

July 2025



The Emotional Enterprise Blueprint

How B2B brands grow
when they start to act like
the people buying them

Introduction

In today's business landscape, there's a fundamental truth that many B2B brands forget – or at least significantly overlook: behind every corporate decision is a human being.

Someone with hopes, fears, aspirations, and the same emotional drivers that influence any purchase decision.

This report builds on a recent Boldspace event with Co-CEO Nick Ford-Young, LHH's CMO Melanie Siewert, BlackRock's Louise Kriek, and Unmind's Oliver Matejka. Together, they explored how B2B brands can unlock growth by recognising and strategically harnessing the emotional dimension of business decision-making.

The evidence is clear: while we've become increasingly sophisticated in understanding consumer psychology, we've paradoxically retreated into sterile, feature-focused approaches when addressing business buyers.

But, as we move into an era shaped by AI acceleration, automation, and audience fatigue – alongside a rising emphasis on values-driven business, experiential expectations, and smarter measurement – emotional resonance has become more commercially powerful than ever. It's the antidote to indifference, and the foundation for lasting brand differentiation.

At Boldspace, we believe we are witnessing a fundamental rebalancing for B2B businesses: logic and efficiency no longer suffice, whilst in the B2C world, it is not new news that emotional brand connection earns memory, trust, and longevity.

And emotion doesn't just live in creative – it must exist everywhere: in brand behaviour, in internal culture, and in every customer experience.



Nick Ford-Young
Co-CEO
Boldspace



01.

Lead with Tension: The enemy and the dream

The most powerful B2B brands don't just solve stated problems – they identify and articulate the unspoken anxieties that keep decision-makers awake at night. Great brands are built not on vague promises but on powerful tensions. They know what they're fighting for – and against.

This involves framing latent tensions to create compelling emotional hooks, positioning your brand as the visionary guide to a better future.

Accenture exemplifies this through their campaigns that don't merely address current IT challenges but tap into deeper fears about obsolescence and aspirations for market leadership. They frame the tension between staying current and falling behind, then position themselves as essential for navigating uncertainty. They own 'change' in a scary world with optimism and opportunism, and it works.

The power lies in understanding that behind every business challenge is a human fear or aspiration. Address that, and you've moved beyond features to emotional connection. Brands must articulate a clear tension between the enemy (the friction, frustration, or limitation in the category) and the dream (what's possible with them in your life). In B2C marketing this is simply a given – think Dove vs toxic beauty, or Oatly vs dairy.

Conflict is what makes a story interesting. From Jungian archetypes to modern brand narrative, emotion is born from overcoming struggle.

02.

Emotional Benefit Hierarchies: The formula behind the feelings

Features and functions don't differentiate. Emotional benefits do. Successful B2B brands identify specific emotional benefits they can own – feelings that are both highly motivating to their audience and uniquely ownable by their brand.

