

STANDING OUT IN A COPY-PASTE WORLD

ACTIONS AND INSIGHTS FOR BACK AT THE OFFICE

Thank you so much for joining my opening keynote at MarTech Nordic 2026. What a time to be alive. I hope you find the following helpful. I'd be delighted to work with you or your organisation further. Please email mda@martindadams.com or martin@formantadvisory.com.

Every company has been handed the same machine. Two forces make brands converge: AI's default purpose (automation) and its convergent nature (same models, same data, same pool). Here is how to overcome both.

1 WHERE IS IT A MISTAKE TO FOCUS AI?

- + **Don't make efficiency the vision.** Costs have a floor, and everyone gets the same savings at the same time. Take them. They won't separate you.
- + **Run the meat proxy check.** Does every output that reaches a customer get checked against your brand rules and standards?
- + **Audit the trust account.** The saving lands on your dashboard; the cost lands with your customers. For every withdrawal last month (generic content, an interruption), name one deposit (something only you would say).
- + **Run the swap-the-logo test on everything customers see.** Content, copy, ads, packaging, product pages, customer replies. If a competitor's logo would work on it, it's copy-paste.

2 WHAT CREATES REAL VALUE IN AN AI WORLD?

- + **Treat value as a rate.** Reasons to choose you have no ceiling, but every one has a half-life. Ask: are we finding new reasons faster than the old ones expire, or become invisible to us?
- + **Build affinity and authority.** People remember what you make them feel. Machines recommend what they can verify. Every claim you stand by needs validation you didn't write: reviews, communities, experts.
- + **Ask an AI to describe your brand.** Then find out where it got its answer. Machines recommend brands whose claims are few, prioritised and consistent, so that customers, communities and third parties can confirm them. Ten different claims give nobody anything to validate. Patagonia: around 60% of its AI-visible mentions come from community and specialist review sites. Notion: 98% of its AI mentions describe it the same way.

3 WHAT PURPOSE CAN I BEST LEVERAGE AI FOR?

- + **Sense and respond, not just generate.** The reasons to choose you form outside your building. Sensing them takes an ongoing intelligence capability, not periodic research.
- + **Audit where you sense.** Demographics, intent, demand, interest, community, trajectory. Most brands stop at the first two. Balance capturing existing demand with sensing new reasons.
- + **Brief the outcome, not your assumptions.** Give the machine your beliefs and it will only confirm them. Ask "what do people who buy twice have in common?", not "does our loyalty scheme drive repeat purchase?"
- + **Move 1: Uncover demand.** What people want that doesn't exist yet, or doesn't exist well enough.
 - DO** Mine the gaps: complaints, returns, competitors' 1 to 3 star reviews.
 - AVOID** Asking customers what they want. They'll describe what already exists.
- + **Move 2: Understand interest.** What your customers care about beyond your category. LEGO is present in around 10,000 live topics and gets around 507k AI mentions a month.
 - DO** Map what your customers talk about when they're not talking about you.
 - AVOID** Listening only for your brand name. Monitoring isn't sensing.

- + **Move 3: Map the community.** Where your next reason to be chosen often shows up first.
 - DO** Find adjacent communities. Watch what people do with your product that you never intended.
 - AVOID** Measuring community by followers. Watch behaviour, not audience size.

4 WHAT MUST STAY WITH MY PEOPLE?

- + **Divide the work.** The machine senses the market, responds in your voice and learns from the response. Your people set the point of view, define the standard (brand, truth, rules, risk) and judge and correct.
- + **Put every signal through human decisions.** Can we deliver this, and do it well? Are we allowed to: legally, ethically, by our own standards? If we're wrong, can we live with the downside? Is it us?
- + **Let what you stand for decide what you do with what you sense.** And let what you sense pressure test what you stand for.

5 WHAT IS MY JOB NOW?

- + **Redesign how the team works.** The machine's job moves from making to sensing and responding. Your people's job moves from making and approving to setting, defining and judging. The rhythm moves from campaigns to a continuous loop. The brand moves from decks to documents the machine reads.
- + **Write your brand into the context engine.** Cover what you're for; who you're for and not for; what you stand for and what you'd never do; what only you sound like; what you're known for; what you look like.
 - DO** Write rules and examples, not adjectives. "Bold, warm, human" means nothing to a machine. "We say repair, never replace" does.
 - DO** Start with your refusals: what you'd never say, do or claim. They keep the machine off the average.
 - AVOID** A brand book the machine never reads. If it isn't in the prompts, the knowledge base and the checks, it's never actioned.
 - TEST** Give an AI a hard brief (an angry customer, a trend you'd never touch) with and without your brand documents. Same answer? Your brand isn't captured yet.

OVERCOME AI'S DEFAULT PURPOSE: **SENSE AND RESPOND.**

OVERCOME ITS CONVERGENT NATURE: **FEED IT WHAT NOBODY ELSE HAS.**

Sources: Doshi & Hauser, Science Advances, 2024 · 21st Century Brand × Semrush, 2026 · Mayur Gupta, Kraken

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