

TELCO & TECH RETAIL UNFILTERED

LIFE-LED[®] INSIGHT 2026

OUR ANNUAL GUIDE FOR CREATORS
OF PEOPLE INSPIRED EXPERIENCES



London Istanbul Dubai Riyadh Jakarta

THE YEAR IN REFLECTION

We're deep now into the second half of a decade defined by rapid technological advancement and renewed questions of trust. Affected by the dominance of the digital & artificial, people are seeking genuine experiences, transparent interactions, and technology that enhances rather than replaces human connections.

Our 26' Insights Reports focus on the key insights driving human behaviour right now, through the lens of **Humanity Unfiltered**, a perspective that values authenticity, care and connection and explore how this might affect the way brands show up.

We aim to offer practical suggestions for creating brands and experiences that are relevant, resonant and real in a year that is about growth, optimism and opportunity.

We hope there are takeaways that are interesting and useful, and that there are some moments of inspiration to make us all wonder 'what if'.... Thanks for reading!

The I-AM Insight Team.



MACRO TRENDS

The macro trends shaping consumer behaviour remain consistent but their impact is deepening.

Continued **economic pressures**, rapid **advancements in AI** and rising expectations around **wellbeing and sustainability** are reshaping how people live and decide.

At the same time, time-scarcity and growing **political unrest** will drive a shift towards more considered, value led choices.

Together these forces signal a move towards more human-centred ways of living and will guide people towards a world that feels grounded. **Humanity Unfiltered** captures this change where value is found not in perfection or excess, but in what feels authentic, sustaining and meaningful.



SUSTAINABILITY

Consumers now expect brands to take real, transparent action. Environmental responsibility is the baseline, not a bonus.



POLITICS

Global instability is fueling caution, pushing people toward brands that show reliability, transparency and social responsibility.



ECONOMY

Despite easing pressures, value seeking remains. Spending decisions are more deliberate and considered.



WELLNESS

Time pressure and modern lifestyles are pushing wellbeing higher up the priority list. People are investing more in practices that support balance and quality of life.



TECHNOLOGY

Advances in AI are making digital interactions more intuitive and personalised, turning seamless experiences into the norm.

HUMANITY UNFILTERED

IN UNCERTAIN TIMES, AUTHENTICITY BECOMES COMFORT, AND TECHNOLOGY FINDS ITS ROLE IN SUPPORTING THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE.



A growing desire for authenticity, emotional honesty and genuine connection is emerging as people navigate an increasingly uncertain world. Geopolitical tension, economic pressure, climate concerns and rapid technological change continue to reshape how people live, work and relate to one another.

In response, consumers are becoming more selective about what they engage with. Perfection driven narratives and hyper-curated identities are losing relevance, while vulnerability, transparency and imperfection are emerging as signals of trust. People are seeking products, services and experiences that recognise the realities of everyday life and support them within it.

Expectations of brands are shifting. Empathy, responsibility and emotional intelligence are becoming essential as consumers look for support rather than aspiration. Technology remains central to daily life, but its role is evolving with the most meaningful innovations working quietly in the background to ease decisions, enhance wellbeing and enable connection without adding to overload.

Together, these forces are shaping new behaviours in 2026 that prioritise integration over excess, functionality over hype and meaningful human experiences over surface level innovation expressed through three emerging themes:

Supportive Systems, Functional Care and Restorative Escape.

WHAT HUMANITY UNFILTERED MEANS FOR TELCO & TECH RETAIL



A MORE HUMAN DIGITAL EXPERIENCE

Telco and tech retail is no longer defined by the fastest network or the latest device. As connectivity becomes embedded in every aspect of life, the real challenge is helping people navigate an increasingly complex digital world.

Consumers are more connected than ever, but also more conscious of digital fatigue, privacy concerns and the pressures of constant upgrading. As a result, expectations of telecom brands are shifting. Beyond connectivity, people increasingly look to brands that simplify technology, provide practical support and make digital life feel more manageable.

This changes the role of the store. Rather than focusing solely on products and transactions, retail environments are becoming places that help people solve problems, understand technology and make confident decisions. Trust is built through clarity, transparency and human support, with technology present to enable the experience rather than dominate it.

