

# Paradox

Feeling Machines and the Rise of Post-Modern Marketing

## Post-Modern Marketing: Welcome To 'Wow'!

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March 2018

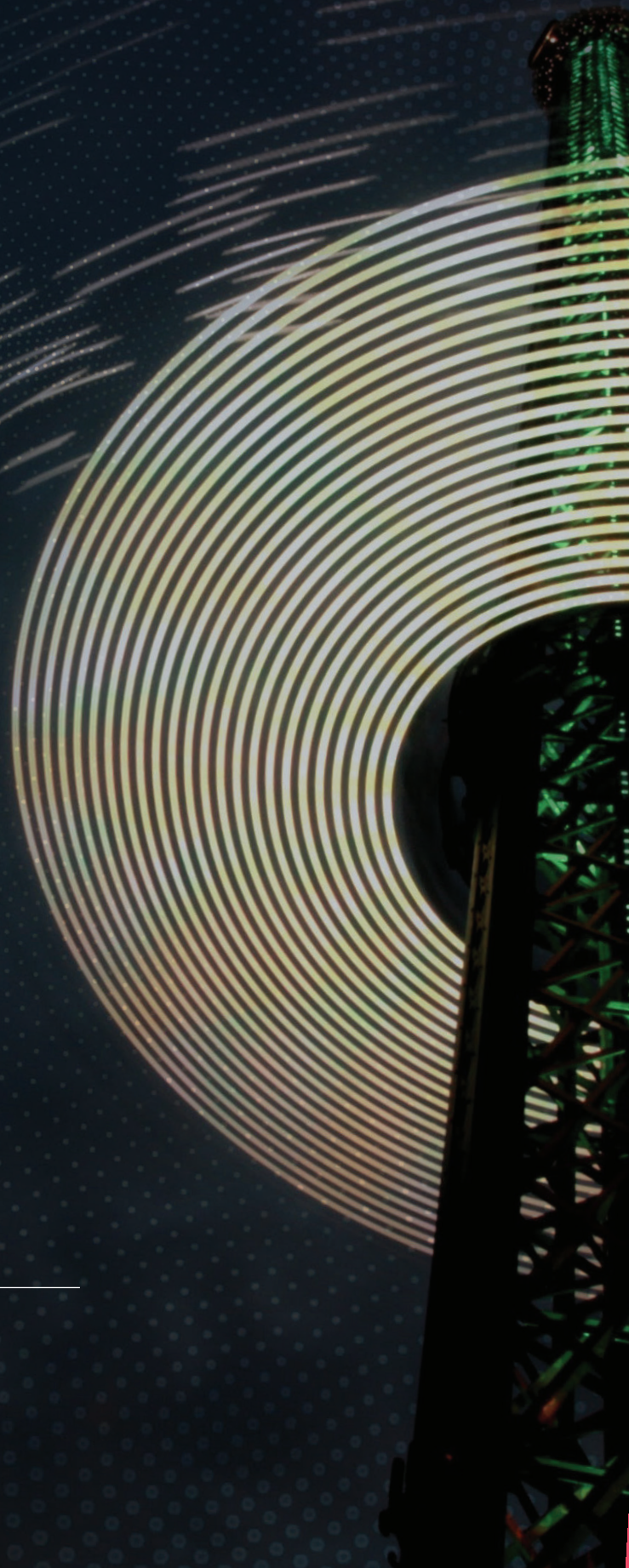
Chapter 3



“The number of channels and potential of data mean there is no better time to be a marketer than today. Despite the ability to employ scientific rigor and reach people in so many ways, brands are more important than ever. Because we are so surrounded by rationality and numbers and predictability of algorithm-based thinking, the heart will be more important than ever before.”

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“Antonio Lucio, CMO, Hewlett-Packard”



**Washington  
DC science fair  
students ride  
a school bus ...  
to Mars.**

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**One defiant  
girl changes  
hundreds of  
corporate board  
agendas.**

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**Food industry  
executives  
experience life  
as a green bean  
and a company's  
value skyrockets.**

**Wow!**

Since the earliest days of the advertising and marketing industry, marketers have sought the Holy Grail of “wow”: ideas that inspire, excite and challenge the imagination – and that give customers an irresistible predisposition to favor one brand over another.

But, like the Grail, “wow” has proven exceedingly difficult and frustrating to come by.

