

The Authority Economy

How implementing human-led, trustworthy AI is essential to preserve your brand's voice and authority

Executive Summary

The attention economy has shaped digital marketing for years. But attention alone is no longer enough. In a world where generative AI can produce endless volumes of content at speed, the more valuable currency is authority: the ability to be trusted, recognised and believed.

This changes the role of AI in the content supply chain. Purely AI-generated content may increase efficiency, but without the right controls it can weaken brand voice, create compliance risk and erode customer trust. As large language models (LLMs) increasingly act as gatekeepers of content discovery, you'll need to appeal to their criteria for surfacing it. They will similarly privilege signals of authority, consistency and provenance. So, scaling content quantity without scaling judgement on quality is, by any measure, a race to irrelevance.

The opportunity is not to replace human creativity, but to amplify it. Organisations that embed trustworthy AI into their content supply chains can move faster while protecting the qualities that make their brand credible: consistency, transparency, compliance and distinctive human judgement.

Perrine Masset

Partner

perrinemasset@deloitte.co.uk



Matt Clark

Director

mjclark@deloitte.co.uk



Kevin Telfer

Associate Director

kevintelfer@deloitte.co.uk



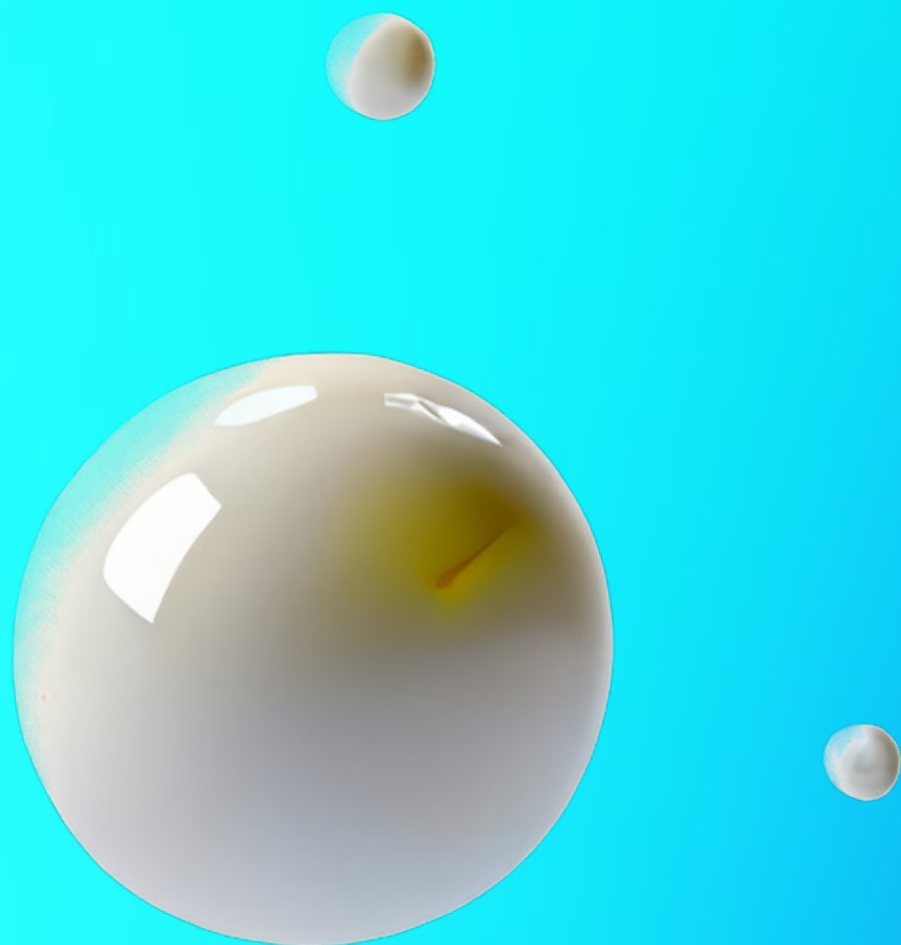
Introduction

THE STRATEGIC NEED FOR TRUSTWORTHY AI IN THE AUTHORITY ECONOMY

Gen AI has revolutionised content creation faster than any technology since the printing press. It means organisations produce more content, more quickly, and more efficiently than ever before. And it allows for rapid iteration and testing of countless content variants, which can offer a significant competitive edge in a crowded digital landscape.

