

Amber: [00:00](#) How do you deploy technology as a marketer? Well, one good place to start is good old Mickey D's.

Lara Skripitsky: [00:05](#) Data is key, and being able to take that data and then use it to drive ROI, because technology's gift is the data, but if it's just there and you can't leverage it, you're not really changing the business or the footprint.

Amber: [00:16](#) Since the days of Ray Kroc, McDonald's has been using technology to improve experience and value for customers. They feed about one percent of the world's population every single day. And they not only created a whole new category, fast food, but they've managed to evolve with consumer tastes and trends to remain as iconic and omnipresent as ever.

I'm Amber Mac.

Brent: [00:39](#) And I'm Brent Chaters.

Amber: [00:40](#) And this is Marketing Disrupted. Brent, as a marketer, what does McDonald's represent to you?

Brent: [00:46](#) I think McDonald's is a really interesting use case. They're probably one of the, if not the biggest brand on the planet. Everywhere you go, if you say McDonald's, people are probably going to have that sense of the golden arches. And what I think is really interesting is not they're not just focused on brand, they've already kind of caught that thought capital. What they're really focused on is the experience. So the role of the marketer is also kind of changing, and it's not just about advertising and buying ad placement, it's about how do you as a marketer enable what that customer experience starts to look like from the drive thru, through the eating experience, back to your kid's birthday party, or whatever else you might be doing in that space. And so, I think it's a good way to start to think about how does a marketer start to provide different value to the organization that's not just about the traditional things that a marketer would do.

Amber: [01:38](#) Well, to go inside one of the world's biggest brands, here's our conversation with Lara Skripitsky, chief technology officer for McDonald's Canada.

Lara Skripitsky: [01:46](#) My role is really to lead the technology for the McDonald's Canadian system, so that's front of the house technology that's in the hands of our guests, like the mobile app, the kiosk, and

then back of the house technology, in terms of point of sale, back office, et cetera.

Amber: [02:02](#) Let's start a little bit with your history. We read that you are a self-described nerd, and you have had many roles in digital, so tell us how you got interested in this space.

Lara Skripitsky: [02:11](#) Well I was always, to your point, Amber, a bit of a digital nerd, and I guess it wasn't even digital back then, it was more sort of computer or internet. Was one of the first people at my university to go get an email address, back in the day. And then I moved into, and kind of stumbled into, through that passion of technology, into Double Click, which was just launching in Canada many moons ago, when internet advertising was really nascent, and found a passion there that really connected my love of marketing and then technology, or that sort of internet space.

And then from there, started to work with bigger corporations in terms of transforming their footprint, so worked with TorStar in terms of taking their content into the online space, Rogers, launching there Anywhere TV product, when things like Hulu and Netflix were disruptors on the space, and then moved on to Johnson & Johnson, where I did some brand work in terms of transformation into the econ space and just making them mobile first, and then landed at McDonald's, where I've been for four years.

Brent: [03:07](#) We look at lot, sorry, this podcast, we are looking at the role of marketing, and you know, kind of how it's transforming. When you think about your need to collaborate with the CMO, what does that look like? Can you kind of describe what that is?

Lara Skripitsky: [03:21](#) Yeah, I would say in the last probably five years, the world of marketing and technology are really one. And I think there's a stat somewhere, and I don't have the source to reference it, but about 25 percent of the marketing budget now is spent on technology. So, as the leader of the technology organization, I work hand in hand with my CMO, especially when we're looking at omnichannel experience, and how do we create that, because it's a brand experience across channels that ends in a ROI that is enabled through technology.

We're still in the process of architecting that omnichannel journey, we're not done by any sense of the imagination. We have our social channels, where we interact and react to our guests in that space, whether it's positive or negative. We have obviously the in-store experience, which is our more traditional

front counter and drive thru, we have the My McD's app, our mobile ordering offers, and now we've got coffee loyalty in there, so that is part of that omnichannel experience.

