

Driving Continuous Marketing Innovation Through Connected Platforms

How Merkle and Adobe Built a System for Compounding Marketing Value

S922 | Adobe Summit 2026 | Daniel Knauf, Merkle | Robert Herrera, Adobe

Adobe Summit



Who we are



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Adobe

From planning to progress – built into how teams work



The Model

Adobe Integrated Services introduces a new way of working – helping organizations move from strategy to measurable, ongoing impact.

- Ongoing access to Adobe experts to support planning, activation, and execution
- Work is centered on real, high-impact use cases tied to business outcomes
- Teams make steady, visible progress
- Combines hands-on execution with long-term roadmap ownership
- Creates consistency, not just speed



Key Differentiators

Built Around Activation

- Work progresses through focused sprints on priority use cases
- Early results, carried forward into next iterations

Architecture That Guides the Work

- Enterprise Architect connects business goals to day-to-day decisions, maintaining alignment across teams over time

Flexible in Practice

- Work adapts as priorities change

What we'll cover

01 The problem

Why marketing innovation is slowing and project-based models break down

02 The flywheel

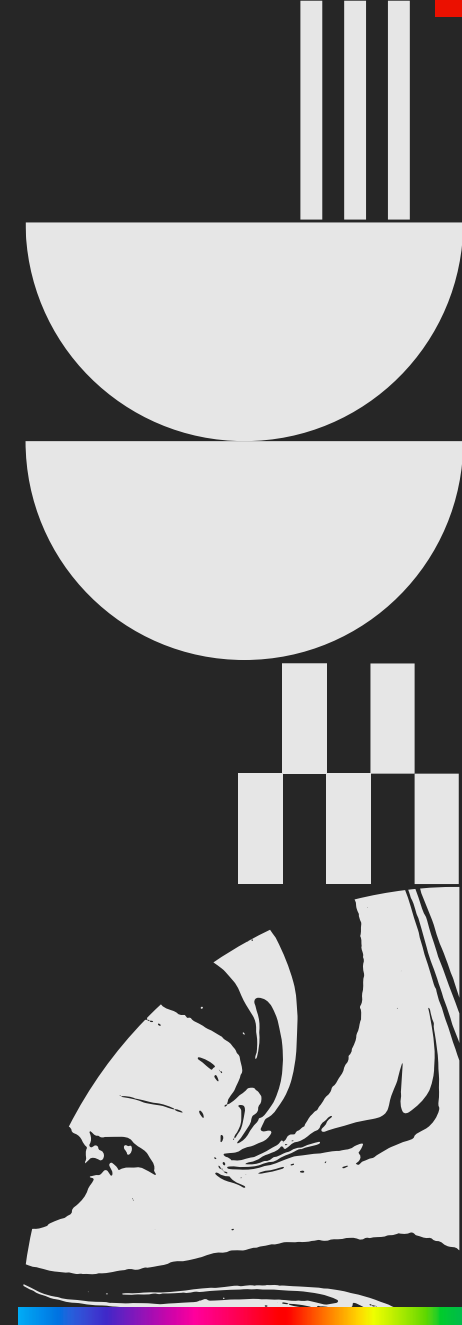
A connected system for compounding marketing value — Signal, Create, Activate, Learn, Scale

