



B2B'25 MARKETING

AN INDUSTRY PERSPECTIVE FOR 2025
CHINA EDITION

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WELCOME

Welcome to B2B '25, the first paper from the B2B community primarily based in China.

千里之行，始于足下... A journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step.

Our first step

In late autumn 2023, a group of passionate B2B marketers gathered in a quaint bar in downtown Shanghai to discuss the challenges and opportunities they faced at work, the economy, and their predictions for 2024. Over a glass or two of wine, they sparked ideas that would lead to the formation of a community.

Building a community

A small group was established on the Chinese social media platform 微信 (WeChat), where clients, agencies, service providers, and academics began sharing insights, brainstorming solutions, and staying updated on developments in the rapidly evolving B2B landscape. While the focus was primarily on China, thought leadership pieces and case studies from around the globe were also exchanged.

Fast forward to autumn 2024, and this expanded group decided to create B2B '25, our first paper targeting the broader B2B community. What initially began as a report on 'trends for 2025' has transformed into a rich compilation of insights, shared experiences, predictions, and practical advice for companies navigating 2025 – not just in China but globally. Many learnings and case studies will resonate with B2B companies worldwide.

Insights for All Stakeholders

Agencies and marketing service providers can glean valuable insights from industry specialists actively engaged in China. Enterprises and brands will find independent perspectives on achieving growth amidst changing market dynamics.

Nine contributors from diverse backgrounds stepped up to share their expertise, resulting in B2B'25 – a series of thought leadership pieces from specialists across various fields. This paper is designed for anyone involved in the B2B sector, not only within China but also throughout APAC and beyond. It offers insights from China's heavily digitalized and social marketing environment regarding branding, engagement and lead generation – strategies that can be adapted to other regions.

Inspiring Perspectives

The paper includes big-picture perspectives intended to inspire local markets to craft more engaging campaigns that drive business growth.

Contributions include:

- A PR expert discussing trends in corporate communications for the upcoming year.
- A content specialist explaining why content remains king and how to leverage it effectively.
- A tag-team collaboration between retail and activation specialists sharing insights from offline retail on how personalization is driving success in China.
- A data specialist addressing AI's impact on data management and strategies for brands entering the Chinese market.
- A digital brand specialist presenting her vision on how B2B digital strategies can be pivotal for success.
- An examination of the role of humans in an AI-driven world
- Another reflecting on the effectiveness of returning to basics during challenging times.
- A corporate coach sharing personal reflections on resilience during tough times.

Future Endeavours

We aim to publish more papers in the future focusing on specific industries and verticals. Our goal is for this community – your community – to become a vibrant hub for individuals seeking to advance their companies in the B2B arena.

I extend my gratitude to all contributors for their time and effort in shaping B2B '25. Their contributions were voluntary; no one was compensated for their input. I also thank BRANDIGO for their design work on this first paper.

We have established a B2B'25 group on LinkedIn and our WeChat group is open to anyone with access – details below. Please join our community as we support each other's growth and success in 2025.

If you are interested in learning more about this paper, feel free to reach out directly to the contributors or me. We also appreciate your help in sharing this paper to your own networks.

Thank you for joining us. I wish everyone great success in 2025...and a Happy New Year of the Snake.

Barry Colman & Mike Golden
Editors
Shanghai
December 2024

Trends for Public Relations & Communications

by Harriet Gaywood

Founder | Anoumis Communications

6 predictions

- B2B content will come more humanised, personal, and purpose-driven
- Online-offline hybrid trends will result in new B2B communication formats
- Technology such as AI will enable greater efficiencies and personalisation
- Crises will extend beyond brand blunders to include cyber attacks
- Long-term, ethical corporate behaviour will inspire EQ-savvy executives
- PR professionals will become more tech-savvy

Introduction

As we look towards 2025 and finish our planning for the year ahead, in the public relations and communications industry, both agencies and in-house departments need to consider what has changed in B2B communications and what remains essentially consistent with some subtle tweak and then consider how to use these approaches and tools as part of a broader strategy to create focused results.

For a long time, B2B marketing communications didn't evolve and was essentially focused on new product launches using traditional methods that had been tried and tested such as trade magazines, print advertising, support for trade shows and the occasional article in major news publications (depending on geo-political significance of the company and industry or some unique technology that was going to change and solve problems such as climate change or health). This section looks at the changes from the perspective of public relations at a time when Chinese companies are continuing to join their European and American counterparts in going global and becoming more mature in their communication.

Prediction: B2B content will come more humanised, personal, and purpose-driven

Messaging: The importance of crisp messaging remains with the key difference that all messages must be more humanised and purpose-driven than ever before. This necessitates a return to basics, honing a mission, vision, and values that is both visionary and realistic. Chinese audiences are particularly pragmatic and fact-based in their brand journeys so claims must be supported. Supporting messages can be tailored to specific audiences but reflecting corporate traits such as ethical values whilst not green-washing is essential. The impact and overspill of customer social media habits in their personal lives as consumers means that in the B2B world, concentration and engagement times have decreased so messages need to be highly engaging to create stickiness, insightful to create 'lightbulb' moments, and authentic, to build trust. Corporate jargon and generic phrases dilute not only the personalisation but also credibility. In China, whilst the underlying educational element of B2B content remains, both the format and type of content for delivery of messages is changing with increasingly nuanced interweaving of messages into overall stories.

Storytelling: Although storytelling is not new, the word has become increasingly popular in the industry as the idea of simply talking about selling points has given way to the increased importance of building a connection with customers through telling stories about the history, the application, or utilising customers to humanise the communication and customer experience, even for the most industrial product. Again, one reason for this trend can be attributed to the way in which audiences use social media in their personal lives for consumer purchase decision-making and an inherent expectation that any brand interaction has a relatable element beyond product functionality whether via messaging, an influencer or ambassador, or simply the 'place' and channel for engagement. This trend for humanisation creates an opportunity for micro-influencers – whether a technical expert or a CEO, to talk about and explain topics of industry or societal relevance.

Localisation: While consumer campaigns in China have localised and tailored to local audiences, B2B companies have traditionally focused on building reputations as global brands preferring to translate campaigns rather than localise. Data protection and transfer laws preventing the transfer of data outside a jurisdiction have (perhaps indirectly) accelerated the idea of localization and localizing content beyond language translations on a global platform to develop relevant formats that resonate. This is facilitated by the typically niche nature of a B2B audience and a relatively finite number of relevant communication platforms and media channels.



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“The availability, accuracy and speed at which data can be collected and utilized means that insights can be quickly leveraged to refine audience segmentation.”

News and Misinformation: Humanisation and trust-building by brands has become increasingly important because trust in news and the prevalence of misinformation is at an all-time volume high creating an emotional low and suspicion. In addition to the prevalence of fake information campaigns, a failure to cite credible sources and the feeding of AI to effectively ‘clean’ information that is unsupported by facts and non-attributable, news is increasingly now showing human elements such as attributable quotes or even mentioning names for fear of retribution if a problem occurs. Attributable news and trustworthy sources are therefore increasingly welcome and no longer taken for granted. This has enhanced the value of executive voices when speaking as experts about industry-relevant topics. Since AI-generated answers are only as good as the sources they use, for niche topics where information is often lacking brands that contribute to the body of accurate knowledge have an opportunity to establish leadership.