And then we have just our broader advertising channel. So all of those, when you look at it, one of the things I think that is a challenge we still face is we have a number of ... we've architected the omnichannel journey, and there's obviously still pieces that are growing outside of the existing channels, but it's syncing them and linking them and making it work for us in a way that we know who our guests are across all the channels, and they have a consistent experience. And I think that's where technology plays a key role. We're still working on it, but it is something that we see from a future potential perspective as enormous.

Brent: [05:00](#) Has that changed the way that you guys are thinking about data and how you surface it back up to drive that ROI up?

Lara Skripitsky: [05:04](#) Absolutely. The data piece for us is probably the biggest opportunity, from a brand perspective. And I think many brands are looking at that now, the conversation around data, and data's sort of the big word, and data, measuring data, having the right data, connecting the data points are key. We use our data, we have millions of transactions that go through our point of sale that are anonymous. We now have transactions going through our mobile app that are more personalized and customized, because we know who you are, we know when you ate at McDonald's, what you ate, how often you ate, and the stitching of that, our guest profile, is where it starts to translate into marketing ROI, because if we know who you are, and where you're eating, and what you're eating, then we can serve you up marketing to drive you into specific day parts, or into different menu items that have a higher average check attached to them. Or just things we know that you as a McDonald's guest are going to enjoy.

Brent: [05:58](#) It almost sounds like you've described a loyalty program, but in a whole different way of how loyalty is thought of. Has that changed kind of how you guys are engaging and thinking about your customer return in value?

Lara Skripitsky: [06:11](#) It has definitely changed the way we think about ROI, but it's still a very small piece of our business, because to grow that digital channel that gives us that unique guest identifier to tie to the transaction is a journey, it's not something that you flip on a mobile app overnight, and everyone comes to it and all the sudden that's your main interaction with the guest. So, it is

definitely something that we look at from an ROI perspective, but it's growing. So I wouldn't say it's making a huge impact on our business today, but I think what we know is to be in the game today, is table stakes for where we want to be in the future.

And when we think about loyalty, we have our, as you probably know, our McCafe sticker on the cup, which is the number one loyalty program in Canada. We've now brought that into the app, and that's the first step of taking that very rich emotional experience of loyalty into McDonald's, where we can now start to personalize it and make it an even richer, deeper, experience to drive brand affinity, brand value, brand trust, brand love, all of those key elements that we know long term are going to set us up to win.

Amber:

[07:15](#)

You've had a number of firsts in Canada, and it's amazing to watch some of the new technologies that you've been able to adopt, one being hiring people through Snapchat, and another being Google Assistant. Can you walk us through how that happens? Are you laying in bed at night, thinking, "Well, we've got to try this." Or what does that process look like from McDonald's Canada?

Lara Skripitsky:

[07:34](#)

Well from an innovation standpoint, you know, we have had some firsts, and it's excited to see that happen. We had a great reaction to the Snapplications initiative, to hire on Hiring Day. And I'll use the Google Assistant example. When we looked at the opportunity, we knew it wasn't going to drive the business incrementally in any significant way, because voice is still very very small in the Canadian space, but what we recognized, there were a couple of things. There was the ability to just get in and test and learn. And I think, when you think about how do you innovate, a lot of people sort of step back and say, "Oh, it's too much, and I don't know the space, and there's too much effort to get there." We just said, you know what? Let's just try it and see what happens.

The second piece that was sort of an added benefit was, from an internal team perspective, the folks that worked on that had an enormous sense of pride of that first, that technology first. We learned a lot along the way, in terms of how you have to architecture the back end technology experience of voice assistants. As we look forward, we're looking at how do you order from your car? How do you order at the drive thru through voice? So this is our first step, it wasn't meant to ever drive ROI, and I think that's probably one of the things that I

think is really important, is if you place the burden of ROI on every piece of innovation, you're going to be slow to innovate.

