

# RED SKY PREDICTIONS

# 2023

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10 Predictions for Communicators  
on the Cutting Edge

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# RED SKY PREDICTIONS

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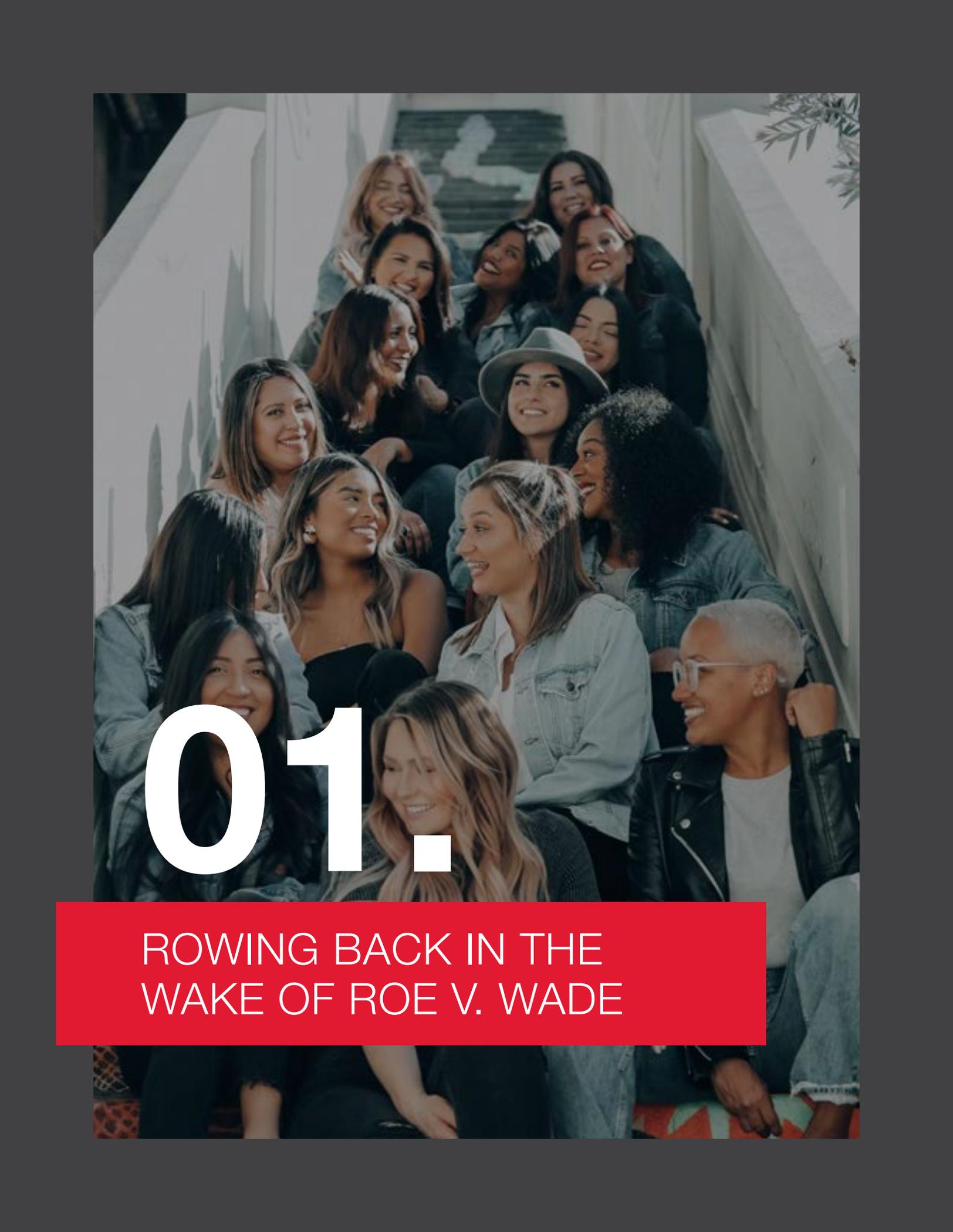
# 2023

It's a wild time to be alive. Around us, wars are being waged. The pandemic continues. Our climate is its own battlefield. The economy and cost of living is hurting. Many of us are traumatized, outraged and despairing over the state of social, racial, reproductive and criminal justice. When we pick up our phones — which we do constantly — we're confronted by headlines about these things and more. It's no wonder peace, and inner peace, eludes so many of us now, making us feel unsettled and even unsafe. The mental health crisis is real, even if stigma still persists in shaming us into silence.

Of course, this is also the context in which organizations are operating — making it a critical time for brands and employers to **consider their purpose** and how they want to make a positive impact on the world and earn greater trust with their stakeholders. As it stands, 71% of consumers have little faith that brands will deliver on their promises, according to Havas Group's **Meaningful Brands® study**. Nevertheless, consumers are looking to brands to make a meaningful difference — with 73% saying brands must act now for the good of society and the planet.

Red Havas' top-of-the-year predictions are made to help our clients navigate changing circumstances and difficult conversations with grace (and foresight). This year, we've envisioned the world as it is and as we want it to be, with 10 predictions that span climate, content, mental health, the metaverse and so much more. We've quietly examined and boldly predicted so you can better connect with the people and organizations you want to reach in 2023.

Thanks to our Havas and Vivendi colleagues, our clients, friends in academia and the media, as well as our partners for all their inputs, experience and research that helped us shape our Red Sky Predictions 2023.



01.

ROWING BACK IN THE  
WAKE OF ROE V. WADE

# ROWING BACK IN THE WAKE OF ROE V. WADE

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The U.S. Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* marked a watershed moment for women and their partners in America. It also sparked a wake-up call across the U.S. and in countries around the globe about the potential implications on LGBTQ+ rights, racial equity, gun control, climate regulation, affirmative action, voting rights and so on. And it served as a stark reminder as to how quickly our life and control over our own destiny can change.

Employees, customers, communities and even some investors looked to “corporate America” to use the power of their platform to take a stand against this latest claw-back of rights. While some companies had the processes and relationships in place to respond proactively and quickly, others were caught off guard and created a leadership vacuum felt most acutely and strongly by their employees. Even though the issue had been rolling through the courts, the media and in our political arenas for months.

