

Brent Smart

Award-Winning Marketer and Telstra's CMO

Telstra's Chief Marketing Officer Brent Smart is an award-winning marketer and dynamic speaker, known for his insights on creativity and cultivating culture. With a global perspective shaped by his role as CEO of Saatchi & Saatchi in New York, Brent has a history of working on iconic American brands like Cheerios, Tide, and Walmart.



Brent has redefined success in brand strategy through his innovative approach and deep industry experience. Before Telstra, he served as CMO of insurance giant IAG, where he transformed NRMA from Australia's 36th to the 5th strongest brand, collecting over 100 major creative awards, including the prestigious Grand Effie.

As an active CMO, he shares real-life case studies on brand strategy, fostering a creative culture, and thriving in today's saturated content landscape.

A confident keynote speaker, Brent has taken the stage at top events like Procter & Gamble's North American Marketing Summit and SxSW, and he's a familiar presence at marketing conferences such as Mumbrella 360 and CMO Summit. He also guest lectures at prestigious institutions, including Wharton and NYU Stern.

Co-host of the popular podcast Black T-Shirts, alongside Adam Ferrier, Brent excels in interview and conversational formats, bringing creativity in business to life. He frequently runs brand workshops and has shared his expertise with leading teams at Commonwealth Bank, McDonald's, and Channel Nine.

Brent Smart Talks About

Why the biggest risk in business is taking no risks

In today's hyper-saturated world, playing it safe is the fastest route to irrelevance. Brands that avoid risk in favour of predictable, incremental growth are losing to those willing to embrace bold creativity and strategic bets.

Brent Smart, Telstra's award-winning Chief Marketing Officer and former CEO of Saatchi & Saatchi New York, knows that the biggest breakthroughs come from taking calculated risks.

Drawing on real-world case studies from brands like NRMA, McDonald's, and Commonwealth

Bank, Brent reveals why risk is the currency of differentiation, how to foster a creative culture that thrives on experimentation, and why brands that chase safety ultimately fade into the background.

Audience Takeaways:

- Creativity wins: Safe brands get lost in the noise—bold creativity is the only way to stand out.
- Culture beats process: Innovation thrives in cultures that balance psychological safety with intellectual honesty.
- Long-term impact over short-term metrics: True brand value isn't measured in clicks but in meaningful, lasting connections.

Why Digital Marketing Sucks

In a world drowning in content and AI-generated noise, digital marketing has lost its spark. Brands are stuck chasing short-term metrics, prioritizing algorithms over authentic creativity, and blending into a sea of sameness. Brent Smart, an award-winning marketer and Telstra's CMO, argues that the obsession with digital efficiency is killing bold, distinctive brand-building. He'll challenge the status quo and reveal how creativity—not clicks—drives real business impact.

Audience Takeaways:

- Why chasing performance marketing over long-term brand-building is a losing game.
- How to cut through the digital clutter with ideas that demand attention.
- The secret to fostering a creative culture that delivers world-class execution.

Hard on the work, kind to the people

Great creative cultures don't happen by accident—they are built on a foundation of trust, candid feedback, and relentless pursuit of excellence. But too often, organizations either prioritize results at the expense of people or foster psychological safety without driving high performance. Brent Smart, Telstra's CMO and former CEO of Saatchi & Saatchi New York, has led high-performing teams across the globe by striking the right balance.

In this keynote, Brent shares how world-class execution requires an environment where teams feel safe to challenge ideas, leaders embrace radical candor, and accountability and empathy go hand in hand. Learn how to create a workplace that inspires bold thinking, drives exceptional outcomes, and ensures that people thrive, not just survive.

Audience Takeaways:

- Balance psychological safety with intellectual honesty—foster a culture where candid feedback fuels better work.
- Raise the bar without burning out your team—high standards should challenge, not crush, creativity.
- Build trust through radical candor—direct, honest conversations strengthen both people and performance.

Too much content, not enough time

The world is drowning in content, yet consumers claim they have no time for any of it. AI is making the problem worse, flooding feeds with generic, low-effort content that blends into the background. So, how do brands break through?

Brent Smart, Telstra's award-winning CMO, argues that the answer isn't more content—it's better content. In this keynote, he challenges marketers to ditch the volume game and focus on creative impact, proving that real cut-through comes from distinctiveness, not just distribution. Learn how to stop chasing algorithms and start making work that actually earns attention.

Audience Takeaways:

- Quality over quantity—stop flooding channels and start crafting content that matters.
- Creativity is the ultimate differentiator—AI can't replace original, emotionally resonant ideas.
- Make people want to engage—capture attention by being bold, distinctive, and human.

Fight the blanding with distinctive branding

Too many brands are playing it safe, diluting their identity, and fading into a sea of sameness. When everyone follows the same trends, uses the same muted color palettes, and mimics the same tone of voice, they become forgettable.

Brent Smart, Telstra's award-winning CMO and former CEO of Saatchi & Saatchi New York, will challenge brands to stop blending in and start standing out. With real-world case studies and hard-hitting insights, he'll show why true branding isn't about fitting in—it's about owning a space so distinct that customers can't ignore you.

Audience Takeaways:

- Be remembered, not just recognized—distinctiveness is the key to long-term brand success.
- Creativity is a competitive advantage—brands that take risks build stronger connections.
- Stop following, start leading—own your brand identity instead of chasing trends.

Testimonials

“ You shared a story that was wonderfully engaging and touched the heart of the audience.

- **ESOMAR**

“ Thought-provoking, passionate and entertaining, Brent is a brilliant speaker. Every time he's spoken at our events, he challenges the audience with genuinely fresh, insightful and compelling ideas, that are backed by his world-class experience and expertise. If you're looking for someone safe, Brent is not for you.

- The Lab

“ There is no better speaker on brand-led business transformation in the world than Brent Smart. His ability to marry creativity, effectiveness, and purpose is exceptional. Get him for your next gig, he'll inspire and give extremely useful and actionable insights.

- Thinkerbell

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