In marketing’s pre-modern “Mad Men” days, marketers used the emotional power of film – through TV commercials – to “wow.” But for every “1984” (from Apple) that made your hair stand on end, how many thousands of Alka Seltzer’s “Plop Plop, Fizz Fizz” were there? How about “Trix are for kids”? Or “Charlie the tuna”? Or “Please don’t squeeze the Charmin”?

Many of us recall all of these, but not with a “wow.” Instead, and at best, with nostalgia and a roll of the eyes. That’s because an idea, as Dom Cobb points out in the movie Inception, is the most resilient, highly contagious kind of virus. “Once an idea has taken hold of the brain it’s almost impossible to eradicate,” he says. And the ad industry’s approach of brute force repetition, especially in the days of mass media but today as well (Flo from Progressive Insurance, anyone?), made sure the seeds of its ideas had every chance to implant themselves in your brain.<sup>1</sup>

But then, in modern marketing’s “all things digital” days, measurement became the be-all, pushing the eternal quest for wow even further into the back seat. Instead, banner ads, performance marketing, CRM, marketing automation, programmatic, retargeting, attribution – they all took marketing’s wheel.

Today, though, we are at the dawn of the Post-Modern Marketing era. The rising noise through which marketers must cut makes wow more important than ever. And it’s not just that there’s more noise; that noise is far more fragmented among many more channels, with many more new, disruptive brands and business models clamoring for attention. All of which makes rising above really, really, really hard.

Yet at the same time – and at last – the tools that mark the post-modern era now put wow more readily within reach. The fusion of pre-modern’s emotionally rooted and iconic creative approach; modern marketing’s digital, highly measurable interactions; and rapidly emerging technologies like AI, augmented and virtual realities are yielding a long sought-after result: The Post-Modern Marketing promise of a new Age of Wow.



## Here's a Post-Modern Wow: B2B Marketers Are Leading the Way!

Has the world turned upside down? How is it that many of the early post-modern wows aren't being created by car brands, or beer brands, or digital brands, or other consumer categories? How can it be that business-to-business marketers are leading the way to wow? After all, B2B marketers traditionally focus on rational arguments to engage customers, and their frequent use of trite clichés is what sparked Stein IAS Chief Creative Officer Reuben Webb to launch the agency's award-winning "Cliché Killers" movement.

The answer lies in the substantial research that the best B2B marketers increasingly are putting into practice. Perhaps surprisingly, Gartner research has found that B2B customers have a much greater emotional connection to their brands than consumers do <sup>2</sup>. The reason is clear enough: the stakes are higher for B2B purchases, and B2B products and solutions usually involve complex concepts and value propositions that tend not to benefit from oversimplification. Achieving a wow in this B2B context is thus more critical than in consumer marketing, while also more challenging.


That challenge and its reward were evident for the B2B marketers who left their B2C competitors gasping for air at the Cannes Lions Festival the last two years. First, Lockheed Martin's 'Field Trip to Mars' won 19 Lions in 2016, followed by State Street Global Advisors' 18 Lions for 'Fearless Girl' in 2017. It doesn't get much more B2B than aerospace or global asset management.

To cut prematurely to this story's surprise ending, and as reflected by HP CMO Antonio Lucio's statement that "the heart will be more important than ever before," <sup>3</sup> all B2B marketers – all marketers, for that matter – must now strive for wow. "Marketers must settle for nothing less than a one-two-three punch that adds together pre-modern emotionality, modern marketing measurability, and powerful new channels, like social, and technologies, like AI and VR, to create immersive stories and experiences that until now have been quite literally impossible to develop and distribute," insists Webb.

The three "wows" mentioned in the opening of this chapter epitomize this one-two-three Post-Modern Marketing punch in powerfully compelling ways.







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“Reuben Webb, Chief Creative Officer, Stein IAS”

## Post-Modern Marketing's Herald: 'Fearless Girl'

Eighty-eight years after Freud's nephew, Edward Bernays, launched the pre-modern marketing era with the women-empowering "Torches of Freedom" campaign – strangely enough for cigarette brand Lucky Strike – "Fearless Girl" ignited a far more purposeful "girl-powered" sensation of her own on Wall Street. She may well be the herald for the Post-Modern Marketing era.

Even with 82 years left in play, it's a good bet "Fearless Girl" will be lording it over the Advertising Age Top 100 Campaigns of the 21st Century the way Volkswagen's "Think Small" did in the last century. And why not? State Street Global Advisors (SSGA) and its agency, McCann, made a bold, provocative, and controversial statement, backed by research supporting SSGA's position that the financial performance of public companies with gender-diverse corporate governance was superior to that of the all-male variety.

