SOCIAL COMMERCE SUMMIT · YOUNG LIVING HQ, LEHI · 16 SEPTEMBER 2026

Marketing is everything. And it is nothing.

It is everything when the business is falling apart. It is nothing when the business is fine. I spent six years finding out why, in a sport nobody was watching.

Bryce Morgan

President and CMO, Pickleball Inc. · Founder, Walkthru Labs

THE PARADOX, MEASURED

4.1	**31%**	**80%**	**43%**
Years · the average CMO tenure. Shortest in the C-suite	Of the S&P 500 no longer has a CMO at all	Of CEOs say their CMO is committed. Highest in five years	Have confidence in the role itself

They like you. They do not rate the function.

SPENCER STUART CMO TENURE STUDY, JAN 2026, S&P 500 · BOATHOUSE FIFTH ANNUAL CEO STUDY, 150 US CEOS, FIELDED JAN 2026

HOW I GOT HERE

I charged them three thousand dollars for a website I was certain nobody would use.

2019	Mesa	6–11	600
A tennis family asks why this does not exist	Valentine's weekend, 2020	Every day. Not the trip I expected	Players. No tickets. Full stadium

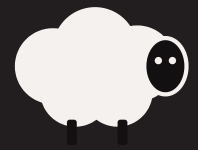
I flew home and proposed a job that did not exist.
Marketing **and** operations.
One person.

THE UNCOMFORTABLE PART

Most of us have become sharks or sheep.

Shark

Brings data that looks like proof and is not.

