

2025 Marketing Words of the Year



Agentic AI and Authenticity

For the first time, the ANA Marketing Word of the Year is not one, but two distinct words.

Since 2014, the ANA has surveyed our members to select the ANA Marketing Word of the Year. ANA staff first identifies a list of finalists and then asks members to cast their votes to determine the winner. The survey has these questions:

1. What word should be the ANA Marketing Word of the Year?
2. Why did you vote for that word?

It became clear to us early in the process of determining this year's winner that there were two equally strong frontrunners that were a reflection of the state of the marketing industry relative to the continued rise of AI. Our survey this year asked respondents to rank their top choices and provide their rationale for each.

ANA polled client-side members the week of November 17, resulting in 623 responses.

Agentic AI was the top vote-getter, and the very close runner-up was Authenticity.

Representative responses to the follow-up question of "Why did you vote for Agentic AI as the ANA 2025 Marketing Word of the Year?":

- It's all everyone is talking about. If you aren't embracing it, you'll be left behind.
- I use it every day. I hear it from others every day. It is something that is already influencing marketing at every level.
- My agency partners were pitching Agentic AI solutions for creative needs, personas, and automating work. My team attended multiple conferences and trainings where these tools were highlighted. I wasn't sold on the idea at the beginning of the year, but now I am thinking of how an AI agent could help my team as we navigate a slashed budget paired with increased needs on the team.
- Agentic AI signals a paradigm shift — empowering autonomous decision-making, adaptive workflows, and hyper-personalization. It's not just shaping marketing; it's redefining how businesses operate across every AI-driven domain.

Representative responses to the follow-up question of “Why did you vote for Authenticity as the ANA 2025 Marketing Word of the Year?”:

- The last few years of AI acceleration, economic shifts, and trust erosion across all industries are leaving folks craving what feels real. It should be clear at this point that the winning brands are doing three things exceptionally well: They say what they mean, show the work, and stay human in the process. Authenticity isn't softness. It's clarity. It's accountability.
- It's getting harder to determine what is real and what is performative. Reaching consumers in a way that is tangibly authentic is going to be the difference-maker.
- We're flooded with AI, and while it helps us scale quickly, consumers still seem hungry for real, authentic stories and connection points.
- Because this is what marketing should be. Real, human content from creators to viewers.

As AI continues to become more complex, it follows that our Marketing Words of the Year would reflect that growing complexity. Agentic AI is capable of multi-step automation with potential to complete a transaction; it is the iteration of artificial intelligence most poised to radically change how marketing operates, how marketers reach consumers, and how consumers make decisions. Content and communications from brands will need to speak to AI agents and influence humans in concert. Personalization, campaign management, and operations all stand to be significantly transformed by Agentic AI in the near term.

Concurrent with the AI revolution is an increased emphasis on authenticity. Ultimately, consumers are humans who choose brands for emotional, functional, and practical reasons. Maintaining authenticity in marketing ensures that hard-won consumer trust and loyalty isn't eroded by technological advances in AI.

The ANA's Artificial Intelligence arm, a sub-group of the ANA Technology Practice, exists to accelerate our members' responsible AI readiness and capabilities, and provide them with indispensable tools, learning pathways, advocacy, and representation. We engage collaboratively with industry organizations to promote alignment, ensure industry health, and drive future-forward AI standards and innovation. Check out our growing portfolio of resources at ana.net/technology.

Previous ANA Marketing Words of the Year have been *AI* (2024, 2023), *inclusion* (2022), *diversity* (2021), *pivot* (2020), *personalization* (2019), *brand purpose* (2018), *artificial intelligence* (2017), *transparency* (2016), *content marketing* (2015), and *programmatic* (2014).

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