HUMANITY UNFILTERED THEMES



SUPPORTIVE SYSTEMS

WHEN TECHNOLOGY FADES INTO THE BACKGROUND AND LIFE COMES FORWARD

Supportive Systems in 2026 reflect a growing demand for technology that quietly serves human needs without demanding constant attention. As people push back against one-size-fits-all platforms and algorithmic noise, they are gravitating toward personalised systems that adapt to individual lives supporting decisions, wellbeing and daily routines without dictating behaviour or shaping identity.

The most meaningful innovations are increasingly invisible. Rather than competing for attention, they use intelligence to reduce friction, remove complexity and create space for presence, purpose and more human ways of living in the physical world.

People Inspired Experiences



FUNCTIONAL CARE

WHEN WELLBEING BECOMES PRACTICAL, SHARED AND GROUNDED IN REAL LIFE

Care in 2026 will move beyond superficial self-care and the idea that wellbeing must be managed alone. As burnout, health anxiety and economic pressure intensify, traditional life milestones such as career progression, parenthood and retirement will become less predictable, driving demand for more genuine, preventative and collaborative forms of support.

Wellbeing will no longer be organised around age, but around life stages and lived realities. This reframes care as infrastructure rather than aspiration, with support designed to integrate seamlessly into everyday routines and respond to moments of transition rather than fixed demographics or idealised wellness goals.



RESTORATIVE ESCAPE

WHEN ESCAPE IS ABOUT RESTORATION, NOT DISTRACTION

Restorative Escape in 2026 responds to the emotional compression of culture by offering intentional, time bound experiences that help people pause, reset and reconnect. Rather than immersive fantasy or hyper stimulation, these experiences prioritise presence, sensory engagement and emotional grounding.

Whether through nature, culture, hospitality or design, restorative escapes create space to recover capacity allowing people to return to everyday life feeling more connected, not further removed from reality.

SUPPORTIVE SYSTEMS

TECHNOLOGY THAT QUIETLY SIMPLIFIES EVERYDAY LIFE

As technology becomes more complex, consumers increasingly value experiences that remove effort rather than add more choice.

Supportive Systems use technology, information and human assistance together to make interactions feel simpler, more intuitive and easier to navigate.





TELSTRA

AUSTRALIA

AI-enabled human support

Telstra equips frontline store teams with their AI tool, Ask Telstra. It brings together customer information and internal knowledge, helping staff find answers more quickly and reducing the need for customers to repeat themselves. The technology sits behind the interaction, making the experience simpler while allowing human support to remain front and centre.



