

AgenticAdvertising.Org

JourneySpark⁺
CONSULTING

Building the Future of Marketing

March 2026

Executive Summary

The Advertising Context Protocol (AdCP) is driving a fundamental architectural shift in marketing, moving the function's authority from transactional oversight to the orchestration of value-creating activities across the enterprise. The "Building the Future of Marketing" report outlines four core, permanent changes for brand marketers and their partners among publishers, marketing agencies, and technology providers:

1. The Rise of the Orchestrator: From Authorship to System Design.

The marketer's core role transforms from authorship (manually executing tasks and coordinating activities based on the brief) to orchestration and system design. Agentic systems automate the coordination of complex activities across paid, owned, and earned media, focusing the marketer on designing integrated systems, defining strategic constraints, and setting objective architectures to optimize performance of the entire system. The focus shifts from buying impressions to building "integrated experience systems."

2. The Rebundling of Brand, Creative, and Media.

AdCP acts as the "connective tissue" that fuses historically separate functions: brand and product strategy, creative ideation, and creative production are now linked directly with media planning, distribution, and procurement. This allows creative assets to become "machine-legible" and dynamic, transforming creative from a static asset into a variable in a continuous optimization loop tested against outcome signals, realizing the Cre(ai)tive Economy.

3. The Integration of Marketing Across the Enterprise Value Chain.

The scope of marketing orchestration expands far beyond media procurement and creative integration. Agentic systems act as a "unified cognitive bridge" that links core advertising activities (insights, creative, media) with a wide swath of enterprise functions. This includes coordinating strategy with commerce, shopper marketing, loyalty programs, product and service development, and data governance to create a continuous, high-speed ideate-test-scale cycle across the full customer journey.

4. The Mandate for Organizational Transformation, Education, and Certification.

The shift to cross-functional orchestration requires profound change management and the professionalization of the workforce. Marketers must adapt their skills from "execution management" to system design and governance of autonomous agents. AgenticAdvertising.org (AAO) is a necessary center for this transformation, providing the technical development, thought leadership, and essential education, training, and professional certification needed to responsibly govern agentic systems and ensure competence in marketing's new Cre(ai)tive Economy.

Our work on behalf of the founders of [AgenticAdvertising.org](https://agenticadvertising.org) (AAO) indicates overwhelming support for a new nonprofit organization that can advance the learning, adoption, development, and professionalization of agentic marketing. This report is a roadmap for this exciting new organization and the future it heralds.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	p2
The AdCP Revolution	p4
The Commoditization of Marketing: A Brief History	p10
The Three Supowers of Agentic Marketing	p13
AdCP In the Wild	p15
The Transformation of Marketing Practice	p21
Reimagining Integration	p24
The AAO Community and Its Governance	p26
The AAO Vision	p36
AAO Member Value Proposition	p38
Agentic Marketing Adoption Personas	p43
AAO Strategic Roadmap & Organization Design	p48
Conclusion: Navigating the Agentic Frontier	p51
Authors	p52

The AdCP Revolution

For nearly two years prior to the autumn of 2025, the advertising industry had been awash in experiments with generative AI. It was a chaotic period where marketers used tools like ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini to draft copy or generate images, but lacked a cohesive infrastructure to make these tools transact business. That changed decisively on October 15, 2025. On that morning, a consortium of industry leaders that initially included Scope3, Yahoo, PubMatic, Swivel, and Triton Digital, and later expanded to include dozens of tech companies, agencies, publishers, and brands in the collaborative group of founders, unveiled the Ad Context Protocol (AdCP) to a Zoom audience of over 1,300 professionals.

This launch did not merely introduce a new technical spec; it galvanized a movement. It marked the definitive transition from the "Programmatic Era," characterized by the automation of transactions of standardized advertising inventory, to the "Agentic Era," where autonomous software agents can plan, coordinate, negotiate, and transact complex marketing objectives using natural language. AdCP, [says the International News Media Association](#), emerged as the "connective tissue" required to turn isolated AI experiments into a scalable mechanism that changes the way work is done across the marketing value chain.

A technology protocol is a set of rules and conventions that govern how systems communicate and exchange data. Think of it as a shared language and set of procedures that allows different technologies to work together reliably. When your phone connects to Wi-Fi or your browser loads a webpage, protocols are arranging those interactions behind the scenes.

While related, protocols and standards aren't identical. A protocol is the actual set of rules for communication—the "how" of data exchanges. A standard is a formal specification that documents those rules, often established by organizations like the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers. HTTP (Hypertext Transfer Protocol) is a protocol; the RFC documents that define HTTP are standards. Standards codify protocols so everyone implements them consistently.

Protocols themselves are conceptual frameworks—documented rules, not code. However, they're implemented in code. The HTTP protocol is a specification describing how web browsers and servers should communicate. That specification is then coded into browsers like Chrome and web servers like Apache. Multiple implementations of the same protocol can exist, all following the same rules. (See Exhibit 1.)

Exhibit 1: Examples of Protocols

TCP/IP: The foundational protocol of the internet, governing how data packets travel between computers

HTTP/HTTPS: Powers web browsing, defining how browsers request pages and servers respond

SMTP/IMAP: Handle email transmission and retrieval

Bluetooth: Enables short-range wireless device communication

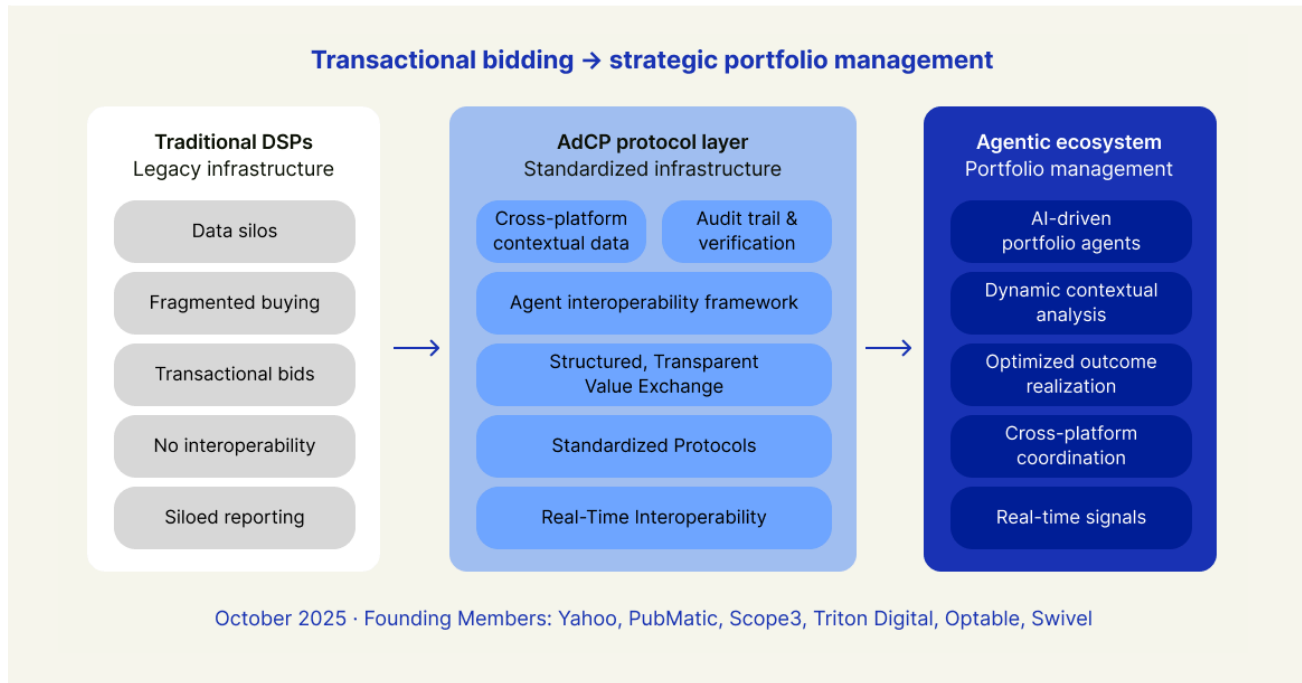
DNS: Translates domain names into IP addresses

Applications leverage protocols as building blocks, abstracting away complexity. When developers build a mobile app that sends data to a server, they don't rewrite TCP/IP—they use existing protocol implementations through APIs and libraries. Netflix streams video using HTTP, Slack sends messages using WebSocket protocol, Stripe processes payments using HTTPS. Each application focuses on its unique functionality while protocols handle the underlying communication infrastructure.

The power of protocols lies in interoperability. Because protocols are standardized, different vendors' products work together. Your iPhone can connect to any Wi-Fi router because they both implement the same Wi-Fi protocols. This creates network effects: the more entities adopt a protocol, the more valuable it becomes.

At its core, AdCP is an open protocol built on top of two other protocols, Anthropic's **Model Context Protocol (MCP)**, and Google's **Agent-to-Agent (A2A) framework**. It functions as a "universal API" that allows disparate AI agents—representing brands, agencies, publishers, tech and data platforms—to communicate using a shared vocabulary. (See Exhibit 2.)

Exhibit 2: Ad Context Protocol (AdCP): Standardizing the Agentic Economy



While AdCP provides the linguistic framework for communication, the practical use of these systems relies on a specialized tech stack designed for machine-to-machine legibility. Central to this stack are two files used within the protocol, **adagents.json** and **brand.json**. Much as **ads.txt** revolutionized transparency in programmatic advertising, **adagents.json** acts as a standardized discovery mechanism, allowing platforms to publicly declare the capabilities, endpoints, and safety guardrails of their autonomous software agents. Complementing this, **brand.json** serves as a protocol-layer identity system, allowing brands to establish domain-verified authority, control authorized brand kit access, and enforce guardrailed personalization in a machine-readable format. Together, these protocols ensure that when a buyer agent queries the marketplace, it can instantaneously verify the identity and competence of its counterparties, moving the industry toward the trust standard required for autonomous commerce.

Before AdCP, an AI agent built by a brand could not "talk" to a publisher's inventory system without a bespoke API integration. AdCP solves this coordination problem by standardizing the logistics of digital work. It enables a marketer to input a natural language brief — such as "I've got a \$20k budget; find me sports enthusiasts interested in high-end running gear" — and have a Buyer Agent automatically translate that intent into technical requirements. This agent then queries the marketplace, identifying Seller Agents that possess relevant audiences or inventory, negotiating terms, and executing the buy.

But AdCP and the agentic tools built with it enable marketers and their partners to accomplish much more than executing safe and secure transactions of formatted advertising inventory. Large organizations historically struggled to port institutional knowledge from one department to

another. Agents and workflows built with AdCP can break through their isolation and offer the ability to shatter the silos that have separated advertising from the rest of the customer experience (CX).

Agentic systems do not simply maximize outcomes; they operate within explicitly declared constraints and long-term relationship frameworks. Agentic systems allow for accessible enterprise-wide intelligence, where a corpus of knowledge acts as a bridge between paid, owned, and earned media. Moreover, agentic intermediation reduces the marginal cost of coordination across silos and lowers integration overhead between systems — a central reason its adoption by marketers is inevitable. (See "AdCP in the Wild," p. 12.)

"We see AdCP as an important step toward an advertising ecosystem built on connected intelligence."

— Kelly McMahon, LG Ad Solutions

"We see AdCP as an important step toward an advertising ecosystem built on connected intelligence," [Kelly McMahon, Executive Vice President of Global Operations at LG Ad Solutions](#), the advertising sales division of the giant consumer electronics manufacturer, told New Digital Age. "The next wave of media buying will depend on interoperability, transparency, and trust — and AdCP represents a shared effort to make that future real. By engaging early, we're helping shape how AI agents communicate, transact, and collaborate across the industry, ensuring that innovation evolves openly and responsibly for everyone involved."

In this regard, AdCP is distinct from another critical, legacy protocol, the OpenRTB framework. OpenRTB has been a critical component of digital advertising's transaction layer, serving as the high-speed rail for atomic, millisecond-level clearing of ad-inventory purchases. In the pre-AI era, this operational frontier was largely "stateless," treating every ad impression as an isolated snapshot in time without retaining long-term context or relationship provenance. While this layer facilitated real-time bidding across open auctions as well as Programmatic Guaranteed (PG) and Private Marketplaces (PMP), the execution of these non-standard or direct deals required extensive human-to-human communication and manual setup. Furthermore, because the ecosystem lacked a universal communication standard, the transaction layer depended heavily on manual human intervention for planning, trafficking, pacing, and troubleshooting across fragmented, bespoke API connections between demand-side platforms (DSPs) and supply-side platforms (SSPs). Ultimately, this legacy transaction layer functioned as a complex, sequential assembly line optimized for the "day trading" of impressions rather than the strategic coordination of business outcomes.