"Fearless Girl" is a bronze statue of a girl, hands defiantly on hips, staring down Wall Street's famous "Charging Bull" statue. "Fearless Girl" became a statement felt around the world. "Precisely because her statement was in bronze, not words, it didn't merely touch but grabbed the hearts of women, girls, fathers and brothers worldwide, regardless of their investment philosophy or whether they even had a savings account," Webb notes. Further, as described by Wendy Clark, CEO of DDB North America and jury president for the Cannes Glass award, the statue's symbolism "transcends geography, it transcends language, it transcends culture."<sup>4</sup>



**"[Fearless Girl]  
transcends geography,  
it transcends language,  
it transcends culture."**

*"Wendy Clark, CEO, DDB North America"*



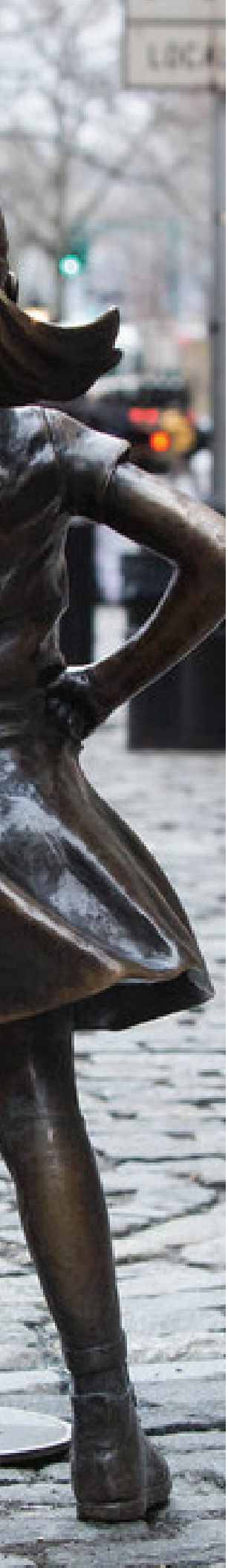


Image source: <https://www.npr.org/sections/therow/2017/04/12/523592057/sculptor-of-wall-street-bull-says-fearless-girl-horns-in-on-his-work>

But “Think Small” grew into an advertising phenomenon over the course of years beginning in 1959. Thanks to digital technology and social media, “Fearless Girl’s” impact was global and immediate. She generated nearly a million tweets or re-tweets in just a few days, and constant discussion in social, online, and offline media. Three months after her March 2017 debut, SSGA estimated “Fearless Girl” had earned up to \$38 million in free media exposure.<sup>5</sup> According to The Wall Street Journal, the statue and campaign cost only about \$250,000.

The return on this post-modern groundbreaker has been extraordinary. Trading volume for SSGA’s SHE fund, which invests only in companies with a relatively high proportion of women in executive and director positions, rose 384% in the days after “Fearless Girl” appeared at her post, and inbound calls from prospective institutional investors rose 15-fold in the four weeks after.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps most importantly to State Street, which has promised voting action against companies that fall behind on diversity, were the inbound calls from companies without women directors asking to “explain our position and work with you to give us time.”<sup>7</sup>

Webb believes “Fearless Girl” epitomizes Post-Modern Marketing and its many paradoxes:

- She was conceived from purpose and a core value of SSGA: that gender diversity on corporate boards – and, to speak plainly, women in positions of corporate power – leads to superior financial performance.
- Her purpose propels the emotions she conveys: intelligence, quiet strength, courage, defiance in the face of opposing power; grace.
- She is indisputably courageous, risk-taking and iconic marketing.
- She was both informed and amplified by digital technology. Data analysis led SSGA to its certainty about the correlation between women on boards and financial performance, and the digital phenomenon of mobile-social sharing transformed that message into a global sensation literally overnight.

## The Emergence of Storyliving: 'Field Trip to Mars'

Lockheed Martin's stated mission is to "solve complex challenges, advance scientific discovery and deliver innovative solutions to help our customers keep people safe."

"The Field Trip to Mars" delivered on all of that, and more, in the course of delighting grade-school students with the prospect of visiting Mars in their lifetimes – and encouraging them to pursue a STEM education.



"Field Trip to Mars epitomizes 'storyliving': It's a great creative idea, powered by immersive technology, delivered through a mechanism that drives viral sharing and emotional engagement."

