

S2: E158: 2026 Marketing Forecast: What's Really Coming Next (and How to Lead It)

Hey there and welcome to the Your Legacy Brand podcast. This is your host Tiffany Neuman and today we are going into 2026 marketing forecasts. What is really coming next and how to lead in this new era.

If you listened to last week, I talked all about how I believe the next wave of thought leadership is coming online and why 2026 belongs to feminine leadership, holistic brands, and service-driven visionaries. So if you missed that episode, I highly recommend you go back and listen to that first because it sets the stage for the actual marketing trends and tactics that I'm going to dive into today. Or you can always listen to this and then go back.

So I'm very confident about 2026, which seems sort of odd at this moment considering everything that's happening in the world. The thing is, I truly believe that entrepreneurs, people like you and I are the ones who can actually create change and make a ripple effect in the world. And the more we pour our hearts into serving each other, serving the greater good, things can shift.

And of course, if you know me, you'll know I also say it's all about energetics, but that's not necessarily what we're talking about today. But you've probably felt it already. Something in the business space has been shifting and it's shifting more.

Launches feel different, audiences are more discerning, and what worked even two years ago now feels off.

And if you're listening to this, I'm guessing you don't want to just try and keep up. You want to lead what's coming next.

So today I'm pulling back the curtain on my 2026 marketing forecast. What I'm seeing, sensing, and validating from multiple angles. So my former life as a trend predictor and creative director for Fortune 500 brands like Adidas and Burt's Bees.

Data coming out of major marketing and trust reports. The conversations I'm in with top thought leaders and communities. And yes, we're even going to dive into the lens of numerology and astrology a little bit for 2026, because the energy of a year absolutely influences how strategies land, in my humble opinion.

If you don't necessarily believe in that stuff, totally fine. Everything else I'm going to share, it all is pointing in the same direction. But first I do want to talk about numerology, because 2026 isn't just another year.

In numerology, it's a universal one year. The beginning of a brand new nine-year cycle associated with fresh starts, bold leadership, and pioneers stepping forward.

Astrologically, we're entering a period where planets like Uranus and Gemini, Neptune and Eros, and Pluto and Aquarius describe tech innovation, new communication paradigms, and radical change in how we organize as communities.

I am not an expert in these areas, but I follow them closely. And you can't make this stuff up, right?

I talk about how in my mastermind, our tagline is actually, you can't make this shit up because of all the incredible things that have been unfolding. And that's how I feel about this.

Because in other words, this is not the year to stay in the ways of the old, the old internet, the old paradigms, the old marketing strategies. This is the year to update what I call your operating system internally, as a human, and also in your brand and marketing. And here's something even more fascinating.

As we close out 2025, this is a universal nine-year, the end of a major cycle. Everything we've experienced this year has been about completion, releasing what's outdated, clearing patterns that can't move forward with us, shedding old identities, old strategies, and finishing what needs finishing.

So it's no coincidence that I came up with nine major shifts emerging for 2026.

Nine-year energy asks us to take inventory.

What's ending?

What can be completed? And what wisdom are you carrying into the next nine-year cycle?

These nine forecasts that I'm going to share momentarily are exactly that. The patterns that are completing, the truths rising to the surface, and the new pathways opening up for leaders who are willing to step forward.

So with that, let's dive right into the nine shifts that I'm predicting for next year.

Forecast number one is AI moves from novelty to infrastructure. And you probably have no arguments with this.

Let's start with the obvious, which is AI. Most people have been stuck at prompt level.

Give me 10 hooks. Write a caption for me. Summarize this, right? Now, I feel like AI is already taking over, but that's because I'm in the world. I'm integrating into my business.

I'm creating agents. I'm creating tools for my clients. You may be doing the same thing.

But if we look at the outside world and, quote, normal humans, which I don't mean in any way good or bad. It's just like not entrepreneurs who are forward thinking. So many people are just sort of dipping their toes in.

Of course, you have the people who are like, I'm never going to do AI. If that's you, you can totally choose to disagree with me. But I really do think that it's here to stay. And it can do so many incredible things for us. It's been useful, but it's not enough for 2026.