Prediction: Online-offline hybrid will result in new B2B communication formats

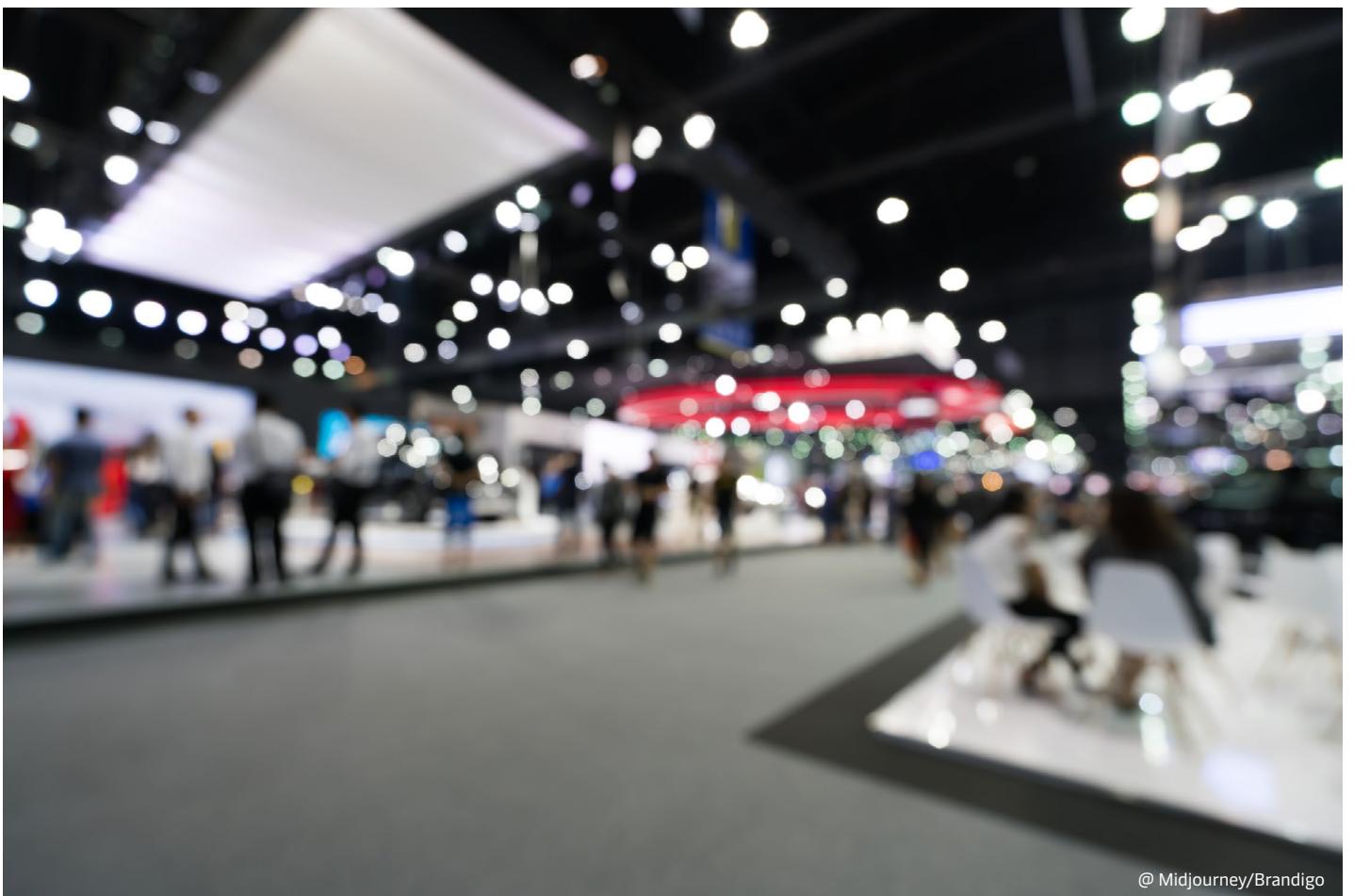
Communication Formats & Channels: Content, even for B2B is human-led and this is driven by an increased emphasis on video content and a waning tolerance for computer-generated voices, including AI-generated. For B2B, this creates an opportunity to design interactions with senior executives making short videos, joining podcasts, highlights from panel-discus-

sions and interview excerpts. Well-managed owned channels on platforms such as WeChat, Xiaohongshu and Douyin have created new opportunities for B2B brands to become more recognized in addition to traditional means such as websites.

Events & Tradeshows: Post-Covid major trade shows have made a comeback. For example China International Import Expo in 2024 was bigger than ever attracting visitors from all over the world. But whilst visits to China have resumed (albeit in a limited volume), in a climate of economic uncertainty and reduced travel budgets, creating both offline and online versions of events to reach customers whether in other parts of China or overseas is necessitating increased efforts in terms of campaign management for the online event. Small-scale events such as panel discussions and industry seminars will continue while the post-event distribution content will become increasingly close to real-time.

Prediction: Technology such as AI will enable greater efficiencies and personalisation

AI: The adoption of AI into the workplace by PR professionals using platforms such as iFlytek will continue to create efficiencies such as the automation of workflows, editing, being able to utilize data-backed insights, personalizing responses, and creating solutions for individual consumers. This will facilitate the development of tailored content-strategies to support SEO.



Data-backed Insights: The availability, accuracy and speed at which data can be collected and utilized means that insights can be quickly leveraged to refine audience segmentation, precisely target particular stakeholders and adjust campaigns in real-time (this topic is covered elsewhere in the report).

Voice-search optimization: The increasing use of voice-search technology with Chinese home-grown platforms such as Alsearch, Fano Labs, and Unisound to name a few, means that all communications content must be optimized accordingly to ensure that brands are recognized.

Prediction: Long-term, ethical corporate behaviour will inspire EQ-savvy executives

Corporate Values & Behaviour: For B2B companies, internal communication is becoming as important as external communications. GenZ and younger employees are demanding human-centered workplaces which consider well-being and inclusivity so a positive company culture is no longer a 'nice to have' but essential. From a communications perspective, development and clear communication about Employee Value Proposition (EVP) paired with human resource department delivery will not only contribute to employee retention but enhance external communications by employees as they become mini-ambassadors communicating in their own spheres. Meanwhile communication about policies such as technology e.g. how chatGPT is used in the workplace, must be related back to the corporate values of the company in order to be relevant.

Long-term Thinking: With uncertainty in the economy including many layoffs, there is a tendency to focus on the short-term bottom line but the importance of long-term thinking, a trait which is fundamental to Chinese society, should also be applied to business. As the age composition, expectations and behavior of employees is changing in addition to societal changes, longevity and loyalty are only given in return for respect and reward. In many corporations, Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI) programs have had some success but have also been first-in-line for budget cuts. As mentioned above, a PR and communications perspective where employees are increasingly being viewed as ambassadors, the value of these voices to reach new audiences and enhance reputation should not be underestimated but instead managed to create value for the company.

Executives & EQ: As B2B companies evolve, senior executives will increasingly be employed for their leadership skills in addition to their technical skills. For many B2B companies where the emphasis had traditionally been on technical-know-how, emotional intelligence (EQ) may be lacking and executives can benefit from more support on how to engage with employees – productive ways to engage as well as tone and manner. There will be greater redefining of roles and a recognition of the importance EQ.

Sustainability

Whilst price and sales may be key drivers in the B2B decision-making process, risk and reputation are increasingly important especially due to the speed of communication on social media if a crisis occurs and the fluidity within which a B2B incident can become a B2C topic. For example, climate change awareness, pressure on local governments in China to meet carbon emission targets and sustainability goals, means that all corporations must not only be rigorously reviewing their own processes but be ready and willing to communicate with key stakeholders whether government departments, multi-lateral organisations and NGOs or procurement teams



that are using sustainability KPIs as a benchmark of trust.

Prediction: Crises will extend beyond brand blunders to include cyber attacks

Accelerated Scaling of Crises: As already mentioned, the speed and scale by which crisis incidents can occur has been accelerated by social media and corporation will increasingly find themselves called out by consumers even though they remain B2B brands. This is because companies are being held more accountable for their behaviour.

From a communications perspective, the traditional tools such as crisis handbooks with preprepared templates and messaging are still important and these should be kept up to date. In addition to basic content and channel planning for potential complaints about products or services or an environmental incident, technology threats such as cyber-attacks are real and need to be factored in.

The risk of a cyber attack is real. For example a survey by Kaspersky found "89.66 percent of surveyed industrial organisations experienced an incident, with many also suffering repeated breaches. The survey of 406 C-level decision-makers found that in the energy sector alone, 95 percent of organisations reported being targeted, often resulting in operational downtime and financial losses." (Source: insight.scmagazineuk.com/industrial-cybersecurity-under-attack-in-2024)

From planning management of owned media channels if a cyber-attack occurs to developing customer communication plans to mitigate the impact of disrupted service, loss to businesses or a data leak, these are all real and fundamental public relations challenges that must be faced. In addition, it is worth creating a contingency budget for a communications campaign following a cyber breach. Working closely with IT Departments and creating dark websites that can be immediately activated if a cyber-attack occurs is fundamental.

Social Media Listening: Social Listening is always important and should not just be used to measure the impact of a fancy campaign, but viewed as an essential means up recognizing and managing voices or sentiment that has potential to have a negative impact on your brand. An understanding of where the voices are including the tone, style and content, allows preparation or consideration of how to respond in an appropriate way. It is important to note that following informed analysis, the resulting decision may be to take no external

action but internal communication may still be required and therefore the communications planning process is important.

“The ability to write strong, well-researched, and immediately publishable content in a variety of formats means that the days of the dominating press-release are over.”

Prediction: PR professionals will become more tech savvy

The skillsets demanded of public relations professionals is changing and while it will vary depending on the size of the department and consequent division of labour, here are some key skills:

- **AI** – AI-fluency means PR professionals should understand some of the benefits and current limitations of key platforms such as ChatGPT, Dalle-3, DeepL for tasks such as grammar, editing or creating initial design concepts and texts. However the temptation to use AI to generate to text or answers for communications content will still remain risky due to a lack of transparency regarding sources.
- **C-Suite Confidence** – Beyond drafting speeches or presentations for CEOs, B2B now presents opportunities for developing campaigns using C-Suite execs as micro-influencers in a niche area or wider communication for topics that are of more general interest. For PR teams and even the most junior team-member who might be the most tech-savvy, this requires not only skills for communicating appropriately with senior people but the ability to create soundbites, choose appropriate settings and make balanced judgement about the formality of a ‘media moment’.

- **Content becomes Copy** – Whilst catchy advertising slogans are not expected in PR roles, the ability to write strong, well-researched, and immediately publishable content in a variety of formats means that the days of the dominating press-release are over. From researched long-form articles to short text to support social media posts, understanding audience needs, the time of day and occasion when B2B content will be consumed is more important than ever.
- **Data Literacy** – The ability to analyse data, extract insights and present concepts through data visualization of AI-generated insights is becoming a fundamental skill for PR professionals. Likewise, the ability to recognize the limitations of data such as bias of algorithms are also essential.
- **Design** – Being able to use software to create designs that conform to corporate style guidelines is increasingly valued for the development of social posts or corporate presentations.
- **Media Relations** – B2B marketing has moved from the realm of a few commercial trade publications to requiring the same mapping and understanding of media channels as B2C ranging from newswires to identifying influencers.
- **Video Editing** – In addition to understanding channels, the skill of creating and editing short videos or managing the production of video is a skill that was previously in the domain of advertising colleagues but now required to facilitate more informal content.

