

Inside Out

The Experience eZine

FROM THE CREATORS OF THE GET SMART PLATFORM | DECEMBER/JANUARY 2026

decoding BRAND EXPERIENCE

Beyond your bubble –
avoiding the feedback
echo chamber

NEW

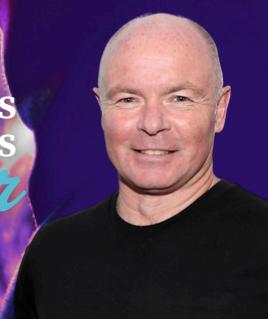


Make your organisation's
culture your brand's
superpower



When brand is
*everyone's
business*

at Engineering
New Zealand
Te Ao Rangahau



Inside Out

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From the Editor's desk

When we think about our brands as people, it means we think in relationships. It becomes about how we show up, how we're understood and how we make others feel. In this edition, we unpack brand experience from every angle, exploring how it's built, measured and truly felt.

From decoding awareness and trust to aligning how our people experience our organisation with what's out in the world, these stories remind us that strong brands don't just talk, they listen, learn, adapt and evolve. And as we'll hear from Suzanne at Engineering New Zealand, a brand is so much more than the logo! Let's get into it.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Samantha Howarth".

Samantha Howarth

INSIDE OUT EDITOR

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Decoding brand experience

We break down what awareness, trust and advocacy really tell you about how customers, employees and your wider community experience your brand and why getting it right can make all the difference to growth and loyalty.

If your business was a person, who would they be?

Would they be the friendly neighbour everyone waves to? The quiet achiever who gets things done? The bold innovator who always has a new idea?

It's a fun exercise, but also a powerful one. Because, just like people, every business gives off signals about who they are. Those signals make up your brand experience, the way people feel about your business based on every interaction they have with it.

When we talk about brand, we're not just talking about logos, taglines or marketing campaigns.

We're talking about people.

- **Your customers** (those who buy from you)
- **Your employees** (those who represent you)
- **Your stakeholders** (your partners, suppliers, and community)
- **Your market** (the not-yet-customers who may one day buy from you)

Understanding how these groups perceive and experience your business tells you a lot about your brand's health and its potential for growth. Let's decode the three building blocks that form the backbone of brand experience: **awareness, trust, and advocacy**.



Awareness

Brand awareness is the simplest and most misunderstood measure of brand strength. Many businesses assume that being “well-known” equals being “well-regarded”. But recognition without reputation is a bit like being the loudest voice in the room. People might hear you, but they’re not necessarily listening.

Awareness answers two questions

- *Who knows about you?*
- *What do they know, or think they know?*

For example, let’s say you run a local restaurant. If 60% of your local community recognises your name, that’s a strong start. But if their top association is “long waiting times” or “service quality is

dependent on who serves you”, that awareness isn’t helping you, it’s hurting you.

Awareness on its own can’t guarantee success, but it lays the foundation for everything else. If people don’t know you exist, they can’t consider you. And if they know you for the wrong reasons, you’ll need to work harder to change perceptions.

Strengthening awareness

- Be consistent in your visual and verbal cues. Use the same tone, style and story across all channels.
- Show up where your audience already spends time, whether that’s online, in community spaces or through local partnerships.

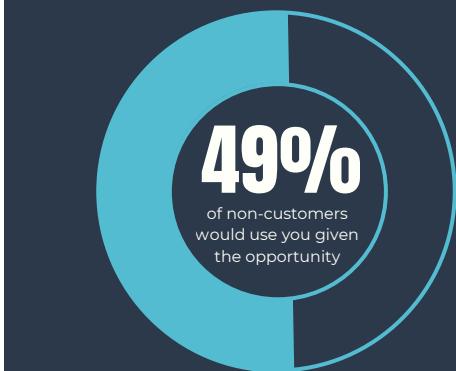
- Educate, don't just promote. Share what you do and why it matters in ways that add value to your audience's world.

Trust

Once people know who you are, trust determines whether they'll take the next step. Trust is built quietly and consistently. It's shaped by what people experience when they engage with your brand. Your service, responsiveness, your reliability and even your honesty when things don't go to plan.

We often describe trust as the bridge between awareness and preference. It's what turns a name someone's heard of into a business they'd actually choose.

For small businesses, trust can be your greatest competitive advantage. You may not have the marketing budget of the big players, but you can offer something they often can't, genuine, human connection.