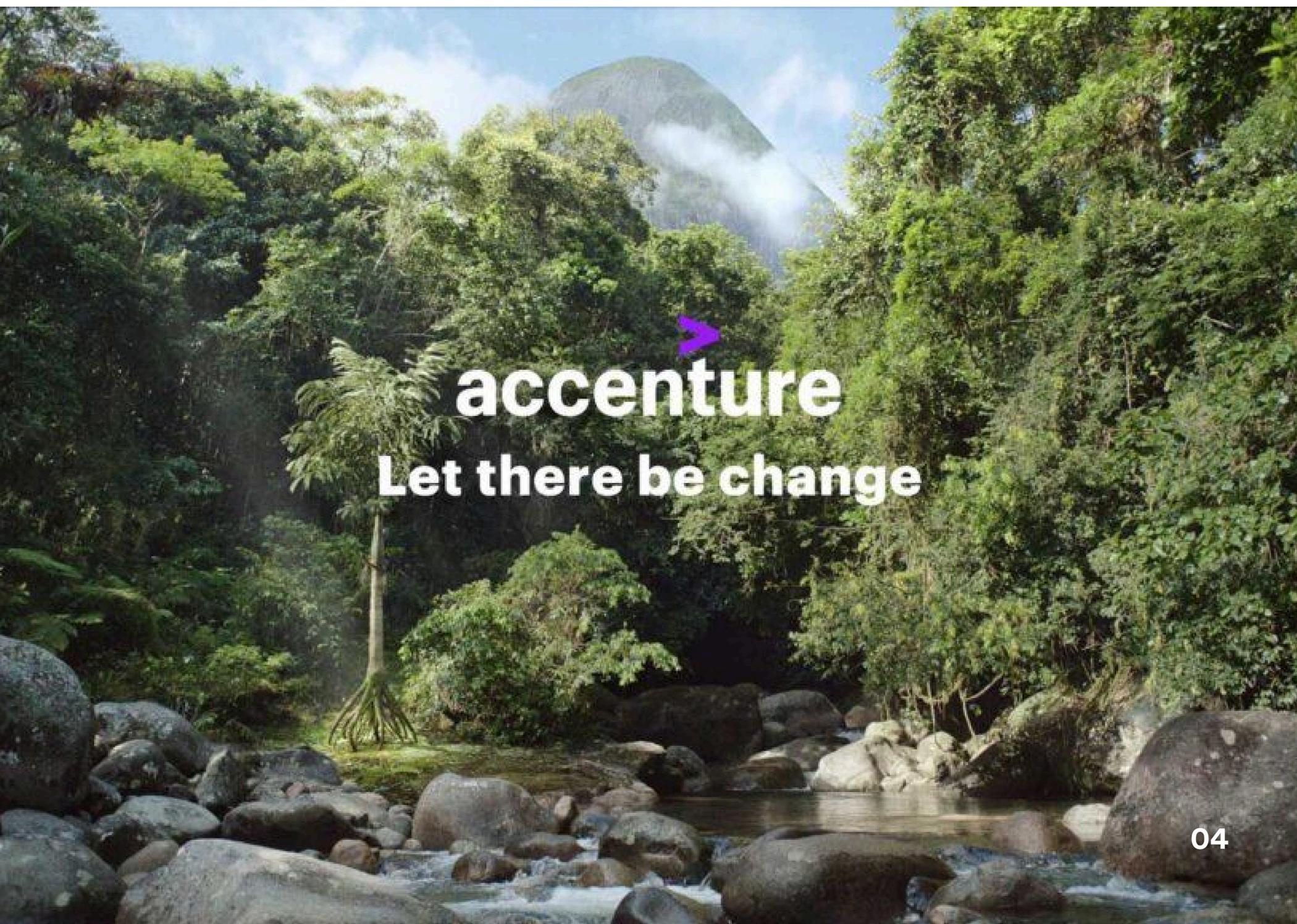
This involves mapping the emotional landscape of your category and finding the intersection of what your audience craves and what you can authentically deliver.

If you explore deeper what this can mean for brands in terms of singularity of thought and broad, vibrant creative territories – it gets exciting:

What if Salesforce isn't just about CRM – it owns **great relationships**.

What if FedEx isn't a just delivery company – it's about **what it means to deliver**.

The key is finding an emotional space that's both meaningful to your audience and authentically ownable by your brand.




accenture
Let there be change

03.

Serialised Storytelling: Consistent emotions build brands

Moving beyond one-off campaigns, the most effective B2B brands create continuous, unfolding narratives that build anticipation and emotional investment over time. Like great novels or box sets, they build chapters over time, each deepening the emotional connection. This is the power of serialised storytelling.

While B2C brands have long mastered this – from Kit Kat’s timeless “Have a break” to Mastercard’s “Priceless” or the endlessly evolving meerkats of Compare the Market – the principle is just as vital in B2B. Because emotional trust isn’t built in a single moment. It compounds through consistency.