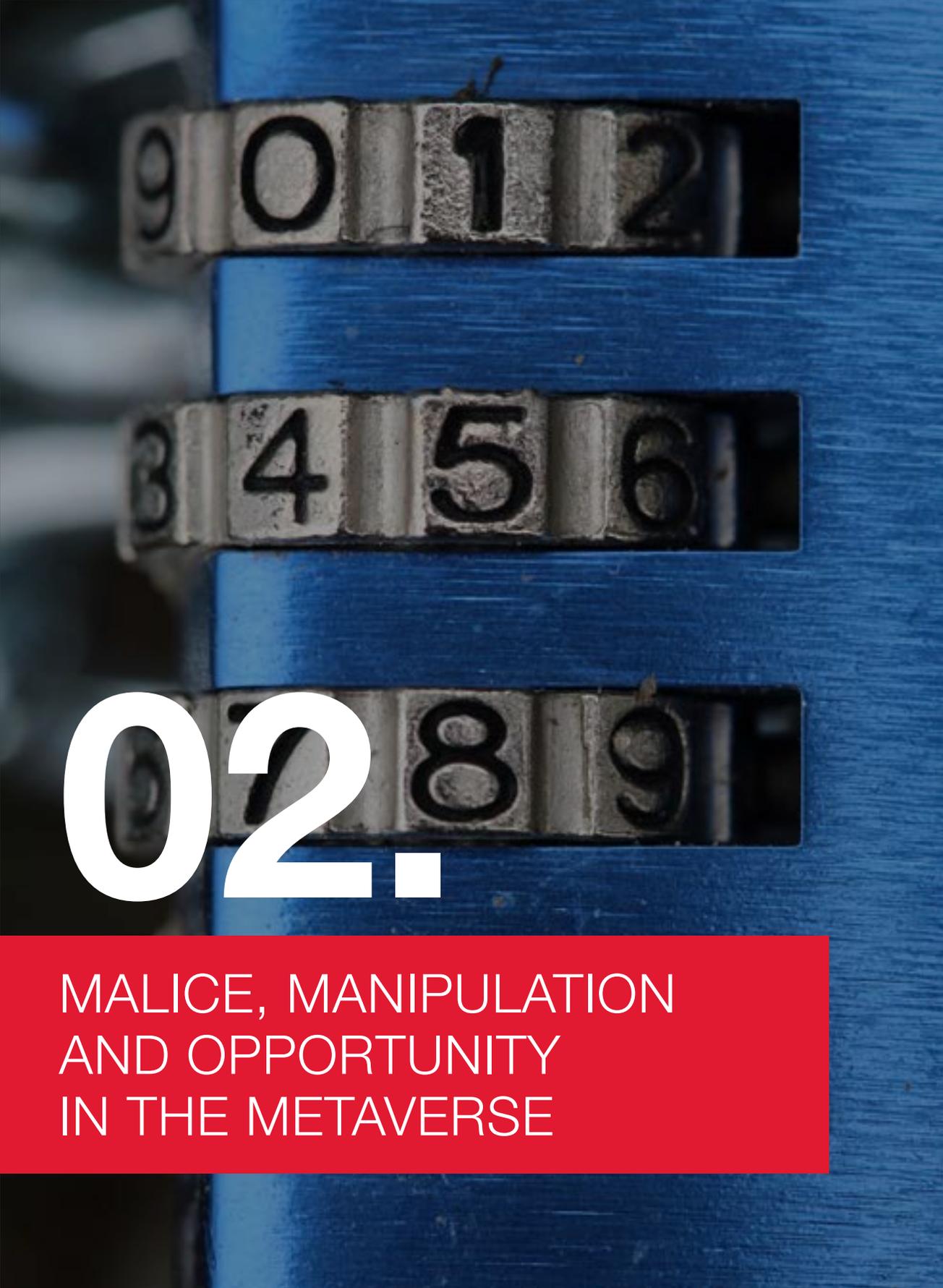
Our group's **Meaningful Brands® study** found that our expectations of brands and companies when it comes to acting on societal and environmental issues are at an all-time high. Specifically, we found that 73% of people worldwide expect brands and companies to act for the good of society and the planet, and 64% — up 10 points vs. 2019 — prefer to buy from companies with a reputation for having a purpose other than profits. The **2022 Trust Barometer** published by Edelman echoed our findings, concluding that employers are the only institution that Americans trust to do the right thing when it comes to societal issues.

It's true that businesses must tread a fine line, being conscious that their employees, external stakeholders and shareholders may have different views on these issues. And calling for direct change, as Yelp and Disney have done, can carry more risk and even governmental consequences. But, in an era of **multistakeholderism** sitting on the sidelines and staying silent is very rarely an option. Neither will be making generic “run-of-the-middle” statements that essentially say nothing, nor will performative pledges and piecemeal progress suffice.

What it does mean is that brands and companies need to understand the expectations of their employees and external stakeholders, and act in a way that is aligned with their purpose, mission and values — and they need to demonstrate their “moral compass” consistently. Those able to build trust through shared values and action are poised to **attract and retain the best talent** — a key determinant for achieving long-term success.

## PREDICTION

As internal and external stakeholders increasingly look to businesses to take decisive action on how laws and regulations conflict with stakeholder and company values, companies must extend their ESG strategy to include a proactive framework for navigating highly charged political waters in a way that supports and complements their business strategy, especially with those issues that matter to their key stakeholders internally and externally.



02.

MALICE, MANIPULATION  
AND OPPORTUNITY  
IN THE METAVERSE

# MALICE, MANIPULATION AND OPPORTUNITY IN THE METAVERSE

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“[Unless] regulated or restricted, the ability of the metaverse to influence people will be the most dangerous tool of persuasion that humanity will have ever created.” Now that’s a **statement**, courtesy of Louis Rosenberg, PhD, CEO and chief scientist of Unanimous AI, that stops you in your tracks.

Is it hyperbole, theatrics and scaremongering to garner attention? Or is it accurate and something we should be threatened by? The reality may be somewhat more balanced with a school of thought that the virtues and benefits of the metaverse can be a positive force. Let’s examine both.

Misinformation and disinformation pervade all parts of our society now. This has been fuelled by a lack of regulation and governance in social media, as well as news — both traditional and emerging — pedalling unsubstantiated storylines to pander to their crowd rather than employing accepted levels of journalistic integrity. As one ex-Fox News producer told us, “These days we are more in the business of entertainment than news.”