Sophisticated brands are already moving into AI as infrastructure, not just a content toy. That means using AI for creative ideation and some strategy, not replacing your ideas at all, because we still need our humanness. This is where our soul comes online, is with the ideas. But stress testing and expanding ideas, right? Workflow automation, 100%. Launch checklists, repurposing systems, so much we can do. Audience insights and predictive analytics. So using data to predict what your people will need next and when is going to be huge.

And personalized experiences. I'm already creating and helping my clients to create AI powered lead magnets and things like that that will bring in clients and give them a bespoke experience based on your unique methodologies.

So the thing is, yes, AI does have environmental implications. In the wrong hands, it can be scary. And I don't want to sugar coat this and be super toxic positive about it. But I'm already thinking in my business, how can I offset, what can I do to stand up for the environment while utilizing AI? Because I truly don't think it's going anywhere.

And so to just not use it is going to just be a detriment to your brand and business. And most 2026 reports that are out there by big brands are already saying the same thing. AI is just going deeper. And the brands who combine AI with human judgment and ethics, not just to crank out more content or random junk, right? We all know that that happens too. And there's so much recycling and crap that gets put out. I'm talking about utilizing it in really powerful and strategic ways. And so you really want to think of it as part of your brand operating system, but not a replacement for your voice or your ideas or your genius.

So in 2026, the question isn't how do I use AI for more content? It's how do I weave AI into my business so it amplifies my humanity, my creativity, and my capacity without replacing my discernment? We'll definitely be doing a full episode on this. But for now, I want you to start seeing AI as plumbing in your business, not a pretty decoration.

Okay, let's jump into forecast number two. Trust becomes the ultimate currency. And it's in a little bit of crisis right now.

So you've probably heard me say this before if you've listened to me for any time about trust being the ultimate currency. But I think it's worth doubling down on, especially in 2026, because across basically every study I've seen, one thing is crystal clear. Trust is in crisis.

A recent Edelman report shows declining trust in CEOs, government, and media, saying that seven out of 10 people believe leaders are misleading them. Now I could get all political here and go on a deep dive in

my beliefs around this and how we're being misled and fear is coming into play and all of the things, but that's not what this episode is about. So I'll just keep moving on.

And at the same time, reports on brand trust show that people still want to trust brands, but that trust must be earned through lived behavior, not lofty claims. So that's really important to take note on. In 2026, trust isn't nice to have.

It is truly the filter that people are looking through before they say yes. That means it's not enough to talk about integrity or name integrity as a value. You have to walk your talk.

Thought leadership that's all theory and no track record, it's not going to land. And people will invest in brands that do what they say and own what they say when things go sideways. So this is why I really want you to think about paying attention to cultivating your warm audiences.

People who've already experienced you, maybe it's listening to your podcast, reading your content, been in your world in some way are going to matter more than ever. You've already built some degree of trust with them.

So you can also think of warm audiences as when other people introduce you.

So for instance, when I partner with a colleague and I go and speak in their say mastermind, that is a warm audience because I'm being introduced by somebody they already know, like and trust, right?

And the other thing is being seen as a trusted guide through what I call the messy middle of an uncertain world becomes a core brand asset, not just a nice tagline. People really want support right now.

There's a lot going on, it's tumultuous, it's interesting, and nobody really knows the true answers of what's going to unfold. So we need more leaders who are leading with their experience, their intuition to rise up right now. So in practice, this looks like case studies that show real journeys, not just overnight miracles, or I even hate to bring this up, but yes, AI will make testimonials for people and just make shit up, right? So we have to be very discerning.

Clear expectations and honest scope in your offers. Over delivering, surprising and delighting people is going to be huge. Now this doesn't mean over delivering to your own burnout, so you're over giving and people pleasing.

This truly means over deliver on your promises. And making sure your operations and decision making are values driven and visible. Again, trust is a new algorithm.

If people don't trust you, nothing else you do will matter that much.

All right, forecast number three, privacy first and warm audience marketing. I touched on this a little bit, but I want to go deeper because I think it's going to be so important.

As we step into 2026, the shift away from surveillance style targeting is already going to be underway. A lot of digital marketing reports are saying the same thing. First party data and consent based values driven data collection are becoming non-negotiable.

Now, what does that mean? This is actually a report that I read from a place called HTmedia, and the translation is basically, you need to build and nurture your own ecosystem. Your list, your community, and your loyal audience.

The old game of buying these big lists and brands tracking every movement, which of course a lot of them are still going to do, but people are starting to notice that.

