



*tomorrow, today:
the future of brand experience*

Global influences impacting our industry

Prologue

Buck Freeman started our company in 1927 with enthusiasm for the idea of connecting people in ways that are meaningful. Nine decades later, as we think about where we are today, we can't help feeling like a 90-year old startup. There is so much opportunity in front of us all, and we are all so fortunate to work together in this great industry. We are grateful for the partnerships with our clients and for all we have accomplished together, but more importantly, we're excited about all that we will achieve in the coming years. In the spirit of innovation that has been a part of our company since the beginning, we want to share with you some insights on the future and where we see opportunities for prosperity and growth as our story, and all of our stories, continue on.

Warm regards,

Don S. Freeman, Jr. and Carrie Freeman Parsons

An Introduction to Our Future-Focused Initiative

“It is not our task to predict the future but to be well-prepared for it.”

PERICLES, 5TH CENTURY B.C.

This year, Freeman celebrates an amazing 90-year history. We’re marking that occasion by both honoring our enduring heritage of innovation and focusing our gaze firmly on tomorrow.

We believe the future isn’t something to experience passively. We believe that together, we can **create** the future.

Our goal? To proactively shape outcomes while remaining flexible to manage the unknowns. To that end, Freeman has launched an initiative to envision our world 10 years from now. We set out to explore society, businesses, and people — to understand how the future will unfold for the brand experience industry, and how this will affect marketers, exhibitors, clients, and attendees.

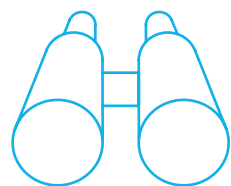
We will use these findings to plan our own future and leadership, and we encourage you and your organization to do the same.



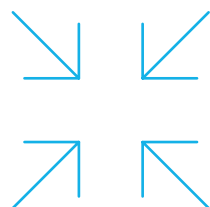


How We Are Identifying Macro Trends

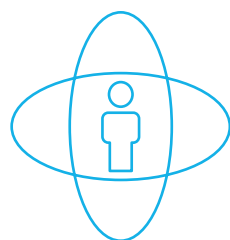
We leveraged a multifaceted approach that overlays trend research, insights, and input to build a comprehensive and robust vision of the future:



Industry insights: We first convened a diverse group of experts from across the Freeman enterprise to provide insight into our evolving industry. We dove into the data, including industry reports, academic literature, and statistics, as well as media scans and empirical observations.




Outside influences: Next, we collaborated with futurist consultancy/agency Kjaer Global, which investigated the scientific and social trends and emotional and spiritual touchpoints that will drive tomorrow's society.



Personal perspectives: Finally, we gathered a handpicked team of Freeman futurists to explore the macro trends we identified. Using a design-thinking approach and their own direct experiences, the group identified core areas for which new thinking, solutions, or approaches are needed.

We feel certain this outlook will motivate, positively challenge, and inspire you. This is the starting point on your journey to stay aware of and tuned in to the changes that are going on around you.

Go forth, learn, adapt, and enjoy!