We’ve seen the impact of this and how it’s created discourse, distrust and disassociation amongst people. The metaverse stands to take this to another level with its capacity to heighten and elevate our emotions within immersive worlds and experiences, with personalized interactions and creations — all of which can be manipulated.

Imagine the metaverse’s potential implications for politics, activism and marketing — and for the likes of cybercrime. Global police agency Interpol has **said** the metaverse will increase the scale of existing crime and give rise to new forms of cybercrime, particularly fraud. And Europol, the European Union’s law enforcement agency, is **keeping an eye** on how terror groups may use virtual worlds to disseminate propaganda and recruit and train extremists.

Additionally, picture political campaigners or activists in the virtual world whose facial features have been slightly modified to replicate elements of your own and thus elicit empathy on an undetectable subconscious level. There is also the potential for them to personalize what you hear through words, terms and emotional buttons they’ve learned about you from your digital footprint. This is highly plausible, **according to Rand Waltzman**. It’s a form of manipulation that’s been validated by **Stanford University researchers** in the “real” world.

Manipulation-rich data about individuals in the metaverse could make current concerns about the web and social pale into insignificance. In the metaverse, everywhere you go, every eye movement you make, where you stare and for how long, and your body language (yes, avatars do display

physical signals) can be sensed and recorded. Throw in the ability to track facial expressions, heart rate and blood pressure, and companies and brands will be able to personalize the advertising and messaging they serve you on such a subconscious level that it will go undetected and be the most persuasive tool man has ever devised.

There is a flip side. The metaverse can be a force for good and a positive experience. After all, technology has the power to change the world. **Gartner predicts** that by 2026, 25% of people will spend an hour a day in a metaverse and 30% of companies will offer products and services there.

The metaverse can enhance healthcare delivery, telehealth and the likes, with remote therapy and remote treatments. It can also help with accessing public services, education and learning. And it could be really exciting in the travel space — giving us a new way to experience cultural sites and exciting parts of the planet, particularly for those who may not have the financial means or health to do so in the real world.

Finally, the metaverse will enable us to build connections and relationships. Imagine meeting your long-distance friends and families there. Research from global dating site OkCupid **finds** over a third of its users would be open to going on a date in the metaverse. During the pandemic, it even created **a campaign** in Turkey, a country with stringent rules and discrimination around gay relationships, to allow LGBTQ+ people to meet and interact in a safe place in this alternate universe.

## PREDICTION

The opportunities brought by the metaverse are endless and the innovation potential incredible. For marketers and communicators, this is exciting if well applied. However, we’ll have to build confidence and trust among key stakeholders for brands that will want to have a meaningful presence in the metaverse. And equally we’ll need to ensure the security of the people and data that enter. Governments will need to heed what we have learned from the social media space and get on the front foot with rules and regulations.



03.

VIRAL HEALTHCARE  
MISINFORMATION EXPOSED

# VIRAL HEALTHCARE MISINFORMATION EXPOSED

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In 2022, FDA commissioner Robert Califf was quoted **saying**, “Misinformation is now our leading cause of death.” Information being fast and free has the side effect of health misinformation becoming increasingly viral.

In a world where information is distributed rapidly through multiple platforms and without universally agreed gatekeepers for science, the substantial noise may reduce the real substance in our efforts to build health literacy. As one physician in Australia **lamented**, “Having qualified voices in this space being highly regulated while unqualified ones are free to share whatever they like is not working.”

In 2023, we expect social media to continue to be frequently accessed across most demographics, with influencers weighing in on significant health-related topics such as diet, skincare, fatigue and wellness, sometimes with misguided claims and often with marketed products.

Just harken back to **September’s warning** from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for consumers to be “chicken” (read cautious) to try the viral TikTok trend with Nyquil and chicken. While doctors and patients can find pages of warnings from the U.S. FDA regarding viral social media challenges, efforts are underway to improve this situation: The American Academy of Family Physicians provides a toolkit called **MisinfoRx** that provides strategies for physicians to address patient-held misinformation. Plus, initiatives at the community

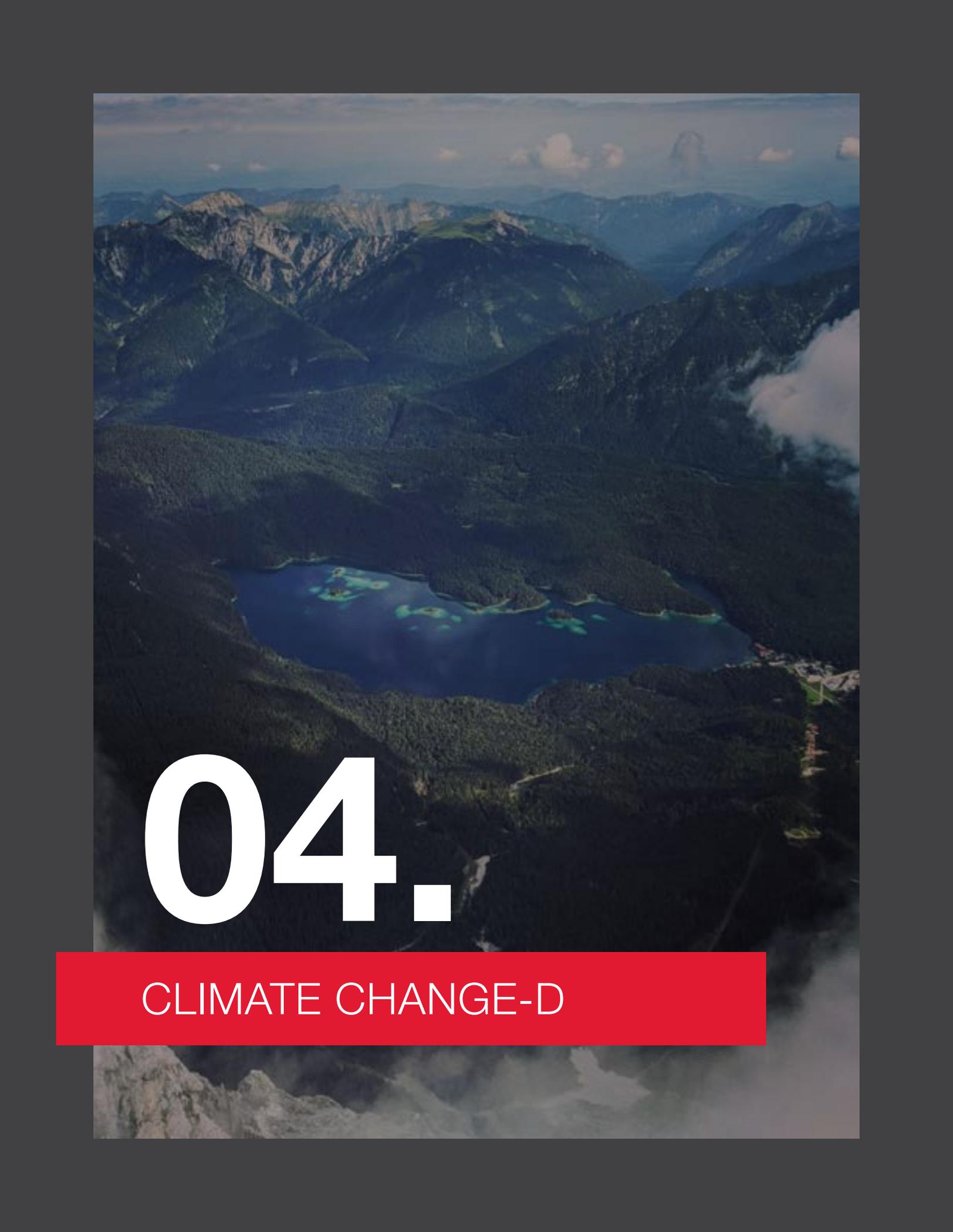
and national levels — both online and in real life — aim to increase consumer digital health literacy and improve health outcomes by helping people understand health news with a more critical eye and learn to appreciate the steps necessary for both wellness and self-care/care in their own lives.