Workday’s multi-part “rock star” campaign and Google’s human-led brand films each prove how episodic content can frame even the most technical offer as a journey worth following. Each instalment builds memory, momentum, and meaning.

Research shows that consistent brands generate over double the market share growth of the least consistent (given equal spend), and deliver 27% more large brand effects, such as increased awareness and favourability.

This is compound creativity in action: repeated emotional cues, evolving stories, and a commitment to brand world-building. Consistency builds memory. Memory builds emotion. Emotion builds loyalty – and commercial return.

04.

Internal Resonance: Emotions from within

Truly emotional B2B brands are built from the inside out. This strategy involves cultivating an internal culture where employees genuinely feel and embody the brand’s emotional promise.

When employees believe in the brand’s emotional benefits, they become authentic advocates in every interaction. Employer brand guides are so often left in the drawer for B2B brands, but hiring and building a team of aligned, passionate brand champions is extremely powerful.

Microsoft’s cultural transformation under Satya Nadella is a masterclass in this approach. By emphasising empathy and growth mindset internally, they created a more human and approachable external brand. Employees who genuinely embrace these values naturally communicate them to customers.

The principle is simple: if your team doesn’t feel the emotional benefits of your brand, how can you expect customers to? Culture is brand. Internal clarity around purpose, values, and tone ensures teams embody the emotion you want customers to feel.

Salesforce’s Ohana culture, Adobe’s creative freedom ethos, or Patagonia’s activist backbone – all emotionally contagious from inside out.





05.

Design the Feeling: Sensory orchestration sets scenes

Emotion isn't just in the message. It's in the sensory experience. From colour palettes to UX, from sound design to scent, how something feels is just as powerful as what it says.

Beyond visual identity, strategic B2B brands design the full sensory experience to evoke specific emotions. This involves considering auditory, haptic, and atmospheric elements to create immersive and memorable emotional connections.

ServiceNow's interface design combines subtle motion graphics and intuitive workflows to evoke "effortless control." Every interaction is designed to make complex IT workflows feel seamless and manageable.

IBM's sonic identity for Watson creates an auditory shortcut to perceptions of intelligence and reliability. The sound itself communicates the brand's advanced capabilities before any words are spoken.

The goal is to make your brand feel distinctive at a sensory level, creating emotional shortcuts that bypass rational analysis. In a digital-first world, brands must think like scenographers. Every touchpoint – from interface to packaging – is a stage.

06.

Empathy-Led Insight: Unearthing the unspoken need

Empathy is the starting point of any emotional enterprise. Great insights come from understanding the irrational, the unspoken, and the felt-but-not-yet-said.

Move beyond demographics. Tap into psychographics, emotional drivers, and behavioural cues. What frustrates, delights, or motivates your audience at a human level?

Think of SAP or Accenture not just creating B2B comms – but building for organisational control or new beginnings.

This strategy goes beyond traditional market research to conduct deep empathy studies that uncover hidden frustrations and emotional pain points. Understanding the human story behind business problems enables truly resonant solutions and communications.

Zendesk's marketing champions the overlooked struggles of customer support agents. They understand that behind every support ticket is a human being dealing with stress and pressure. Their software isn't just about efficiency – it's about empathy and empowerment.

The insight comes from spending time with your users, understanding their daily frustrations, and recognising the emotional weight of the problems you solve.

07.

The Unconference: Real-world personality & connection

The most forward-thinking B2B brands are moving beyond formal presentations and passive audiences. They're embracing what we call the Unconference – creating emotionally rich flagship events and environments where real human connection takes centre stage – for clients, consumers, partners and advocates alike.

These experiences aren't about showcasing the brand's internal culture; they're about extending that emotional authenticity outward. Summits, social-led gatherings, collaborative workshops, and hybrid events become opportunities to foster co-creation, community, and shared purpose.

Intertwining corporate education with social entertainment puts a stake in the ground in amplifying a brand's personality. Flagship events define how a brand shows up.