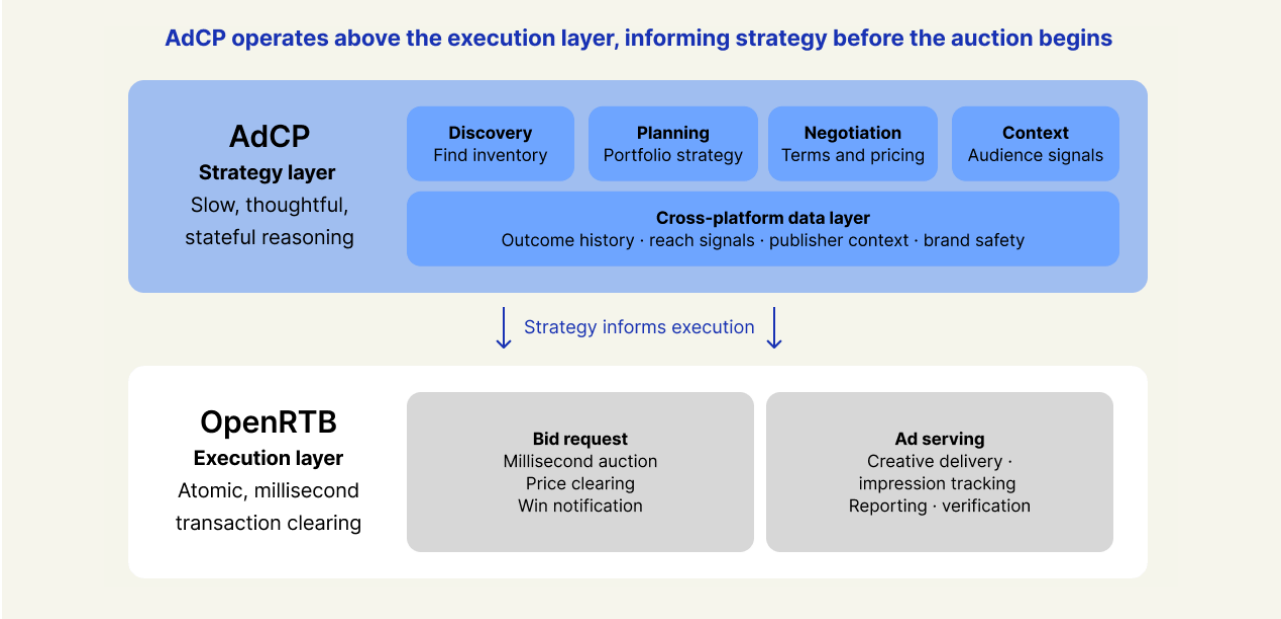
AdCP, by contrast, retains context, relationship provenance, and enduring value metrics that OpenRTB ignores. The distinction is not incremental; it is architectural. Programmatic advertising automated the execution of transactions. Agentic advertising automates the coordination of decisions across strategy, creative, media, data, and measurement.

"AdCP isn't in conflict with OpenRTB," [Benjamin Masse, Chief Product Officer at Triton Digital](#), a division of iHeartMedia, the United States's largest audio company, has written. "It's an expansion beyond the execution layer. OpenRTB remains the essential high-speed rail for atomic transactions, while AdCP introduces a stateful nervous system around the auction: informing strategy, discovery, and contextual evaluation."

Agentic marketing does not replace RTB, it abstracts above it, integrating it into more complete marketing workstreams. In financial terms, if OpenRTB is "day trading" (high frequency, low context), AdCP is "portfolio management" (strategic, long-term, relationship-based). This allows the market to utilize matching algorithms to align buyer and seller preferences based on trust and value rather than just the highest bid.

AdCP effectively implements the [Gale-Shapley algorithm](#), a Nobel Prize-winning theory developed to coordinate two sides of a market that need each other but don't necessarily trust each other. By enabling buyer and seller agents to rank counterparties based on preferences and iterate through a "deferred acceptance" process until a stable market equilibrium is reached, AdCP mimics economics' "stable marriage problem," ensuring a match where no buyer or seller would prefer to transact with a different partner over their current assignment, prioritizing mutual fit over isolated bidding. (See Exhibit 3.)

Exhibit 3: The Nervous System vs. The High-Speed Rail



While AdCP aids in buying and selling inventory, one of its most transformative powers lies in discovery. In the programmatic era, premium inventory that didn't fit into a standard format often went undiscovered or was commoditized in open auctions. AdCP allows publishers to expose the totality of consumer experiences to buyer agents. This includes complex, non-inventory-based opportunities like homepage takeovers, sponsorships, or "side skins" that previously required manual Insertion Orders (IOs). It even extends to non-standard creative formats. As noted in "[AdCP for Non-Standard 'In-Content' Creative](#)," platforms like Rembrand use AdCP to allow agents to plan and activate "virtual product placements" and in-scene advertising that were previously impossible to transact programmatically.

Furthermore, AdCP enables the discovery of data signals independent of media impressions. Marketers can use agents to query a publisher's data clean room to ask, "Do you have an audience that matches this persona?" without ever exposing personally identifiable information (PII) or committing to a buy upfront.

In short, AdCP — and the agentic marketing revolution it enables — remedies one of the critical failures of the preceding programmatic era: the commoditization of marketing into an opaque, price-based marketplace for the trading of impressions independent from the value marketing must contribute to the value of the brand. Moreover, AdCP's discovery capability enables smaller premium placements and non-standard inventory to clear economically by lowering coordination friction. This represents enormous potential for publishers to expand their market opportunities.

The Commoditization of Marketing: A Brief History

The commoditization of marketing is almost as old as the discipline itself. Like the consumer brands it was invented to promote, advertising was a product of the Industrial Revolution and its underlying discovery that standardization was both an enabler and a consequence of a machine-driven economy. Just as mechanical parts were standardized and labor regimented to produce consistent outputs in volume, advertising itself became an industrial product.

In this era, goods like Heinz pickles and Ivory soap poured from factories, needing a mechanism to differentiate them from the generic competitors that local grocers literally picked from barrels or wooden shelves. Brand marketing emerged as the antidote to industrialized mass commoditization. However, the mechanism chosen to build these unique brands was, ironically, a standardized commodity itself. Although the nascent advertising agency industry gradually introduced bespoke efforts to develop insights and creative campaigns with emotional appeal to consumers, advertising copy was stamped out endlessly in same-size spaces on lookalike newsprint, treating communication with the same assembly-line logic as the production of toothpastes and detergents.

This industrial-age approach reached its zenith with the introduction of network television in the United States in 1949. To leverage this powerful new medium, the advertising industry embraced a pseudo-scientific fiction known as the Unique Selling Proposition (U.S.P.), championed by Rosser Reeves, a copywriter by background and the longtime leader of the Ted Bates Agency, for decades the largest global advertising agency. The U.S.P. reduced marketing to "one strong claim" repeated endlessly in unvarying 60-second or 30-second broadcast time slots.

The irony was palpable: Marketers sought to de-commoditize their products using a strictly commoditized media engine. This era relied on "brute force" repetition rather than genuine engagement. Under the prevailing commission system, advertising agencies were incentivized to generate mass-produced volume, as each additional insertion of an ad was incrementally more profitable than the last. As [Rosser Reeves related proudly to the author Martin Mayer](#), he was once entertaining a client on his yacht, when the marketer idly inquired what the hundred people who worked on his account did. Reeves answered: "They keep you from changing your advertising." Creativity was bullied by the need for standardization, leading to a "clutter crisis" of glib slogans and cookie-cutter campaigns.

Yet the tactic was certainly successful: Reeves publicly boasted how one client spent \$86,400,000 over the course of 10 years "on one piece of my copy."

Creative leaders like Bill Bernbach and David Ogilvy fought back in the 1960s with the logic that better creative requires less media volume to be effective. "[Properly practiced, creativity must result in greater sales more economically achieved](#)," Bernbach said. Although these leaders

understood intuitively the power that engagement (to use a contemporary term) could bring to brands, the “Creative Revolution” they led with George Lois, Mary Wells Lawrence, and other acolytes lasted barely a decade. The financial currents of the agency business flowed in the opposite direction.

For advertising agencies, the margins on media procurement were so rich they fueled waves of consolidation. Holding companies like Omnicom, WPP, and Publicis were formed to capture scale economies and pricing leverage over television ad time—marketing’s highest single cost. To grow, these conglomerates acquired full-service agencies, tore them apart, and glued together their media departments into functionally focused global networks dedicated to media procurement. Creativity was still celebrated via numerous industry awards, but the economic logic of their business models reinforced a focus on operational efficiency as commodities traders. Even as brands shifted spending toward other marketing activities, the agency ecosystem remained structurally addicted to the arbitrage of television advertising.

The arrival of the Internet promised to break this commodity model by enabling the mass customization of marketing. The digital mantra, trumpeted by the [first major Internet advertising network, Doubleclick](#), in the late 1990s, was “the right ad to the right person in the right place at the right time,” offering a vision where waste was eliminated and engagement was personalized.

The Internet’s architecture should have allowed marketers to escape the rigid formatted spaces and time slots of advertising’s industrial era. It offered the potential to break down silos between advertising, ecommerce, and customer experience, theoretically allowing brands to orchestrate complex, multi-touchpoint journeys rather than simply buying impressions.

The effect of such digital integration would have been immense. As [Lucas Watson, then the Global Team Leader for Digital Business Strategy at Procter & Gamble](#), told attendees at the IAB MIXX Conference in 2009, “We spent all this time worrying about ad frequency and ad formats... It’s all important — but we’re finding that it’s creative quality that is driving 70% of the business impact we’re seeing in our return on advertising. Good ideas are driving more business than bad ideas.”

Instead of realizing this potential, the industry utilized programmatic technology to double-down on the old model. The rise of programmatic advertising in the early 2000s focused almost exclusively on the “right place at the right time”—the logistics of delivery—while ignoring the “right ad.” Programmatic technology automated the commoditization of attention, [prompting IAB Chair Wenda Millard to warn](#) her association’s members, at their first Annual Leadership Meeting in 2008, “We must educate one and all about the value our digital offerings provide marketers and not trade our advertising space like pork bellies.”

But the advent of programmatic was inexorable, substituting complicated, machine-driven processes for what had been complicated, human negotiations about rate cards, upfronts,

scatter markets, and spot markets. Because so much of the impact of marketing generally and advertising specifically derives from its content, programmatic reinforced the split between media and creative: media buying devolved into pure (albeit automated) price negotiation, while ads were treated merely as targeting parameters rather than creative expressions, consumer engagement tools, or vehicles for value creation.

Consequently, the Internet's complexity led to the rise of "walled gardens" like Google, Facebook, and Amazon, which thrived by corralling this chaos into efficient, but closed, commodity marketplaces. Beyond reducing the challenge of managing complexity across a broad set of publishers and ad-tech intermediaries to generate the same level of reach, these walled gardens developed competitive advantages through their data assets amassed from their consumers' concentrated engagement in search, social media, and ecommerce activities.

Over time, however, the growth of walled gardens, together with an ever-expanding sea of publishers in the open internet, have stressed publisher economics, as the pricing gap between brand and performance-focused advertising has narrowed. Adding to these pressures, the industry now faces a "cr(ai)p crisis" of AI-generated slop that is eroding the consumer experience and reinforcing a focus on efficiency over effectiveness.

The Three Supowers of Agentic Marketing

But there is hope and evidence of real change. To borrow from the presocratic philosopher Heraclitus, marketing is a river, always flowing, always changing, never “being” because it is always “becoming.” If the currents in marketing’s river during the past 60 years were channeling the ecosystem toward ever greater efficiency, those currents now are shifting, redirecting pent up creative energy towards a more balanced approach between efficiency and effectiveness.

The marketing ecosystem is currently undergoing a phase shift from the "Programmatic Era" to the "Agentic Era." While the previous period was defined by the automation of transactions (through real-time bidding, header bidding, and other mechanisms), the present era is defined by the automation of *thinking, coordination, and experimentation*.

Industry executives and thought leaders identify three specific capabilities — we call them "superpowers" — that differentiate agentic systems from legacy ad tech. These are not merely efficiency gains; they represent a fundamental architectural change in how marketing functions.

Superpower #1: Rendering Complexity Invisible and Irrelevant. In the programmatic era, the "cost of complexity" was the defining constraint. To manage the fragmented open web, the industry relied on walled gardens to corral chaos into efficient, closed systems. Agentic AI uses a common linguistic framework to allow software agents to negotiate, test, and procure inventory and other forms of marketing activity across boundaries without human manual labor. [This capability erodes the primary advantage of walled gardens](#) by allowing the open internet to function as a unified, frictionless marketplace. Agentic plus open protocols reduce dependence on closed APIs. This is important because programmatic strengthened walled gardens through data concentration, execution control, closed auction logic while agentic weakens them by standardizing negotiation, separating decision from execution, enabling discovery across boundaries, and reinforcing the advantage of open ecosystems.