A **recent study** published in ScienceDirect found that even mental health professionals who purport to be influencers do not necessarily lead people to formally pursue help to address their mental health needs. The study’s results indicated only 23% of TikTok posts and 7% of Instagram posts from these influencers enhanced the ability of the viewer to recognize specific difficulties in their mental health.

In development are variations of semi-supervised end-to-end artificial intelligence programs that assess whether social media posts contain health-related misinformation. In an early pilot from **Accenture** on a dataset of more than 21 million COVID-19-related tweets, AI identified posts with misinformation with 95% accuracy, significantly outperforming comparable algorithms.

## PREDICTION

Improving individual health literacy and equity will become a greater focus as misinformation surrounding health conditions increases. AI, similar technology tools and digital health literacy efforts are positioned to play a key role in disrupting the viral nature of misinformation.

An aerial photograph of a mountain lake, likely a reservoir, surrounded by dense green forests and rugged mountains. The lake's surface is overlaid with a heatmap, showing areas of high temperature in red and orange, and lower temperatures in blue and green. The background shows a vast mountain range under a clear sky with some clouds.

04.

CLIMATE CHANGE-D

# CLIMATE CHANGE-D

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The climate has changed. In the 32 years since the IPCC's first climate report, **emissions have risen by 54%**. As global temperatures continue to climb, so has the heat behind the conversation about it. The good news: A step change in the way climate change is framed is drowning out its deniers. The question of whether it's real has evolved into a question of how to mitigate its effects.

Progress is being made in fits and starts. COP27 brought forth a **groundbreaking fund** with which rich nations can now support developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. But it failed to secure the commitments that would stop greenhouse gas emissions from rising beyond thresholds that could lead to planetary catastrophe.

For the first time, the **IPCC's latest report** asserts that media have the power to shape public opinion on climate change — whether they're sparking public support for action or fueling denialism. While global media coverage of climate-related stories has increased over time, journalists are often drawn to reflect “both sides” in their reporting, leading to “fueled polarization, with negative implications for climate policy,” according to the IPCC.

**Experts also warn** that fever-pitch coverage can create fatalism, despair, dismissiveness and denial. Therefore science-based reporting that communicates **the urgency and the opportunity** will be increasingly necessary. We have seen this shift in the past 24 months as climate catastrophes mount and we predict that reporting on the realities of climate change will significantly increase — and its **denial decline** — in 2023 and beyond.

The existence of climate change is now mostly agreed upon across the political spectrum. While those on the left may prioritize addressing it more than the right, **both sides are open** to policy proposals to mitigate climate change. With **the majority of people concerned** about climate change across the world, it can be expected that in 2023, politicians, regardless of party, will make climate action a key point of their campaigns, and in the long term, will turn these platforms into policies.

To create change, the private sector must also be held responsible for not only communicating their climate targets to stakeholders but also proving they've met them. While the number of companies committing to net zero emissions has increased over time, many question whether it will be enough or whether these promises are simply **greenwashing** in action. As stated in Red Hava's **From Pledges to Progress** white paper, companies that want to be profitable and retain their employees and customers (read: all of them) must devise a plan of immediate action to reach both near-term and long-term climate goals. Transparency will be critical in 2023, as companies can expect to be held accountable for their climate pledges by both government regulations and in the court of public opinion.

Public perception on the topic of climate change has changed drastically over the years. A recent survey from Pew Research Center shows **72%** of people across the world are greatly concerned about climate change and willing to make sacrifices to address it. Even more telling is that intense concern about the personal effects of climate change has increased sharply in several major economies since 2015, with younger generations showing the most concern that climate change will harm them in their lifetime.

Now that the climate has changed (comms wise), we need to keep it changed and get the action Mother Earth needs. Otherwise, she'll continue to burn, blow and drown us. As it becomes increasingly impossible to deny the reality of climate change, the key now will be turning concern and conversation into action.

## PREDICTION

In 2023, the conversation around climate change will continue to change — in the media, in politics, within corporations and amongst the general public — moving away from *denial* and toward *demand*, as more climate events occur, the costs of inaction become clearer and more get on board with taking a stand.



05.

BRAND VALUES TO  
INCREASE IN VALUE

# BRAND VALUES TO INCREASE IN VALUE

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Over the past two decades, digital transformation and rapid social change in developed economies have driven substantial shifts in the way brands interact with the public. In particular, the rise of employee, investor and customer activism, combined with the rise in opinion-led editorials has created an environment where brands are held to account more strongly than ever.

Against this backdrop, the pressure is on brands to ensure they not only have programs in place around corporate citizenship but that their goals in these areas are achievable and they're proactively demonstrating their commitments.

In Australia, [research commissioned by our team](#) at Havas Labs exemplifies global trends around changing values in developed western economies. The key takeaway being that Aussie brands wishing to succeed should be sure their value proposition is oriented around equal opportunity for all, honesty, freedom, sustainability and compassion.

