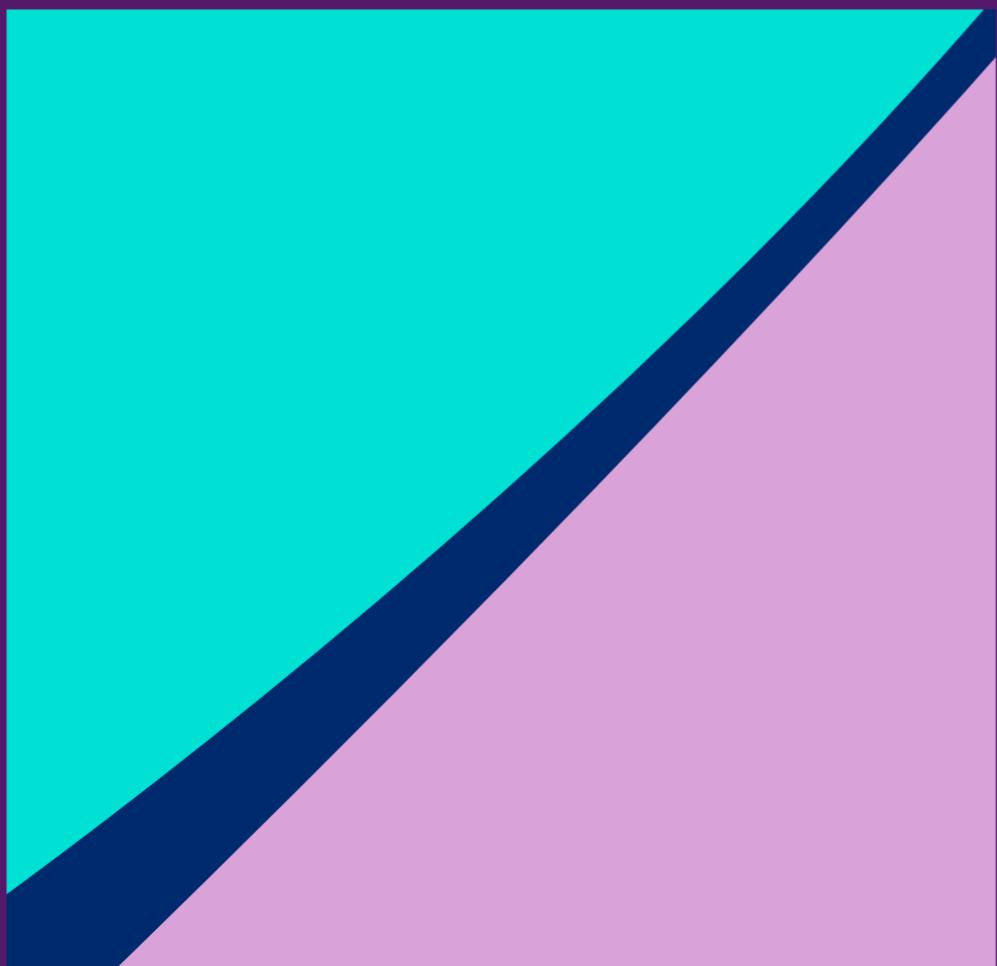


VIEWS
2025



Views articles 2025

This collection brings together our **Living Views for 2025**, shaped by what we are seeing across markets, sectors and culture.

Throughout the year, we shared viewpoints on emerging trends, shifting expectations and the realities behind the headlines. Some articles explore how organisations are responding to change, while others step back to examine the forces influencing brand, digital and communications more broadly.

As sector specialists, our views are informed by ongoing analysis, creative work and real-world conversations, but they are not limited to individual firms or case studies.

They reflect how we see the landscape evolving, from technology and AI to visibility, engagement, storytelling and human connection.

Together, these [Views](#) reflect the questions, challenges and opportunities that felt most relevant in 2025.







Private Markets: the brand battleground redefining asset management

How is your brand positioned for the private markets era?

Connect with one of our specialists:

[Kate Shaw](#) in New York,

[Greg Hobden](#) in London or

[Aliena Lai](#) in Hong Kong.

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As private equity and alternatives firms expand their reach, traditional asset managers face a new era of brand competition, where perception, purpose and positioning matter as much as performance.

Private equity and alternatives firms are stepping confidently into a space once dominated by traditional asset managers. With private markets worth around \$13 trillion and expected to reach \$25 trillion by 2030, competition for both capital and brand distinction has never been sharper.