Conclusion

There is quiet optimism that with the increasing merging and blurring of lanes between sales and marketing teams, this may mean that budgets will merge thus creating greater potential for PR and communication. Contrasting 2024 where technology such as AI was overwhelming the industry due to mild panic and lack of understanding, in 2025 the rapid evolution of platforms is creating more defined opportunities for sustainable evolution and embracing of specific tools to create a more efficient and humanised environment for B2B communication.



Rethinking Your B2B Content Plan in 2025

by Mike Golden

President | Brandigo China

China's B2B marketing space is drowning in content. AI tools are pumping out articles, videos, and posts faster than ever. But more content doesn't mean better results. In fact, it's just creating more noise. To stand out, marketers need a new playbook: better content, not more content.

For years small and mid-sized B2B companies have been tied to one WeChat post a week, and then adding more for larger companies. And with big changes coming to WeChat – China's go-to platform for B2B engagement – it's more important than ever to get it right.

What does that mean? It's about creating material that's tailored, valuable, and designed to break through the clutter. The secret lies in the 3Cs: Context, Content, and Channel.

Context: Know Your Audience Inside Out

In China, context is everything. B2B buyers aren't just numbers in a CRM – they're people with specific needs, goals, and challenges. And those challenges vary widely across industries and regions.

Understand Their World

Are you targeting a tech company in Shenzhen? They'll want innovation and speed. Selling to a manufacturer in Jiangsu? Cost-cutting and supply chain efficiency are likely their top concerns. Using data tools – like AI-driven audience analysis – can help uncover these insights. But don't stop there. Your content has to feel credible, personal, and aligned with their values. Dig deep and create target personas to understand your target audience pain points. You can create these from 1-on-1 qualitative interviews, or by dumping all of your data into ChatGPT and asking it to help create them for you.

Stay Ahead of Regulations

China's regulatory environment is always shifting, especially in industries like tech, finance, and sustainability. B2B buyers want partners who understand the rules and can guide them. For example, content that helps companies navigate carbon neutrality requirements shows you're more than just a vendor – you're a trusted advisor.

Content: Quality Over Quantity

In a world flooded with AI-generated fluff, quality is your edge. B2B buyers are looking for content that speaks to their challenges and offers real value. Following the classic content marketing mix works in China: content should entertain, educate, inspire or convince.

Less Is More

Stop churning out bland blog posts or repetitive videos just to stay visible. Instead, focus on fewer, high-impact pieces. A de-

tailed case study, a data-backed whitepaper, or an engaging webinar can do more for your brand than dozens of generic posts.

Fresh Ideas, Real Stories

Stories sell. Instead of rattling off product features, show how you've solved real problems. For example, a supply chain firm might share how they helped a struggling company recover from disruptions. Include data, but don't forget the human side – testimonials, challenges, and wins. The posts that feature actual humans tend to do best. You could also look at co-creating content, with media, employees, or other companies to find new, fresh angles.

Visuals That Pop

Plain text with images? Not enough. In China, where platforms like Douyin (TikTok) and Little Red Book (Xiao Hong Shu) thrive, video and interactive content rule. High-quality visuals, animations and video grab attention and keep it. Want to explain a complex idea? Create a short video. Have a compelling stat? Turn it into a sharable infographic.

Save the PR for a Real Crisis

The world of press releases serving as your main content base is long gone. Although the occasional corporate piece is required, don't expect tons of reads. If you have to publish PR, try to find a good balance with more compelling content.



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Mike has over 20 years of China marketing experience as the founder of Brandigo China, a B2B marketing communications agency that focuses on content creation, social media, PR, demand and lead generation campaigns.. Mike is a graduate of Cornell University and holds an MBA from the University of California, Berkeley. He works with clients of all sizes, including Maersk, W.R. Grace, Henkel, Costco, and UPM.

“Even the best content falls flat if it’s not delivered correctly. In China, your distribution strategy matters as much as the content.”

Channel: The Right Place, Right Time

Even the best content falls flat if it’s not delivered correctly. In China, your distribution strategy matters as much as the content itself.

The WeChat Shake-Up

WeChat has long been a cornerstone of B2B marketing. Service accounts offered visibility with timely push notifications, while subscription accounts handled regular updates. Now, those lines are blurring. Service accounts are becoming more like subscription accounts, meaning your content will be less visible in users’ main feed.

What does this mean for B2B marketers?

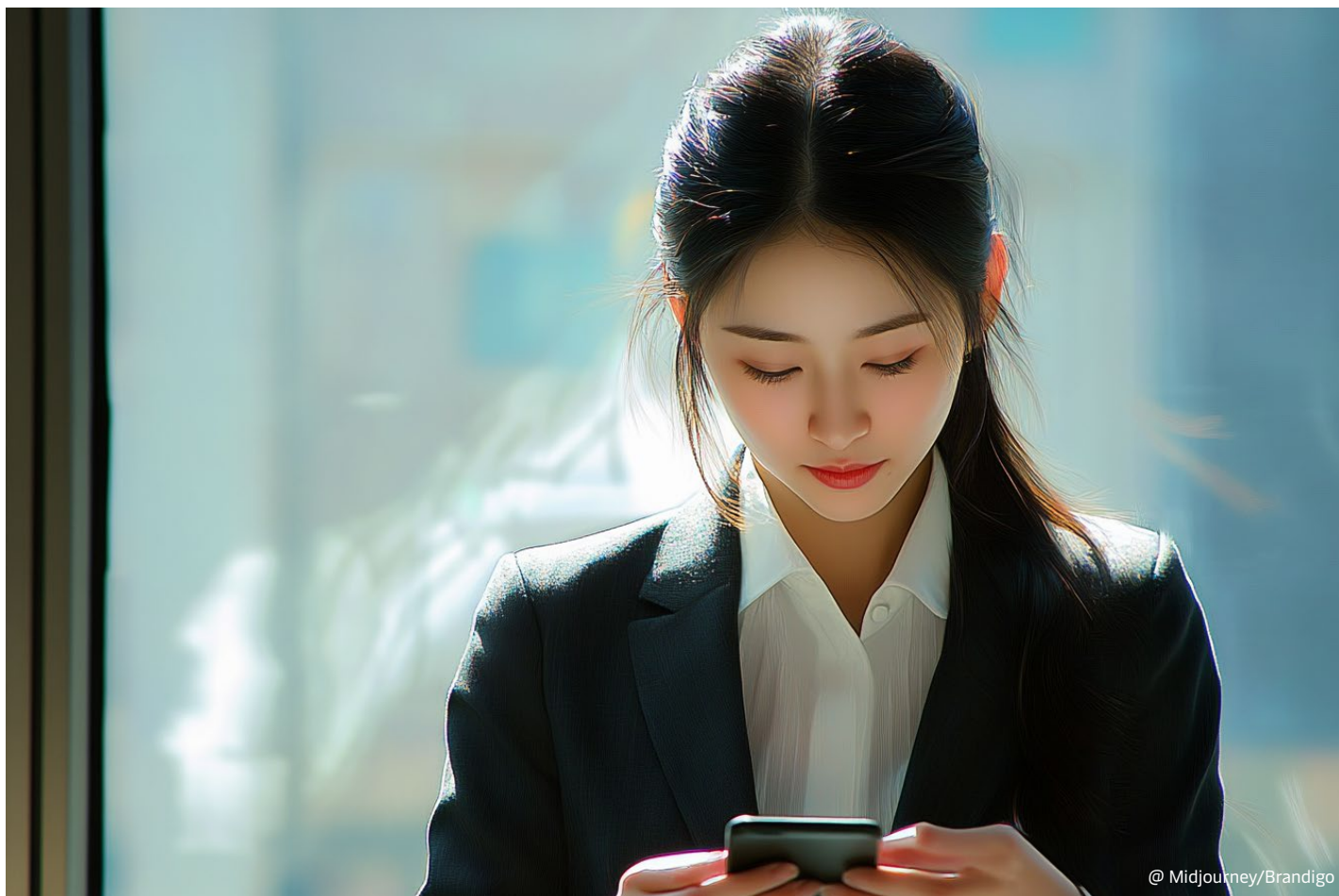
- Step up your game. Your content has to be good enough for users to seek it out – not just click because it’s in front of them.
- Be sure to utilize WeChat Channels (the video platform) to reach new audiences.
- New WeChat post styles (“Little Green Book”) suggest shorter posts with more visuals.
- Use mini-programs and groups. These tools keep you connected to your audience even if your account notifications get buried.

