15 YEARS OF FORESIGHT STRATEGY

FORESIGHT ROUNDTABLE EXPERT PANEL

15 YEARS

THE FORESIGHT ROUNDTABLE

Celebrating fifteen years by looking ahead to the next fifteen months — with the marketing leaders shaping what comes next.

FORESIGHT STRATEGY

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THE FORESIGHT ROUNDTABLE

AI Is Everywhere. Human Judgment Is More Important Than Ever.

At Foresight, we're celebrating 15 years by looking ahead to the next 15 months. We brought together senior marketing and analytics leaders from Fortune 500 leading brands around the world and asked them about the challenges we're all wrestling with — consumers, technology, and the shape of growth ahead. Candid, insightful, and occasionally polarized, what they told us should make every CMO a little uncomfortable. And excited for what's to come.

Executive Summary

The strongest areas of agreement were that sustainable growth can no longer rely on price increases alone. It must come from stronger relevance, volume, new consumers and occasions, innovation, and sharper execution. Brands need to stay close to consumers, adapt quickly, and connect brand strategy with commercial choices across channel, pack, and price. AI will deliver immediate efficiency, but its greater long-term value will come from improving consumer understanding and decision-making. Human curiosity, judgment, and cross-functional collaboration become more important — not less — as data and AI become widely available. There was also broad agreement that an insight is only strategic when it changes a decision, that sponsorships must begin with measurable business objectives, and that future leaders need agility grounded in foresight and clear growth fundamentals.

The main differences were largely matters of emphasis rather than fundamental disagreement. Some placed greater weight on emotional brand equity, while others saw product performance, price, and availability becoming more decisive. Views also vary where AI will create the most value: efficiency, creativity, consumer understanding, or commercial decision-making. Consumers were seen as both price-conscious and willing to pay premiums, depending on relevance, occasion, and execution. Sponsorship visibility still mattered to some, but most emphasized measurable commercial impact. Overall, the tension was between enduring brand-building principles and the growing importance of immediate, precise commercial execution.

TOPIC 1

What Separates Growing Brands from Stalling Brands

In an increasingly volatile economy, what separates brands that keep growing from brands that stall?

WHAT WE HEARD

Growing brands stay pointed outward. They solve a real consumer problem and make the case for value well beyond low price. Product quality, relevance, innovation, cultural connection, disciplined execution, and adapting quickly are all essential. Balancing short-term performance with long-term brand building, they protect their core consumers and unit growth and keep pack-price architecture and channel strategy moving with the market.

> **Brands that stall become too internally focused. The ones that grow stay externally obsessed. ... It's about adapting without losing your identity.**
>
> — **ELENA PINAKATT**, Partner & CMO, Monoceros

Brands stall when they turn inward — rigid, over-promotional, leaning on price increases and cost cuts to manufacture growth. The winning formula pairs an enduring brand promise with commercial flexibility, disciplined investment, and a willingness to reinvent how growth gets delivered.

> **There is not and never will be a substitute for a great product. And marketing can't get you out of that problem.**
>
> — **REBECCA MESSINA**, Global CMO; Senior Advisor, McKinsey & Co; Board Member; Advisor

> **I'm not sure brands are actually growing. I think companies grow by managing their product portfolio and product efficacy.**
>
> — **JEFF HUNTER**, Innovative, analytically driven, market validated, growth strategies for B2C | Ex Consumer Insights Senior Director at General Mills

THE FORESIGHT POV

Sustainable growth follows a disciplined sequence: define what to achieve, decide where to play, and establish how to win. It starts with absolute clarity on the business target — revenue, volume, profit, or some combination. From there, look beneath surface-level trends to understand real market dynamics, identify the highest-leverage opportunities, size them, and choose the combination that can close the gap between today's performance and your ambition.

Each priority then earns a precise plan: which consumers and occasions to address, which needs and benefits to own, and how to turn those choices into channel strategy, pack-price architecture, and execution. Growth gets far more predictable when strategy and commercial delivery are connected.

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TOPIC 2

Consumer Behavior and Future Sources of Growth

What surprised you most about consumer behavior over the past few years, and what do most marketers still misunderstand about where growth will come from?

WHAT WE HEARD

Consumers are resilient but far more selective. They trade down and pay up at the same time, rewarding meaningful value wherever they find it — quality, convenience, wellness, trust, or emotional payoff. Social commerce, creator influence, eroding loyalty, and faster switching are rewriting how choices get made.

On one point, the roundtable was nearly unanimous: price-led revenue growth of recent years has run its course. The next wave must come from volume, new households, new occasions, relevant innovation, frictionless conversion, and sharper channel execution.