Amber: [08:52](#) Can you just explain how Google Assistant works with McDonald's, just so we have that from you, as far as what it does?

Lara Skripitsky: [08:58](#) So in the My McD's app, there are offers on a weekly basis that vary across the country, that our guests can go in, and sometimes it's a buy one get one junior chicken, or it could be 50 percent off a McFlurry. What we did, working with our partners, at our agency at OMD, and then some third party partners, was when you wake up in the morning, you can say to Google, "Hey Google, talk to McDonald's."

And the first time, it just determines where you are, because the offers do vary across the country. It has to know where you are specifically. Once that's set, that's sort of one and done, and then it will walk you through the different offers. So it's just a fun way for people to interact with the brand. I think we're still working on the tone and the feel of that experience, because it's still very, "You have a junior chicken, would you like to hear more?" You know? That voice just needs to develop a little bit, but you can do it through your Google Home, your Mini, and you can also do it through your phone, through Google Assistant.

Amber: [09:53](#) Thank you.

Brent: [09:54](#) It sounds like you've got a lot of talent that's supporting this. So when we think about kind of driving ROI, it's not just about the technology investment, it's also the investment into your team and your talent, and making sure that they're getting the best, you know, the thing I hear the most is, "We have a Ferrari, we're not driving it, it's in the garage."

How do you make sure that your teams are staying ahead of that? How do you manage your talent so that you maximize the return on your technology investments?

Lara Skripitsky: [10:17](#) It's a great question. The first thing McDonald's did when it decided to embark on this digital transformation, I guess it's now four years ago, was we brought in some folks from the outside, who had existing experience. And I think that's often when you look at more established brands who have been doing things in a very similar way for a number of years, that's the first thing, is you need to bring in some folks who have

existing experience and then set them up for success within the organization.

In terms of how do you keep them on top of that? That's a real challenge, because I think the day to day grind of getting things done within a company like McDonald's for example, can sometimes supersede the ability to continue to learn and grow in the space. Where we rely on agency partners, you know, they have a lot of time and experience and see that. But also, you know, my team, we keep abreast of growing technology through, you know, listening to podcasts, or ensuring that they have some time set aside to drive innovation, and setting that time aside in a very concentrated way to allow them to go to the conference that they need to go to.

We just acquired Dynamic Yield, which is a big acquisition for McDonald's in the artificial intelligence space, and it's a huge learning curve for a lot of people in the technology organization, even just McDonald's broadly, and you know what is AI, and how does it apply to McDonald's, in terms of suggestive sell, or supply chain traceability?

So we have to educate the entire organization, but especially my team. So you know, conferences, learning, peer conversations, all of that just to drive that is really important, because to your point, we're building a Ferrari, we don't have the Formula One driver, I don't even know if that's a relevant reference, but if we don't have that Formula One driver to drive it, we're gonna be sitting at the start gate.

Amber:

[12:01](#)

How do you determine success then? You know, in terms of trying out some of these new technologies, and because so many organizations are focused on return on investment, how do you measure what you've done?

Lara Skripitsky:

[12:15](#)

I think ROI is a great thing, but I think sometimes it can be dangerous a little bit because we live in such a measurable age, increasingly more so. You know, you can measure year over year, month over month, day over day, hour over hour, and I think if you take a look and really just focus on ROI from an immediate perspective, you lose potentially the opportunity to grow the brand from a longer term perspective.

So we do measure ROI, absolutely, you know, we look at conversion through funnels, we look at sales impact, we measure ROI through things like brand value and affinity for brand and the brand that I trust and measures that we feel are important to grow McDonald's as a brand. But, I think when we

think about ROI, as we look down that longer road towards brand value and driving sales, ultimately it is something that we look at how are we investing in our scale? And how we do in scale for good activity, you know? Sustainability efforts, or supporting our very significant charity, Ronald McDonald House, across the country.