- Diversify your channels. Understand where your target audience “hangs out” to figure out which platforms will work best. Besides WeChat you can also look at:
 - Zhihu: Q&A bulletin boards, useful for thought leadership
 - Douyin: for short, engaging videos
 - Little Red Book: Video, images and text, good for B2B2C categories like food and drink related categories

Personalize the Journey

Not all leads are at the same stage. Tailor your distribution. Early-stage buyers? Offer educational content like how-to guides. Ready-to-buy leads? Invite them to a webinar or send them a product demo. This might mean incorporating an external CRM or content automation system into your WeChat account to identify your users and categorize them.

China’s B2B marketing landscape is shifting. AI is flooding platforms with content, and changes like WeChat’s visibility updates are raising the stakes. To win, you need better content: content that’s tailored, impactful, and strategic. Understand your audience, create high-quality, original material, and deliver it where and when it matters most.



The Smell of Success: How Fragrance is Reimagining Retail in China

by Philip Handford | Creative Director | CAMPAIGN design studio

Jason Bridge | Partner | Shine Group

The global retail market, including China, has faced a decline over recent years, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the fragrance market is defying this trend, showing resilience and growth. In 2023, the market hit 20.7 billion RMB (\$2.9 billion), and is projected to grow to 51.5 billion RMB (\$7.2 billion) by 2029. This growth is driven by innovative retail approaches, such as personalization, immersive experiences, and temporary artistic retail spaces. Philip Handford and Jason Bridge, both veterans in retail design and experiential marketing respectively, have teamed up to share their insights on what the broader retail market can learn from the fragrance industry in China, drawing from their hands-on experience.

"The fragrance retail landscape in China is evolving significantly, driven by Gen Z and hybrid retail trends, where digital and physical retail are seamlessly connected through pop-up events and social selling channels," says Philip Handford, Creative Director of CAMPAIGN, an experiential retail design agency in Shanghai.

At CAMPAIGN, we have been at the forefront of experiential retail for many years, working with brands such as Selfridges, Burberry, Nike, Elle, and Anta to deliver innovative experiences. The Fragrance Lab, delivered by Campaign in collaboration with the French Fragrance leader Givaudan and Selfridges in London, is a leading example of the hybrid retail model. This high quality pop up project achieved outstanding sales within a few weeks, with an AVE of £5 million, demonstrating the power of physical retail experiences to go viral and drive significant success.

Additionally, the rise of AI is enabling advanced profiling and personalization as consumers seek more niche and customized products, often referred to as the "MBTI of beauty." Brands like 'Four Season Color Analysis' and the K-beauty brand Etude are addressing this demand by providing tailored solutions, creating deeper emotional connections with consumers.

"Sixty percent of Gen Z consumers turn to Xiaohongshu as their main source of information and inspiration," according to Lisa Nan, the beauty editor at Jing Daily. This presents a significant opportunity for brands to deliver high-quality content through events for influencers & customers.

As shopping habits increasingly lean towards digital platforms, the demand for high-quality physical experiences—such as experiential retail and pop-ups—is also growing. These formats deliver more meaningful content and foster a sense of community and belonging.

Tamburins, a South Korean luxury fragrance brand, has revolutionized retail by blending storytelling, art, and sensory experiences. Their model, centered on immersive, multi-layered narratives, resonates deeply with Millennials and Gen Z

consumers. This strategy has been highly successful in Seoul and Shanghai, where Tamburins flagship stores captivate visitors with enchanting, insect-themed universes.

Tamburins' retail experience is a masterclass in immersive design and sensory engagement. Their flagship stores, such as the one in Seongsu, Seoul, evoke a sense of wonder and curiosity. The Seongsu store features a Brutalist exterior with floor-to-ceiling glass windows, creating an atmosphere akin to an underground cave. Inside, the store is transformed into an art installation with life-like sculptures, paintings by renowned artist Lee Jaeheon, and a carefully curated product display that immerses visitors in a romantic, autumnal environment.

The success of this model is evident in the results: Tamburins has seen a significant increase in foot traffic and sales, particularly among Millennials and Gen Z consumers. Their Shanghai flagship store, which opened recently, has also been a hit, attracting a similar demographic and achieving impressive sales figures. The synergy with Gentle Monster, known for its own experiential retail spaces, has further bolstered Tamburins' success, creating a cohesive brand experience that resonates with consumers across different markets.

Bulgari's launch of the Allegra perfume range in China has



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Jason Bridge is a partner of 18 years at Shine Group, a leading group of experiential & omni channel marketing agencies. Jason started in London in 1992, when founded guerilla marketing agency Labryth, spending years visualizing events and concerts for the likes of Prince, Michael Jackson and Sting.

“The integration of personalization and immersive experiences in retail showcases a powerful connection with customers.”

been marked by a captivating pop-up event at Akimbo Cafe on Yuyuan Road in Shanghai. Designed to immerse visitors in the vibrant and joyful essence of the Allegra collection, the event featured multi-sensory installations that brought each fragrance to life.



Guests embarked on a vibrant journey that epitomized the colorful and lively spirit of the Italian brand. The aesthetic essence of Bulgari was vividly brought to life through the five new fragrances of the Allegra collection: Fiori D'Amore, Fantasia Veneta, Rock'N'Rome, Riva Solare, and Dolce Estasi. Each scent was showcased in a distinct, immersive setting, capturing the unique character of these exquisite perfumes from an Italian-garden inspired scene for “Fiori D'Amore” to a sparkling disco ball setting for “Fantasia Veneta,” the pop-up created an unforgettable experience. The Shanghai launch generated significant social media buzz and impressive sales figures, particularly among younger consumers.

Bulgari Fragrance also unveiled its limited-time store in Shanghai's Zhang Garden in response to the relaunch of the BVLGARI POUR HOMME cologne. The store's first floor is an immersive space, showcasing a giant bottle of Bulgari Darjeeling Tea Eau de Toilette surrounded by tea trees and plants, creating a serene and evocative atmosphere. Adjacent to this area, a dedicated perfume testing zone allows visitors to explore the diverse charm of Bulgari fragrances.

Adding a touch of avant-garde artistry, Bulgari collaborated with Chinese fashion designer Wang Fengchen to create the “White Shirt Realm” art installation within the store. This imaginative space invites visitors to experience the fusion of fashion and fragrance in a unique and engaging manner.

The event generated significant buzz on Weibo, with the

hashtag “Bulgari fragrance meets another me” amassing over 88 million views and sparking more than 1.5 million discussions.

“The integration of personalization and immersive experiences in retail showcases a powerful connection with customers and highlights the transformative benefits of these innovations in retail across various sectors”, said Jason, who produced these Bulgari experiences with Shine Group. Shine has been producing leading experiences and marketing campaigns across China for over 20 years, connecting consumers with many exciting MNCs and brands including L'Oreal, Pernod Ricard, P&G, 光明乳业(Bright Milk), Danone, Bulgari, Ferrari, to name a few.

Chinese local brands are leaning into personalized immersive retail. To Summer has gained recognition for its unique storytelling approach. Each product in their stores is accompanied by a short poem and detailed fragrance notes, creating a deeply personal and engaging shopping experience. This narrative-driven model resonates with consumers, offering them not just a scent, but a story to connect with.

As a new brand seeking to establish a physical presence, a secluded street with no vehicle access might seem unorthodox. However, To Summer, or Guanyia as it's known in China, did just that by opening its first offline store on Shanghai's Hunan Road. Named Xian Ting, or the Courtyard of Leisure, this store is housed in a nearly century-old villa. To Summer's Xian Ting acts as a living room where visitors can “enjoy life.” This cozy, home-like setting aligns perfectly with the brand's ethos of creating intimate and immersive retail experiences, complemented by preserved backyard foliage.

So what is the future of retail in China?

Personalized immersive experiences are set to become the defining purpose for retail spaces, whether in permanent stores, temporary retail, or pop-ups.

With customers accessing myriad online purchasing channels, the pre-purchase brand and product experience will become crucial in the decision-making process. As consumers are not entirely rational agents, instant and impulse purchases driven by personalized experiences will be key.

In 2025, we will witness hyper-personalization in retail, similar to digital shopping experiences. “These are very exciting times to be in this space,” says Jason. “We are working on networked AI agents that will understand your online preferences and suggest daring options as you navigate store experiences.” This does not eliminate human interaction; retail staff will play a crucial role, equipped with instant personalized discounts and knowledge of customer preferences, while customers will be able to fully immerse themselves in retail experiences through AI eyewear akin to the Ray-Ban Meta Wayfarer.

Brick-and-mortar retail is on the brink of a new personally immersive Golden Era, characterized by purpose-driven brands and excited customers.

China B2B Marketing in a Complex and Competitive Environment

by Oliver Pearce

Managing Director | Corporate Perspectives

The operating context for B2B companies in China in 2025 will grow increasingly complex, shaped by an uncertain economic outlook, intense competition, and geopolitical tensions. These challenges may push executives to curb marketing budgets and adopt risk-averse strategies, compelling B2B marketers to defend their efforts and secure resources.

Here are three considerations for developing effective B2B marketing strategies and tactics in 2025:

1. Content is still king: be hyper-focused on relevance and reach

B2B buyers in China use a wide range of channels for gathering information and evaluating potential partners in a process that involves both online investigation and personal recommendations from trusted sources. Companies respond by creating huge amounts of content and pushing it out across multiple channels to get their message seen everywhere. This scattergun “pump it and dump it” approach is neither effective nor efficient. Content marketing must become more streamlined, value-added and targeted, leveraging new formats like video.