Whether it's HubSpot's 'INBOUND', Atlassian's 'Team', or 'Workday Rising', the best experiences don't just inform – they immerse. Attendees feel part of something bigger. They don't just hear what the brand stands for – they feel it.

In a world increasingly mediated by screens, these physical or hybrid spaces give brands a powerful emotional edge.

When you architect environments that prioritise belonging, collaboration, and creativity, you're no longer just delivering content - you're building memory, meaning, and emotional loyalty that lasts long after the lights go down.

08.

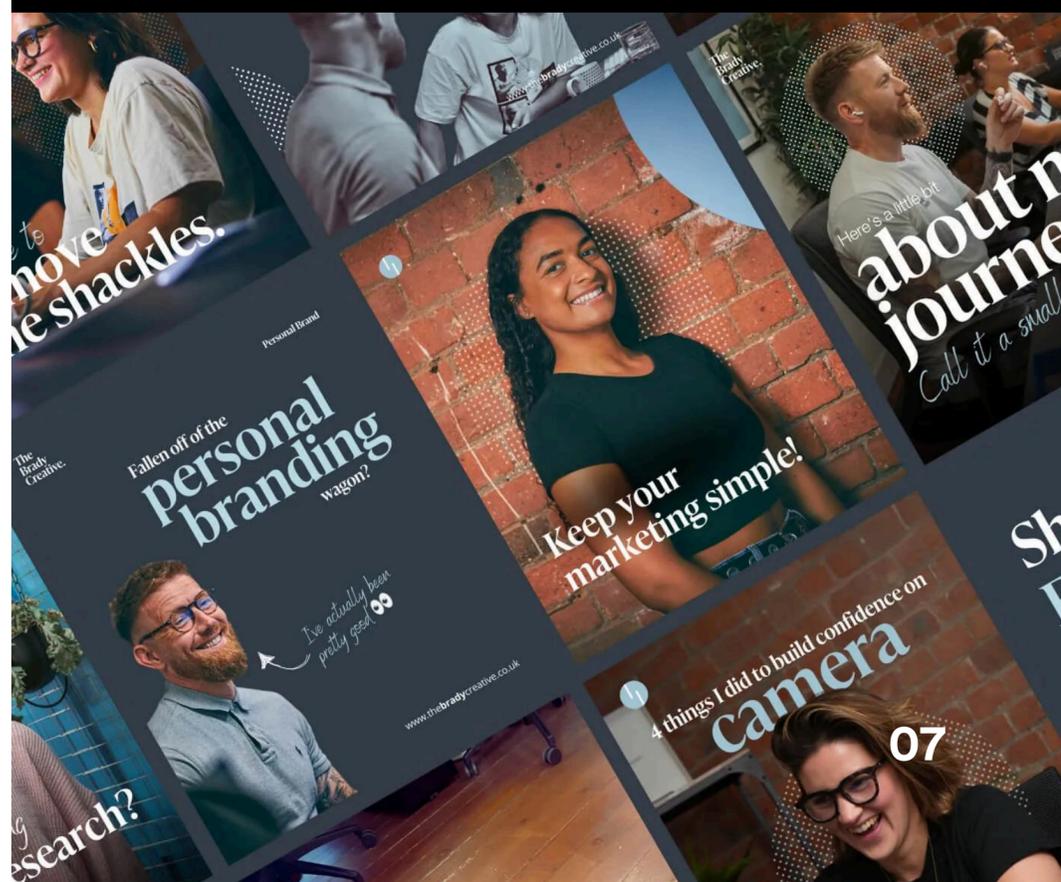
Amplified Advocacy: Personal Branding 2.0

In B2B, trust is built between people – not between people and logos. That's why empowering your internal experts to build visible, authentic personal brands is no longer a nice-to-have. It's a core growth strategy.

LinkedIn is the engine room for this. Not just a distribution channel, but the only full-funnel B2B platform – blending thought leadership, brand building, emotional connection and performance. It rewards relevance and engagement, meaning the more your people show up with valuable perspectives, the more visible your brand becomes.