Research around brand boycotts, too, shows values alignment is playing a key role on spending in major markets. A [2017 study by YouGov](#) found 21% of U.K. consumers had boycotted a brand following a negative media scandal and among this group, 67% never returned. This squares with findings from an [April 2022 study](#) in the U.S. that one in four Americans are actively boycotting a product or company they'd spent money on in the past. Importantly, across both pieces of research, the driving factors for boycotts were misalignment around customer values or issues including employment conditions, sustainable business practice, political matters and supply chain.

Brand trust, as measured by our group's [Meaningful Brands® study](#), is at an all-time low. Only 47% of brands are seen as trustworthy with trust metrics around the world in decline — only 39% of brands are trusted in North America and 24% in Asia.

In 2021, [Forbes reported](#) 78% of consumers prioritize buying from companies that make it clear they have ethical sourcing strategies in place. It's not surprising then that ethical procurement along the full supply chain (and being able to demonstrate it) is becoming an increasing priority for both B2B and consumer-facing businesses.

Talent, too, is looking for better values alignment, with [research](#) published by McKinsey and Company showing that nearly two-thirds of workers felt the pandemic made them question the purpose of their day-to-day job.

While it can be tempting to take a “bigger is better” approach to ESG announcements, authenticity and achievability must be key considerations. Following the adoption of the Paris Accord, many companies set (and announced) high targets around sustainability for seemingly far-off timeframes like 2025, 2030 or 2040. With these timelines now fast approaching, many of those businesses that made large-scale pronouncements are finding themselves having to quickly reframe, as climate activists and their customers hold them to account.

Grand gestures by brands like [Patagonia](#) — which recently divested its ownership structure to trusts that focus on protecting the environment, supporting thriving communities and fighting the environmental crisis — are setting new benchmarks in this space. But there is also risk in these benchmarks being demotivating for brands not in a position to achieve this scale of boldness.

For others, adherence to principles of humbleness can act as a block. While humility is an admirable and important quality particularly amongst top-tier brands, when it comes to building and enhancing reputation it's important it isn't mistaken for silence. To be impactful, reputation storytelling must be hard-baked into business thinking from the outset and focused on the long-term goals. Even more importantly, it must be built on achievable, purposeful action that is communicated with authenticity and integrity if it is to positively drive business outcomes, attract the best talent and influence consumer perceptions.

## PREDICTION

As the impacts of global economic and geopolitical uncertainty really start to bite, purpose-aligned brands will be the ones that succeed at talent retention and attraction and supporting sales enablement. But it's going to be an increasingly competitive space as brands across all categories compete for share of voice and mind.

A close-up photograph of a smartphone lying on a laptop keyboard. The phone's screen is lit up, showing a lock screen with a vibrant image of a tropical beach and turquoise ocean. The time '4:11' and the date 'Wednesday, 27 September' are visible on the screen. The laptop keyboard is partially visible, with keys like 'command' and 'option' clearly seen. The overall scene is set against a dark, blurred background.

06.

THE DIGITAL DIVIDE  
AND GREATER  
SOCIAL SEPARATION

# THE DIGITAL DIVIDE AND GREATER SOCIAL SEPARATION

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Touchless technologies during the pandemic often required us to scan a QR code with an internet-connected phone to view a website. While beneficial for some, this left those who were without or unsure about technology to use different and potentially more at-risk means, or it excluded them entirely. How many of us had to help parents or grandparents, those with learning disabilities or with underlying health conditions, to access online services, such as banking, social services or healthcare? These groups are often the ones that would benefit the most from safer ways to interact.

Digital inclusion **promotes the idea** that everyone deserves equal access to the digital world, while digital exclusion leaves some without the ability to access and use the digital space. Particularly as it relates to day-to-day interactions with people at schools, government services, healthcare institutions, banks, insurers and retailers, we're leaving many behind.

Food for thought: About 20% fewer people with a disability own a desktop or laptop computer **than those without a disability**. Globally, women are 23% less likely to use a cell phone than men. In the U.S., Black and Hispanic/Latinx households have less reliable internet and devices available. And nearly 22 million (42%) seniors lack wireline broadband access at home.

The digital divide is a social justice issue and a public health crisis, with organizations such as **Aging Connected** working to combat it by increasing connectivity for older adults.

Due to advanced age or an underlying medical condition, some people were — and remain — more at risk of the serious symptoms and complications of COVID-19. Today, some in these vulnerable groups remain uncomfortable re-engaging with society's norms and continue to isolate and distance themselves. Add to this the digital divide created by the rapid acceleration of internet services that existed prior to the pandemic, and it's easy to see how social isolation and digital exclusion have become bedfellows.

What are we doing to help these people access the information and care they need? When it comes to healthcare, telehealth is providing increased access to some but can be a challenge for others. **A study of a Chinese home care program** with a telehealth component found that to make it most effective, public relations around the program needed to specifically address the older patient audience, and the app needed to have a clear and simple interface in order to be most accessible. Training and support materials were found to be critical to help older adults complete internet-based health management tasks, **another study found**.

Now that the long-term effects of the pandemic are coming into focus, a large and significant portion of the population may get left behind if we don't address this digital divide. To encourage and provide access for all, we must look to both service and product innovation. Communicators have an important role to play in combatting digital exclusion by considering how to make their marketing campaigns more inclusive; remember the value of experiential and analog campaigns that may not only be more effective than a digital campaign on its own but also more accessible, inspiring people from all comfortability levels to participate.

## PREDICTION

In 2023, we'll see more campaigns and activations that consider how to reach populations that we have left behind with the acceleration of digital during the pandemic, such as those without internet access or unconfident with technology, and those still feeling socially isolated because of health vulnerabilities. Look for an increased emphasis on user experience, education and awareness about digital inclusion, as well as (re)consideration of more direct interface interactions for services.



07.

NEWS TAKES ON  
NEW SOCIAL SHAPES

# NEWS TAKES ON NEW SOCIAL SHAPES

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It's no "new news": Social media has long been a key source of news consumption. In fact, 2021 **Statista** data cites "reading news stories" as the third most important driver of social media usage.

"Fake news" headlines have dominated our *newsfeeds* for years, ever since the Cambridge Analytica scandal, with Facebook and Twitter copping the majority of criticism over their news sourcing and moderation methods. And while overall social news consumption did decrease, last year's **Pew Research data** still showed these two platforms to be key sources of news consumption, with over half of Twitter users at the time reporting to read news on the site regularly.