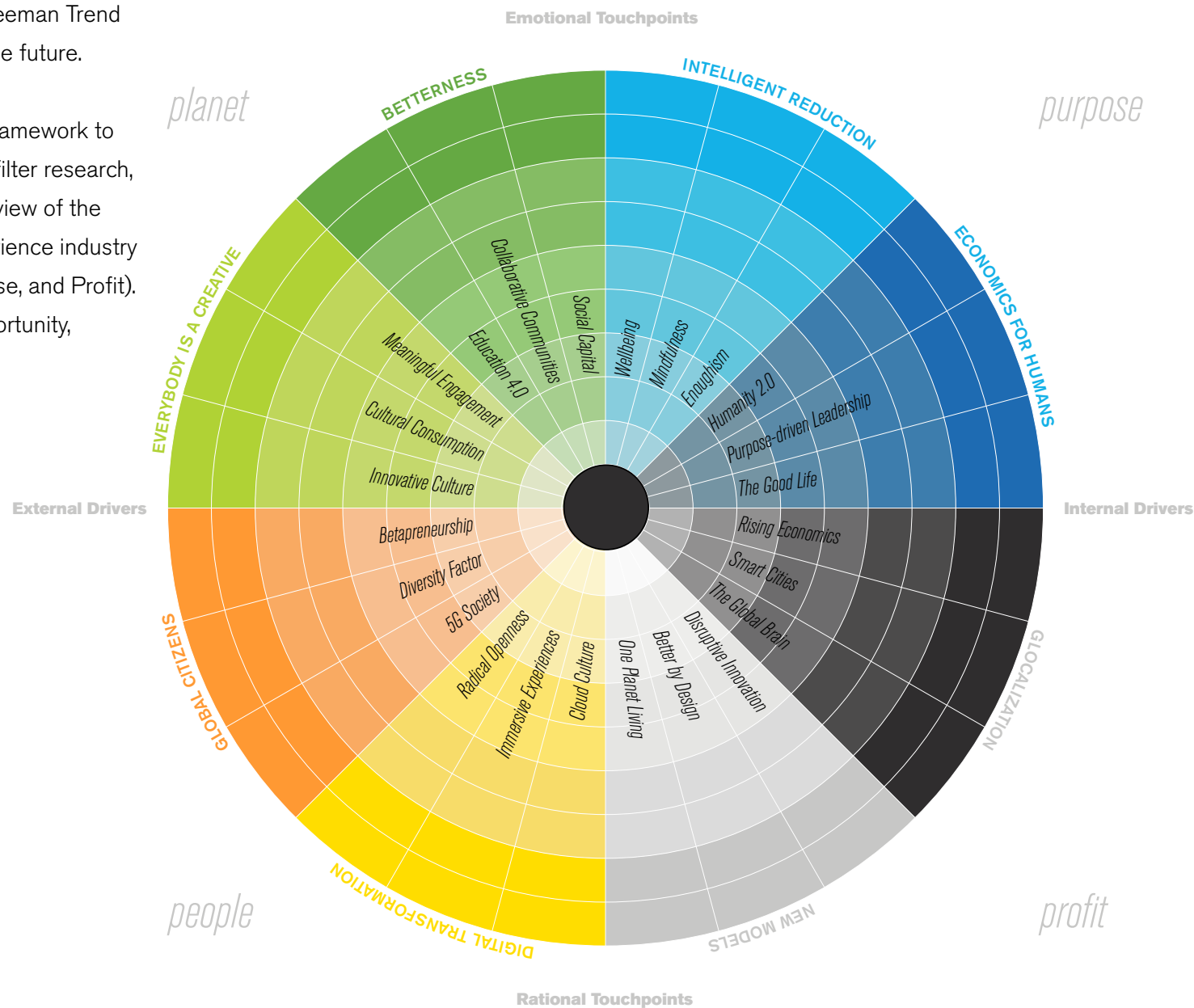
**“ Building a solid framework
enables us to actively shape**
tomorrow's reality.”

— ANNE LISE KJAER, FUTURIST AND ENTREPRENEUR

The Freeman Trend Compass

Over several months of work looking at global trends in our industry, we created a Freeman Trend Compass in order to better navigate the future.

The Trend Compass provides a solid framework to actively shape the future. It is used to filter research, data, and ideas to provide a clear overview of the core drivers impacting the brand experience industry in a 4P context (People, Planet, Purpose, and Profit). It provides vision grounded in real opportunity, bringing the bigger picture into view.



Profit: Measuring Nontraditional Drivers of Value

Long-term business success is no longer measured solely by traditional financial metrics. Today, performance and profitability are determined by how well an organization:

- Operates on global and local scales;
- Maximizes new models of operation; and
- Emphasizes drivers like customer satisfaction and employee innovation.

By embracing a more comprehensive view, organizations can better design, communicate, and implement their strategic plans worldwide.

