



AUTHENTIC IN THE AGE OF AI – THE BACKLASH ANGLE

Authentic in the Age of AI Challenge

Sponsored by Adobe



Studies show that too much AI in marketing is leading to consumer fatigue.

- Over 75% of consumers feel AI makes advertising look less authentic and “cringey.”
- Trust falls nearly 50% when content is labeled AI or is suspected to be AI, and 63% of consumers are less likely to buy from a brand using AI ads.

Driving Question or Challenge:

How can a company effectively use AI throughout the marketing process, from start to finish, while still being authentic and preserving customer trust?

Real-world Context:

Marketers are adopting AI tools faster than consumers are embracing AI-generated content. This challenge asks Collegiate DECA members to engage with the realities of modern marketing, where efficiency, creativity and consumer trust intersect. By identifying what makes AI-assisted advertising feel inauthentic, evaluating a real local business's marketing, and building a campaign that uses AI responsibly, participants will explore how brands can keep the human connection that earns trust. This experience mirrors real-world work done by marketing strategists, creative teams and brand managers.

CHALLENGE OVERVIEW

- This event consists of two major parts: a pitch deck of up to 10 slides created in Adobe Express and a video presentation that is a minimum of **two minutes** and a maximum of **three minutes** in length. The Adobe Express pitch deck will be uploaded as a PDF, and the video will be submitted as a link.
- Each event entry will be composed of **2-3 members** of a Collegiate DECA chapter. Chapters may submit multiple entries for consideration.
- The participants will design a pitch deck featuring an advertising or marketing campaign for a local business, using AI throughout the process.
- The participants will then present their campaign in a video that is a minimum of **two minutes** and a maximum of **three minutes** in length. Videos longer than three minutes will not be evaluated and will not be eligible for awards.
- Submissions will be evaluated against the criteria to determine the top 10 submissions. Judges will evaluate the top 10 and select the top three overall teams. From the final three entries, an overall winning team will be selected.
- The participants must fully complete and submit the pitch deck and video link to the [Submission Site](#) no later than **January 15, 2027 at 11:59 p.m. ET** to be eligible for awards. Late entries will not be accepted.
- DECA Inc. and Adobe are not responsible for lost, damaged, mislabeled or misdirected entries.

ADOBE EXPRESS LOGIN ACCESS:

Start by signing in to Adobe Express with your school email address. If your school provides access, you'll be able to use Adobe Express through your school account.

If you can't access Adobe Express with your school email, no problem. Simply sign in or create an account using your personal email address.

1. [Adobe Express HelpX](#)
2. [Learn Adobe Express \(tutorials\)](#)

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS DEVELOPED

Participants will demonstrate knowledge and skills needed to address the components of the project as described in the content outline and evaluation forms.

Participants will also develop Career Competencies, in the following categories, desired by today's employers:

- **Critical Thinking** - Thinks critically to understand and solve problems.
- **Communication** - Communicates clearly, effectively, and with reason.
- **Decision Making** - Considers the impacts of decisions.
- **Collaboration** - Participates and advocates in groups of all sizes to achieve common goals.
- **Innovation** - Demonstrates a creative and innovative mindset.
- **Technology** - Ethically leverages technologies to enhance efficiencies, complete tasks, and accomplish goals.

CHALLENGE GUIDELINES

The participants will present their campaign in a 10-slide pitch deck created using Adobe Express and a video that is a minimum of two minutes and a maximum of three minutes in length. All entries must include the following components:

PITCH DECK

I. AI in Marketing

- Explain why AI in Marketing is a trend and how it can be used effectively
- Explanation of why inauthentic AI use results in consumers losing trust, supported by research
Examples of inauthentic use of AI in marketing and advertising
Telltale signs that AI has been used

II. Local Business Introduction

- Description of the selected local business and its brand identity
- Description of the business's current marketing strategies that use no AI or too much AI, with examples
- Description of the target audience

III. Proposed Marketing Campaign or Advertisement

- Objectives and rationale of the campaign or advertisement
- Description of the campaign concept, key message and channels
- Examples of components of the marketing campaign / advertisement

IV. AI use in Marketing Campaign or Advertisement

- Explanation of how AI was used throughout the process, from start to finish
- Explanation of the methods used to ensure the campaign is authentic and preserves customer trust
- Proposed metrics to measure campaign effectiveness and consumer trust

VIDEO PRESENTATION

- Summary of the pitch deck with a focus on the marketing campaign or advertisement created
- Explanation of how AI was used and how authenticity and customer trust were preserved
- Clear articulation of how Adobe Express was used in the project
- Engaging, with a clear verbal message

CHALLENGE JUDGING

Judges will select the top three overall teams. From the final three teams, the overall winning team will be selected.

AWARDS

In partnership with Adobe, the following awards will be provided:

- 1st Place Team - \$1,500
- 2nd Place Team - \$1,000
- 3rd Place Team - \$500

TIMELINE

Challenge submission deadline

January 15, 2027

Top 3 announced

March 2027



2-3 PARTICIPANTS



2-3 MINUTES
PRESENTATION TIME



10-SIDE PITCH
DECK



AUTHENTIC IN THE AGE OF AI CHALLENGE

SUBMISSION EVALUATION FORM

Name of College/University: _____ City: _____ State: _____

Team Member Names: _____

When completing the challenge, to what degree did the team...		Novice	Proficient	Advanced	Exemplary	Judged Score
PERFORMANCE INDICATORS						
1.	Critique advertisements.	0-1-2-3-4-5	6-7-8-9-10	11-12-13-14	15	
2.	Explain the nature of corporate branding.	0-1-2-3-4-5	6-7-8-9-10	11-12-13-14	15	
3.	Develop an advertising campaign.	0-1-2-3-4-5	6-7-8-9-10	11-12-13-14	15	
4.	Describe the use of technology in the promotion function.	0-1-2-3-4-5	6-7-8-9-10	11-12-13-14	15	
5.	Build trust in relationships.	0-1-2-3-4-5	6-7-8-9-10	11-12-13-14	15	
PITCH DECK COMPONENT						
6.	Pitch deck includes research, examples and campaign assets that support the proposed campaign or advertisement.	0-1	2-3	4	5	
7.	Pitch deck demonstrates effective use of Adobe Express, design principles and a professional layout, with proper grammar, spelling and word choice.	0-1	2-3	4	5	
VIDEO COMPONENT						
8.	Video clearly summarizes the pitch deck and campaign and articulates how Adobe Express was used in the project.	0-1	2-3	4	5	
9.	Video explains how AI was used throughout the process and how authenticity and customer trust were preserved.	0-1	2-3	4	5	
10.	Video is engaging, with a clear verbal message and creative storytelling.	0-1	2-3	4	5	
TOTAL SCORE (100 points)						