> **The next phase of growth will need to be much more volume-led by increasing penetration, broadening usage occasions, strategic PPA and innovation that solves real consumer problems.**
>
> — **MEGAN FRANK**, CMO, North America, Ornua

> **Marketers mistook price-led growth for equity gains.**
>
> — **SHAKIR MOIN**, President, Coca-Cola North America

Where leaders split was on what drives the final choice: The enduring pull of emotional brand equity or the rising dominance of product performance, availability, and price.

> **What surprised me most is how quickly consumers have learned to move between seemingly contradictory behaviors — trading down in one category while paying a premium in another. Value no longer means price alone. It can mean convenience, quality, health, emotional reward, or simply confidence that a product will deliver.**
>
> — **CRAIG CHRISTENSON**, Brand Builder I Advisory Board Member

THE FORESIGHT POV

Brand value has become a relative concept. The question is no longer whether consumers can afford a product, it's whether the brand gives them a compelling reason to choose it. Consumers pay a premium when three things line up: the product is relevant, its value is validated through channels they trust (often creators, sponsorships, and media), and the brand is there at the moment of decision.

Communication alone won't carry it. The promise has to connect to execution — the right product, pack, format, price, and channel showing up in the right place at the right time. Brands that align value creation, value communication, and value capture stop competing on price and start growing profitably.

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TOPIC 3

Where AI Will Create the Greatest Marketing Advantage

AI is changing everything — but where will it create the greatest real advantage in marketing: efficiency, creativity, consumer understanding, or commercial decision-making?

WHAT WE HEARD

In the near term, AI's clearest win is efficiency — accelerating production, analysis, testing, media execution, and routine work. The more durable prize is deeper consumer understanding and sharper commercial decision-making: integrating data, catching emerging signals, pinpointing audiences, and converting insight into action.

> **Commercial decision-making when it creates one source of truth and breaks down functional barriers.**
>
> — **KONSTANTINOS DELIALIS**, Senior Marketing & GM Operator | Ex Coca-Cola, Danone & Kraft Heinz | Brand, P&L Growth & Business Transformation | Corporate & Startup Advisor

AI can strengthen creativity through ideation, prototyping, and testing, but it doesn't replace originality, craft, or human relationships. As access to AI becomes universal, advantage shifts to what can't be commoditized. The quality of the questions you ask, the proprietary data you hold, the judgment you apply, and how fast your organization can act.

> **The ability to de-average consumers at scale, to sharpen insight, and generate intimacy.**
>
> — **JORGE LUZIO, HEAD OF MARKETING,** Coca-Cola Original Taste, North America Operation Unit & President of the Hispanic Inclusion Network at The Coca-Cola Company. Professor, Emory University, Department of Economics.

THE FORESIGHT POV

The greatest opportunity is to fuse the scale and depth of AI with the experience and judgment of marketers. AI can integrate vast datasets, search wider than any team could, and surface connections that were previously invisible. But it can't turn those connections into a complete growth plan on its own. The advantage shows up when marketing, insights, analytics, strategic planning, and commercial teams work side by side in structured sessions, using AI to accelerate the analysis while people supply context and experience. That's how consumer understanding gets connected to communications, channel execution, pack-price decisions, and commercial reality. The winning model isn't art or science. It's a deliberate fusion of both.

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TOPIC 4

Strategic Insight vs. Information Overload

As data becomes more accessible, what will separate strategic insight from information overload?

WHAT WE HEARD

Strategic insight isn't measured by how much data you have. It's measured by the decision it drives. The signals worth chasing are the ones that materially move consumer choice, revenue, pipeline, or strategic action. AI can organize information and surface patterns, but it takes domain expertise, business context, common sense, and human judgment to turn any of it into meaning.

> **"What separates insight from information overload is whether it actually changes a decision. There's more data than ever, so access alone doesn't mean much. If it isn't helping the team decide where to invest, what to stop, or what to change, it's just noise.**
>
> — **BRANDON DAVIS,** Head of Digital Transformation & Sales Capabilities, Kimberly-Clark

As data and tools become universal, the edge moves to proprietary interpretation: connecting different forms of evidence, challenging assumptions, and translating findings into clear choices. An insight only becomes strategic when it improves a decision and leads to more precise, more effective action.

