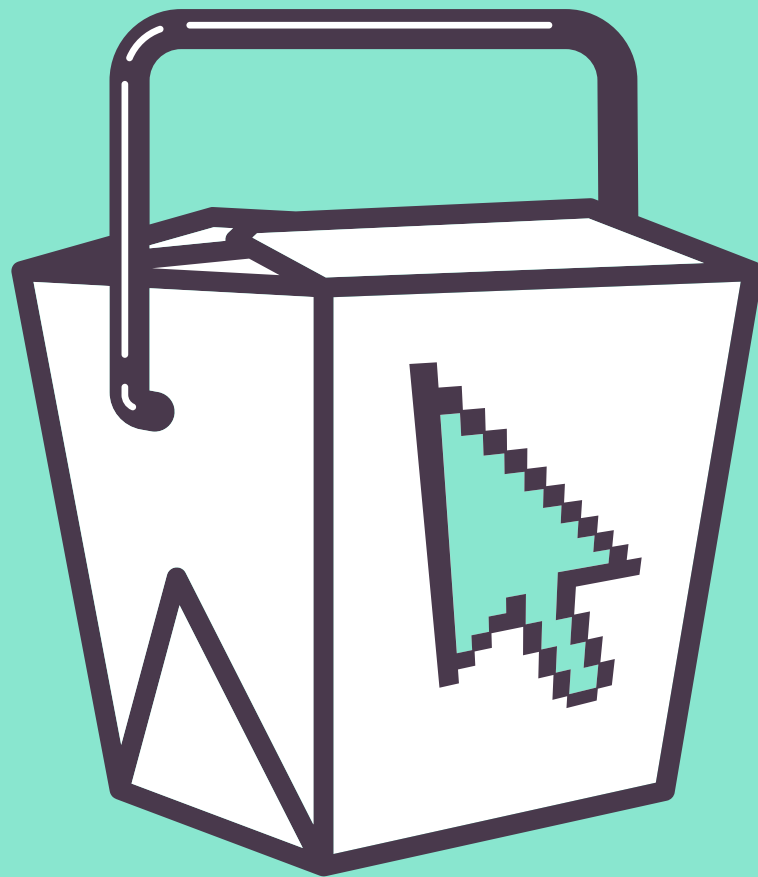


a trend report

from the front desk of sweb



2025 trend report:
people over logos

👉 *let's dive in* 👈

brands as we know them are dead.

💀 cause of death:

consumers aren't just looking for products or services they're looking for real connections, experiences, and communities. this means that marketing is no longer about chasing virality, it's about creating moments that turn audiences into loyal customers.

for years, businesses have optimized for engagement—more likes, more shares, more views. but if those numbers aren't turning into long-term trust and loyalty, what's the real impact?



80% of consumers say...

in-person events are the most trusted way to discover new brands. 💡

77% feel more loyal after...

actually meeting a brand face to face. 🤝

64% would rather...

dive into an immersive experience than just scroll past another ad. 😞

brands that turn online engagement into real-life connections build the strongest relationships. 👁️👁️



B2B & professional services: a LinkedIn post from a founder led to a referral that closed a major deal—not because it introduced them, but because it reinforced an offline relationship.



consumer brands: companies that bring customers into real-world experiences see higher retention, with 77% of attendees feeling more connected after an in-person event.



hospitality & retail: dining events, pop-ups, and community activations are creating urgency, with some locations booking out weeks in advance due to FOMO-driven word of mouth.

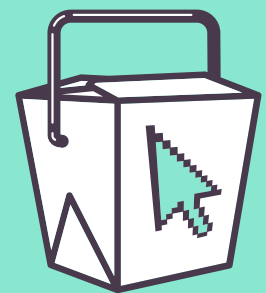
the brands that win in 2025 will show up where it matters 🖱️

humans want to see humans

the rise of CEOs as faces of the brand ★

“

for decades, brands have relied on logos, sleek marketing campaigns, and polished messaging. but in 2025, consumers want something different—they want to know who's behind the brand.



why you should care👉

82% of consumers say they trust a company more when its leadership is active online.

it's not just about having a headshot on the website. visibility builds trust.

and you've seen this before...

look at Elon Musk. his tweets alone move markets. Mark Zuckerberg has rebranded himself from an awkward tech founder to a cage-fighting, VR-hyping evangelist of the metaverse. even at a smaller scale, brands with socially active CEOs see 30% higher employee engagement and stronger brand trust.



