

CANNES LIONS DECODED

IONS DECODED 2025 PNL

LEADERSHIP, CREATIVITY & THE FUTURE OF COMMUNICATION

At Cannes Lions 2025, the big question wasn't just "what's next for creativity?"—it was:

**“HOW DO WE REBUILD
COMMUNICATION FOR A
WORLD TRANSFORMED BY
AI, SHIFTING CULTURE, AND
A CRISIS OF TRUST?”**

Porter Novelli was at the heart of the conversation, convening innovators, leading panels, decoding the trends shaping the future of our industry - **and even taking home a few awards.**

This report distills Cannes' most urgent lessons and inspiring work into five key chapters:

01 CREATIVITY, AI, AND HUMAN IMPACT: KEY TRENDS FROM THE WORK

AI-powered creativity is collapsing the boundaries between imagination and execution, empowering bold new ideas. Meanwhile, humor and playfulness have become strategic tools for emotional connection and brand growth.

02 CASE STUDIES & STANDOUT CAMPAIGNS

From viral creator partnerships to purpose-driven action, the most impactful campaigns delivered measurable outcomes and real human benefit. This chapter spotlights breakthrough work that moved markets, changed policies, and built lasting emotional bonds.

03 A NEW BLUEPRINT FOR COMMUNICATION

AI is no longer just a tool—it’s a gatekeeper and collaborator. Brands must now design messaging for both humans and machines, while prioritizing trust, language strategy, and earned visibility to stay relevant and credible.

04 CURIOSITY: THE LEADERSHIP SUPERPOWER

In a world defined by uncertainty, curiosity has emerged as the essential leadership trait. Across panels and roundtables, leaders agreed: asking better questions, embracing vulnerability, and fostering cultures of exploration drive resilience and reinvention.

05 THE CANNES CALL TO ACTION

Cannes 2025 left leaders with a clear mandate: Prototype and iterate like innovators. Lead with curiosity. Prioritize trust, impact, and emotional intelligence. Embrace authentic creators, strategic humor, and meaningful action to future-proof brand relevance and success.

CREATIVITY, AI & HUMAN IMPACT: KEY TRENDS FROM THE WORK

AI: CREATIVE PARTNER, NOT COMPETITOR

AI's role as a creative companion was a defining theme, collapsing the friction between imagination and execution. As Apple's Tor Myhren said: "There is no technology capable of making us feel emotion better than the human mind can." The future is human + machine, not one or the other.

HUMOR & PLAYFULNESS AS STRATEGIC TOOLS

Humor wasn't just for laughs—it was a tool for memorability and growth. Campaigns like McDonald's France's "Curry Sauce" Olympic hack proved that a single witty post can spark a global conversation and drive results.

PURPOSE BEYOND PURPOSE-WASHING

The work that stood out had real human impact—not just talk. AXA's emergency relocation for domestic violence victims, Amazon India's upcycled festival beds, and McDonald's UK's mental health Happy Meals showed that brand action changes lives and drives loyalty.

THE CREATOR ECONOMY TAKES CENTER STAGE

The Social & Influencer Lions were renamed Social & Creator Lions, cementing creators as brand architects. Authentic, transparent, and long-term creator partnerships are now essential for narrative and ROI. The "CEO Creator" is a new leadership archetype.

NOSTALGIA, REMIXED

Nostalgia bridged generations when executed with freshness and relevance. Campaigns revived iconic assets to spark emotional connection with new audiences, while brands like Nutter Butter and Budweiser used their history as a launchpad for contemporary cultural moments.

CASE STUDIES & STANDOUT CAMPAIGNS



DUOLINGO

“Death of Duo” campaign turned the loss of a mascot into viral engagement, driving billions of impressions and record user growth.



GRAND RESERVA + CORONA

Corona created a first-of-its-kind Sun Reserve, leasing unbuilt airspace to limit beachfront development and ensure that beaches continue to get their shine.