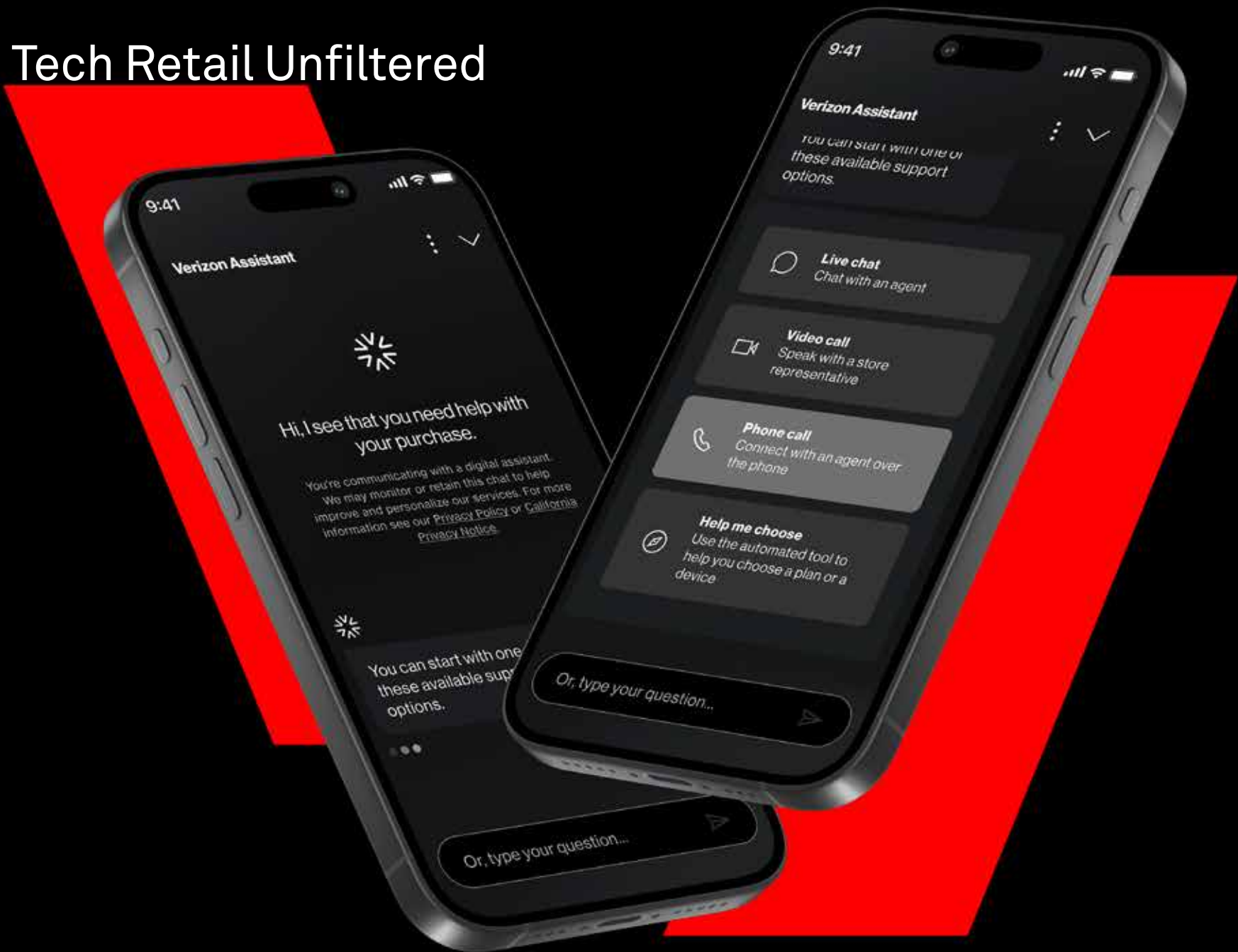
KPN

NETHERLANDS

Protection made simple

KPN's Safe Internet service protects customers from malicious websites, phishing and other online threats at network level. With protection built directly into the connectivity experience, customers don't need to navigate complex security settings, helping make digital life feel simpler, safer and easier to manage