But, as the last twenty years of digital transformation have shown, technology on its own is only part of the answer. And at an organisational level, the technology enablement behind the AI content revolution brings substantial concerns as well as opportunities. It's always been true that organisations want to reduce the cost of their content operations and that customers respond best to great content. That dynamic is at the heart of all content strategy and requires organisations to make serious choices.

And it's always been true that an overwhelming focus on speed and efficiency, without proper oversight, can jeopardise brand integrity, invite regulatory scrutiny, and erode customer trust – all critical components of a brand's authority. AI increasingly polarises these choices. Smart organisations recognise that governance, control and compliance are critical to safeguarding authority. Without the right guardrails in place, you risk diluting or damaging your brand due to inadequate governance. Without the right operating model, the pursuit of speed simply creates new bottlenecks, review logjams and inconsistent quality checks.



All this matters more now than ever before because we're moving beyond the attention economy into the authority economy. Catchy slogans or viral campaigns, and the production of vast amounts of content will not, on their own, sustain long-term success. There's simply too much content for individuals to process to consistently capture attention. And LLMs are more likely to summarise and recommend content from sources that are trusted and consistent. A brand is also a quality mark, a signal of reliability and expertise. You need people to care about what you have to say, and to trust it. That's what gives it authority.

So, to build enduring brand resilience and establish market authority, organisations must embed robust guardrails and a strong compliance culture within their content supply chains. It's a strategic differentiator, essential for long-term value creation and market leadership. You need to be able to answer the question:

How do we make
sure this is good
content that people
will actually want
to read and **that
reinforces our
brand authority?**

In other words, you need to scale effective human judgement in a way that doesn't slow you down.

The AI content revolution



We've already seen the transformative impact of AI-enabled content creation. Across marketing, communications, and customer engagement, it enables previously unimaginable scale and speed: our own work with clients, including a global leisure and travel brand, suggests that Gen AI can increase content authoring times by 75%. Global campaigns can be instantly adapted for dozens of markets, and personalised customer interactions delivered at an unprecedented pace. This technology empowers businesses to reach audiences more effectively and efficiently than ever before.

However, this rapid evolution introduces a new set of challenges, particularly concerning the establishment and maintenance of brand authority:

- 1. BRAND EROSION AND THE HOLLOWING OUT OF AUTHORITY**
- 2. ERODING CUSTOMER TRUST**
- 3. REGULATORY AND LEGAL EXPOSURE**
- 4. BUILDING TRUST AND AUTHORITY**

Brand erosion & the hollowing-out of authority

The risk of misinformation, an inconsistent brand voice, or content that misaligns with core values is a direct threat to reputation and, crucially, to a brand's authority. A single piece of off-brand or inaccurate AI-generated content can cause significant reputational damage, which may be difficult to repair, directly undermining the trust and expertise a brand has worked to build.

There are also more pervasive and long-term brand risks. Deloitte Brand Director Katie Farrell says that *'Brands that fail to ensure quality in their mass-production content model are likely to hit average. This average will probably feel quite robotic and dull. That's a problem because, for brands, voice and tone are everything.'*

This can lead to what Farrell calls *'A hollowing-out effect'* where brands lose their distinctiveness. This distinctiveness is also a core part of their brand authority – the unique expertise and perspective that sets them apart.

‘**Safeguarding voice** is crucial to successful content. I like to think about what ingredients make the best human conversations; things like **empathy, a sense of humour and reciprocity**. Trusted brands with authority are going to be the ones that can bring those human elements into their brand voice, thereby **solidifying their position in the authority economy.**’

Katie Farrell, Director, Deloitte Digital





Eroding customer trust

THE ULTIMATE CURRENCY OF THE AUTHORITY

At Deloitte we use a framework called TrustID to measure trust. This has four metrics: capability, reliability, humanity and transparency. Long term advantage in the market comes from having a trusted brand, and trust is the bedrock of authority. Without a clear, distinctive voice, it's hard to build that trust.