*but let's be real. CEOs don't have time
to be influencers. the solution? 🤔*

presence



over

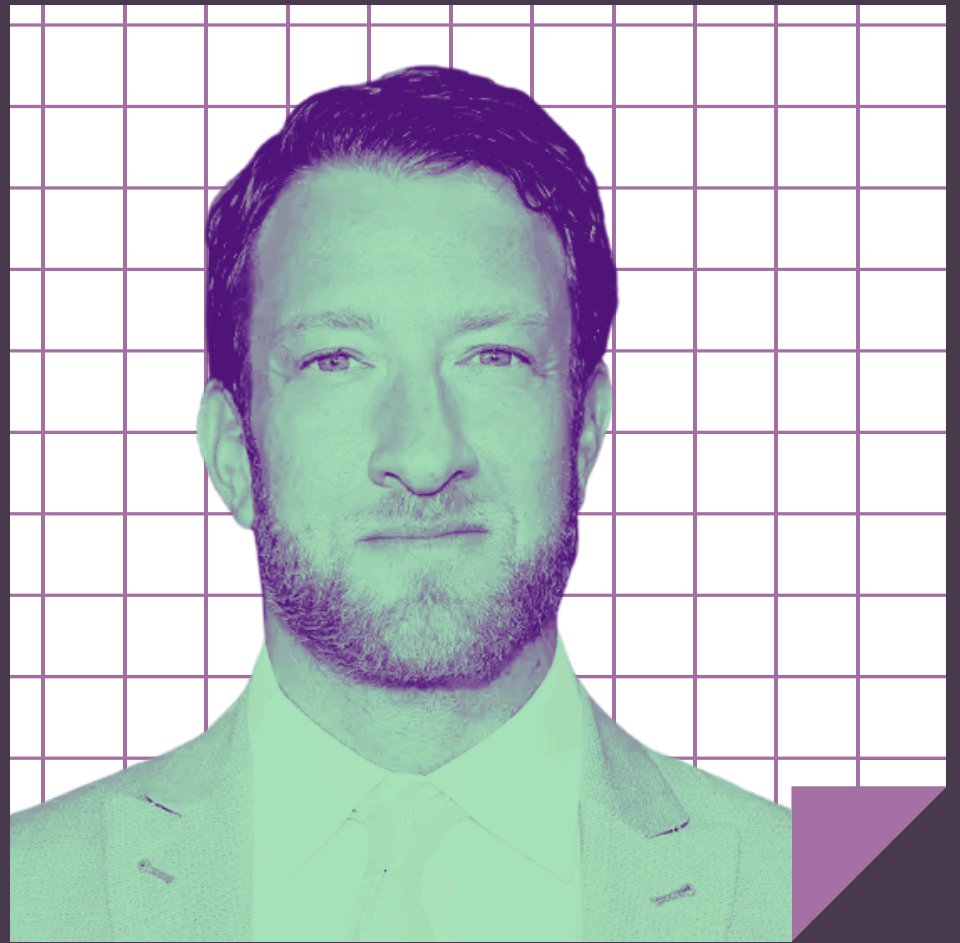


perfection



*pick one platform, show up consistently, and
share what's already happening—key decisions,
behind-the-scenes moments, quick insights.*

leaders who are getting this right



think Dave Portnoy or Ben Francis who actively aren't trying to go viral. they're just showing up, staying real, and giving people a reason to trust them.

so... stop marketing to algorithms. 🤖

(and blaming it for
poor performance)

in a world hyper-focused on data, algorithms, and automation, brands have forgotten the most important thing: their audience is made up of real people.

brands that thrive aren't just selling products or services—they're creating experiences that feel personal, immersive, and human-first.

harsh reality #1

64% of U.S. consumers feel that companies have lost touch with the human element of customer experience.

harsh reality #2

companies with highly engaged teams are 22% more profitable and 21% more productive.