But the social landscape has since changed — big time.

First of all, Meta's Facebook isn't the behemoth it once was; the platform faces ongoing battles in the form of year-on-year **active usage decline** and undeniable **drops in market share**, leading to its huge slew of recent **redundancies**.

Twitter, once "the" news engine on the social scene, is facing an existential crisis following Elon Musk's acquisition — with its new owner **admitting** the business has suffered a "massive drop in revenue" after campaign groups raised concerns about content-moderation standards and warned the company's remaining staff that it could lose billions of dollars next year. It's been a whirlwind few months that made Twitter the story rather than the stories on Twitter. Now the question is: What will the next CEO do to move the platform from bitter to fitter?

Where these two major players will go, we won't know with certainty until things unfold further, but what we do know is that there are new(ish) players on the block ready and waiting to take their place.

In come the underdogs. While considered primarily "entertainment" and "inspiration" platforms until recently, both TikTok and Instagram are bucking the trend of declining news consumption that's taking place across other channels. Instead, they're growing in popularity as sources for what's going on in the world beyond the latest dance trend, fashion or foodporn.

So much so that Pew Research **recently reported** the share of U.S. adults who say they regularly get news from TikTok has roughly tripled in just two years, from 3% in 2020 to 10% in 2022. That means a quarter of U.S. adults under 30 now regularly get their news on the platform. The cat has been out of the bag for years; video dominates social media. But what we look for in those short videos is changing.

Havas' most recent **Meaningful Brands® study** showed that 48% (almost half!) of all content provided by brands is not meaningful to consumers; and that "help" content is the most desired category desired from brands today; whereas content that "rewards" or "inspires" is the most expected.

The trend is clear: Consumers are looking for content that equips them with new information or knowledge — content that helps them understand or do things. And they're looking for it not just from news media, but from brands on social — across (on the surface) unexpected channels.

## PREDICTION

The definition of news and the channels across which people consume it on social have already changed drastically and will continue to do so. In 2023 and beyond, every brand is a news brand and will be expected to help its audience by providing meaningful social content that equips them with new knowledge or tools. In addition, brands will be more careful about the platforms they use, thinking as much about brand loyalty and love as they do about reputational risk.

A man with short dark hair is sitting on a chair with a red patterned backrest, positioned in front of a large window. He is looking at a laptop screen and has his hands on the keyboard. The window shows a view of green trees outside. The overall scene is brightly lit with natural light.

08.

HERE, THERE,  
EVERYWHERE:  
THE HYBRID QUANDARY

# HERE, THERE, EVERYWHERE: THE HYBRID QUANDARY

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In the Oxford Dictionary, the word hybrid means “a thing made by combining two different elements; a mixture.” And among the many impacts of the pandemic, the hybrid life — primarily referring to the melding of our work/home lives — emerged as a lasting outcome.

Employees with remote capabilities quickly realized the benefits of flexible working environments, and employers recognized the benefits of a happier, less-stressed workforce. Thus, the hybrid workplace was born. Beyond working, the rest of our lives grew to be more hybrid as well, with **telemedicine** finally becoming a widespread option, home exercise equipment and fitness apps **exploding**, and retailers finding ways to bring **store-like experiences** to online shoppers.

And as people brought their “outside lives” into their homes, these became more than the place you live; they became offices, gyms, stores and medical facilities. Even early in the pandemic, **Gensler suggested** more flexible home design could become a trend, predicting we’d see extra rooms equipped with retractable green screens or closets built out with cubbies for printers and office supplies.

In this now-permanent shift lies a conundrum for brands and employers: How do you create the space for collaboration and in-person connection without actually seeing people (often at least)? For employers, setting and communicating consistent policies and procedures is key. Those who don’t run the risk of breeding resentment with employees interpret expectations differently. They’re also working to improve the physical offices employees have worked in for many years, redesigning them for wellness, engagement and to have more of the “creature comforts” of home. We’re seeing **multimodal designs** incorporating “deep focus spaces” for quiet work, “soulful” spaces with comfortable and creative furniture and conversation nooks.

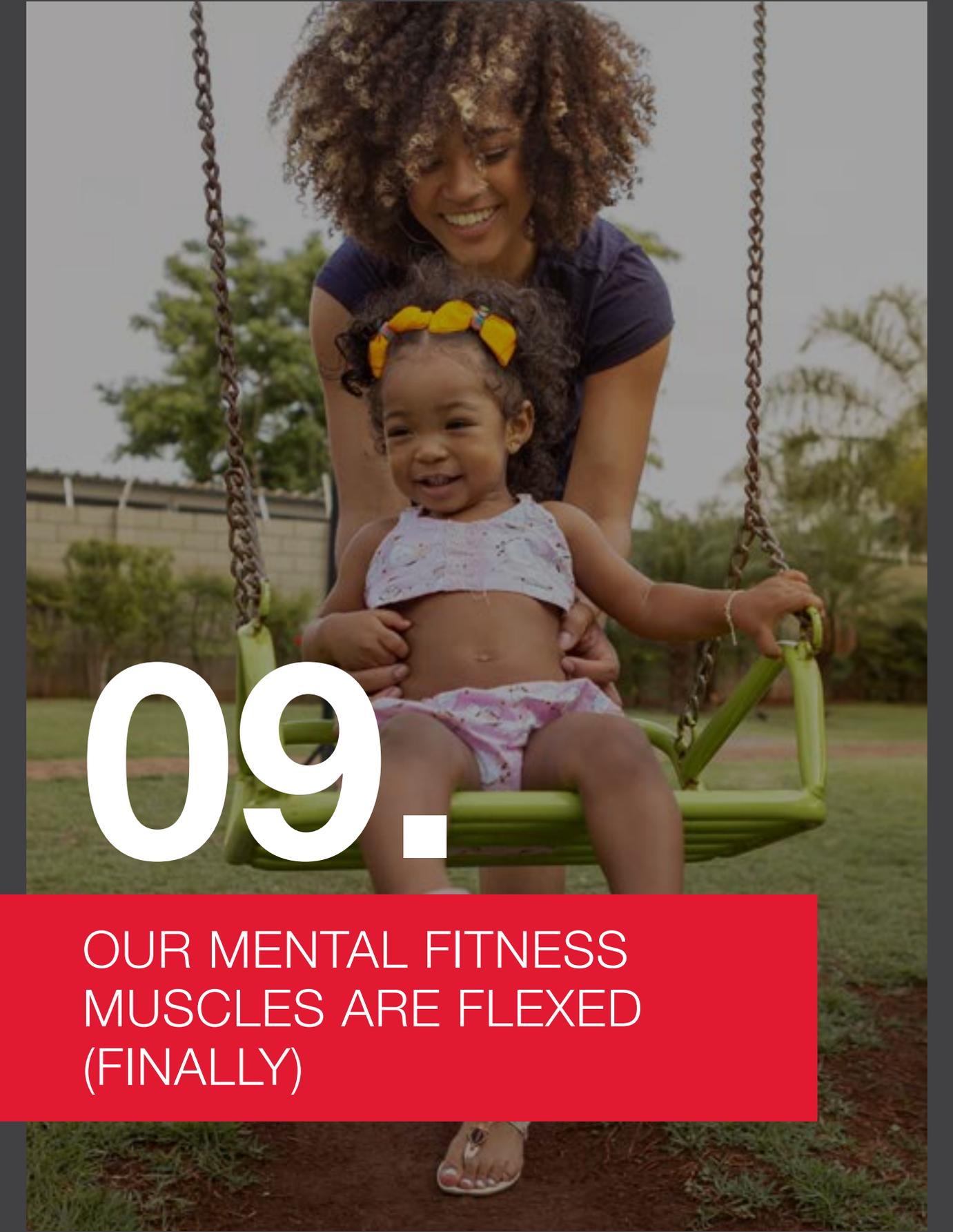
In the medical field, facilities dedicated to addiction treatment, weight loss and mental health have used telemedicine to open doors to more patients through digital platforms, apps and social media — increasing access to care and privacy, and decreasing stigma.