- Stop with the generic and AI-generated content. AI provides users with snapshots of search queries for generic questions such as “what is a sales pipeline?” that are the bread and butter of a lot of B2B content marketing. We are already seeing a reduction in traffic to owned platforms such as websites as a result. Trying to offset this with more content generated by AI is not a sustainable solution as any short-term clicks and gains will soon fade. Meanwhile the backlash against this type of content is getting stronger.
- Focus on unique, high-quality insights: In a contextual world, companies can only expect to have resonance if they match their brand’s perspective with that of their target customer. Content has to be original to win the attention war in the AI-era. Companies need to include unique research or insights no one else has, especially for saturated topics. For really clear differentiation, B2B brands should extract rich and targeted viewpoints from their own subject matter experts – after all, it is still experienced B2B professionals who create the most value-driving ideas and content, not AI.
- Do more with less content. Producing a lot of content isn’t bad in and of itself but too much content is noise and it causes fatigue – a problem amplified by AI tools. Go for less content. Let it be hyper focused on your top-value buyers’ challenges. Position it in the consideration and purchase stages of the funnel. Remember, there can only

be so many new ideas at one time. Stick to winning ideas and put more focus on distribution.

- Short-form content is where it is at. Chinese B2B companies excel in leveraging platforms like WeChat, Xiaohongshu and Douyin to engage decision-makers through short videos, infographics, and livestreams. Short-form content must align with a cohesive strategy and emphasize authenticity over production quality.

2. Invest in brand building to win in tough economic times

As economic uncertainties persist into 2025, many businesses may favour sales-oriented activities over brand building – a risky trade-off. Building a strong brand is essential for long-term success, and this is also becoming the case in China:

- In the competitive Chinese market, traditional marketing methods have seen diminishing returns. For example, heightened competition is driving up costs in demand-capture channels like SEO and paid ads while reducing effectiveness. A strong brand helps mitigate these pressures and challenges and strengthens market positioning.



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Oliver advises Chinese companies on international reputation management. Now based in London, he worked in China for 15 years and was previously global head of marketing for a NYSE-listed Chinese B2B enterprise.

“A strong brand helps mitigate competitive, economic and geopolitical pressures and strengthens market positioning.”

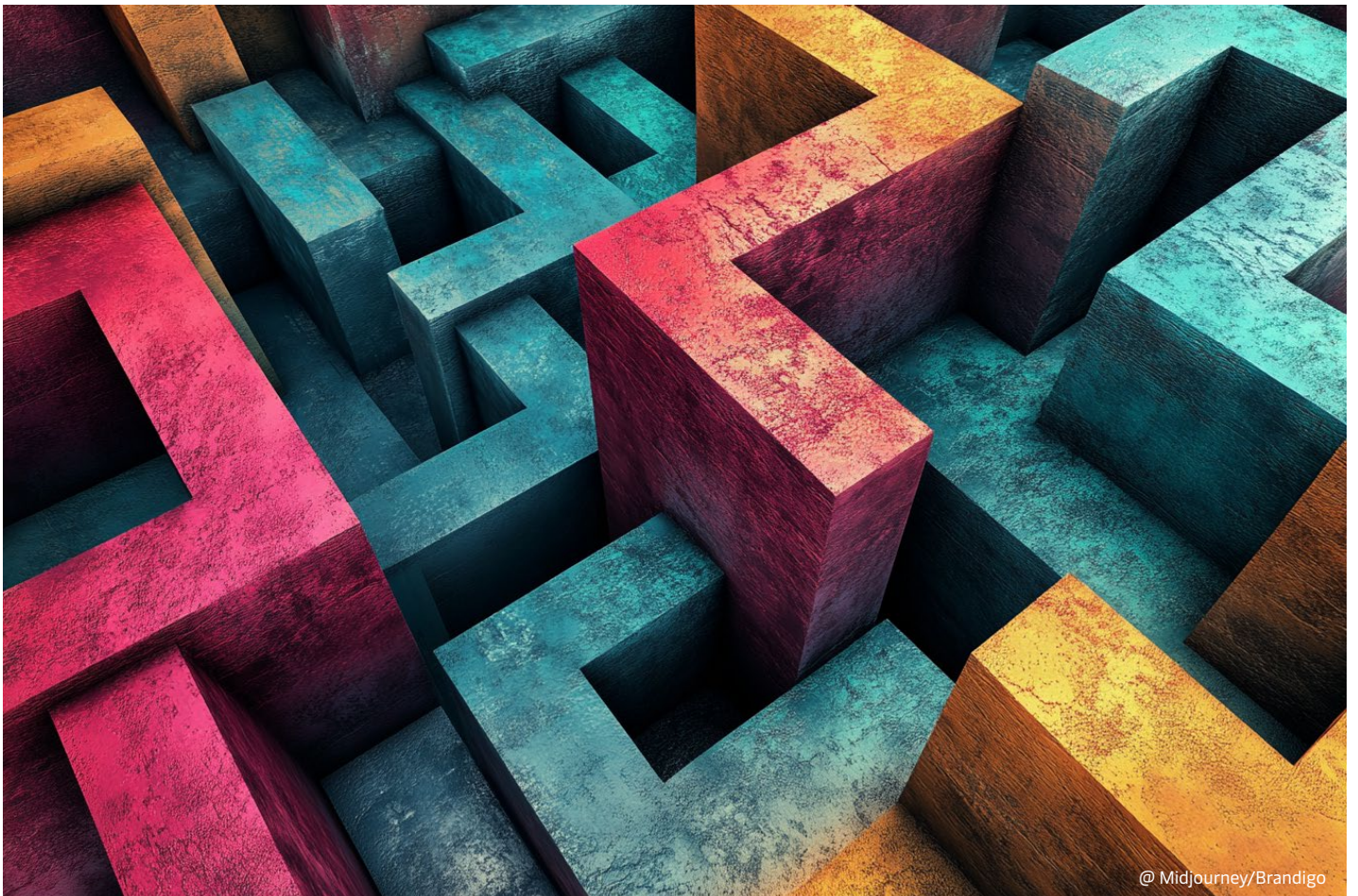
- In overseas markets, perceptions of Chinese B2B products and services are shifting from “low cost” to “high quality,” fuelled by innovation and manufacturing excellence. Companies that have invested in brand building have seen measurable benefits, with over 80% of Chinese enterprises recognizing brand soft power as either “crucial” or “very important” for international expansion, according to some recent surveys.

3. Navigate the costs and complexity of geopolitics and reputation management

The unfortunate reality is that geopolitical tensions will remain a significant disruptor for B2B companies, increasing costs and complicating operations. Strategic marketing and communications can help navigate these complexities:

- For multinationals in China, clear corporate positioning is essential, emphasizing innovation, reliability, and alignment with government priorities such as sustainability, strategic industries, and job creation. This messaging must permeate all marketing efforts. Marketing and communications departments have to tackle this together.
- For Chinese companies going outbound, the playbook is not dissimilar. Align marketing efforts with local economic, sustainability and social priorities. Proactively engage in dialogue with media and key stakeholders, showing transparency and building trust. Find and partner with the advocates on your side — the business partners who want access to high-quality, affordable industrial goods from China; politicians who have climate goals to meet; consumers who want cutting-edge innovation. By maintaining an open dialogue, embracing authenticity, and emphasizing shared values, Chinese B2B firms can build resilience and strengthen their reputations amidst global complexities.

By embracing authenticity, strategic focus, and adaptability, B2B marketers can help their organisations navigate 2025's challenges while securing sustainable growth in China and beyond.



When Data is Losing its Head in the Ocean of AI

by Alex Lam

Co-founder | Eureka Tech-Marketing

Partner | Monster Interactive Asia

Marketers are increasingly relying on data to determine their marketing operations, especially media investments, over the past decade. From building their own DMPs and CPDs, to integrating CRMs to plug into any major advertising media platforms and more. However, with the implementation of various versions of data privacy laws, marketers are facing more difficulties in not only their database setup, but also making their data-led investments efficient.

What Would Be An Ideal Setup:

To ensure an effective data-led marketing setup, advertisers need to use a Data Management Platform (DMP) to collect 1st, 2nd, and 3rd party data from online and offline sources. These data are often categorized through multiple layers of tags and can be used in personalized advertising on media platforms. Advertisers are also familiar with the benefits of using DMPs as the base for their biddable programmatic media.

Customer Data Platforms (CDPs) focus on 1st party data, which is held for a longer period compared to typical DMPs, and help create individual customer profiles while effectively monitoring and managing the full purchase cycle of existing customers.

Data Management Platforms (DMPs) and Customer Data Platforms (CDPs) can complement each other to form a multi-dimensional, seamless advertising data flow. Such a setup can provide comprehensive customer insights by using anonymized data from DMPs to monitor the wider audience spectrum and matching individual preferences of existing customers using profiles from the CDPs.

Data Privacy Law of China Making Significant Impact in DMP And CDP Establishments:

China's data privacy laws, particularly the Personal Information Protection Law (PIPL) and the Data Security Law (DSL), significantly impact the use of Data Management Platforms (DMPs) and Customer Data Platforms (CDPs) by imposing stricter regulations on data handling and cross-border data transfers.

