

Pathways to Creativity 2020

Collaborating With
The Creative Customer

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Great British Creativity

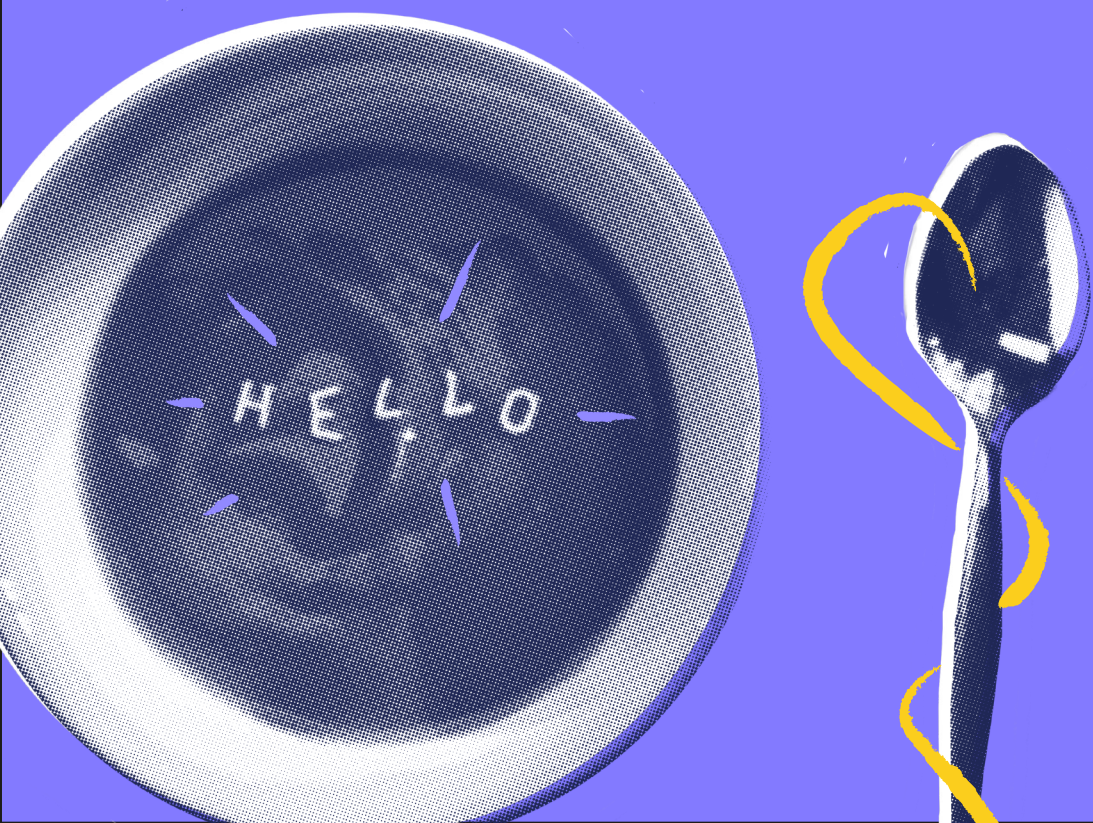
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Introduction



Britain has earned its place at the top table of creativity.

Our creative industries added almost £116bn to the economy in 2019¹. Even in straitened financial times since the pandemic began, the sector's power and prowess are clear.

Less apparent is how consumers view their own roles in creativity.

It's an issue we sought to understand in our recent report, [Pathways to Creativity 2020](#).

Long-term trend data from **Foresight Factory** reveals that a majority of British consumers (51%) in 2019 felt the need to be more creative to fulfil themselves. This figure was 53% in 2013, reflecting a consistent and stable perspective.

The research also uncovered consumers' different creative traits and considered approaches they desire from brands to reflect their creative needs.

Here we build on those findings as we examine how organisations can harness these insights to ignite creative sparks, so they can build stronger links between brand and customer, engendering trust and loyalty.

This piece captures the views of leading creative experts from agencies and brands, who took part in a recent virtual roundtable.

Led by the DMA's Creative Committee, the event was held to discuss key aspects of the research and what it means for organisations and their customers.



