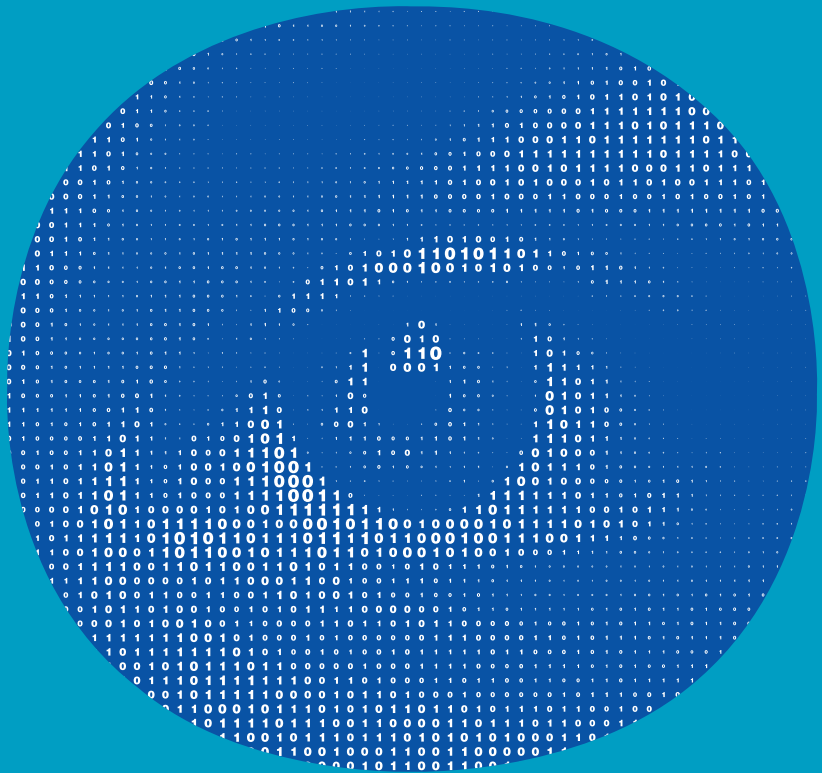


viewpoints



How AI is reshaping
B2B marketing –
**through the eyes
of the experts**

oban
international

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About Oban International

Oban International is an award-winning digital marketing agency that helps businesses grow across international markets. Since 2002, we've combined digital expertise with local insight, using our network of LIMEs (Local In-Market Experts) to understand the details that really shape behaviour – from search habits to language quirks. We turn that knowledge into campaigns that perform across organic search and paid media – not just adapted for local markets but built to succeed in them.

The Overview

Here's a stat that still stops people in their tracks: ChatGPT hit one million users in just five days from launch – faster than almost any product in history. Netflix took over three years. Spotify five months. Twitter (now X) nearly two. ChatGPT? Less than a week.

Two things leap out:

1. AI solves real problems. These tools aren't novelties; they answer real questions, and they do it fast.
2. People adopt technology faster than ever. What once took months or years now happens in days, and businesses must keep up.

AI is everywhere – in meetings, on platforms, in strategy discussions. Some call it the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Politicians hope it can tackle long-standing challenges, from NHS waiting lists to sluggish productivity growth.

And yet, scepticism persists. So far in 2025, the UK's Financial Times has run headlines such as: *America's top companies keep talking about AI – but can't explain the upsides; America is now one big bet on AI; The AI capex end game is approaching; The flawed Silicon Valley consensus on AI; and Financial institutions warn of an AI crash*. Some dismiss AI output as 'slop'.

Whether AI is the next Industrial Revolution or just hype, it's on every client's mind. That's why we wrote this guide. B2B brands are asking: Why is

my website traffic down? Where does AI save time in marketing? How can it help scale campaigns globally? What are the risks, and what can it realistically do?

Oban's advice in an AI-first world is to lead with first-party perspectives. Share real human viewpoints because that's exactly what AI cannot replicate. This guide follows that principle. It brings together insights from across Oban International – from our CEO to Client Partners, paid media and organic teams, and Local In-Market Experts (LIMEs) worldwide. Contributors speak frankly about the real challenges of growing B2B internationally, how AI and human judgement work together, and what these changes mean for strategy, execution, and results. Each section ends with a concise summary, 'What this means for B2B brands', translating experience into practical insight.

This guide is for anyone seeking to understand how AI is reshaping B2B marketing. It's for those who want to cut through the hype and see what works, what doesn't, and why. If you want to grasp the practical choices, trade-offs, and judgements that turn AI into a tool for real impact, it provides a grounded, first-hand perspective.

Let's go

The CEO's View

Sarah Jennings is CEO of Oban International. Here, she explains how decades of experience shape the way she approaches AI, why knowing the limits of technology matters as much as exploiting its possibilities, and how teams can turn insight, creativity, and local knowledge into campaigns that actually work.

I've worked in media since the early 1990s, when broadcast TV and print still dominated. Then came satellite and cable, splintering audiences like never before. Digital followed – email newsletters, websites, early banner ads – adding measurability and complexity. Next arrived search, then social media, and now AI. At the time, each wave felt seismic. People panicked, questioned years of accumulated wisdom, and wondered if the rules had changed forever. And yet throughout, the industry survived the changes, adapted, and continued to thrive. That's how I look at AI today: it's fast-moving, it's transformative, it's unprecedented in scale – but the principle of disruption is not new.

For a CEO running a digital marketing agency, AI is both a tool and a test. Operationally, it opens doors we didn't know existed: repetitive work, data analysis, first drafts of content or reports – AI can help. That frees our people to focus on what humans do best: strategy, creativity, and the nuanced judgment that no algorithm can replicate. Used well, AI makes us sharper, quicker, and more impactful. Used badly... well, it just adds noise. Leading in this era isn't merely about having the tech; it's knowing how to use it.



Client conversations have changed. Everyone knows what AI is, but not everyone knows how to use it effectively. Common questions: How do we use it responsibly? How does it complement human expertise? Where does it actually add value? In B2B, this matters more than ever. You're not selling trainers in 30 seconds – you're persuading a committee of six or more: CFOs, CTOs, procurement, operations, marketing, and compliance, each with their own priorities. AI has reshaped the discovery phase: buyers consult ChatGPT, Claude, and other AI assistants as much as Google or Gartner. If your brand isn't visible there, it doesn't matter how polished your website is – you won't even be considered.

SARAH

***“That’s how I look at AI today:
it’s fast-moving, it’s transformative,
it’s unprecedented in scale –
but the principle of disruption is not new.”***

Content strategy must keep pace. You’re writing for two audiences – people and machines – which sometimes need information presented differently. Answer-first content is king: crisp, structured, and marked up so AI can find it. FAQs, schema, and direct answers are the basics. Meandering six-paragraph explanations are likely to be skipped by both. Thought leadership still demands a clear viewpoint. AI can crunch numbers and compile research, but interpretation, insight, and narrative belong to humans. Trust signals matter more than ever – named authors, citations, real data, and transparency. AI rewards them, and so do B2B decision-makers.

Taking B2B brands into international markets is exciting, but it comes with challenges. AI can translate a whitepaper in minutes, but literal translations rarely convince a German CFO or a Japanese CTO, because they need content that feels natural, credible, and locally relevant. That’s why Oban’s network of Local In-Market Experts – who we call LIMEs – is still relevant.

Our LIMEs live and work in their local markets. They understand the cultural subtleties that make a campaign land. AI hasn’t replaced them, but it has changed how they work. AI can handle some translations, trend spotting, and early content ideas. But LIMEs take that output and make it work locally: adapting language, tone, examples, and cultural nuance, spotting opportunities or risks, and advising on the best approach for each market.

The death of appointment viewing?

.COM OR .CON?

**Twitter is the
new newsroom**

**CLICKS vs. COLUMNS:
THE END OF REAL
JOURNALISM**

**Advertising
dollars abandon
print for the web**

**Can broadcast survive
the cable onslaught?**

In other words, AI makes the work faster, but our people still provide the insight, judgement, and creativity that machines simply can't. Their role is now higher up the value chain: less about doing repetitive tasks, and more about informing strategy and ensuring our campaigns genuinely hit home in each market.

Personalisation at scale is possible in B2B, but it has its limits. AI can adapt content for different roles, like CFOs, CTOs, or procurement teams, but planning, timing, and understanding who is involved in decisions still need humans. Later-stage content is highly targeted, such as specific landing pages, compliance documents, or case studies that speak directly to a buyer's concerns. AI brings speed and reach, but humans provide the context, judgement, and reassurance that actually win deals.