As the lines blur between public and private market players, the focus is shifting from performance alone to perception, purpose and positioning.

1. Private Markets as a growth engine for asset managers

Investor demand is moving toward yield, diversification and access to non-public assets. Private credit and infrastructure are leading that trend.

Brand implication: Firms that demonstrate authentic expertise and access in private markets, can reposition themselves as strategic growth partners, not just allocators of capital.

2. Blurring of brand boundaries

Traditional managers are building private market capabilities, while private equity firms diversify into broader investment platforms.

Brand implication: Differentiation now depends on access, depth and scale: who can unlock opportunities and deliver across asset classes and geographies?

3. The democratization of private markets

New fund structures are bringing private market exposure to wealth managers and individual investors.

Brand implication: Firms must project trust, clarity and education, making private markets feel both aspirational and accessible.

4. Performance and brand resilience

Private markets offer potential stability amid volatility, but also greater scrutiny around transparency and liquidity.

Brand implication: Those aligning consistent performance with open and transparent reporting, will define long-term brand leadership.

5. Private credit as a brand catalyst

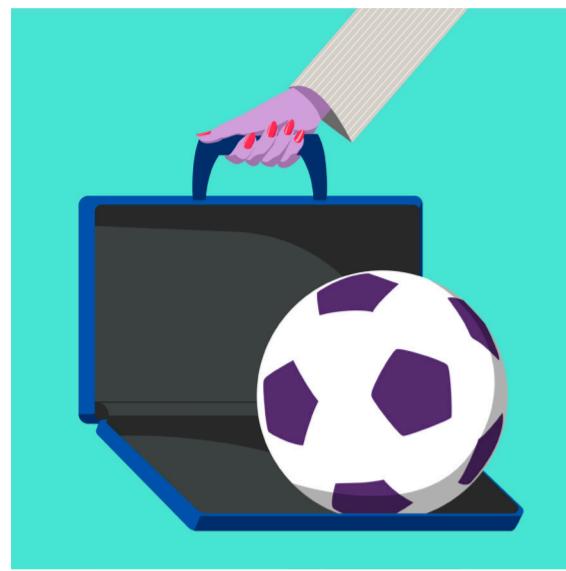
The boom in private credit is reshaping competition. Asset managers use it to refresh their brand story; private-equity firms leverage it to expand their influence.

Brand implication: The modern financial brand is defined not by products, but by solutions which are creative, collaborative and client-centric.

The brand imperative

Private markets are the new brand battleground. Success will belong to those who combine access, expertise, transparency and innovation, aligning their storytelling across audiences and building a brand architecture that feels both cohesive and authentic. Only then can exclusivity become opportunity and brand strength evolve into sustainable growth.





Rethinking sports partnerships for B2B (part 1)

How can you turn sponsorship into a strategy?

Connect with one of our specialists: [Duncan Shaw](#) in New York, [Greg Hobden](#) in London or [Aliena Lai](#) in Hong Kong

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A shifting landscape

For years, sports sponsorships were considered the playground of B2C brands – those aiming to connect emotionally with mass audiences and drive quick consumer action. But the landscape is shifting. B2B brands are increasingly recognizing that sports partnerships, when approached strategically, can be a powerful tool for long-term brand building and relationship development.

Unlike B2C brands such as TAG Heuer, which leverage visibility in high-profile events like Formula 1, B2B companies must be more deliberate. Their success hinges on aligning the sport's audience with their business goals and integrating their value proposition in a way that resonates. IBM's partnership with Wimbledon, where it provides advanced data analytics and AI-driven insights, is a prime example of how B2B brands can add tangible value while enhancing their brand image.

Why sports?

One reason for the shift is the evolving demographics of sports audiences. Leagues like Formula 1, the PGA Tour, the Premier League, and the NHL attract affluent, influential fans—including a high percentage of C-suite executives and decision-makers. These are precisely the individuals B2B brands want to reach.

Sports events also offer premium hospitality experiences—luxury suites, exclusive meet-and-greets, and behind-the-scenes access—that create ideal environments for client entertainment and informal networking. These settings foster deeper relationships than traditional boardroom meetings.

Another factor is the rapid integration of technology in sports. Innovations like MLB's upcoming Automated Ball-Strike (ABS) system – aka “robot umpires” – signal a growing appetite for tech-forward solutions. This opens the door for B2B brands to showcase their own innovations or align with leagues that value precision and performance.