Look at the impact of voices like Andrew Tindall at System1 or Tom Roach at Jellyfish. Their posts aren't just commentary – they're community-building. Through consistent, insight-led contributions, they raise the profile of their agencies while delivering value to their networks.

This strategy works because it adds humanity to your brand. It shifts influence from corporate comms to real conversations. When your people show up as themselves, the brand earns reach, trust, and memorability – all in the places that matter most.



09.

Freedom Within a Framework: Content frameworks to judge all output

In today's world of always-on content, consistency is critical – but so is creativity. The most effective B2B brands strike the balance by building clear frameworks that guide emotional storytelling without stifling originality.

These frameworks aren't restrictive. They're strategic guardrails that ensure every output – from social posts to long-form content – serves both the audience's needs and the brand's emotional positioning.

They ask the right questions: Does this feel on-brand? Does it serve a real human insight? Does it reinforce the emotional territory we want to own?

At Boldspace, we use our own content framework structures to help clients measure exactly that – ensuring content lands with creative power and emotional precision.

Because in the end, consistency breeds trust, but a little bit of freedom breeds authentic personality. And the most powerful brands know: you need both to truly resonate.

10.

Relevancy in a Flattening World: Staying human in a world of sameness

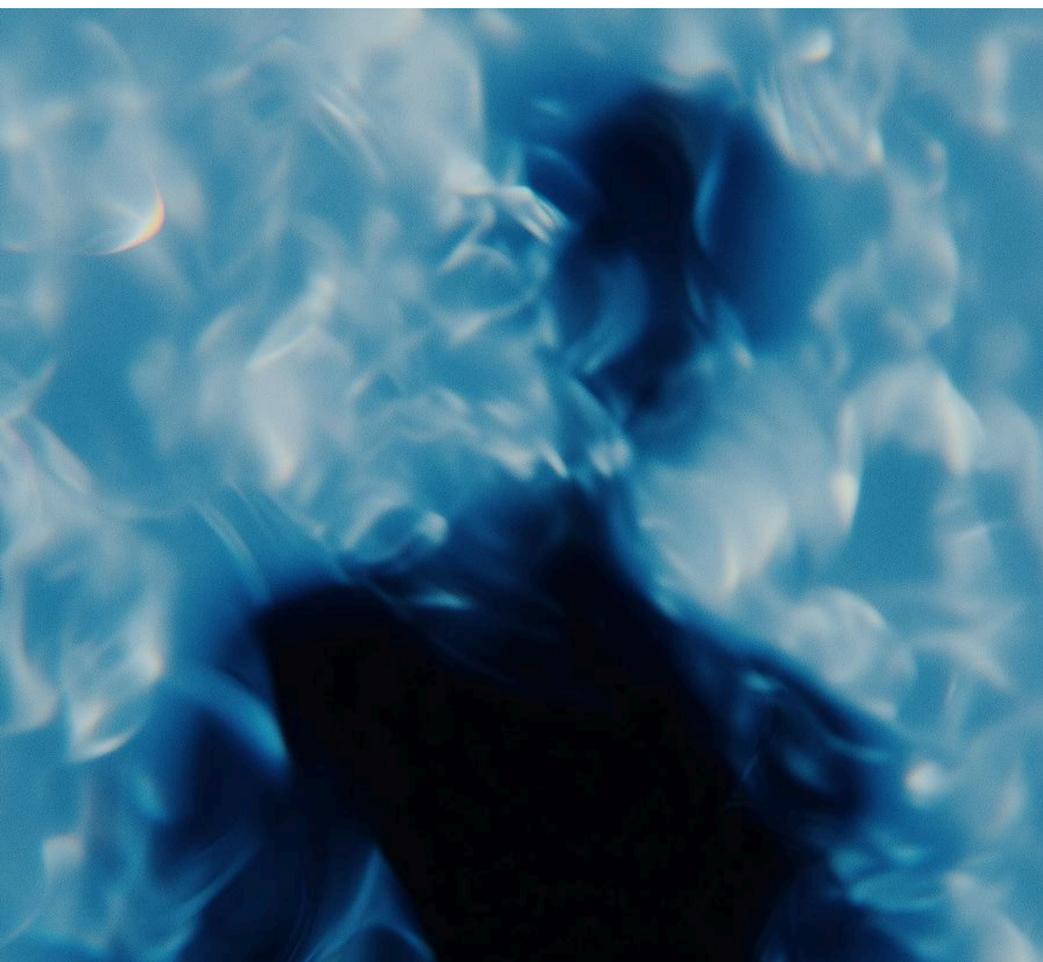
As industries converge and functional differences disappear, emotional relevance has become the new battleground. In a world increasingly shaped by AI, sameness, and speed, the brands that thrive are those that feel the most human.