So, ROI for us is not necessarily entirely data driven, and "Okay, we did this campaign and it drove this many sales," but is it contributing to the greater good of the McDonald's brand value, and what does that look like?

Brent: [13:34](#)

And you talked about Dynamic Yield, could you explain a little bit about what they are and what they mean to you?

Lara Skripitsky: [13:39](#)

Dynamic Yield was one of McDonald's biggest acquisitions in over 20 years. It was a \$300 million-dollar acquisition, a huge step forward for the company, and really, it was our putting a stake in the ground and saying that we believe technology is a key driver of our experience of the future for McDonald's. And Dynamic Yield is a machine learning, artificial-based company that works with many brands across the world. We are not certainly the first brand to work with, and they will continue to work with those brands. But the reason we acquired them is the sophistication that they bring in terms of machine learning and artificial intelligence, if you can imagine how that might play into McDonald's and one of the first we're ruling out is the drive-thru, where we have digital drive-thru menu boards.

When that car pulls up to the drive-thru, instantly at a store level in real time the Dynamic Yield artificial machine learning based algorithm is going to pull in things like time of day, weather, trends at the restaurant, how busy is the kitchen and what could they serve up, and then determine based on the basket that's being built, what can we upsell from a suggestive sell perspective?

So during complex times of the day, we'll serve up something that's easier to make so the kitchen can push that through. At less complex times of the day, you would maybe serve up a higher priced item, a more premium Angus burger as an example, but it's really bringing the ability for us to react in real time and give our guests a better experience while driving the business.

And then from there we'll move to the mobile app, we'll move to the kiosk, we'll move to the interior menu boards, and then there's even a broader piece around a more traceable supply

chain, efficiency in the kitchen. All these things that are really important business metrics where, you know, data based machine learning can really contribute to success.

Amber:

[15:27](#)

I'm thinking about the customer experience at McDonald's and imagining myself when I was a child going to McDonald's and thinking about going to McDonald's now, and I would argue that those experiences don't feel all that different in some ways. Can you talk a little bit about how you believe that technology and digital tools will enhance the experience for the customer? Is it okay that I don't notice that, that it's happening, or do you imagine that the customer experience is different?

Lara Skripitsky:

[15:52](#)

When I think about customer experience for McDonald's, there's a couple of things there. I think the experience changes that technology has enabled that are more overt, like the kiosks, the standalone kiosks, the big screens when you walk in the restaurant, we're offering our guests more ways to interact with us and order with us. So the kiosk is one.

A really great example that I like to use is the ordering through the MyMcD's app. So there's four ways you can pick up your food. You can go to the front counter, you can go to drive through, but the two that are really interesting for me in terms of customer value is curbside and table service. So if you're a mom who has a sleeping baby in the car and you just want to get a coffee and a muffin, you can pull into the parking lot, park in a parking spot, order your coffee and a muffin and they'll bring it to the car for you.

So when you think about what that does from an experience perspective, there's an emotional attachment there that sort of creates that brand affinity and love similar to, you know, I have kids, when I go into McDonald's it's busy. Like, you're standing in line with a bunch of people trying to order. Now I can go in and say okay, everyone go sit down at the table, and now we're going to order. Or go play in the PlayPlace and I'll order the food and then it'll be brought to the table.

So that's the more overt pieces of the experience that I think is creating value for our guests, and that ties back to our very high level objective of creating delicious feel good moments that are easy for everyone. So technology plays a role there, absolutely. I think the less overt things are, you know, how are we making the kitchens faster, how are we getting food out fresh and hot? With McDelivery, which is, you know, ultimately a technology driven experience but it's third party enabled, how do we let you interact with McDonald's when, where, and how you want?

Brent: [17:29](#) It sounds like you've got no shortage of ideas and, you know, innovation. How are you prioritizing like ... what's the next thing? How are you taking in those ideas and then how do you start to bring them to life?