“We often describe trust as the bridge between awareness and preference.”

Think about what builds trust

- **Consistency** Delivering the same quality experience every time.
- **Transparency** Being upfront about your pricing, policies, or delays.
- **Authenticity** Showing the real people behind the business.
- **Empathy** Understanding and caring about your customers' needs.

If awareness is about getting noticed, ***trust is about being believed.***

Advocacy

The highest expression of brand strength is advocacy, the point where customers, employees and partners don't just trust you, **they actively recommend you.**

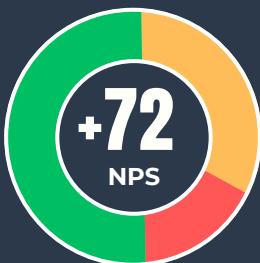
Advocacy is powerful because it multiplies your message. A happy customer's word-of-mouth carries more credibility than any ad you could buy. An enthusiastic employee can attract better talent. A respected partner can open new doors. In other words, advocacy fuels organic growth. While advocacy is often tracked through Net Promoter Score (NPS), the real measure of strength is when that advocacy shows up in business outcomes, from higher retention to greater revenue per customer.

Here's what advocacy looks like in action

- Customers leaving glowing reviews or referring friends.
- Employees sharing your wins on LinkedIn because they're proud to work with you.
- Community partners publicly celebrating your collaboration.

To nurture advocacy, focus on creating experiences worth talking about. Small touches, a handwritten thank-you note, a follow-up call after service, or spotlighting a team member who went the extra mile, can turn satisfaction into loyalty and loyalty into advocacy.

Remember, advocacy doesn't come from everyone. Your goal isn't to please everyone, it's to **deeply resonate with the right people.**



“The strongest brands don't just earn a high NPS, they see advocacy in their results.”

Seeing your brand as a person

If your brand were a person, what kind of relationship would people have with them? Would they be seen as reliable and trusted or inconsistent and unpredictable?

Do they make people feel confident, cared for, or understood or do they leave them frustrated and uncertain? Personifying your brand helps you think about the experience you're creating from the outside in. It forces you to consider not just how your business looks, but how it behaves.

For example:

- If your business were a person, how would they greet a new customer?
- How would they apologise after a mistake?
- What tone would they use when speaking to their community?

These questions help align your internal culture with your external reputation. For now, it's enough to recognise that what happens inside your business (the employee experience) inevitably shapes what people experience outside of it (the customer experience).

Bringing it all together

Brand experience isn't a marketing department project, it's the sum of every interaction, impression, and emotion your business creates.

When you decode awareness, trust, and advocacy, you're really uncovering three layers of relationship:

- **Awareness** shows whether people know you exist.
- **Trust** reveals whether they believe in you.
- **Advocacy** proves they value you enough to share that belief with others.

Each layer strengthens the next. Awareness without trust is empty. Trust without advocacy is fragile. Advocacy without awareness can't grow.

The key is to see your brand as alive and evolving, a relationship. One that grows stronger every time someone has a positive experience, feels understood, or shares your story with others.

A final thought

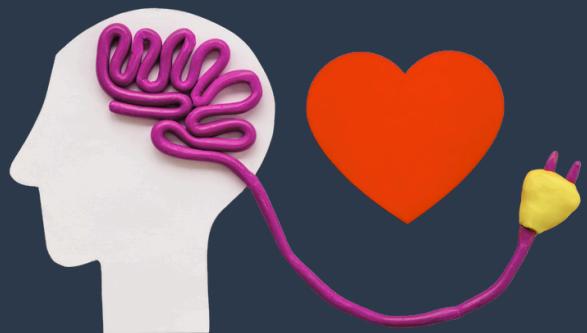
Small businesses often underestimate their brand power. But every local interaction, every repeat customer, every "I've heard

great things about you" moment is brand experience in action.

Your brand lives in the minds and hearts of others, it's what people say, feel, and expect about you. And the more deliberate you are in shaping that experience, the more magnetic your business becomes.

Because when awareness builds trust, and trust inspires advocacy, your brand stops being just a business and starts becoming someone people genuinely want in their lives.

“Your brand lives in the minds and hearts of others.”





Beyond your bubble – avoiding the feedback echo chamber

Karen Connell, Qualitative Research Director at

Angus & Associates explores why true brand growth begins when you step outside your feedback bubble



It's a familiar story.