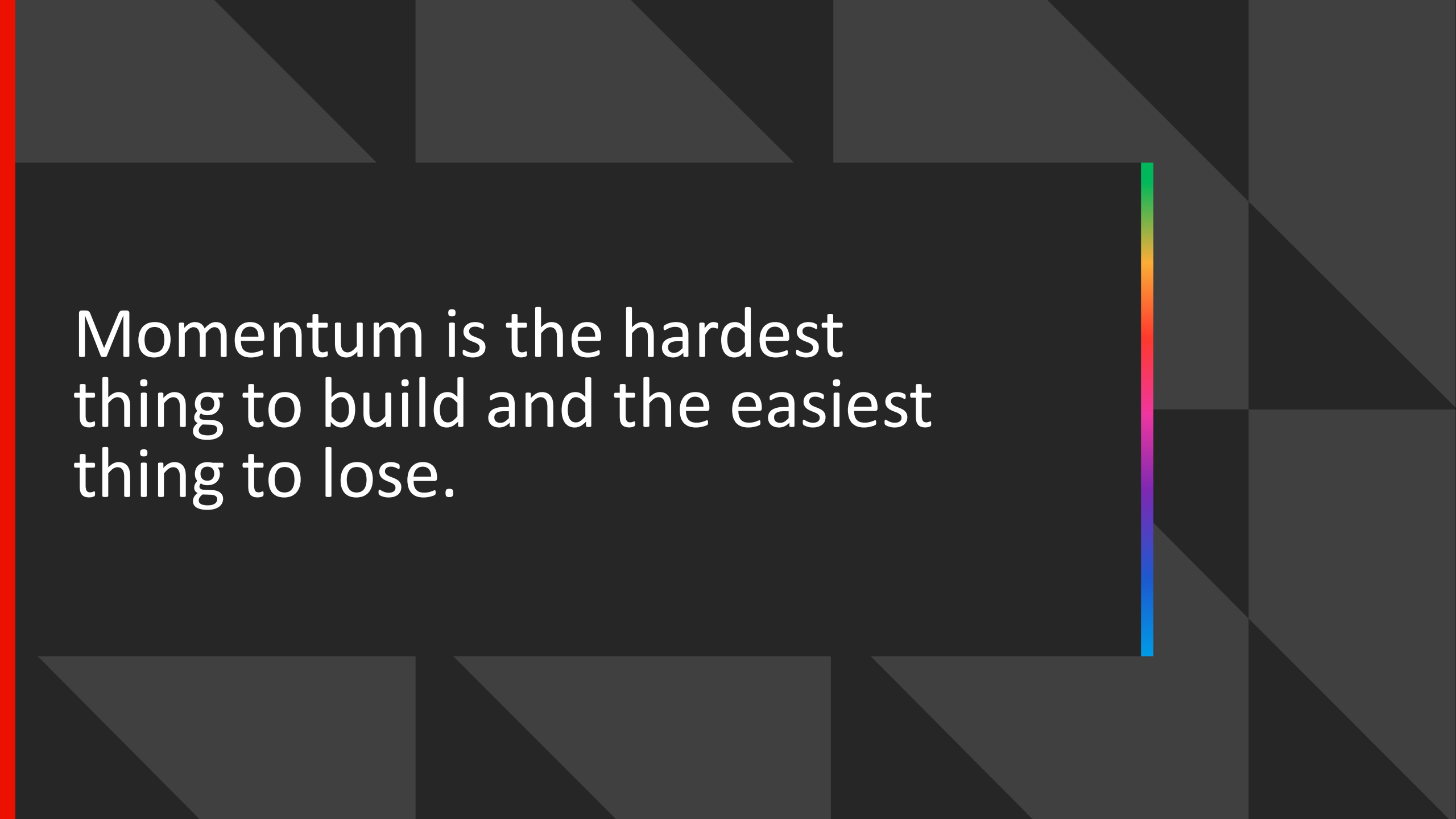
03 Merkle's journey

How we turned capability into momentum and what it looks like in practice

04 Your next move

Starting the flywheel, AI readiness, and actionable next steps





Momentum is the hardest
thing to build and the easiest
thing to lose.

Marketing innovation is slowing, not accelerating

Most organizations are investing heavily in technology, AI, and data yet innovation still feels slow and fragile.

The challenge is not ambition or tooling, but how innovation is operationalized across teams.

As AI rewrites the marketing operating model, three key sources of friction continue slowing progress.



Data blockers

Siloed data across ecosystems requiring manual aggregation. Inconsistent taxonomies. No unified customer signal.



Tech infrastructure blockers

Fragmented access across multiple environments. Tenancy and permissions causing errors. Integration complexity.



People and process blockers

Admin coverage gaps. Bandwidth constraints for training. Resource models that cannot flex with evolving needs.

Why project-based innovation breaks down



Traditional work follows a familiar pattern – plan, build, launch, optimize briefly, then move on. Projects are designed to terminate.



That model does not support AI, experimentation, or scale. Every new use case feels like starting over because it literally is starting over.



You lose institutional knowledge, you lose momentum, and you lose the compounding effect of learning from what came before.

"The CFO is often the real product manager. That is not how innovation works."

PART 01 | THE FLYWHEEL

Momentum compounds when systems are connected

From signal to scale: the marketing flywheel



Each stage
fuels the next.

Signal informs what to create.
Creation drives activation.
Activation generates learning.
Learning enables scale.
Scale produces new signals.



The flywheel never
stops. Each rotation
builds on the last.

Disconnected platforms create friction



Handoff failures

Data, content, activation, and measurement live in different systems. Every handoff is a momentum leak.



Context switching

Teams unclear on which environment is for what, with fragmented access causing errors.



Organizational drag

Silos, competing priorities, and rigid resource models prevent flexibility needed to maintain speed.



Knowledge trapped in people

When expertise lives in individuals, every departure or reorg resets the clock.