Glocalization

“The old world of Globalization is dead. Today, brands need to operate in a new era of Deep Globality, which requires deep knowledge, deep local networks, and deep media savvy.”¹

Glocalization is the process of applying a global idea in a local context, and it's transforming brand engagement. By building empathy and understanding with communities, and by engaging with each market's collective desires, aspirations, and cultural experiences, brands ensure a balance of continuity and customization with the messages they communicate.

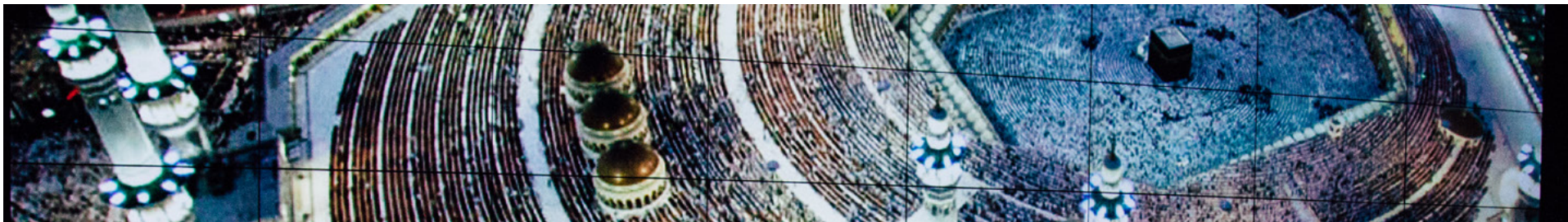
☆ Example

Microbreweries in China tap into a local culture that big brands often ignore.

Several factors are driving glocalization:

- **New economic hubs.** As Western growth stabilizes, we've seen new economic hubs emerging in such areas as Guangzhou, China; Lagos, Nigeria; and Bangalore, India. Expect this to increase.
- **Increased urban living.** Cities are facing new challenges, including resource shortages and climate and environmental impacts. These challenges are also opportunities to use resources more wisely, invest in smart infrastructure, and optimize the quality of life.
- **The global brain.** This self-organizing network is formed by the information and communication technologies that connect the planet's population. As global connectivity and data grow, we'll continue to see profound implications for how we live, work, consume, and interact.

¹ McCann Truth Central: Truth About Global Brands



The Impact of Glocalization on Brand Experience


As organizations look to international markets for growth, the glocal focus becomes increasingly important. But how companies execute that focus will look vastly different.


- Some organizations will seek to *attract* international audiences to their event or brand experience.
- Others will seek to *find* international audiences by exhibiting at trade shows or executing proprietary events around the world.


No matter the form or fashion, the goal for glocalization is the same: Generate local relevance with global consistency.

Start having conversations within your organization about this now. How can your organization be mindfully local? How can you use data to fuel more personalized engagements? The world will continue to shrink, so going global needs to be on your radar today and part of your future tomorrow.

Facts and figures

66% of the world's population will live in cities by 2050.² 

75% of the infrastructure that will be in place by 2050 doesn't exist today.³ 

By 2020, **4 billion people worldwide** will have Internet-connected smartphones.⁴ 

2 The United Nations: World Urbanization Prospects

3 Global Infrastructure Basel: Removing the Bottleneck for Infrastructure Investments

4 Medium: "Lessons from the PC Video Game Industry"



“ We can’t solve problems by using
the same kind of thinking we
used when we *created them.* ”

— ALBERT EINSTEIN



New Models

There's no question that the world is changing. New patterns of international production and trade, demographic change, and technological advances have dramatically altered the shape of the global economy during the past two decades, and "business as usual" is no longer an option.

☆ Example

In Kenya, a mobile app called Flare is the Uber of ambulances in a country where many cities have no functioning emergency response system.

Organizations need to rethink the 20th-century economic principle that people, markets, and economies behave rationally and self-correct — so they can build new business models ripe for 21st-century opportunities.

To build these new models of engagement and avoid having to play catch-up, organizations must be focused on two key areas:

- They must become disruptive innovators — innovating their brand before an outsider does it for them.
- They must have their pulse on future needs and behaviors, as well as technology developments and global trends.

How do they get there? Design thinking.

