

## The end of performance (from a performance marketer)

Why the brand-versus-performance debate is based on a false choice that's costing brands billions. by **Shoshana Winter** 08 January 2026



*Shoshana Winter has spent her entire career in the performance marketing trenches, arguing for ROAS and conversion optimisation over "fluffy" brand work. In a special article for the [PMW Squad](#), the CEO at agency [Converge](#) examines new data from WARC that confronts an uncomfortable truth...*

I've spent my entire career in performance marketing. I built an agency on it. I've hired teams, sold clients, and defended budgets using that word – performance – for

decades. Yet here's a sentence I never thought I'd write: the word "performance" has lost its meaning.

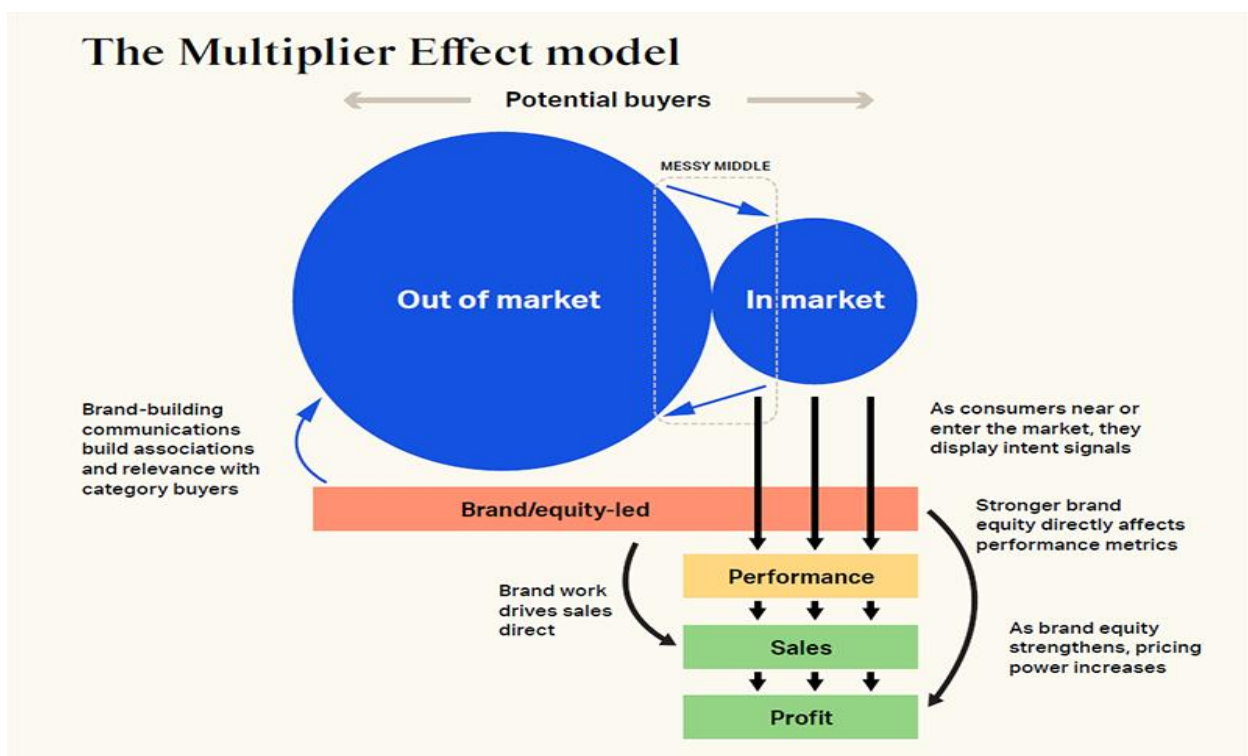
It's not that performance doesn't matter. In fact, it matters more than ever. But we've trapped it inside a false choice – brand or performance – that no longer reflects how growth actually happens.

Somewhere along the way "performance" became shorthand for short-termism: clicks, conversions, ROAS spreadsheets. The implication was clear – brand was fluffy, performance was real. Brand was storytelling, performance was revenue. Marketers have been arguing about that binary ever since, shifting budgets like bets at a roulette table.

But the truth is, that argument is outdated.

[WARC's research](#), especially *The Multiplier Effect*, didn't just challenge the brand-versus performance debate – it ended it. Their data shows brands grow most efficiently when brand-building and performance tactics work together. Not in sequence. Not in silos. Together.

Brand activity amplifies performance outcomes, and performance activity monetizes brand demand. One without the other is mathematically inferior.



Source: [WARC](#)

Yet we keep using language that suggests otherwise.

As a performance marketer, I'll say the quiet part out loud: performance marketing alone does not drive sustainable performance. It harvests demand more than it creates it. It's exceptional at the last mile, when someone is ready to act, but increasingly inefficient at generating that readiness in the first place.

That doesn't make performance marketing bad. It just makes it incomplete.

Meanwhile, traditional brand storytelling – long-form video, emotional narratives, cultural moments – has been unfairly absolved of accountability. Brand teams still talk about awareness and affinity as if revenue is someone else's problem. In today's environment, that separation is no longer defensible. Every dollar must play a role in growth, even if that role isn't immediately measurable in a dashboard.

This is why I believe we're nearing the end of "performance" as a category. Not the end of accountability. Not the end of measurement. Not the end of optimization.

It's the end of the word, and the mindset, that performance lives in one lane and brand in another.

All marketing is performance marketing now.

Some of it is performed by building memory structures. Some of it performs by shaping preference over time. Some of it performs by capturing intent in the final moments before purchase. The timelines are different. The metrics are different. But the goal is the same: revenue growth.

The most effective systems today don't ask, "Is this brand or performance?" They ask, "What role does this play in the growth engine?" Storytelling creates future demand. Targeted media and promotions convert present demand. One multiplies the other.

As CEOs, CMOs, and agency leaders, our job isn't to defend old labels. It's designing modern systems. That starts with changing our language. When we stop separating brand and performance, we stop organizing teams, budgets, and expectations around a false divide.

So yes – this is the end of performance.

And the beginning of something better: marketing that is accountable, creative, commercial, and finally aligned with how growth actually works.



By Shoshana Winter CEO [Converge](#)

This article is part of Performance Marketing World's series '[The PMW Squad](#)', a handpicked team of industry experts providing fresh and unfiltered insights on the biggest issues facing marketers today.