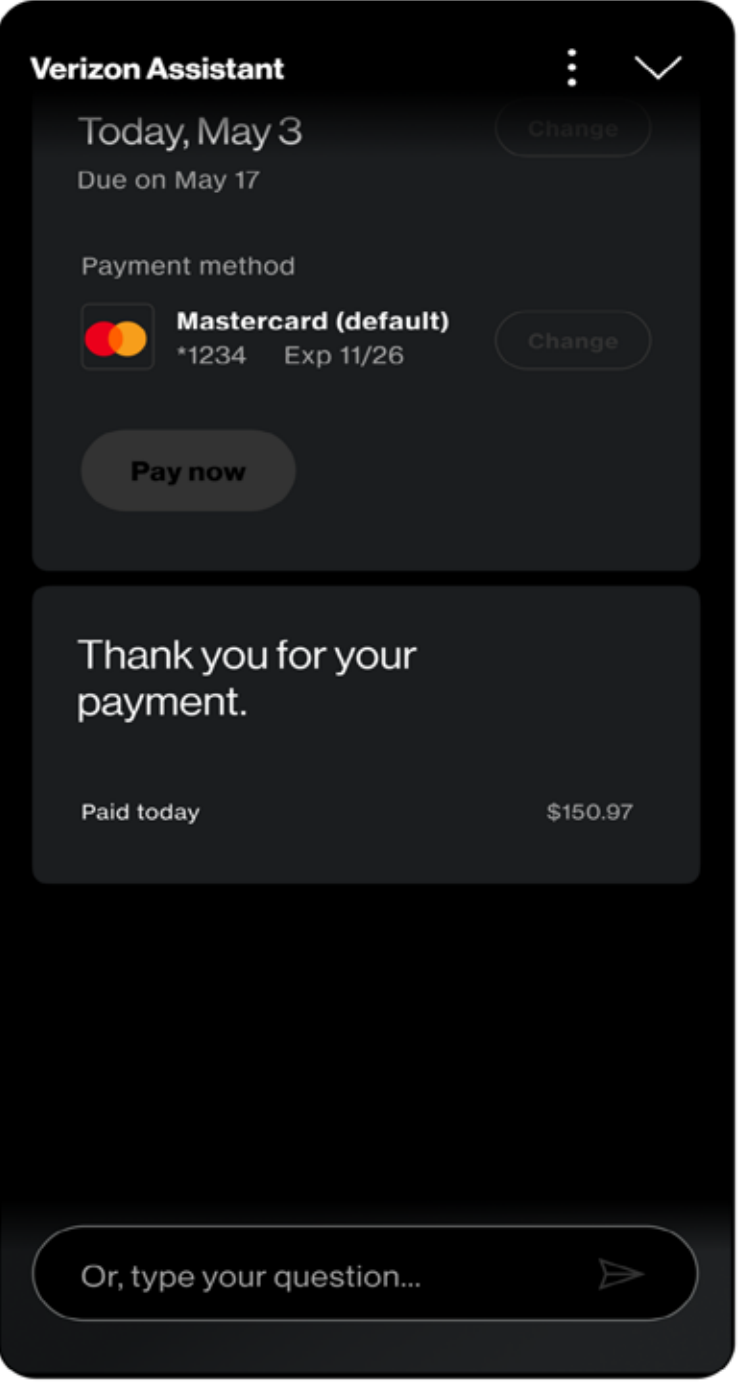
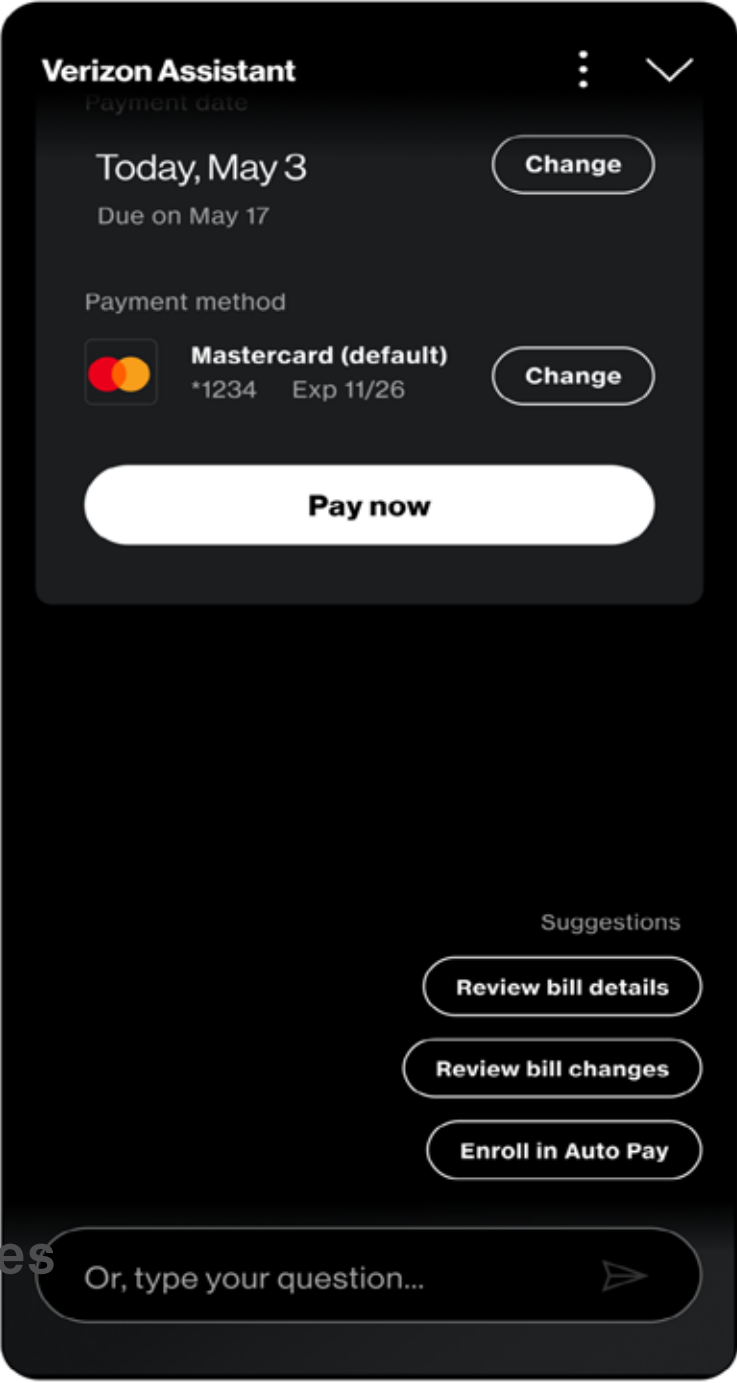
