

## Do androids dream of AI creative briefs?

Rebecca Myers and Rory Petty

Source: WARC Exclusive, APG Canada, November 2024

Downloaded from WARC

The Account Planning Group (APG) of Canada organised a competition between a team of human strategists and AI to create the best creative brief for Rexall, a Canadian retail pharmacy.

- Both teams had two hours to create their briefs, and while Team Human's brief was praised for its creativity, Team AI's brief impressed the judges with its on-brand proposition.
- The competition highlighted the potential of AI in creative brief development and its ability to generate the tension needed for creative inspiration.
- AI is a powerful tool that requires human direction and input to function effectively, and the future of strategic success lies in the collaboration between humans and AI.

### The premise

On November 13th 2024, the Account Planning Group (APG) of Canada pitted humans against AI to discover how an AI-created brief would stack up against a brief written by award-winning human strategists. The results of the battle generated a passionate discussion amongst those in the room, particularly around two topics:

1. How can AI be best harnessed in creative brief development?
2. Can AI help create the critical tension needed to maximize creative potential?

### The participants

Team AI was comprised of two Canadian strategists, [Sarah Hassanally](#) and [Scott Suthren](#). A week prior to the AI Battle, APG Canada hosted an AI Intro Class that featured an overview of AI Myths & Misconceptions, as well as tips for highly effective prompting across popular LLMs with Canadian creatives and AI luminaries Dré Labre and Jason Theodor. It also included an introduction to [AgencyCoLab](#), an AI platform designed by advertising practitioners for advertising practitioners. After the class, attendees were asked to develop a creative brief from a client brief. The authors of the two best briefs were selected from the submissions and Team AI was generated in the form of Sarah and Scott.

Team Human was formidably comprised of two of Canada's most heavily awarded human strategists who are also, of course, known for creating inhumanly excellent briefs: the Head of Strategy for [Gut](#), [Amy Badun](#), and the Head of Strategy for [Rethink](#), [Julian Morgan](#).

## The battle

There was just one rule: Team Human couldn't use AI.

The client brief for Rexall, a leading Canadian retail pharmacy, was shared with both teams at the same time and they had two hours to crack it.

## The process

AI outputs do still tend to have a whiff of the synthetic to them and Team AI's final creative brief was bounced through the AI pinball machine using 6 different LLMs (including [AgencyCoLab](#)) and 14 different prompts.

Meanwhile, Team Human enjoyed the rare treat of two Heads of Strategy collaborating. Their powerful creative brief drew impressed gasps from the crowd when it was finally unveiled, befitting a creative strategy produced by two industry heavyweights.

## The result(s)

The audience and judges were asked to evaluate the briefs and determine a winner based on the brief that best addressed the client's challenge/business problem, had the best insight, and was the most creatively fertile.

Officially, Team AI won. Their brief received the most votes from the 7 judges, which included strategy and creative leads, a senior member of the Rexall team, and an AI bot (seriously). Of note, the two senior creatives on the jury were split: one favoured Team AI, the other voted Team Human.

That said, Team Human won the popular vote, with 65% of the audience (many of whom work in strategy and creative roles) voting for the way this brief inspired their imaginations.

## Why Team AI won the jury over

The AI brief was regarded as being more on-tone and on-brand. The proposition worked and the reasons to believe and thought-starters felt like concepts that the brand could credibly stand behind, as validated by Rexall's President and their senior agency partners, all of whom were present. The quality of the final brief spoke to Team AI's skills in prompting the AI tools they used – a lot of work went into the inputs to get a much more nuanced final output than many would expect from an LLM. Or six LLMs.

## Why Team Human won the audience over

Many strategists in the room conceded that while the AI brief worked well for the brand, the human brief, and the proposition in particular, was more creatively fertile. Some even aired the old, and controversial, agency chestnut, “I’d present the AI brief to the client for buy-in, but I’d rather brief my team with the human brief.” This is because the Team Human brief was, well, more *human*.

## Key takeaways

1. While powerful, AI is still ultimately another new technology tool in human hands. It didn’t do anything until the humans prompted it. And re-prompted it, and re-prompted it...
2. Briefs are for creatives. The best route to business success for a client is a brief with enough tension to get creatives inspired so the ideas flow easily and aplenty. That said, a brief that feels off-brand is a risk that could result in creative work the client just can’t buy. It takes a human lens, collaboration, and trust for a strategist to strike the right balance.
3. If your rivals use AI to make their briefs, with similar inputs, would everyone arrive at similar creative briefs? This is risky. Diversity of both what goes into briefs, and the composition of the strategy teams creating them, remains essential.

## Why Humans & AI are a winning strategy team in the future

An undriven Formula One car has a top speed of 0 km/h. Usain Bolt ran at 44 km/h. But when a human drives an F1 car, they travel together at 320km/h. Here’s how strategists can move faster with AI:

- AI can give a lot of options that get strategists closer to making decisions faster – since we don’t have a partner like creatives do, AI can be a powerful brainstorming collaborator
- With thoughtful human direction, AI can mimic tone impressively. Use it to help your briefs get the right attitude
- The AI surprised in terms of what it can do, so make sure you keep experimenting with it. Once upon a time the 4Cs were a strategy innovation. And did you ever hear about the famous and successful strategist who ignored the 4Cs? Exactly.

Finally, this was an edutainment event designed to spark debate. Thankfully, when strategists are shedding blood, sweat, and tears for their next creative brief, none of them will be doing it in two hours in total isolation from their clients, creatives, and account teams.

While AI is getting more effective every day, strategy is still about making tough choices, and using discernment and taste to pick the best options. This remains safely in human hands. For now.

## About the authors

**Rebecca Myers**

Director, Strategy, Citizen Relations

**Rory Petty**

Strategy Director, VML

---

© **Copyright Ascential Events (Europe) Limited 2025**

Ascential Events (Europe) Limited

Americas: 666 3rd Avenue, Suite 638, New York, NY 10017, United States - Tel: +1 212 201 2800

APAC: 71 Robinson Road, Singapore, 068895 - Tel: +65 3157 6200

EMEA: 2nd Floor, 81-87 High Holborn, London, WC1V 6DF, United Kingdom - Tel: +44 (0)20 7467 8100

[www.warc.com](http://www.warc.com)

All rights reserved including database rights. This electronic file is for the personal use of authorised users based at the subscribing company's office location. It may not be reproduced, posted on intranets, extranets or the internet, e-mailed, archived or shared electronically either within the purchaser's organisation or externally without express written permission from Warc.

**WARC**

