



# Center of Marketing Advantage Advancement and Action

CM3A NEWS • January 2026



## Editorial: Our First Birthday!!

Born in February 2025, we believe the Center is fulfilling its mission, bringing 20 real-life projects into the classroom last year, promoting two academic research projects for publication (and coordinating with doctoral students for more), holding two events with external and internal partners (the **Statewide Hispanic Chamber of Commerce** and the **Office of Career Management**), generating revenues before we learned to walk; we posted on social media on average twice a week, getting numerous echoes, and published three issues of this newsletter, **CM3A News**.

2026 looks even more promising, with six figures in grant requests, as many as 30 projects, and 4 events to host, kicking off as soon as the end of January.

In this issue, we bring you an interesting piece by Professor Can Uslay, Ph.D. titled “Beyond Profits: Navigating Brand Activism”, some tips on “Strategic Success”, and our usual sections on Feedback, Upcoming Projects and Rutgers Events, a Spotlight on the Marketing Career Day, and a new corner on how to help our efforts.

As always, we invite your comments and contributions

Thanks to all who have supported our efforts!

Francisco J. Quevedo  
Executive Director

## Feedback: Echoes from Social Media



Arturo Osorio • 1st

Associate Professor - Entrepreneurship / Board Member Statewide H...  
2mo •

A full house at Rutgers Business School at our co-sponsored event with the [Statewide Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of NJ](#) "Finding Business Opportunities" in the upcoming FIFA 2026 World Cup. Dr. [Francisco J. Quevedo](#), the Executive Director of [Rutgers Center of Marketing Advantage, Advancement and Action](#), did an excellent job laying out the framework to find opportunities for attendees.

Nearly 90 business owners came together to brainstorm, learn, and build a compelling Strategy Map for maximizing the business potential around this global event. Success comes from planning!

A big thank you also to [Yaw M. Mensah](#), our Vice Dean for Strategic Partnerships, for his welcoming remarks opening the forum and emphasizing that at #RBS we are [#NJ](#) business partners.

[Elisa Charters](#) [Monica Martinez](#) [Milan Gladys Vonglahn](#) [Hilda Mera](#) - SA [AUTO CENTER](#) [Matt Neidl](#) [Eguiguren](#) [Karem Ospino](#) [Ronald Ospino](#) [Gus Penaranda](#) [Any P. Oliva](#) [Valera](#) [Myriam E. Cruz](#) [Debora Roachford](#) [Erica Horton](#) [Ariel Valle](#) [Tatiana V. Vivas](#) [Danilo Melan](#) [Aixa G. L. Dr. Jairo Borja](#), [DBA Tobon](#)



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Luis O. De La Hoz • 1st

Empowering Small Businesses | Expanding Financial Access | Building Sto...  
2mo • Edited •

The "2026 RFA World Cup: A Map of Opportunities," was more than just a discussion — it was a call to action.

The message on the screen said it best:

- You can do the right things wrong.
- You can do the wrong things right.
- You can do the wrong things wrong.
- You can do the right things right.
- Or you can do nothing. The choice is yours.

That statement captured the essence of the session — a powerful reminder to business owners and entrepreneurs that opportunity is only as valuable as the strategy behind it.

A huge thank you to [Yaw M. Mensah](#) Professor and Vice Dean for Strategic Partnerships, [Francisco J. Quevedo](#), Assistant Professor in the Marketing Department, and [Arturo Osorio](#), associated professor from the School of Business at Rutgers, for leading this impactful seminar. Their insights helped attendees not only understand the scale of the 2026 World Cup opportunity but also how to approach it strategically and intentionally. Nearly 90 business owners came together to brainstorm, learn, and build a compelling Strategy Map for maximizing the business potential around this global event.

This isn't just about soccer. It's about mobilizing our communities, leveraging our strengths, and making sure we're ready to win — on and off the field. Special thanks to [Catalina Perico](#) for so beautifully capturing the essence of the event.

[Elisa Charters](#) [Monica Martinez](#) [Milan Gladys Vonglahn](#) [Hilda Mera](#) - SA [AUTO CENTER](#) [Matt Neidl](#) [Eguiguren](#) [Karem Ospino](#) [Ronald Ospino](#) [Gus Penaranda](#) [Any Rishman](#) [Any P. Oliva](#) [Valera](#) [Myriam E. Cruz](#) [Debora Roachford](#) [Erica Horton](#) [Ariel Valle](#) [Tatiana V. Vivas](#) [Danilo Melan](#) [Aixa G. L. Gloria Lopez](#) [Jairo Tobon](#)

"Not an official RFA or NYNJ Host Committee event."



Elena Shlychkov • 2nd

Founder and CEO at Green Desk Marketing, LLC - Digital Marketing, Perform...

