



EPISODE 15

Live from Cannes Lions 2025: Candid conversations on the future of marketing

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

Guests:

Celia Salsi, global head of product marketing at YouTube

Kaya Yurieff, team leader for the creator economy at The Information

Kenny Gold, head of social and creator at Deloitte Digital

Emma Simkiss, associate director of brand and marketing at the International Olympic Committee

Michelle McGuire Christian, chief commercial officer at Converge™ by Deloitte for Sports

David Geisinger, Marketing Technology, Data & Operations offering leader at Deloitte Digital

Alan Hart: Are you ready to go beyond the basics of marketing? I'm Alan Hart and this is Marketing Beyond, where I chat with the world's leading chief marketing officers and business innovators to share ideas that spark change and inspire you to challenge the status quo. Join us as we explore the future of marketing and its endless potential.

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What's next for marketing? At the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity, I sat down with industry leaders, creators, and innovators to find out. In this special edition of Marketing Beyond, brought to you by Deloitte Digital, we share their candid confessions direct from the heart of Cannes.

Kenny Gold: Creators are running a trust business and an authenticity business that's rooted in their humanity and how they connect with their audiences.

Kaya Yurieff: There is more that the industry has to do to kind of connect brands and creators of all sizes together.

Celia Salsi: Reach alone is no longer enough. And so, for brands to really break through and move people from discovery to purchase, they need attention, relevance, and trust.

Michelle McGuire Christian: I'd say data's become the lifeline for all sports and leagues, including the International Olympic Committee, on how they engage with fans, figure out what they want, and how to personalize content to them in a way that we've never seen before.

Emma Simkiss: I think it's all about the content, of course. And in our case, it's about providing a platform for people to interact as much as possible with athlete content because that's what they love. They love athletes. They love the sport.

David Geisinger: The ability to move from one-way communication to two-way community is really something...

Alan: On today's episode, we have something a little different for you. Instead of a single interview, we're going to share snippets from candid conversations I had with marketing leaders on the iconic Croisette at the Cannes Lions Festival, where Deloitte Digital hosted a series of exclusive crystal ball brunches. Over French cuisine and sparkling cocktails, some of the brightest minds in marketing gathered for panel and roundtable discussions to chat about all things shaping our industry. After each brunch, we invited the speakers into a private "confessional"—just them, the mic, me, and their boldest ideas about what's next. Each confessional is a few minutes long, but together they paint a vivid picture of where marketing is headed today. In this episode, you'll hear perspectives on the evolution of the creator economy, the future of fan engagement, and predictions that might just change the way you think about your work. Let's dive in.

Our first stop: the "Collaborate with Certainty" brunch, where we explore how the creator economy is transforming the way brands connect with customers and drive growth. Global head of product marketing at YouTube, Celia Salsi, shared a perspective that really highlights a fundamental shift in how influence works today. Here's what she had to say:

Celia Salsi: So, I'm Celia Salsi, and I lead the global product marketing for YouTube Ads.

Alan: Well, you had a great conversation today at the brunch. What do you see as the relationship between creators and brands and how they're evolving?

Celia: I think to breakthrough in today's world, like people are bombarded, consumers are bombarded with messages. So, what we realized through research is that reach alone is no longer enough. And so, for brands to really break through and move people from discovery to purchase, they need attention, relevance, and trust. And what we've seen is that creators are best positioned to drive higher attention with the format, the tone, and the style that they use to deliver content. Relevance because literally you can find so many communities of interest on

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the platform like YouTube. And trust. And that's actually a point that we've also seen, is that users trust the recommendations of creators more than traditional celebrities or anyone else. So, their voices are very powerful, and thus creators are an incredible channel and leverage for brands to break through and get consumers from discovery to purchase.

Alan: Do you see new models evolving in terms of how they work together?

Celia: Yes, absolutely. Yeah. We see leading brands—they work differently with different creators. A few of the researches that we've seen: First, brands go beyond just their category. So, let's say you're a beauty advertiser. In the past, you would tend to work with beauty creators. We see that evolve. We see them, of course, work with beauty creators, but work also with people into music. Just really focus on culture as what they're trying to encompass themselves as a brand beyond the product category that they sell. That's one. Then we see them forging deeper, longer relationships with a core group of creators. So instead of just doing one-offs, they really start forming long-term partnerships, you know, like a year, two years old, and the relationship really evolves. And today, we had one of our creators, who actually spoke about how the brand she works with, she has a really long-term partnership with. So, they evolve, and they're able to do much more than just one-off product streams.

Alan: Celia points out that users trust the recommendations of creators even more than celebrities. This is a powerful insight for many brands trying to break through the noise. Her "aha moment" is that creators aren't just helping brands get noticed; they're fueling the entire journey from discovery to purchase. What brands need most is attention, relevance, and trust, and creators are uniquely positioned to deliver all three. It's a reminder that in today's landscape, authentic creator relationships aren't just a tactic; they're a strategic advantage. I also caught up with Kaya Yurieff, team leader for the creator economy at The Information, who brings a unique viewpoint on how brands can turn those authentic connections into lasting engagement.