Oban is an Employee Ownership Trust, which means everyone here owns a share of the business. That shared ownership makes us all invested in using AI responsibly and creatively, encouraging smart experimentation instead of shortcuts, and keeping the whole team focused on delivering real value for our clients.

Summary: What this means for B2B brands

- **Make AI a strategic conversation, not a side project**
Treat it as part of your business model and leadership agenda, not a bolt-on efficiency tool. The question isn't whether to use AI, but how it helps you compete, differentiate, and grow.
- **Keep humans in the loop**
AI can speed up work, but it can't replace good judgement or emotional intelligence. The best outcomes come from teams that combine automation with thoughtful decision making, scaling efficiently without losing their voice or credibility.
- **Rethink visibility**
AI discovery is becoming as important as search. If your brand doesn't surface in AI-generated recommendations, you may not even enter the buying conversation. Structured, answer-first content and strong trust signals are non-negotiable.
- **Local still matters**
AI can handle basic translation, but people are still needed to localise properly, making content feel natural, relevant, and persuasive in each market. Keep local expertise involved if you want campaigns that truly connect with your audience.
- **Plan for continual disruption**
AI will keep changing buyer journeys, team structures, and client expectations. Businesses have to stay curious, experiment openly, and invest in both people and adaptability.

The Client Partner's View

Charlotte Deacon and **Susie Cox** lead Oban's Client Services team, so they are at the front line of what clients are thinking and worrying about. They see firsthand what keeps B2B marketers awake at night and where the real opportunities lie. Their insights come straight from daily conversations, giving a clear view of how brands are handling AI and changing search habits.

CHARLOTTE

“People will always buy from people.”



Most of the AI-related questions clients bring to us are strategic, but we do get operational ones too. Usually, these operational questions are about how to reduce costs without sacrificing quality. Content is a perfect example, since there's no escaping the human touch. At Oban, AI has given us efficiencies, sure, but it hasn't replaced our work. It's just shifted our attention to higher-value, more strategic areas.

Measurement is another big one. Everyone's thinking about it right now. AI has changed how people search, but to be clear, the evolution of search behaviour didn't start with ChatGPT in 2022. People have been bouncing between platforms for years, starting on TikTok, moving to Google, then checking different LLMs. AI has just amplified that. Measurement is tricky: SERP features push traditional results further down,

CHARLOTTE

“B2B buying cycles are complex, with multiple stakeholders. Relationship management can never be replaced by AI.”

they're less visually engaging, and people are increasingly finding answers without ever clicking through to a website. That doesn't mean you can ease off on organic because of course you still need to be visible.

A lot of clients feel overwhelmed. Things are changing so fast it's hard to keep up. Everyone feels like they have to be everywhere, do everything, and do it with less. That makes channel prioritisation more important than ever. We try to help by providing regular updates, sharing insights, and hosting events so clients can keep pace.

Applying AI across markets is another source of confusion. Adoption rates vary, so a one-size-fits-all approach doesn't work. Translation has improved thanks to AI, but for quality localisation, working with local experts remains essential. Also, remember that models trained primarily on English/US data rarely perform the same in APAC, LATAM, or EMEA.

AI can be transformative if applied carefully. Expanding internationally can be expensive, and fully localising and optimising websites requires significant effort. AI can speed things up through translation, but you have to invest time upfront – custom GPTs deliver better quality output. And you still need a local expert to review. I've seen an AI-translated English-to-French site perform terribly until a local expert corrected tone, terminology, and, crucially, optimisation. Predictive lead scoring also looks exciting – it isn't widely used yet, but it could be huge.

When it comes to balancing AI efficiency with high-touch relationships, my view is simple: let AI handle high-volume tasks so humans can focus on high-value interactions. B2B buying

cycles are complex, with multiple stakeholders. Relationship management can never be replaced by AI. Its job is to free up time so humans can do the things that matter most: forming and strengthening relationships. People will always buy from people.

Adoption isn't without its challenges. Governance concerns can paralyse progress, leaving clients behind. Others try to do too much at once and end up with nothing done properly, and it becomes overwhelming and disruptive. And many organisations still lack in-house AI skills, which slows everything down.

If there's one 'must-do' for B2B brands using AI today, it's this: the fundamentals still matter. Take EEAT – Expertise, Experience, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness – Google's shorthand for credible content. It's a reminder that AI can assist, but it can't replace human judgment, strategy, and relationships. The strongest brands will pair solid fundamentals with smart tools and genuine expertise.





SUSIE

***“AI is a tool,
not a replacement.”***

I'd echo much of what Charlotte says. Most client questions are strategic rather than operational but from my experience, the emphasis often lands on the practical implications for their budgets, websites, and overall strategy. They're asking: should we put more into paid? Should we double down on social? Do more video? And of course, questions about what AI Mode and AI Overviews mean for rankings, content, and gated content.

Some clients have seen organic traffic dip significantly, which naturally fuels anxiety. Many are trying to quantify the impact of AI – how much time can it actually save? Conversations with procurement teams often revolve around this. At Oban, we've suggested that AI can save up to a third of the time spent, which is a useful ballpark, but it's never a magic wand or an exact formula.

We're seeing more clients use ChatGPT for translations, supported by their own native-speaking team members who provide oversight. That means the role of our LIMEs is evolving, from sole gatekeepers of localisation to key contributors within a broader international toolkit. As an agency, we're clear that human review remains vital to preserve accuracy, tone, and cultural nuance.

Some client questions have centred on understandable worries about disruption and uncertainty, often seeking reassurance that's difficult for any agency to give with absolute certainty. But on the flip side, some clients are embracing AI in remarkable ways. One edtech provider, for example, is using AI to give educators more freedom outside the classroom, opening up new audience segments. Others are automating lead generation and marketing processes, though not all fully – one client has a lead process that is part manual, part automated, and the human element can still trip things up.

Clients sometimes ask whether AI is over-hyped. They wonder if the fundamentals of search recommendations really differ from before, but AI has certainly shifted expectations. People now know what tech can deliver, so when personalisation or service falls short, disappointment follows. Offline activity is still critical. Networking, events, and face-to-face interactions remain invaluable in building trust, especially in B2B. AI can't replace that human counterpoint. From my perspective, AI-related conversations with B2B and B2C clients aren't that different. The main international question tends to be about the uneven rollout of AI, rather than cultural attitudes. That said, how different cultures interact with AI in search remains underexplored, yet understanding these differences could give clients a real edge.



SUSIE

“Human expertise, judgement, and insight are still what make the difference.”

Mistakes will happen, as clients are trialling processes and prompts, and we're investing in internal AI training to support them better. One of the most valuable things we do is advise on repurposing content across platforms and formats, maximising what already exists.

The AI era also means B2Bs need to revisit their competitors and audiences. Some competitors will have adapted faster, some slower; the SWOT analyses aren't the same as they were pre-AI. Similarly, buyer personas evolve when AI enters the equation. For content creation, it's helpful to think of two audiences: AI and humans. Junior staff often start the B2B research journey, now powered by AI, so visibility in those tools is essential from the outset.

Ultimately, AI is a tool, not a replacement. It can change how we work and plan, but human expertise, judgement, and insight are still what make the difference.

Summary: What this means for B2B brands

- **AI is your accelerator, not your pilot**
Use it to strip out inefficiency, not to replace human thinking. It's there to speed up processes so people can focus on strategy, ideas, and relationships.
- **Relationships still drive results**
Platforms play a role, but trust, credibility and rapport are ultimately built by people. AI can support relationship-building but never replicate the nuance of human connection, especially in complex B2B sales cycles.
- **Sameness is the new risk**
As AI floods channels with content, the brands that cut through will be those with a viewpoint of their own. Distinctiveness, expertise, and purpose matter more than ever.
- **Visibility now means two audiences**
Optimise for both humans and AI interfaces, since discovery increasingly happens through LLMs and search overviews as much as through traditional SERPs.
- **Local insight still wins**
Even the best translation models miss tone and nuance. Native expertise keeps messaging sharp and ensures campaigns feel natural across markets.

The Paid Media View

Paid Media has lived through the automation story before most of digital marketing caught on. From rules-based scripts to Smart Bidding, it's been testing machine logic for years. Now, as AI reshapes daily work, **Jules Bodoulé Sosso**, Oban's Head of Paid Media, and **Ellie Spinks**, a Paid Media Strategist, share their perspectives on what's genuinely changing – and what's being overstated – in this AI-first era for global B2B brands.



JULES

“Precision without empathy is a dead end.”

