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AUTHENTIC INTELLIGENCE | *Greenhaus' Guide to AI in the DMO World*

CHAPTER 1: FRAMING AUTHENTIC INTELLIGENCE

AUTHENTIC INTELLIGENCE

Artificial intelligence has already moved from novelty to necessity. For marketers and destinations, it promises scale, speed, and predictive precision that feel like superpowers. But here's the risk: AI alone doesn't know what it feels like to stand in the crowd when the Cowboys run onto the field, or to taste a Fletcher's Corny Dog at the Texas State Fair.

Those lived experiences — the soul of a destination — can't be automated.

That's why the future isn't about Artificial Intelligence. It's about Authentic Intelligence: AI guided, shaped, and elevated by human creativity and brand stewardship. This is the strategic partnership between irreplaceable human intuition and the superhuman capabilities of technology. It's about using AI to handle the calculations so we can focus on the connections, freeing us to tell our destinations' stories with more depth, passion, and impact than ever before.

“THAT'S WHY THE FUTURE ISN'T ABOUT ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE. IT'S ABOUT AUTHENTIC INTELLIGENCE: AI GUIDED, SHAPED, AND ELEVATED BY HUMAN CREATIVITY AND BRAND STEWARDSHIP.”

We've all seen AI generate content that looks right but doesn't feel right. In travel marketing, that gap matters. A generic AI-generated tagline might sound fine, but without human refinement, it misses the cultural nuance, emotional resonance, and local flavor that make destinations stand out.

The destinations and agencies pulling ahead aren't the ones who “let AI run.” They're the ones who treat AI as a powerful engine—driven by human experts who know where it should go. They use AI to analyze traveler behavior, accelerate production, and personalize content at scale—but they ensure skilled practitioners provide the voice, emotion, and authenticity.

KEY TAKEAWAY

AI IS A POTENT TOOL—BUT YOU CAN'T TAKE YOUR HANDS OFF THE WHEEL.

Without expert guidance, you risk speed without strategy. With the right human oversight, you unlock scale and precision that truly serve the brand.

CHAPTER 2: BRAND STEWARDSHIP

In an era of automation, your brand's unique identity has become your most valuable asset. AI is a powerful engine, but it has no destination; it operates with incredible speed but without a moral compass or a point of view. Brand stewardship is grounded in the Authentic Intelligence and destination knowledge around what makes a place special — this is guided by the people, places, and culture — it is the foundation of strategy and communication.

The temptation is to ask AI, “What should I say?” The strategic imperative is to tell AI, “This is who we are, and this is how we speak.” Your brand's voice, values, and core truths are the essential inputs that transform a generic tool into an authentic extension of your destination. Without this guidance, the most powerful AI will only generate more noise. With it, you can amplify your soul at an unprecedented scale.

PRACTICE

The most common failure in using AI for marketing isn't a technical error; it's a crisis of identity. When left undirected, AI defaults to the generic because it learns from the entirety of the internet—a place filled with category clichés and generic content. It doesn't inherently understand the nuanced meaning of “swagger” for a brand like Visit Dallas or the unique blend of polish and grit that makes the city thrive.

Here's how brand stewardship becomes an active, daily practice:

The Foundation

Before you can direct an AI, you must first define your core identity. This foundational work is the essence of Authentic Intelligence. It's built through rigorous research, stakeholder conversations, and a deep discovery process to unearth the characteristics that make your destination what it is. This human-led (and AI-aided) strategy ensures your brand stays true to its values and provides the raw material to fuel AI platforms, teaching them to behave and act as a true extension of your brand.