Carlyle's partnership with Oracle Red Bull Racing in Formula 1 is a case in point. Built on shared values of “relentless precision, peak performance, and seamless teamwork,” the collaboration reflects a new era of B2B sports sponsorships rooted in strategic alignment.

Law firms enter the arena

Even traditionally conservative sectors like legal services are embracing sports partnerships. Hill Dickinson's stadium naming rights deal with Everton FC raised eyebrows at first – but the connection runs deep. Founded in Liverpool in 1810, Hill Dickinson shares historical and cultural ties with Everton, the city's original football club. Their partnership extends beyond branding, encompassing community initiatives like Everton in the Community's charitable work across Merseyside. As CEO Craig Scott put it, the deal reflects a “bold, transformational vision for Liverpool and its future.”

King & Spalding, an international law firm based in Atlanta, also made headlines by becoming the Official Law Firm of Major League Rugby. The firm saw strong parallels between rugby's core values – teamwork, strategy, and camaraderie – and its own approach to client service. With the Rugby World Cup coming to the U.S. in 2031, the partnership is part of a long-term strategy to build presence in the North American sports market.





Rethinking sports partnerships for B2B (part 2)

How can you turn sponsorship into a strategy?

Connect with one of our specialists: [Duncan Shaw](#) in New York, [Greg Hobden](#) in London or [Aliena Lai](#) in Hong Kong

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Values, humanity, and strategic fit

Aligning brand values: Financial services firms have long been involved in sports, but the approach is evolving. Barclays, for example, has been a prominent player through its past sponsorship of the Premier League and naming rights to the Barclays Center in Brooklyn. Now, more firms are exploring partnerships that reflect deeper brand values and social impact.

State Street Investment Management recently announced a multi-year partnership with the WNBA, becoming the league's official investment management and ETF partner. The WNBA's rapid growth – fuelled by rising stars like Caitlin Clark – makes it an attractive platform. Its fan base, which includes younger, digitally savvy Gen Z and Millennial audiences, aligns well with State Street's target market. As CEO Yie-Hsin Hung noted, the partnership aims to help fans "learn how investing in their future can advance their ambitions – just like the athletes they admire."

Humanizing B2B Brands

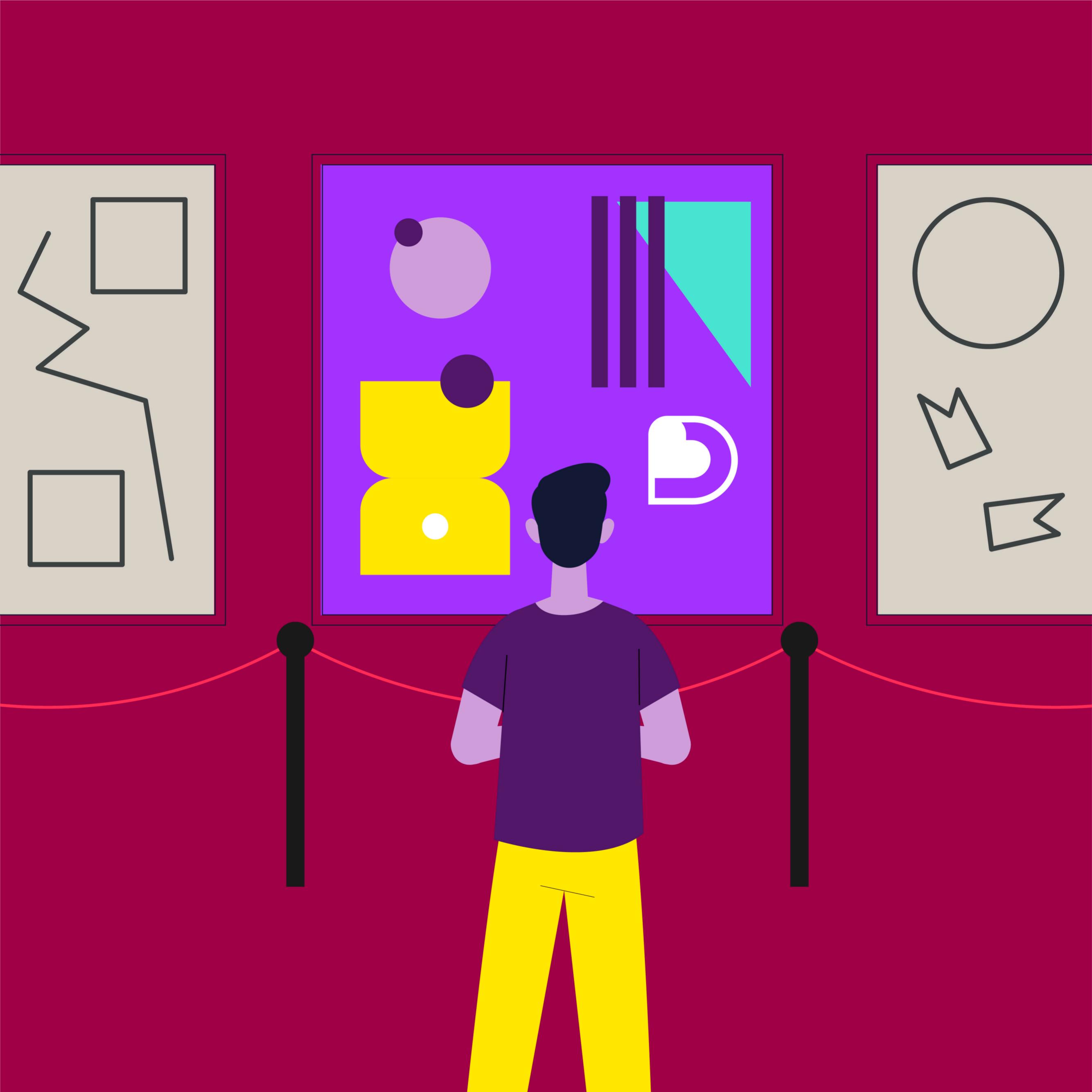
B2B companies often struggle with being perceived as impersonal or institutional. Sports sponsorships offer a way to inject humanity and emotion into their brand narrative. Neuberger Berman's partnership with Serie A club Como 1907 is a great example.