Data, content, activation, measurement — working as one



Unified data

Adobe Customer Journey Analytics data ingestion from web, Adobe Target, content analytics, and external sources creates a connected signal layer. Baseline metrics establish the starting point for every decision.



Modular content

Centralized asset management through unified DAM. Adobe GenStudio for on-brand content generation. Smart tagging and metadata strategy for findability and reuse.



Integrated activation

Target experimentation in progressive waves. Workfront for workflow orchestration. Adobe Marketo Engage for marketing automation with advanced use cases.



Shared measurement

Baseline metrics across web and email. Quarterly adoption reviews as recurring checkpoints. Metrics reviews built into the cadence, not bolted on at the end.

PART 02 | MERKLE'S JOURNEY

The boxes are great.
But the arrows between them
are where the work happens.

Turning capability into momentum



Consultative discovery

Not a questionnaire. Twenty-one interviews across six functional pillars, designed to surface friction, identify objectives, and build cross-functional alignment before a single initiative launched.



Prioritized roadmap

Eighty activities mapped across a two-year horizon, sequenced by effort and impact. Not a backlog. A plan with milestones, success accelerators, and value checkpoints.



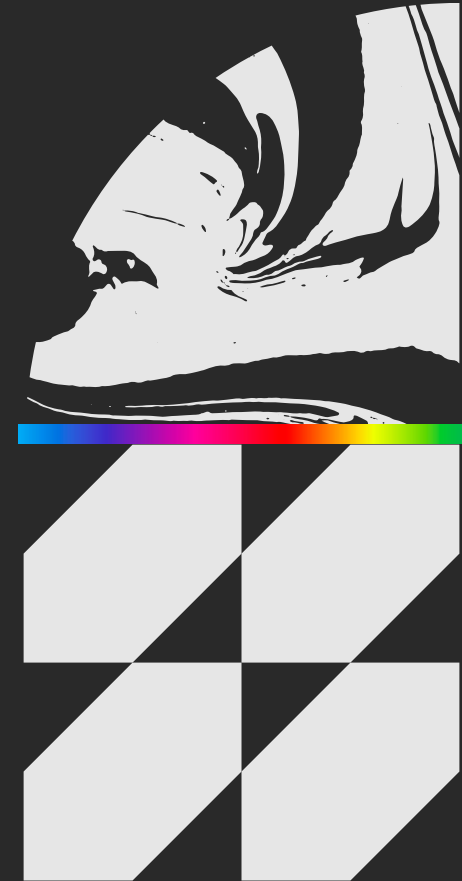
Activation cadence

Work organized into defined activations, each scoped with objectives, deliverables, success criteria, and stakeholder engagement requirements.



Built-in learning

Every activation produces an impact summary. Measured outcomes feed the next prioritization cycle. The roadmap evolves based on evidence, not assumptions.



How activations build on each other

Cross-solution

Strategic roadmap development

21

interviews
conducted

8

friction areas
identified

80

activities
planned

Provided a prioritized, actionable two-year plan to accelerate adoption and maximize ROI.

How activations build on each other

Workfront

Enterprise migration planning

25%

shorter
timelines

20%

improved
utilization

30-40%

fewer
errors

Templated migration framework for consolidating 25+ Workfront instances.

How activations build on each other

Workfront

Consolidation roadmap

5

instances
analyzed

22M

objects
assessed

14.5K

hours
quantified

Evidence-based view for sequencing, resourcing, and budgeting decisions.

The flywheel accelerates

With the foundation of the value roadmap and Workfront migrations underway, the program is entering its next phase.

Each new activation follows established patterns and builds capability that compounds over time.

The roadmap includes progressive Target experimentation waves, CJA dashboard deployment, content supply chain mapping, and GenStudio planning.



In progress: Target Wave 1

Homepage hero A/B test, lead gen CTA test, establishing experimentation cadence



Planned: Customer Journey Analytics Dashboards

Multi-source data ingestion, marketer-friendly dashboards from unified profile data



Planned: Content supply chain

CSC process mapping, GenStudio planning, unified DAM to centralize assets



Planned: Advanced capabilities

Marketo advanced use cases, Target waves 2-5, content analytics implementation

We have the same anchors you do

This isn't theory. Both sides of this partnership face the same challenges you do.

Merkle's reality

One of Adobe's largest partners, yet significant product capabilities remained untapped. Limited adoption stemmed from unclear roadmap priorities and resource constraints.

Adobe's reality

Even Adobe is going through similar internal improvements. Connecting our own platforms, streamlining our own workflows, and applying the same flywheel principles internally.