Companies who were in front early with this type of operating model — think Momentum, Noom, Calm and Headspace — quickly won the love of patients craving a different or an easier way. For patients, telemedicine is now a way of life because it removes some of the stressors of visiting a doctor — especially for minor ailments, prescription orders and refills. (Not surprisingly, Amazon has **just announced** plans to open virtual clinics for common ailments.)

Retailers have arguably had one of the toughest jobs in the transition to this hybrid reality, as it’s difficult to replicate an in-store try-on experience at home. However, clothing retailers like Nordstrom, **H&M** and **Zara** showcase AI, avatars and real shoppers (versus models) trying on items and commenting on the features. And makeup stores like **Ulta** and **Sephora** have invested significantly in at-home AI and virtual tools to help shoppers picture themselves wearing certain products. They’ve also retrofitted their retail locations to include more collaborative spaces like coffee shops and social media staging locations for influencers to capture and share content.

## PREDICTION

As people exert further control over their preferences for the ways, times and places in which they work and live, employers, retailers, landlords and homeowners will need to think creatively about what it means to design with flexibility. We predict more apartments and communal living spaces with bookable workspaces, and expect to see homebuilders and designers prioritizing customized workspaces and exercise spaces. We expect more retailers and offices to offer more livable spaces, with creature comforts that encourage collaboration, relaxation and team building.

A woman with curly hair is smiling and holding a young child on a green swing set in a park. The child is wearing a purple and white patterned crop top and shorts, and a yellow headband. The woman is wearing a dark blue shirt. The background shows a grassy area and trees.

09.

OUR MENTAL FITNESS  
MUSCLES ARE FLEXED  
(FINALLY)

# OUR MENTAL FITNESS MUSCLES ARE FLEXED (FINALLY)

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Mental health is finally a priority. It's no longer about work-life balance ... it's about life-work balance, or balance in general. It's no longer about physical health and mental health but simply, health and well-being. Across the globe, mental fitness is a topic of conversation in our homes as well as throughout the workforce — where personal issues are experienced at all levels, from intern to CEO.

In 2022, mental health played a factor in **trends** such as the “great resignation” and “quiet quitting” that today's leaders are addressing by transforming their culture and approach to business. We'll see more mental health and well-being officers hired, significant investments into health and wellness programs, “safe space” communities being created for open conversations, apps like Headspace and Calm being offered free to employees, a sharp rise in empathetic management and leadership training, and training to identify and deal with situational stress.

According to the **World Health Organization**, anxiety and depression increased by 25% during the first year of the pandemic globally, and women and younger generations were disproportionately affected — with youth at greater risk for suicidal and self-harming behaviors. While there is a need to address mental health across the board, we also must look at disparities across the globe related to age, gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation.

Mental health was once a taboo topic in the workplace. While employees may have felt comfortable asking for time off from work for the flu, a migraine or sick child, they didn't feel the same about asking for a mental health day. Now it's not only becoming more talked about but is also something that *needs* to be addressed in the workforce. More than 76% of U.S. workers reported at least one symptom of a mental health condition — with 84% saying workplace conditions contribute to at least one mental health challenge, according to a **Mind Share Partners report**. The **American Psychiatric Association** also found that employees with unresolved depression experience a 35% reduction in productivity.

Gus Worland, founder of Australian mental fitness charity **Gotcha4Life**, says: “Expectations have shifted. How you care for your staff meaningfully is now a priority, not just something you say you do.” Gotcha4Life's mission is to ensure everyone has a Gotcha4Life Mate — a go-to person to rely on and talk to about anything, so no one has to worry alone. Gus adds: “We talk about mental fitness, so we can speak about it positively. It makes you realize you can work on it, just like your physical fitness.”

