

Narrator: This is AdLab Performance marketing. Dissected, decoded and delivered.

Gavin: What's happening? Listeners, thanks for joining me in the AdLab. I'm your host, Gavin Flynn, on this final episode of season two. We wanted to do something a little different to close out the season. We're actually taking a look back at season two as a whole. Over the last few months, we've talked to folks from Google, Microsoft MNTN, and even the brightest minds here at LP, and we've covered a ton everything from Amazon's AI shift to Pinterest, halo effects to CTV to World Cup marketing.

Gavin: A lot of ground has been covered. So today we're actually going to be counting down my top five moments from the season, pulling out the best and most meaningful moments. If you're new here, this is a good primer on where we've been and a little peek into where we're headed for season three. And if you've listened to every episode this season, hopefully this is a fun reminder of just how much ground we've covered.

Gavin: Let's get into it. Early in the season, I sat down with Craig and we talked about one of those statistics that he actually pulled out. That really just makes you stop and rethink how people shop online. Here's Craig on the shift in where product searches actually begin.

Gavin: Now it's a case where search queries are getting longer, where it's more of a conversation with an Alexa, or it's longer tailed searches on Google, maybe expecting an AI overview to answer the question for you before you even get into a listing, and that maybe there's going to be more segmentation where people are living on their own platforms and maybe less of a Google dominated ecosystem.

Gavin: I don't know if that resonates at all, or if you think that's the direction we're going.

Craig: It all resonates. It really does. Just because that is in theory, what we're looking at happening is, you know, this kind of take away or maybe silo right into, okay, we want to own the beginning, the middle and the end, right? We want to own the entire journey, and we believe we can do it right. Because Amazon got to this point where they started to be more than 50% of product searches were starting on Amazon.

Gavin: That's why it was 50%.

Craig: Yeah.

Gavin: When he said that, my immediate reaction was, that's more than I thought. And honestly, it kind of still is. We at LP spent so much time talking about Google and heck, even Microsoft for that matter. But for a huge percentage of shoppers, Amazon has effectively become the search engine for those products. It really reinforces the idea that brands need to think beyond traditional search and focus on discoverability.

Gavin: Wherever customers are actually making buying decisions. And if that stat represented a major shift in consumer behavior, the next clip gives us a glimpse into where that behavior might be headed next. With AI playing a much bigger role in the purchasing journey. This next moment came from my conversation with CP McBee about AI-powered commerce, and it might be one of the most important data points we discussed all season.

Gavin: Check it out!

CP: This is one of the most consistent pieces of data that we've seen over the past couple of years, which is that when people spend time in Copilot, their purchase intent goes up by 54%, and if they came with purchase intent already, it goes up to around 200%. And so all those pieces of data really tell a compelling story about why it's so important for brands, and why they can create a unique competitive advantage for themselves by using tools like Clarity to really understand and take the guesswork of how agents are deciding and why and how agents are deciding and prioritizing to bring your anticipate across all agents, by the way, not just Copilot.

CP: And being able to actually Clarity gives optimization recommendations so brands can continue to make sure that they're improving how they're showing up in these agents.

Gavin: Those numbers really jumped out to me for a few different reasons, but partly they really just suggest AI isn't helping people find information. It's helping people actually make the buying decision. When users are spending meaningful time and tools like Copilot, they're often moving closer to a purchase, not farther away. They're kind of going down that funnel in that conversational back and forth.

Gavin: And if that trend continues, marketers are going to have to rethink what customer engagement even looks like in an AI focused world. It's going to be really interesting to find out, and CP is going to be the guy to ask about that on the AI Microsoft side. But yeah, statistics only tell part of that story. One of my favorite moments this season was actually getting hands on and seeing this technology work in real time.

Gavin: In this next clip is actually connected to the last clip. I was talking with Cam Marsella, and had the chance to test out a brand agent live on the show, which was a ton of fun. What I liked about this particular moment, compared to maybe some of the other moments, is that it moved the conversation I was having with cam from just the theory, and to something practical that I was hands on working with.