"If we make sure that everyone has a common book of language, everyone can build in a way where things will be inherently compatible with others without us having to have the same integration complexity," says Ruben Schreurs, Chief Executive Officer at Ebiquity, the global marketing and media consultancy that helps the world's largest advertisers measure, analyze, and optimize their marketing performance and media spend. "My analogy on the power of standardization is containerized shipping."

Superpower #2: Facilitating Rich Statistical Analyses via "Stateful" Context. Legacy programmatic protocols are "stateless" — they view every ad impression as an independent, time-delimited mote, optimized only for the now. Agentic systems introduce a "stateful nervous system" that retains memory, relationship provenance, and long-term context. This allows for

rich statistical analyses in the cloud, moving the industry from vanity metrics (such as clicks, views, or downloads) to holistic business outcomes.

“If everyone has a common language, everyone can build in a way where things will be inherently compatible with others.”

— Ruben Schreurs, Ebiquity

“By moving from purely transactional bidding to strategic trading, we move beyond real-time snapshots that treat impressions primarily through an ID lens,” says Benjamin Masse of Triton Digital. “Instead, the market can reason about long-horizon context: enduring value, relevance over time, and relationship provenance, rather than optimizing each bid in isolation. That distinction matters because it allows the open web to approach the ease of transacting that we see in walled gardens, without sacrificing its independence.”

Superpower #3: Rebundling Creative and Media. Perhaps the most profound shift is the reunification of creative strategy and execution with media procurement—functions that were unbundled by the advertising holding companies from their acquired agencies 40 years ago, then sewn together into global media procurement networks. Programmatic further separated creative and media because creative was static, media was probabilistic, and optimization loops were asymmetric. Agentic AI - aided by Generative AI - acts as the connective tissue that allows creative and media to work as one system again, optimizing content resonance rather than just delivery speed. Because creative now can be parameterized and dynamic, optimization loops are no longer asymmetric, and outcome signals can feed upstream into ideation, so coordination cost approaches zero.

“Creative and media are still operating on different systems,” said Pia Malovrh, Director of Product Management at Celtra, the AI-powered ad tech platform that helps brands, agencies, and media companies create, manage, and scale high-performing digital ads across all channels. “Agentic AI can become the connective tissue or layer that lets the creative and media work as one system.”

AdCP In the Wild

Although AI adoption by brands and their partners is in early demo and hybrid phases, the introduction of AdCP already has begun to show the promise Malovrh identifies. We call AdCP the Stanley Homeowner Toolkit of advanced marketing because it provides the standardized, essential utilities—digital hammers and wrenches, if you will—required to build complex consumer experiences without sourcing bespoke integrations individually.

This infrastructure extends beyond media buying to power the "Cre(ai)tive Economy." AdCP enables developers to build specialized creator tools that plug directly into the transaction layer. Whether generating video assets or coordinating influencer partnerships, these tools leverage AdCP to fuse creative strategy with media procurement, transforming the ecosystem from a rigid assembly line into a modular workshop where "builders" orchestrate high-performing systems.

Roughly five months after its public launch on October 15, AdCP has crossed a critical practical threshold, moving from theoretical promise to early, verifiable proof. As of early 2026, there is a "thin but real" cohort of working agents. The protocol is behaving exactly as a credible infrastructure standard should in its first quarter — narrow in its initial deployment, deep in its structural implications, and already fundamentally altering how industry participants think about value, collaboration, and discovery. (See Exhibit 4.)

Exhibit 4: Marketing Agents Built on AdCP (as of February 2026)

Agent / Developer	Category	Core Function & Description	Current Status / Role
PubMatic & Butler/Till	Media Buying & Execution	Autonomous Campaign Execution: Interprets natural language briefs, generates media strategies, and autonomously activates and optimizes campaigns (e.g., for Clubtails/Geloso Beverage Group).	First concrete co-development; executed live autonomous campaigns.
Swivel Seller Agent	Media Selling	Inventory Negotiation: Allows publishers (e.g., LG Ad Solutions) to expose inventory constraints and pricing logic to negotiate directly with buyer agents.	World's first "Seller Agent"; active in live demos.

Agent / Developer	Category	Core Function & Description	Current Status / Role
Scope3 Buyer Agent	Media Buying	Reference Implementation: Represents a brand to issue RFPs, negotiate price and brand safety rules, and execute buys. Sometimes referred to as "Ematini",.	Reference implementation used for demos and testing.
Magnite Seller Agent	Media Selling	Automated Direct Sales: Embedded in the SpringServe ad server to automate 1:1 buying methods (IOs, PMPs) and interact with emerging buyer agents.	Production/Pilot; embedded infrastructure.
Wonderstruck Sales Agent	Media Selling	MCP Connectivity: Allows buyer agents to connect via Model Context Protocol to browse inventory and creative formats and execute media buys.	Live Sales Agent implementation.
BiddingStack Seller Agents	Media Selling	SMB Discovery: Hosting infrastructure that provides Seller Agents for medium/small publishers to make inventory discoverable to AI buying assistants.	Infrastructure provider for long-tail discovery.
Optable Planner Agent	Planning & Orchestration	Automated Planning: Reads RFPs, interprets goals, builds bespoke audience segments from 1st-party data, and recommends inventory packages,.	Reduces planning time from weeks to hours.

Agent / Developer	Category	Core Function & Description	Current Status / Role
Rembrandt "In-Content" Agent	Creative & Content	Virtual Product Placement: Automates the planning and transaction of "in-scene" advertising, generating mock-ups for inserting products into creator video content.	Automates non-standard, high-friction formats.
Celtra	Creative & Content	Transforms a campaign description into fully built creatives based on channel, goal, and brand assets (images, headlines, brand kit).	Automates the production of display units, rich media formats (such as carousels, sliders, cubes), outstream video, and CTV formats
Samba TV Audience Manager	Data & Signals	Audience Discovery: Searches 50M TV households to find specific viewers and build segments without exchanging sensitive user data.	First production-ready audience intelligence implementation.

The initial wave of AdCP agentic and systems development has not been evenly distributed across all eight functional areas in the marketing value chain in which agentic development has been taking place. (See Exhibit 5.) Instead, activity is heavily clustered around Distribution & Placement, Media Operations, and Strategy & Planning. This concentration is strategic rather than accidental: These are the sectors where transactional friction is highest and where the standardization of semantics offers the immediate relief of replacing human-intensive workflows with agent-to-agent negotiation.

Exhibit 5: Ad Context Protocol (AdCP): Standardizing the Agentic Economy

Agentic Marketing Services: A Sample

1. Strategy and Planning

- Strategy development and consulting
- Market research capabilities
- Consumer insights and audience analysis
- Media planning services
- Campaign planning and coordination
- Budget allocation and optimization

2. Creative Development

- Creative agency services
- Graphic design and visual content
- Copywriting and content creation
- Video and multimedia production
- Interactive and digital content development
- Brand development and identity

3. Media Operations

- Media buying services
- Programmatic advertising capabilities
- Ad exchange partnerships
- Demand-side platform (DSP) access/ownership
- Supply-side platform (SSP) operations
- Cross-channel media execution

4. Technology Infrastructure

- Ad serving technology
- Customer data platform (CDP) capabilities
- Data management platform (DMP) services
- Attribution and measurement tools
- Marketing automation systems
- Proprietary technology development

5. Distribution and Placement

- Publisher relationships and inventory
- Broadcast media capabilities
- Digital platform partnerships
- Out-of-home advertising services
- Retail media network access
- Cross-channel distribution

6. Data and Analytics

- Third-party data provision
- Measurement and analytics services
- Performance reporting capabilities
- Audience research and insights
- Campaign optimization tools
- Custom analytics development

7. Fulfillment and Production

- Print production capabilities
- Broadcast production services
- Digital asset management
- Creative trafficking operations
- Quality assurance processes
- Technical delivery systems

8. Financial Operations

- Billing and invoicing systems
- Financial reconciliation services
- Performance guarantee structures
- Payment processing capabilities
- Financial reporting and transparency
- Risk management services

Leading the charge is the PubMatic–Butler/Till AdCP Seller Agent, widely cited as the first concrete co-development in the ecosystem. This agent allows the advertising agency (Butler/Till) and the supply-side platform (PubMatic) to negotiate price, targeting constraints, and brand safety rules directly, bypassing legacy IO processes. WPP has also been an early partner with Butler/Till, the women-owned and -led marketing agency headquartered in Rochester, New York, and has used agents to run live campaigns on connected TV. Initial pilots have been promising, reducing human effort by more than half. Alongside this, the industry has seen the deployment of the AdCP Buyer Agent (Reference Implementation) and internal Agency Campaign Orchestrator Agents, which are currently being piloted to translate business objectives into execution plans.

The true test of AdCP's impact lies in whether it is delivering on the specific "superpowers" promised at its launch. Early evidence suggests a distinct shift in three key areas:

1. **Valuing the Publisher's Full Experience:** The reduction of publisher value to standardized slots is showing signs of abating. In live demos and early pilots, AdCP seller agents are proving they can expose more than just formatted inventory. They are beginning to advertise contextual constraints, suitability parameters, and outcome-oriented terms. While publishers are not yet fully packaging complex experiential offerings at scale —such as data signals or community access—the structural capability to do so is now live. AdCP's schema creates a marketplace where publishers are represented as capability-bearing partners rather than mere commodity sellers of impressions.

AAO's partnership with [Prebid.org](https://prebid.org) — transferring its sales agent repository to Prebid, which will leverage the Prebid developer community for ongoing management of sales agent development — will significantly accelerate adoption in the market and do the same thing for premium inventory that Prebid did back in 2017 for programmatic. When AI agents help humans discover, negotiate, and buy premium ad products, a \$5K sponsorship makes economic sense for agencies and for publishers. So does a \$500 one. The Prebid Sales Agent will continue to operate under the AdCP protocol, under AAO's governance framework, allowing AAO to focus on education, certification, and adoption of use cases.

- 2. The Integration of Creative and Media:** Perhaps the most significant structural shift is visible in the emergence of Creative-to-Activation Bridge Agents. These tools represent the first cracks in the historical silos separating creative development from media buying. In current pilots, creative variants generated upstream are being passed programmatically into buying workflows, where they can be tested and iterated against outcome signals. While the market has not yet moved to pricing creative as a distinct financial asset, AdCP has made creative "machine-legible" inside campaign management. This allows for faster iteration cycles and the empirical comparison of creative strategies, fundamentally changing creative from a static asset handed off at launch to a variable in an optimization loop. Brands have been experimenting with greater content variety through dynamic content optimization (DCO), but this has not scaled significantly yet, due to the human effort required by brands and their agencies.
- 3. The Discovery of Hidden Value:** The ability to discover previously invisible insights is emerging through Signals & Data agents. These agents are being piloted to normalize performance data across disparate channels and partners. This normalization is the precursor to continuous discovery; once insights are shared agent-to-agent, brands can begin to see patterns — such as correlations between specific publisher capabilities and outcomes — that were previously obscured by fragmented reporting.

Equally telling is what has not yet appeared. The "Fulfillment & Production" sector of the value chain — trafficking, QA, and format validation — remains conspicuously empty. However, this vacuum is temporary. As buying agents move from demos to repeatable execution, the demand for automated trafficking and Outcome Verification Agents — which reduce financial disputes — is expected to surge.

While AdCP certainly has not transformed the marketing economy (yet) it has succeeded in reframing the conversation. The evidence from the first few months shows a clear movement away from the "spots and dots" of the programmatic era toward a system where experience, iterative creative, and continuous discovery are the primary units of value. The infrastructure is no longer just a theory; it is a mechanism for discovery that is currently being built.

"With agentic interfaces, we can make non-standard creative standard, fast—removing barriers, streamlining workflows, and empowering planners to unlock new creative potential," writes Cory

Treffiletti, the Chief Marketing Officer of Rembrand, the AI-fueled native video advertising platform.

For publishers, AdCP offers liberation from the "tyranny of the rectangle." In the programmatic era, publishers were forced to slice their value into standardized units to fit into exchange pipes. As Yahoo's head of monetization, Gabe Dewitt, notes, agentic protocols allow agents to set business rules, protect pricing floors, and sell their unique value propositions directly to buyers without a "bloated supply chain of intermediaries" extracting fees.

For brands, AdCP offers marketers an escape from the "efficiency trap" of programmatic, where cheap reach was prioritized over effectiveness. Major consumer brands already are using natural language to query and activate complex audiences without needing deep technical expertise in the specific demand side platforms they use. This democratization allows brands to follow the consumer journey seamlessly from an advertisement to a commerce transaction to a loyalty interaction.