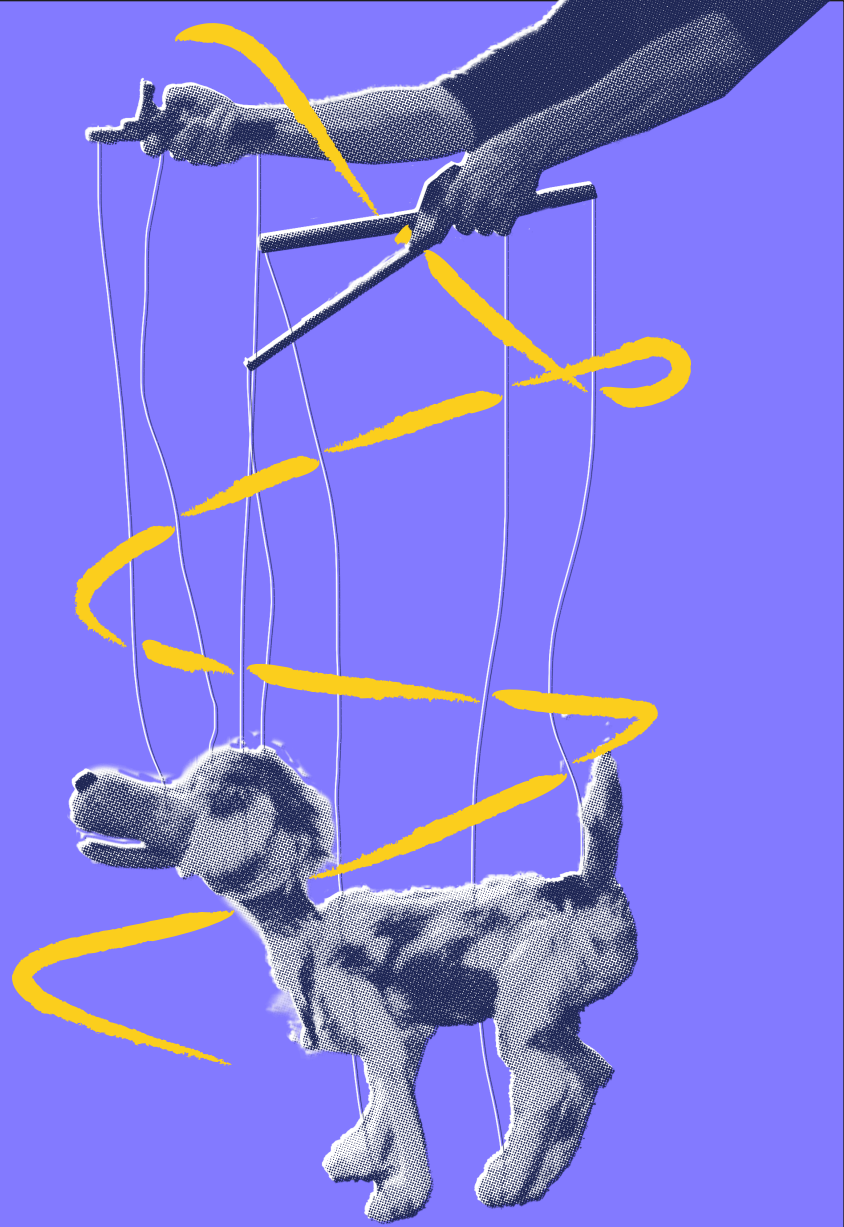
¹ <https://www.thecreativeindustries.co.uk/uk-creative-overview/news-and-views/creative-industries-added-%C2%A31159bn-to-uk-in-2019>

Introduction

Thank you to the following experts for their participation:

- Debi Bester, Founder, Department of Change and Chair of the **DMA's Creative Committee**
- Tim Bond, Head of Insight, **DMA**
- Kate Davies, Director of Brand Awareness, **The Guardian**
- Rob Sellers, Executive Director, Growth Studio, **Engine UK**
- Tom Skinner, Executive Creative Director, **TikTok**
- Andy Boreham, Head of Marketing, **Bristol Beacon**
- Nigel Edinton-Amor, Creative Director – Copy, **Sky**
- Daniel Jury, Senior Media Planner, **Royal Mail**
- Marie Feliho, Global Head of Customer Retention, **Just Eat**
- Patrick Collister, Non-Executive Director, **Ad-Lib**
- Cordell Burke, Creative Managing Partner, UP There, **Everywhere**
- Tony Spong, Managing Partner, **AAR**
- Emma Inston, Former Global Head of Brand and Marketing, **E.On**
- Michael Ferdenzi, Account Director, **Droga5**





Remote

Control

Creativity

The panel believed marketers are often too controlling

UK plc is driven by creativity, from marketing to data storytelling and industrial innovation. And consumers are fascinated by creativity. How else do you explain huge audiences for TV shows spotlighting all aspects of the craft, from *The Great British Bake Off* to *The Repair Shop*?