Kaya Yurieff: I'm Kaya Yurieff. I'm a reporter at The Information.

Alan: Well, today's brunch had a lot of perspectives. What new perspective did you take away?

Kaya: I think what was really interesting is how brands and creators still are not speaking directly together. And I think the smaller the creator is, the worse that is, right? It gets a little bit; the relationships get outsourced. So, I think there's more that the industry has to do to kind of connect brands and creators of all sizes together.

Alan: And then as you think about takeaways, what takeaway did you have coming away from the conversation?

Kaya: Yeah, it was so interesting to hear from the motorcycle athlete who I think it just shows how niche the creator economy has gotten. And I thought what was so interesting is that she was really speaking about how she identifies first as an athlete. So, thinking about who is a creator, how you define yourself. The other piece I think is just the ROI and measuring that. And that's still such a challenge for this industry. And there's so many different mechanisms for doing that, and it's something that marketers are still really thinking through how to measure the effectiveness of creators. They know that people trust creators, but measuring that versus traditional advertising is very different.

Alan: Kaya's insight is a wake-up call for marketers. As the creator economy becomes more niche, the connection between brands and creators can actually get weaker, not stronger, especially for smaller creators. Too often, those relationships are outsourced or transactional, when what's really needed is direct, meaningful collaboration. Her

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“aha moment” came from hearing a motorcycle athlete describe herself first as an athlete, not just a creator. It’s a reminder that creators are multidimensional, and brands need to recognize and respect those identities. Finally, Kaya points out a challenge we hear again and again: ROI. Marketers trust creators, but measuring the impact of creator collaboration, especially compared to traditional advertising, is still a work in progress. Deloitte Digital’s head of social and creator, Kenny Gold, was also in attendance and shared a perspective that really cuts through the hype we’re hearing everywhere about AI.

Kenny Gold: Yeah, Kenny Gold, managing director at Deloitte Digital.

Alan: What’s the one myth that was debunked today in the conversation?

Kenny: This idea that every creator is going to be using AI right away was the big one for me. I think so much of what’s being talked about on the Croisette this week is going to be around AI and agentic services. And while the technology is incredible and disruptive and something we all need to be integrating into how we think, creators are running a trust business and an authenticity business that’s rooted in their humanity and how they connect to their audiences. And the balance of AI versus human created is still being figured out.

Alan: What was the one takeaway as you think about the conversation in terms of collaborating with certainty?

Kenny: It’s no brief, which I loved the creator that we had with us today. She was saying, “Don’t brief me,” which I like that because we have to be creating these sandboxes where creators can play within the brand versus telling the creator prescriptively what to do. And I thought that was just an awesome takeaway for all marketers.

Alan: Kenny’s “aha moment” is that, while AI is the talk of Cannes, creators are still running a trust and authenticity business, one that’s deeply rooted in their humanity. The balance between AI and human creativity isn’t settled yet, and that tension is where the most interesting work is happening. I also love Kenny’s takeaway about collaboration: “Don’t brief me.” Instead of prescribing every move, brands need to build sandboxes where creators can play and bring their own voice. In a world of infinite content, it’s the genuine voices that cut through the noise. That’s a hopeful shift for the industry; one that empowers creators and leads to more authentic, resonant work. It’s clear that collaboration and creativity are driving forces in marketing.

From creators to fans, our next brunch, aptly titled “Engage with Certainty” tackled the question: What does the fan of the future expect from their entertainment experiences? Here we heard first from Emma Simkiss, associate director of brand and marketing at the International Olympic Committee, about how engagement is measured and what truly drives it.

Emma Simkiss: Yeah, hello, I’m Emma Simkiss. I work for the International Olympic Committee. I look after the brand and marketing team.

Alan: Give one piece of advice for organizations on how to drive fan engagement.

Emma: It’s all about the content, of course. And in our case, it’s about providing a platform for people to interact as much as possible with athlete content because that’s what they love. They love athletes, they love the sport. So have a think about your audience, what they’re going to be most interested in, and create an incredible content strategy and plan around that.

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Alan: Emma's approach to measuring success is evolving in a really meaningful way. It's no longer just about how many people you reach, but about the depth of that engagement: Are fans coming back? Are they buying tickets? And how much time are they spending with your content? Her "aha moment" is that driving real engagement starts with great content, but it does not end there. It's also about creating platforms where fans can interact directly with athletes, building a sense of connection and community. Emma reminds us that a winning content strategy is rooted in what your audience actually cares about, and that's where true loyalty begins. Shifting gears: Michelle McGuire Christian, Converge™ by Deloitte for Sports, chief commercial officer, dives into how data and AI are transforming fan engagement.