This iterative process is not about aesthetics or product development. Instead, it spurs innovation and creativity through a structured, strategic process and a mindset that is driven by a passion to do better.





The Impact of New Models on Brand Experience


New business models are changing everything around the brand experience — our industry included. To be successful with your audience, consider:


- What is your audience going through?
- How can you improve their experience?
- Can you make it simpler, yet more meaningful?

The most successful organizations will be more loosely structured and less focused on corporate hierarchies. They will understand, honor, and embrace the concept that good ideas can come from anywhere.

You can start by leading with design. Collaborate with leadership to pioneer a human-centric model that incorporates technology and simplicity.

Facts and figures

66% of CEOs are forming unusual alliances, like partnerships with customers.⁵ 

Design-driven businesses outperformed the Standard & Poor's 500 by **228%** during the past **10 years**.⁶ 

⁵ PwC: A Marketplace Without Boundaries? Responding to Disruption

⁶ The Design Management Institute: The DMI Design Value Index

People: Incorporating Technology with a Human Touch

Everything organizations do starts and ends with people. But what it means to be human is changing as technology plays an ever-pivotal role in business. How can organizations successfully incorporate these advancements while retaining the human perspective that's essential to interactive experiences?

Digital Transformation

“For brands to create transformative experiences, the audience will become their marketers, their advocates, which is what every brand wants.”⁷



This should come as a surprise to no one: The digital transformation shows no signs of slowing.

To be successful in the new paradigm of digital engagement — which goes beyond what we can imagine today — organizations must be able to take advantage of the efficiency of the cloud while addressing the very real issues of privacy and trust.

☆ Example

Businesses in developing countries rely on cloud computing when electric grids and other tech infrastructure are unreliable.

⁷ Event Magazine: “Experiential Marketing Trends for 2015: Immersive Experiences”

Cloud computing is a key driver behind the transformation of people's digital lives and the way businesses operate.

- Organizations are taking advantage of the cloud's efficiency to create better products and experiences, drive new collaborations, analyze and manage supply, and deliver lean and efficient services.
- Meanwhile, speed, personalization, and quality expectations continue to rise as technology advances and digital natives take on increased entrepreneurial and leadership roles.
- As analog and digital realms increasingly overlap, we should expect to see new possibilities for immersive experiences.

And yet, with an increased reliance on the digital, organizations must mindfully address privacy and trust issues. Ethics, privacy, and transparency must be paramount.

The Impact of Digital Transformation on Brand Experience


There is a tremendous opportunity here for brands to do what the Internet can't on its own: Create immersive experiences that blend analog, digital, and hybrid environments to connect people in meaningful ways.


The era of the passive participant is gone. Today's participants take an active role in a brand experience. Key to those experiences are authenticity and technology that actively engage audiences before, during, and after events.

If your organization isn't yet ready for the coming digital transformation, start by:

- Championing a move to the cloud to increase agility and scalability.
- Working on building transparency and trust inside and outside your organization while closing the gap between promises and actions.

Facts and figures

70% of online consumers report that a message's timing, relevance, and quality influence their entire perception of a brand.⁸ 

97% of people surveyed are concerned that businesses and the government might misuse their data.⁹ 

8 Google: "Micro Moments, Your Guide to Winning the Shift to Mobile"

9 Frog Design: "Consumer Trust Is Key to Leveraging Personal Data in a Connected World"

Global Citizens

“[For some millennials] ... the idea of diversity, at least when it comes to race and ethnicity, feels like a given.”¹⁰



When talent isn't tied to physical location, the promise of global citizenship is clear: Organizations can leverage creativity around the world. With the trends toward cloud computing and a rise in the popularity of project-based work, businesses are well-positioned to match talents to tasks — rather than location or hierarchy.

☆ Example

Project management software Basecamp is headquartered in Chicago, but members are spread across 32 cities worldwide. Employees are “free to live and work in the places they thrive.”

By 2020, five generations will be working side by side for the first time in history. We're truly experiencing a no-age society that has redefined traditional life phases. This increase in diversity will foster sharp rises in innovation across teams, departments, and leadership.