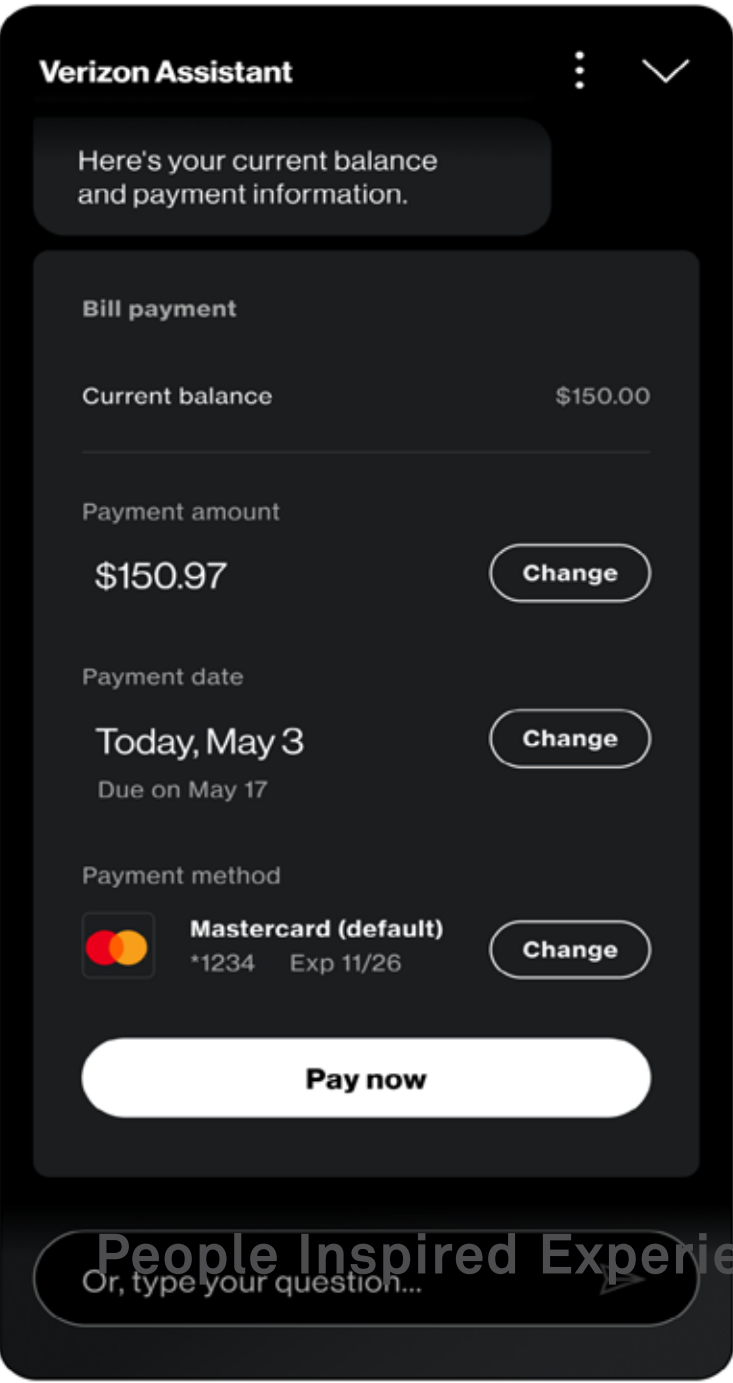