Lara Skripitsky: [17:40](#) That's a great question. There are a lot of opportunities for sure. I think we put them into slightly different buckets, I think ... taking the Google example, Google Assistant as an example, that was a pure innovation play. It wasn't meant to drive sales, it wasn't meant to reach millions of Canadians. It was purely about how do we continue to learn and innovate in the space and move that forward.

When we get into larger, more technology driven decisions that are meant to drive the business we will look at, you know, basic stuff like ROI, potential for this to be a longer term play versus a short term play because there's often low-hanging fruit that's quick wins but low impact and short term, and when we're building out our technology footprint, as we invest in things like e-commerce engines and you know, things like machine learning hardware and our infrastructure, we need to make sure that what we're architecting that for has long-term payback and long-term potential for the business to grow and continue to build on.

Amber: [18:41](#) Just thinking about some of our listeners who may not work in large organizations like McDonald's and may not be able to experiment at that level where they don't have to worry about ROI, can you talk from your experience about where you see the opportunity for everybody who is in this space today, who can leverage digital tools, to be able to try new things? What do you think that people listening should do if they're thinking okay, you know what? I hear about all this new tech, how do they prioritize what they're supposed to do?

Lara Skripitsky: [19:09](#) I think the first thing to do is do an assessment of where you are overall in terms of your digital fluency or your digital capabilities and once you are there, there's a couple of areas that are important to get from a table stakes perspective. Obviously, if you're listening to a podcast you're probably already in mobile but if you aren't and you don't have a great mobile experience, my advice is be great in mobile, because that is the ultimate destination for where I think brand technology transformation begins. You have to be great in mobile to be able to start.

Then as you move forward I think the tools that are out there, there are some really low hanging fruit. How do you take some of the testing capabilities and the real-time feedback channels

of digital technology to allow you to test creative in real time? We have a ... or even be more relevant in the space using technology. One great example I can give, and again it's a bigger brand example but I think you can pull this down to a smaller brand example, is we have Monopoly across the country every year, one of our biggest promotions. What we wanted to do was convey in real time the winners, but it's impossible to create two, three, four hundred ads in real time, so we created some video templates and then fed in through a simple script the winners as they happened. So we created 500 video ads of people creating their Monopoly success in real time based on a very low effort of creating sort a standardized template.

So if you boil that down into ... where technology really plays a role from my perspective is how do you leverage that real-time ability to connect and drive the business, at the same time keeping the effort and the resource low. Probably high effort to get going, but once you hit your stream, you can really leverage and optimize that.

Brent: [20:59](#) You have an extremely strong technology background. If you were to give advice to marketer who was maybe less technology savvy, what would be the things that you would say, go spend your time on X, Y, or Z as it relates to the STEM space, technology as a whole?

Lara Skripitsky: [21:16](#) Well, given technology overnight seems to change, one of the biggest things when people say to me, "Well, what should I get better at or what do I need to know?" Data is key, and being able to understand data and architect data and bring solutions together that stitch it across the channels like I talked about earlier, it's key, and one of my biggest challenges I think at McDonald's when I look at it from a technology perspective, we have all the tools in place right now, but I think what's missing from a marketing perspective, and we continue to upscale all of our team, is how do you take that data and then use it to drive ROI. Because technology's gift is the data, but if it's just there and you can't leverage it, you're not really changing the business or the footprint. So, get great at data, learn how to ... figure out how to drive the marketing channels capability and also the reach that they can deliver using that data.

Brent: [22:16](#) And as you see a proliferation of that data, do you ever worry that there's like so much data you almost end up with like, data paralysis or analysis paralysis, and not able to distill out the right ideas, and if so then kind of how do you break through that?

Lara Skripitsky: [22:31](#) We absolutely have paralysis by analysis on a daily basis because we have gobs of data, like it's just coming from every angle. We have social data, we have POS data, we have the technology data, we have supply chain data, we have financial forecasting data, and trying to map that all together is really, really difficult. I think where we have had some success is really focusing on what is the objective you are trying to drive, or what's the goal you're trying to get to, and then find a couple of data sources that are the top two or three and stitch those together. Because if you try to map the whole ecosystem from top to bottom and create a funnel that just keeps flowing through and driving results through that, you're going to literally die on the sword for that because it's just not going to happen.