What it enabled

Smarter use cases grounded in cross-functional discovery. Faster experimentation through progressive Target waves. Continuous optimization built into the operating cadence.

Focus your teams on where they add value



Strategic innovation.

Free from integration complexity, agency teams invest energy in designing new experiences and forward-looking services. Focus on what to build, not how to connect it.



Enablement over execution.

The model teaches teams to fish. Deskside coaching for Marketo. Workfront enablement for PMs. CJA training for analytics. Adobe Express enablement for creative teams. Internal capability compounds.



From basic to advanced.

Teams progress from basic use cases to advanced capabilities because the foundation supports it. Target Wave 1 is A/B testing. By Wave 5, it is multivariate testing and personalization at scale.

What continuous innovation looks like in practice

21

Stakeholder interviews across 6 functional pillars feeding a unified roadmap.

80

Activities planned across a 2-year horizon with value milestones and success accelerators.

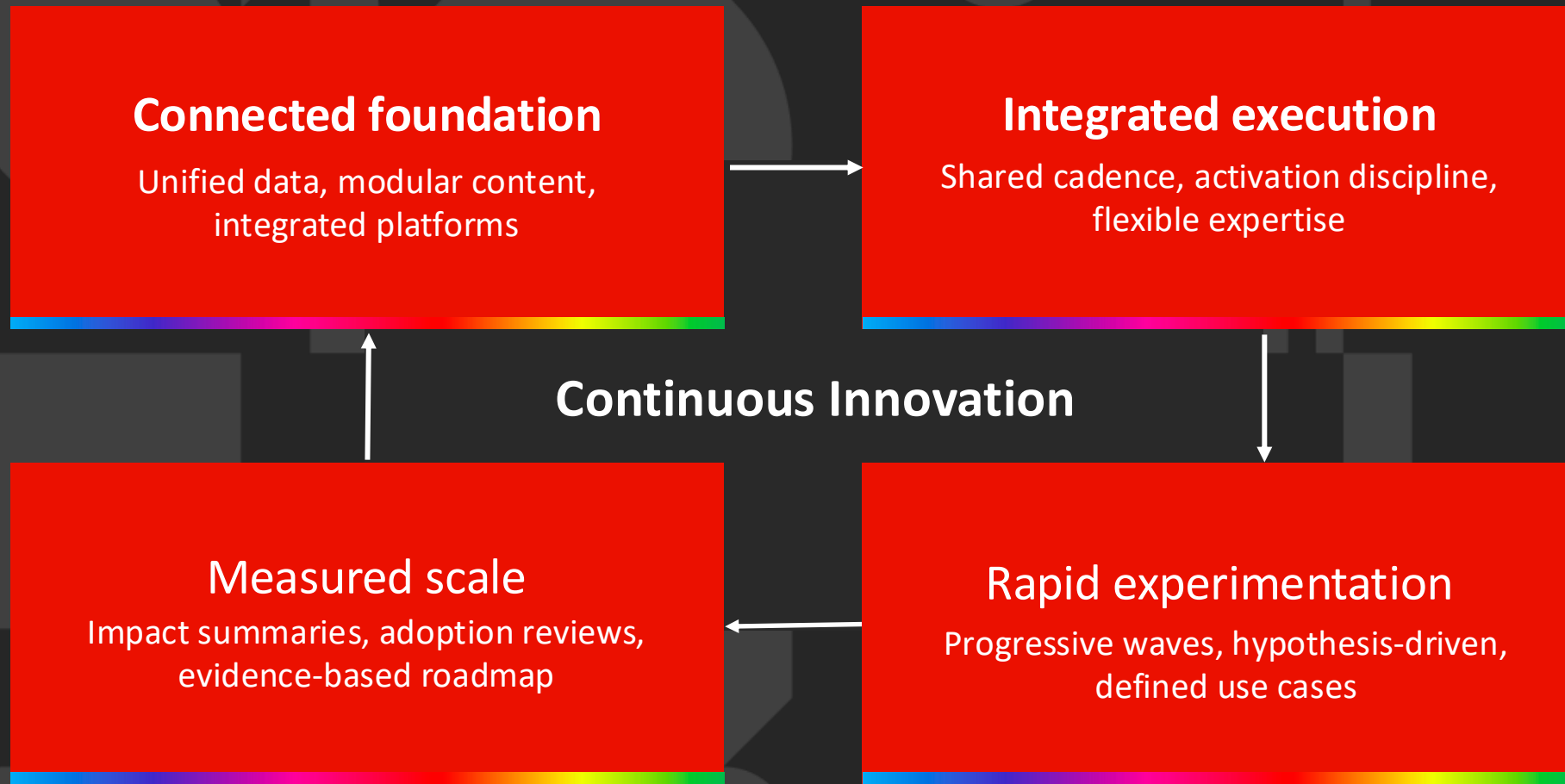
25%

Projected reduction in Workfront migration timelines through standardized frameworks.