**“YOUR BRAND BOOK
IS NOW A PROMPT:
THE STRATEGIC SOUL
OF YOUR DESTINATION,
TEACHING THE MACHINE
TO THINK AND SPEAK
IN YOUR VOICE.”**

Your Brand Book is Now a Prompt:

The most successful DMOs treat their core brand documents as a training manual for their AI. This isn't just about logos and colors; it's about feeding a Large Language Model (LLM) the strategic soul of your brand. You provide it with your mission and vision to give it purpose, your brand voice and tone guidelines (e.g., “witty and bold, never sarcastic”) to shape its personality, and your key messaging pillars to focus its narrative. By providing these authentic inputs, you are not just generating content; you are teaching the machine to think and speak in your unique voice. You are grading its papers, refining its output, and layering your humanity onto its efficiency.

From More Content to More Meaningful Connections:

The goal of AI isn't just to create more social posts or more email variants. The goal is to create more personalized and relevant touchpoints. Authentic Intelligence uses AI to tailor content for specific traveler personas — the foodie, the adventurer, the family — while ensuring every single social post or article feels like it comes from one consistent, authentic source: your brand. Think of ChatGPT (and others) as an assistant copy-writer that helps save you time, but needs feedback and guidance to produce the best possible result.

Upholding Your Values:

Brand stewardship also means taking responsibility for the AI's output. Algorithms can inadvertently reflect biases present in their training data. It is the brand steward's job to establish ethical guardrails, review the outputs for fairness and inclusivity, and ensure the technology is used in a way that builds trust and reflects the true character of the destination.

Your Expertise is the Final Edit:

An AI will not always be accurate, right, or reflective of your destination's beliefs — regardless of how much training and input it receives. It can generate factual errors, misinterpret cultural nuances, or produce content that doesn't align with your values. This is where your role as the guide is non-negotiable. You must leverage your knowledge and expertise to act as the final filter, shaping the best possible output. This isn't a failure of the AI, it's the nature of the collaboration. Your expertise is the critical ingredient that ensures every piece of content is not only fast but also factual, authentic, and accurate to your brand.

KEY TAKEAWAY:

AI BRINGS SPEED, EFFICIENCY, AND SCALE—BUT ONLY COLLABORATION TURNS OUTPUT INTO IMPACT.

AI IS GREAT AT:

- ✓ Generating first-draft messaging variations quickly.
- ✓ Organizing and summarizing stakeholder input into themes.
- ✓ Identifying audience segments and tailoring content for each.
- ✓ Creating versions of assets across channels (social, email, web).
- ✓ Spotting patterns in traveler sentiment from reviews and social chatter.

HUMANS ARE GREAT AT:

- ✓ Defining brand voice, values, and personality that AI cannot invent.
- ✓ Interpreting cultural nuance (e.g., what "swagger" means for Dallas).
- ✓ Applying ethical guardrails to ensure fairness and inclusivity.
- ✓ Editing AI outputs to make them authentic, emotional, and on-brand.
- ✓ Protecting long-term brand equity—making sure short-term outputs build, not dilute, identity.

CHAPTER 3: CREATIVE & PRODUCTION

THE BIG IDEA

Creativity is what sets destinations apart. AI can accelerate production and generate endless variations, but left alone, it creates work that feels flat and interchangeable. What makes a campaign memorable is not just the quantity of content — it's the quality of the story.

In Authentic Intelligence, AI is not the creative director. It's the assistant: fast, tireless, and capable of helping teams explore ideas at scale. The role of the marketer is to take that raw speed and turn it into something emotional, cultural, and uniquely tied to place.

PRACTICE

Accelerating the Spark

Every great campaign starts with an idea. Instead of a traditional brainstorm, creative teams can now use AI as a sounding board — prompting it with a strategic thought and instantly generating dozens of headlines, design variations, or campaign concepts.

But here's the key: AI isn't the final idea. It's the accelerator. The role of the human creative team is to iterate, provide feedback, and shape direction so the concepts evolve into something authentic.

AI helps you move faster through the messy middle of ideation — testing options, sparking new angles, and filtering out clichés so that human instincts can land on the perfect idea. Think of it not as replacing the creative spark, but fanning the flame, allowing teams to get from concept to polished breakthrough in a fraction of the time.