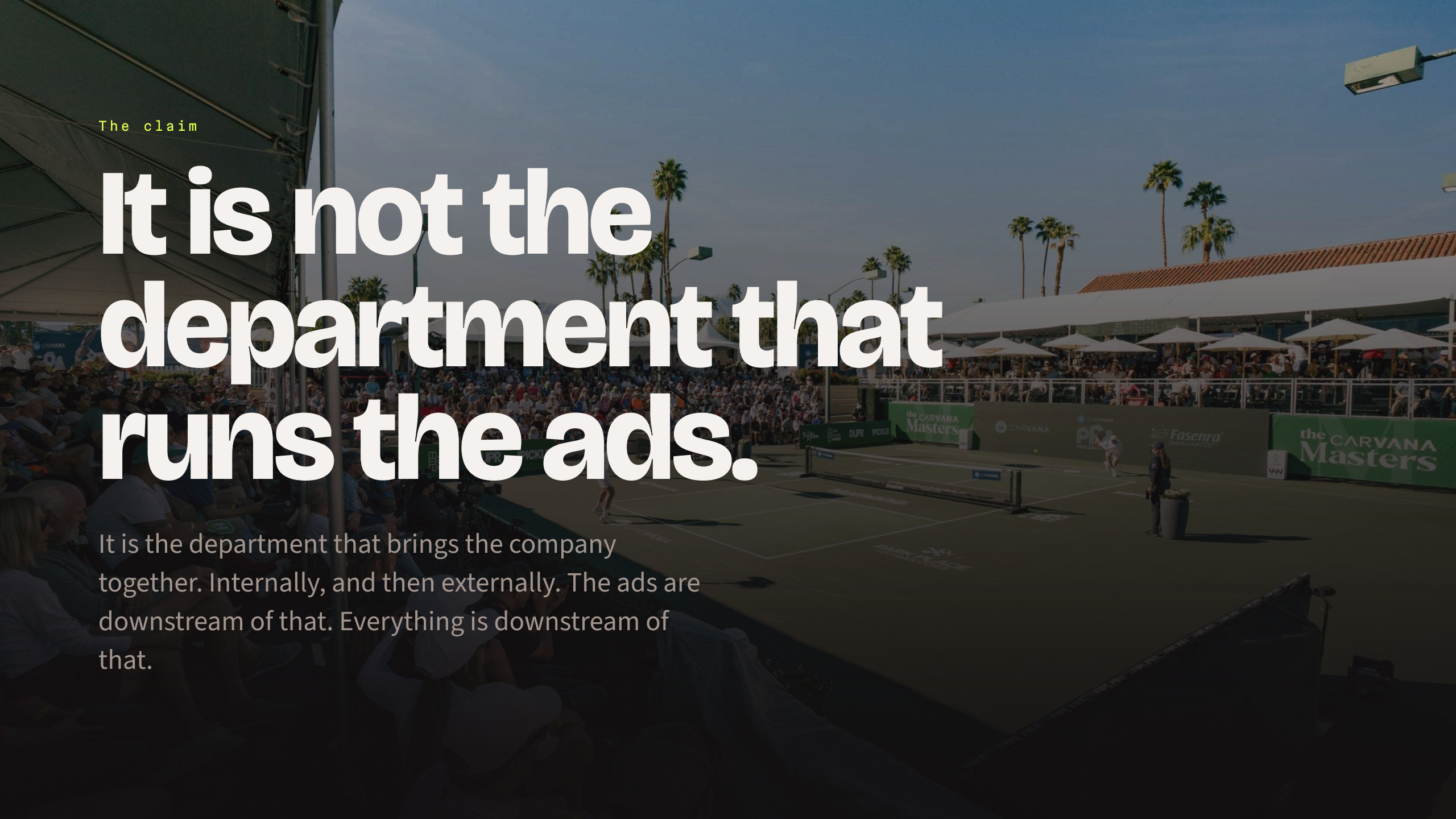


Sheep

Brings a plan that offends nobody and changes nothing.

Do not be either. The job is the space in between.

Both last about four years. And you have been blamed for a quarter you did not cause, and watched a good one get credited to product.



The claim

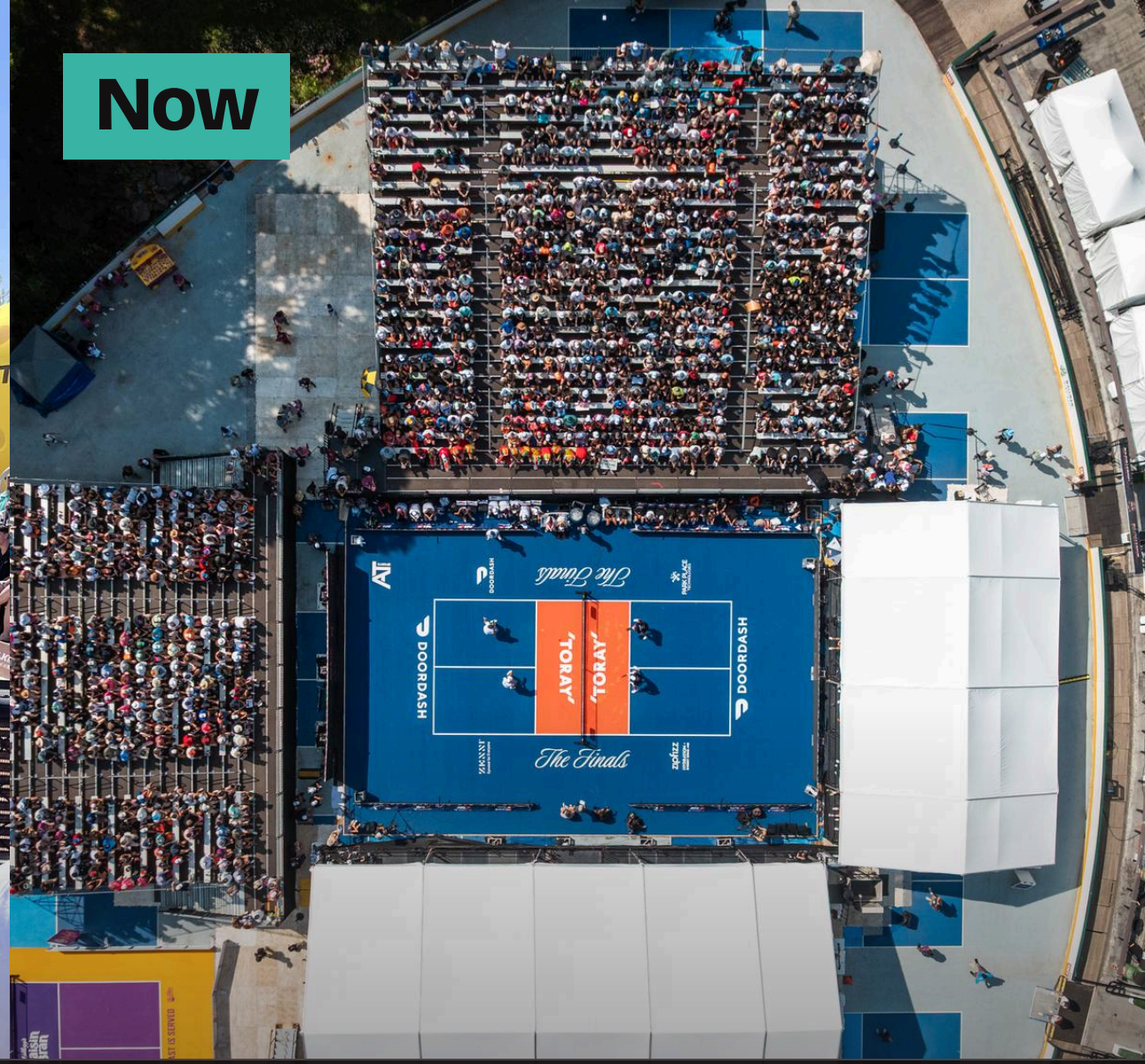
It is not the department that runs the ads.