2h •

This reinforces an often-overlooked truth: strategy succeeds when leaders actively champion it. Vision, motivation, and vigilance aren't optional—they're essential. Looking forward to what's next in CM3A News.

Like 1 | Reply

## The CM3CA At Work: Upcoming Projects for 2026

The following are some of the clients who have requested our help for this Spring:

1. **Hearts of Mercy:** <https://hearts-of-mercy.org/>
2. **Restmo:** <https://restmo.online/>
3. **MyFitPlate:** <https://myfitplateapp.com/>
4. **Glassroots:** <https://glassroots.org/>
5. **Mighty Martin:** <https://mightyartinnow.com/>
6. **Margarita Island Restaurant (startup)**
7. **Windmill Hotdogs:** <https://windmillhotdogs.com/>
8. **HempCasita:** <https://hempcasita.com/>
9. **Carelink 360:** <https://mycarelink360.com/>
10. **Discovery Christian Montessori School:** <https://www.discoverycm.com/>

The **Jersey City Economic Development Corporation** has requested a strategy mapping event to kick off the year with local businesspeople.



Thank you all for giving our students the opportunity to learn experientially, and kudos to the teams for their fine work.

## Spotlight: Summit Delivers Provocative Look at AI as a Tool For Marketing Industry

Executives from leading companies like Mastercard and LinkedIn spoke about how technology is changing the marketing industry, offering students valuable insights to supplement their classroom learning.



An audience of more than 160 students, alumni and faculty packed a lecture hall at Rutgers Business School-New Brunswick and spent most of a recent Friday at the Annual Marketing Summit entitled, "Transformative Marketing: Reinventing for Success."

The event kicked off with a presentation by Nicola Grant, Mastercard's senior vice president of global brand and advertising, on AI's impact on marketing, included panel discussions, networking, rapid fire demonstrations on selling and wrapped up with a panel discussion. "It's one of the most exciting times for marketers ever," Grant said, noting the "warp drive" pace of change and the evolution of communities without borders. "Anything you can imagine is possible with AI. We have to take hold of it and make it work for us." She explained the influences of both Reddit and TikTok and the power of artificial intelligence to create more personalized content.

In response to a question from the audience, Grant maintained that entry-level jobs were not being cut because of new technology. "You're the most connected to the culture. You all have minds," she said, addressing students in the crowd. "Why wouldn't I want you co-creating and making the great ideas."

Professor Yla Eason, who organized the first Summit seven years ago and attended the latest on Nov. 14, said the event was created to extend student learning beyond the classrooms at Rutgers. "Students hear the perspectives of authentic marketers from substantial companies about what's important in marketing now," Eason said. Professor Phil Cohn, who organized this year's summit, also described it as an important way to expose students to trends and other relevant information about the industry.

The summit's focus on AI complimented Rutgers Business School's efforts to incorporate instruction about the technology across all academic areas so students have knowledge and experience working with AI when they go into the business world. It also reflected the strength of Rutgers Business School's corporate partnerships and its ability to foster corporate engagement.

Technology, AI specifically, was also part of the conversation during two of the event's first panel discussions. Rutgers Business School marketing professor Chris Ribeiro, who moderated one, asked his panelists to describe a use case in which AI delivered powerful results. The panel was composed of Adobe evangelist Eric Matisoff, Greg Willis, vice president of global sales at LinkedIn, and Siddarth Gopinath, CEO of Azuraa Insights. "It's amazing how things have changed," Matisoff said. "The conversation three years ago was dicey." Now conversations are different, more about ideation, he said. "We've entered the era of AI, and users are more excited than scared."

Those sentiments were expressed again during a second panel discussion when panelists discussed AI's shortcomings interacting directly with customers as well as its potential to help build brands. The panelists – Ed Filippazzo, chief privacy officer at American Express, Rutgers MBA alumnus Rohit Sood, chief revenue officer at Sorcero, and Lisa Pillette, president LPH Holdings and former CMO of The Fossil Group – spoke about the importance of ROI and ethics. "The tools have changed. The theory still holds," Sood said.

Taken from Susan Todd's piece:

<https://www.business.rutgers.edu/news/summit-delivers-provocative-look-ai-tool-marketing-industry>

## CM3A Tips: Strategic Success: Is it the planning process, making the right decisions, or the correct execution? Is it luck or something else?

Thomas Edison said that “genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration...” suggesting that it’s all about effort and perseverance. Indeed, most experts suggest that 80% of strategic success depends on the execution, but the question arises, the execution of what? The wrong strategy?! Most certainly not. A faulty planning process may miss important facts and considerations, leading to ill-informed decisions that would make even the best execution a road to failure (“Garbage in - Garbage out”

they say, and then some). Peter Drucker stated, “there is nothing worse than doing the wrong things right, because the better you do them, the worse the outcome will be...” So, a proper due diligence process must support enlightened decisions; then, a relentless execution must pursue a well-balanced set of KPIs; but there is more, and it is not luck.