AMAZON INDIA

Upcycled delivery boxes into beds for pilgrims, combining sustainability, practicality, and social impact.



AXA FRANCE

“Three Words” helped change insurance policies to protect victims of domestic violence, resulting in immediate, measurable benefit and a +9% brand consideration uplift.



RENAULT UN:PATENT

With UN.patent, Renault is licensing its safety innovations for electric vehicles to the global automotive industry.



NUTTER BUTTER

Revived a 55-year-old brand for Gen Z through unexpected, “unhinged” digital content, yielding viral engagement with \$0 media spend.

A NEW BLUEPRINT FOR COMMUNICATION

IF COMMUNICATION IS BROKEN, HOW DO WE REBUILD IT?

At the Porter Novelli x Provoke Innovation Roundtable, top minds from marketing, AI, and strategy named the new realities:

A new blueprint emerged. Prototype like product developers. Communicate for both humans and machines. Prioritize trust over reach. Innovate language, not just technology. Reinvest in earned visibility.

Bottom line: Communication must evolve—intelligently, empathetically, and fast—to stay relevant in an AI-shaped world.

● AI IS A GATEKEEPER

Brands must now train large language models with their messaging—or risk becoming invisible. AI isn't just a tool, but a collaborator and a filter for influence.

● LANGUAGE IS STRATEGY

Nuance, framing, and behavioral science are more critical than ever. Words shape perception and drive behavior.

● EARNED MEDIA IS BACK

PR's power is resurgent as earned coverage fuels AI content and credibility.

● TRUST IS IN CRISIS

Emotional resonance, cultural fluency, and ethical design are essential as trust fractures across generations and organizations.

● PLAY, NOT PUSH

The future belongs to interactivity, creativity, and gamified engagement—not one-way messages.

CURIOSITY: THE LEADERSHIP SUPERPOWER

LEADING THROUGH CURIOSITY

Across the Croisette, a critical leadership theme emerged: in an era of rapid change, curiosity—not certainty—is the new superpower.

At LBB Beach, our CEO, Jillian Janaczek led a panel with executives from Chief, Google, Comcast, and more, all agreeing that curiosity builds resilience and relevance.

- LETTING GO OF OLD MODELS IS ESSENTIAL.
- VULNERABILITY (“I DON’T KNOW”) BUILDS TRUST.
- IMPACT MATTERS MORE THAN INTENT.
- CURIOSITY IS A PRACTICE, NOT A TRAIT.



CURIOSITY: THE LEADERSHIP SUPERPOWER



The PRWeek Curiosity Roundtable reinforced that asking better questions (“What if I’m wrong?”) unlocks innovation and humility. Curious leaders create cultures of exploration and growth, while trust and empathy win over mere tactics.



The Female Quotient Lounge highlighted the power of personal philosophy. Leadership rooted in self-awareness and values drives authentic, high-performing teams. As Jillian put it, “Who you are shapes how you lead. Values aren’t just personal—they’re strategic.”

CANNES CALL TO ACTION

THE WORLD IS CHANGING FAST. COMMUNICATION LEADERS MUST:

- PROTOTYPE AND ITERATE LIKE INNOVATORS.
- COMMUNICATE FOR BOTH HUMANS AND MACHINES.
- LEAD WITH CURIOSITY IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY.
- PRIORITIZE TRUST, IMPACT, AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE OVER REACH AND VOLUME.
- EMBRACE AUTHENTIC CREATORS, STRATEGIC HUMOR, AND MEANINGFUL ACTION.

Cannes 2025 made it clear: The brands and leaders who thrive will be those who evolve—intelligently, empathetically, and bravely. Curiosity, creativity, and values aren't just ideals—they're competitive advantages.

THANK YOU THANK YOU



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON CANNES INSIGHTS OR THE
FUTURE OF COMMUNICATION INNOVATION, REACH OUT TO:
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