It is the department that brings the company together. Internally, and then externally. The ads are downstream of that. Everything is downstream of that.

WHY I GET TO SAY THAT

I taped the lines.
I drove the bus.
I wrote the recaps on the flight home.
I sold the sponsorships.
I hired people. I fired people.
I wrote the checks to the players.
Then I built the system that writes them.

That is not a résumé. It is the only reason I know what marketing actually is.



600

Players at Mesa. No tickets sold

100+

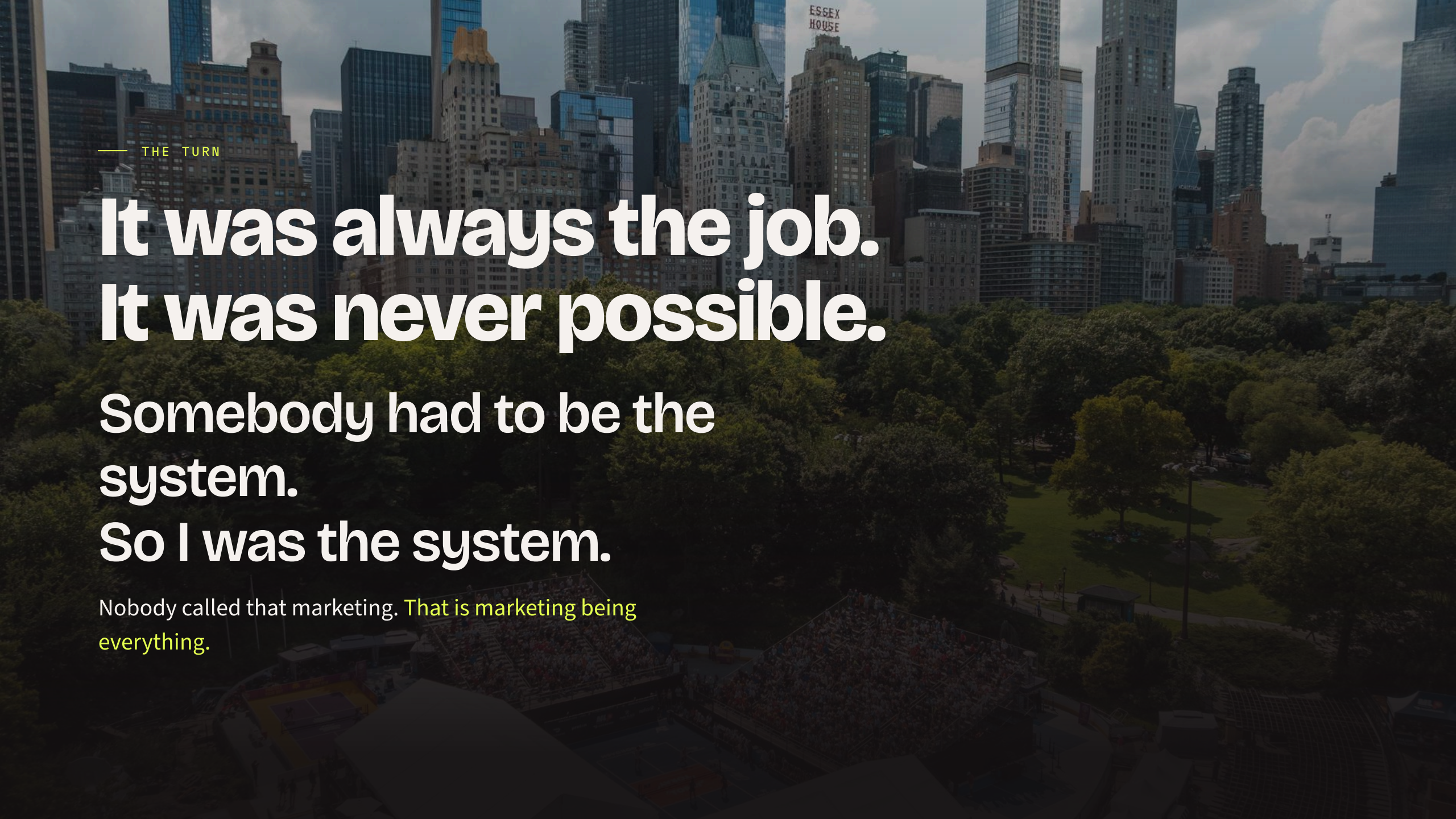