"A fully agentic media buy has the potential to really fulfill the promise: right ad, right person, right time."

— Amanda DeVito, Butler/Till

AdCP promises "the ability to... almost copy and paste the exact description of who you're trying to target, and have an agent ... create this perfect one-to-one, data-driven audience and targeting plan that doesn't have any of the latency or the drop off that you would have in the traditional process," says James Trott, Senior Director of Global Audience Planning at Coca-Cola.

Amanda DeVito, CMO of Butler/Till, emphasizes that this shift allows brands to finally locate the holy grail offered but never found during Internet marketing's early days: "A fully agentic media buy has the potential to really fulfill that promise: right ad, right person, right time."

For agencies, AdCP facilitates the rebundling of their creative and media expertise, healing the rift created decades ago when holding companies separated these disciplines. By allowing creative agents to share data and guardrails directly with media buying agents, AdCP ensures that creative strategy and media execution work as one system - the underpinning of the "Cre(ai)tive Economy."

The Transformation of Marketing Practice

The Cre(ai)tive Economy represents more than just a catchy label; it is the economic manifestation of agentic AI's ability to force a reintegration of historically atomized marketing functions. For decades, intelligence was siloed in research, data was locked in IT, creativity lived in boutique agencies, and procurement was a back-office financial hurdle. Today, agentic systems act as a unified cognitive bridge, allowing insights to inform creative variants, which are then matched with inventory and optimized in a continuous, high-speed ideate-test-scale cycle. In this new equilibrium, the friction of manual handoffs disappears, replaced by an integrated professional practice where collaboration among humans and agents becomes the primary vehicle for value creation.

As this intelligence-led architecture matures, marketing shifts from a cost center managed for transactional efficiency to a strategic resource optimized for growth. This is the heart of the Cre(ai)tive Economy: a marketplace where the "brute force" of media volume is superseded by the "precision force" of agentic orchestration. By fusing the art of storytelling with the science of real-time procurement, brands can move beyond the legacy assembly-line model and instead build living experience systems that adapt as fast as the consumers they serve.

Agentic intermediation in all fields is catalyzing a shift in how work gets done. This is not just about changing the lines and boxes in organization charts, or M&A activity. It reduces the human effort required to coordinate complex activities. Done right, the focus should not just be on efficiency, but on effectiveness, pivoting from authorship to orchestration.

For more than a century, marketing has been organized around authorship. Someone writes the brief. Someone else writes the copy. Someone else designs the layout. Someone else plans the media. Someone else buys it. Someone else measures it. And, finally, someone else decides if, when, and how to optimize it. The work moves down a linear assembly line, and at the end, an ad campaign comes out the other side. The same is true for other content-based experiences, from ecommerce to shopper marketing to mobile experiences at home, on the go, and in the store. Humans are not only in the loop; we are the loop.

That model made sense in a world of scarce media, slow feedback cycles, and simple customer journeys. It makes very little sense in a world where experiences are assembled dynamically, not published statically; journeys stretch across channels, moments, and contexts; feedback is continuous, not episodic; and agentic bots, not just humans, are participants in the creation and orchestration of experiences.

“With agentic, bots can make decisions with guidance from humans in the loop as needed to optimize the performance of the system as a whole.”

— Rajeev Goel, Pubmatic

In this world, the center of gravity shifts from authorship to orchestration - from making things to building systems that make things... and remake them, and adapt them, and personalize them, and optimize them within shorter time frames, but with longer time horizons for strategic investments and value alignments.

As Jim Lecinski, Clinical Professor of Marketing at Northwestern’s Kellogg School of Management and co-author with Rajkumar Venkatesan of the best-selling book [The AI Marketing Canvas](#), puts it, “Marketing as a profession, as a craft, is moving from writing briefs, plans, and synthesis of research to prompting and coding with AI. People who grew up as authors and giving feedback to others need to respond to this disruption in how their work gets done.”

Agentic is far more disruptive to the marketing workflow than prior waves of marketing automation. Its impact goes well beyond reducing time spent on repetitive tasks or providing a co-pilot to support decision making.

“Real-time bidding provides automation at the point of the ad impression,” says Rajeev Goel, CEO of the pioneering supply-side platform PubMatic. “But there’s discovery and planning that must happen prior to the buying and selling of ad impressions, and there’s measurement and optimization afterwards. These still involve a lot of human effort. With agentic, bots can make decisions with guidance from humans in the loop as needed to optimize performance of the system as a whole.”

It even changes what it means to be “good” at marketing.

Agentic and generative AI are accelerating shifts that have been underway for years, expanding the scope of what we call marketing. Paid, above-the-line media still matter. But they constitute slices of a larger pie that includes the larger cornucopia of below-the-line expenditures that includes:

- Redefined search and shopping experiences using LLMs
- Commerce media
- Digital content that is dynamically inserted into owned media touchpoints
- Influencer and creator ecosystems
- Activation of sponsorships and rights deals
- Loyalty programs and membership models
- Phygital experiences where mobile is the glue across experiences in multiple locations

In most categories, [the largest share of marketing investment has long been for below-the-line activity](#), not paid media. Yet the bar to coordinate paid media with all the other ways brands activate consumer behavior keeps getting raised. This makes it more important to ensure that they are not suboptimized through siloed approaches.

Which means the job is no longer to buy impressions. It is to build integrated experience systems that work across the entire customer journey. This isn't just about adopting new technology and tools. Agentic intermediation changes roles and how people collaborate. While programmatic advertising required media traders, traffickers, and optimization analysts, agentic will require constraint designers, system governors, objective architects, economic alignment designers. The skill shift is not just from writing to prompting — it is from execution management to system design.

"The brands that win will be the ones that simplify, focus, and build systems that scale," says Evan Eckman, one of the fractional CMOs at Chief Outsiders, a network of marketing veterans that has served more than 1,500 clients, many of them high growth companies owned by private equity. "Agentic advertising provides an opportunity to treat retail media and CTV as strategic amplifiers rather than siloed experiments."

Reimagining Integration

“Systems” is the operative word. As we described above, for decades, the marketing-media ecosystem has been challenged by fragmentation: creative separated from media, planning divorced from procurement, and media measurement isolated from strategy. Agentic intermediation is reversing this entropy. By establishing a universal language for autonomous software agents to communicate, negotiate, and transact, AdCP is collapsing the cost of complexity and enabling disparate marketing functions to combine into unified, cross-functional integrated systems where a single natural language objective — such as “launch a seasonal campaign for outdoor enthusiasts” — triggers a cascade of coordinated actions across strategy, creative generation, media buying, and analytics.

“Machine-to-machine coordination across the full campaign lifecycle,” [Alex Powell, the CEO of Pixels AI](#), the vertical video ad tech company, calls it. “With the ability to connect millions of data points in milliseconds, apply machine learning for outcome-driven decisions, dynamically optimize budgets, and link supply, demand, and creative intelligence, the industry needs centralized, standardized solutions to move from manual coordination to intelligent collaboration.”

Already, we are seeing AdCP’s coordination powers instantiated in a rising class of commercial implementations built atop the protocol - a new AI marketing tech stack that we and our colleague John Frelinghuysen have dubbed MAMMAs, an acronym for [Marketing-Advertising-Media-Measurement-Analytics](#) engines. Think of MAMMAs as “agencies in a box,” because they use AI to rebundle the capabilities that were historically scattered across multiple service providers, each one working with different functional departments within the brand enterprise. MAMMA engines represent a fundamental shift from point solutions (tools that do one thing, like email marketing or bidding) to service-as-software, where the software performs the work of an entire department or of a network of agencies that serve a marketer with many brands. By leveraging AdCP to connect internal data lakes with external marketplaces, these engines can autonomously orchestrate complex workflows that previously required armies of human talent to manage.

The power of these integrated systems lies in their ability to fuse functions that were previously operationally incompatible. A MAMMA engine can seamlessly integrate strategy development and ideation with the GenAI creation of assets across video, digital, audio, and print. It can handle price negotiation and procurement for both standard advertising inventory and non-advertising assets (like influencer partnerships) simultaneously. Crucially, these systems extend beyond paid media to handle consumer journey orchestration across owned and earned channels. They can ingest unstructured data from call centers, social media, emails, and messaging to inform real-time campaign optimization and measurement, closing the loop between a customer’s broader experience and the ads they see next.

Leading brands and agencies are already experimenting with this cross-functional integration, moving beyond simple ad buying to orchestrate the entire customer experience:

- **Horizon Blu:** An agency-led platform that functions as an "agency in a box" for clients, extending the historic media procurement expertise associated with its parent company, Horizon Media, the world's largest independent media agency. Horizon Media Executive Vice President John Koenigsberg describes Blu as an "innovation lab" that integrates media spend with performance analytics, allowing for natural language querying to solve business problems rather than just buying media spots.
- **WPP Open:** A platform built by the UK-based holding company to serve as a neutral layer that stops the industry from "rebuilding the same workflows 50 times," systematize cross-functional hand-offs, and effectively offering the full power of the global network via software to small- and medium-sized businesses the global holding companies conventionally ignored. In effect, WPP Open is competing with newer, AI-native MAMMAs like Vibe and MNTN that were built to serve the SMB market and help small companies (particularly direct-to-consumer companies) exploit consumers' migration to Connected TV.
- **Coca-Cola:** The beverage giant is working with WPP and OpenAI to create "agentic optimization" across its portfolio. Senior Director of Global Media Planning James Trott describes using agents for "audience discovery and activation via natural language," allowing the brand to manage frequency capping and creative sequencing across its entire house of brands—something impossible in legacy silos.
- **Hilton:** The hotel chain is using AI to modernize its customer experience by mining social media and customer conversations to inform "next best message" algorithms. This connects the advertising experience directly to the guest's stay, ensuring that messaging from booking to checkout is coherent and personalized.
- **Nestlé:** In its Nespresso coffee unit, the global food giant is testing "repeatable use cases" where AI agents help define strategy and talent impact, moving the organization away from piecemeal experiments toward a "unified machine" for marketing effectiveness.
- **Mastercard:** The payments company is leveraging AI platforms like Dynamic Yield (which it acquired) and WEVO.ai to democratize access to insights. By testing every new product and campaign with AI simulation before launch, they are fusing product development, marketing, and customer experience into a single, agile workflow.

The rise of AdCP and MAMMA engines signals that marketing is no longer a series of handoffs between "buyers" and "sellers" trading a commodity. It is becoming a unified professional practice of what Northwestern's Jim Lecinski calls "codesmanship with AI," where marketers design and oversee systems that create value. This transformation implies a necessary redesign of organizational relationships.

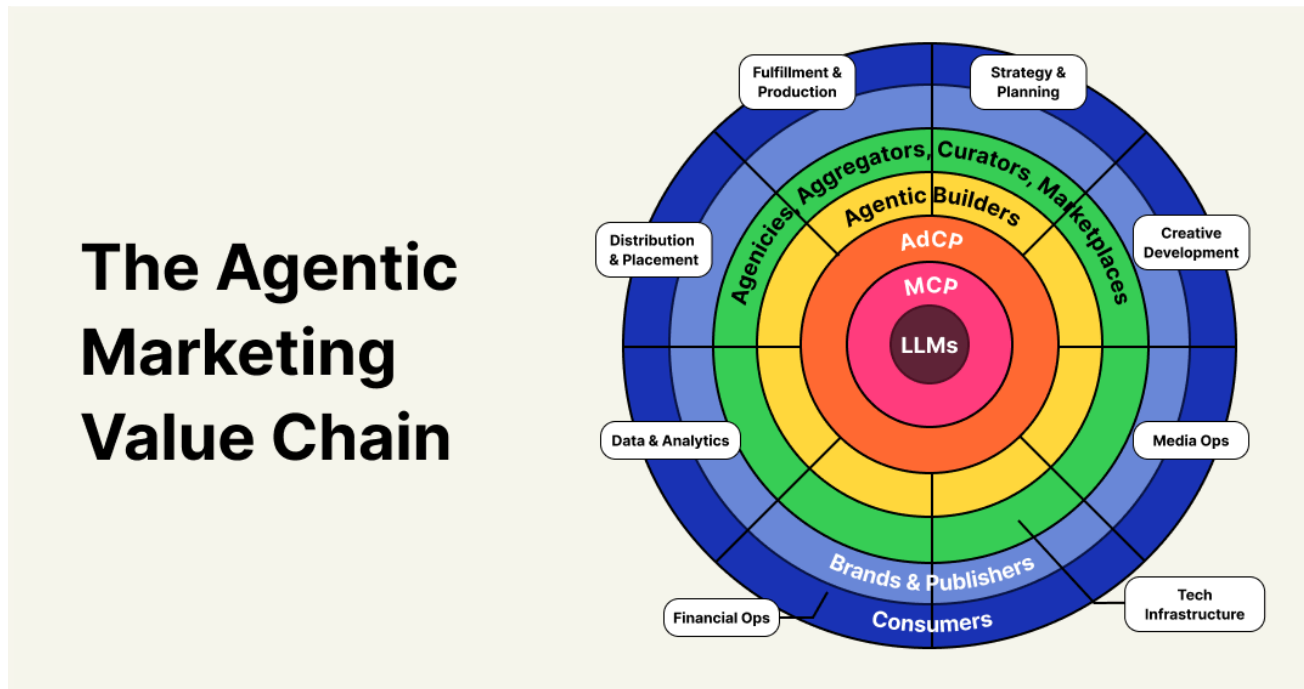
The AAO Community and Its Governance

Clearly, what we are describing is not an industry, but a series of interdependencies that constitute a reorientation of the marketing function. The adversarial buyer vs. seller dynamic is obsolete; in the agentic era, brands, agencies, and publishers are all "builders" and "implementers" working within a shared, interoperable ecosystem. This new agentic marketing value chain looks less like a chain, with a series of sequential handoffs, than a web of activities in which ideas, briefs, concepts, insights, ideations, executions, tests, pricing, distribution, measurement, analysis, outcomes, and optimization recommendations can be passed back-and-forth, sideways, and in skip-steps among various participants. (See Exhibit 6.)