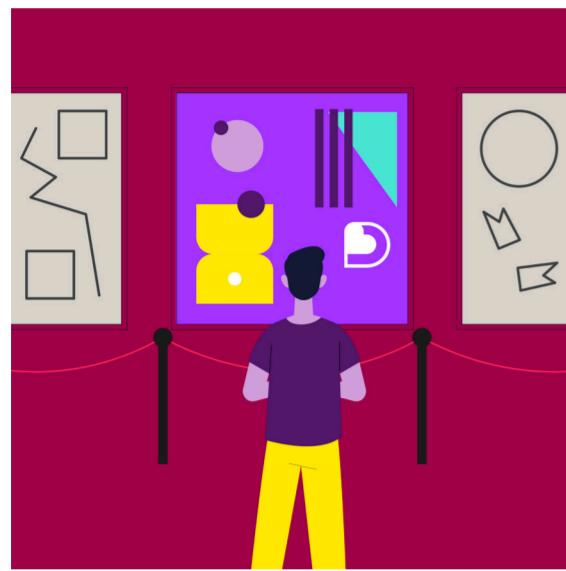
As the official back-of-shirt sponsor, the firm emphasized shared values of excellence, integrity, and community engagement. "We share Como 1907's passion for excellence, integrity, and community engagement," said Matt Malloy, Head of EMEA. The partnership also sparked new digital initiatives, including a dedicated landing page and increased LinkedIn engagement – showing how sports can amplify brand presence across channels.

Do It Right

For B2B brands considering sports partnerships, the first question should be why. If the goal is simply to spend marketing dollars on something flashy, the return will likely be minimal. But if the objective is to build meaningful connections with a targeted audience, enhance brand authenticity, and drive long-term engagement, the payoff can be substantial.

Success requires patience, a clear strategic vision, and a partnership that feels authentic – not forced. When done right, sports sponsorships can transform how B2B brands are perceived, helping them stand out in competitive markets and build lasting relationships.





Need a visual language that speaks to your audiences?

Connect with one of our specialists:
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[Greg Hobden](#) in London or
[Aliena Lai](#) in Hong Kong

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The post-stock era: From generic imagery to standout visuals

As an agency, we recognize the value of stock photography – its speed and flexibility make it a useful tool. But overreliance can weaken a brand's identity and cause it to blend in rather than stand out. Our view: the strongest brands balance stock with original, brand-specific visuals that convey authenticity and credibility.

Here are our tips for creating standout visuals that truly differentiate your brand:

Use motion to engage viewers

Motion – from subtle animations to interactive elements – can add depth, guide navigation, and encourage exploration. It should enhance the user experience, not distract from it. Avoid over-engineered effects that slow performance or obscure your visual identity.