VERIZON

USA

Frictionless self-services

Verizon’s digital platforms and AI-enabled tools allow customers to manage billing, upgrades and support through streamlined self-service journeys. By bringing everyday tasks into one experience, customers can find answers, make changes and resolve issues more quickly and independently.

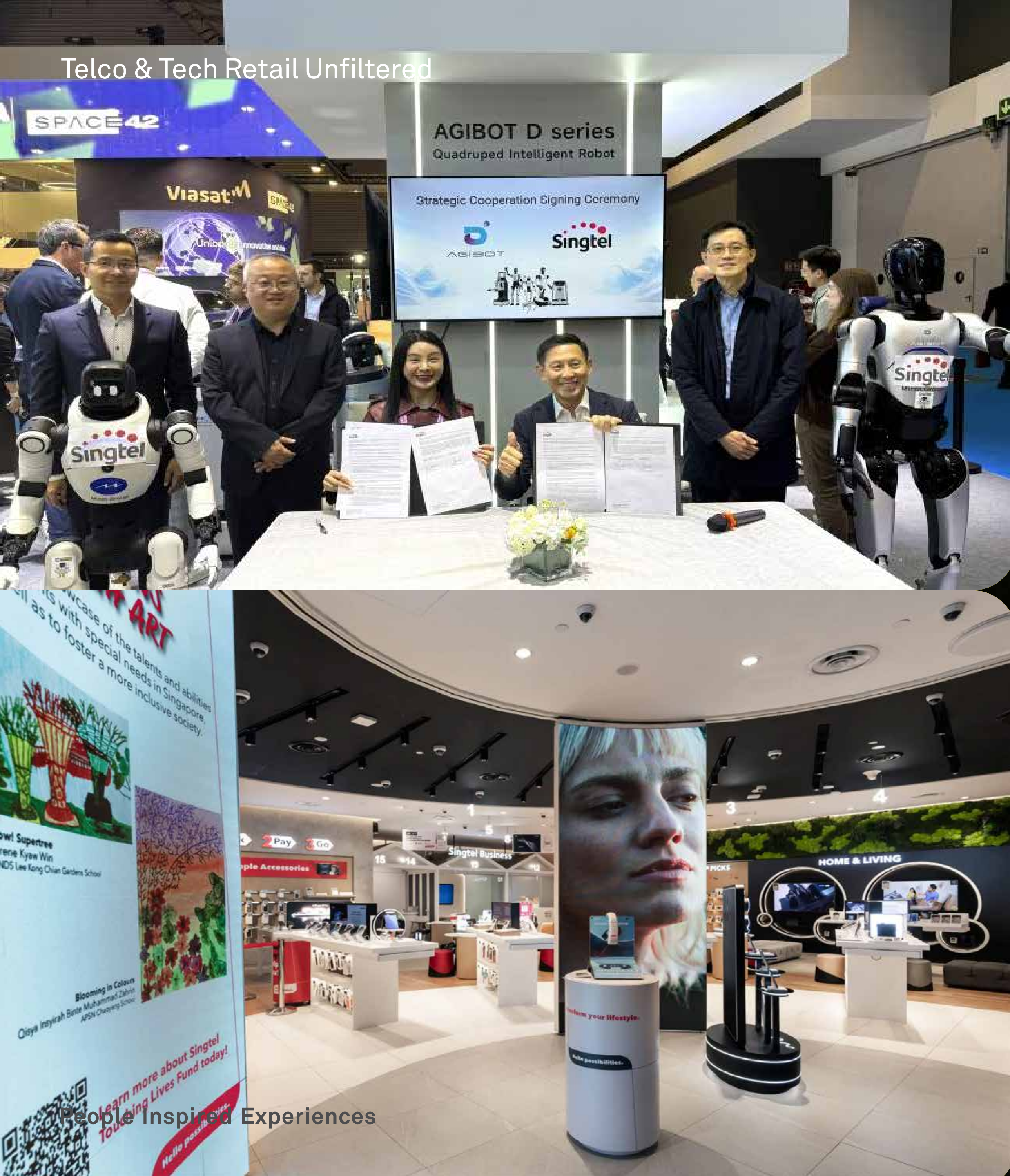


FUNCTIONAL CARE

CONNECTIVITY AS EVERYDAY SUPPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

As digital life becomes more complex, teleco services are increasingly positioned as tools that support wellbeing, safety and day-to-day life management. From family connectivity and online security to smart home services and digital assistance, technology is being reframed as a practical form of care that helps people navigate everyday challenges with greater confidence and ease.