> **The human ability to connect disparate thoughts. We need marketers who can connect various paradigms.**
>
> — **JAI KIBE**, Global CMO & SVP | Transforming Marketing & Brand Value | Digital Expert | Iconic Brand Turnarounds: Coca-Cola | Built Purpose Brands: Chobani & SC Johnson | Fuse Data, Creative, Tech & Culture | Art + Science + Instinct

THE FORESIGHT POV

Strong insights are defined by the decisions they enable. The point isn't to make an interesting observation. It's to make a better choice about whom to target, which "need" to address, which occasions to prioritize, how to communicate, where to activate, and which channel, pack, and price configuration will win. An insight is only as valuable as the link between evidence, decision, and execution. So, insight work should be built around explicit "decision questions" from the start, with the resulting choices carried all the way through the marketing and commercial plan. Winning comes from finding the right insight, connecting it to the right decision, and executing it consistently.

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TOPIC 5

Curiosity and Human Judgment in an AI-First World

Do curiosity and human judgment become more important, or less, in an AI-first world?

WHAT WE HEARD

More important. Decisively. As AI makes processing and answer-generation universal, differentiation moves to the human work: asking better questions, imagining new possibilities, challenging automated outputs, and judging what's right for a specific business and consumer context.

> **Curiosity and human judgment will reign supreme wherever risk is required. ... Monster, Coca-Cola, and Poppi would never have been born out of AI.**
>
> — **ANONYMOUS,** President - Canada, Leading Alcohol Beverage Manufacturer

Human judgment brings empathy, ethics, experience, commercial understanding, risk appetite, and accountability. Routine tasks may need less human hand-holding, but judgment becomes decisive wherever there's uncertainty, trade-offs, originality, brand meaning, or entrepreneurial risk. AI generates possibilities; people decide which ones are meaningful, distinctive, and worth pursuing.

> **We humans have the responsibility to keep molding the future. Art is more important than ever.**
>
> — **EUGENIO MENDEZ,** Coca-Cola, Bacardi, Start-Up Advisor | Chief Revenue Officer | Chief Marketing Officer | Advisory Board Member | Growth Strategies for Start-ups, Scale and Established brands

THE FORESIGHT POV

In an AI-first world, advantage depends on preventing strategic convergence. When every company runs the same tools over the same data, the default result is the same conclusions and the same strategies. Differentiation comes from pairing science with the human art of curiosity, humility, imagination, and informed risk-taking.

Marketing, insights, analytics, finance, and commercial teams should work together in carefully designed sessions, using AI as a shared accelerator. It can't be a substitute for judgment. The goal is to challenge the obvious conclusion, explore alternatives, and turn diverse expertise into distinctive choices. AI democratizes the inputs. Human collaboration determines whether the output is conventional or genuinely differentiating.

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TOPIC 6

The Evolution of Pricing, Packaging, and Channel Strategy

How are pricing, packaging, and channel strategy evolving as consumer expectations and economic pressures shift?

WHAT WE HEARD

Pricing, packaging, and channel strategy are converging into a single integrated value system. Economic pressure doesn't produce uniform trade-down behavior. Consumers want affordable entry points and real value, and they'll still pay premiums for quality, wellness, convenience, experience, or emotional reward.

> **Companies understand that inflationary pressures are changing buying behaviors. Value conscious consumers are trading down, at the same time, health conscious consumers are willing to pay a premium for nutritional benefits.**
>
> — **PAVI GUPTA**, Creator, The Infinity Growth Loop | Founder, The Insight Exchange | Former VP/Insights Lead - Coca-Cola, J&J, SC Johnson, Chobani

That calls for a differentiated pack-price architecture: smaller entry packs, larger value formats, premium tiers, and channel-specific assortments across club, discount, convenience, e-commerce, and on-premise. Rising price transparency, channel switching, and AI-enabled shopping will squeeze undifferentiated middle brands hardest.

> **E-commerce will drive pack assortments for the shopper — Costco packaging and 7-Eleven packaging can coexist on the same digital shelf. Prices are more transparent and marketers have to personalize a lot more.**
>
> — **RAM KRISHNAMURTHY,** Founder, Marketing Analytics and Research Synergies

THE FORESIGHT POV

Affordability is being redefined by the renewed power of pack-price architecture and channel strategy. Consumers no longer judge value only by comparing prices on a shelf. Brands can now reach them across physical and digital touchpoints while needs and decisions are still forming. A well-designed, well-executed PPA and channel strategy puts the right pack, format, and price in the right place for the specific occasion, moving competition away from simply being the cheapest option. When the product and proposition meet the need at the exact moment of choice, relevance can outweigh absolute price — and support a premium. Getting PPA and channel execution right is central to both accessibility and profitable growth.

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TOPIC 7

Sponsorships and Measurable Business Impact

How should brands rethink sponsorships and partnerships when the goal is no longer visibility alone, but measurable business impact?