With consent for data usage now being strictly necessary, advertisers and their nominated media platforms are highly restricted in audience targeting via behavioral segmentation.

Cross-border data transfer restrictions also pose challenges, effectively limiting CDPs' ability to match overseas customer data with domestic lookalike profiles. This makes it harder for brands and companies to align with their China market entry strategies and activations.

Localizing customer databases is essential, as personal information has become too sensitive to transfer between servers

in different countries. Common practices include partnering with local vendors or joint ventures, such as the partnership between Salesforce and Alibaba, to host customer databases on domestic servers.

China's regulations also target the use of predictive algorithms, which are crucial for DMPs in predictive analytics and ad targeting. Companies must disclose algorithmic recommendation services to the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC) for review. The aim is to provide a more transparent cyber environment and give individuals greater control over their personal data, which is often processed without fully understanding the potential consequences, even when consent is given.

Then Platforms Introduce AI Into The Fold:

Many biddable, programmatic platforms have started using AI bidding (transitioning from machine-automated bidding and optimization) in their self-service media backends. This helps them and their advertisers navigate China's Personal Information Protection Law (PIPL) by implementing strategies focused on compliance and data handling.



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Alex is a versatile marketing professional providing digital strategies and solutions for clients throughout his career. Starting from doing search engine marketing in the early 00's, he realised back then the future of the marketing industry was always going to become a digital and data dominated world.

“Localisation of customer database is also essential since personal information becomes too sensitive to be transferred between servers in different countries.”

Data anonymization and de-identification are among the most obvious benefits of using AI for automated bidding, ensuring individuals are not targeted based on specific behaviors. This complies with PIPL requirements, which restrict the linkage of personally identifiable information (PII) to individuals.

With AI controlling the entire bidding process, media platforms are automatically informed of potential data risks, including breach detection and violations involving access to sensitive information. This minimizes the risk of violating the PIPL and DSL.

However, advertisers who have spent years collecting customer and audience data find it challenging to adjust their advertising strategies when investing in performance media. The lack of insight provided by these AI bidding practices—essentially black boxes—makes it difficult to understand granular campaign performance. This can impact investment phasing, creative performance assessments, and ad optimizations.

That said, AI bidding assistance generally delivers good returns on investment for performance-based advertisers in the short term. However, this raises concerns, as short-term performance gains can obscure larger issues, such as losing track of attribution models, online reactions to offline events, and audience behavior analysis.

Sustainable Data Practice For The China Market:

To address the potential issues mentioned above, advertisers need to regain control of their data and understand the composition of the black boxes.

There are important steps to unlock the potential of customer data while avoiding violations of China's PIPL and DSL. Opportunities lie in how personal profiles are enriched in the customer CRM and how reliable 3rd party data sources are introduced into the black box.

Customer CRMs contain some of the most important unique identifiers in personal profiles. Extra details about preferences and behaviors can be gathered through customer service

interactions and mini-surveys. Localizing the customer CRM is foundational for any data-led campaign aimed at real customers.

Deploying CRM data into platforms' DMPs with anonymous labeling gives advertisers control through unmarked segmentations, rather than relying solely on platform AI. The more granular the segmentation, the more flexibility advertisers have to tweak campaigns mid-flight.

Data cleanrooms provided by licensed data partners with anonymous individual profiles of important purchasing behaviors can elevate data performance. Providers such as Union Pay, Alibaba (Taobao), and Bytedance play significant roles in matching customer CRM profiles at different stages of the flow.

Additional behavioral tags can then be added to existing DMP profiles (sometimes via CDPs) to further enrich the pool for better targeting performance.

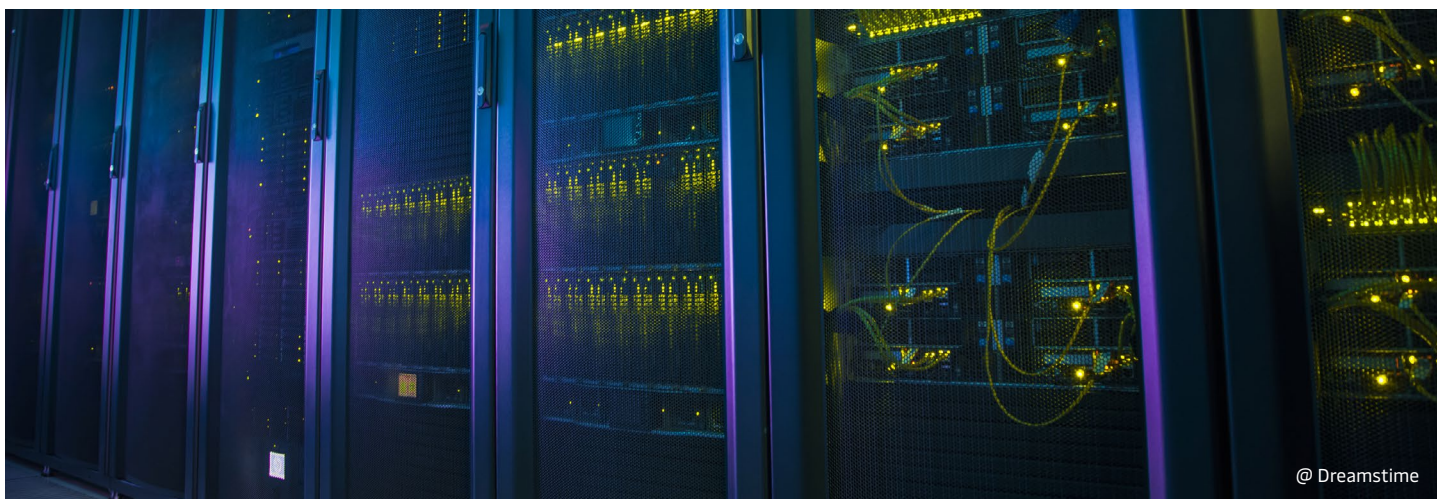
POV:

Foreign brands entering China must understand the risks and adapt to local practices accordingly. Investing in a localized database setup is a critical first step before launching data-led marketing campaigns. Thorough data cleanup and profile consolidation are integral to creating a strong foundation for seeding pools.

Many local companies can assist in setting up localized customer CRMs and running DMP-driven ad campaigns on multiple platforms. With the introduction of data cleanrooms, advertisers can regain significant control over AI-driven bidding programs.

Running A/B tests comparing different levels of AI involvement, combined with granular profile segmentation, can provide advertisers with better feedback on campaign performance and reactions.

As advertisers, we have moved beyond the stage of not utilizing AI. Should we be scared? No. Embrace AI, at least in performance advertising, or risk being sidelined.



B2B = Back 2 Basics

by Barry Colman

Consultant | GLAS B2B

Imagine...your (downsized) agency partner is sitting at their monitor, excited by the opportunity to 'prompt' the latest generative AI platform to develop your new marketing campaign...fast and cheap. The keyboard warrior cum art director cum copywriter cum creative director cum producer cum account director turns to you and asks, "So, what's the brief?"

Two weeks ago, I brainstormed with some senior clients the biggest challenges we all face over the next 12 months.

'Manage costs' came first, then 'how to get more bang for my marketing buck' followed by more visibility, better quality leads, scope-creep, tight budgets, bringing it all in-house and even the use of AI to generate cost effective (CHEAP!) videos for social.

Then, one of them said something I had not heard before, and I quote,

"Staying on top of changing customer needs in a VUCA world".

VUCA. What the vuca does that mean? I had to look it up. I guess that coming from Europe and having been based in China for the past 30+ years, many of these acronyms don't get through.

VUCA, for those who like me don't know, stands for

Volatility:	speed of change
Uncertainty:	lack of confidence in predicting the future
Complexity:	information overload
Ambiguity:	unclear interpretations of facts

VUCA world is a world where things don't, won't or can't go to plan. They are caused by many factors including economic downturns, terrorist attacks, new governments, natural disasters (remember COVID?) and even by the sudden release of life-changing technologies such as GENERATIVE AI.

Couple VUCA with reports that, in our post-digitalised B2B world, traditional marketing methods are seen as being less effective and there is a very real risk of businesses of all sizes getting distracted, losing their focus and suffering as a result. This led to me to think back to previous VUCA periods I've experienced: the Asian financial crisis of '97, the dot.com bubble burst of the early '00s, SARS and more recently COVID among others.

What really sticks out from my past 30 years, is that when life goes VUCA, many of the world's biggest brands adopt an immediate B2B plan of attack: B2B meaning BACK to BASICS. I've seen and been involved in this first hand and it does actually help deliver better results.

It's simple. Shift your strategic focus back to the **MUST HAVES**

and not the **NICE TO HAVES** frilly stuff.

What does this mean for today's B2B marketers, both clients and agencies?

Here are my top 4 learnings.

1: BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF YOUR BRAND.

Nurture and build a powerful brand that fights for something more than just selling stuff.

Strong brands sell more in the long run and can charge more money too.

Many established brands who have dominated their categories for years are now losing share to new, fresh, hungry brands working with a digital mindset from the off.

Take a moment and ask yourself, do you have company vision and an up-to-date mission statement and if so, has everyone seen it? Does it mention ZERO CARBON, SUSTAINABILITY or even AI? When was the last time your company held a key stakeholder ideation session with both internal and external key-stakeholders reviewing and refreshing your vision and mission?