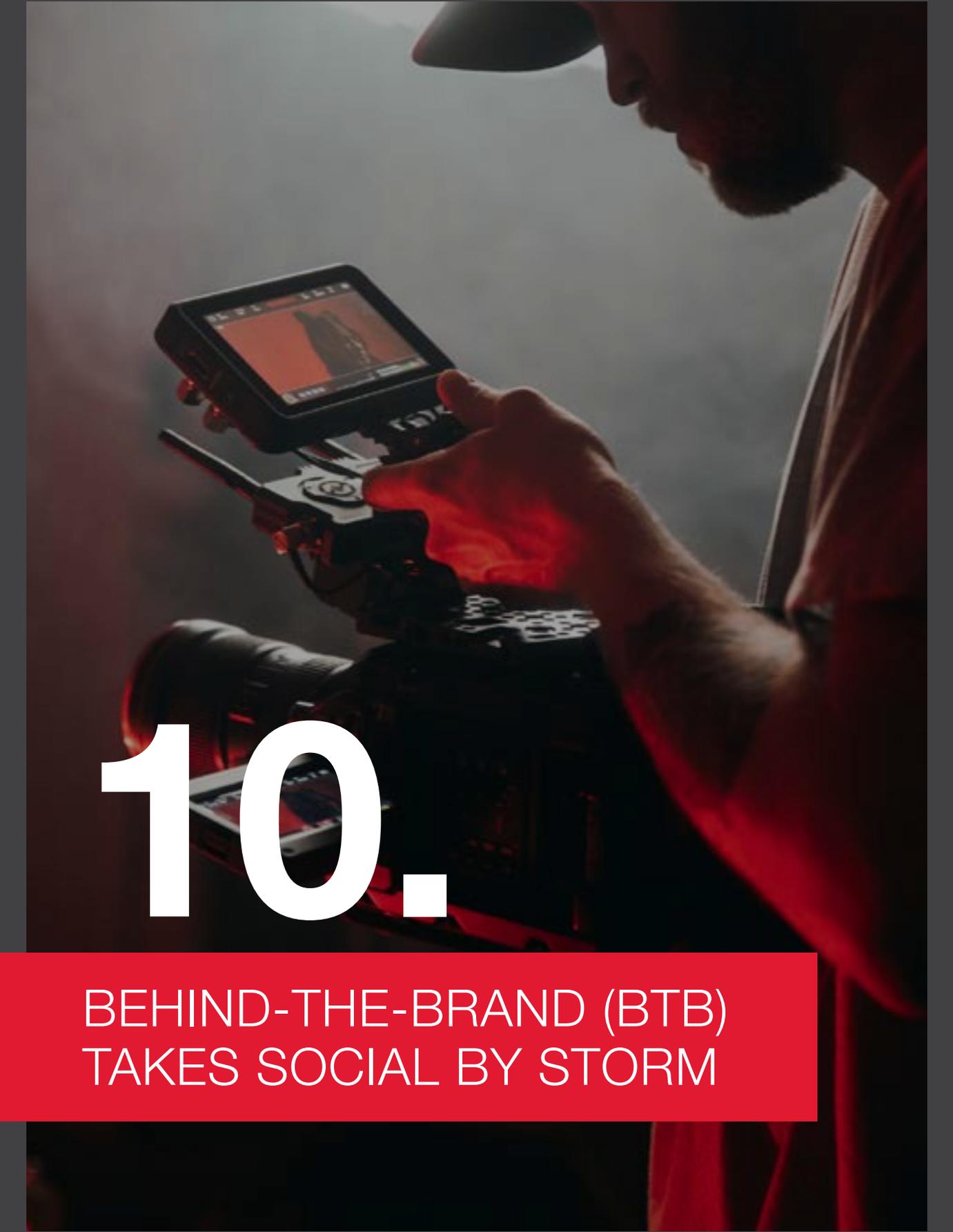
Businesses and communities are taking notice — with a recent **Gallup research** finding while less than one in four employees in the U.S. feels strongly that their employer cares about their well-being, those who believe their employers care are 69% less likely to look for a new job, 71% less likely to report significant burnout, and five times more likely to advocate for their company as a place to work.

Mental health may be more top of mind than ever before, but many gaps remain around the globe — with the **World Health Organization** reporting major disruptions in life-saving services for mental health, including suicide prevention, during the pandemic period. Many people still remain unable to get the care and support they need for pre-existing and newly developed conditions — making it more important than ever for employers to offer support.

Today we're starting to see companies tackle mental health in a more holistic way — with heightened awareness and greater expectations for employers to promote empathy, lead by example and provide access to resources and outlets for open discussion.

## PREDICTION

Mental fitness is finally at the forefront, and we expect it to be embraced further. We'll now see mental health being viewed through the same lens as physical health — and soon it could become an education requirement in schools, like physical education. As more data is uncovered, particularly from the impact of COVID-19, we'll see a greater investment in mental health services by government, businesses, communities and individuals. And more strategies will emerge to build our emotional muscles.

A person wearing a red shirt and a dark cap is shown in profile, looking down at a handheld electronic device. The device has a screen displaying a red-tinted image and a keypad below it. The person's hand is resting on the keypad. The background is a bright, hazy outdoor setting. The overall lighting is dramatic, with strong red and orange tones.

# 10.

BEHIND-THE-BRAND (BTB)  
TAKES SOCIAL BY STORM

# BEHIND-THE-BRAND (BTB) TAKES SOCIAL BY STORM

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What do consumers want? Realness. When do they want it? Yesterday. How do they want it? All the ways.

Between the steady rise of UGC (user-generated content), EGC (employee-generated content), influencer co-creation, #NoFilter, IG vs. Reality and the new authentic-by-design social platforms like [BeReal launching onto the scene](#) in a big way, 2023 is the year in which consumers will demand candid, otherwise “unseen” and “unfiltered” perspectives in the form of content from brands in social.

The common denominator between each of these content forms? People. Human stories sit at the heart of authentic content.

And it isn't just a consumer thing. B2B brands have begun to behave like B2C brands in a big way; per [our P2P prediction](#) years ago, the two worlds have collided — from B2B marketers jumping on social trends (Little Miss, etc.) to producing [bespoke content skits series](#) and taking on IG and TikTok headfirst.

The rise of TikTok and TikTok-esque content (Reels, Shorts and so on) has both empowered and challenged us to come out of our content shells and adopt people-led storytelling. This format is tough to nail without a human touch and takes a whole new twist on the once boring “face-to-camera” format.

And with employees as arguably the most powerful influencers, employee advocacy today goes well beyond employees posting about their company across their own social channels. In many instances we see brands' own executives or employees acting as the talent in their branded content. Take [Amazon](#), [Starbucks](#) or [Delta](#) — each wildly successful B2C brands belonging to different categories that center entire content series around empowering their employees to take audiences behind the scenes and offer an exclusive and firsthand look into the company's offering.

## PREDICTION

2023 is the year in which BTB or “behind-the-brand” will become a staple theme in every content marketing strategy. Both B2C and B2B marketers will prioritize all forms of people-led content production, from employee- and customer-advocacy programs to influencer co-creation and serialized branded content production — as authentic-by-design social storytelling becomes the new norm.

# UNBLINKERED | UNEXPECTED THINKING IDEAS

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