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"Marc Keating, Chief Innovation Officer, Stein IAS"



In the process, “Field Trip to Mars” became the epitome of what Stein IAS’ Chief Innovation Officer Marc Keating calls post-modern “storyliving” (as opposed to storytelling). “Field Trip” exemplifies storyliving through the use of immersive digital technology to create a purpose-driven experience that people literally “live,” and that grabs participants by their emotional short hairs.

Lockheed Martin’s challenge to Framestore Studio, a virtual reality and visual effects company that has won multiple Oscars, was to “transport young students to the surface of Mars, in a school bus, without them realizing what was about to happen. The school bus would have to drive around Washington DC, all the while maintaining all the legal requirements of a safe and legal vehicle.”<sup>8</sup> “It was probably the craziest request I’ve ever received,” says Alexander Rea, Framestore’s head of creative technology.

“The result was mesmerizing Post-Modern Marketing, and a high-tech tour de force,” according to Webb.

Video shows students who attended Washington’s USA Science & Engineering Festival entering what looks like an ordinary yellow school bus, anticipating an ordinary field trip. But Framestore had transformed the bus, and had created 250 square miles of photo-realistic Martian landscape. Then, Framestore painstakingly mapped that landscape to the real streets of Washington. The plan was for the entire bus to become a virtual reality headset, with the Martian landscape realistically distributed across the multitude of individual screens that comprised the bus’s “windows.”

But all seems normal when the students enter the bus, having been told they’re going to a nearby museum. A few moments after pulling into traffic, the bus suddenly goes dark as a “switchable” film inserted into the windows turns opaque, shutting out exterior light. Students squeal. Within seconds, the Martian landscape appears on clear LCD screens also mounted to the windows – and the squeals turn into screams of delight. In another second or so, the first student figures out he can touch the interactive display to get information.

Over 2,500 Festival attendees took the virtual ride, some waiting an hour and a half. Since then, “Field Trip to Mars” videos have been viewed more than 2.5 million times. In all, it generated over 120 million impressions and was a trending topic on Facebook for more than 24 hours, spreading to more than 50 countries.

For Keating, “The Field Trip to Mars” ticks all the Post-Modern Marketing boxes: “It’s a great creative idea, powered by immersive technology, delivered through a mechanism that drives viral sharing and emotional engagement.”