Gavin: Yeah. Check out this clip.

Gavin: What's a real example of how a shopper might use a tool like this to find the product they're looking for?

Cam: Yeah, I think I mean, that is the number one way that this is being used, from what we can see from data insights on Clarity. So, you know, it's very common that you'll see something like you know, what hats do you have that are offering the best sun protection and UPF protection. Right. And it's these search strings that are nice and long with a lot of detail about the customers looking for as if they were engaging with their own, you know, ChatGPT, LLM, whatever it may be, which shows that, you know, they're already very comfortable with these long framed questions, but now it just constrains it right to your business and doesn't send it to

Cam: your competitors.

Gavin: What I was also excited to see was the add to cart function that lived in the interface. I actually put in a few fun prompts on a brand called Village Hats, and I was giving it pretty general questions around, hey, I'm a 32 year old male. I usually wear baseball hats, and it was spitting out really good recommendations, and I was able to hone it in based on size, color, and a few other items.

Gavin: Actually found it pretty easy to interact with. Listening back, what stood out to me, and also my reaction to the tool was how familiar the experience felt. Because we're used to interacting with those Q&A agents on sites, but instead of clicking through filters and menus, you can really just describe what you're looking for as a consumer and refine the results through the actual conversation, which I thought was interesting.

Gavin: It was one of those moments where you start to look around and see how shopping and search and customer experience are just going to look so different a few years from now. These agents are opening up the door to, I think, a lot more updates. And yeah, that's the thread connecting so many of the episodes this season, whether it's Amazon changing, where search begins, what we just talked about, or AI changing how decisions get made, that customer journey is evolving so fast.

Gavin: And yeah, the clips really capture some of those biggest changes that are happening right now. This next clip comes from a conversation with Adam Gilbert about web design. And honestly, one of the more unexpected insights we had all season wasn't on my bingo card. To have a lesson from a D&D comparison translate so well into marketing and user experience, but heck, that's what happened.

Gavin: Adam brought the brought the goods. Let's check out the clip.

Adam: So one of my weird side obsessions has been with ND and the D&D system as it was created. It was actually created by a group of engineers that just were really they just needed a strong rule set for the kinds of games that they were playing. But it doesn't necessarily play nicely into how users, actually most users actually think.

Adam: And so a cool thing that redesigning a D&D system taught me is that a human, the human experience and empowering a user to kind of go where they want to go is fundamental to really good design. And that correlates directly with almost any kind of app interface or web design interface that you're going to create. So let me see what's a good way to kind of explain this.

Adam: So there's this thing called I, there might be different terms for it, but it's called a top down approach to design, meaning that, a person might think, okay, I know that these patterns are really cool. I know that this is in trend right now, or I know that this flow is just something that I feel is good, and I've used it in the past, and they sort of impressed that onto the user and say, this is what you like to.

Adam: Another one that I often hear too is like users don't really know what they want. So we're going to take our experience and tell them what they want. That is identical to the bad GM experience. Or a player has a really cool idea of exactly what they want their character to do, where they want their character to go, the story they're trying to tell, and having a GM because of the rule set or whatever constraints they feel are best, constantly railroad them.

Adam: Another term you hear often, it's kind of in the improv community where you always need to say yes and not no. Every time you railroad, you're kind of breaking off a user's ability to get into a flow state, to feel empowered, to feel engaged and to feel like, I'm, I'm here. This is for me. And so it was kind of a happy accident that I did that enough, because I ended up building up my own RPG system from the ground up solely with this idea in mind, that it should be a very seamless experience for the user.

Adam: And the other systems don't really do that. And then taking that into web design and realizing it's the same thing when you take a top down approach and dictate to a user, this is how it's going to be. You're essentially railroading their experience. Now it's a bit more nuanced because obviously we need to create an interface. And inherently by doing that, you are to some degree dictating where they need to go.