Rapid Prototyping and Versioning:

Once a core concept is approved, AI can act as a production assistant to create versions at scale. For a city-wide festival, you can use AI to instantly draft ad copy tailored to different audiences — one for foodies, one for families, one for music lovers. You can even use AI image tools to generate different visual styles for A/B testing. The human creative directs this process, ensuring each version is on-brand, but the AI handles the repetitive work of adaptation, freeing up budget and time.

Ultimately, AI cannot replace the beauty of a photoshoot or the energy captured on set, but it can help you communicate ideas and concepts faster than ever before.

Goodbye, Google Image Search. Hello Veo3.

Avoiding Clichés:

Left unguided, AI tends to default to category tropes: “lots to see and do,” “making memories,” “fun for the whole family.” Destination marketers know these phrases dilute brand equity. By feeding AI with brand books, voice guides, and cultural nuance, you prevent generic outputs and shape campaigns that are original and authentic.

Human Oversight is Non-Negotiable:

Even in production workflows, AI can misinterpret nuance, generate errors, or miss the cultural heartbeat of a destination. Creative directors and brand stewards remain the final editors, ensuring that every execution reflects both the truth of the place and the intent of the campaign.

KEY TAKEAWAY:

STORYTELLING HASN'T LOST ITS SOUL; IT'S SIMPLY GAINED A FASTER ENGINE.

AI IS GREAT AT:

- ✓ Generating multiple headline, caption, or concept variations in seconds.
- ✓ Creating rough mockups, moodboards, or first-pass visuals for early ideation.
- ✓ Resizing and reformatting creative assets across platforms (social, display, video).
- ✓ Speeding up production workflows (versioning, tagging, formatting).
- ✓ Acting as a brainstorming partner to spark new angles or campaign ideas.

HUMANS ARE GREAT AT:

- ✓ Choosing which ideas are authentic, original, and worth pursuing.
- ✓ Adding emotion, storytelling, and cultural nuance AI can't replicate.
- ✓ Breaking clichés and pushing creative beyond the obvious.
- ✓ Directing AI with clear brand prompts and refining its drafts into polished work.
- ✓ Serving as the final editor to ensure accuracy, resonance, and brand alignment.

CHAPTER 4: THE NEXT LEVEL OF PAID MEDIA

MEDIA + AI

Long before generative AI captured the world's imagination, it was the silent, invisible engine of paid media. For over a decade, Artificial Intelligence has been the operating system for programmatic advertising, powering the real-time bidding and automated optimizations that define modern digital campaigns. While AI isn't new to this space, its role is undergoing a dramatic evolution.

Authentic Intelligence in paid media is about leveraging AI across the entire campaign lifecycle — from initial planning to final reporting — to replace guesswork with data-driven certainty. This shift fundamentally changes your role from tactician to strategy director, using expertise to guide an increasingly powerful suite of tools.

PRACTICE

In paid media, AI acts as an infinitely powerful analyst, strategist, and trader, working 24/7 to ensure your message finds its audience with maximum impact.

Media Planning and Persona Development:

Before you spend a single dollar, AI can act as a research assistant with superhuman capabilities. It analyzes vast datasets to forecast travel demand, identify emerging market trends, and reveal competitor strategies. It can also help you build and “interview” AI-generated traveler personas, allowing you to pressure-test messaging and gain deep insights into audience motivations before the campaign is even built.

Predictive Audience Targeting:

AI has moved targeting far beyond simple demographics. It analyzes thousands of real-time signals—flight searches, hotel browsing, content consumption—to identify users demonstrating active travel intent. You provide the strategic goals, and the AI finds high-value audiences you might never have discovered on your own, reaching them when they are actively dreaming, planning, or booking.

AI also lets us reverse engineer the path to conversion. Understanding all the steps taken prior to booking—some expected, some surprising—unlocking new contextual cues to power our targeting approach.