Creativity is our cultural heartbeat. It underpins the Maker Movement², which aims to harness creative energy “to build a better world.”

The pandemic has dramatically increased that focus.

People have spent longer at home finding new pastimes and entertainment. For example, replacing the pub with painting and birthday gatherings with baking.

Meanwhile, we spend even longer online and on social media, where brands and consumers can easily connect.

All of this should present organisations with a clear opportunity to tap into, or at least reflect, consumers’ creative spirits. The truth is, few of them are doing so.

So, what’s stopping them?

The panel believed marketers are often too controlling.

They can struggle to allow others – including consumers – into the creative ‘inner circle’ that governs how a brand’s values are constructed and communicated.

One **expert from our panel** said: “Marketers and agencies are frightened by a lack of control. Dare I say they often stifle creativity. Channels like TikTok have been brilliant, because brands understand they have to hand control over to consumers – but you just don’t know what they’re going to do.”

In the panel’s opinion, organisations must banish that fear and instead embrace the idea that their customers have an important role to play in brand building. It’s a balancing act though, another **participant** admitted: “People hack the narrative brands give them with their own heartfelt stories or plain escapism. They want to show their emotions for brands they love, but they don’t always feel happy to be directed.”

As another **attendee** put it: “Listen to the mood of your customers.”



² <https://creativeconomy.britishcouncil.org/guide/go-make-something-growth-maker-movement/>

Conversation

Is Creation



Collaboration/co-creation is nothing new.

Organisations across sectors have involved their target markets in campaigns and even overall brand strategies for decades.

The panel identified Nike as being adept at facilitating consumer activity over a long period of time.

What has changed is the instant feedback loop that brands have gained from their presence on social media. This also gives consumers a greater say in the conversation.

It's clear they want their voices to be heard – and that's no bad thing.

The creative consumer brings opinions and ideas to the process, giving brands a unique insight into what their target market really desires. Without this powerful asset, brands can lack resonance among their audiences.

Our research identified three key trends in consumer collaboration:

- Consumers have an increasing entrepreneurial mindset to capitalise on their own creativity
- A growing preference for brands to produce sharable – 'meme-able' – content; consumers are also keen to get a direct response from brands they comment about in social media posts
- A desire to be seen as stakeholders by brands, with organisations acting on their product and service reviews

"It's about approaching creative collaboration without fear," a participant commented. **"Brands can now share the conversation with consumers and often get unexpected but exciting creative results."**

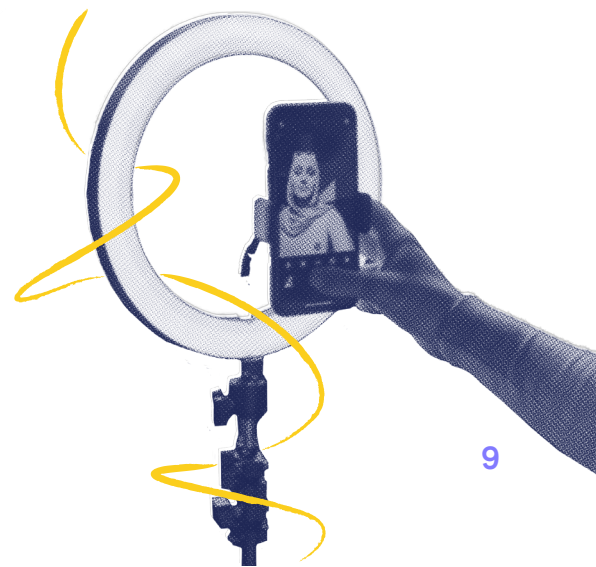
Social media allows consumers to continue a conversation that starts when a campaign launches.

TikTok and other channels enable them to reshape a creative idea, often delivering entertaining versions of their own that increase the longevity and reach of the initial execution.

An expert added: "Consumers have a strong appetite to connect when brands get it right. That's when they re-enact your ad and mash it up."