Michelle McGuire Christian: Michelle McGuire Christian, I'm the chief commercial officer for Converge by Deloitte.

Alan: How is technology changing the way fans engage and leagues and sports groups engage with their fans?

Michelle: I'd say data's become the lifeline for all sports and leagues, including the International Olympic Committee, on how they engage with fans, figure out what they want, how to personalize content to them in a way that we've never seen before. And AI, frankly, is enabling them to pull in that data and use it to give fans the experience that they want.

Alan: If you had one piece of advice for how brands and leagues should engage with their fans with certainty, what would that advice be?

Michelle: Yeah, I think engaging with certainty involves first landing your data, right? Collecting it, normalizing it, and then using that infrastructure downstream and have the data tell you what the fan wants. As opposed to assuming I know what fans want or need, have the data tell you. Use unsupervised clustering algorithms to group those fans into audiences that enable you to know what channel, what message, what tone of voice that they actually care about.

Alan: Michelle's insights really drive home the central role of data in today's fan engagement strategies. Her "aha moment" is that it's not just about collecting data but about using AI to truly understand what fans want. That way, brands, sports teams, and leagues can deliver the right content on the right channel, with the right tone. Instead of making assumptions, Michelle urges us to let the data speak for itself. That's how you move from generic outreach to truly personalized experiences, and that is the future of fan engagement. Building on that idea of personalization and community, let's hear from David Geisinger, Marketing Technology, Data & Operations offering leader from Deloitte Digital, who shares how technology is taking fan engagement to the next level.

David Geisinger: OK, David Geisinger, Deloitte.

Alan: What's one innovation in fan engagement that you think is going to become standard?

David: You know, I think that the ability to move from one-way communication to two-way community is really something that I think given where technology is, the real-time nature of how individuals, athletes, the broader sports community can integrate using technology to bring real-time data, real-time feedback, real-time statistics through sports devices, through athletes' perspective, and through community will be different. I think that we've seen an evolution of fantasy sports a lot over the past few years, and the evolution of fantasy leagues and how that has created a whole new set of fans, as well as real-time stacking of content. And the ability to follow an athlete or a team's journey from the moment they begin training through the ups and downs, the trials and tribulations,

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through, as they used to say on the *Wide World of Sports*, through the thrill of victory or agony of defeat, all the way through the post-event or post-athletic occasion is going to be really interesting, and fans will continue to engage and find ways through devices, through technology, through creative, through AI to find their place in that model.

Alan: If there was one piece of advice you'd give organizations looking to engage fans with certainty, what would that be?

David: Well, I mean, it all starts with the data. Data is the foundation of any relationship, but in any communication. So, understanding, and I know it's cliché, but communicating to the right person, at the right time, with the right message—but that takes time. That takes not only a solid understanding of who your fans are, but it also requires the necessary technology and information architecture to ensure that you've structured that data in a way that allows you to use innovations like GenAI to segment and identify new things within that data that you otherwise, as a human, we might not be able to find those nuggets quickly, but then be able to act on that data. So, one of the big things is to help organizations move away from working too much in the business to working on the business. And so, starting with that data, starting with the technology foundation and then really focusing on custom experiences that the fans, the teams, the leagues, the athletes need in order to continue that engagement and create those unique moments that bring out the best in everyone.

Alan: David's vision for the future of fan engagement is all about moving from one-way communication to true two-way community. His "aha moment" is that real innovation happens when fans aren't just passive spectators, but active participants sharing feedback, accessing real-time stats, and connecting with athletes' journeys in a much deeper way. He points out the rise of fantasy sports as just the beginning. Imagine following an athlete or team from training to victory and defeat, with technology and AI helping fans find their place in that story. But David reminds us it all starts with data. Building meaningful relationships with fans requires not just collecting data, but structuring it and using the right technology and information architecture to communicate with the right person, at the right time, with the right message. Doing so will help you unlock the power of GenAI and other innovations to truly understand and engage your fans.

After hearing these confessions, I asked each panelist to choose one word to describe the Crystal Ball Brunch experience. Here's what they had to say:

Kenny: Hopeful.

Kaya: Energizing.

Celia: Optimistic.

Emma: Vibrant.

David: Creativity.

Michelle: I'd say, certainty.

Alan: That wraps up our special edition episode spotlighting our Cannes confessionals. Thank you to all our speakers for sharing their insights with us. This episode is part of a special miniseries brought to you by Deloitte Digital, recorded on location at the 2025 Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity. Over the next few weeks, we'll be dropping new episodes featuring conversations with leaders from some of the world's most influential

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brands and capturing the latest insights, trends, and stories shaping our industry right now. Be sure to subscribe so you don't miss an episode as we continue this journey from Cannes. We'll be back to our regular content after the miniseries concludes. Thank you for listening, and we'll see you next time.

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