“With the ability to connect millions of data points in milliseconds... the industry needs standardized solutions to move from manual coordination to intelligent collaboration.”

— Alex Powell, Pixels AI

Exhibit 6: The Agentic Marketing Value Chain



Brands are building direct-to-consumer experiences and collaborating with retailers to curate emotionally engaging experiences that win the trip, grow the basket, and deepen loyalty.

Publishers are building not just seller bots to trade advertising inventory, but cultures of agile experimentation to curate consumer experiences through creative bots, shopper solution bots, and signals bots. Agencies are building not just media procurement bots, but creative, shopper solutions, and data signals bots. And technology companies are building the infrastructure and tools that enable all of this.

For every agent these companies are building, they also are implementing agents built by others. Just as the modern business organization comprises full-time staff, third-party suppliers, fractional experts, consultants, freelancers, and their amalgam of capabilities, we are heading into an agent-infused world where all companies abet their human teams with collections of bought, built, and partnered bots. In the agentic marketing era, all are builders, and all are implementers.

This transformation of functions and organizations, in turn, implies a significant role not just for a non-profit organization, but for a very different type of non-profit organization than the buyer-centered or seller-centered associations that have served the marketing and media professions for much of the past century. To determine the mission, goals, activities, and governance of AAO, we should look again at technology protocols and explore more deeply the relationships between protocols and the ways they can shape market development and organization.

Protocols create standardized foundations that entire industries can build upon - or be built upon. Email protocols (SMTP, IMAP, POP3) enabled the global email industry—countless email clients and services exist precisely because they all follow the same protocols. Healthcare relies on HL7 for medical records exchange. The relationship between protocols and industries falls into three distinct patterns, each with profoundly different implications for economic organization. (See Exhibit 7.)

Exhibit 7: Technology Protocols and Their Governance

Category	Protocol Examples	Oversight Body	Governance Model	Participation
Category 1: Support Existing Industries	FIX, SWIFT, EMV Chip, HL7/FHIR	FIX Protocol Ltd, SWIFT, EMVCo, HL7 Int.	Closed/Semi-Closed: Controlled by incumbents to standardize existing activities.	Primarily industry-specific companies (banks, healthcare).
Category 2: Transform Existing Industries	5G, WebRTC, OAuth 2.0, RCS, AV1	3GPP, W3C/IETF, GSMA, AOMedia	Consortium/Open: Often contested; creates disruption or shifts power within an industry.	Mix of tech giants, telcos, and open standards bodies.
Category 3: Create New Industries	TCP/IP, HTML, Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, USB	IETF, W3C, IEEE, Bluetooth SIG, USB-IF	Open/Permissionless: Consensus-driven; designed for universal connectivity and innovation.	Highly inclusive; anyone (individuals or any company) can typically join.

Category 1: Some protocols support existing industries. These protocols emerge from within established industries to solve coordination problems, improve efficiency, or enhance security in activities that already exist. They're typically created by industry incumbents working collaboratively. A prominent example of such industry support protocols is the SWIFT protocol in banking, developed in 1973. The protocol emerged from a consortium of 239 banks across 15 countries, which recognized their mutual need for better communication infrastructure. Banks had been sending international payment instructions via telex, which was slow, insecure, and error prone. SWIFT didn't create international banking, of course —it standardized and secured existing wire transfer activities.

These protocols have closed governance because they require coordination among established players with significant investments in existing systems. They're evolutionary because they must

maintain backward compatibility and can't disrupt existing business relationships too dramatically.

Category 2: Some protocols transform existing industries. These protocols take activities that existed in one form and fundamentally restructure them, often disintermediating incumbents, lowering barriers to entry, or enabling new business models within familiar activities. Among the most prominent examples are the 3G/4G/5G mobile protocols. Mobile voice telephony existed before them, but mobile protocols transformed telephony from a utility service into a computing platform. This spawned app stores, mobile advertising, mobile payments, and location-based services. Telecom-munications companies controlled the protocol development but couldn't control the industries it enabled.

These protocols often have mixed, even contested, governance models, reflecting the tension between incumbent interests and transformative potential. Some parts of governance can be open and participatory, and some parts closed. Different organizations may vie for oversight authority, as the scope of the industrial transformation becomes clearer.

Category 3: Some protocols create entirely new industries. These protocols enable capabilities that didn't exist before, spawning new forms of economic activity and industrial organization. They're often created by technologists, academics, or independent organizations outside established industries. Such protocols are very familiar in and around the Internet, as are their massive, often unanticipated downstream effects. The most prominent is the HTTP/HTML protocol developed between 1989-1991 by Tim Berners-Lee. HTTP/HTML didn't improve existing publishing or retail: It created the World Wide Web, generating industries that didn't exist, such as e-commerce (Amazon, eBay), social media (Facebook, Twitter), streaming entertainment (Netflix, YouTube), SaaS (Salesforce, Zoom), gig economy platforms (Uber, Airbnb), and countless others.

Industry-spawning protocols are frequently characterized by open and permissionless governance: Anyone can build on them.

What we see from this overview of technology protocols, their impact, and their governance is that the more technology transforms the way people and companies work, the more people and the companies for which they work require and deserve education and training to adapt to the transformation. What's more, it is common for the associations that arise to oversee the evolution of technical protocols to coalesce those ecosystems and oversee layers of activities that extend beyond technical development, frequently including training, education, and professional certification.

Historically, the marketing and media ecosystem has been governed by trade associations (e.g., the Association of National Advertisers, American Association of Advertising Agencies, Interactive Advertising Bureau, Consumer Brands Association, and National Retail Federation). These organizations exist primarily to advance the commercial interests of member companies before their buyers or in front of regulatory bodies. By contrast, professional associations (e.g., the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, International Association of Privacy Professionals, the American Medical Association) exist to advance a discipline and the competence of the individuals who practice it. They define what it means to be a "professional" through bodies of knowledge, individual certification, and codes of ethics.

If the Ad Context Protocol (AdCP) were merely a software update—a "better pipe" for moving data—it would require little more than a GitHub repository and a maintenance committee and could be managed by an existing trade association to support its development and respond to regulator queries. However, the evidence suggests AdCP is not a Category 1 protocol (supporting existing industries, like SWIFT does for banking) but acts as a Category 2 or Category 3 protocol: It almost certainly is transforming the existing marketing function and the industries that support it, and is likely to spawn entirely new functions and sectors as paid, owned, and earned media are more seamlessly integrated with agentic solutions.

Just as HTTP did not merely improve magazine publishing but created the World Wide Web, AdCP does not merely optimize the buying of "slots"; it creates a "stateful nervous system" for a new "Cre(ai)tive Economy." It shifts the fundamental unit of value from the impression to the autonomous decision, enabling the mass customization and orchestration of consumer experiences at a scale previously impossible.

This transformation creates a widening gap between the technology's capability and the workforce's competency. Because AdCP transforms how work is done — moving marketers from "authorship" to orchestration — it demands an organization that does more than manage technical specs. It requires a body that simultaneously oversees the evolution of the protocol (the rails) and the professional development of the people (the operators). Without the latter, the former presents unmanageable known risks regarding brand safety, privacy, economic alignment, as well as new classes of risk: model hallucinations and drift, incentive misalignment, feedback loop distortion, reinforcement of biased signals, and governance gaps.

For these reasons, agentic marketing requires the rigor of a professional association. A trade association protects business models; a professional association protects the integrity of the practice itself. We recommend designing AgenticAdvertising.org (AAO) not as a lobbying entity or sales-support body, but as a dynamic hub for the "builders and implementers" of this new economy. Its value proposition is defined by five distinct pillars:

- **AAO Is a Place to Learn:** Through Mastermind Groups and Councils, members move beyond passive webinar consumption to active peer-to-peer problem solving. These forums allow professionals to decode emerging use cases—such as "agile journey orchestration"—and share patterns for success before they become commoditized best practices.
- **AAO Is a Place to Build:** AAO serves as the home for open-source working groups where the industry's technical architects collaborate on the AdCP roadmap, adjacent protocols, and standardized utilities needed to construct complex agentic workflows.
- **AAO Is a Place to Partner:** By shattering the adversarial buyer vs. seller silos, AAO provides a neutral ground where brands, agencies, publishers, and tech platforms meet as equal builders and implementers.
- **AAO Is a Place to Test:** The organization facilitates "sandboxes" and pilot programs where members can validate interoperability and run controlled experiments with real data signals, reducing the risk of adopting new agentic behaviors.
- **AAO Is a Place to Certify:** To establish trust in a chaotic market, AAO provides the "Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval" for both machines and humans. It certifies that agentic software complies with safety and transparency standards, and it credentials individuals who have mastered the necessary skills to govern these systems responsibly. It can and should publish a living directory that functions as a trusted discovery engine for finding interoperable partners.

The structural challenge facing AAO is that agentic marketing functions simultaneously as a commercial market and a professional discipline. To succeed, the organization requires the capital and adoption power of corporations — brands, agencies, publishers, and tech — while equally requiring the public trust, ethical oversight, and individual competence of human practitioners. A pure trade association model risks "regulatory capture" by dominant commercial interests, potentially turning standards into weapons for market share rather than tools for interoperability. Conversely, a pure professional society model often lacks the speed and funding necessary to drive technical standards like AdCP into the commercial mainstream. Consequently, AAO should adopt a hybrid model of membership and governance designed to prevent the "original sin" of industry capture while still enabling the protocol and practitioners to flourish.

The hybrid membership and governance model recognizes the importance of corporations and individuals as members, and the careful allocation of decision rights between them. Corporate members are the adopters: Companies (brands, agencies, publishers, tech) pay higher dues to fund the infrastructure. In exchange, they gain voting rights on technical standards adoption and governance of the business consortium. Their participation ensures that protocols are commercially viable and scalable. Individual members are the practitioners: People join to access education, certification, and community. Crucially, they maintain credential sovereignty, meaning the standards for professional competence are defined by experts in the field, not dictated by corporate sponsors. This prevents the dilution of certification into a pay-to-play training scheme.

“AdCP allows the Open Web to approach the ease of transacting we see in walled gardens, without sacrificing its independence.”

— Benjamin Masse, Triton Digital

Because corporations are made up of many employees, they participate in AAO both as corporate entities and by enrolling and empowering their employees to participate in and benefit from their engagement in AAO’s working groups, councils, regional chapters, and education and certification offerings. By focusing on building a “big tent” with attractively priced corporate memberships, AAO will tap into the energy of a broad-based movement of professionals charting the agentic future.

This asymmetric dual-constituency membership and governance architecture we are recommending for AAO draws directly from the specific successes of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) and the International Association of Privacy Professionals (IAPP). These organizations demonstrate how to harness corporate resources without compromising the integrity of the profession.

Founded in 1963 with roots dating to 1884, the IEEE counts nearly 490,000 individuals (more than 150,000 in the United States) and more than 300 “entities” (corporations, universities, and government agencies) as members. Its work has profoundly influenced modern life; among the standards and protocols it has developed and nurtured are Wi-Fi (IEEE 802.11) and Ethernet. It is estimated that 98 percent of all internet traffic crosses at least one IEEE 802 network during its transmission. The association’s primary decision makers are individuals; corporations pay for the privilege of shaping technical protocols—which require commercial implementation to survive—while ensuring that individual members retain control over the organization’s bylaws and leadership. It manages technical standards through the IEEE Standards Association, which, while not separately incorporated, has its own Board of Governors.