Amber: [23:21](#) I just have one last question for you, and this is kind of a simple question but you might have a long answer for this one. What is it that you like most about your job?

Lara Skripitsky: [23:32](#) When I joined McDonald's, what was uniquely appealing to me was the ability to drive the marketing transformation through digital channels. So I had had a lot of experience in driving social media and websites and mobile and all the different areas that marketing brings. So like when you think about digital, what was really unique for me was this massive brand that touched millions of Canadians on a daily basis, and the ability to transform that brand and bring things like digital capabilities. You think about mobile, or kiosk, and touch, the way that this iconic brand is interacting with and building love and affinity and passion for the business through Canadians was really, really unique.

Obviously it's ... there's a lot of weight behind McDonald's. So, you know, we have big budgets. We don't always move as quickly as we would like to because we are such a big brand, but I think the sheer scale of it was really interesting. And the ability to see it in real time, right? Like we launch a mobile app and the next day it's in the hands of hundreds of thousands of Canadians who are using it, providing feedback, both positive and negative, our guests are very honest with us, and we ...

The other thing that was really interesting ... and it's a bit of a long answer, was the ability to have a key stakeholder group like our owner-operators who ... these are the men and women who run and operate and own the McDonald's, so it wasn't just the corporate making the decision. You know, at Johnson & Johnson we decided to change websites and they changed. With McDonald's, there's a very interesting stakeholder group

that we have to influence so that's really, really challenging and never a dull moment for sure.

Brent: [25:21](#) And my last question. As you think about ... or as you've talked about technology, right, and we've been talking about marketing, we haven't really been talking about websites, we haven't really been talking about social, we've been talking about the experience when you go through the drive through, the experience that you have online. How are you thinking of technology in terms of how it's enabling marketing -- like we hear this term of MarTech, and it's very much locked into kind of a specific area ... you guys are thinking of it in a much bigger space. So when you think about omni, like what are the technologies that you think are kind of core that any business should have and how should they be using them?

Lara Skripitsky: [26:01](#) One for us that's become increasingly more important, as it should be, is when I think about the mobile app, we have more Canadians registered and using our mobile app on a monthly basis than Canadians that watch the Super Bowl. So when you think about that from a marketing technology perspective, as we continue to invest in the technology in the mobile space and becoming more sophisticated, we have, you know, millions of Canadians who put up their hands and said, "I want to interact with McDonald's and I'm going to do it through this channel." So they're bought in, they're leaned into McDonald's. It's a much more effective spend to market to those guests than, you know, the broad sweep of where we would pay you know, a million dollars or so to be on a Super Bowl primetime ad.

So that's one spot I think is where the MarTech piece of that. The other piece is ... when you think about loyalty and you know, we're looking at how do we bring loyalty into the app? We've got it in there now in a very sort of basic way, but how do you continue to grow that experience? The technology stack there needs to understand the marketing inputs in order to be able to drive that. What I mean by that is it's not just, okay well we need to have an e-commerce platform and an offers engine that will process our offers and a little bit of data intelligence from a data mining perspective. It's how do we connect that with the front end part of the funnel or the front end advertising piece so that the back end piece of the technology can actually feed the analysis and then the eventual, you know, net win of we're driving more sales, we're getting more guests to the restaurant, et cetera.

Amber: [27:44](#) Brent, in our conversation with Lara, what surprised you the most about McDonald's strategy?