Embracing collaboration means recognising your target market as stakeholders rather than customers: don't just sell to them, involve them.

One participant stated they believe it's the only true way to successfully embed purpose into a brand's values: "Some brands throw things onto social media and it engages people almost accidentally. Providing consumers with a meaningful purpose and reason to be creative helps your brand stand for something and gets the best results."



When Data Drives Creativity



The solution, according to the panel, is data.

Pinpointing potential customers likely to buy a product or service is one thing; identifying those who can rally to a brand's creative cause is quite another.

The solution, according to the panel, is data.

How customer information is organised and segmented internally has a big bearing on how external communications are received.

Many businesses are now realising that they might be doing okay with 'database basics,' having well-structured transactional records for example.

But when it comes to collaboration, they need to think about data differently.

An **expert** said their organisation uses data to closely monitor consumers' behaviours and attitudes towards the brand, then shapes communications to make the creative message as relevant as possible.

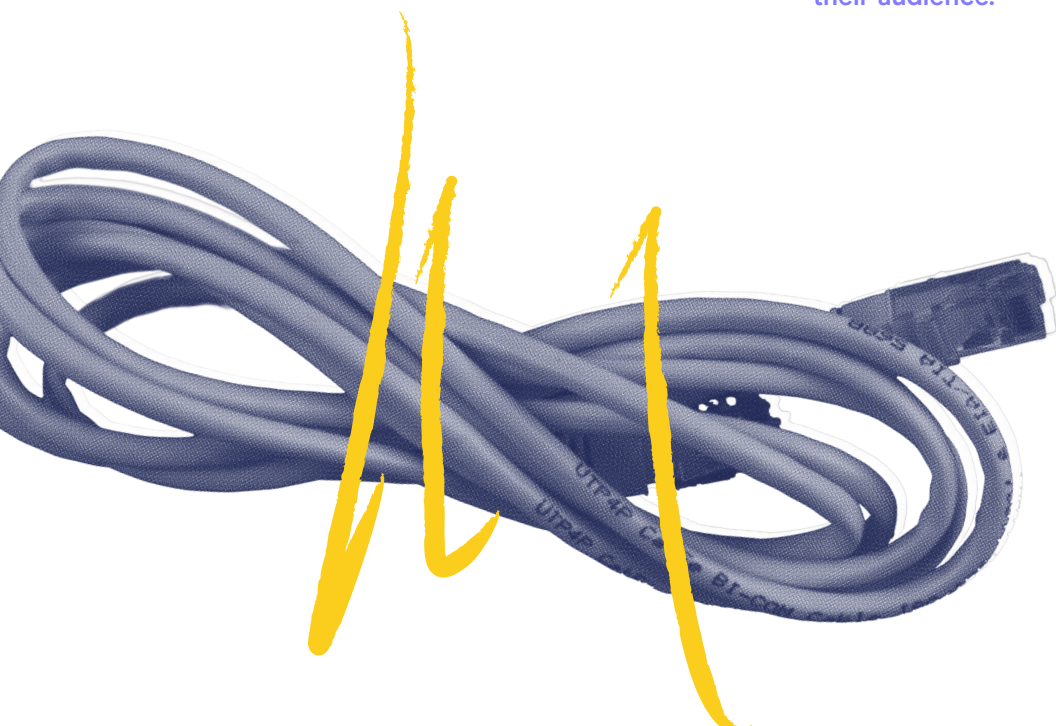
Another brand represented at the roundtable takes things one step further. **"We're bringing product development, marketing, data and UX into one team,"** they said. **"It's creating a culture of experimentation, with quick development of MVPs that are then tested using customers' reactions."**

Success lies as much in engaging customers in the creativity conversation using multichannel data as it does in targeting the right audience to begin with.

This approach is a step towards the current holy grail of marketing: authenticity.

In Britain, creative consumers show significantly more interest in authentic culture and experiences compared to non-creatives (39% vs. 16% respectively).

"Many brands have worked out they're not constructed well enough to move quickly," a participant stated, **"so data and brand architecture are now being put closer together. That helps marketers understand their brand better and have an authentic conversation with their audience."**



Cultivating

Consumer

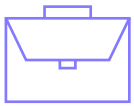
Creativity



What Aspects Should Brand Consider?

If brands need to step back and check whether they're correctly set up to involve creative consumers, what aspects should they consider?