Keep visual assets fresh

Photography, video, and advertising visuals shape first impressions. Refreshing them regularly keeps your brand relevant, showcases new campaigns, and improves SEO. On social media, consistent visual updates signal vitality and engagement.

Showcase brand-specific imagery

Original photography, employee portraits, and event visuals communicate personality and values in ways stock photos cannot. These images tell authentic stories that connect with audiences on a deeper level, reinforcing brand purpose.

Build a cohesive visual identity

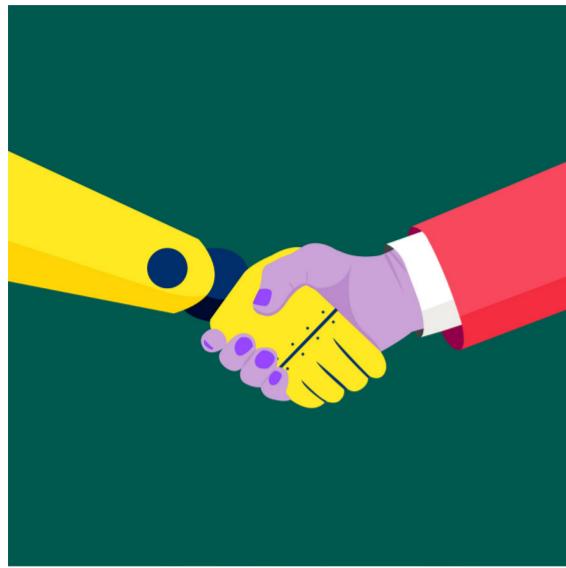
Consistency in logos, colours, typography, and iconography strengthens brand recognition, trust, and credibility. A unified visual approach ties campaigns together and helps audiences form lasting impressions of your brand.

Visual storytelling as a differentiator

By replacing generic stock images with authentic, custom visuals, you can create a compelling brand story that captivates audiences and elevates your position in competitive markets.

In essence, to truly stand out, brands must move beyond generic stock photos and embrace original, brand-specific visuals that tell authentic stories, engage viewers, and build lasting emotional connections.





Keeping brands human in the age of AI

Want to maintain brand authenticity in the age of AI? Connect with one of our specialists: [Duncan Shaw](#) in New York, [Greg Hobden](#) in London or [Aliena Lai](#) in Hong Kong

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In today's digital age, a new paradox has emerged: the balance between efficiency and authenticity. As AI-generated content floods the market, brands that preserve a genuine human voice can rise above the noise. Storytelling and emotion remain essential for building trust and cultivating meaningful connections.

Here's how to keep brands human in the age of AI:

AI as an enhancement, not a substitute

Artificial intelligence should be used to support – not replace – human creativity. Tools like ChatGPT can scale content production, analyze data, and generate ideas. However, true resonance comes from human-centred stories and authentic voices. AI content should never speak for your brand; instead, use it to enhance human insights.

Storytelling as a strategic advantage

Many brands rely on fully generated content, missing storytelling's unique power. Forbes describes the "essence of a human brand" as personality as much as positioning. Campaigns like Dove's Real Beauty succeed because they highlight everyday challenges, creating an emotional purpose for audience engagement.

Humanising social media

Consistency in brand values and tone should extend to your social presence. This might include personal replies to comments, employee spotlights, or celebrating user-generated content. Genuine interactions build stronger brand connections than scripted automation.

The emotional power of visual design

Colour and typography aren't just aesthetic choices – they carry emotional weight. Blue conveys trust, red signals passion, and yellow evokes optimism. Fonts also communicate personality: serif fonts suggest tradition and reliability, making them ideal for law firms or

established institutions. Combining colour and type strategically can create a visual identity that amplifies your brand's emotional impact.

Authenticity as a competitive advantage

AI will continue to transform industries, but the real challenge is staying human. Brands that embed emotion into their narratives and prioritise genuine connection will stand out in an automated world. Human connection isn't just a creative preference – it's a business essential.

Ultimately, to stay human in the age of AI, brands must use technology to enhance – not replace – authentic storytelling, emotional design, and genuine connection.

ENGAGING
WITH A
SOCIAL MEDIA
COMMUNITY
IN A
REGULATED
INDUSTRY



How to engage with a social media community in regulated industries

Need support with Community Management?

