



DISRUPT YOURSELF FIRST



“The instinct is to wait. But the pressure is pace.”

That line from Lucinda Barlow, Uber’s Global CMO, says everything about the kind of marketer today’s landscape demands.

In a packed fireside chat hosted by Thomas Barta, more than 140 senior marketing leaders tuned in for the first 2025 session of Marketing Disrupted Online.

In a world fuelled by geopolitical uncertainty, budget pressure, flat headcounts, and the AI whirlwind, Lucinda laid out a clear message: **slow is no longer safe.**

If anything, the cost of hesitation is higher than ever.

Marketing in an Age of Urgency

Lucinda’s five leadership imperatives struck a chord:

- **Lead Yourself** – Energy, bias awareness, and habit-breaking are leadership essentials.
- **Diagnose & Develop Talent** – Ruthless prioritisation and feedback cultures are key.
- **Be Indispensable** – CMOs must be strategic allies across the C-Suite.

- **Drive Efficiency to Create Value** – Efficiency isn’t about cost-cutting; it’s about creating impact.
- **Foster Bravery & Risk-Taking** – Don’t wait for certainty - move fast and learn faster.

Before diving into tactical insights, Lucinda wrote a memo to Uber’s global team titled “Dear Heads of Marketing.”

More than a leadership check-in, it was a call to arms - a rally cry for pace, impact, and introspection.

Lucinda addressed the tension every marketing leader is feeling right now, flattened budgets, rising expectations, and relentless change, and reframed them as catalysts, not constraints.



It cut through the fluff, acknowledged the chaos, and reframed it as an opportunity. It modelled the kind of self-awareness and sharp thinking today's CMOs need: honest about what's hard, clear on what matters, and unwavering in the demand for pace, focus, and impact.

The Bold Pivot: From “Tonight I’ll Be Eating” to “Get Almost Almost Anything”

One of the most compelling parts of the session was the story of self-disruption: how Uber Eats walked away from a wildly successful global campaign “Tonight I’ll Be Eating” to make room for the next chapter: “Get Almost Almost Anything.”

Why? Because great marketers don’t ride yesterday’s wins into irrelevance. They sense the shift. They test, localise, measure, and iterate.

The original campaign had achieved cult-like success, especially in Australia and New Zealand, where its celebrity pairings, witty tone, and brand codes created massive salience and led Uber Eats to leapfrog from a distant fourth to category leader.

But campaigns, even great ones, have expiry dates. As Uber Eats moved beyond restaurants into grocery, retail, and convenience, “Tonight I’ll Be Eating” couldn’t carry the new strategy. The creative platform needed to evolve—without losing the magic.

Enter “Get Almost Almost Anything.” A bold repositioning that kept the fun, the fame, and the tone of voice but unlocked new relevance. It was tested rigorously, scaled smartly, and outperformed its predecessor in key markets.

Lucinda put it simply: “It was scary. But we had to disrupt ourselves before someone else did.”

That kind of decision doesn’t just take creative courage—it takes data. Confidence in testing. Clarity in performance. And alignment across leadership. It’s brand bravery, grounded in evidence.

The best kind.



AI, Creativity & the Case for Magic

Lucinda described AI as “the whirlwind in the Wizard of Oz” - powerful, fast-moving, and transformative.

But her caution was clear:

- Don’t delegate your thinking.
- Don’t confuse mediocre content with momentum.
- Use AI to bank time—then spend it making the work better.

AI should enhance creativity, not erase it. Lucinda’s reminder? Keep the magic. Move people.

And here’s the reality: the front lines of AI are built on data. If your data’s off, your AI is blind. If your insights are lazy, your outputs are average. In the rush to adopt new tools, many marketers forget the foundation - clean, sharp, human-centred data that reflects real customer behaviour.

AI can move fast. But if it's fed junk, it only speeds up the wrong direction. That's where data becomes both a launchpad and a safeguard.

At its best, data doesn't just support creativity - it challenges, sharpens, and gives it direction. And in the right hands, it doesn't kill the magic.

It makes it **undeniable**.

Speed Requires Clarity

As Lucinda said, the pressure is on pace. But speed without clarity is just chaos. That's where Mortal comes in.

When uncertainty reigns, marketers often face the paradox of too much information and not enough insight.

The result? Decision fatigue, paralysis, and wasted spending. We've seen it all and built Mortal to respond to that exact dilemma.

We believe customer data is your sharpest edge in an unpredictable environment. It's what lets you:

- Cut through stakeholder noise with confidence.
- Back big bets with behaviour-led evidence.
- Spot patterns, pain points, and growth opportunities that others miss.

Our role isn't to bury you in numbers (or hand over just another polished but empty marketing dashboard).

It's to give you a live pulse on your audience, so you can:

- Say no to guesswork.
- Say yes to strategy.
- Walk into your next boardroom discussion with proof, not just a pitch.

Whether you're launching a bold new brand

platform or pitching ROI to your CFO, you need insights that are:

- **Human-first** – rooted in real behaviours, not broad assumptions.
- **Usable** – not just more charts, but sharper decisions.
- **Provable** – marketing that earns its place at the table.

At Mortal, we help marketers turn customer data into clarity—so you can act faster, present stronger, and make braver moves.

"Speed. Efficiency. Bravery. Self-disruption and a risk-taking mindset. A powerful and inspiring message from Lucinda as businesses, here in NZ and overseas, continue to navigate choppy waters.

Sounds like now would be a great time to have all the right information, at your fingertips. Nothing puts a dampener on bold decision-making like not having any data to back it up..." - **Tim MacMillan**

Marketing in 2025 isn't about playing safe. It's about knowing what to bet on, moving fast and learning faster.

Lucinda reminded us that disruption isn't the enemy. Stagnation is.

If your data's just reporting the past, it's already out of date. Let's put your data where it belongs—at the front of the strategy table.



Tim MacMillan - GM, Mortal