Here's what panelists said:



Make a business case for creativity

"Have a really strong and clear business plan about why you're engaging customers in a creative way. Businesses that draw a line between this activity and commercial success will be better at it, as it will be their core."

– Agency perspective



Be braver to engage customers

"How do you utilise and monetise a passionate audience? There's a difference between passion and creativity. We have like-mindedness and shared values that unlocks passion. But we could do a better job of understanding the creativity that comes from that."

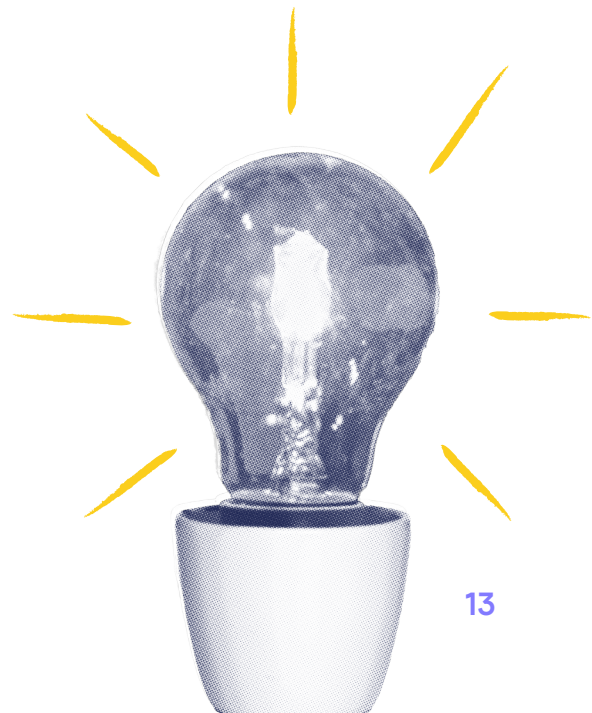
– Brand perspective



Think past the media plan

"Breaking down silos is a big step forward. If you're inviting in a customer, you need to stop worrying about the confines of the media plan and see beyond it. Creativity is just as important."

– Brand perspective





Put the right people in charge

“Large organisations have a lot of creative people inside them who’re full of ideas. But in a giant machine, it’s hard to identify exactly the right ones to instigate changes. Find the people with the right ideas and the power to execute them.”

– Brand perspective



Listen to the feedback loop

“Conversations with customers about creativity aren’t linear, nor should they be. Constantly make campaigns better. Listen, refine, act.”

– Creative perspective



The Power of Creative Consumers



This Can be Gold-Dust for Brands.

Potential
Happening
Enlightening
Authenticity

Current
Tangibility
Commerciality
Of course, they're creative!

Exciting
Opportunity
Inspiring



Consumers are taking a more prominent role in the evolution of brands, not only from the insights derived from their behaviours, but also in the ways they provide ideas, shaping how products and services are developed to suit their ever-changing wants and needs.

This can be gold-dust for brands.

When all of these essential ingredients take place and consumer creativity is firmly established in the mix, exciting things can happen:

1

Firstly, guaranteed engagement.

Barriers are broken down: customers who have a stake in campaigns are more likely to stay involved. As we've seen, this can also mean an infinite feedback loop.

2

Secondly, onward communication.

As one [expert](#) said: "If ideas generated ladder back to something customers can get behind, they spread the word on your behalf in a creative and meaningful way. It's out of your control – but what a place to be."

4

Thirdly, brand development.

Being customer-centric in creativity unlocks the door to understanding more about what consumers really want from your brand.

A [participant](#) explained: “Sometimes, I think I’ll use the customer base for the amplification and fame-driving parts of brand building. But the real value comes from intrinsically understanding those customers and tailoring – even personalising – products, services, and experiences around them.”