They say a word, the phone picks up on it, and they start seeing ads. It can work, but sometimes it just feels creepy and it just makes you not want to buy. This is shifting.

This again is where your brand operating system really comes in. Your email list, your podcast, your sub stack, your workshops, your client base, whatever your operating system is, this includes your warm, high intent audiences.

In a world where people are being more cautious and spending a little bit more thoughtfully, it's so much easier to launch to people who already know you, upsell or deepen with clients already seeing results, and invite existing subscribers to their next aligned step, versus trying to convince random strangers on the internet that you are the answer. Right? And this is where I see so many people spraying and praying on social media, or paying a ton of money on paid ads, and there's no conversions, right? That has really shifted the last few years. Cold audiences are not working as well, and it's going to be more and more expensive.

So in 2026, I really believe that the strongest brands are going to create simple, elegant funnels for their warm leads, not these 17-step labyrinths that feel confusing and feel shady as hell when you're through them, and like, do you want this? And add on this, and do that.

And it's like, no, I don't. I don't even want to buy from you anymore, right? That's my personal opinion. But if you're listening to this, you're probably on the same page.

Encouraging people to raise their hand for deeper support, not forcing people through manipulative urgency like all the countdown timers and bro marketing crap, and truly designing marketing around ongoing relationships, not one-off launches. Because your warm audience is an asset, energetically and financially. Treat it like one.

Pour into those people who already trust you and who already love working with.

That really leads to forecast number four, which I'm calling rooted realness. Everyone talks about authenticity, right? It's a played out word.

And then there's also on the other side, performative vulnerability, which we'll talk about in a moment. What is rooted realness? This is a new term that I'm claiming because, honestly, I'm sick of authenticity and being vulnerable for vulnerable's sake.

So let's talk about authenticity first.

Like I said, it's been overused. It's been co-opted. And a lot of what gets labeled as authentic online is either oversharing without containment or highly curated relatability that's actually a strategy.

So in 2026, I am seeing a shift towards what I call rooted realness, being genuinely yourself, but also being anchored, boundaried, and leading from a deep place of alignment. So this is why I stopped editing the podcast. You probably hear me fumble my words a little bit, and that's because it's me talking to you.

It's not some perfect narrative, right? And so not saying you have to do that, but when we're showing up truly raw and real, that's when people get to see our true self shining through. And I think there's been so much perfectionism holding people back. And I just want to see leaders being themselves and not worrying what everyone's thinking when they're not perfect.

Because that's not the point. The point is how we're showing up and serving one another. And so this looks like sharing enough of your journey that people trust your humanness, but not dumping unprocessed trauma on your audience.

Like the people I see crying on social media. I truly don't agree with that. You need to process that first, and then you can tell a story about it later if it's actually relative to your audience, if it actually makes sense to share, right? So the other thing is being willing to say, hey, here's where I got it wrong, and here's what I've changed.

We're human. We make mistakes. This is also why I tell all of my clients to start new programs and processes with beta groups, like Brand Alchemy that I just ran, like my new turnkey websites that we're launching.

I always start with beta because they're probably not going to be 100% perfect. But I know I can walk people through them. I have them 90% of the way there, and I will get incredible results for people. But I'm first transparent about that. And people get a good deal, and they're happy, and they love it.

So this is where we need to have the strength and conviction to lead, even when the world feels chaotic.

The thing is, BS meters are sky high. People can feel the difference between, like, I'm sharing this from a healed, integrated place, or I'm bleeding out on the internet and hoping you're going to pay me. Like, that feels very different energetically, right? And at the same time, we're seeing real-life examples of brands being rewarded for transparent human choices around AI, around imagery, like Ari, the brand Ari, it's a clothing company, had a recent pledge not to use AI-generated bodies or retouching, which became their most engaging Instagram post in over a year.

Now, I'm not saying, again, you heard me a couple, you know, forecasts ago, AI is here. They're probably using their content. They're probably going to use it in different places in their business.

They didn't say, I'm not going to use it at all. They're just saying, we're not going to fake human bodies and make them look all perfect anymore. And there's something really beautiful about that.

So the takeaway here is your people want you to show up human, show up honest, and emotionally regulated as best you can. Not perfect, but also not performative, which leads us to forecast number five. I touched on this a little bit last week in the episode of my predictions on high level, but I wanted to go a little bit deeper in this because I think it's so important.

