relies on this podcast.

About Deloitte

Deloitte refers to one or more of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited, a UK private company limited by guarantee (“DTTL”), its network of member firms, and their related entities. DTTL and each of its member firms are legally separate and independent entities. DTTL (also referred to as “Deloitte Global”) does not provide services to clients. In the United States, Deloitte refers to one or more of the US member firms of DTTL, their related entities that operate using the “Deloitte” name in the United States, and their respective affiliates. Certain services may not be available to attest clients under the rules and regulations of public accounting. Please see www.deloitte.com/about to learn more about our global network of member firms.

Copyright © 2025 Deloitte Development LLC. All rights reserved.