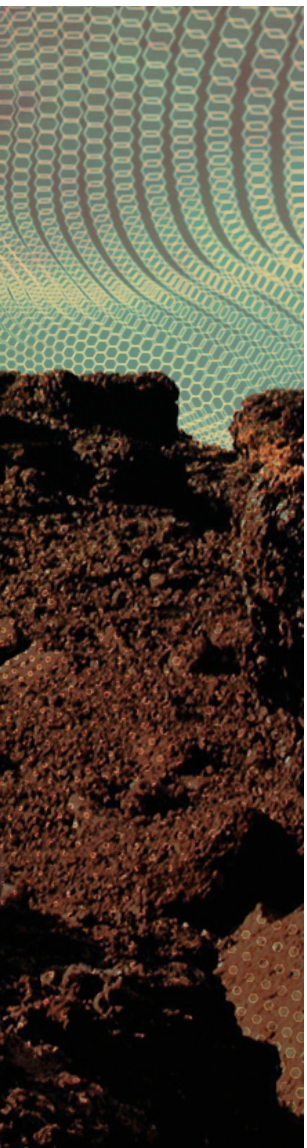
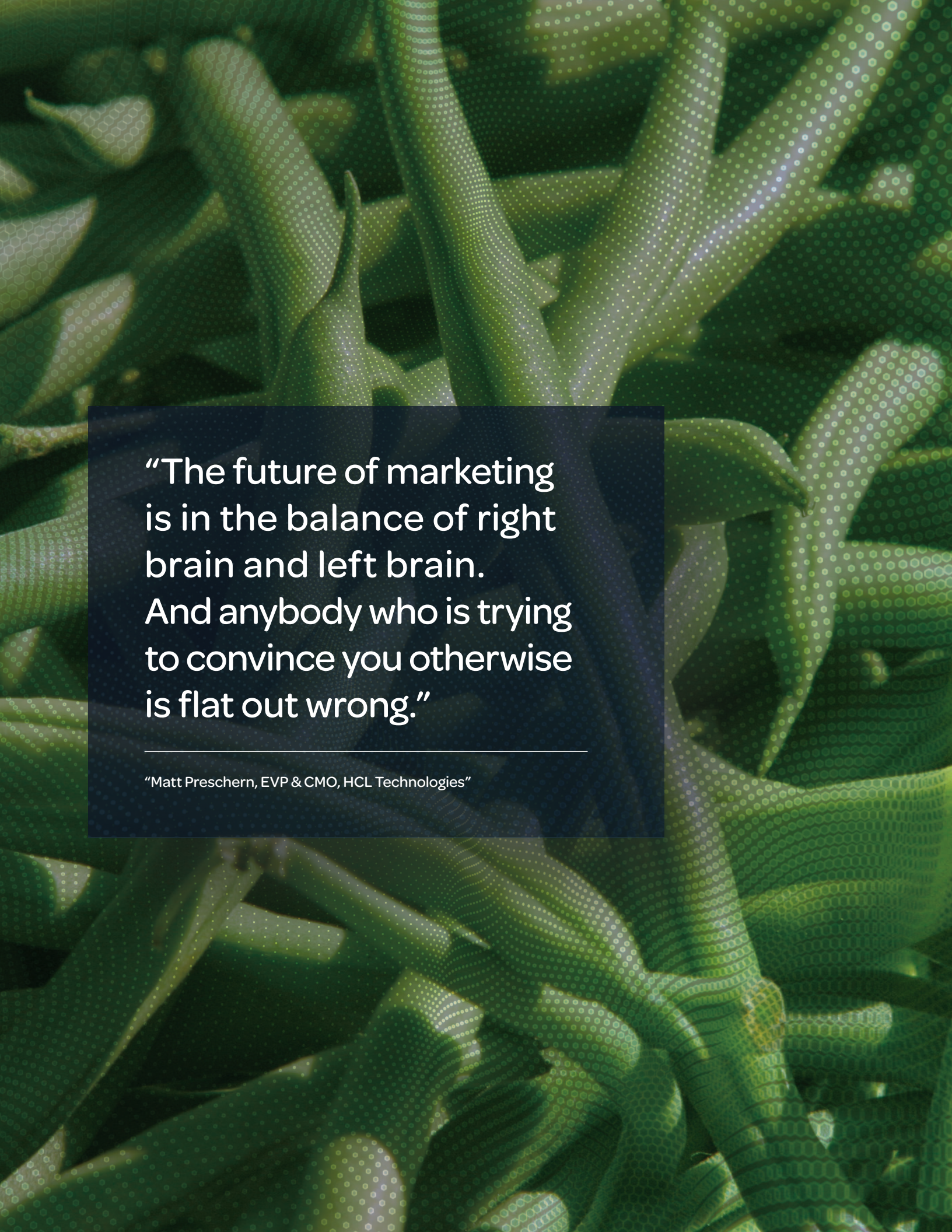


Image source: <https://www.nasa.gov/specials/lego/>



The background is a vibrant green with a complex, abstract pattern of overlapping hexagonal shapes and dots, creating a textured, almost crystalline effect. A dark blue, semi-transparent rectangular box is centered on the image, containing white text.

“The future of marketing  
is in the balance of right  
brain and left brain.  
And anybody who is trying  
to convince you otherwise  
is flat out wrong.”

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“Matt Preschern, EVP & CMO, HCL Technologies”



## A Post-Modern ‘Wow’ From the POV of a Green Bean

Key Technologies proved you don’t have to have a trillion dollars of assets under management to create a super-powered wow. “Immersive virtual reality, sparked by a strong creative concept, made Key’s “VERYX 360 Experience” no less surprising to the food processing industry than ‘Fearless Girl’ was the morning she appeared on Wall Street,” says Webb, whose agency conceived and executed the program.

Key Technologies’ remit to Stein IAS was to ensure its new VERYX digital food sorting platform launched with a reception worthy of the revolutionary technology it brought to market. Key to the agency’s solution was a virtual reality experience that offered decision makers and influencers the opportunity to experience what it’s like for a green bean to race through a VERYX sorter, while “living” the functionality that was about to render competitive systems obsolete. The virtual reality let customers experience VERYX from the inside out – the same way their food product does.

“Inherently, when we began to think about how to do this, we had to think about it less like a demo and more like a videogame, or a movie,” says Michael Ruby, Stein IAS’ Chief Content and Experience Officer. “It had to be, ‘What is the story that I am telling as I go through here?’ as opposed to what are the things that I’m showing off. That’s incredibly important. Otherwise who cares? You don’t make an emotional connection.”