And I'm the only brand strategist I know that doesn't say the riches are in the niches or whatever that dumb saying is. I truly don't believe it. And sometimes they can be, but then people burn out and I end up reverse niching a lot of people.

So this pattern that I'm observing is the shift away from super niching yourself into a tiny corner. For years, the advice was pick one micro problem for one micro audience and only talk about that. And it did work for a lot of people.

And that advice did produce some clarity, but it also created brands that felt flat, boxed in and disconnected from the whole human. So the thought who are going to thrive in 2026, I believe are bringing their full spectrum to the table, strategy and soul, mindset and execution, business and life, intellect and intuition. Like my client, Randy, we were just having this conversation and he's like, I still feel like I haven't found my niche.

And I'm like, Randy, but you don't need to. And we helped him realize that he has two incredible humans he raised. He's run multiple businesses and yes, he's stepping into becoming a coach fully.

Like he's been coaching, but he's going all in on that and kind of leaving his other businesses behind. And the beautiful thing is he doesn't have, he kept saying, I have to pick. I love coaching people on parenting because he has done that.

And I love coaching people on business. And what we helped him realize was he can do both. Coach business owners who are parents and bring in the mindset and bring in the strategy because that's what made him successful.

It wasn't any of those things alone, right? And he had it so ingrained in his mind that he had to pick one lane. He was in tears at the end of the call because he was so excited for this revelation. So what it means is, yes, you do have to have a clear through line.

I call it the golden thread, a philosophy, a promise, but you can allow a more holistic expression through your offers and content than you believe you can.

So you're probably already seeing this online, hybrid offers that combine coaching, consulting, strategy, and healing, maybe more ecosystems instead of single products, and more leaders who are known for a body of work rather than one gimmicky tactic. This goes hand in hand with the idea that marketing will need to meet the moment, not cling to old formulas.

So in my own world, I've helped clients shift their offers and messaging slightly to meet the times, not burning everything down, but really re-evaluating how they can release things that no longer serve them or things that they don't any longer enjoy and really bring in new things that they're really excited and pumped to offer.

And like I said earlier, my masterminders, Nina doubled her income in 2025, Shannon let go of misaligned services that were no longer serving her and felt like she was carrying a heavy load, and really making sure that clients are feeling more supported while working less for her, which is so beautiful.

So we want to talk about more of a subtle refinement sometimes than a dramatic reinvention. Sometimes dramatic reinvention is called for, and we're shifting all the offers and we're shifting the identity.

But this can also mean a refinement in the way that you've been doing things, not throwing the baby out with the bathwater, right?

All right, forecast number six. Also touched on this last week, but again, I believe it needs a deeper dive. And this is flow, flexibility, and feminine principles in side strategy. Because the pace of change is not slowing down, it's only getting faster. We talked about AI accelerating, platforms shift weekly, economic forecasts are layered, and we don't know what's happening. And in this type of environment, the leaders who thrive will be the ones who lean into flow, creativity, and flexibility.

And this is what I would label feminine principles in business. I don't know about you, but my identity as a corporate woman, when I left my business seven years ago, when I came in, I was so masculine. Only because I was one of the only women in the C-suite, I had all leaders around me who were primarily men, and the only other woman that was in the C-suite, similarly, I was head of brand, she was head of marketing.

She did not like me because she saw me as competition. I did not play that game, but it made it very difficult. And it actually had me showing up very, very masculine, very, very working hard, all of the things, right? And I could go into that story so much more, but this is going to be a long episode, longer than normal because of all of these shifts and forecasts that I'm sharing.

So I'll leave it at that. But I do believe that many of us, as women especially, have been leading from this masculine principle, right? Trying to get our productivity up, trying to do all the things, working harder, blah, blah, blah, blah, right? And so I really feel like many of us are already entering this shift. We're heeding the call to have this more flow, creativity, flexibility. I definitely have over the past few years, but I feel like I'm finally in the place personally where I'm like, I'm all in on this and I want my clients to be all in on this. And so this isn't being reactive or flaky or what some men would dub feminine leadership as. It's about letting go of that perfectionism, moving from

control into co-creation that can be with other people, that can be with the universe, that can be with God, whatever that is for you.