SINGTEL & AGIBOT

SINGAPORE

Care beyond connectivity

Through its partnership with AGIBOT, Singtel is exploring the potential of embodied AI robots to assist with household tasks, provide companionship and support ageing populations. The initiative moves beyond connectivity alone, positioning technology as a practical layer of everyday support within the home. By investing in AI-enabled care solutions, Singtel is expanding its role in helping people live more independently and confidently as care needs evolve.

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ORANGE

FRANCE

Protecting the connected household

Orange's Family Protection ecosystem (#ForGoodConnections), integrates AI-powered parental controls, cybersecurity and digital safety tools directly into the home network through its Livebox service. Instead of users needing to manage multiple standalone tools, protection is embedded into the core connectivity experience. This approach reflects a shift towards making digital safety a built-in utility, helping families navigate online life with greater confidence, control and peace of mind.

People Inspired Experiences



I-AM

VODAFONE

UK

Supporting digital confidence

Through programmes such as everyone.connected and Hi Digital, Vodafone is helping people build the skills and confidence needed to participate in an increasingly digital society. The focus goes beyond access to technology, supporting practical digital literacy around everyday tasks, online safety and independent use of digital services. By investing in digital skills alongside connectivity, Vodafone is helping reduce barriers to participation in a connected world.



How to keep your grandkids safe online

When you're with your grandkids, they may spend some of their time online – whether it's chatting to friends, watching a show or enjoying social apps such as TikTok and Snapchat. It's important to make sure they are safe online, so there are a few things you can do to protect them.

How do they connect?
There are lots of ways to connect to the internet, so your grandkids may be online even when you don't realise it! Devices include: home computer, smartphone, tablet, games console, smart watch and more.

Talk to them
The best way to deal with digital safety is to talk to your grandkids about the possible risks. You want them to have a safe and positive experience and following a few rules will make this easier.

Things to think about:
Cyberbullying
Have they been bullied online? Internet Matters has some great advice on their cyberbullying advice hub.

Sharing images and videos
It's easy for someone to screenshot an image that you share with them, so you have to be very careful about what you send as you can't control where it might end up.

Staying safe
Make sure your grandkids:
■ Set their social accounts to private
■ Never post personal information
■ Never share their location

Social sites
Many sites are age restricted and require users to be 13+ to have a profile – have a look at the platform, so you know what's what.

Parental controls' can help you manage and restrict what your grandkids see and do online. Search for 'how to set up parental controls' on the device, app or browser you want to use and follow the instructions.

What's a content filter?
Your internet provider will probably offer a content filter, this means you can set certain rules on your broadband and filter out certain content. This can stop kids from accidentally stumbling across something that isn't suitable for them. Contact your provider to find out how to set this up. You can also find advice at Internet Matters Inappropriate Content hub.

Set a limit
Discuss how much screen time they can have and agree upon a limit. You can always set a timer to remind you.

Switch off
Make sure they switch off well before bedtime to give themselves some downtime away from the screen, especially if they are playing online games.

RESTORATIVE ESCAPE

DESIGNING MOMENTS OF PAUSE

As consumers become increasingly fatigued by constant connectivity and digital demands, telecom brands are exploring ways to create moments of pause, clarity and reassurance. Retail environments are evolving beyond transactional spaces into calmer, more considered settings where customers can slow down, seek guidance and engage with technology in ways that feel more human, purposeful and less overwhelming.





DEUTSCHE TELEKOM

GERMANY

When retail turns down the volume

Deutsche Telekom's "Magenta Silent Hour" creates a calmer, lower stimulation retail experience through quieter stores, softer lighting and more personalised support. Designed with sensory sensitive customers in mind, the initiative shows telecom brands are moving beyond feature led experiences to create environments that feel simpler, more accessible and more human.

EE

UK

Retail as a living room

Originally trialled in 2023, EE's hospitality inspired concept has become the standard across many of its stores. Replacing traditional product heavy layouts with central spaces inspired by hotel lobbies and premium workspaces. Designed for conversation rather than transactions, the stores encourage customers to explore technology, seek advice and spend time in a more relaxed, welcoming environment.



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People Inspired Experiences

SK TELECOM

SOUTH KOREA

Discovery without pressure

SK Telecom's T Factory repositions the telecom store as an open space for exploration and learning, where customers engage with technology through experiences rather than transactions.