👉 consider how leading brands are redefining this 👉

when brands focus on building genuine connections, they cultivate long-term loyalty—not just among consumers, but also within their internal teams.



Taco Bell’s retirement community activation turned its loyalty program into an intergenerational experience.



Canon’s “World Unseen” event allowed visually impaired individuals to engage with the visual world.



Nike & Dick’s Sporting Goods partnered on a female empowerment program with WNBA leaders.

in 2025, the brands that succeed will be the ones that put people first. 🙌

and that's exactly why the creator economy is thriving.

the rise of
influencers has
reshaped marketing,
relationships and
authenticity are now
at the center of every
brand strategy.

👉 *here's what the data says* 👉

you can't afford to ignore this 📌

93% of marketers say...

influencer marketing is effective for brand awareness. 🙌

70% of consumers feel...

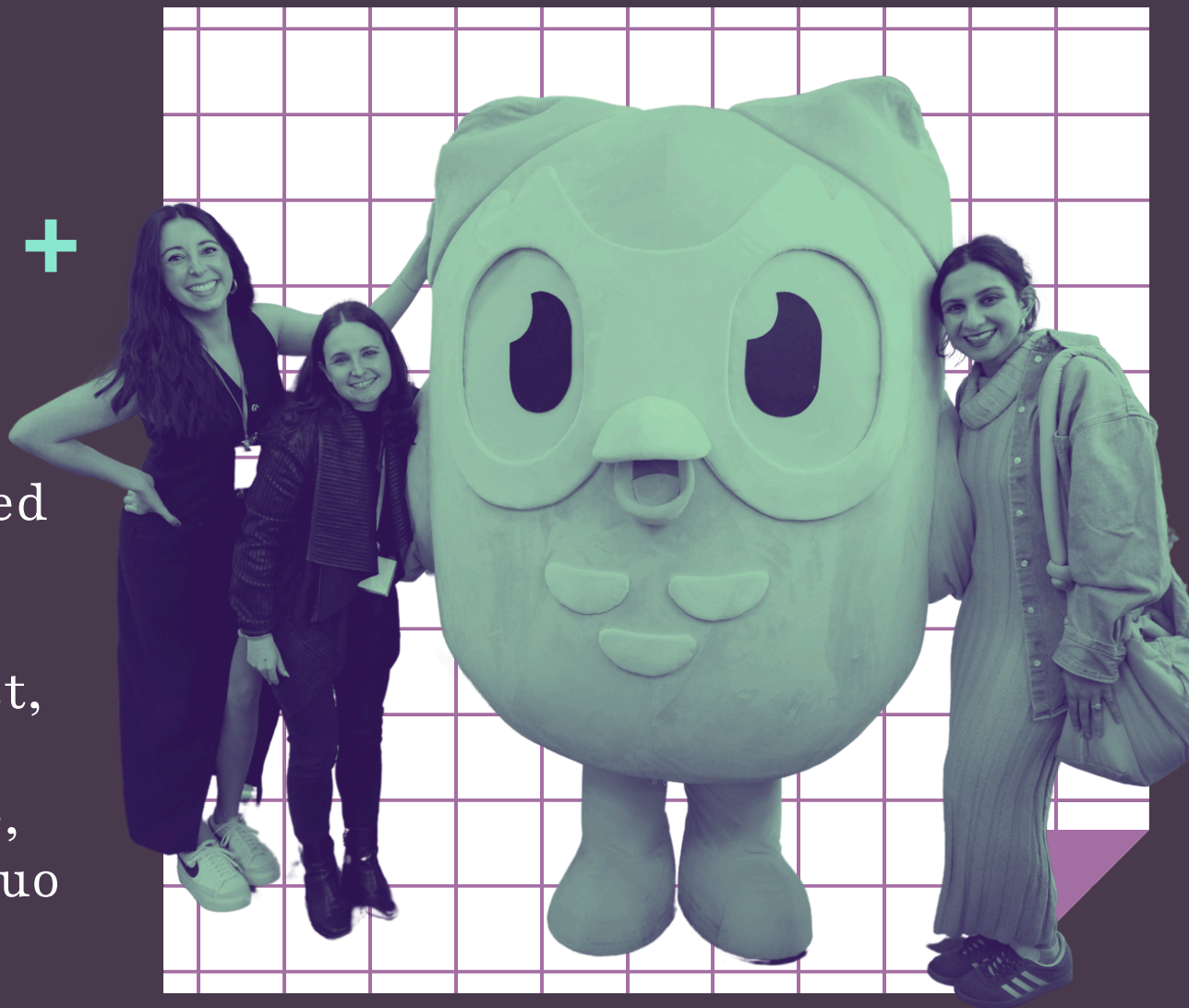
they trust micro-influencers over the big celebrities. 🧑