For me, it is God. Co-creation can mean so many different things. It also means running experiments and not clinging to the one right way.

I've been helping so many of my clients look at things as like, well, let's test it. Let's see if it works. You can't be tied down into like no longer building this massive course without testing the waters first. I just highly advise against that.

And also building simple, elegant systems that can bend without breaking. Steve Jobs said that simplicity is the ultimate form of sophistication.

It's one of my favorite quotes. And it's the lens that I look through when I'm building anyone's brand. I mean, look at Apple, whether you love it or not.

It's incredible. It is so simple, so sophisticated. And that's where we need to show up, right?

Most of the time, people's messages are so complex and convoluted that people don't actually even understand what you do or who you are.

Or your offers are so confusing, right? And so these simple, elegant brand operating systems, as I am currently trademarking, which I'm really excited about, that's what we want to lean into.

How can we bend and flow and flux and change while leading without breaking? So 2026 is not the year to get lost in overbuilt funnels and complicated tech stacks. Like I could go on and on about all the people switching over to go high level, and I just want to be like shaking them.

Don't do it. Most people do not need these complicated funnels that everybody's selling. In my humble opinion, everybody is white labeling, go high level to make a bunch of money, they're not thinking about the end user who's going to pay for it.

Who doesn't need the complication of it, right? It does a lot of things okay, and nothing really good.

Another rant for another time. I'm in a ranty mood today, if you can't tell. Thank you for sticking with me.

So it is the year to test smaller, smarter moves, be transparent with your audience about what you're trying, invite them on the journey, right? People love to go on the journey and experience it with you and be open to bigger success than you ever thought possible as the new wave of thought leader rises. We are in a climate of uncertainty, but don't let that fear hold you back.

It doesn't mean you have to contract, it actually means that you can stay rooted in your values while being nimble with your tactics and showing up more powerfully than ever before. All right, we still have three forecasts left, so I'm going to try to keep my rambling to a minimum while we move into forecast number seven, messaging that mirrors your dream client's inner world. Now, this has always been important.

It's what I teach in my program, Legacy Brand Foundations, which, spoiler alert, is going away. I'm talking about being nimble here. I'm doing it myself.

It's not going away completely, just the way that we're doing it is shifting. And you'll have to stay tuned to learn more because this is going to be groundbreaking and game changing. But I digress, and I promised no more doing that.

So one of the most important things I do with clients, and this is going to be critical in 2026, is mapping what your dream clients believe, what they believe about themselves, what they believe in the world and about the world, what they say to themselves when they wake up at 2 a.m., how they define safety, success, and risk right now, and really capturing their actual words and reflecting them back to them with clarity, respect, and love, not manipulation. In a world saturated with generic content, specificity and empathy are everything right now. And this is big.

People will still be careful with their investments, but they really are ready to work with people that understand them and can shift and help them get results. They're not looking to be convinced. If your marketing comes from convincing energy, it will feel grasping and your nervous system will be showing that, too.

So in 2026, your job is actually to speak directly to people who already know they need support, not try to convince people. Position yourself as the next aligned step, not people's savior, and make it incredibly clear what problem you solve and what outcome you help create. No drama, no inflated promises, just clear leadership and grounded confidence.

And again, if you need help with your messaging, stay tuned. I've got your back. OK, forecast number eight, no brainer offers.

This is going to be super important. Your offers may be fine as is, but don't be quick to light everything on fire and start over. OK, a lot of people are kind of throwing everything away and starting fresh right now.

And chances are, maybe, maybe, maybe you do need that, but most likely you just need to shift. And so I've helped so many clients this past year do this because your offers will need to be no brainers for the right people, like where people are just like, I want to give you my money because I know you can get me results. And this is exactly what I'm looking for.

They do need to solve an immediate felt need priced in a way that feels like a stretch. Because if it's too low, people might not trust that you can get them results, but also low enough and perfect enough where it's just an easy yes for people. Right.

Gone are the days where thirty thousand dollar masterminds with no promised big results, those aren't flying anymore and really designed to over deliver without burning you out. So this doesn't mean undercharging. It really means trimming the fluff, tightening the promise and making sure the value is obvious.

You will stand out if you are realistic with your promises. You offer surprise and delight moments. You actually care about client outcomes, which I'm sure if you've listened this far, that is your jam.