By reducing sales pressure and encouraging self-directed discovery, it creates a more relaxed and accessible way to interact with emerging digital services.

SIGNALS OF A MORE HUMAN RELATIONSHIP WITH TECHNOLOGY

The examples highlighted across telecom, illustrate how brands are responding to changing customer expectations. However, these shifts are not confined to telecom alone. Emerging consumer behaviours across technology and digital services suggest a broader preference for experiences that reduce effort, minimise distraction and provide support in more human-centred ways.

ATTENTION PROTECTION

Brick is a physical device designed to help people reduce smartphone distraction. Tapping a phone against the device blocks selected apps and notifications, creating a deliberate barrier to mindless scrolling.

The growth of tools such as Brick reflects a wider desire to actively manage distraction and regain control over attention. Rather than seeking more connectivity, consumers are creating clearer boundaries around technology use and reducing the constant demands on their time and focus.





Q3 GTM sync

Today 4

ICP Alignment Confirmation

- Agreed to narrow Q3 focus to mid-market finance and ops buyers
 - SMB deprioritised for the quarter
 - Paid campaigns paused until ICP doc is confirmed

Deal Stalls: Sales Input

- Jack flagged deals stalling at business case stage
 - Marketing to build a business case template
 - CS to share proof points from successful onboardings
- Follow-up scheduled for Tuesday

Q3 Messaging Rollout

- Sales and CS do not yet feel briefed on new messaging
 - Lunch and learn session agreed

Next Steps

- Tanya: Update ICP doc and pause paid campaigns
- Rob: Scope business case template by Tuesday
- Jack: Collate CS proof points by Tuesday

My notes

Enhanced



COGNITIVE OFFLOADING

Granola is an AI-powered meeting assistant that automatically captures conversations, organises notes and creates summaries, allowing people to stay focused on the discussion rather than documenting it.

Its growth reflects a wider shift towards technology that reduces mental effort rather than adding to it. As people manage increasing amounts of information, tools that remember, organise and summarise on their behalf are helping to reduce cognitive load and free up attention for more meaningful tasks.

INVISIBLE ASSISTANCE

From automated security and smart home systems to AI assistants that anticipate everyday needs, technology is increasingly working quietly in the background with less need for active input.

This reflects a shift away from technology that constantly demands attention towards systems that step in when needed. The value lies not in how visible the technology is, but in how seamlessly it reduces effort and supports everyday life.



DIGITAL CALM

Growing interest in digital wellbeing tools, notification management and low stimulation experiences reflects a desire for a calmer relationship with technology. A relationship that respects attention, reduces overwhelm and allows people to disconnect without abandoning the benefits of being connected.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TELCO & TECH RETAIL

The shift towards more human-centred technology signals a change:

As digital services become embedded in everyday life, customers are moving away from complexity and constant innovation towards experiences that reduce effort, increase clarity and support more confident decisions.

This reframes retail from transaction-led environments to support-led ecosystems, where customers come not only to buy but to understand, resolve and manage their digital lives. Success is increasingly defined by how well these environments reduce friction, build trust and enable everyday use.

At the same time, expectations of technology are shifting towards systems that operate quietly in the background, reduce cognitive load and minimise unnecessary interaction. This puts pressure on retailers to design experiences that feel more intuitive and less intrusive by default.



5 KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- 1. Support over Sell**
Design retail around guidance, problem-solving and ongoing support.
- 2. Clarity over Complexity**
Simplify products, plans and information to make choices easier.
- 3. Conversation over Conversion**
Equip staff and spaces to enable more useful, human interactions.
- 4. Calm over Spectacle**
Reduce visual and sensory overload to create more welcoming environments.
- 5. Technology in the Background**
Use intelligent systems to remove friction without adding more interaction.



LET'S WORK TOGETHER TO CREATE BRANDS AND EXPERIENCES THAT BUILD DEEP, AUTHENTIC HUMAN CENTRED CONNECTIONS, TO FORGE RELATIONSHIPS WITH CONSUMERS AND ELEVATE YOUR BUSINESS.

PLEASE GET IN TOUCH IF YOU WOULD LIKE A CONVERSATION ABOUT OUR INSIGHT, A CHAT OVER A COFFEE, OR IF YOU WANT TO SHARE AN INTERESTING CHALLENGE.

GET IN TOUCH

I-AMONLINE.COM