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GLAS^{B2B}

With 30+ years Asia experience, Barry is recognised as one of the region's leading B2B marketing specialists. Barry started his career in Hong Kong running a regional direct marketing catalogue business before moving agency side, where he has since worked with some of the world's biggest brands in some of the world's biggest agencies in some of the world's most challenging markets. GLAS B2B offers research, planning, strategy and creative solutions to both agencies and brands with a laser focus on driving bottom-line growth. Barry today lives in downtown Shanghai with three dogs, a bull and a horse.

“With branding, you don’t need to go all JAGUAR on us.”

It’s from the vision and mission that the PASSION comes and we all know that brands are emotional monsters...not just logos and typefaces. Build brands with emotion, sell stuff through great attributes.

People buy products but they are loyal to a brand. You don’t need to go all Jaguar! Just review what you have now, remind everyone what you’re fighting for and make sure everyone understands the what, the how and the why.

Do you have a clear brand strategy? Once you do you can start thinking about updating your creative portfolio but be prepared to talk brand, vision and mission with passion...not just products.

2: GEEK OUT ON YOUR CUSTOMERS

AI, digital, social media, IoT - these all mean customer buying habits are changing and fast.

Ask yourself (and your teams...and your agencies...and your boss) do you, as marketers, really understand your customers - their needs, their challenges and their pain-points - or do you leave all that to the research department and the sales teams? When was the last time the marketing teams (and agency partners) actually sat down face-to-face with the sales teams AND the customers and had a brainstorm, a Q&A...a dinner?

Do you have up-to-date, well-researched and validated customer personas, industry personas (that’s a thing by the way) and customer journeys? Have you mapped out all the

decision makers and the decision influencers you need to get through to as marketers and understand what drives them both as professionals but more importantly as people? Many people forget that buyers, procurement, managers, C-levelsthey are all people too with families, ambitions and hopes. Recognise that and mix your communications up accordingly to better appeal to them on both a professional and an emotional level.

In retail it’s all about location location location. In B2B, I say it’s all about **customers, customers, customers**.

‘Geek out’ on your customers both as people and as professionals and be sure you know what they need before they do.

3: GET YOUR MESSAGING RIGHT

Someone once told me that one of the biggest secrets to marketing success is consistency. If you are managing portfolios of products or services targeting a number of different industries, are you sure all your communications, sales aids, white papers, press releases etc are working hard to both generate sales but also build a strong brand? There will be a lot of content from different departments going out to market: corporate, PR, marketing, sales, CRM. Make sure there is a consistency not just to the creative look and feel but to the messaging too because, if it’s not consistent, you are, as I call it, going to ‘confuse and lose’.

How to ensure consistency? Know what you want to say and why and then make sure all stakeholders are on board.



Do you have a messaging house - Is it up to date? When was the last time you read it yourself? Is it from global and if so, have you localised it? I recently spent 9 months researching and localising a messaging house from global for the China...9 months for only a few small but hugely important changes.

When was the last time you had marketing, research, sales, product development and finance in a room together reviewing the whats and whys of your messaging?

Get your messaging house sorted and then make it easy for customers to find your content. Get a digital playbook on the go that documents what gets shared where and how but most importantly WHY. Keep it up to date with results, analytics and learnings of what work best and what doesn't (or is all that valuable data just sitting around waiting for someone to work out how to use AI to analyse it?).



@ Midjourney/Brandigo

Some insist the good old FUNNEL is dead, some don't (cough cough). I say people, targets, suspects, prospects, customers, advocates...they all still need to know who you are, what you stand for, why are your products better than the competition's and how to buy. Online data shows that new customers can be as far as 70% through their buying cycle BEFORE they make first contact with your sales teams. That means they've been online, searching, reading, watching, consuming and double-checking. That then means, in order to get into their top 3 consideration set, you will need to have well thought through, powerful and relevant messaging available for them.

Get consistent with your messaging and you'll soon attract new customers, sell more products and build a stronger brand. If you refuse, you'll run the risk of confusing and then losing customers both new and old alike.

“Shift your strategic focus back to the **MUST HAVES** as opposed to the **NICE TO HAVES** frilly stuff.”

4: PLAN - TEST - LEARN - GROW

So now you know what you stand for, who you are talking to and what you want to say...so let's get on with it.

Sell products today, yes, but plan for long-term growth.

Growth can mean anything from getting more followers for your social community to more downloads of a whitepaper to a higher conversion from MQL to SQL (if that's still a thing. I had one client recently demand “just give me QLS”).

Embrace a GROWTH mindset; plan for success but be ready for failure.

Every social post should aim to grow the community of followers.

Every sales exhibition should be planned to identify and greet as many new sales leads as possible: before during and after the event.

How to grow? Testing is very useful here. Testing allows you to find out what works best so you can plan to do more of that again and find out what doesn't work so you can stop doing that and shift budgets to what does.

The old direct marketing rule of thumb is test AUDIENCE first, then OFFER and then the CREATIVE...one at a time, in that order.

Set benchmarks and targets before you test: number of new follows/likes, number of leads, CPM etc. I've done loads of A/B testing on social media in China and overseas and it really helps. When it comes to setting benchmarks, remember this old direct marketing rule too:

Make sure your targets are SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timed.

Always be testing something and analysing the results and data through to sales to assess the ROI if you can.

And with all that stuff that fails, don't throw it away. Keep it on file, keep revisiting it and test test test until you can make it work.

Plan - test - learn - grow.

After 30+ years, I've learned that, when you get the basics right, you can move on in confidence and embrace the challenges and opportunities that present themselves helping you succeed both professionally and personally.

One last question. Back to our agency asking for a brief. I ask you, if you don't know what your brand stands for today, what your customers' needs are today and if you don't have a clear understanding of what you want to say...what's the AI prompt going to be?

Back 2 Basics: Brand - Customers - Messaging - Growth

B2B Digital Marketing in China is a Whole New Ballgame. Are You Ready to Play?

by Eva Hsu

Founder & Senior Marketer | Ripplr

In 2024, Chinese companies have been facing unique challenges. Domestic market competition has been fierce, driving them to look for improvement and/or to expand in new markets. This creates an opportunity for international businesses to offer solutions.

To reach B2B customers in China, brands need to go beyond traditional lead generation. As this market has experienced rapid growth for its digital economy, conducting business activities online and on smart phones is now the norm.

Embrace the differences of a new market as your current positioning and already-earned reputation won't count in China. Instead, your company will have to develop local brand awareness and build up the company's reputation from scratch.

As an international brand entering the Chinese market, branding is at your upper hand. Instead of going into a price war with local brands by offering low prices, promote your brand's quality and how your company's service or product offers an edge to Chinese companies.

Strategies to reach B2B customers in China

Develop a localized website

Having a Chinese website can help your business on many facets: 1) It provides a virtual tour of the company; 2) It's the online library of your company's information; 3) It's the media center of your company's Chinese social media efforts, such as Weibo, WeChat Official, XHS, Douyin; 4) Helps with your company's SEO, such as Baidu.

Execute proper branding with all marketing efforts

As an international brand, branding is at your upper hand. Having consistent branding throughout all China marketing efforts demonstrates your brand's quality and the sophistication of its products and services.

The right branded content will engage potential clients who value your brand's services/products. These are the ones who will be eager to understand how your brand's services/products can benefit their business.

Launching an Effective Baidu SEO & PPC Strategy

An effective Baidu SEO strategy normally works hand in hand with your brand's Chinese website. So, when the Chinese website is up and running and maintained with sufficient updates, SEO can provide better, rewarding results.

(PPC) Pay-per-click ads on China's leading search engine, Baidu, are the best B2B marketing strategy to acquire new B2B leads. If you still have an additional budget, you can also consider PPC ads on Sogou and 360 Search to generate even more B2B leads.

Using Chinese Social Media Platforms for B2B Marketing in China

- **WeChat Official:** Everyone in China is on WeChat, having a WeChat Official Account can come in handy when your company attends an offline exhibition, interested professionals can scan a QR code to follow your company's WeChat Official Account. As WeChat is also the app where business discussions take place, having a WeChat Official Account will allow you to re-share the account and its articles directly to a business contact on WeChat. Lastly, it provides credibility to your business. One of the first questions people will ask you is if your business has a WeChat Official Account. So set one up and prove you are serious about doing business in the Chinese market!
- **WeChat Channel:** WeChat Channel is the video platform of a WeChat Official Account. As WeChat is an enclosed environment, your WeChat Official Account won't gain new followers easily. However, the videos posted on a WeChat Channel are public, with the right content and consistent communication, videos will attract potential clients and interested professionals to like, comment, and/or follow.

In addition, videos from WeChat Channel can be inserted into the WeChat articles your brand creates, which provides an integration of efforts made on the two platforms (they are separate platforms from the backend).



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Eva works with international and Chinese companies on digital marketing and content production, she's been living and working in Shanghai for 11 years and is the Founder of Ripplr - a boutique digital marketing agency based in Shanghai. Eva holds a bachelor's degree from National Kaohsiung University of Science and Technology and a MSc from IE Business School.