what's the reason?

they feel real influencer collabs are about creating shared experiences between the brand, the creator, and their audience. 🤝

Zaria Parvez + Duolingo

“start big, but iterate small” that’s how Zaria Parvez helped transform Duolingo into the world’s favorite unhinged brand. with leadership’s trust, small, smart shifts made the brand more human over time, leading to the cultural icon duo is today.



Dick’s Sporting Goods on LinkedIn 🙄

LinkedIn isn’t just for job hunting anymore. it’s becoming a key space for building influence, and not just through big-name creators. “it’s an untapped potential, especially if you look at the platform and the changes that are happening,” said Nicole Marcus, manager of influencer strategy at Dick’s Sporting Goods

the takeaway

so what 🙄🙄

does this mean

for you 🤝 and

your business?

if your brand disappeared from social media tomorrow, would your audience still know how to find you? would they still feel connected to what you do? if the answer isn't a confident yes, it's time to rethink your strategy.

the reality is, online visibility without real-world connection won't get you far in 2025. the businesses that win are the ones turning digital engagement into offline loyalty.

here's how to make it happen...



rethink in-person events—it's not just about hosting; it's about making people want to attend. whether it's an exclusive dinner, a curated networking event, or an interactive workshop, people need a reason to show up.



leverage your online community to fuel real-world action—your best customers already follow you. make them feel like insiders with first-to-know access, VIP invites, or interactive opportunities beyond the screen.



build for longevity, not just hype—creating urgency is great, but sustaining relationships is better. prioritize events, partnerships, and activations that continue the conversation long after they're over.

at the end of the day people just want to feel valued as a consumer 



predictions from **team sw**

why showing up IRL still matters in 2025 and beyond



SW

the best marketing doesn't feel like marketing 💡

but instead, an experience worth talking about. grassroots activations make that happen. it's the accounting firm hosting an exclusive wine night or the hospitality group turning wednesday dinners into an event worth posting about.

no big budgets, just small, intentional moments that create loyalty and organic buzz. when people feel important, they spread the word for you.



JC

where digital and real life meet 🤝

people crave in-person connection, but burn out fast. the challenge? finding the balance. at sw, we believe in meeting people where they are—on their phones, at events, in between. knowing your audience means knowing how to reach them. what's your middle ground?



BG

real beats reach 🤝

social platforms will keep evolving, but one thing won't change—people want authentic, human experiences in a digital world. the smartest brands will prioritize real engagement, meaningful conversations, and community-building. even something as simple as responding to a comment can turn passive followers into loyal fans.



MC

offline marketing just hits different 🧠

people are putting their phones face down, and brands need to meet them there. the resurgence of book clubs, intimate brand pop-ups, and in-person activations isn't just a trend—it's a shift back to real, tangible experiences.



MS

creators don't just want brand deals ✖

being a creator can be isolating. the brands that get this are going beyond sponsorships to build something bigger than a campaign. creator retreats, brand-hosted summits, intimate networking dinners—these are the moments that turn collaborations into real relationships. the best brand connections don't happen in the comments. they happen IRL.

the takeaway—

your audience isn't

just numbers on a

screen  they're real

people  looking for

brands **they can trust**



online and in real

life. the **real question**

is, will they show up

for you? 

ready to make it happen?

you + **sw** **web**
imagine
what
can do.

let's chat.