WHAT WE HEARD

Sponsorships should be built as business platforms, not visibility purchases. Start with a defined outcome — trial, conversion, loyalty, pipeline, customer access, cultural relevance, price premium, or a new commercial opportunity — and a clear measurement framework in place before anything is signed.

> “
> **Brands should view sponsorships as platforms with potential to impact all areas of the business, not just marketing.**
>
> — **RICARDO FORT**, Sponsorship Strategy Advisor to Global Brands | Helping CMOs unlock measurable ROI from sports investments | ex VP Global Sports & Entertainment Partnerships at The Coca-Cola Company

The strongest partnerships create a credible connection between brand, property, and audience. Value has to extend well past logo exposure — into content, experiences, retail activation, transactions, customer and employee engagement, and coordinated cross-functional execution. Visibility still matters, but it's worth far more when it's tied to authentic cultural participation and measurable commercial action.

> **Find opportunities that marry brand and audience needs with partners who can drive the content and experiences fans crave and engage with.**
>
> — **ANONYMOUS**, Sports and Entertainment Marketer and Brand Strategist

> **In our B2B space, technical influencers are critical.**
>
> — **MIKE DEVINE**, CMO, Recast Software

THE FORESIGHT POV

A strong sponsorship strategy follows the same disciplined process: clarify what to achieve, decide where to play, determine how to win. Begin with specific business objectives and the measures that will prove success. Then identify the passions that matter most to the consumers you want to reach, and find where the brand has an authentic fit, a credible point of view, and a real ability to add value. Only then does the search for assets begin — a sport, a stadium, an artist, an event, a show, a cultural platform. From there, assess every opportunity through one consistent, data-driven framework that evaluates the audience it reaches, its sales-impact potential, contract strength, incrementality to the portfolio, and cost versus expected value.

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TOPIC 8

Advice for the Next Generation of Growth Leaders

What advice would you give the next generation of CMOs and growth leaders navigating constant disruption?

WHAT WE HEARD

The next generation has to stay grounded in consumers and enduring growth fundamentals while treating disruption as a permanent operating condition. Continuous learning, experimentation, agility, and fast course correction are non-negotiable. And so is the discipline not to chase every new tool or trend without a clear strategic purpose.

> **Keep learning. Be out there. Put yourself in the shoes of the consumer and the competition. Invest in talent, stay flexible, and be agile. When you make mistakes, course-correct — don't be afraid, but learn.**
>
> —**STEPHAN CZYPIONKA,** Former Global CMO CJ Foods

Technology fluency matters. But, technology is a means, never the work itself. Tomorrow's CMOs need broader commercial range across brand, sales, finance, pricing, innovation, data, and operations. Stronger cross-functional collaboration and real clarity on the mandate from the CEO and board is crucial, too. The leaders who thrive will stay curious, stay human, and stay comfortable deciding with imperfect information.

> **Be very clear about the marketing mandate you are receiving from the board and the CEO. Fulfill it relentlessly and make new mistakes that punch you in the face.**
>
> — **CESARE ZAVALLONI,** Fortune 100 Executive | Associate Certified Coach | ICF Member | Founder @ LEADERFULLY

In a world where experimentation, failure, learning, and rapid adaptation matter more than a perfectly drafted strategy, foresight becomes more important, not less. Foresight is the ability to envision multiple plausible futures, understand how each could reshape the brand and the business, and use that understanding to make better choices today.

> **Don't look at a single point, static future. Don't bet that your innovation, currently valued at $XM, is going to deliver $X. Instead, view the world in shades of uncertainty and lean into it.**
>
> — **ANONYMOUS,** Sr Director North America at a Fortune 100 CPG Brand

THE FORESIGHT POV

CMOs should define the future they want to create, act toward it, and preserve the options that let them adjust fast as signals reveal which future is actually emerging. That's what keeps agility from becoming random motion and risk-taking from becoming recklessness. Leaders who combine experimentation with structured foresight move faster without losing direction — staying true to the fundamentals while actively shaping the future instead of reacting to it.

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FIFTEEN YEARS OF FORESIGHT

The throughline is clear. In a market where everyone can generate answers, advantage belongs to the leaders asking sharper questions. And the leaders who connect those questions to decisions, execution, and growth. That's the discipline: Seeing what's next and acting on it before it's obvious.

When we asked our roundtable what advice they'd give the next generation of growth leaders, one participant kept it to two words.

> **Call Foresight**
>
> — **MIKE SCHWAB,** SVP and Group Account Director, Colle McVoy

FORESIGHTSTRATEGY.COM
Phone: 612.486.5735
info@foresightstrategy.com