Inauthentic or biased AI-generated content can quickly undermine customer loyalty and perception, directly impacting a brand's authoritative standing. Consumers value transparency and authenticity. If they perceive content as merely a product of an unmonitored algorithm, their trust in the brand diminishes, and with it, their perception of its authority.

Trust matters. Recent industry surveys make this plain: the 2025 Edelman Trust Barometer shows that **88%** of consumers view trust as at least as important as quality and price¹. At the same time, independent news and information trust is at a historic low – the 2025 Reuters Institute's Digital News Report finds only **35%**² of people say they trust information in the news, down from **51%**² in 2015. Widespread concern about misinformation and AI-generated content is already changing behaviour: **66%**³ of consumers say they would boycott brands they don't trust. According to a Gartner survey of U.S. consumers, **50%**⁴ would prefer to do business with brands that do not use generative AI in their customer-facing content, advertising, and messages and **68%**⁵ of consumers frequently question whether the content they see is real, highlighting a **'trust recession'**.

Together these trends create a **'crisis of authority'** that demands organisations build verifiable, transparent content supply chains and embed trustworthy AI so their brand resilience is durable, not accidental. This crisis stems from many factors: the proliferation of deepfakes, the spread of misinformation, and a general unease about the ethical implications of AI. In this environment, **trust becomes the ultimate currency of the authority economy**.

Brands that fail to address this fundamental shift risk irrelevance and the loss of authority.

Regulatory & legal exposure

PROTECTING YOUR LICENCE TO OPERATE WITH AUTHORITY

AI regulation is struggling to catch up with the advances in technology that are outpacing it. One example is European governments scrambling to react to Grok-enabled inappropriate content on X. AI regulation and enforcement will increase to catch up with technology and its implications on society. Organisations face complex challenges related to intellectual property infringement, data privacy, and the responsible use of AI. Non-compliance can lead to hefty fines, legal battles, and severe public backlash, all of which severely damage a brand's credibility and authority.



Building trust & authority

***A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR YOUR
CONTENT SUPPLY CHAIN***

To navigate this complex environment and thrive in the authority economy, organisations need to take a holistic approach. Our Trustworthy AI Framework is at the heart of our approach. This means integrating governance, technology, and people-centric solutions into a cohesive strategy. It's not enough to implement isolated tools; a comprehensive framework ensures that every aspect of the content supply chain upholds trust and compliance, thereby reinforcing brand authority.



'Trustworthy AI can actually increase the speed at which you can scale AI in your organisation. We act as the **connective tissue between technology, business functions and risk**. The processes that we build are that connecting tissue, enabling organisations to **scale responsibly and authoritatively.**'

Lewis Keating, UK Director of Trustworthy AI, Deloitte

The key ingredients...

1. ROBUST GOVERNANCE AND POLICY: ESTABLISH CLEAR ETHICAL AI PRINCIPLES FROM THE OUTSET TO UNDERPIN YOUR AUTHORITY.

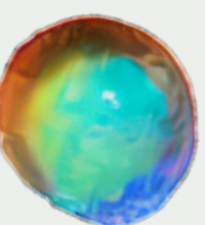
It's vital that you develop comprehensive content policies that define acceptable use, brand guidelines, and legal parameters for AI-generated content. You need to assign clear accountability for AI outputs and content quality. We ensure that AI tools are designed and developed responsibly. This includes risk assessments, technical guardrail design implementation, and the implementation of AI controls. We can also help you prepare for regulatory compliance by performing gap analysis against standards, building governance to enable this, and providing legal support in regulatory interpretation. You'll need to implement continuous regulatory intelligence to stay ahead of evolving AI laws and industry standards. This proactive stance ensures your organisation remains compliant and adaptable, protecting your authoritative standing.

2. INTELLIGENT TECHNOLOGY AND CONTROLS: DEPLOY SECURE AI PLATFORMS WITH ENTERPRISE-GRADE SECURITY TO MAINTAIN CREDIBILITY.