Adam: In fact, that's part of the goal. But where you really want to, I guess, find that nirvana of design is the same type of nirvana you find when you're a good GM, which is you've developed just a fine set of guidelines that puts them on these rails, and the rails are so seamless and so smooth that player or that user just goes, yeah.

Gavin: What struck me about this one, especially in hindsight, is great. Design isn't about making something simply look good. It's about helping people move naturally towards what they're trying to accomplish. And that holds to websites or e-commerce experiences or even marketing campaigns. The best experiences give users a sense of control rather than, you know, forcing them down a path.

Gavin: And I think that's why this example stood out so much, especially when reviewing other clips from this season. It reminds us that understanding human behavior still is really important, and frankly, probably matters more than the latest tool or trend that focus on the human experience actually connects nicely to the next clip. Because while technology keeps evolving, the real question is how people interact with it.

Gavin: And that's where some of the most interesting opportunities in marketing are emerging today. This fifth and final clip comes from my conversation with Courtney Roberts about Pinterest, and it's one of those quotes that immediately sticks with you. And you can kind of tell that, even as she's saying, that this must be something that, you know, inter department conversations land back on.

Gavin: It's simple, it's memorable, and it says a lot about where marketing is headed in the future. Check it out.

Gavin: What role.

Gavin: Does creative play in Pinterest compared to other channels? And part of the reason that I asked the question is almost even more so now than ever. These different social platforms have very different standards of what the content looks like. TikTok looks very different from YouTube, which looks very different from Meta. I'm kind of curious on the creative side.

Gavin: How do you think about Pinterest content, and what's the best practices to make sure that content is working on the Pinterest platform?

Courtney: I think the first thing anyone will tell you is that creative is the new targeting. I think every everybody is going to tell you that whether it's Meta, TikTok, Pinterest, and I think that very much stands true for Pinterest as well.

Narrator: Yeah.

Gavin: I really think Courtney nailed it with this one because for years, marketers obsess over finding the perfect audience and the perfect targeting strategy, which is still true. And that targeting is going to continue to be omnipresent. And as we get more data points

around consumers, that's going to deepen. But as platforms become more automated, and this is kind of the key takeaway here, the quality of the quality of the ad creative and hack.

Gavin: This even holds for like shopping and for search and text ads. That is actually the biggest difference as automation points become or as automation becomes more widespread. So the ad itself has to stop the scroll, communicate the value, you know, create enough curiosity to get someone to actually take that next step and that focus on creative. Heck, this is bringing us full circle to Mad Men days.

Gavin: Don Draper, you know, really thinking about the essence of how that creative is communicating the value of the product and listening back to it. I also liked the example we talked about around recipe content influencing performance on completely different platforms. So someone might discover a brand while browsing Pinterest, never click on an ad, and then later search for that product on Google, or end up converting through Meta kind of those multi-touch point conversions.

Gavin: And it's a good reminder for anybody who doesn't know this. And I think everybody listening should. But marketing doesn't happen in silos because users don't behave in silos. And some of the most effective campaigns think about creating demand long before we ever actually see the conversion show up in a report in GA4 or another reporting tool. That's a wrap for our top five moments from season two.

Gavin: Huge thanks to every guest who came on the show this season and shared their time and expertise. And thank you all for listening, sharing, and sending in questions along the way. If you're looking for fresh ideas to grow your business, head over to AdLab Podcast for a free marketing review from the team here at LP, plus a special listener discount.

Gavin: If you decide where the right agency to work with, we're going to be taking a short break here before we head into season three, so keep your eye on your feeds and check back in. We'll let you know as soon as we're back with new episodes. In the meantime, if you've enjoyed this episode or any other episodes this season.

Gavin: Be sure to subscribe and leave a review. It really helps more marketers discover the show. Thanks for listening and we'll see you next season in the lab.