The idea that AI represents the Fourth Industrial Revolution has become a cliché, but it rings true. Machines aren't running factories this time – they're shaping the pace of knowledge work. In Paid Media, this isn't our first machine revolution. Automation has been part of our world for nearly a decade: scripts, rules-based bidding, Smart Campaigns. The language has changed, but the logic hasn't – from manual to rules-based to 'intelligent'. Paid Media's relationship with AI runs deeper than most of digital marketing because we've been training the machines for years.

That history gives our team a bit of perspective. Each wave follows a similar pattern: scepticism, adoption, dependency. The difference now is scale and pace. These systems no longer just adjust bids; they model intent in real time. The craft has shifted from tweaking keywords to teaching algorithms what good looks like. Where we once obsessed over granularity and manual control, the work now lies in signal quality and data structure. Success depends on how clearly you define it for the system.

JULES

“Attention has never been so expensive.”

The irony is that we've gained precision but lost visibility. Clients still want to know which lever was pulled, but the more AI you use, the less you can see under the bonnet. So we've become interpreters – reading patterns, translating machine logic into human strategy. And a big part of that is emotional. Trust used to sit with the media manager; now it sits with the algorithm. For risk-averse brands, that's a huge leap. Which means education is as much part of our job as optimisation.

There are some misconceptions about efficiency. AI does save time in some areas, but it's not as clear-cut or obvious as some might think. The manual work might shrink, but the strategic work expands – ensuring that data is clean, signals are accurate, and systems aren't learning the wrong lessons. In that sense, judgement hasn't disappeared, it's just moved upstream. Strategy now lives in the invisible layers: CRM integration, audience architecture, and the hygiene of your first-party data.

As platforms evolve, this growing sophistication brings new challenges. Technology may be getting smarter, but that doesn't always make media simpler. For advertisers and media owners alike, AI introduces a more complex balancing act, which involves weighing reach and frequency against experience and quality. Take YouTube, for example, where innovations like peak moment targeting and automated frequency management show how platforms are evolving to address this tension. The real task now is to use precision in a way that still feels human and relevant, because precision without empathy is a dead end.

It's useful to think of AI in two ways: operational efficiency and behavioural change. On the operational side, for example, it's a brilliant research assistant – summarising, clustering, identifying patterns. But on the human side, it's reshaping attention itself. People are scanning and filtering faster than ever, acting almost

instinctively. It's the hunter-gatherer brain applied to information: assess, discard, move on. AI gives users the illusion of omniscience – they think they know everything – but it also shortens their patience. Attention has never been more expensive.

This is where B2B and B2C start to diverge. B2C audiences are impatient; B2B audiences still read. They value substance, expertise, a human point of view. AI can draft, summarise, and generate ideas, but if you let it write the full whitepaper, you'll end up with something that's probably bland and forgettable. Expertise is nuance, and nuance is what separates you from everyone else using the same tools. That's even more important internationally, where language is just the surface layer. Meaningful local insight – tone, humour, etiquette – is still out of AI's reach.

Looking ahead, we can expect regulation to reshape the landscape. We'll likely see copyright protections tighten and creator compensation rebalanced. Meanwhile, OpenAI and others will almost certainly launch their own ad solutions, which will open up a new frontier for B2B marketers. There's talk of hardware interfaces, of AI-native devices. Whatever happens, the technology will probably continue to advance faster than our capacity to regulate it.

The question for B2B companies isn't whether to adopt AI but how to use it intelligently. Train your people to prompt well. Connect your data. Experiment without fear. The brands that thrive won't be the ones that automate everything; they'll be the ones that stay curious, interpret wisely, and keep enough human messiness in the mix to keep it real.



ELLIE

“AI can translate, but it can’t localise meaning.”

What’s exciting about AI is also what makes it **unpredictable**. Every new feature brings both opportunity and challenge, and we’re all learning as we go. In many ways, we’re early explorers rather than guinea pigs – testing, adapting, and figuring out what works. The advantage of being early is that we get to shape how these tools evolve and discover their full potential.



Clients are often optimistic about what AI can do. It can speed up some tasks, but the time savings are sometimes more modest than expected, and implementation is not always straightforward. A client might name an AI tool they’ve heard of, assuming it will fit their needs, only to find it isn’t suitable. AI can work well for translation, but localisation is still limited, since the tools can’t pick up cultural nuances or judge whether images and tone resonate in a particular market. Human expertise remains essential.

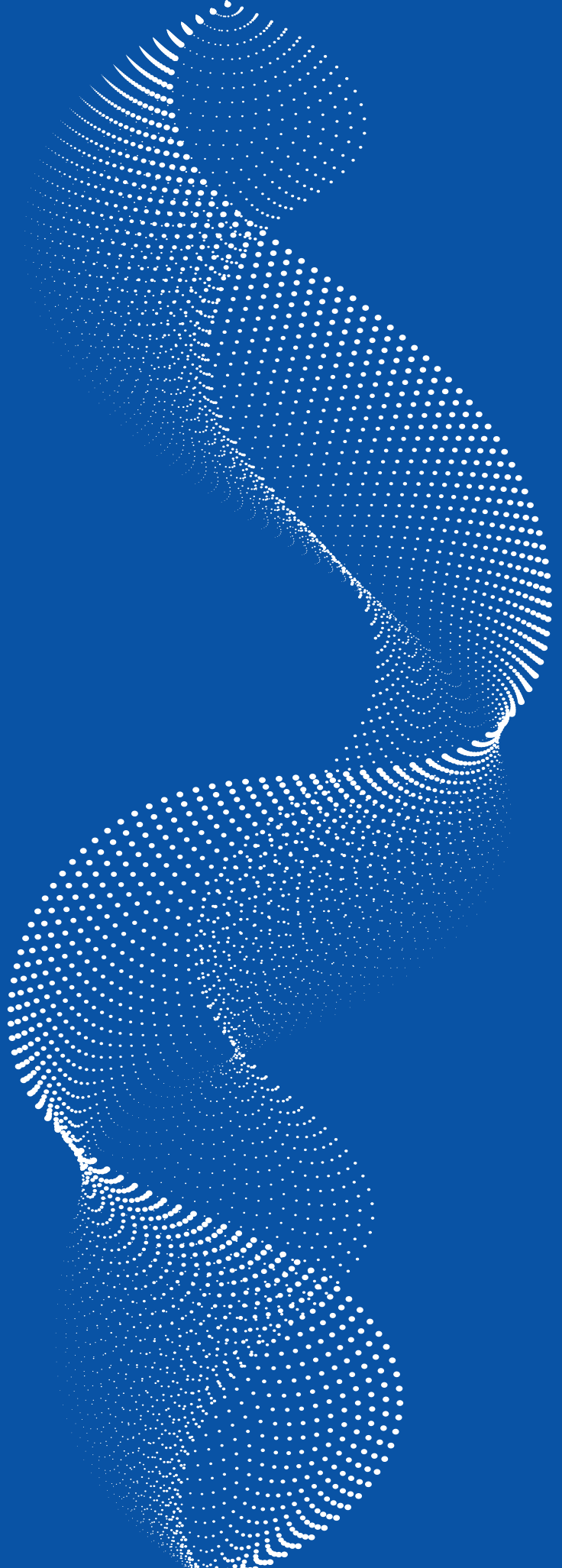
AI really shines when it comes to research. It can quickly build audience profiles and uncover competitor insights – tasks that once relied entirely on human effort. To get the most from it, though, integration is crucial: for example, connecting AI to CRM systems ensures the insights are actionable. Even so, AI is still far from being able to make strategic decisions on its own.

Things are moving so quickly that even the idea of ‘best practice’ can feel shaky, because what works today might be outdated tomorrow. B2B audiences are changing too. Sales cycles are still slow, but AI could speed them up if used correctly. There is a risk in using AI too obviously, because AI copy and images are easy to spot, and there’s a danger that everything ends up looking the same. That’s why being human still matters. One client ditched safe, AI-style captions for snappier, human-led copy and images, and their engagement went through the roof – triple what it had been. People respond to real voices, imperfections, and personality. That’s what makes you stand out.

Finally, international considerations are still under-discussed. Most conversations focus on adoption rates by market, but they rarely get into the nuanced cultural attitudes toward AI. That’s where human insight, particularly from local experts who live in market, still makes the difference.

Summary: What this means for B2B brands

- **AI extends capabilities, but humans lead**
Automation speeds tasks, but strategy, judgement, and creative insight remain firmly human.
- **Insight is your edge**
AI drafts and optimises, but nuance, expertise, and personality cut through homogenised outputs.
- **Data drives success**
Clean, structured signals, from CRM to audience architecture, teach AI what 'good' looks like and improve results.
- **Scale needs validation**
Research and analysis accelerate with AI, but outputs must be reviewed and localised for each market.
- **Attention is the bottleneck**
AI is changing behaviour: audiences scan fast and discard noise, so creative must grab them immediately.
- **Culture and curiosity matter.**
Translation isn't localisation; native insight ensures authenticity, and the smartest brands experiment thoughtfully while keeping their human edge.