¹⁰ The Atlantic: “The Weakening Definition of Diversity”

By embracing these new dynamics, organizations can unlock the creative capital needed to spur a “betapreneurship” mindset — a combination of beta testing and entrepreneurialism that encourages fast prototyping and personal responsibility for innovation.


The Impact of Global Citizens on Brand Experience


This new focus on globality will drive transformation in several ways:

- Team development will change. When organizations curate the teams that create experiences, they can include individuals from different locations, generations, and backgrounds to foster innovation and ideas.
- The experiences created will change. With the rise of streaming, location is no longer a barrier. Events can attract attendees regardless of location, making every event a global one.
- The live brand experience will become increasingly important. Real-life experiences will serve as the catalyst to bring diverse groups together and generate the thinking that will change the world.

To fully take advantage of the future workforce composed of global citizens and a five-generation society, organizations must give their people the room to be creative within a nurturing environment. Play to the specific strengths offered by each generation, and embrace the advantages of creating truly diverse teams. Learn to deliver fast-cycle innovation and create a safe space for experimentation.

Facts and figures

By mid-century, there will be more people on this planet older than **age 60** than younger than **age 15**.¹¹ 

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“PeoplePerHour, an online freelance marketplace, forecasts that one in two people in the US and the UK will **be freelance by 2020**.”¹² 

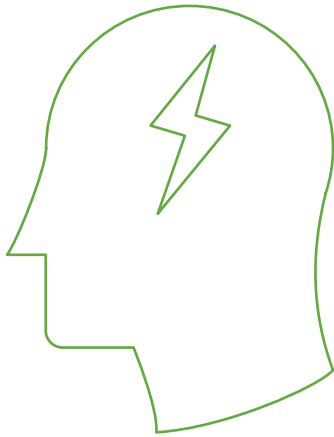
11 World Economic Forum: How 21st Century Longevity Can Create Markets and Drive Economic Growth

12 BBC: “Is the ‘gig economy’ turning us all into freelancers?”



Planet: Generating Ingenious Solutions That Benefit the Whole

When organizations prioritize the health of the planet, everyone benefits. Organizations that tap into people's inherent creativity and focus on long-term solutions instead of short-term gains will increase the likelihood of their success and protect the planet we call home.



“If you’re really creative, really innovative, you don’t have to make things. You just have to live, observe, think, and feel.”¹³

Everybody is a Creative

Creativity is no longer the sole domain of the designer, writer, or artist; today, it’s an essential work and life skill for everyone. In fact, the planet is a studio of billions of artists and inventors experimenting with, testing, and producing the next masterpiece — even interacting with and influencing brands in real time.

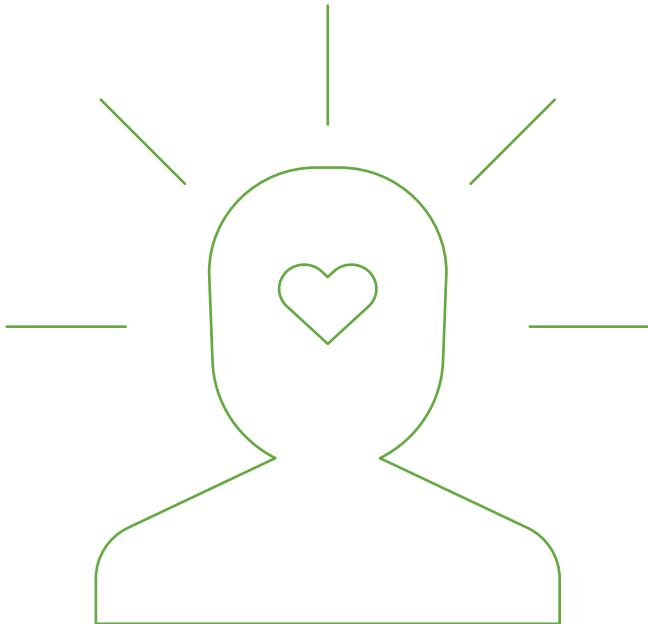
☆ Example

In South America, crowdsourcing platforms like ClickARQ, LALA, and idea.me are helping to inspire a new crop of artists, scientists, makers, and inventors.