The approach stood out from the moment it debuted at the gigantic Pack Expo, where the VERYX 360 Experience took customers inside the sorter to experience the technology that made it unique. It continued through distribution across paid/earned/owned/shared media as well as through sales engagement.

The impact of the “Green Bean” experience on Key’s business was both immediate and lasting. Initial engagement, sales and revenue targets were easily exceeded. The VERYX platform was also cited by Key as a primary driver of large-scale, strategic client acquisitions, record-setting order levels and backlogs – all contributing to a 70% increase in stock value from launch through the end of 2017 and the acquisition of the company in January 2018 at an impressive 51% premium beyond that. Further, Key Technologies was recognized as a Corporate Marketer of the Year by the Association of National Advertisers’ Business Marketing Association, and the experience won multiple awards in major U.S. and U.K. competitions.

## Post-Modern Marketing Wows Fly on Wings of Modern Marketing Mastery

As illustrated by the preceding examples, Post-Modern Marketing “wows” rely on powerful creative ideas laden with purpose. But just as importantly, the three examples share a mastery of the digital technologies that define Modern Marketing, suggesting that marketers won’t achieve post-modern wows without first mastering modern marketing technology.

“The root-and-branch transformation we call Post-Modern Marketing is more than a mere rebalancing of modern digital marketing with pre-modern creativity. It’s a sea change in business emerging from all the ways technology and society are co-evolving in the post-modern world.”

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“Reuben Webb, Chief Creative Officer, Stein IAS”



All three examples deploy digital marketing technology to create (or amplify) new kinds of immersive experiences that hit the right and left brain simultaneously, making a far more powerful impact on people's thinking and feeling than marketers have been able to achieve before – that “one-two-three” punch we described at the beginning of this chapter.

Individually and collectively, these Post-Modern Marketing campaigns reach the elusive, vaunted “wow” heights in a way pre-modern and modern marketing did not and could not. “These examples show how the root-and-branch transformation we call Post-Modern Marketing is more than a mere rebalancing of modern digital marketing with pre-modern creativity,” says Webb. “It’s a sea change in business emerging from all the ways technology and society are co-evolving in the post-modern world.” Topping that list:

- Digital technology is enabling new kinds of more immersive, more personal experiences, along with a growing capability to address people individually. “Happiness comes in many flavors – in fact, as many different flavors as there are people,” says Stein IAS’ Keating. “And the promise of Post-Modern Marketing is that technology can help understand how to inspire that happiness, or fulfill desires, for each and every one of them, individually.”
- Dramatic shifts are taking place in customer-brand relationships, due to changing dynamics between people and information and changing expectations people have of brands. The trends all point to brands’ growing need for purpose, and humanity.
- And because of these shifts, marketing’s role in business strategy and operations is on the rise.

Marketers will get to “wow” only by taking full advantage of all the immersive digital storytelling, message amplification, optimization and individualization that modern marketing has to offer, but layered together with intuitively powerful, purposeful creative ideas that generate strong gravitational pull.

## References

<sup>1</sup> More recently, neuroscience has shown that human brains cannot easily distinguish between “familiarity” and “truth.” See *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, by Daniel Kahneman.

<sup>2</sup> “B2B Marketers Are Full Of Emotion. Is Your Branding?,” CMO.com; <http://www.cmo.com/opinion/articles/2017/8/9/b2b-buying-is-full-of-emotions-ptr-tlp.html>

<sup>3</sup> “HP’s CMO: Brands and agencies must publish their ‘scorecards’ to move diversity forwards,” Marketing Week, <https://www.marketingweek.com/2018/01/03/antonio-lucio-scorecards-diversity/>

<sup>4</sup> “Fearless Girl Takes Home 3 Top Awards at the Cannes Ad Festival,” Fortune.com, June 20, 2017.

<sup>5</sup> “‘Fearless Girl’ Steals the Conversation,” The Wall Street Journal, June 19, 2017.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> “The Fearless Girl Is Worth \$7.4 Million in Free Publicity for State Street,” Bloomberg, April 28, 2017.

<sup>8</sup> “The Field Trip to Mars: An ordinary school bus trip transforms into an incredible space journey,” Framestore Studio web page, accessed 7 January 2018; <http://framestorevr.com/field-trip-to-mars/>