Connect with one of our specialists:
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Community management is an essential part of every brand's social media strategy. Social media users expect your brand to engage with them through comments and likes, not just posting. There are multiple examples of great community management in retail brands from the humorous Duolingo to the ever-present Sweetgreen.

However, reaching an audience in heavily regulated industries, like investment banking or law, is more complicated. Here are a few tips to connect with your brand's audience beyond the post.

Consistency is key

Before you begin to engage with an online community, you need to build and maintain one. Posting consistently across key channels signals to your community that you are present, insightful, and ready to engage. If you only post sporadically, we recommend increasing the consistency of posts, so your audience knows that you are an active member in your online community.

Ditch the 'timely or nothing' mentality

It is well known that commenting on a post over 24 hours old dramatically decreases potential engagement. However, many heavily regulated industries do not have the privilege of working without layers of approvals. While best practice is to comment on a post within 24 hours, it is also possible to engage within 72 hours to even a week, depending on your target audience, and still yield higher engagement results than not commenting anything.

Comment with compliance

If your brand is comfortable commenting on community posts from its brand profile, make sure the person commenting is a trusted member of your team. Whether they are engaging on LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, or

even TikTok through comments, likes, and reposts, set up a two-step approval system with a trusted senior leader so engagement remains on-brand and compliant.

Exciting executive profiles

If your brand will never be able to get comments made by its brand profile through compliance, you can still engage with the community through key executive profiles. Creating an executive social media program boosts your executive's online presence as well as brand recognition. The person who engages with the community through an executive profile should learn the executive's personal voice and set up a two-step approval system to ensure on-brand messaging.

Engaging with industry leaders, content creators, and everyday people in your brand's online community can not only lead to increased online engagement, but also an increased sense of authenticity and trust in your brand.

Read about our [executive communications for CFA Institute](#).

SHORT
FORM
VIDEO



Interested in exploring how short-form video could work for your firm?

Connect with one of our specialists: [Duncan Shaw](#) in New York, [Greg Hobden](#) in London or [Aliena Lai](#) in Hong Kong

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Maximising engagement and ROI with short-form video

The way audiences consume content has fundamentally shifted. Short-form video now dominates online channels, demanding attention with visual immediacy. For financial and professional services firms, finding ways to leverage content in video format is key to cutting through noise and driving results.

The visual shift: Why video reigns supreme

We live in an era of information overload and shrinking attention spans. Visual storytelling and short-form video (TikTok, Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, and LinkedIn) has become the most effective way to capture interest quickly. Statistics on channels such as LinkedIn consistently show higher engagement rates and recall for video content compared to text or static images.

This trend is not limited to younger generations. While Gen Z and Millennials are native consumers of short, dynamic video, older demographics are also increasingly engaging with video content online, particularly for learning and information gathering. This translates directly to a stronger return on investment (ROI) for marketing efforts.

What this means for 'text-heavy' firms

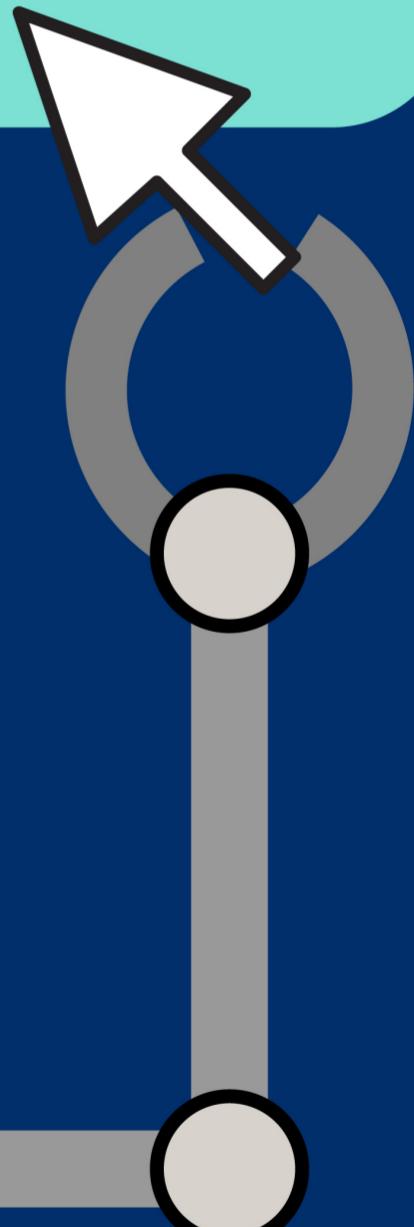
Traditionally 'text-heavy' businesses like law firms and asset managers can greatly benefit from embracing video. The challenge often lies in communicating complex, nuanced information in a digestible way.