Tomorrow’s culture of creativity and innovation is not only open and values-driven, it’s completely decentralized. Creativity thrives in an environment that supports meaningful engagement.

- As they seek out higher meaning, organizations have a unique opportunity to offer brand experiences that invite self-expression and personal discovery.
- Expect an increase in the cross-fertilization of ideas between educational institutions, businesses, and communities, with a focus on co-creation and crowdsourcing.
- Because the iterative ideas of many are often stronger than the singular idea of one, expect employees and audiences to become a critical component of the process.

The future world of creativity is one that is participative, authentic, and integrated into our daily lives.



The Impact of Creativity on Brand Experience


Everyone is a creative, and a good idea can come from anywhere. When brand experiences unleash this creative power, they're unstoppable. This means marketers must be smart about collecting and using ideas from their stakeholders and audience base. Think of ideas as currency: The best experiences will be built on ideas and will provide an environment where new ideas are exchanged.

To harness this potential, organizations can take several steps:

- Start with a story. Keep it authentic to your brand and inherently human.
- Be open and transparent, and encourage your employees, your attendees, and your partners to create alongside you.
- Strive to create experiences that make a difference. Tap into data on your audiences to incorporate “engineered serendipity” — kismet opportunities for self-discovery and learning.

Facts and figures

Consumers aged 15 to 29 are **three times more likely** to participate in product or service development than those aged 50 and older.¹⁴ 

Neuroscience solutions show that storytelling is a creative tool that evokes stronger enjoyment and engagement, which then **motivates people**.¹⁵ 

14 EY: “Placing Trust in the Future of Co-Creation”

15 Raconteur: “Telling the Story Behind Data”



“betterness

**doesn't begin with [someone else]. It begins with you.
Creating a better 21st century means choosing to stop
living in the 20th century.”**

— UMAIR HAQUE



Betterness

Have you ever dreamed of long-lasting prosperity — the kind that benefits your stakeholders, society, and the planet as a whole?

That's the principle of betterness. Specifically, betterness means:

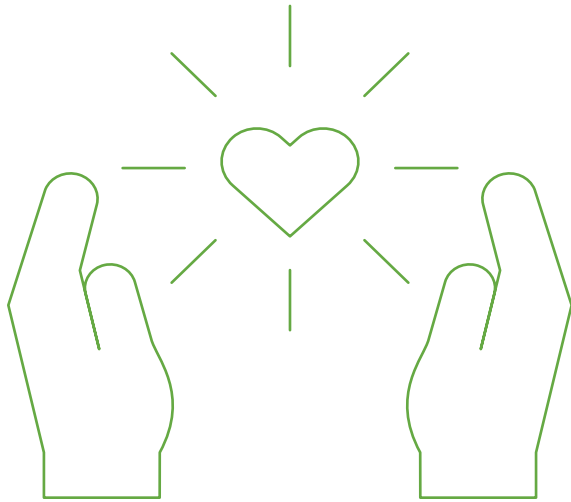
- Having a long-term vision instead of a short-term strategy;
- Keeping a people-focused culture; and
- Making it easy for people to make positive choices.

☆ Example

Whole Foods operates under the long-term vision of providing foods that are “free of artificial preservatives, colors, flavors, sweeteners, and hydrogenated fats” for the betterment of its customers.

The rapid pace of change and the five-generation workforce is driving a chasm between what we know and what we need to know to do our jobs well. Betterness includes the desire for lifelong learning — the kind of education that will minimize that chasm. Luckily, technology makes access to education easy, and the democratization of knowledge provides opportunities to leverage personal and collective influence in relation to business, government, and education.

As communities come together to collaborate on better outcomes, open sourcing and sharing solutions also become en vogue for business and organizations — all with the goal of positive change for the collective. Meanwhile, each individual's social capital, or network of connections, becomes a resource that is nurtured and leveraged for good.