You'll need to implement content provenance mechanisms, such as digital watermarking, or metadata tagging, to identify AI-generated content and track its origin, thereby ensuring transparency and accountability. These mechanisms do more than support transparency for customers and regulators. They also strengthen the signals of source credibility that LLM-driven discovery increasingly relies on. Use automated guardrails, configured with deep context to enforce brand guidelines and compliance rules. This builds integrated review into the content supply chain to prevent off-brand or non-compliant content from reaching your end users, which could otherwise erode your authority. You'll also need to integrate human oversight. This ensures that AI is used as an effective lever for human creativity, rather than a replacement for it. And it's clear that for final approval of critical content, blending AI efficiency with human judgment and ethical review is crucial to maintain the highest level of authority.

3. PEOPLE, CULTURE AND CONTINUOUS LEARNING: FOSTER AI LITERACY ACROSS THE ORGANISATION TO EMPOWER AUTHORITATIVE CONTENT CREATION.

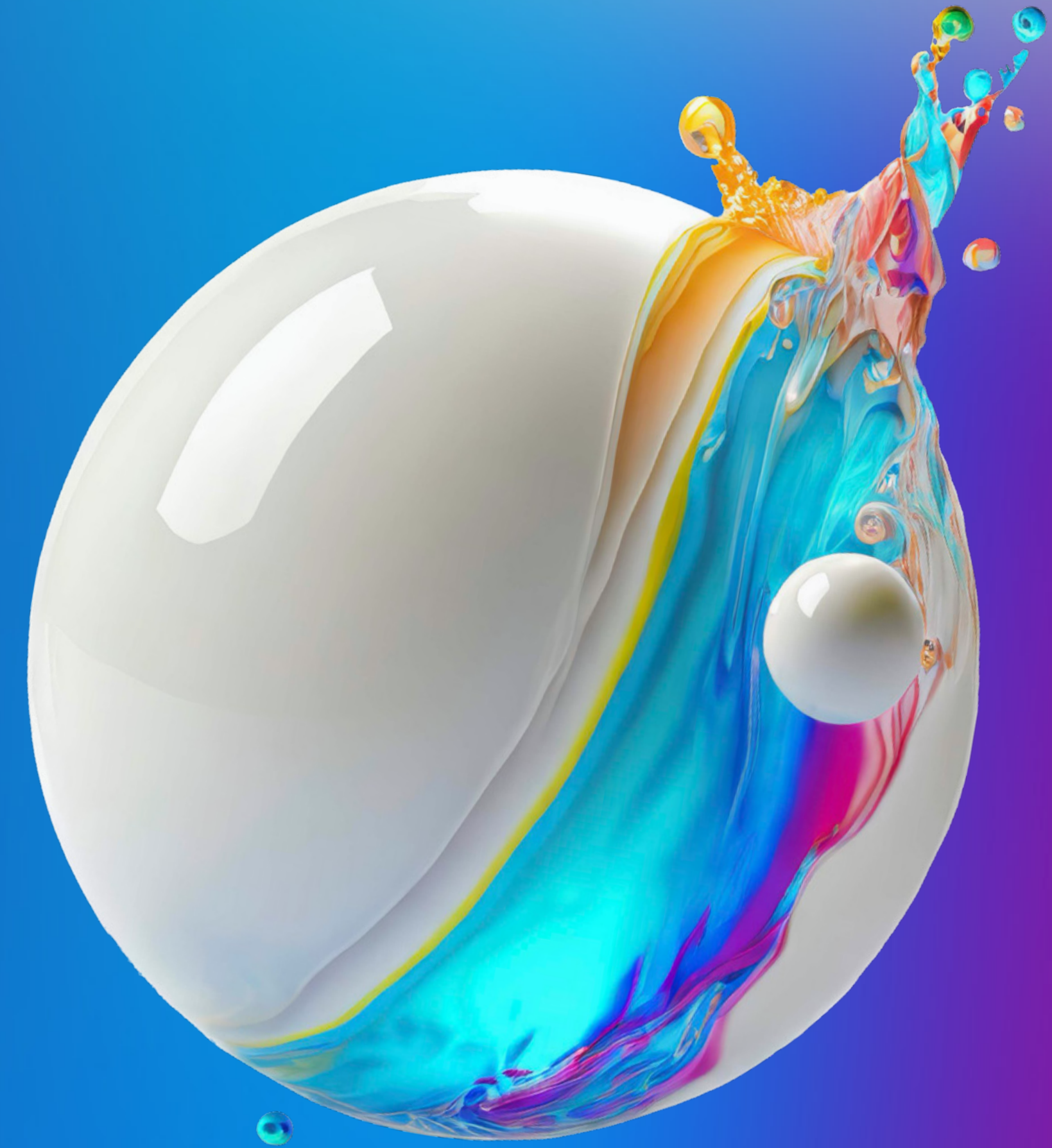
There's a workforce aspect to this as well. We always model effective organisational change around three main pillars: technology, people, and processes. You need to get all three right to succeed. Therefore, to have an effective AI-enabled content supply chain that builds authority, you'll also need to help your colleagues understand the capabilities, limitations, and ethical considerations of AI. Encourage cross-functional collaboration between legal, marketing, IT, and compliance teams to ensure a unified approach to AI content. Most importantly, embed a culture of responsible AI use. This means you need to promote ethical decision-making, encourage critical evaluation of AI outputs, and set up accessible channels for colleagues to report concerns. Continuous learning and adaptation are vital as AI technology and its regulatory environment evolve to make sure your organisation remains trusted and authoritative.