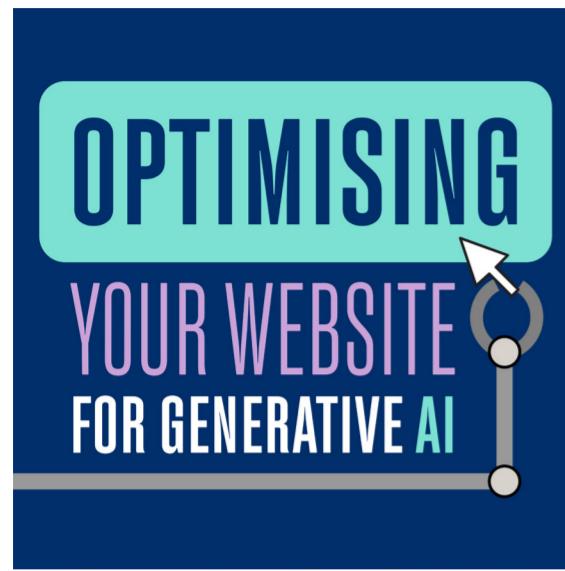
Short-form video provides a unique opportunity to:

- **Simplify complex topics:** Use short explainers or animations to break down intricate legal concepts or investment strategies.
- **Build trust and authority:** Feature experts sharing timely insights, market commentary, or brief Q&As to establish thought leadership.
- **Humanise your brand:** Showcase firm culture, introduce team members, or highlight community involvement to build connection and attract talent.
- **Promote wins or case studies:** Briefly highlight successful case outcomes (appropriately anonymised) or new service offerings visually.

By integrating strategic, short-form video, marketers can significantly enhance engagement, improve understanding, and ultimately drive stronger business results in a visually driven world.

OPTIMISING YOUR WEBSITE FOR GENERATIVE AI





Ready to prepare your website for the future of search?

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Optimising your website for Generative AI

There is no doubt that the way we search for information online is changing. Tools like ChatGPT are shifting online searches from keywords to conversations. You might already, without even realising, be relying on the AI-generated overview that appears at the top of Google search results.

This means we need a new approach to website optimisation. Enter 'Generative Engine Optimisation' (GEO), which is the art and science of preparing your website for this conversational future. It's no longer just about making your content easily digestible for people, but for AI too. Think of it as teaching your website to speak AI's language.

SEO and GEO: A Force to be reckoned with

While traditional SEO continues to be important for achieving high rankings in search results, GEO presents a new opportunity to optimise content for AI-driven models that process natural language questions and long-tail keywords. Understanding both the similarities and differences helps brands leverage these tools effectively to stay competitive.

Three top tips on speaking AI's language:

1. Just as SEO thrives on compelling content, GEO recognises the importance of high-quality, authoritative information. We have an article that goes into more detail on creating compelling content here. Don't forget the power of authorship, such as creating detailed bio pages that add a layer of credibility to resonate with both human users and AI algorithms.
2. Consider incorporating questions that your target audience might ask and providing clear, concise answers directly on your website that are structured in a conversational and easily digestible manner. Think FAQs, how-to guides, and in-depth articles that address specific user queries and needs.
3. Implement concise introductions, schema markups and well-structured header tags to enhance readability and search visibility.

These three tips are just the tip of the iceberg... there are many additional tactics that should be addressed to ensure that your website is not only visible in traditional search results but also accessible to AI models, thereby positioning your firm for success.

FROM VALUES TO



VISIBILITY



Is your brand truly reflecting what you stand for?

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From values to visibility: Your brand's true differentiator

When an organisation is developing its proposition it's easy to get focused on what it does and put to one side how it does it. But it's the how – your culture – that truly connects with people and can be the only way to truly differentiate in markets that are crowded with almost identical product offerings.

For clients and potential employees, they want to see what you stand for, not just what you sell. And for most of us we want to want to work with brands that feel human and make us feel human – in today's world, the how matters more than ever, and that's what becomes your North Star.

The culture club

Cultures don't just 'happen'. They are the result of many contributing factors from the style of a leadership team, the way you communicate, the office (or homeworking) environment and your core values. It is lived in the way you hire and onboard new employees, through engagement and recognition programs, work ethics, social norms and daily interactions. While policies on work-life balance, adaptability, compensation and training will also have a role in shaping a culture.