The Impact of Betterness on Brand Experience


As we move toward betterness, brand experience will become a safe space that allows us to work together toward common goals and missions. While learning opportunities can happen anywhere, at any time, face-to-face engagement will become the primary source for idea exchange and collaboration.


Events will become more minimally structured, with less focus on activity scheduling and more on community building. Events will also incorporate more experiences that maximize interaction while facilitating the building of social capital.


Organizations with strong, visionary leadership will win the day as they:

- Encourage an entrepreneurial spirit;
- Adopt accountability metrics that put people and communities first; and
- Provide learning and network-building opportunities for all stakeholders.

Facts and figures

75% of millennials believe businesses are too focused on their own agendas and need to focus more on helping to improve society.¹⁷ 

By one popular estimate, **65%** of children entering primary school today will ultimately end up working in completely new job types that don't yet exist.¹⁸ 

87% of organizations cite culture and engagement as top challenges. As the job market has heated up and new technologies have exploded, power has shifted from the employer to the employee.¹⁹ 

¹⁷ Deloitte: Mind the Gaps. The 2015 Deloitte Millennial Survey

¹⁸ World Economic Forum: The Future of Jobs

¹⁹ Deloitte: "Culture and Engagement. The Naked Organization"

Purpose: What It Is and Why It's Important

What is a brand's purpose? Purpose-driven organizations seem to answer to a higher calling; they follow an ultimate goal that serves as the North Star for every action and decision. In the future, purpose will align more strongly to integrated solutions and service offerings that create better economic opportunities for everyone.

Intelligent Reduction

“The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why.”

MARK TWAIN

With modern life growing more complex by the day, people are stretching their cognitive capabilities. As a result, we crave opportunities to regain balance, find calm, and be engaged in the moment — a true “less is more” approach. We call this “intelligent reduction.” And it’s driving forward-thinking organizations to adopt a values-first mindset and integrate well-being across their portfolio of solutions and service offerings.

☆ Example

From [Marie Kondo](#) to Netflix’s [“Minimalism”](#) to [HGTV’s “Tiny House Hunters,”](#) the “less is more” mindset is popping up everywhere you turn.

Research consistently finds that happy people are more productive, yet personal and work-related stress is on the rise.

- A mindful approach to curating the elements of one’s life — from products purchased, services used, and even companies we work for — is key to intelligent reduction.
- People will naturally gravitate toward the things and experiences that positively impact their well-being.

In fact, happiness at work is more than altruistic — it’s been proven to boost performance. This means organizations must look inward with an empathetic focus on their own structure, communication strategies, and talent management. Organizations that get it right will reap the rewards.

What's more, people are increasingly realizing that experiences, not consumption, drive lasting well-being.

And that's good news for everyone.

The Impact of Intelligent Reduction on Brand Experience

In the future, brand experience will be the avenue through which people connect and accelerate the potential of humanity.


- Events will become more holistic, more culturally and spiritually informed.
- Marketers will understand that less is more and simple is strong.
- Organizations will embrace the need to create opportunities for audiences to nourish their mind, body, and spirit, all under the umbrella of brand experience.

Who will take the lead when it comes to intelligent reduction? The answer is simple: It will be the organizations that build in routines — both in company culture and brand experiences — that allow people time to reflect.

Technology is powerful, but only when it's used to enhance, not dominate, an experience. Treat it as such.

Facts and figures

4.6 billion pieces of content are created every day.²⁰ 

64% of consumers are willing to pay more for simpler experiences.²¹ 



20 Brian Solis and Hugh Macleod: Attention Is a Currency

21 Siegel & Gale: Global Brand Simplicity Index

Economics for Humans

“We are prioritizing relationships. . . and personal growth, and in the process, changing the economy.”

NICK CRAIG, PRESIDENT, AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE



Historically, economics has tended to focus on stimulating growth — while leaving questions of moral justice and ethics to the domain of philosophy. And yet, in the coming years, these theories will no longer operate in isolation. Crucially, our economic measure of a successful, thriving society is beginning to encompass our ideals of lasting happiness and meaningful, fulfilling lives.