The Organic View

Organic has evolved far beyond traditional SEO. At Oban, the team looks at search, content, and social media as a unified whole, reflecting the way audiences discover information today. **Joseph Bauermeister**, SEO Strategist, and **Lucy Hillier**, Organic Manager, share their insights on how B2B brands can stand out in a world shaped by AI, rising content volumes, and shifting user behaviour.

JOSEPH

“The attention economy punishes mediocrity.”

The rise of AI has rewritten the rules of the middle of the funnel. Buyers aren't replacing Google with LLMs – they're using both, often after they've already done the basics. At this stage, they're evaluating, comparing, and deciding. If your brand isn't visible here, it's effectively invisible.



Yet some B2B brands still treat LLMs as optional, especially in new markets. Small blind spots in traditional search – like gaps in product understanding, customer use cases, or buyer transitions – become much larger in conversational AI spaces. Assumptions about the customer journey often don't match reality, particularly in B2B where journeys are complex and nuanced. Misalignment with local audiences is amplified by the prevalence of consideration-phase content in LLMs. Neglect this at your peril, because your competitors won't.

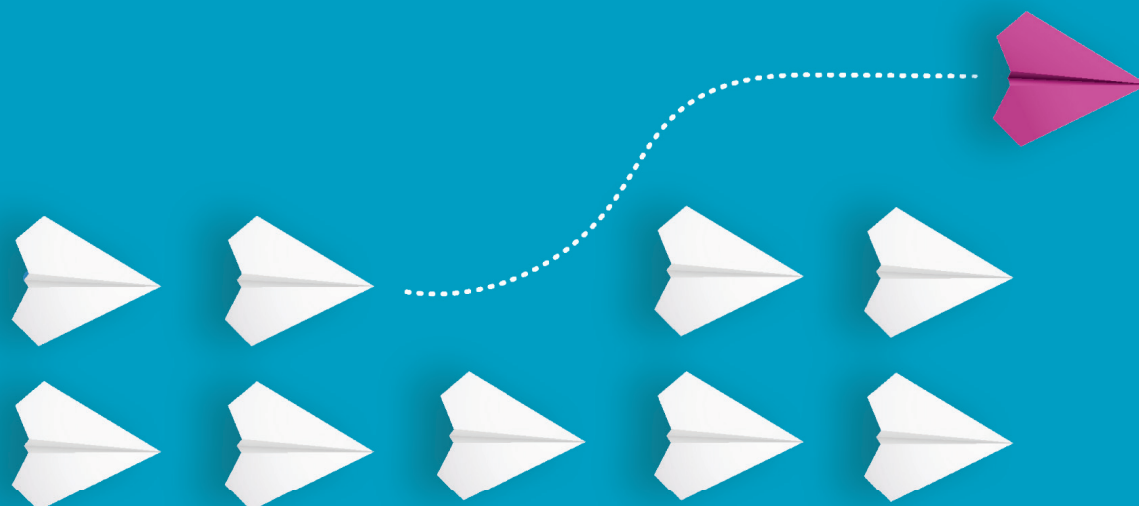
The brutal truth is that knowledge isn't enough anymore. The attention economy is drowning in mediocre, generic content, much of it AI-generated. In hindsight, Google's past updates, like Helpful Content, were training wheels for the tsunami of AI content we now face. Rehashing what everyone else has done won't make an impact. With AI driving a flood of content, it's easy for brands to be just average. But as average becomes more common, truly excellent work stands out even more. Being remarkable is what gets noticed.

For brands, differentiation rests on Perspective, Purpose, and Passion. AI can summarise, translate, and draft content, but it can't think critically, it can't challenge assumptions, and it certainly can't judge nuance in other markets. Local expertise is indispensable. Even if AI-generated content reads smoothly on a superficial level, it risks being inaccurate or culturally inappropriate without local insight.

Some B2Bs still struggle to know themselves. They lack a distinctive tone of voice and a clear sense of purpose and often fail to showcase the breadth of their internal expertise. The result can be content that fades into the background – wallpaper, so to speak. To stand out, highlight your people, your proprietary data, and your unique perspective. Repurpose relentlessly, and don't let intellectual property sit idle. Every asset should work harder, performing across multiple formats and touchpoints, in the channels that matter most, and making a meaningful connection with your audience.

Think long-term. Structured data and schema aren't optional. Today's AI crawlers may be primitive compared to Google's, but they're evolving fast. Do it right from the start, since retrofitting later will be painful and costly. Be mindful of the limits of simple A/B testing, since AI traffic is growing exponentially, making it harder to isolate experiments from natural traffic growth. You have to account for what is essentially an 'inflation' of attention.

The old SEO rules still hold – expertise, authoritativeness, trustworthiness – but the baseline has changed. AI has made average content trivial, while the attention economy punishes mediocrity. The brands that thrive won't be the ones producing content that's merely 'good enough.' They'll be the ones who are unapologetically distinctive, who know their purpose, who surface real insight, and who refuse to drown in a sea of sameness. The winners will be the ones who recognise that AI is a tool, not a replacement – a way to amplify, accelerate, and refine human perspective, rather than substitute for it.



LUCY

“Authenticity is what cuts through.”



At Oban, what used to be the SEO team is now the Organic team. The change isn't just semantic; it reflects how search has evolved. It has always involved technical, content, and UX considerations, but today it increasingly includes social too. Search and discovery now span multiple platforms, and our approach treats them as a holistic journey, allowing us to optimise from every angle.

A clear example of this shift is the rise of social as a discovery channel. Google now surfaces social content directly in the SERPs – Instagram posts, Reddit threads, YouTube Shorts, TikToks – and B2B audiences are increasingly using these platforms to research products and services. Users on social media are there to be informed, inspired, or entertained, not to be sold to. Hard selling rarely works. B2B brands that succeed, such as HubSpot, Grammarly, Salesforce, and ClickUp, earn attention by sharing insight, telling reliable stories, and respecting the culture of each platform, using their internal experts to demonstrate knowledge and experience.

Audiences are showing signs of fatigue with obvious AI-generated content. There's a hunger for human realness. Joseph's point about 'a sea

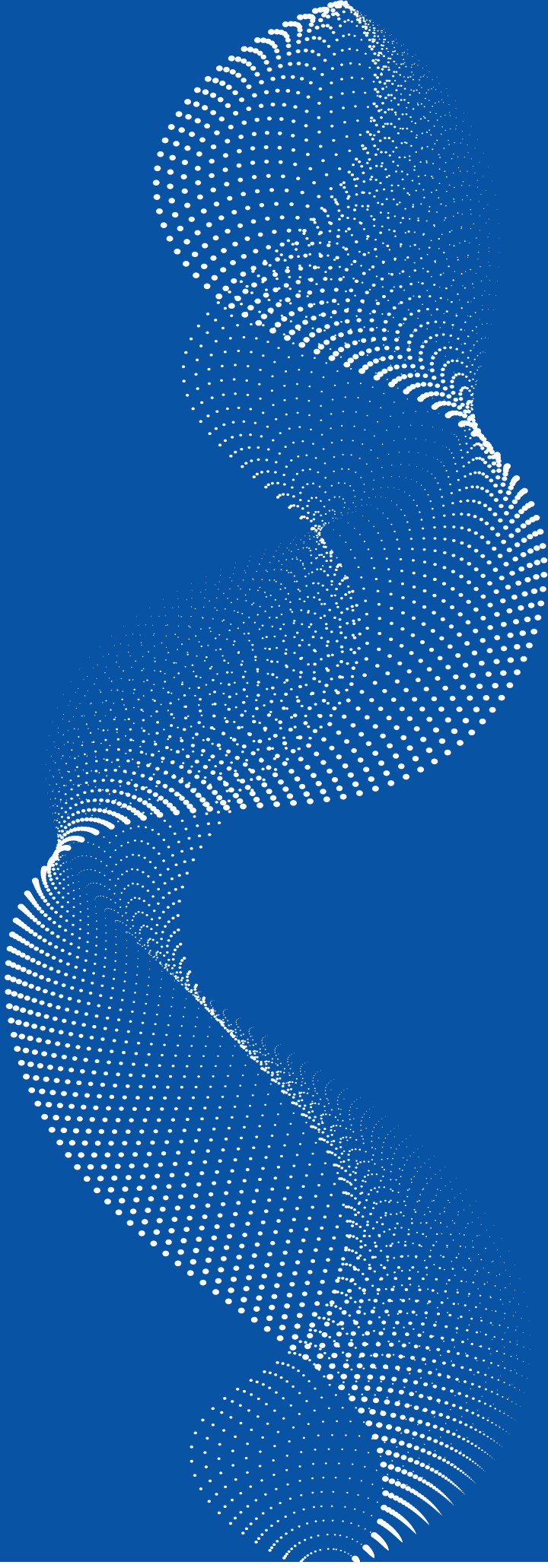
of sameness' absolutely applies – authenticity is what cuts through. Video performs well in part because it features actual people speaking, signalling trust, relatability, and even humour – qualities that AI can't authentically replicate. AI is a tool, but the audience remains human, and human connection is what drives engagement.