Continuous Campaign Optimization:

Once a campaign is live, AI becomes your optimization manager. It evaluates and bids on millions of ad placements in milliseconds, predicting which specific impression is most likely to lead to a valuable action and adjusting the bid accordingly. It can also dynamically shift your budget, optimization creative rotations, and shift target audience strategies. The trick to this is that each platform needs clear understanding of what success looks like, and what KPI you find most important. AI cannot simply make your program successful with wishful thinking; it needs black and white direction on what is most important to guide its real-time decision-making.

Intelligent Data Analysis and Reporting:

While no perfect attribution model exists in the digital world, AI is getting us closer to understanding true, real-world impact. It simplifies complex program metrics by creating automated dashboards and translating raw data into plain-language summaries, making sophisticated insights accessible to your entire team. More importantly, AI excels at correlating data across many different sources—from ad engagement to flight arrivals—to perform complex analysis that drives faster, smarter decisions. This allows you to move beyond vanity metrics and keep your programs moving in the best possible direction based on what’s actually driving visitation.

BALANCING ART AND SCIENCE

AI has mastered the science of paid media—the data-driven precision that speeds decisions and optimizes performance. But growth doesn’t come from numbers alone. The art still matters: the strategy, creativity, and storytelling that turn campaigns into something memorable.

Big ideas, custom content, experiential activations, and authentic narratives can’t be automated. They require human imagination and cultural understanding to break through the noise. As programmatic platforms make media increasingly black and white, success lies in providing them with powerful creative fuel. Human expertise ensures that scientific precision is matched with artful impact—transforming efficiency into true connection.

“AI DOESN’T REPLACE HUMAN MEDIA STRATEGY; IT SUPERCHARGES IT—AN ENGINE THAT CAN PROCESS MILLIONS OF SIGNALS IN SECONDS, FREEING PEOPLE TO FOCUS ON THE PARTNERSHIPS AND POSITIONING THAT ACTUALLY MOVE MARKETS.”

KEY TAKEAWAY:

AI DELIVERS THE SCIENCE—PRECISION, SPEED, AND OPTIMIZATION. BUT ONLY HUMANS BRING THE ART—BIG IDEAS, CREATIVITY, AND STORYTELLING. TRUE IMPACT HAPPENS WHEN THE TWO WORK TOGETHER.

AI IS GREAT AT:

- ✓ Optimizing bids, budgets, and placements in real time.
- ✓ Running predictive models to identify high-value traveler segments.
- ✓ Automating creative rotation to test which versions perform best.
- ✓ Correlating data across channels to surface performance patterns.
- ✓ Streamlining reporting dashboards for faster insights.

HUMANS ARE GREAT AT:

- ✓ Defining campaign objectives that ladder up to destination strategy.
- ✓ Interpreting results through the lens of brand equity, not just clicks.
- ✓ Setting ethical and brand-safe guardrails for AI-driven targeting.
- ✓ Deciding which optimizations serve long-term goals vs. short-term efficiency.
- ✓ Pushing beyond pure data driven decisions to take chances, innovate and evolve.

CHAPTER 5: SOCIAL MEDIA

MAINTAINING AN AUTHENTIC SOCIAL VOICE

Social media is the digital soul of your destination — a living, breathing conversation between you, your visitors, and your community. In a world of filters and algorithms, the most valuable currency is authenticity. The risk of using AI here is significant; a generic, robotic post can do more damage than no post at all, instantly signaling that you're not part of the conversation, but just another brand shouting into the void.

Authentic Intelligence in social media isn't about automating engagement. It's about using AI to listen more effectively and manage workflows more efficiently, so your team can focus on what truly matters: creating culturally relevant content and participating in genuine, human-to-human conversations.

PRACTICE

In the fast-paced world of social media, AI acts as your strategic listening post and workflow accelerator, ensuring you can keep up with the speed of culture without losing your authentic voice.

AI for Trend Spotting and Social Listening:

Before you can join a conversation, you have to know it's happening. AI-powered tools analyze millions of posts, comments, and videos in real-time to identify emerging trends, track traveler sentiment, and understand what people are saying about your destination. This provides your social media team with the critical insights needed to create content that is timely, relevant, and genuinely part of the cultural moment.