Organisations often ask customers what they think, or survey employees for feedback. A well-structured programme surfaces both positives and challenges, giving a balanced view. But this feedback comes from people who already know you, those who've chosen to engage and whose perceptions are shaped by familiarity.

The real test comes when you want to grow your brand or reach new markets. Then you must connect with audiences who don't yet know you, or who've formed impressions from afar. That's when the contrast becomes clear, and the bubble of existing perceptions gives way to the realities of reaching new audiences.

Different audiences, different priorities

Imagine talking to potential customers who've never used your product, or lapsed customers who drifted away years ago. Their feedback can be surprising, revealing barriers you didn't know existed, misconceptions about your offer, or opportunities to stand out more clearly.

In one recent project, we found distinct differences between current, lapsed and potential customers. Loyal customers valued trust and familiarity. Prospects were influenced by first impressions. Lapsed customers were shaped by past experiences. These differences matter. Growth depends on understanding what each group values and tailoring how you communicate, not assuming one message fits all.

Why ongoing monitoring matters

Neglecting brand monitoring creates blind spots. Without

visibility beyond your loyal base, decisions rest on outdated or incomplete information. You risk missing shifts in customer expectations, industry trends or competitor positioning until it's too late.

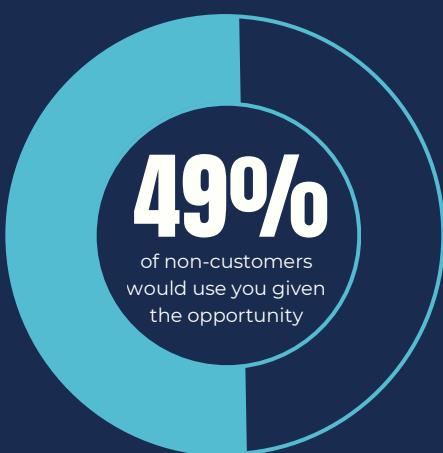
“You risk missing shifts in customer expectations, industry trends or competitor positioning until it's too late.”

In contrast, systematic monitoring gives you a clear, evidence-based view of how your brand is perceived and performing. It reduces guesswork, highlights early warning signs, and measures the impact of your marketing and customer initiatives. Most importantly, it uncovers unmet needs and fresh opportunities, the fuel for innovation and sustainable growth.

The power of first impressions

Think of your brand like a house. Inside, it may be warm and welcoming. But if the front door is peeling and the garden overgrown, visitors form an opinion before stepping inside. Monitoring how your brand appears from the outside is like repainting that door, it shows you care, invites curiosity and sets expectations for deeper engagement.

Always-on market data at your fingertips



See the interactive Brand Monitor dashboard demo
www.getsmartglobal.com/brand-monitor

Making brand data matter – from knowing to doing

Brand data can feel abstract or overwhelming, but its real power lies in the stories it tells about your audience and your market. In this article, we unpack what those insights are revealing and explore what turning them into action might look like.

Every brand sends signals.

The trick is knowing what they're saying and whether they match what you *meant* to say.

That's where brand data earns its keep. It doesn't just tell you how many people recognise your name or recall your ads, it helps you understand how your brand is positioned in the minds of the people you most want to reach. And once you know that, you can decide what to do about it.

Because numbers alone don't grow a brand. It's what you learn from them, and act on, that does.

When awareness is low

If awareness is low, you're probably fighting for attention. It doesn't necessarily mean you're doing anything wrong, it may simply mean you're not yet visible enough to the right audience.

Here, the move is usually about reach. Partnering with complementary businesses, tapping into local networks, or creating content that gets shared beyond your existing followers. Awareness-building doesn't have to mean expensive advertising, it's about showing up consistently where your potential customers are already looking.

Sometimes even small shifts help: a clearer tagline that says what you do, imagery that better reflects your audience, or better signage that draws the eye. The goal is recognition, to make your name familiar enough that when someone needs what you offer, they think of you first.

When awareness is high, but familiarity is low

This is when people have heard of you but don't really know you. Maybe they know your logo, but not what you actually stand for. Or they think you're only for a certain type of customer.

This calls for storytelling. Bring your brand to life through examples, people, and proof. Let customers see behind the curtain, who you are, what drives you, what your service or product really delivers. Familiarity grows when people can connect your brand to a real experience or feeling.

It's the difference between "Oh yeah, I've heard of them" and "I know what they're about".