7

Target personalization use cases defined in Wave 1 alone, with 10 progressive waves planned.

How the flywheel sustains momentum



Flywheels power AI readiness

The friction you solve today determines the AI value you unlock tomorrow.



AI thrives on connected systems

Without a flywheel, AI remains isolated and experimental. GenStudio, Content Analytics, and agentic workflows all depend on the same connected foundation.



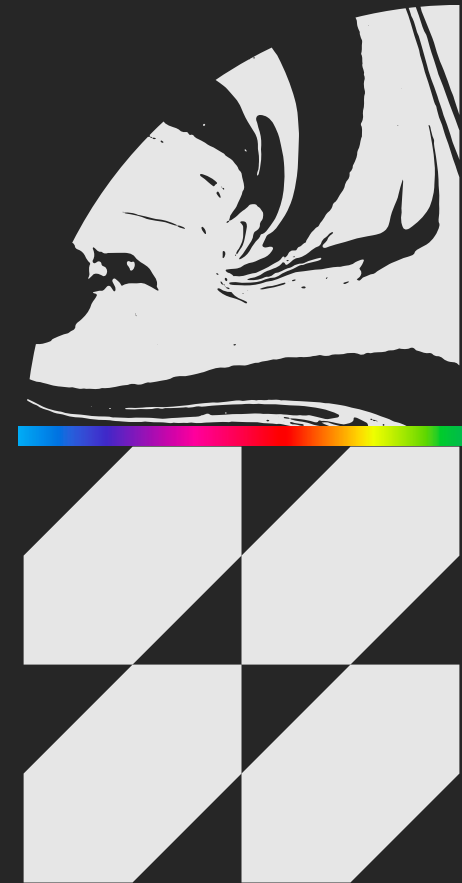
Same blockers, higher stakes

Siloed data, disconnected tools, fragmented teams. The blockers that slow marketing innovation today will prevent AI adoption tomorrow. Solve them once, benefit twice.



AI as accelerant, not complexity

The Merkle roadmap already includes agentic art-of-the-possible sessions and AI-driven content optimization. The connected foundation makes these possible.



Starting the flywheel



Listen before you build

Start with discovery, not a project plan. Talk to teams across functions.



Build a shared roadmap

Translate discovery into a prioritized plan everyone can see.



Start one connected activation

Pick a high-impact use case and connect the full loop.



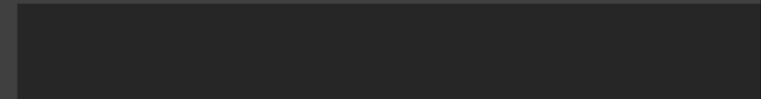
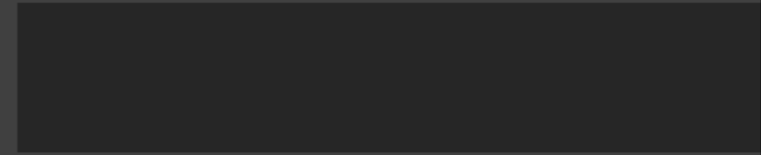
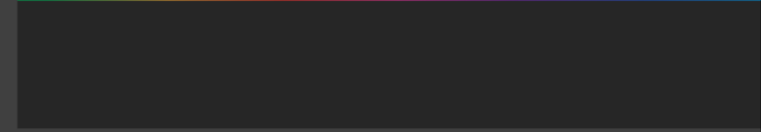
Design for reuse from day one

Build every framework assuming it will be used again.

Funnels end.

Flywheels accelerate.

The future of marketing innovation is not about launching more projects.
It is about building systems that compound value over time.



Your next move



Identify your friction

Where is your flywheel breaking? Which handoffs, silos, or disconnects cost you the most momentum? Map your friction areas starting with honest conversations across functions.



Start one connected activation

Pick a high-impact use case and commit to connecting the full loop: signal, create, activate, learn, scale. Define success criteria before you start. Produce an impact summary when you finish.



Explore Integrated Services

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Where is your flywheel breaking? What connection would restore your momentum?

Daniel Knauf | CTO, Merkle, a dentsu company

Robert Herrera | Principal Enterprise Architect, Adobe

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