Brent: [27:49](#) I think the biggest thing is that we didn't really talk about traditional channels. We really talked about how McDonald's is starting to evolve the way that they're using technology in ways to connect with their customers. So somebody goes through the drive through, they order that cheeseburger, and in the time it takes to order that cheeseburger, they're crunching numbers behind it. They're creating apps that have more resonance than the Super Bowl game. And so what this really does, what this means to us as marketers is that you're creating new channels. These are channels that didn't exist before, and they're thinking about ways to utilize and leverage these, to drive better... Not just better shareholder value, but better consumer experience and outcome, and also creating better brand affinity, so that I can actually start to connect with that brand through channels that McDonald's directly owns.

Amber: [28:39](#) Right. Okay. Okay. Of course McDonald's isn't the only game in the quick serve restaurant space. Maybe you don't have one of the world's largest corporate IT budgets at your disposal, so how can you implement tech to help? We reached out to Twitter for some intriguing suggestions. No, I didn't ask my followers on Twitter, but if you want to follow me, it's @AmberMac. Instead, we spoke to Diana Helander, the Head of Marketing for the Twitter developer platform. How can Twitter help a marketer?

Diana Helander: [29:09](#) I think first of all, it really depends on where a brand is. And what I mean by that is that some brands are much further down the path of digital maturity than others, right? And so depending on where you are, the first step would really be to listen--to listen to that audience. What we find is that the conversation that's happening amongst audiences on Twitter is a conversation with audiences who are actively engaging with each other and with brands. So, 79% of those Twitter users follow brands, and 53% recommend products and services to friends and family. So these are audiences, communities that are receptive, they're relevant, they're looking for new experiences and they're in a discovery mindset. They're not just leaning back and waiting to be entertained.

So, important for brands to start listening, and that could be indicative... Or that can help surface things like a problem, or an opportunity. By listening and stepping in quickly, brands can help identify something newsworthy or, if needed, remediate an issue. But that's just a first step.

I think following on from that is active engagement with those audiences. So whether it's for brand voice marketing

campaigns, or customer service, you know, engaging in that conversation and doing so in an authentic way, for lack of a better description. So a nice way of kind of applying some of those insights but in an area that isn't necessarily owned, let's say, by marketing.

Brent: [30:56](#) And just to shift the conversation a little bit more to the customer side, as we've seen the rise of technology, the rise of social, how do you see that changing the way that customers are expecting to engage with brands? What's shifting in the power between the consumer and the brand? How do you expect brands to start to respond to that?

Diana Helander: [31:19](#) Yeah, well I think there's been plenty of conversation about how the consumer really drives the brand. So, brands are not in as tight control of their brand image, and I think that's in large part because of the dynamics that we've seen as a result of people engaging on social and the speed at which consumers expect to engage with a brand.

I remember a few years ago, the data points were something like consumers expected a response on Twitter from a brand in under an hour, and I think that has changed even since then and gotten shorter. So, that kind of expectation is hard for brands to live up to and to scale for, and one of the ways to do so is to really consider how... Going back to customer experience, how their customer experience may be different depending on what channel they're communicating with their customers on.

So, a good illustration of that, we've all had the experience of dialing into a call center, right? And your experience there is going to be very different than you posting on Twitter let's say, that you're having a problem. Your expectation on Twitter is that problem should be resolved quickly by the brand. The brand should acknowledge you. And as opposed to sitting online with a call center care agent, who may have a dedicated script that they need to go through, the social interaction, the assumption is always it's going to be more organic if you will, and there are lots of great examples of brands that do a fantastic job of embracing a more customer centric, fun in some cases, voice. You can think of Wendy's as a great example there.

Brent: [33:17](#) Can you tell a bit about what Wendy's is doing, and what's sort of different?

Diana Helander: [33:22](#) Yeah. I think one of the things that they do is they really try to have a conversation with their audience. So, they do some fun things around asking people how they're doing. They have a

very unique brand voice. It's very playful, and they call out their competitors sometimes but it actually ends up in kind of a playful back and forth. So, there's some fun interactions between Wendy's and other quick meal change, QSR's if you will.