A strong, intentional and actively cultivated culture will increase satisfaction, collaboration and ultimately achieve more success for your organisation. It should never stand still and a culture that isn't evolving with a vision and goals will create a tension or a brand gap.

When your brand is built on strong human foundations, it connects with people on a deeper level, showing them that you stand for the same things that they do. A culture can reflect the shared behaviours, attitudes, and the focus of your organisation and core values will be the guiding principles behind your actions and decisions. Together, they influence every interaction and capture the essence of who you are – helping to highlight what makes you different.

"Living Ratings: 58% of law firms have values on their website, yet just 33% provide evidence of these values in action."

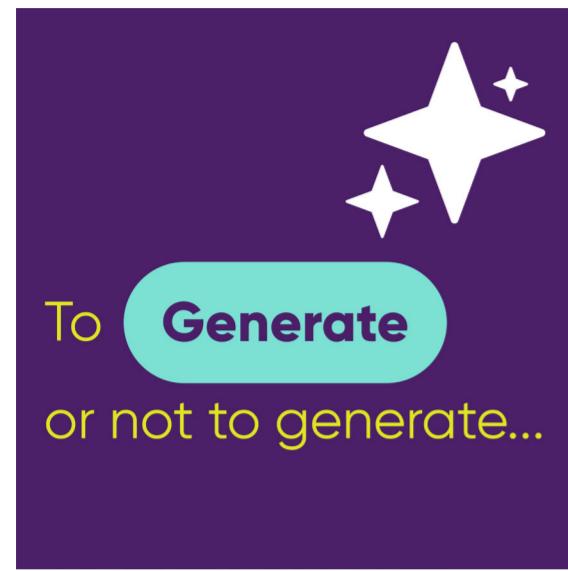
Walking the talk

Authentically communicating culture and values needs more than a polished website or video from the CEO (although those certainly help!) You need to walk the talk. Clients and future employees are smart enough to see through superficial branding or generic statements and see the gap between marketing and reality.

Building a real picture with real people talking about genuine experiences can only truly bring your story to life. People outside the organisation need to see your office environment, hear employee stories, see your responsible business in action (with results) and together these activities start to build an authentic portrayal of who you really are.



To **Generate**
or not to generate...



Interested in turning generative AI into a creative advantage?

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[Greg Hobden](#) in London or

[Gigi Yung](#) in Hong Kong

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To generate or not to generate, that is the question

The possibilities of generative AI imagery and videos are exciting and scary in equal measure. Having recently explored, and generated AI images, a familiar quote comes to mind... *"Just because we can, doesn't mean we should"*, uttered by Jeff Goldblum when questioning the resurrection of the dinosaurs.

It's a divisive topic – and rightly so. The creative talent once exclusive to photographers, graphic artists, and illustrators is now in the hands of algorithms – offering infinite possibilities. But, as with many things that are seemingly simple on the surface... are far from it.

As we navigate the next chapter in generative image creation, we asked ourselves a few fundamental questions:

- Does it support, enhance, and link to your creative concept?
- Does it support the client's brand values?
- Are images generated via a reputable platform that cares about supporting creative talent and artistic integrity?
- Is it practical solution e.g. AI generated images are fantastic for a campaign, but are they suitable for an extensive library?

Taking stock

The use of imagery has always been a critical visual differentiator for any brand, whether it's royalty-free, rights-managed, CGI or bespoke. It comes down to budget, timing, and usage. Royalty-free imagery is fast, efficient, and accessible, by anyone. Which means, you can see the same image often popping up on different sites.

However, generative imagery gives us more control. A proprietary edge.

Prompts make perfect

Whether you're searching for images via a global image library, or creating tailored prompts via a generative AI platform, the same rules apply; the concept, composition, style, meaning, purpose, and art direction that underpins an image, should always come from an original source, the brief. The platforms can create, but they still need the idea. It's all about the quality of the prompts, and that comes down to the concept and what you're trying to achieve. It's trial and error, believe me.

As a hands-on designer, I know all too well the feeling of that elusive search for the 'right image to complete the set' challenge. With generative ai imagery, the style/suite of images you want to achieve, you can create an entire library – now that is liberating!

Ultimately, it's not about whether we can generate AI imagery – but how we ensure brand authenticity and relevancy to the brief. We all know how Jurassic Park turned out – powerful innovation, but not without consequences.