When people know you, but don't choose you

This one can sting a bit, high awareness, low preference. It's a sign the market recognises you, but doesn't yet see a compelling reason to choose you over the alternatives.

Sometimes the answer lies in repositioning, clarifying what makes you distinct, not just what makes you good. Are you known for reliability when your competitors chase trends? Then own that. Are you the creative option in a sea of sameness? Lead with it.

It might also be about removing perceived barriers, pricing clarity, online booking ease or simply better communication of value. People often make decisions emotionally first, then rationally so if your brand isn't sparking interest or trust, no

amount of facts will convert them.

When satisfaction is high, but advocacy is low

If your existing customers love you but aren't spreading the word, something's blocking the leap from satisfaction to advocacy. Sometimes it's practical, you've never asked for referrals or made it easy to leave feedback. Other times, it's emotional, people like the service, but it didn't surprise them enough to talk about it.

Look at the touchpoints that create delight, how you welcome customers, how you thank them, how you handle problems. Advocacy grows from moments that feel personal and memorable. It's less about grand gestures and more about consistent, thoughtful ones.

When reputation starts to slip

Even healthy brands have weak spots. Maybe your trust

scores dip slightly, or perceptions around value or service start to erode. The instinct might be to jump into PR mode but the smarter play is to look for the root cause.

Is the experience consistent across all locations? Are expectations being set clearly? Are new staff trained in the same values as your veterans? Often, small operational tweaks restore confidence faster than big marketing campaigns.

The key is spotting these shifts early, before they become the story about your brand.

When you spot something unexpected

Sometimes the most interesting insights aren't about what's wrong, they're about what's emerging. Maybe your overall awareness looks low, but when you drill into the data, it's higher than expected among a particular age group, region, or niche audience.

That's gold. It might point to a segment that's quietly warming to your offer, a new customer base, a different use case, or a partnership opportunity you hadn't considered.

Data like that helps you follow momentum, not just chase problems. Instead of asking "how do we fix this?", you start asking "how do we build on this?".

That's where growth often hides, not in what's broken, but in what's beginning to work.

The real measure of a brand

Brand data isn't there to pat you on the back or catch you out. It's there to keep you

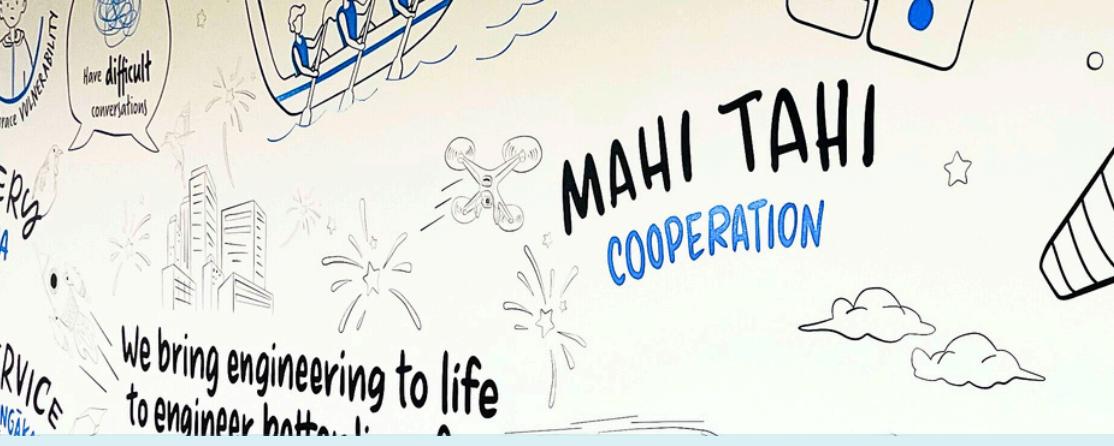
honest, to bridge what you think your brand stands for with what the market actually experiences.

Sometimes that leads to bold change, a new direction, a repositioning, a refreshed voice. Other times it's as simple as doubling down on what's already working.

Either way, when you treat brand insights as a living part of your strategy, not just an annual report, you start managing your brand like an ecosystem, not a campaign. You listen, you learn, and you evolve. **Because that's what strong brands do. They keep listening and they keep moving.**



The best businesses don't guess, they know



How Engineering New Zealand made Brand everyone's business



When **Engineering New Zealand Te Ao Rangahau** rebranded, Marketing Manager **Suzanne Roff** was clear that “It’s NOT just about the logo.”