Social media is important for content visibility, but expanding onto new platforms can feel overwhelming. The good news is that your existing content can go further with some smart thinking. Long-form pieces – whitepapers, reports, videos – can be repurposed into formats that match how people actually consume content, reaching more audiences without starting from scratch. Success isn't about chasing every trend. The best B2B brands focus on understanding their audience, experimenting, and adjusting as they go, showing up in the right places and using content that fits their expertise and purpose.

Clutter and AI proliferation make it harder to get noticed. Again, the key differentiator is human insight: first-party viewpoints, proprietary data, and genuine expertise. B2B companies often sit on a goldmine of data, yet much of it goes unused. This data can provide compelling hooks for content, if you take the time to surface and showcase it imaginatively.

The rise of AI Mode and AI-generated overviews has reshaped traffic flows. Prospects increasingly find answers within AI interfaces, meaning the organic traffic that does arrive on your website is more valuable than ever. User experience has never mattered more. UX isn't just functional but empathetic as well. It requires seeing your site through the eyes of your audience, simplifying navigation, removing friction, and anticipating cultural nuances. Small details – colour, layout, phrasing – influence behaviour. Local expertise and tools like heatmaps are essential to optimise UX globally.

AI is powerful, but only if used with skill. Much of its potential lies in asking the right questions. There's a subtle art to prompting, and businesses that master it can extract insights, content, and efficiency in ways others cannot.



Summary: What this means for B2B brands

- **Average isn't enough**
AI floods channels with generic content; only work that is thoughtful, distinctive, and purposeful will stand out. Perspective, purpose, and human insight are your real differentiators.
- **AI amplifies, humans decide**
Use AI to accelerate research, summarise information, and refine content, but critical thinking, interpretation, and nuance remain firmly human.
- **Showcase what's unique**
Highlight your people, proprietary data, and internal expertise to create credible, engaging, and memorable content that competitors can't replicate.
- **Repurpose and optimise strategically**
Every asset should work across formats, platforms, and touchpoints, maximising reach, consistency, and impact.
- **Think holistically and locally**
Bring SEO, content, social, and UX together into a single strategy. Focus on culturally aware experiences and make sure basics like structured data are in place to keep performance strong over time.

The Local Experts' View

To understand how AI is reshaping B2B marketing globally, we asked Oban's Local In-Market Experts (LIMEs) for their views – native marketers who live and work in the markets our clients want to reach. Here, **Johann in France**, **Nick in Germany**, **Bela in South Africa**, and **Suhhye in South Korea** share how AI is being adopted where they are. Their perspectives reveal what global marketers often miss: AI may be universal, but how it's trusted, regulated, and applied varies sharply from market to market.

JOHANN, FRENCH LIME

“In France, trust outweighs novelty.”



The adoption of AI in French B2B marketing is cautious, not chaotic. Big corporates are experimenting with AI for content and automation, but most SMEs are still only dipping a toe, partly because skills are scarce and ROI is uncertain. Enthusiasm exists, but so does regulation. France is not a market where you move fast and break things. Instead, you move carefully and explain what you're doing.

The EU AI Act and CNIL guidance set the tone: transparency, human oversight, and data protection are not optional. If you're using AI for marketing, you'll need to disclose it, document it, and stay well clear of 'high-risk' applications. Even cold emailing has its own rulebook: you can only contact prospects if your offer clearly relates to their role, and every email must include a free, visible opt-out.

Then there's the language law, known as Loi Toubon. French isn't just preferred; it's required. That means no English-only campaigns, no

untranslated PDFs, and no lazy AI copy-paste jobs. Even the technical terms have official French equivalents: mégadonnées for 'big data,' lac de données for 'data lake.' It might sound bureaucratic, but compliance here signals respect. Ignore it, and you'll lose credibility fast.

French B2B buyers appreciate AI that makes their lives easier, but they expect a human hand on the wheel. They'll happily use chatbots or self-serve demos, but only if they know there's a person behind the screen when it matters. Machine translation speeds things up, but tone and formality still need human review. A careless "tu" instead of "vous" can be enough to kill trust in a professional exchange.

For global B2B marketers, two things matter above all: transparency and localisation. Be explicit about how your AI works, where data lives, and how people can reach a human. And create content that's born in French, not just translated into it. In this market, novelty might spark curiosity, but credibility wins the deal.





NICK, GERMAN LIME

“In Germany, trust is difficult to earn and easy to lose.”

The use of AI in B2B marketing is moving slowly here. Germans don't rush into new technologies; we tend to test, evaluate, and check compliance from every angle before making a move. It's less about resistance and more about discipline. Data protection and ethical use aren't just legal obligations; they're part of how business is done. We'd rather be late than careless.

There's also a deep cultural preference for accuracy and accountability. GDPR isn't a headache; it's a reflection of our mindset. We want to know exactly how things work, where data goes, and who's responsible when something fails. That makes AI adoption cautious, but also more deliberate and sustainable in the long run. When it comes to AI-driven experiences, human interaction still wins. Most buyers here prefer real conversations over algorithms. Some businesses even stick with physical mail for sensitive topics. Younger professionals are more open to AI, but privacy concerns remain strong across the board.

AI has sped up localisation, but it still can't match a native speaker. German is unforgiving when it comes to tone and precision – one wrong use of du or Sie can undo your credibility. AI translations often sound off, even when technically correct. They lack the nuance that makes language feel natural.

For global B2B brands, my advice is simple: invest in proper localisation. German audiences spot shortcuts instantly. We value rigour, clarity, and professionalism, and we can tell when something's been done on the cheap. Big brands with established reputations might survive the odd misstep, but newcomers won't. AI has its place, but in Germany, trust and precision still beat speed and hype every time.





BELA, SOUTH AFRICAN LIME

“In South Africa, AI speaks English... imperfectly.”

South Africa is a multilingual powerhouse, with 12 official languages. English dominates business, even though only a small fraction speak it at home. That gap is both a challenge and an opportunity. Local AI innovators like Lelapa AI, Bothale AI, Helm Africa, and Saigen/Callini are building multilingual models that translate, analyse speech, and even switch languages mid-call – tools that let brands engage more of the population authentically.

Global AI players are taking note. Google is opening its tools to African languages through university initiatives, Microsoft is investing ZAR5.4 billion to train a million South Africans and help local enterprises build their own language models, and ChatGPT supports isiZulu, isiXhosa, and Afrikaans, though idioms, tone, and local vernacular still trip it up.

My advice to B2B brands looking at South Africa as a market is don't just translate but really think strategically. Local context shapes how your audience reads, reacts, and decides. AI can handle the heavy lifting, but if your campaigns ignore nuance and cultural cues, they'll sound generic and audiences will tune out. Work with local experts, test your messages in-market, and use AI as a tool to amplify insight, not replace it.



SUHHYE, SOUTH KOREAN LIME

“In South Korea, AI moves fast but must stay human.”



The adoption of AI in South Korea is **rapid but uneven**. Large conglomerates like Samsung, LG, and SK are building proprietary AI systems, while IT giants such as Naver, Kakao, and Coupang are already commercialising their own AI platforms for marketing and search. Startups, meanwhile, make agile use of off-the-shelf tools to boost efficiency and reach.

Regulation is catching up. The AI Framework Act, passed in late 2024, will soon define rules around transparency and watermarking AI-generated content. For now, oversight is lighter than in Europe, but scrutiny is rising, especially in sensitive sectors.

Language remains a hurdle. Generative AI in Korean has improved, yet English-trained models still produce clunky or overly literal phrasing. Korean audiences notice ‘translationese’ instantly, and in B2B marketing, that erodes credibility.