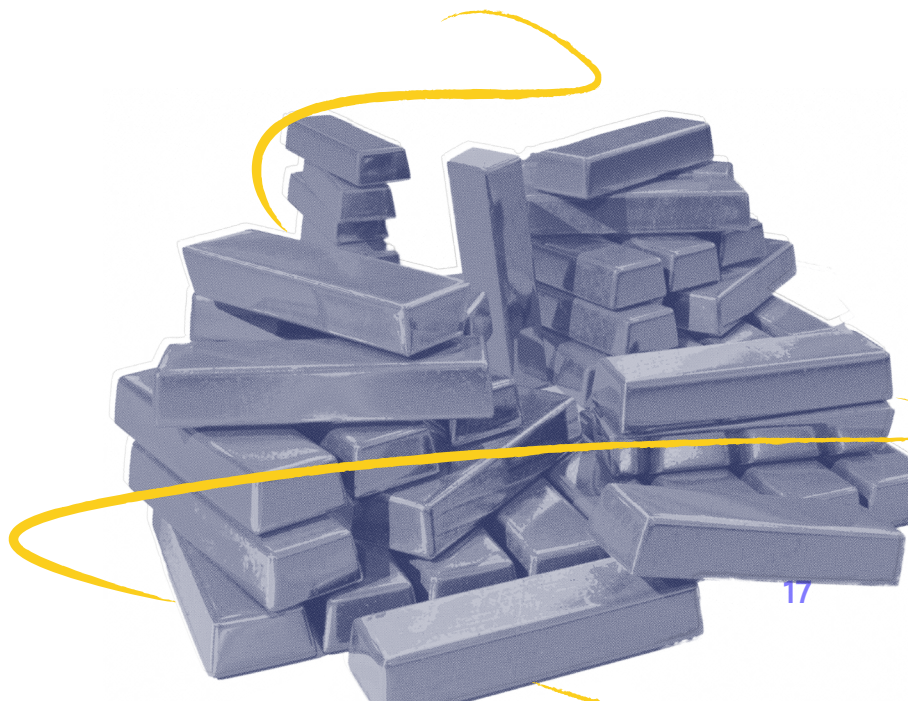
Today, creative consumers are far more likely to be interested in personalised branded experiences compared to non-creative consumers (68% vs. 41% respectively).

3

Lastly but far from least, increased trust.

One [attendee](#) stated: “Trust is our superpower.”

The DMA’s Creative Committee has [written extensively about using creativity to reset](#) trust in business, which remains a clear opportunity to construct meaningful customer relationships.



Conclusion



A Rising Tide of Creativity

In a results-driven world, it's all too easy for brands to forget the value of creativity.

But when it comes to engaging their target markets, the creative process becomes even more powerful.

Our research shows consumer creativity is increasing and increasingly diverse.

Not only that, but consumers are keener than ever to lend brands a hand with their creative strategies.

The perspectives of brand and agency creative experts who joined our roundtable reveal a growing understanding of the rising tide of consumer creativity, and how organisations can get the best from it.

As our bid to keep creativity at the heart of everything brands do gathers pace, we'd love you to add your own insights and ideas to the DMA's creative community.

Head here to find out about the latest activity in our [Campaign for Great British Creativity](#).



About the Great British Creativity Campaign

This campaign shines a light on one of UK business' most valuable resources.

Through keeping our community up-to-speed on the finest, fiercest examples of copywriting, design, and art direction in the marketing industry, we aim to raise awareness of creativity's often overlooked importance in brand-customer relationships.

Our on-going campaign research helps us to better understand how consumers view creativity in relation to their interactions with brands; our virtual events, both for professionals and young talent, offer expert-led insights on creativity in business; and our content, from editorials to podcasts, inspires creatives to push the boundaries of their craft and gives them the tools and resources to do so.

Led by an advisory board formed of industry leaders, we ensure that our themes and objectives remain relevant to the industry they represent.

Join us in the fight for creative work and talent to be recognised, respected, and celebrated; join us in the fight for the power of the word and beyond.

Find out more at dma.org.uk/greatbritishcreativity.

About the Data & Marketing Association

The Data & Marketing Association (DMA) is the driving force of intelligent marketing.

Guided by our customer-first principles enshrined in the DMA Code, we champion a rich fusion of technology, diverse talent, creativity, research and insight to set standards for the UK's data and marketing community to meet in order to thrive.

We deliver this mission through a fully integrated, classroom-to-boardroom approach that supports you, your team and your business at every stage of your development.

Through DMA Talent we create pathways for the next generation of marketers; our world-class training institute, the Institute of Data & Marketing, delivers learning to corporations and individuals; and through the DMA we deliver advocacy, legal and compliance support, as well as research, insight and a packed events calendar.

With more than 1,000 corporate members, we are Europe's largest community of data-driven marketers.

www.dma.org.uk

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