For **Engineering New Zealand Te Ao Rangahau**, their rebrand wasn’t a marketing led design exercise, it was an organisational mindset shift.

Seven years after transforming from IPENZ to Engineering New Zealand, the organisation had successfully modernised its image and broadened its appeal. That change had done its job. But as the engineering profession continues to

change, it was time to pause and ask *what matters now?*

“We’d achieved what we set out to do back then,” says Suzanne. “Now it’s about resonance and relevance, putting the member experience at the centre.”

A brand led by members

True to Engineering New Zealand’s collaborative spirit, the rebrand began not with



colour palettes or fonts, but with conversations. Workshops with members, staff and technical groups explored what the brand felt like today and what they wanted it to feel like tomorrow.

“We asked, if Engineering New Zealand were a person, how would you describe them? That opened up some awesome, honest conversations,” says Suzanne.

“There was this perception that engineers might be quite traditional or cautious about change, but what we heard

was the opposite,” Suzanne recalls. “There was consistency – which I wasn’t expecting – members wanted us to lead, to be progressive and to innovate. That was really exciting.”

Rebranding as an education process

For Engineering New Zealand, the biggest shift wasn’t visual, it was educational.

“Everyone can understand a logo. That’s the easy part,” says Suzanne. “But a brand isn’t just how you look, it’s also what you do and what you say. It’s the 90% below the surface.”

To help embed that thinking, Suzanne took a bold step and **launched the brand to staff without the logo**. Instead, they focused on sharing what the new brand experience could look like through story telling of what a members experience could be.

Constant communication kept everyone in the loop; team meetings, updates and workshops made sure the organisation knew what was happening and why. The process wasn't about “marketing doing a rebrand”, it was about everyone shaping the organisation's next chapter.

“You want it to be everyone's brand,” Suzanne explains. “That's what gives it guts and ownership.”

Living the brand every day

To make sure the new brand isn't just words on a wall, Engineering New Zealand formed the Core Brand Implementation Team (CBIT)

and 12 brand champions across different parts of the business. Each champion is responsible for activating the new brand experience in their areas of the business.

They also took a **values-first** approach to everyday behaviour. Their brand values are the guiding principles for everything they do:

- **Bravery** We lead the profession boldly and with courage.
- **Integrity** We are honest, respectful and authentic in everything we do.
- **Mahi Tahi** We are one team, stronger working together as a collective.

“We'd rather talk proudly about results than shout loudly about our intentions.”

SUZANNE ROFF

Marketing Manager

Engineering New Zealand

- **Service** We provide value for our members, the profession and our community in every interaction.

Measuring the shift

Engineering New Zealand is already planning how to measure brand success, inside and out.

In early 2026, they'll introduce new member survey questions to track how people feel when interacting with the organisation, benchmarked against the new brand personality and how we want members to feel when interacting with us or our products and services.

They're also checking in internally to gauge employee understanding and alignment. "We're starting from the inside out," Suzanne says.

Lessons in rebranding

Suzanne is proud of the groundwork that's been done and the shared ownership that's emerged. "People don't

like being told what to do. We potentially could have arrived at a similar brand personality, but without being intentional about inclusivity, it wouldn't have been *our* collective brand and this was extremely important to us. Giving everyone a voice makes all the difference."

So, what advice would she give other businesses thinking about rebranding?

- **Don't focus on your logo.** Despite the pressure, the visual identity comes last.
- **Bring people with you.** A rebrand needs leadership from the top, it can't sit with marketing alone.
- **Do it properly.** Take time to educate, align and embed before you unveil anything.

And finally, recognise that a rebrand is never done. "*A brand is a living beast, it's always evolving and changing. Never become complacent as that's when you lose sight of the impact of brand.*"

All will be revealed... are you ready to play?

Blind Spot is a card game designed to challenge what you think you know about your customers, team, stakeholders and market.

Reveal what you know as fact, where you're making assumptions and where you're guessing.

It's the perfect way to kick off your next leadership meeting, board meeting, offsite or strategy session.



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Make your organisation's culture your brand's superpower



Ramp Brand Communications Director, **Stephen Reid**, on how aligning culture with brand promise makes your team your greatest asset.