Brent: [34:02](#) The companies that get it. Is there an example of a company that you guys might have partnered with where you thought, "Wow, that was a really impactful campaign? That was a really great way to connect with their customers?" And kind of what did they do differently? And what do you think other businesses could learn from that?

Diana Helander: [34:16](#) I'm going to share one with you which is really recent, I just found out about this. Another partner of ours, Sprinklr, helped Chick-fil-A use AI to spot signs of foodborne illness from social media posts. And when they did this, they were able to spot these issues that might have come up in their various outlets with 78% accuracy. That's pretty extraordinary. I mean it's not a use case that I would have necessarily expected, but it certainly goes to show that it's not just about marketing, that clearly has an impact on operations and some of the other groups within the organization. It's not just about campaigns.

And let me give you a good example there that actually is a non-profit, if you will, and a government example, because I thought this one was really interesting and it had some good application to the commercial world. NASA. NASA has some pretty unique challenges. One is to tap into the curiosity about space and tell meaningful stories to that audience that cares about that topic. But two, and this is what really caught my attention, is to grow their audience without any paid promotion because that means that they would be paying with taxpayer money. So as a government organization, they have to do all of their growth organically.

And so what they've done is to audit their social audience, and identify that that audience included some very passionate fans who cared about sound. NASA had been sharing pictures of space, and some of them were lovely, but when they found this out, they were able to leverage the insight to create a SoundCloud account to help these people understand and hear what space sounds like, which is kind of a cool extension, right? Now you're tapping into a real passionate group of people in a very different way.

And then beyond that, the way that they've grown their social presence is by looking at communities that care about

something related to what NASA actually does. So in space, having clean water is important, right? And so water filtration systems are something that NASA has invested in. But water filtration systems are now... That were developed for space, are now being used on our planet, and that's something that has tremendous impact on lots of communities around the world, not just the community that's interested in space exploration. NASA has tapped into that group, and grown their audience. Amongst a group of people who may or may not what they're care about what they're doing for space, but they do care about water.

Amber: [37:25](#) Brent, I think this really shows you that there is a lot that you can do right now when it comes to organic content online, also leveraging things that are happening in the news.

Brent: [37:34](#) Yeah, I think there's a few takeaways. As we often talk about paid media, we really often don't talk about earned and owned. And so if you think about what NASA was doing with Twitter, the ability to really own and earn tweets, and viewership, and starting to expose your brand in different ways, I think the biggest thing that marketers should be doing today is thinking about creative ways to really tap into those two areas. Because the biggest question I get is, how do I effectively double my ROI? And the easy answer is, well go double your budget, but that doesn't really double your ROI, that just effectively gives you more dollars.

The real answer is you're going to double it by either driving more earned, or more owned traffic, and volume, and eyeballs. They're going to lead to the outcomes you're looking to build towards.

Amber: [38:26](#) On our next episode of Marketing Disrupted, we look at the gaming industry, particularly the Ontario government's colossal OLG, one of the biggest gaming brands in the world. How do they make you feel good about losing the lottery?

Randy Weyersberg: [38:40](#) Most people will lose. However, part of the engagement is, how are you feeling about that purchase, especially after you read that your numbers didn't come up this week? And so hence there is an opportunity to create a messaging that brings you back into the game. One of those messages that we do know works very hard, and is a motivation to purchase, is what are we doing with the proceeds, as part of the Ontario government, that come from the lottery, which last year was over \$2.5 billion? So, we talk about the good of giving back to the

community, and we know that the under 35, who have more of a cause and purpose mindset, that resonates with them.

Amber: [39:19](#) All that and much more coming up on Marketing Disrupted. I'm Amber Mac.

Brent: [39:23](#) And I'm Brent Chaters.

Amber: [39:24](#) Thanks for listening. Marketing Disrupted is a production of Antica Productions and eOne. It's produced by Stuart Coxe. Music by BoomBox Sound. And this podcast is supported by Accenture.