Events since 2020

1.05M

Peak viewers on CBS

+63%

Ticket revenue, this season on last



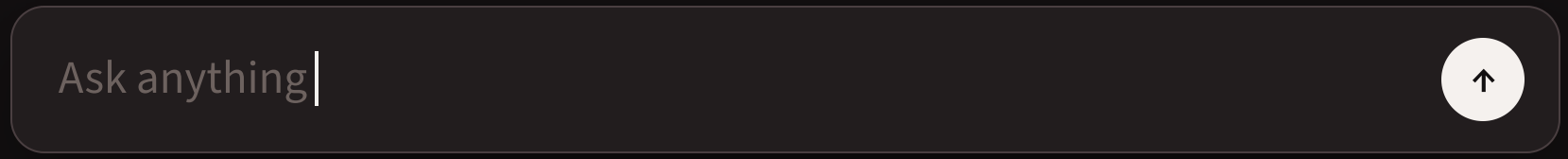
THE TURN

It was always the job. It was never possible.

Somebody had to be the system.
So I was the system.

Nobody called that marketing. That is marketing being everything.

WHAT ACTUALLY CHANGED



> It is not intelligence.
> It is an efficiency layer.

The impossible half of the job just became the cheap half.

INSIDE THE COMPANY

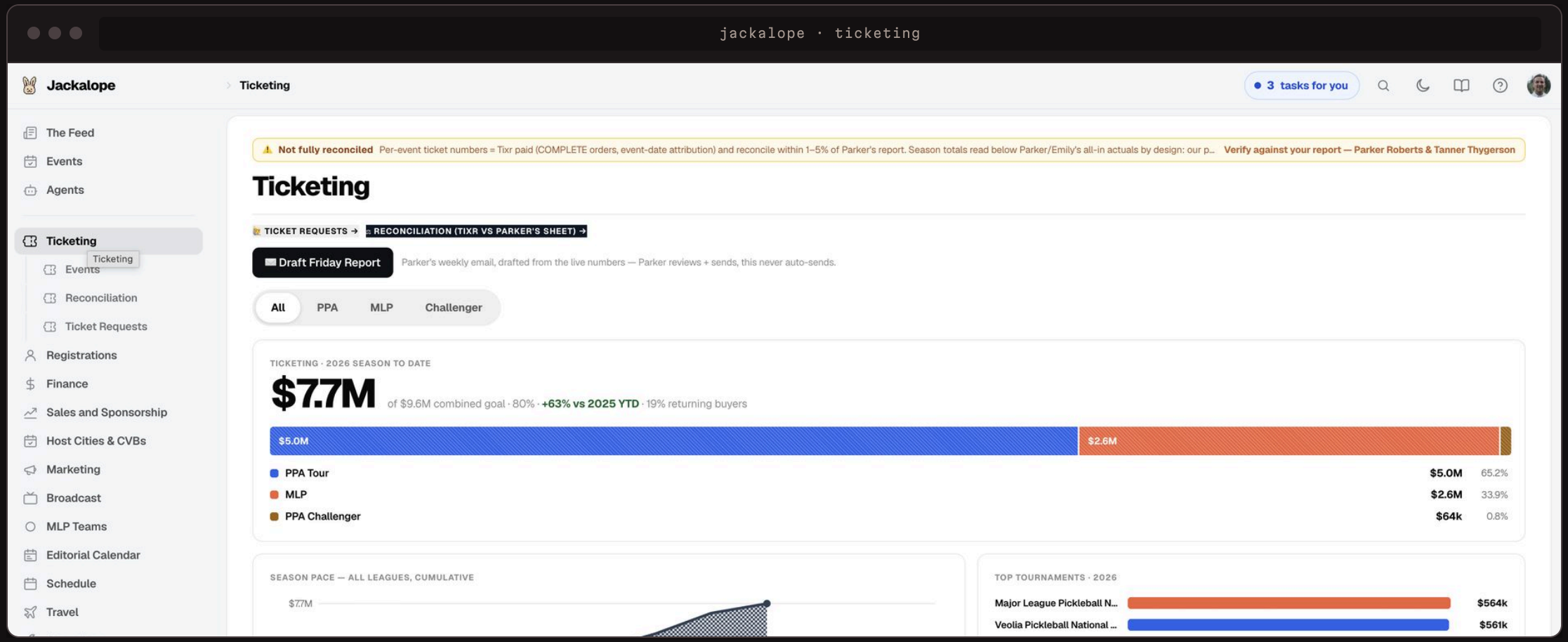
Marketing became the single source of truth.