Indeed, a rigorous planning process will lead to enlightened decision-making, as long as it provides decision-makers with the right information and perspective, and follows a proven methodology that facilitates the analyses and the discussion of ideas. Here is where tools like benchmarking and best practice analysis, the SWOT diagram, Porter’s 5 Forces, PESTEL, and scenario analysis, among others, will come into play. Due diligence must show you what you should know to make enlightened decisions; it should help you visualize where you are in the context of the market, the supply chain, regulators, and other elements of the business environment; it should also show you what and how others are doing, what your customers and sales channels expect, and should suggest which route to take to achieve your goals. Omitting the due process will most likely lead to improvisation and wrong decisions.



The essence, however, is the soundness of the decisions, the choices made, and the priorities set after the analyses and brainstorming. An appropriate due diligence cannot guarantee that you'll make the right decisions. Proper guidance is of the essence. Will we grow or franchise? Will we target the middle class or the populace? Quality or economy? There are choices to be made, and outcomes to be simulated, or predicted. Drucker said that strategy is about doing the right things. Are you (doing the right thing)?! The quality of the analysis determines the quality of the decisions, but we cannot underestimate the power of intuition in decision-making.

And yet, if you do the right things wrong, you're toast. Assuming your strategy is right, a correct execution requires an operating plan, and agenda that spells out who will do what, how much, and when. We call it "the detail that makes the strategy possible..." But it also demands control: a Balanced Score Card (Key Performance Indicators) to guide the processes, frequent follow-up meeting to stay on track, and constant feedback. Your KPIs, like market share, conversion rates, CSM (Customer Satisfaction), average ticket, repeat sales, ROI, ROS, and others will depend on your goals and on the strategy itself, but remember what Chris McChesney said, "if you ain't keeping score, you're only practicing..." (The 4 Disciplines of Execution).

## Organizations annual marketing operations plan

The slide showcases an organization's yearly marketing operations plan. It covers activities, key initiatives, owners, KPIs and quarterly timeline.



The Academic Corner by Professor Can Uslay, Ph.D.

## Beyond Profits: Navigating Brand Activism

The age of the stoic titan where the corporation existed solely to maximize profits in serene silence is over. In the relentless turmoil of the modern marketplace, brands find themselves compelled to adopt a public stance on contentious social issues. Thus, Brand Activism has become the defining challenge of contemporary leadership. For any organization seeking relevance, the core query is no longer if they should engage, but why they should engage, and more critically, how they can do so effectively without incurring catastrophic risk. This turbulent environment demands an entirely new management philosophy, one that recognizes that staying silent is no longer a neutral option, as inaction can also be perceived as a profound **liability**.

### **The Necessity of Doctrine: Defining the New Corporate Purpose**

For decades, executives found comfort in broad, abstract mission statements. But when faced with the sudden demand to take a stand on abortion rights, climate change, or racial justice, these statements prove hopelessly broad for guidance. Thus, effective brand advocacy requires methodological precision—a clear doctrine to guide action. The motivation for engaging is profound: purpose-driven brands are demonstrably winning hearts, minds, and market share. Yet the risks are manifest: political backlash, consumer boycotts, and debilitating brand dilution. It is critical to use the available strategic tools to transform conviction into consistency and navigate this treacherous path.

### **The Five Rings: Authenticity as the Toughest Test**

To determine the legitimacy and viability of an activist stance, take your brand through the Five Rings of Brand Activism. These rings act as the essential internal audit before any public declaration, providing a comprehensive alignment check to prevent the disastrous consequences often seen when a brand's action contradicts its essence (such as Jaguar's Copy Nothing campaign).

1. Mission, Vision, Cause: Does the cause align deeply with the foundational beliefs and core mission of the company?
2. Passion and Brand Purpose: Are the core consumers ready to join the brand on this journey, or will the advocacy alienate its most loyal base?

3. Business and Cause: Is there a solid, measurable business case underpinning the initiative? Brand activism must be treated as a strategic investment, not merely a marketing expense.
4. Legacy of Commitment: Does the brand's past behavior support its current public stance? Authenticity rests on a "bedrock of past deeds."
5. Authenticity: And this is the "toughest test of all," separating genuine advocacy from woke or anti-woke washing. Authenticity requires that the brand truly "walk the talk."

By failing this crucial internal interrogation, as ample case studies demonstrate, companies expose themselves to massive financial and reputational losses. Some of these blunders are so evident that even AI could have informed the marketers they represent missteps only if Pepsi, Bud Light, or Cracker Barrel had asked.