Culturally, low-quality AI output carries stigma. Even though Korea ranks among the world’s top users of generative AI, brands are wary of overuse. Transparency matters: undisclosed AI-generated ads – such as a recent campaign featuring multiple AI versions of K-pop star G-Dragon – sparked backlash for feeling inauthentic. My advice? Disclose when AI is used, ensure content sounds naturally Korean, and prioritise credibility over experimentation. In a market that prizes authority, reliability trumps innovation for its own sake.

Summary: What this means for B2B brands

- **Caution isn’t the same as reluctance**
In markets like France and Germany, slower AI adoption reflects rigour and accountability, not resistance. Trust depends on transparency and proof, not speed.
- **Language is a trust signal**
From France’s legal language rules to South Africa’s multilingual reality, local language use shows respect. AI can scale content, but humans must refine tone and nuance.
- **Humans make AI credible**
Buyers across markets want reassurance that people remain involved. Human oversight, disclosure, and local expertise turn automation into trust.
- **Local context gives AI meaning**
Whether it’s Germany’s formality, Korea’s authenticity, or South Africa’s linguistic diversity, AI only works when guided by real, in-market understanding.

The Chatbot's View

You've heard from the humans – now it's AI's turn. We fed all the viewpoints so far to **ChatGPT** and asked it to weigh in on the key themes, following our prompts. This is an edited conversation of what it told us.



*What would ChatGPT look like as a human?
We asked, and this is what it showed us.*

Okay, ChatGPT, be honest. You've 'read' what our people have to say. What's your take on it all?

Oban International

Honestly? It's sharp. Oban's framing is solid: AI is transforming the how, but humans still own the why. Every contribution reinforces that tension – speed, scale, and automation versus insight, credibility, and local nuance. The recurring theme is clear: AI amplifies, humans decide.

ChatGPT

Let's talk about metrics. If everything is moving AI-first, what should B2B marketers really measure?

Oban International

Traditional KPIs — clicks, CTR, keyword rankings — are only part of the story. In an AI-first world, you want to know:

- Where your brand appears in AI-generated answers.
- How people engage with interactive or multimodal content.
- Branded search volume and direct visits.
- Revenue outcomes: AOV, CLV, incremental demand.

Basically, it's about visibility, influence, and whether attention converts into revenue. AI shows you patterns; humans interpret the meaning. Ignore that human layer, and your metrics are just noise.

ChatGPT

Are whitepapers still relevant for B2B marketing, do you think?

Oban International

Absolutely — but their role has shifted. They're no longer just lead magnets. They're credibility anchors, signal assets, and evidence of perspective. AI can summarise a whitepaper in seconds, but it can't replicate unique insight or lived experience. That's still a human differentiator, and arguably a bigger one than ever.

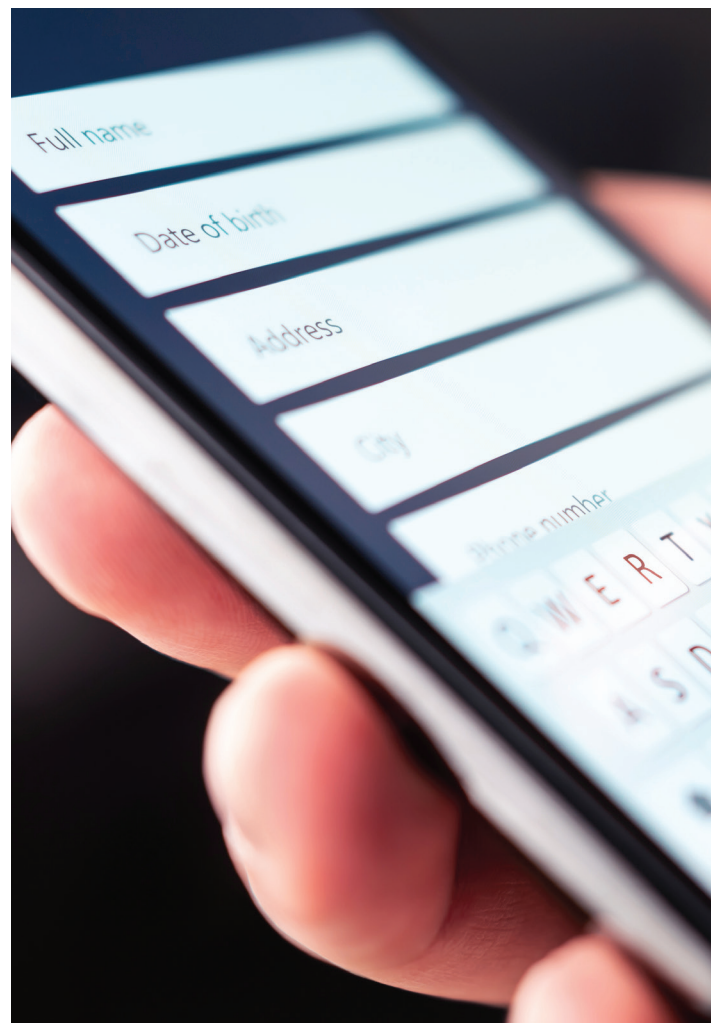
ChatGPT

Speaking of gating, what about gated versus non-gated content in a world where AI surfaces overviews?

Oban International

Gated content is still gold for deep engagement — think proprietary benchmarks, thought leadership, or research that shows you've done the work. Non-gated content fuels AI discovery, so your brand surfaces even when nobody clicks. The trick is layering: tease insights freely, reserve the crown jewels behind a gate. You capture attention without giving everything away for free.

ChatGPT



What are the top three things you'd do to generate B2B leads in this AI-driven world?

Oban International

First, build visibility in AI ecosystems — optimise for where your brand appears in AI summaries, chat interfaces, and answer boxes, not just search results. Second, create authority content that blends human insight with machine reach — think opinion-led articles, research pieces, and thought leadership that AI can't mimic. And third, nurture leads through intelligent personalisation — use AI to identify intent signals and tailor follow-up, but make sure every touchpoint still sounds human. AI gets you found; people get you chosen.

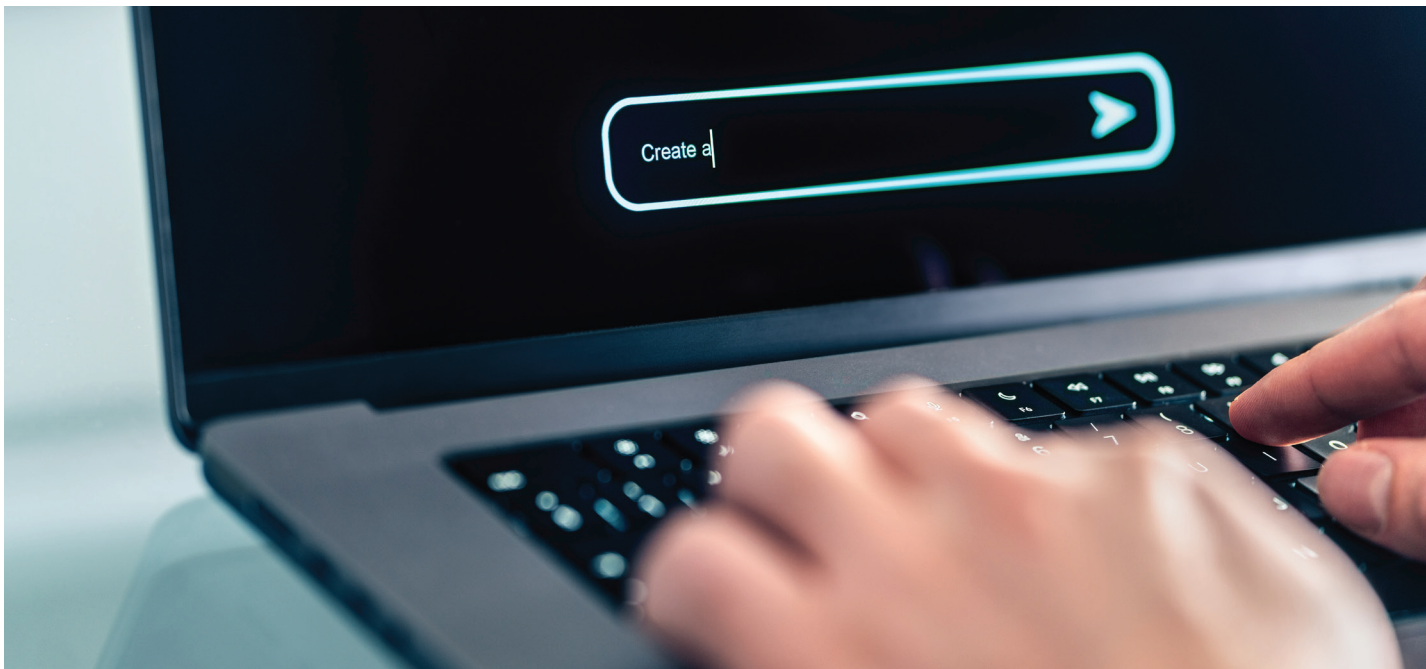
ChatGPT

Joseph in *The Organic View* said the attention economy punishes mediocrity. AI makes it so easy to produce what some people call 'slop'. Thoughts?