The IAPP, founded in 2000, is the world’s largest global information privacy community, with 90,000+ individual members and over 1,400 organizational members in 155 countries. It does not engage significantly in technical standards development or oversight; its signal accomplishment is the professionalization of the privacy sector through its certification program, which IAPP has kept firewalled from interference by its corporate members, ensuring that certifications represent a level of competence that vendors cannot dilute or purchase. Companies are drawn to participate for their access to training and knowledge in an area of activity that is increasingly compliance sensitive.

Drawing from these and similar hybrid organizations' successes, AAO's governance model should explicitly separate "who pays" from "who decides" regarding professional standards. Research indicates that across hybrid associations, success relies on corporate affiliation with strict credential sovereignty. This means that while corporate members should vote on the adoption of technical standards—ensuring that the market will actually implement the AdCP protocol and its complementary protocols—they must be barred from defining professional competence. AAO should establish an independent Certification Council composed exclusively of individual experts. While corporate members may fund the development of the body of knowledge required for professional certification bodies, as companies they cannot vote on exam content, passing scores, or the revocation of credentials for ethical violations. This ensures that the "Certified Agentic Advertising Professional" remains a mark of genuine skill rather than a commodity.

To operationalize this hybrid model, we recommend that AAO consider a dual-entity structure. Put simply, we envision a 501(c)6 in which companies govern and individuals participate, and an affiliated 501(c)3 in which individuals govern and companies participate. This is a familiar model shared by numerous business organizations. (See Exhibit 8.)

"Agentic AI can become the connective tissue that lets creative and media work as one system."
 — Pia Malovrh, Celtra

Exhibit 8. Hybrid Trade and Professional Associations

Central/Parent Body	501(c)(6) Entity (Advocacy/Industry)	501(c)(3) Entity (Education/Research)	Asymmetric Functions
Project Management Institute (PMI)	Project Management Institute Inc.	PMI Educational Foundation	The (c)(6) manages the profession and member services, while the (c)(3) "independently" manages research and training.

National Association of REALTORS® (NAR)	National Association of REALTORS®	REALTORS® Relief Foundation / Related Foundations	NAR (c)(6) handles lobbying and ethics standards; foundations handle charitable grants and public education.
American Institute of Architects (AIA)	BSA/AIA (Local chapters like Boston)	The BSA Foundation	The (c)(6) connects members to the profession; the (c)(3) focuses on public design initiatives to improve lives.
Common Cause	Common Cause	Common Cause Education Fund	The (c)(6) is the "Action League" for advocacy; the (c)(3) is the "Education Fund" for policy research.

The 501(c)(6) "business league" will house the corporate membership, managing the AdCP protocol consortium, complementary technical development, and the working groups guiding their development, as well as any advocacy efforts to advance common business interests without violating antitrust laws. Parallel to this, a 501(c)(3) educational foundation can house the individual memberships and the Professional Certification Council. This separation ensures that the certification process serves the public interest — assuring safe, competent, and transparent AI usage — rather than the immediate commercial needs of the trade arm.

By adopting this asymmetric structure, AAO ensures that capital flows from the companies to build the infrastructure, while legitimacy flows from the individuals who hold credential sovereignty, preventing the appearance of capture.

The total addressable market for AAO is quite large. Globally, the core marketing workforce is estimated at 6.5 million individuals, with 2.5 million of them in the United States, according to the [American Marketing Association](#). A bit more narrowly, the [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) counts 495,400 men and women stateside working in advertising, public relations, and related services.

The company marketplace for AAO's services is equivalently robust. As of early 2026, there are approximately 3.64 million consumer-facing product and services companies in the United States with annual revenues above \$500,000 (about 14% of the world's total), according to the [U.S. Small Business Administration](#).

To be sure, the competition to represent their interests in marketing also is vigorous. An analysis of IRS Form 990 filings - the reports required of 501(c)6 and 501(c)3 nonprofits - indicates that there are 8,674 U.S. business associations serving marketing and media in the United States. Even when individual public media channels and tax-exempt religious media are filtered out, that still leaves 3,183 business leagues vying for the membership and participation of marketing professionals in the U.S.




Yet, reflecting the high degree of specialization of roles within marketing organizations, these business associations that represent brand marketers and the agencies, publishers, and technology suppliers that work with them also are fragmented. Most manifest the customary organization of this ecosystem into "buyers" and "sellers" of — and "intermediaries" facilitating transactions in — specific sets of marketing platforms and services. Interviews with more than 100 senior executives at brands, agencies, publishers, and technology companies and our survey of the more than 1,300 professionals who attended the launch event for the Advertising Context Protocol standard (AdCP) indicate overwhelming enthusiasm — 80% in favor — for a new, multi-polar organization for agentic marketing.

The AAO Vision

AgenticAdvertising.org was incorporated by its founders in late 2025 to amplify an existing movement of builders. The focus for the movement is on collaboration and education across the ecosystem, not advocacy within it. AAO exists to support members' as they create new industries, as well as transform existing ones.

Based on our discussions with more than 100 executives from brands, agencies, publishers, and tech companies, we have crafted the following Purpose, Vision, and Mission for AAO. These will continue to evolve as the movement grows. (See Exhibit 9.)

Exhibit 9: AAO's Purpose, Vision, and Mission

		
Purpose	Vision	Mission
To pioneer a more intelligent, human-centric advertising future through Agentic AI.	To be the definitive engine of the Cre(ai)tive Economy, where every brand and creator thrives through agentic collaboration.	To unite builders and thinkers to develop agentic solutions that pair the scale of AI with the power of human judgment.

Purpose statements address why an organization exists. They tap into members' emotional commitment as a renewal energy source. For AAO, this reflects members' excitement to build the agentic future together across functional disciplines and industry sectors. It reflects a shift in members' mindsets from authorship to orchestration.

Vision statements address what future the community is building together. They paint a picture of what success looks like when we get there. For AAO, this can be quantified based on the size of the community and the diversity of its membership. AAO is building a big tent including large and small brands across categories; holding companies and independent agencies; publishers across a broad set of consumer interests and industries; and established tech and data providers as well as new startups and MAMMAs that enable the agentic workflow.

The mission includes the community we serve and what specifically we will do for them, distinct from alternative organizations. For AAO, collaboration is at the core of the mission, shifting mindsets from buyers, sellers, and intermediaries, to building the standards, protocols, and educational services to lift up all members together. AAO's mission also emphasizes greater

balance across effectiveness and efficiency. It puts the focus on the consumer experience, and how agentic enables more holistic orchestration across the customer journey.

AAO Member Value Proposition

AAO member organizations are all part of a cultural movement where the energy of the members builds and flows. This movement is grounded in AAO's origins as an open-source development community for AdCP but has a broader energy source as AAO supports collaboration for a broader set of builders across brands, agencies, publishers, and tech companies. The movement encompasses a diverse set of roles across business functions, from marketing to technology to analytics to human resources to legal.

Culture is "how things are done around here," which can either raise up or drain peoples' energy. Cultures are reinforced through an organization's - or networks of organizations' - unique combination of mindsets, behaviors, relationship networks, and skills. This is why the connection between customer experience (CX) and culture is so important: The congruence of your CX with your brand promise reinforces an emotional connection and magnifies customer lifetime value. (See the website for Matt Egol's book and podcast, [The CX & Culture Connection](#).)

For AAO, this means fostering collaboration, more holistic thinking, and openness across brands, agencies, publishers, and tech companies. We think of AAO as embodying a cultural movement in business that rests on five pillars. (See Exhibit 10.)

Exhibit 10: Core Mindsets for the Cultural Movement

Boundaryless Collaboration
Members collaborate across brands, agencies, publishers, retailers, and technology companies to solve

Systems Thinking & Interoperability
Standards, patterns, and tools are designed to work across platforms and vendors, reducing complexity and enabling agentic systems to be assembled dynamically.

Openness & Sharing
Members share real use-cases, lessons learned, and reference implementations so learning compounds across the community and adoption accelerates.

Stewardship & Sustainability
Members act as stewards of trust, reliability, and governance in agentic and AI-driven marketing systems.

Inclusiveness And Respect
Leadership and influence come from what members build and improve, not titles, size of their organization, or how long you've been working in specific industries.

Boundaryless Collaboration

AAO has a bold agenda to help members reduce friction in their customer journeys and the millions of hours spent coordinating activities across their investments in paid, owned, and earned media, as well as to magnify the ROI of these investments. Agentic supercharges collaboration opportunities, as brands pursue innovation across ecommerce, shopper marketing, loyalty programs, and other collaborative efforts with ecosystem partners.

Systems Thinking & Interoperability

The evolution of work from authorship to orchestration requires a systems thinking mindset. It requires interoperability across agentic solutions to enable easier integration of data signals that power continuous optimization against business outcomes. Protocols and standards need to work across platforms and vendors, reducing complexity and enabling agentic solutions to be assembled dynamically.

Openness & Sharing

Members are approaching the community with what the psychologist Adam Grant of the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School, one of the world's most influential thinkers on organizational effectiveness, describes as a "giver mentality." "The most meaningful way to succeed," Grant says, "is to help others succeed."

Stewardship & Sustainability

Members need to uphold the highest levels of integrity with governance practices that reinforce trust. This includes developing standards for brand safety, protecting consumer privacy, and sustainability. (It is encouraging that the working group for governance is one of the most active within the AAO community.)

Inclusiveness and Respect

The way members show up with one another in working groups, councils, in-market pilots, and public discussions is central to boosting (rather than sapping) the movement's energy. Influence should result from the clarity of one's ideas and the way members work with one another.

These five shared mindsets are brought to life through specific behaviors that members practice. The energy of the movement flows through the relationship networks among the members. The skills of members will be further reinforced through the education and professional certification services provided through AAO and its network of delivery partners.

By focusing on culture and change management at an industry level, AAO is ensuring that culture doesn't eat its strategy for breakfast. The metaphorical river that AAO members are navigating and drawing energy from is not just powered by technological change, but the collective mindsets, behaviors, relationship networks, and skills of the members.

AAO will focus on four activities by which members can tap into the metaphorical river's energy as they collaborate with one another. (See Exhibit 11.)

Exhibit 11: Four Ways Members Can Tap into The River's Currents

Align	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participate in the development of standards and protocols• Collaborate on use cases that bring brands, agencies, publishers, and tech together• Increase awareness for a range of use cases across and within member organizations• Prioritize use cases to drive business value for members
Adopt	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Education across member organizations on how to be a builder in the Cre(ai)tive Economy• Support members in discovering and implementing agentic solutions
Accelerate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help members navigate the ecosystem to find and orchestrate productive agentic partnerships• Foster pilots/P.OCs for high value use cases
Amplify	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhance trust by getting member solutions certified (i.e., Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval within member directory)• Share success stories so that AAO can amplify them

Align

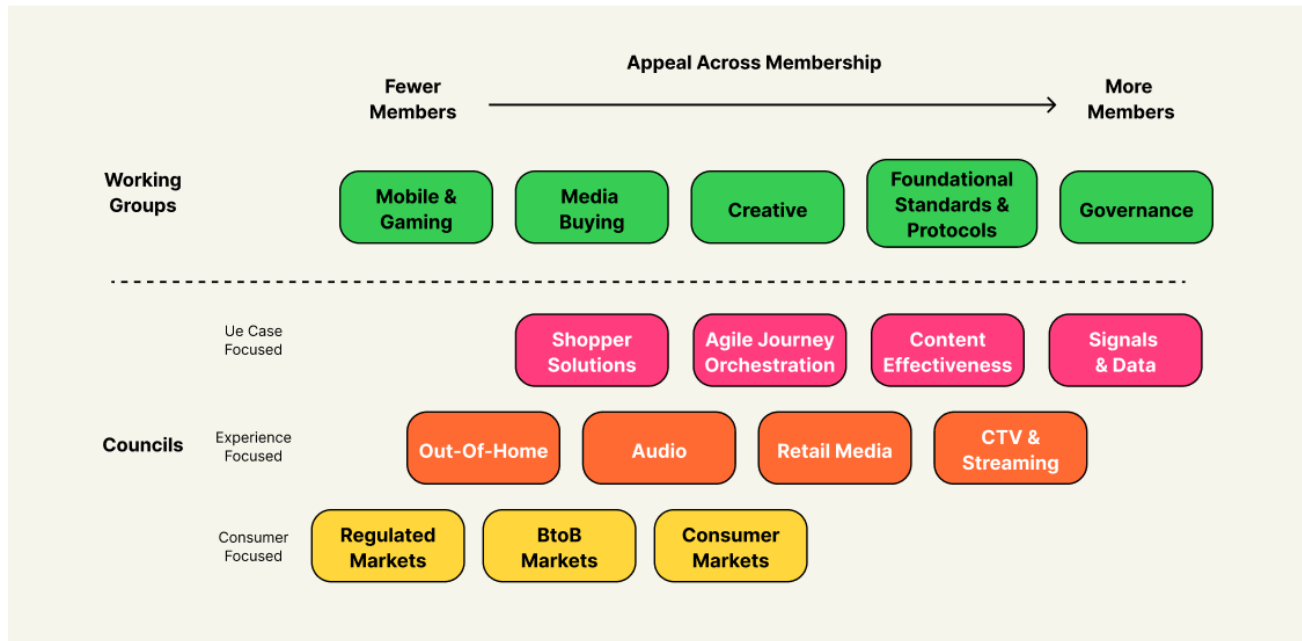
The member experience at AAO provides multiple forums for members to increase alignment with others for the development of protocols and standards, as well as the adoption of leading practices. Working groups are the primary forum for protocols and standards, building on and driving adoption of AdCP for successful implementations in the market.