### The Strategic Map: Balancing Positioning and Resonance

To answer the Drucker-like question of where and when to allocate resources, we introduce a Brand Activism Alignment Matrix which relies on two critical dimensions for strategic calculation:

First, Brand Positioning, defined by the intersection of Market Share and Mind Share. Brands with high mainstream positioning (like Google or Walmart) have immense market power but face exponentially higher financial risk from misalignment. Conversely, fledgling brands often benefit most from a "Niche Dare" strategy, using divisive issues to carve a viable niche for themselves in crowded markets and quickly increase visibility and sales.

Second, Activism Resonance, defined by the complexity of the issue itself—Consensus versus Perceived Importance. Mainstream brands are cautioned against issues that lead to Massive Fragmentation (low consensus/low importance) where the likelihood of a brand-busting blowback is highest (as seen in the Bud Light controversy). Instead, they are urged toward Mass Embrace on issues that, while important (like healthcare or education), enjoy broad societal consensus.



This strategic roadmap is dynamically complemented by the Hierarchy of Needs and the S-Curve of Activism, illustrating that a brand's appetite for risk and the potential Return on Investment from activism vary greatly based on its maturity (from Survival to Self-Actualization). This teaches leaders that activism must be calibrated to the specific stage of the organization's development to yield true returns, rather than being a standardized response.

### **Doctrine Over Mission: A Call for Coherence**

The ultimate mandate of Navigating Brand Activism is the replacement of the use of vaguely aspirational mission statements with decisive, coherent strategies—found in a specific Marketing Doctrine and a passionate Brand Manifesto.

When a company faces “pull” activism, being dragged reluctantly into a social conflict by external pressure, a well-defined doctrine provides clarity and prevents reactive panic (such as Google’s varying reactions to employee protests). Meanwhile, for “push” activism where a brand proactively chooses a cause, the Manifesto acts as the philosophical north star, ensuring that the advocacy is consistent with a brand’s personality and enables authentic differentiation in the minds of consumers.

I urge you to align purpose with profit and harness the transformative power of genuine advocacy. Modern business needs it, and your customers may even demand it.



Note: This article is based on my new book *Navigating Brand Activism* (Routledge, 2026) with Jag Sheth..

## F.Y.I.: Rutgers News and Upcoming Events

Make some time in your agenda for one or more of these activities:

- ✓ **New Jersey Film Festival (Spring 2026)**
  - Time: January 23 – February 22, 2026, 5:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.
  - Location: Voorhees Hall #105, College Avenue Campus, New Brunswick
- ✓ **Winter Career & Internship Mega Fair**
  - Times:
    - February 4, 2026, 11:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
    - February 5, 2026, 11:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
  - Location: Jersey Mike's Arena, Livingston Campus, Piscataway
- ✓ **SparkNight: Celebrating Black History Month**
  - Time: February 12, 2026, 5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
  - Location: Zimmerli Art Museum, New Brunswick
- ✓ **Último Domingo: Carnival**
  - Time: February 22, 2026, 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
  - Location: Zimmerli Art Museum, New Brunswick
- ✓ **SparkNight: Celebrating Women's History Month**
  - Time: March 5, 2026, 5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
  - Location: Zimmerli Art Museum, New Brunswick
- ✓ **Rutgers Innovation Showcase**
  - Time: March 19, 2026, 1:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.
  - Location: Rutgers Academic Building – East Wing, New Brunswick



## We Appreciate your Support: Grants, Donations, and Fees

What are the benefits of consulting with the **CM3A**? Our student – faculty teams offer:

- **Unmatched Data Access:** Teams leverage premium databases—IBISWorld, Mintel, MarketLine, PrivCo, Statista, Mergent, Scopus, and more—to generate insights that most firms would otherwise find cost-prohibitive.
- **Expert Faculty Oversight:** Projects are led by professors with up to 40 years of consulting and corporate experience, ensuring analytical rigor and industry relevance.
- **Highly Skilled Talent:** Many of our graduate consultants already hold advanced degrees and professional experience, guaranteeing both academic precision and practical execution.
- **Professional-Grade Work, Minimal Cost:** In exchange for a modest supporting donation, partners receive top-tier strategic deliverables that rival those of major consulting firms.

Why partner with us? **Rutgers** can offer:

- **State-of-the-Art Installations:** In Newark and New Brunswick.
  - Ample parking
  - Catering
  - Audio-visual support
- **Expert Faculty:** Our conferences are held by professors with up to 40 years of consulting and corporate experience, as well as corporate VIP guest speakers.



**Feedback:** Please send us your comments and events to  
[cm3a@business.rutgers.edu](mailto:cm3a@business.rutgers.edu)



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