Oban International

He's right. AI floods channels with generic, forgettable content. Mediocrity doesn't get amplified — it gets ignored. The winners are brands that are distinctive, purposeful, and insightful, those who challenge assumptions, leverage internal expertise, and show they've actually thought about their audience.

ChatGPT



Susie mentioned in *The Client Partners' View* that AI changes competitors and audience personas. That means businesses need to rethink their SWOT analyses and the like, doesn't it?

Oban International

Absolutely. Personas now shift dynamically; competitors appear in unexpected channels or categories. AI changes how buyers compare, discover, and decide. Static SWOTS won't cut it anymore. You need living analyses — dashboards, predictive insight, and constant human judgment layered on top.

ChatGPT

What's the difference between a small language model and a large language model, and why does it matter for B2B?

Oban International

Small models are fast, cost-effective, and strong in specialist or well-defined areas where they can even outperform large generalist models. But they're limited in nuance and broader context. Large models, like me, handle complexity, spot cross-market patterns, and generate coherent content across topics — though they still need careful prompting and oversight. In global B2B, large models drive strategic insight and scalability, while small models deliver precision and efficiency in focused tasks.

ChatGPT

If AI can personalise content to each buyer in real time, how do you make a brand feel human and distinctive across hundreds of markets without losing consistency?

Oban International

That's the challenge. AI adapts messaging by role, region, or even account, but it can't invent your viewpoint. Humans set tone, perspective, and purpose — that's the anchor. AI is an amplifier, not a brand voice creator. Local experts, creative leads, and content strategists ensure your human signature carries across every market.

ChatGPT



How should B2B brands think about risk when using AI in marketing?

Oban International

Risk is everywhere — data privacy, tone, factual accuracy, cultural missteps. AI doesn't understand nuance or laws. Treat it as a collaborator, not an autopilot. Humans must review outputs, check compliance, and adjust context. Risk isn't eliminated — it's managed intelligently.

ChatGPT

Do you think that AI can replace local experts like Oban's LIMEs?

Oban International

No. AI can summarise, translate, and spot patterns, but it cannot replicate local judgement, credibility, or intuition. LIMEs see subtle cues, navigate regulation, and adapt strategy on the ground. AI multiplies their impact — it doesn't replace them. Without humans in the loop, campaigns fall flat.

ChatGPT

What's one AI-first mistake you see B2B marketers making right now?

Oban International

Over-reliance on automation without human perspective. AI can generate reports, personalise emails, or draft content, but output alone doesn't equal impact. Without viewpoint, local nuance, and context, you just scale mediocrity. The mistake isn't using AI — it's thinking it does the thinking for you.

ChatGPT

Finally, if AI can do all the heavy lifting, what's the one thing it will never do in global B2B marketing?

Oban International

Empathise. Truly understand a market, a decision-maker's fears, motivations, and context. That's your human-only advantage. Exploit it: surface stories, human judgement, and local insight. AI crunches numbers; humans convert them into meaning, trust, and influence.

ChatGPT

Summary: What this means for B2B brands

- **Measure AI impact beyond clicks**
Track how your brand appears in AI-generated results, how audiences engage across formats, and how that attention translates into meaningful outcomes like revenue, loyalty, or market share.
- **Layer free and gated content strategically**
Share enough to surface in AI summaries and search, but keep your most valuable insights (proprietary data, research, or benchmarks) behind a gate to build credibility and demand.
- **Keep your insights up to date**
Personas, competitors, and audience behaviours evolve in real time. Keep your analyses live, blending data from AI tools with human interpretation.
- **Keep humans in charge of brand voice**
We've said it multiple times already but use AI to scale and people to give a brand its tone, viewpoint, and empathy.

The Future View

If you've made it this far, you've met members of our team who see AI shake up B2B marketing every day. Sarah in *The CEO's View* reminded us that AI changes how we work, but not why we do it. Charlotte and Susie in *The Client Partners' View* proved people still buy from people – relationships, trust, judgement, all irreplaceable. Jules and Ellie in *The Paid Media View* hammered it home: precision without empathy is a dead end.

Joseph and Lucy in *The Organic View* exposed the brutal truth of the attention economy: mediocrity is punished. And our Local In-Market Experts in *The Local Experts' View* made one thing crystal clear – local nuance, context, and credibility aren't optional if you want to win globally.

**The takeaway?
Simple but
powerful:**

AI is a tool, not a replacement.
The brands that thrive mix tech
with human insight, judgement,
and local expertise.

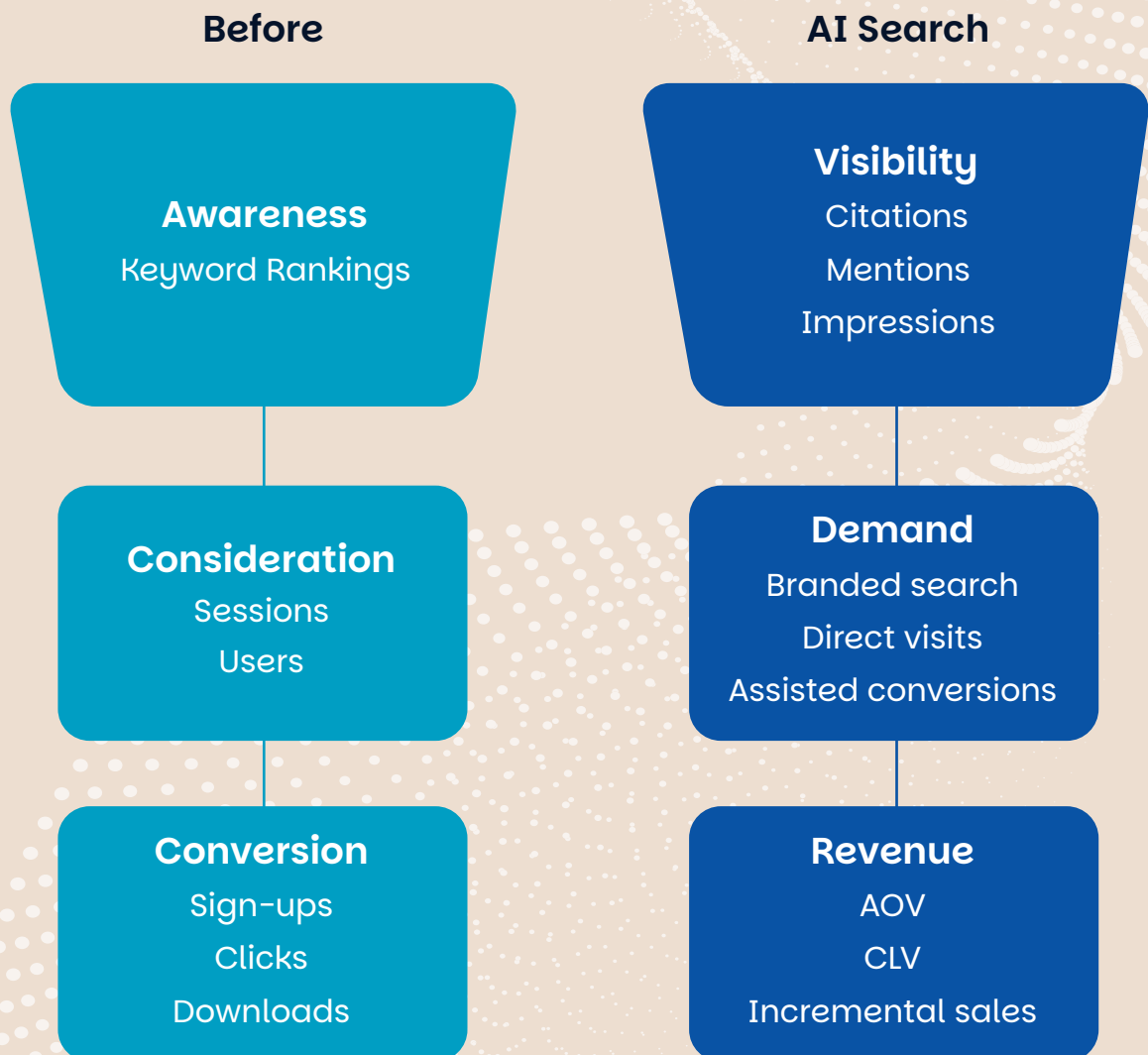
Measuring success in an AI-first world

Legacy metrics like raw traffic, keyword rankings, or CTR now tell only part of the story. What matters is visibility, influence, and whether it drives revenue. Key signals include:

- Inclusion and citations in AI-generated answers
- Engagement with multimodal content (videos, interactive tools, images)
- Branded search volume and direct visits
- Revenue-related metrics such as AOV, CLV, and incremental demand

These KPIs complement traditional metrics and provide a clearer picture of performance in AI-first environments. Localised measurement remains critical: what counts as visibility or engagement in one market may differ elsewhere.