The Deloitte advantage

At Deloitte, we understand the intricate balance required to harness the power of GenAI while safeguarding brand integrity and ensuring compliance. Our approach is built on integrated expertise. We combine deep knowledge in AI strategy, risk management, regulatory compliance, and technology implementation. This allows us to deliver comprehensive solutions that address the full spectrum of challenges and opportunities presented by AI in content supply chains, helping you build and maintain your brand's authority.

Deloitte partner Perrine Masset is an expert at working with clients in regulated industries to develop robust, AI-enabled content supply chains with embedded brand guidelines and other guardrails.





'In a world where millions of pieces of content are posted every second online, trust and authenticity are no longer mere assets; they emerge as a true superpower for brands. Particularly in regulated sectors, **trust transforms into a decisive competitive advantage, a potent differentiator for leaders.** Faced with digital cacophony, consumers crave, more than ever, brands that embody **impartiality, empathy, and unwavering authenticity.** These fundamental qualities will forge lasting bonds and secure the loyalty of an increasingly discerning audience.'

Perrine Masset, Partner, Deloitte Digital

Trusted AI content supply chains cannot be copied and pasted. They need to **reflect the organisation's sector, risk profile, operating model, brand standards and regulatory exposure**. Whether you operate in a highly regulated sector or a rapidly evolving consumer market, we work with you to develop a strategy that aligns with your unique objectives and risk appetite, always with an eye on enhancing your market authority. We help you establish the right governance models, select appropriate technologies, and **cultivate a culture that champions responsible AI use**.

Deloitte helps clients turn trustworthy AI from a principle into an operating model. We're a partner that helps you unlock the **full, trustworthy potential of AI for long-term growth and brand strength**, while mitigating the risks. We'll help you **embed trust and compliance** at the core of your content strategy, so you can transform AI from a potential liability into a **powerful engine for competitive advantage and sustained customer loyalty**, solidifying your position as an authority that your audience wants to listen to.

Conclusion

***BUILD ENDURING RESILIENCE FOR YOUR CONTENT
IN THE AUTHORITY ECONOMY***

Building trustworthy AI is essential to help you navigate the complexities of generative AI. In the emerging authority economy, brands that prioritise clear guardrails and a robust compliance culture will elevate their ability to lead in the market. They will earn and maintain the trust of their customers, secure their reputation, and build enduring resilience, becoming recognised authorities in their respective domains.

This will protect your brand and secure a competitive advantage through sustained customer loyalty and an authoritative presence where long-term consistency matters more than any single content execution. AI can scale content, but only trustworthy content sustains authority and brand success.

We'll work with your people to build trustworthy AI into your content supply chain and scale their creativity and judgement.

Contact Perrine Masset, Matt Clark or Kevin Telfer to start a discussion about building authority into your content supply chain.

Perrine Masset

Partner

perrinemasset@deloitte.co.uk



Matt Clark

Director

mjclark@deloitte.co.uk



Kevin Telfer

Associate Director

kevintelfer@deloitte.co.uk





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