Councils are the primary forum to foster collaboration beyond technical work, enrolling and engaging a broader set of stakeholders focused on thematic opportunity areas:

- Use-case focused councils (e.g., Content Effectiveness, Signals and Data, Agile Journey Orchestration, Shopper Solutions)
- Experience-focused councils that align to AdCP's value as the "nervous system" that operates above the execution layer and enables a more "stateless" approach, moving from transactional bidding to strategic portfolio management (e.g., CTV & Streaming, Open Web, Retail Media, Creator Economy, AI Surfaces, OOH)
- Customer-focused councils (e.g., Consumer Markets, BtoB Markets, Regulated Markets)
- Functional councils (e.g., Legal, Financial, Human Resources)

AAO will continuously assess where there is energy in the community to launch councils. Based on our conversations with 100+ current and potential members to date, we've developed an initial assessment of which working groups and councils will have the broadest appeal across the membership. (See Exhibit 12.)

Exhibit 12: Appeal of Potential Councils Across Membership



Not all the above will necessarily be launched; member interest will determine both the “if” and the “when.” Other groups will also emerge organically from conversations in the Slack community and become councils.

Beyond working groups and councils, regional chapters are forming globally based on member energy (e.g., New York, London, Paris, Hamburg, Amsterdam, Sydney, India, and Southeast Asia). These provide an additional forum for networking and sharing leading practices and success stories.

Adopt

AAO will reinforce engagement by current and prospective members, further showcasing success stories through thought leadership platforms (e.g., case study library, podcast, webinar series to showcase research and case studies).

Across the 100+ interviews and our survey of the broader 1,300+ community, there was strong support for AAO to provide education, training, and professional certification services for members. This will be particularly important to support the millions of builders employed at member organizations, including both employees of corporate members as well as those joining as individuals, as they progress on their learning journeys and maintain their credentials through continuing education.

There is currently a gap to address for member education for agentic advertising and marketing. AAO needs to move quickly to fill this gap in ways that reinforce trust across the ecosystem and help members reshape the work in their organizations. AAO will guide the professionalization of

agentic marketing by defining AAO's Body of Knowledge, establishing credentialing governance, structuring multi-track certification paths, and designing a scalable delivery model globally — while AAO retains authority over competence, ethics, and certification.

Members will have the opportunity to contribute to the development of curricula and certification requirements through a dedicated working group, as well as a series of interactive forums that AAO will organize to engage members globally. We envision a vibrant community of approved trainers that support members on their learning journeys, including members in academia, individual members providing training and consulting services, and corporate members' establishing train-the-trainer programs for their own or client organizations.

We will come back to the value proposition for corporate vs. individual members in the sections for Membership and Governance & Decision Rights.

Accelerate

The AAO community provides a marketplace for members to find others with whom to work to realize their own visions for agentic value creation. AAO will facilitate networking and ease of finding other members with the right capabilities through its member directory, as well as always-on support from Addie, AAO's bot, which provides an agentic-first member experience and taps into the institutional knowledge of AAO through its ability to synthesize across the collective conversations in Slack, on the website, and across meetings for working groups, councils, and regional chapters.

Amplify

AAO will reinforce trust through certification of members' claims in the directory, as well as through review of stories showcased across AAO's thought leadership platforms. AAO will rely on approaches leveraging AI and the involvement of members to do this in a scalable and trustworthy way.









Taken together, these four ways to tap into the river's currents will reinforce the desired mindsets, behaviors, skills, and relationship networks that make AAO's culture a source of strength and sustained energy for the movement.

Agentic Marketing Adoption Personas

Brands prize two distinct values in their marketing activity: effectiveness and efficiency. They measure these values with a growing set of data signals they access across the end-to-end customer journey. (See Exhibit 13.)

Exhibit 13: Optimizing Effectiveness and Efficiency with Data Signals

Consumer Journey Data Signals

<p> Content engagement (e.g., view/click-through, downloads, sign-ups, float-overs)</p> <p> Occasion signals (e.g., time of day, weather, location, trip to/from home or work)</p> <p> Deal-hunting (e.g., price checking, offer stacking, earn/burn of loyalty program rewards)</p> <p> Fulfillment experience (in-stock, delivery options, checking order status)</p>	<p> Purchase behavior (e.g., order frequency, brand loyalty, store loyalty, attachment rates)</p> <p> Social proof (E.g., ratings and reviews, influencer content, social shopping)</p> <p> Usage behavior (e.g., quantified self, beyond-the-product digital experiences)</p> <p> Conversations (messaging, social, chat, in-app, email, call center)</p>
--	---

Effectiveness Drivers

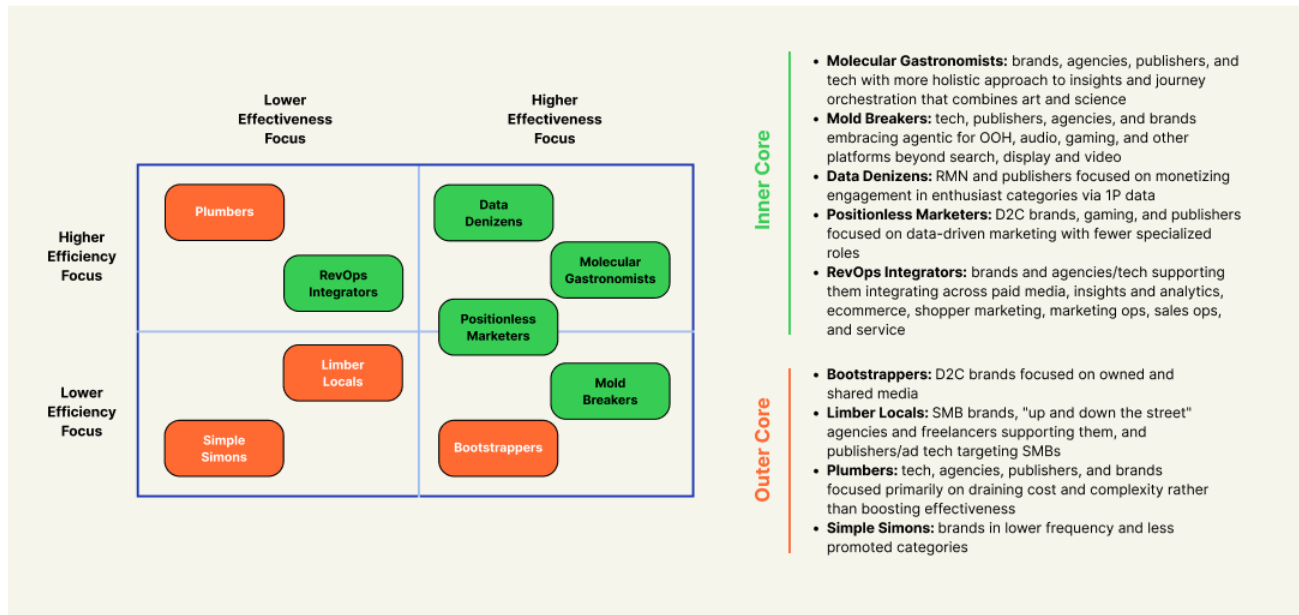
- DME breadth (% of total DME beyond paid media)
- Research and insights intensity (# experiments/year, # use cases/campaigns applying research and testing before campaign launch and post-event)
- Occasion-based marketing intensity (more drive periods, more frequent promotions)
- D2C intensity (% of sales to consumer vs. B2B2C or B2B)

Efficiency Drivers

- Ecosystem complexity (# agencies, # vendors in tech-stack)
- Media diversity (% spend on OOH, audio, gaming, and other platforms beyond search, display, and video)
- Insourcing vs. outsourcing (FTEs in house vs. reliance on agencies and other partners)
- Investment in own mar-tech stack (e.g., CDP, DAM, CRM, journey orchestration, etc.)

Yet brands are vastly different from each other. And compared with law, finance, manufacturing, and human resources, brand marketing is among the few major functions of the enterprise without a codified and credentialed body of practice. There is no singular, well-defined way by which brands weigh and pursue the collective value created by their effectiveness and efficiency drivers. Rather, we have found clusters of distinct personas that help categorize the different ways companies create value from their marketing activity. Understand these personas and you'll better understand how your brand (or, if you are a marketing supplier, your clients) can successfully onboard agentic marketing services. (See Exhibit 14.)

Exhibit 14: Inner-Core vs. Outer Core Personas



These are not demographic segments. They are not job titles. They are patterns of behavior, investment, and ambition. They represent the collective focus across individuals in an organization. As a professional intelligence collective, AAO will be a de facto implementation advisor to its members, helping them understand and instantiate leading practices in their companies. Understanding the members' different personas is central to accomplishing this part of AAO's mission.

Five of the nine personas we consider "inner-core"; these are our primary focus in designing the member experiences with and value derived from AgenticAdvertising.org. The four "outer core" personas also are important for understanding the structure and dynamics of the evolving marketing function, but these companies are more likely to be followers than leaders. Our design challenge is to serve the inner-core completely without losing the outer-core. This is doable because there are interests that align across them. What is common across personas is important, not just what makes them distinctive.

Inner-Core Personas

- Molecular Gastronomists:** These are the chefs of the marketing world: brands, agencies, publishers, and tech companies that combine art and science into a single, coherent practice. They don't optimize solely against the costs of ingredients and the labor to cook them. Marketing's Molecular Gastronomists elevate recipes. They don't choose between creativity and analytics. They fuse them.

As Evan Eckman from Chief Outsiders and former Global Marketing Director at Energizer puts it, "There was a time in CPG when merchandising was both an art and science. As Retail Media Networks have taken off, the science of marketing has overtaken the art of marketing.

The most successful brands use RMNs to amplify merchandising, not to avoid it. Agentic advertising creates an opportunity to reintegrate art and science at a scale never imagined."

- **Data Denizens:** These are the native inhabitants of first-party data ecosystems: retailers, publishers, and other businesses monetizing engagement in enthusiast and high-intent categories, from house and home to health and wellness, to sports and live entertainment. Data Denizens are broadening their use of search and browsing behavior. They are tapping into their consumers' total, experiential usage behavior, exploring the ways consumers engage with mobile devices at home, on the go, and in the store. They use that data to close gaps between media behaviors and shopping behaviors. They amplify influencer content and sharing on social media. They understand that value is not in the impression. It's in the relationship—and in the compounding intelligence that comes from serving that relationship well.

In an agentic economy, Data Denizens become critical hubs of signal, context, and activation.

- **Positionless Marketers:** These are the D2C brands, gaming companies, and digitally native organizations where the old silos never fully formed. They don't say, "That's not my job." They say, "Let's fix the system." Never having developed bad habits and the silos to house them, Positionless Marketers are comfortable moving between creative and analytics, between product and marketing, between media and experience design. As Northwestern University's Jim Lecinski puts it, marketers are "not only shifting from authorship to prompting and coding, they're also shifting from a rigid set of positions to a more flexible system of positions."

In an agentic world, where work is increasingly done by networks of humans and machines, positionlessness is not chaos. It is leverage.

- **Mold Breakers:** These are the pioneers in out of home (OOH), audio, gaming, and emerging platforms, using agentic solutions to tame the underlying complexity of cross-platform marketing. They are inventing the future in places where measurement is more complex, buying cycles are longer, and real-time bidding doesn't apply yet. Mold Breakers create upside in effectiveness and solve operational headaches in the process.
- **RevOps Integrators:** These are organizations focused on stitching together paid media, commerce, operations, and service into a single team that is accountable for growth and customer lifetime value. They are process-driven, systems-minded, and good at making the machinery run more smoothly. RevOps Integrators are more likely to be BtoB SaaS and services providers, but increasingly also include consumer marketers embracing subscriptions and as-a-service business models. Whatever their core business, they are looking to respond more rapidly and effectively to demand signals.