Every business invests in building a brand, crafting promises, designing identities, developing positioning. But the most powerful brand asset you have is often overlooked, your organisational culture. When your internal culture aligns with your external brand promise, you transform your team from brand deliverers into brand amplifiers. Culture becomes your competitive advantage, your superpower.

When superpowers are left dormant

A local café built its reputation on understanding corporate customers and delivering

exceptional service in an environment ideally suited for business discussions.

Recently, a group of business leaders I know, fresh from their regular morning ride, stopped in before starting their busy day. They sat for twenty minutes while staff chatted in the kitchen, aware of but completely inattentive to their waiting customers. So, they left.

They realised the café showed little regard for the one thing they valued most, their time. It wasn't about a few inattentive staff, it was about the café's

culture and what it signalled. The place they thought understood them didn't understand them at all.

Word spread quickly. None will return. The café's carefully crafted brand was reimagined by its customers, not through what was promised, but through what was experienced. How the team made people feel became the true definition of the brand.

It doesn't matter how good the logo is when the culture doesn't deliver. This wasn't a failure of brand design, it was a failure to activate culture as a brand superpower.

The amplification effect of culture

When culture and promise align, extraordinary things can happen. When they don't, the damage is amplified. Negative experiences resonate more loudly than positive ones.

But here's what makes culture a superpower, when your team

genuinely embodies your brand values, they naturally exceed expectations. They make decisions that align with your promise without needing a manual. They create moments that turn customers into advocates.

Why culture remains untapped

Many businesses develop brands at boardroom or owner level and apply them to the organisation. This misses two critical elements, genuine insight from those who interact with customers daily and an understanding of the team's realities that shape your business capabilities.

Your brand promise is only as strong as your team's ability, and desire, to deliver it.

Activating your superpower

To activate culture as your brand superpower, involve the people tasked with delivering your promise in developing it. What's promised externally must be lived internally.

This creates two powerful outcomes. First, you gain insight from the people closest to your customers. Second, when people are involved, they feel a sense of ownership and ownership drives action.

The strongest activation mechanism is purpose. Discuss with your team how their personal purpose might align with your business and brand. Does the brand promise make sense to them – is it believable, does something need to be adjusted?

When your team believes in what the brand stands for because it resonates personally, they don't just deliver – they amplify.

Starting with small, easy steps

Building organisational culture takes time, effort, and sometimes external expertise. But aligning that culture with your brand promise doesn't necessarily cost much if anything.

Start with conversations about where personal purpose meets brand purpose. These discussions cost only time. You may choose to invest further in culture alignment programmes later, but this first step requires nothing more than genuine dialogue.

Before you spend big marketing dollars attracting people to your business, invest time creating the destination you're promising and a team culture that can bring it to life.

Your hidden competitive advantage

Products and services can be replicated, and marketing messages flood every channel.

So how do you compete?
Culture. Organisational culture is your differentiator, the one thing competitors cannot copy.

Your brand isn't what you say it is. It's what your customers experience through your people, every single day, in every interaction.

More than any logo, design, or positioning statement, culture may be your most powerful brand investment. It begins with something remarkably simple, asking your team how their purpose connects with your brand's promise. That conversation costs nothing and its impact can transform everything.

Make your organisation's culture your brand's superpower.

“When your team connects personally with what the brand stands for, they don't just deliver – they amplify.”

STEPHEN REID

Founder & Director

Ramp Brand Communications



Make your organisation's culture your brand's superpower.

Find out how, with a free, no-obligation chat

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The experience equation for business performance

Ask any business leader what drives performance and you'll hear familiar answers – **loyal customers, engaged employees, committed partners** and a **trusted brand**.

It's an intuitive formula, when people are motivated, connected and see value in the relationship, the business thrives.

Yet these elements are often measured in isolation. Customer feedback sits apart from employee surveys. Brand awareness is tracked separately from financial results. Partner sentiment is rarely captured at all. **The real picture only emerges when the pieces come together.**

That's the thinking behind **EX4**, a connected insights programme from **Get Smart** by Angus & Associates.

EX4 links the four experience lenses, **customer, employee, partner**, and **brand**, directly with business performance data.

The approach enables benchmarking by sector or size and more importantly, helps leaders identify the blueprint of a high-performing business.

Because when experiences align, when customers keep coming back, teams feel invested, partners grow alongside you, and the brand inspires trust, **performance isn't just the outcome, it's the natural result.**

Learn more at www.getsmartglobal.com/ex4