☆ Example

Chobani enforces pay minimums for employees, understanding that it's expensive to lose high-quality talent, and awards employees equity stakes in the company. Founder Hamdi Ulukaya described this initiative as “a mutual promise to work together with shared purpose and responsibility.”

One main driver behind an economics-for-humans approach is purpose-driven leadership:

- The leaders of tomorrow will be evaluated on their ability to deliver meaningful and sustained value through clear purpose and human-centric culture.
- This requires prioritized long-term thinking and clear propositions over short-term gains.
- Leaders must understand that growth and prosperity are intertwined with the need to be happy and fulfilled.

Technological advances, such as robotics and artificial intelligence, hold the potential to drive an autonomous future, delivering both personal empowerment and richer experiences. But leaders and individuals must be thoughtful about this future to ensure the place and purpose of individuals and organizations remain clear in an increasingly tech-centered reality.

The Impact of Economics for Humans on Brand Experience


Organizations must adopt purpose-driven leadership, but so must the brand experiences they create. People buy the “why,” so only those organizations that stay true to their missions will achieve their goals.

Alongside setting a clear purpose and vision, organizations should:

- Focus on economics for humans by looking at the relationships between financial viability, community, and physical well-being as they develop marketing and brand experience strategies.
- Ensure that technology, systems, and infrastructure are aligned for long-term purposes.

Doing so will help organizations attract the best talent and help them differentiate their brands.

Facts and figures

40% of workers believe it isn't possible to succeed at work, make a good living, and have enough time to contribute to family and community.²² 

Studies show that working for a good cause boosted employee morale and **increased productivity by 30%.**²³ 

The world now includes **1.1 million** working robots. They're streamlining supply chains to deliver more efficient and predictable business results.²⁴ 

²² Deloitte: Global Human Capital Trends

²³ Inc.: “Why Businesses That Are Purpose-Driven Come Out on Top”

²⁴ World Economic Forum: Deep Shift: Technology Tipping Points and Societal Impact



Wrap-up: Imagining the Future

When we set out on this journey, we purposely chose a time in the not-so-distant future. Five to 10 years from now is just within reach — yet much can change in that time. For comparison, consider the smartphone, which in less than a decade has revolutionized nearly everything we do.

And yet, working with the tools outlined here doesn't have to mean taking crazy risks. Rather, we encourage you to simply ask, "What if?"

Plant the seeds of innovation today by asking yourself and your organization these questions:

- What if my organization goes global (if it isn't already)? How can we be mindfully local but globally consistent? How can we use data to fuel more personalized engagements?
- Could design thinking work in my organization? How can we allow more iterative innovation? How can we simplify our processes?
- What if we moved our operations and processes to the cloud? What avenues would that open for innovation? How can we drive transparency?
- Where can I find the best talent? What are my preconceived notions about where that talent should be or who that person should be? Does my organization encourage personal responsibility for innovation?
- What if my organization doesn't have a good story for its existence? What can we do to create an authentic, human narrative? Where do good ideas come from within my organization, and how can we encourage everyone to share their ideas?
- Does my organization create experiences that improve participant betterness? What impact do these experiences have on their well-being? Does my organization have a people-first mentality?
- Are we using technology to enhance or to dominate our experiences and work cultures? How can we simplify the experience and reduce the impact on the human spirit?
- What if my organization focused on affecting lives rather than making a profit? Which practices, products, or services would stay? Which would go?



Above all, be bold when analyzing macro trends and imagining a new future. Never be afraid to step outside the comforts of what you've already done or what you know you can safely achieve.

*The best and brightest future is
the one you create for yourself.* 



want more?

Request a consultation to learn about these macro trends and how you can use them to bring value to your brand experience.

CHRIS CAVANAUGH, EVP & CMO

+1.214-445.1000 | ContactFreeman@Freeman.com

About Freeman

As the world's largest brand experience company, [Freeman](#) helps organizations connect with their customers by delivering seamless, innovative, and immersive brand experiences. Through comprehensive solutions including strategy, creative, logistics, digital solutions, and event technology, we help clients increase engagement and drive results.

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