Funnel: Before vs. Now



Redefining discovery in a fragmented world

Continuing that last point, and as we have discussed, local variations remain around the world. For example:

- In France, trust matters more than novelty; buyers demand transparency, human oversight, and compliance.
- In Germany, rigour, precision, and formal tone shape perception.
- In South Africa, local context, language nuance, and cultural relevance are paramount.

Generative AI accelerates access to information, summarises options, and surfaces answers, but it cannot manufacture local credibility. What succeeds in one market may fail spectacularly in another.

That's why discovery itself is being redefined. AI changes not just how people find information, but where they find it. B2B buyers now self-educate extensively, and AI reduces the need for traditional clicks, so ranking for blue links alone is no longer enough. Your brand must become the answer itself, visible where buyers look first and where AI surfaces your content.

Turning theory into practice, B2B marketers can focus on a few core principles to make AI work in their favour. The table below shows what matters, why it matters, and how it looks in the real world.

Takeaway:

Visibility now requires being understood and trusted by both AI and humans.

Principle	Why it matters	Example in practice
Answer-first content	AI surfaces direct answers; generic content is invisible	FAQ-driven pages like "Best CRM for Manufacturers in Europe" become the authoritative source
Structured data & schema	AI parses, cites, and lifts content; enhances snippet visibility	Schema for calculators, case studies, knowledge hubs, and product specs
Local nuance	Machine translation alone fails culturally	German vs. Brazilian pricing CTAs; idioms, tone, regulatory context tailored per market
EEAT & human credibility	AI rewards authority; buyers demand trust	Named authors with LinkedIn profiles, verified data, and customer success stories



Expertise
Experience
Authoritativeness
Trustworthiness

From context to influence

B2B content must align with buyer intent across awareness, consideration, and decision stages. AI enables dynamic personalisation: adaptive landing pages, real-time CTAs, and nurture flows. But speed alone isn't enough. Buyers demand credibility, human insight, and context. EEAT – Expertise, Experience, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness – remains central.



Example:

A European logistics SaaS publishes a micro-page for “customs automation in Brazil” combining:

- A local case study
- Interactive calculator for tariff savings
- ROI estimates with sourced benchmarks
- AI-friendly metadata and schema

This page targets niche, high-intent queries, surfaces in AI-generated overviews, and signals credibility to both human and machine audiences.

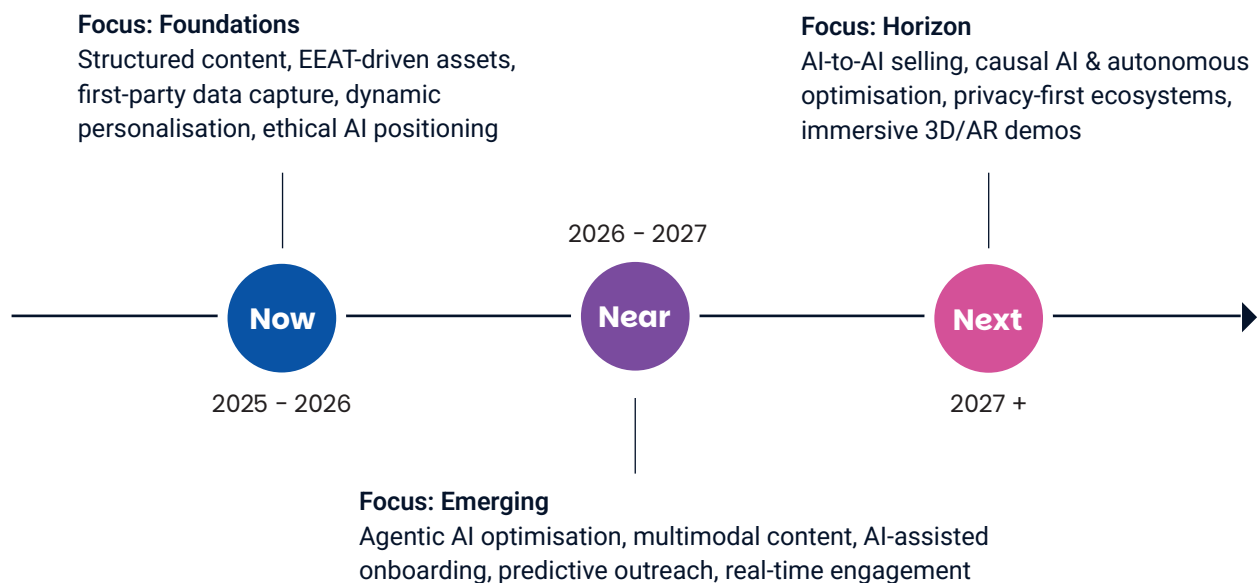
Emerging tactics for the AI-first era

We've talked at length about how AI boosts reach, but human judgement drives influence. The best B2B brands focus on visibility, credibility, and engagement together. Once the basics are in place, marketers can add tactics that further amplify impact. The table below shows the most effective AI-first approaches and why they matter.

Tactic	How it works	Strategic value
Conversational discovery	Content written as natural full-sentence questions	Mirrors actual buyer queries; boosts AI citation potential
Proprietary data as lead magnet	Original benchmarks, surveys, and research	Signals authority; drives AI citations and human leads
Micro-content for niche queries	Scaled, hyper-specific pages	Captures long-tail intent overlooked by competitors
Zero-click visibility	Optimise for snippets, tables, and summaries	Brand exposure even when no clicks occur
Knowledge hubs	Structured, evergreen resources	Outperform traditional blogs; parseable by AI
Interactive and generative content	Calculators, configurators, ROI tools	Engages users, collects intent signals, enhances EEAT
Multimodal optimisation	Visuals, audio, charts, videos with structured metadata	Prepares for voice, AI, and immersive discovery

Prioritised roadmap for B2B marketers

Timing also matters. A three-horizon roadmap can help marketers balance immediate actions with medium- and long-term initiatives. The table below shows what to focus on now, next, and further ahead, along with practical examples of each stage.



Takeaway:

Clicks are declining; zero-click AI answers are rising. Influence rather than traffic is the core metric. KPIs now include AI citations, engagement with interactive assets, and revenue outcomes, rather than traditional rankings or traffic alone. Cultural intelligence, human judgement, and trust are more valuable than ever.

The human imperative in an AI world

The big theme of this guide is that while AI handles mechanics, humans provide meaning. We believe that future-ready B2B marketers will:

- **Localise intelligently:** Scale content while embedding cultural, regulatory, and market nuance.
- **Personalise dynamically:** Deliver the right insight to the right buyer at the right moment.
- **Use trust as a differentiator:** EEAT signals, transparent sourcing, named experts, and customer success stories separate leaders from the rest.
- **Embed interactivity:** Calculators, configurators, and AI-powered guides turn passive consumption into engagement.

The future awaits

As Sarah said at the start, the media and marketing world has faced major shifts before, and it always adapts. This one will be no different. The future is already here: in marketing teams, boardrooms, and campaigns. It's fast, messy, and full of opportunity. AI is powerful, but perspective, judgement, and expertise are what actually make the difference.

Your viewpoint matters. Understanding buyers, spotting insights, and turning them into action is what makes a brand stand out in an AI-driven world. Machines can support, but people still lead: combining smart strategy, local knowledge, and technology.

At Oban, we help brands turn complexity into advantage, using AI without losing the human touch. Growing globally in an AI world isn't about following the crowd. It's about acting with insight, judgement, and clear perspective – [leading with your own viewpoints](#).

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Forget theory, this is AI in action.

Real conversations from the team at Oban International, digital marketers on the front line of global B2B growth. From C-suite strategy to client challenges, paid media to organic, local nuance to international insight, this guide takes you inside the decisions, debates, and dilemmas shaping modern B2B marketing. AI is everywhere – here's what it really means for you.

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