“The Chinese market is different from any other market in the world, as it has its own digital marketing landscape and business culture.”

- **XHS (Xiaohongshu):** While XHS is an Instagram-like social media app, B2B businesses have been using XHS to raise brand awareness, gain new followers and inquiries. This is a platform where branding and social content co-exist.
- **Bilibili:** A video app for long-form videos. This app is great for brands who are looking to produce a lot of tutorials or informative videos. With a China-wide user-base, followers can be gained on Bilibili by consistently posting long-form videos on topics relevant to your brand.
- **Weibo:** Weibo serves as a public relations platform to most brands. If your brand has a press release to post, Weibo would be a go-to platform for this. In addition, Weibo is also a good platform for marketing campaigns, it's also where KOL collaborations can take place as KOLs have Weibo accounts.
- **Work with the right KOLs or KOCs for your B2B marketing campaign:** You might already know that KOL or KOC collaboration can help your brand engage with potential clients. B2B KOLs or KOCs are normally experts of a certain category or industry who have a large follower base. Working with KOLs normally isn't a one-time attempt if your brand is looking to get results from a KOL. Having a series of collaborations as part of a marketing campaign usually helps achieve more impactful results. If your brand's budget allows, collaborating with the right KOL or KOC can be a way for your brand to quickly gain exposure and eventually new followers.

The Chinese market is different from any other market in the world, as it has its own digital marketing landscape and business culture. However, if you've already done the initial market research and SWOT analysis, the aforementioned challenges can be overcome with the right guidance and action plan!



@ iStockPhoto

From Asia to the World: 5 Game-changing Trends in Coaching & Leadership for 2025

by Terence H Clarke

Founder & CEO | Upskill Consulting & Terence H Clarke Coaching

This year has been an incredible journey for me as a coach. I've traveled all over China and the Asia-Pacific region, delivering workshops and coaching sessions. I've had the chance to work with clients in countries like India, Thailand, Malaysia, the UK, and the USA. Through these experiences, I've noticed some important trends that are shaping how we think about coaching and personal development.

Resilience: Bouncing Back

One of the biggest things I've seen is the need for resilience. In our fast-changing world, it's vital to be able to recover from setbacks and adapt to new situations. In my workshops, I focus on helping people build their resilience by giving them practical tools to handle stress and overcome challenges. For example, while working with corporate clients in China, I found that many are eager to learn how to create resilient teams. They understand that when employees can bounce back from difficulties, the whole organization benefits. By encouraging open discussions about personal experiences and sharing strategies, I help participants develop a stronger ability to adapt.

Embracing a Growth Mindset

Another trend I've noticed is the importance of having a growth mindset. This means believing that you can improve through effort and learning. In my coaching sessions around Asia, I emphasize that challenges can be opportunities for growth. In India, for instance, many professionals are starting to see that adopting a growth mindset leads to greater creativity and teamwork. When organizations encourage learning from mistakes, they unlock their employees' potential and create a more innovative environment.

Communication: Connecting with Others

Good communication is essential for any team's success. During my travels, I've worked on improving communication skills among participants. In workshops in Thailand and Malaysia, we focused on listening carefully and expressing ideas clearly. These skills are crucial for building trust and working well together. I've found that when team members communicate openly, it leads to stronger relationships and a more welcoming workplace. This is especially important in diverse teams where different perspectives can enhance discussions.

Managing Change: Staying Flexible

Change is a constant in today's workplaces. As I coach leaders in various countries, I stress the importance of being flexible—being able to adjust quickly when things change. In the USA, for example, many organizations are facing rapid changes due to new technologies and market demands. In my coaching sessions, I help leaders approach change with confidence. We talk about ways to guide their teams through transitions while keeping spirits high and productivity strong. This proactive approach helps organizations succeed even when faced with uncertainty.

Inclusive Leadership: Valuing Everyone

Inclusive leadership has also become a key theme in my work. Leaders who show empathy and promote fairness create environments where everyone feels valued. In my workshops across Asia-Pacific, I emphasize the importance of recognizing different perspectives and encouraging teamwork. From my experiences with clients in Hong Kong and Singapore, it's clear



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Terence Clarke is a Master Coach with over 20 years in Asia, empowering teams and individuals to transform and thrive. Founder of Upskill Consulting, he works with global clients like LVMH, BMW, Alibaba, and Airbus, specializing in resilience, leadership, and communication for sustainable growth and success.

“Helping teams openly discuss setbacks has shown me how resilience grows through shared strategies and real conversations.”

that inclusive practices lead to better team dynamics and happier employees. Leaders who focus on inclusion not only boost morale but also spark innovation by tapping into the unique strengths of each team member.

Steps to Move Forward

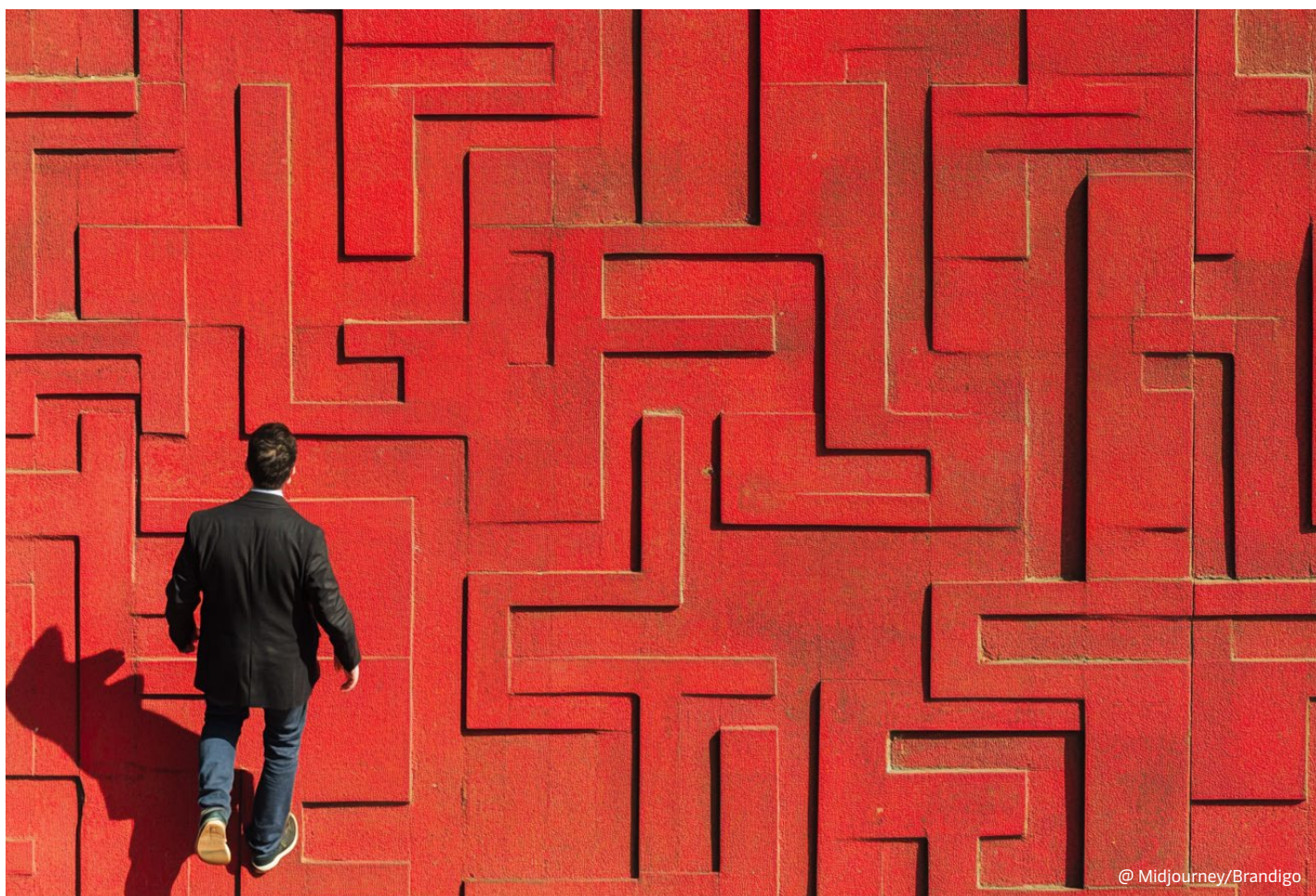
To help organizations put these ideas into practice, here are some simple steps I recommend:

- **Invest in Resilience Training:** Offer programs that help employees build resilience skills through real-life scenarios.
- **Encourage a Growth Mindset:** Create learning opportunities that challenge employees to try new things without fear of failing.
- **Improve Communication Skills:** Provide training on effective communication techniques that promote open discussions among team members.

- **Facilitate Change Management Workshops:** Equip leaders with strategies for navigating change while keeping their teams united.
- **Promote Inclusive Leadership:** Develop policies that support diversity and encourage collaboration among all employees.

As we look toward 2025, it's clear that these themes are essential for effective leadership and teamwork. My experiences this year have reinforced my belief that investing in coaching and personal development is crucial for individuals and organizations aiming to succeed in today's complex world.

By focusing on resilience, fostering a growth mindset, improving communication skills, managing change effectively, and practicing inclusive leadership, we can build a strong foundation for success.



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