From Pilots to Practice: Six Lessons from prompt. New York

On 6 October we brought founders, investors, creatives and marketing leaders together to talk about what AI is really changing in marketing, media and creativity. The sessions ran under the Chatham House rule. And we used AI to help surface the sharpest lessons.

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The question is no longer whether AI will change marketing, but how quickly organisations can move from experimentation to implementation. From AI search to simulation, generative video and the agentic enterprise, the conversations kept returning to one tension: machine speed versus human judgement. These six lessons share much of what we learned.

LESSON ONE

Customers now find and buy through AI.

The way people discover and buy is shifting from search results to synthesised answers. Instead of visiting twenty websites over an hour, a shopper describes what they want and the journey "auto-completes" to a recommendation. Agentic assistants, like Muse or Instinct, go further, booking travel and buying goods for the consumer; one has reportedly handled more than $1 billion of transactions.

And it's not just for consumers – change is happening as much with corporate purchasing as consumer buying. Agentic procurement platforms such as Lio are already automating enterprise purchasing, so increasingly the buyer's agent will be dealing with the seller's, with rival agents competing to win the order.

As paid search traffic declines, it's harder to buy one's way to the top. Marketing to the machines, or AI visibility, is a new discipline and the start of many companies' AI journey. Each AI engine draws on different sources and blends ten or twenty of them into one answer, so brands need accurate, current information everywhere, owned and earned, not one well-optimised page. Product quality, brand reputation and consumer reports are all becoming more critical. It's getting harder to hide.

LESSON TWO

Build an intelligent organisation.

Rather than just using AI to write emails faster, the most advanced companies are using it to build a shared memory. AI-native firms record and transcribe internal meetings and sales calls, with everyone's consent, and make them searchable by anyone in the business. Larger enterprises are building a private intelligence layer of campaign results, audience data, brand guidelines and past decisions that sits on top of general-purpose models and gives them the company's own experience.

One global consumer goods company relied on around ten people, in-house and at its agencies, to turn media data into a monthly performance deck, leaving barely a week of the month to act. An agent now builds the deck, listens to the review meeting and learns from the decisions taken. Two years of one category's media activity, some 270,000 individual actions, were distilled into 169 decisions that moved the needle and seven repeatable patterns. Acting on them faster is projected to improve ROI by 20% in year one, improving each year as the system learns.

As one speaker put it: if only the company knew what the company knows. Now it can. And building this intelligence layer is at the heart of the AI-powered enterprise.

> **"The agent is actually the smallest part. The intelligence behind it, that operational knowledge, is the value."**
> *— prompt. New York, 2026*

LESSON THREE

Use AI-powered insights and simulations to improve decisions.

AI is also rapidly expanding the breadth and diversity of insights available to decision-makers, allowing them to test ideas directly and more quickly. Think of this as a way to improve product quality that's critical for AI-model ranking.

AI interviewers can now run hundreds of in-depth conversations in hours rather than the four to six weeks of traditional research: fast enough to gauge reaction to a brand crisis on the day, or to decide which ads in a live billboard campaign to change.

Behavioural simulation goes further. Models trained on real behaviour, such as card transactions, footfall, receipts and streaming, let teams narrow 5,000 product concepts to a

handful in a couple of weeks. One utility used simulation to learn that customers fell into arrears because of irregular pay cheques, not unwillingness; the product it launched as a result has since recovered tens of millions of dollars.

All of this is part of the same shift: using far more data, far more quickly, to make better decisions.

LESSON FOUR

Let AI surface the opportunities; keep people making the calls.

The step beyond the chatbot is AI that works proactively: monitoring live campaigns, flagging a creative that is starting to fatigue, spotting what competitors launch and suggesting what to brief next.

During a global football tournament, one brand owner's social-listening agent, trained on the genetic code of its brands, combined data at a scale no team could read and proposed ideas and hooks in real time. A human "locker room" of creatives then made and published the work. The time from insight to activation fell from hours or days to minutes; 70% of the insights acted on were surfaced by the agent; and the content was 2.3 times as effective.

Be realistic, though: the first phase is doing the work you already do, faster, and agents are nowhere near judging on their own whether an opportunity is right for a brand. The prize is letting AI do the monitoring and preparation so that people spend their time deciding.

LESSON FIVE

Turn pilots into the way you work.

For AI to change how a company operates, leaders need to stop running isolated tests. One global marketer has banned the word "pilot" and talks instead about "first units of scale": built properly from day one, inside the company's own governance, so they can roll out.

Start with a business problem, not a technology brief, and ask five questions: how will we create more value, how must we work differently, what technology and what skills do we need, and will this be a genuine competitive advantage? Give each project one owner of the data, the team and the problem. Move technology and talent together, "like a three-legged race", with hackathons, office hours and senior leaders visibly using the tools in meetings. Its first use case went from brief to live in six months; later ones went faster.

Most companies have a graveyard of AI pilots; the difference, speakers said, is leadership. Help people do their current jobs faster before redesigning roles. And reinvest what AI saves: one sportswear brand now creates product imagery while shoes are still at the factory, instead of shipping samples to studios worldwide, and is putting the savings into brand campaigns. Boards, one director noted, care more about growth than efficiency.

> **"When everybody has access to the same tools and everything becomes best practice, nothing is best practice anymore."**
> *— prompt. New York, 2026*

LESSON SIX

Human taste is the difference maker.

Soon every company will have access to the same tools to power their creativity. AI will clear out a great deal of mediocrity but it doesn't know what makes a joke funny, a story moving or an idea new.

Cheaper production should make brands braver, not blander: one carmaker brought to life an extremely ambitious idea that would once have been too expensive to greenlight. Taste also means restraint. Just because you can doesn't mean you should. Know when not to show up, remember that personalisation is more than knowing someone's name, and set out to solve for the consumer rather than sell to them.

Decide your policy on AI-generated people before they become indistinguishable from real ones, and be transparent wherever content could mislead. Above all, give creative thinkers a seat at the top table. As one creative leader put it, everything interesting about humans lies in our flaws.

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AI COMMERCE	**INTELLIGENT ORGANISATION**	**INSIGHT & SIMULATION**	**PEOPLE DECIDE**	**SCALE**	**TASTE**
Consumers and businesses now buy via AI. Be accurate everywhere it looks.	Capture decisions so the whole organisation learns.	More data, faster, behind every decision.	Agents watch and propose. People choose.	First units of scale, one owner, savings reinvested.	Same tools for all. Taste and restraint win.

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