But staying emotionally resonant isn't a one-off positioning exercise – it's an ongoing strategy. What feels powerful today may feel disconnected tomorrow. Emotional salience must be continually revised and refreshed to remain relevant within a shifting cultural landscape.

From HubSpot's ABM storytelling to Monzo's design-led product moments and Cisco's evolving community-led content – the most effective brands don't just repeat messages. They evolve the feeling, not just the words. It's about maintaining a consistent emotional core while flexing to fit new contexts, needs, and cultural signals.

This is emotional relevance in practice: real-world innovation, social-first storytelling, community creation, employee advocacy, and personalisation that connects. The goal? To meet your audience where they are – and how they feel – without losing who you are.

In 2025, the most valuable brand asset won't be features or functionality. It will be the ability to feel emotionally alive, culturally present, and unmistakably human – in an increasingly AI-augmented world.



Top Trends for B2B in 2025

As we've explored, the B2B landscape is undergoing a profound emotional and strategic transformation. The most successful brands are embracing a richer, more human approach to connection, creativity, and communication.

The following trends represent the blueprint for B2B growth in 2025:

- 1. Creative positioning & storytelling**
Standing out means telling a compelling, emotionally resonant story that connects beyond product features.
- 2. Employee brand advocacy**
Your people are your most trusted voices. Activating them builds trust and reach.
- 3. Value-driven marketing**
Brands that lead with values create deeper meaning and stronger alignment with customers.
- 4. Social-first content**
Emotion-led video content is the fastest path to memorability and engagement.
- 5. Human-led meets AI-augmented**
Emotional intelligence and artificial intelligence must work hand-in-hand.
- 6. Real-world innovation**
Tangible, human-centred innovation speaks louder than abstract promises.
- 7. Community building**
Connection builds loyalty. The most successful brands grow tribes, not just customer lists.
- 8. Personalisation and ABM**
Relevance is non-negotiable. Tailored experiences create emotional and commercial resonance.
- 9. Increased Flexibility**
Brands offering adaptable subscriptions, products, services, and policies will better meet evolving customer needs.
- 10. Sustainability Integration**
Fully integrated ethical and sustainable practices will become key loyalty drivers for values-conscious consumers.

Conclusion

The rise of the Emotional Enterprise

B2B is no longer a purely rational playground. The future belongs to brands that feel. That live their truth. That understand the unspoken needs of their buyers and speak to them not with jargon, but with clarity, courage, and care.

As this report makes clear, the Emotional Enterprise isn't a campaign, it's a cultural shift. It's the recognition that behind every procurement decision, budget approval, and technology integration is a human being seeking meaning, reassurance, and inspiration.

In a world of sameness, emotion is your unfair advantage. And in a world of automation, it is your most human one.

The brands that win in 2025 and beyond will not be the loudest, or the biggest, but those that are felt the most deeply.

Now is the time to be braver. Bolder. More human.

Welcome to the era of the Emotional Enterprise.





Need help with your approach?

hello@boldspace.com
0208 050 9928

119 Wardour Street
London
W1F 0UW