As Stephen Diorio, EVP Growth Strategy at Horizon Media and co-author with Chris Hummell of the best-selling book [*Revenue Operations: A New Way to Align Sales & Marketing*](#),

[Monetize Data, and Ignite Growth](#), shared in our discussion, “Agentic solutions are the next frontier of Revenue Operations to design, orchestrate, and continuously optimize experiences across the customer journey. Revenue Operations powered by agentic boosts growth and lowers cost-to-serve.”

In an agentic world, RevOps Integrators’ greatest opportunity is to refocus human effort on designing intelligence into the system and continuously optimizing experiences via a culture of experimentation.

Outer-Core Personas

- **Bootstrappers:** These are primarily D2C brands that have learned to survive and grow on owned and shared media. They have more focused investments in paid media, which are much more heavily concentrated in search, social, and commerce media. They are masters of content, community, and commerce. They punch above their weight in effectiveness, but they often do it through sheer heroic efforts, 24/7 energy substituting for the considered capabilities—building and organizational design that would systematize the enterprise and reduce the stress. Agentic systems promise Bootstrappers something magical: the ability to scale without losing their soul.
- **Plumbers:** These brands, agencies, publishers, and tech companies focus on draining cost, reducing friction, and making the pipes work. They bring order to chaos. But if their only goal is efficiency, it’s hard to get their growth flywheel spinning faster. Agentic tools can help Plumbers become builders again—if they choose to use them for more than just cost-cutting.
- **Limber Locals:** These are the SMBs, local agencies, freelancers, and others that serve them, which have fueled the growth of not only Google, Meta, and Amazon but publishers migrating local print, radio, and outdoor businesses from linear to digital advertising. They are resourceful. They are close to customers. They are also brutally challenging to serve profitably, as evidenced by the bruises and tombstones of companies aiming to create more scalable, nation-wide approaches to serving local markets. Agentic systems drain the complexity out of the system and turn services into software at lower costs. As agentic reduces the costs of serving Limber Locals, companies that previously sat on the sidelines are investing in innovative ways to better serve them. PubMatic’s Rajeev Goel describes how “agentic opens up opportunities across the entire supply chain in categories that have been foreclosed to us for years and years because it was just too expensive to serve them.”
- **Simple Simons:** Brands in low-frequency, low-promotion categories have had little urgency to build serious marketing or experience engines. For a long time, great product design and distribution did the work. That era is ending. While Simple Simons are much more likely to be followers than leaders, they can still play a role in shaping the agentic future. They can focus on specific moments that matter in the customer journey to reimagine the customer

experience. They can better leverage data signals to reach customers through more targeted advertising with the right shopper solutions.

What unites all these personas is a shared universe of data signals and a shift from authorship to orchestration. All of these personas benefit from standards and educational support to make the transition, enabling them to innovate and thrive in the [Cre\(ai\)tive Economy](#).

Not everyone will move at the same speed. Not everyone strikes the same balance across effectiveness vs. efficiency. But the direction of travel is clear.

And the most important question is what you are building, and how you can collaborate with the right partner ecosystem to realize this promising future faster.

AAO Strategic Roadmap & Organization Design

The end state vision for AAO is clear. It is to be “the place companies and individuals go to collaborate on agentic opportunities in advertising and marketing, educating their people and forging winning networks to thrive in the Cre(ai)tive Economy.”

Our interviews with 100+ brands, agencies, publishers, and tech companies, as well as our survey of the 1,300+ people that participated in the Zoom launch event for AdCP demonstrated clear alignment that the most important strategic priorities for AAO are further development of protocols and standards and driving adoption of leading practices for agentic advertising and marketing. Education and training are also key sources of value for members across the ecosystem, particularly for brands, agencies, and publishers (in that order of perceived importance). Focusing on these twin pillars is key to attracting and engaging a vibrant community of builders.

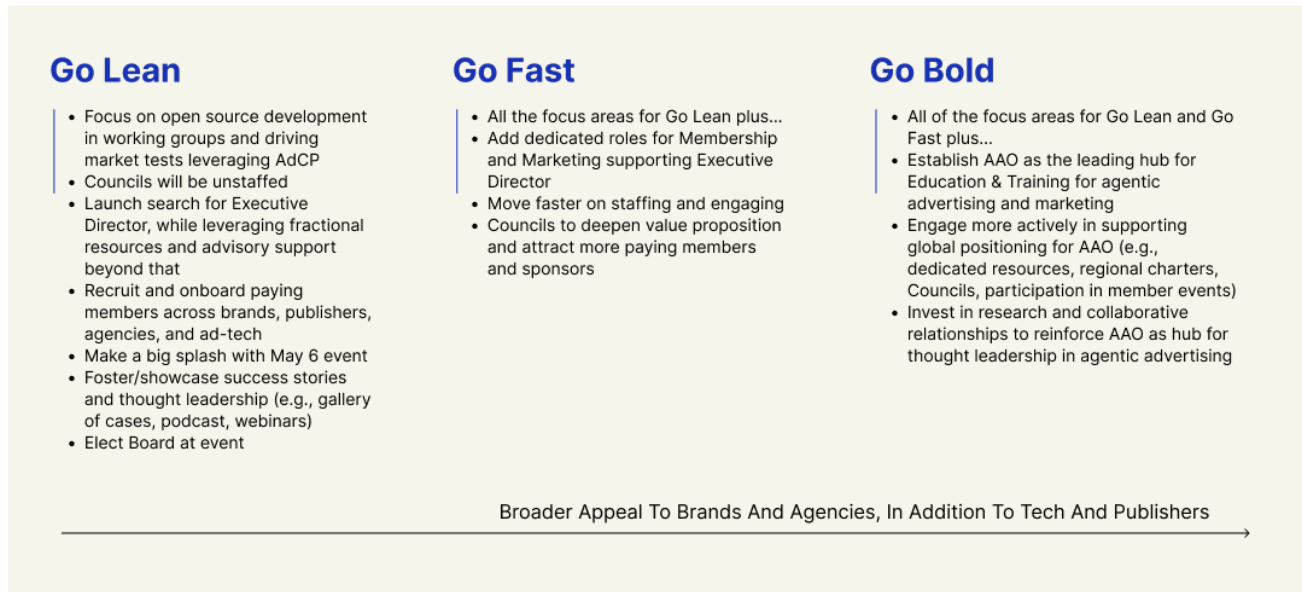
We considered other potential sources of value, such as research, public policy, and consumer protection. Research is valuable to members if it supports the twin pillars above in a differentiated way from research members get from other associations, academic institutions, consulting firms, and technology suppliers. AAO can pursue research selectively, in collaboration with members, other associations, and academic institutions.

Public policy is not a current strategic priority for AAO. AAO does not exist to serve the commercial interests of a particular industry, but rather to foster collaboration and upskilling across a broad cross-section of builders. However, consumer protection is relevant as part of AAO’s culture and the behaviors of members. We believe consumer interests are better served, at least initially, through a robust training, education, and certification program that commits people and companies to ethical, consumer-centric practices.

That said, the organization should remain open to having a lobbying presence if it determines that Federal or state policies might jeopardize consumer interests and/or economic competitiveness. Moreover, public policy will almost certainly influence the rules regarding data governance and data flows in AI marketing environments, which might be another spur to engagement in public policy by the organization.

Given these strategic priorities, AAO needs to make choices about its near-term focus to deliver the greatest value to members and manage its resources well. (See Exhibit 15.)

Exhibit 15: Strategic Options for AAO



The *Go Bold* option covers the full breadth of the end-state vision but requires greater investment in dedicated staff at AAO. It would have the greatest appeal to target personas across AAO's primary membership categories (brands, agencies, publishers, and tech companies). *Go Bold* would also provide the greatest value to the employees of member companies, as well as individual members.

At the other end of the continuum, *Go Lean* focuses more narrowly out-of-the-gate on protocols and standards, sticking more closely to AAO's founding ethos as an open-source development community for AdCP.

Go Fast increases the level of support for a larger number of councils, while also providing staffing support for them, in contrast to *Go Lean*, which relies on members' energy to self-organize these groups. In *Go Fast*, AAO would invest resources to curate, facilitate, and synthesize across councils. This would increase their value to members, encouraging a broader base of roles to engage at more senior levels beyond more technically focused participants.

Focusing initially on *Go Lean* or *Go Fast* would not preclude "shifting right" after initial momentum and as more resources are available as AAO has a broader financial base from memberships and sponsorships.

Given these priorities and the need to focus member time and AAO bandwidth as it ramps up the organization, *Go Lean* should be the focus through the first half of 2026. AAO should plan to "shift right" towards *Go Fast* and *Go Bold* as rapidly as practical, given growth in the member base and sponsorship support. (See Exhibit 16.)

Exhibit 16: Year 1 Priorities for AAO



AAO doesn't require a large team to pursue this roadmap. During the *Go Lean* stage of the stepping-stone roadmap, AAO will rely primarily on volunteer time from members, as well as advisory and freelance support. The most critical hire is an Executive Director, who needs to provide the right balance of skills, a strong relationship network, and be viewed as someone that represents AAO's full community of builders. The Executive Director will engage closely with the Executive Committee drawn from the board, as well as volunteer leads for the various working groups, councils, and regional chapters (see Governance & Decision Rights section).

As AAO "shifts right", it will add dedicated support for Membership and Education & Training. These roles will be critical to support AAO's purpose, vision, and mission globally, while tapping into the energy in the river fully through a strong member value proposition and vibrant culture.

Conclusion: Navigating the Agentic Frontier

The transition from the Programmatic Era to the Agentic Era is not merely a technical upgrade; it is a fundamental reorientation of marketing from authorship to orchestration. Our research confirms that the industry has reached a phase shift where the automation of transactions is being superseded by the automation of thinking, coordination, and experimentation.

The launch of the Advertising Context Protocol (AdCP) in October 2025 provided the connective tissue required to move beyond sporadic AI experiments toward a scalable, interoperable infrastructure. By acting as a stateful nervous system, AdCP allows the industry to move from high-frequency day trading of impressions to strategic portfolio management. We are witnessing the emergence of MAMMA engines—integrated systems that fuse creative strategy with media procurement to optimize for effectiveness rather than just efficiency.

The complexity of this new landscape demands a shift from traditional trade association models to a professional association framework. Like the IEEE or IAPP, AgenticAdvertising.org (AAO) serves as a neutral "big tent" that protects the integrity of agentic marketings' practice through certification and open standards, ensuring that human talent can responsibly govern autonomous systems.

AAO invites your organization to move from observer to builder. Whether you are a "Molecular Gastronomist" fusing art and science or a "Data Denizen" monetizing deep engagement, the choice is no longer whether to adapt, but whether to lead the standard or merely comply with it.

- **For Brands:** Move beyond the "Efficiency Trap." Transition from procuring cheap impressions to orchestrating high-value consumer journeys. AAO provides the framework to build internal "MAMMA" engines that link marketing spend directly to SKU-level business outcomes.
- **For Marketing Agencies:** Lead the "Rebundling." Agentic tools allow you to reintegrate creative, media, and measurement at machine speed. Use AAO standards to prove your value as a strategic "orchestrator" rather than a commodity labor provider.
- **For Publishers:** Reclaim your "Contextual Superpower." AdCP enables you to make high-impact, premium inventory discoverable to AI agents without the friction of legacy programmatic paths. It also enables you to value publishers' greatest contribution to marketing: the creation and maintenance of deep consumer relationships through your generation of consumer experiences. Join to showcase your full value, enhance your margins, and ensure your first-party relationships are valued fairly.
- **For Tech Companies:** Build the "Connective Tissue." Help define the interoperable protocols that will replace today's fragmented APIs. Participation ensures your tools are "AdCP-native," making them the default choice for the world's most sophisticated marketers.

The river is flowing swiftly.

Do not wait for the map to be finished before you start building your vessel.

Authors



Matt Egol

Matt is the host of The CX and Culture Connection podcast and author of the best-selling book by the same name. Matt is the founder of JourneySpark Consulting, where he works across industries helping companies build capabilities and cultures to become more customer-driven.

Prior to founding JourneySpark Consulting, Matt was a partner at PwC and Booz & Company, where he focused on culture-led transformation programs across marketing, sales, and service.



Randall Rothenberg

Randall is a partner in JourneySpark Consulting. Previously, Rothenberg was CEO and Executive Chair of the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB), the trade association for the digital media industry. He is a former CMO of Booz & Co.

Earlier in his career, Randall was an editor, reporter, and Advertising Columnist at The New York Times, and author of the critically acclaimed book "Where the Suckers Moon: The Life and Death of an Advertising Campaign."



JourneySpark
CONSULTING