And give people a clear pathway from dipping their toe in to going all in. And that means a stack of offers that's credible, cohesive and really leads to a positive outcome. And so this is where I want you to think about refining offers, not necessarily completely reinventing, because I think what's happening a lot of the times is people are just kind of burning everything down, starting fresh, and then their audience doesn't actually know if they can trust them anymore because they're like, well, if none of that stuff was actually any good, how do I know that I can trust all this new stuff that they're creating? Right now, warm audiences that people that you've already worked with may not think that.

But if people have kind of been following you, but they haven't actually worked with you yet, you need to just double down on what you've been doing in a new and different way, most likely. OK, last but not least, forecast number nine. We have to move from this pain-obsessed marketing to uplifting, grounded hope.

This is the last piece, but it's a big one. I saved it till last for a purpose. People are tired.

They are saturated with bad news, outrage and fear-based messaging in their daily lives, especially on social media, especially with the news, which is why I don't take part in either. Do we still need to acknowledge what the marketing industry has dubbed as air quote pain points? And yes, as I'm saying this, I'm doing the air quotes, but you cannot see me. Yes, of course, we're not spiritually bypassing reality.

We're not sugarcoating and pretending and being toxic positive. But leading with deep pain, doom and twist the knife messaging is going to feel more and more out of alignment and less and less effective.

In 2026, your message will land when it names reality without amplifying fear.

It regulates your audience's nervous system instead of spiking it and it points toward genuine possibility, not toxic positivity. Also, when it offers a grounded path forward, people will be drawn to brands that make them feel seen, safe, capable and inspired to act. And this is how you become a lighthouse, not a siren.

With fear based on fear, so as we wrap up today, let's zoom out for a second again, 2026 being a universal one year, that start of a new cycle, right? What I want you to think about when you put all of this together and the nine forecasts, it paints a clear picture. 2026 is an initiation year. That's what I'm calling it personally.

A year to step forward as a conscious leader, a year to innovate how you communicate, a year to use technology in alignment with your values, and a year to build communities and ecosystems, not just audiences. You're not imagining if you're feeling a pressure to evolve, you're hearing the call earlier than most. So as you listen to all of this, the last thing I want for you to feel is overwhelmed.

I want you to feel invited, invited into leadership, invited into refinement and invited into the next version of your brand in your body of work. And if you've come to any of my workshops, I talk about

stepping into thought leadership and the fact that there's no fairy godmother that's going to come and boop you over the head and one day say, OK, you're officially an expert, you're officially a thought leader. It's not going to happen.

So this is where if you walk away with anything today, I want to encourage you to give yourself permission to own your expertise, to step into thought leadership. And knowing that you do not have to rebuild everything from scratch for 2026, but you do need what I call a clear brand operating system that integrates AI in a way that supports you, centers trust and warm audiences and positions you as a grounded human leader. Also aligns your offers, messaging and marketing within this new era. So if you want support with that, I want to invite you today to an all new brand clarity workshop. So if you've been listening to me some time, I have a three day brand clarity workshop that I've been running in 2025 and the model worked really, really well. We spend 90 minutes Monday, Wednesday, Friday together.

And just as I've been talking here, I over deliver. I talk you through everything I talked about today, like literally the step by step on how to do that. We go through a lot of the exercises together.

We'll really talk about creating your unique brand operating system, not just for 2026, but for this next nine year cycle that we're stepping into. We'll implement shifts in an energetic way that fits you and really look at positioning you as a leader in this next wave of thought leadership. So if you're feeling the nudge, this is your personal invite to join us.

It's going to be at the end of January and you can just click the link in the show notes to save your seat. It's normally ninety seven dollars. And as a gift to you for coming this far and listening, this was one of my longer episodes, but I just really felt called to share this information.

So I hope it was very useful for you. Go ahead. Click that.

Join us for just seven dollars. Because the future isn't going to be led by the loudest, it's going to be led by the ones who are clear, courageous and deeply aligned. And that, my friend, I want to be you.

And I'd love to support you on the journey. As always, I'd also love if you leave me a comment or a rating on the podcast. My goal for 2026, as I'm always transparent, is to get this podcast into the ears of more thought leaders.

So if you enjoyed this, please rate it. Please send it to a friend, invite them into the workshop. And as always, I'm wishing you a beautiful rest of your week and we'll see you here next week.