AI as Your Content Assistant:

Think of AI as your assistant social media manager. It can help you overcome the blank page by drafting captions, suggesting relevant hashtags, and brainstorming content ideas based on your messaging pillars. The human expert then steps in to act as the editor, injecting the brand's authentic voice, adding cultural nuance, and ensuring the final post feels like it came from a person, not a prompt.

Streamlining Workflows and Influencer Relations:

The logistics of social media can be overwhelming. AI can streamline the process of scheduling content across multiple platforms and even help identify potential influencer partners by analyzing their audience data, engagement metrics, and brand alignment, freeing up your team from administrative tasks to focus on the high-value work of building genuine relationships with creators and engaging directly with your community.

KEY TAKEAWAY:

IN SOCIAL MEDIA, SPEED WITHOUT SOUL IS JUST NOISE. USE AI TO KEEP UP WITH THE PACE OF CULTURE, BUT USE YOUR HUMAN VOICE TO JOIN THE CONVERSATION.

AI IS GREAT AT:

- ✓ Monitoring millions of conversations for sentiment, trends, and traveler insights.
- ✓ Suggesting optimal posting times, formats, and frequency.
- ✓ Drafting first-pass copy or captions for different audience segments.
- ✓ Resizing, repurposing, or generating quick visual/video assets.
- ✓ Identifying trending hashtags, keywords, and cultural signals early.

HUMANS ARE GREAT AT:

- ✓ Deciding which trends align authentically with the brand (and which to ignore).
- ✓ Writing responses and captions with empathy, wit, and cultural nuance.
- ✓ Ensuring consistency in brand tone across platforms.
- ✓ Spotting when an AI-generated post risks being tone-deaf or generic.
- ✓ Building authentic community engagement through real conversations.

CHAPTER 6: THE ROAD AHEAD

The road ahead is not about keeping up with AI; it's about leading the way with it. We are moving beyond an era of simple efficiency into one of profound evolution, where artificial intelligence will push us to a new level of strategic and creative excellence. This future is exciting not because of what the technology can do on its own, but because of what we can achieve with it.

This evolved space is still, and will always be, fundamentally human. The principles of Authentic Intelligence—the collaborative partnership between human experience and machine capability—will be our guide. By embracing these new superpowers, we will amplify our expertise, deepen our storytelling, and deliver an impact for our destinations that was previously unimaginable.

PRACTICE

Embracing this new paradigm requires a commitment to action. It's about moving from theory to practice and building the capabilities to thrive.

HERE IS A SIMPLE PLAN TO BEGIN YOUR JOURNEY:

1. **Start with a Conversation:** The first step is to build a strategy. CALL GREENHAUS to discuss how our team of AI-integrated experts can help you navigate this new landscape and build a plan for success.
2. **Solidify Your Foundation:** The fuel for any AI is a clear brand identity. Ensure your Brand Book is a comprehensive, actionable guide that can serve as a training manual for the technology you use. The clearer your inputs, the more authentic your outputs will be.
3. **Embrace Experimentation:** You don't need a massive budget to start. Begin by exploring the AI features already built into the platforms you use daily. Use generative AI tools for brainstorming and content assistance to build fluency and confidence.
4. **Define a Pilot Project:** Don't try to do everything at once. Choose one specific, measurable goal for a small test campaign. This will allow you to learn fast, demonstrate value, and build momentum for broader adoption.

KEY TAKEAWAY:

THE FUTURE OF DESTINATION MARKETING WON'T BE CREATED BY AI ALONE. IT WILL BE IMAGINED, DIRECTED, AND BROUGHT TO LIFE BY AUTHENTIC, COLLABORATIVE TEAMS WHO HARNESS THESE NEW SUPERPOWERS TO TELL STORIES THAT MOVE PEOPLE. LET'S BUILD THAT FUTURE TOGETHER.