1	**0**	**Asana**	**1 week**
Place the numbers live	Spreadsheets emailed around to agree on them	On its way out within the month	Is how long "did that event make money" used to take

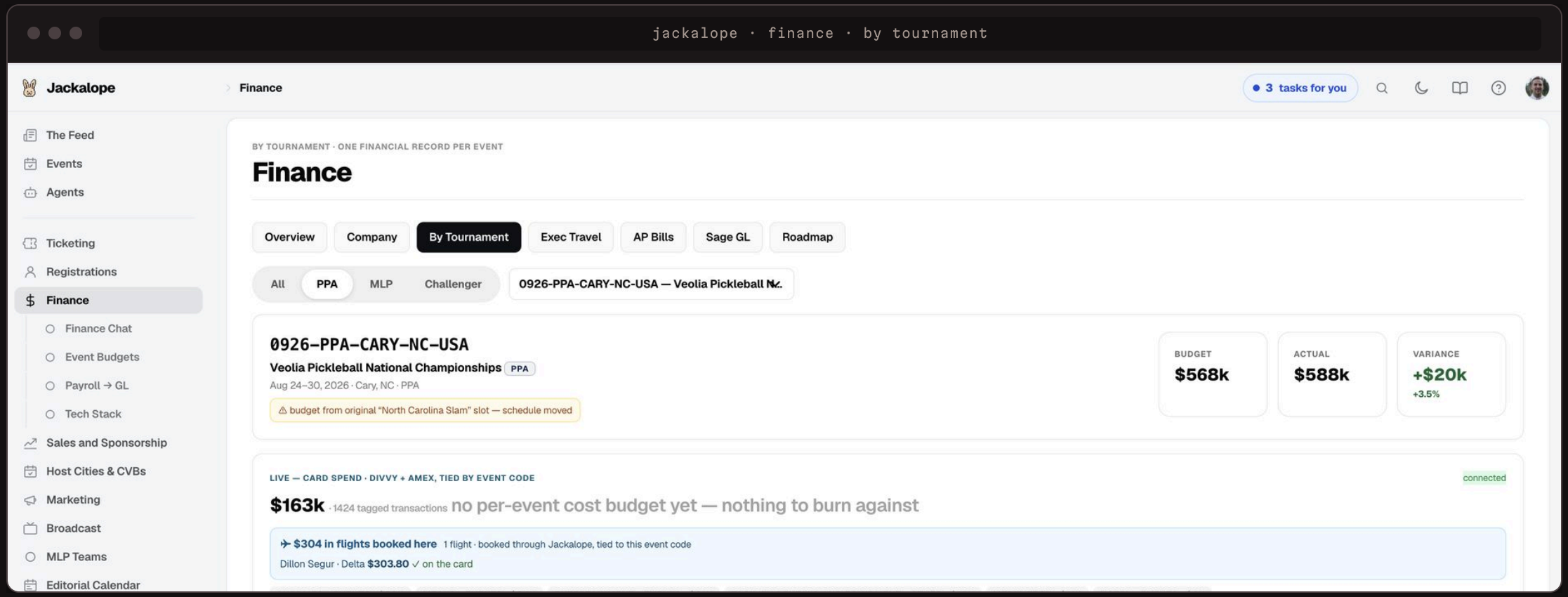
Which makes marketing the quarterback.

When it works, nobody calls it marketing. That is marketing being nothing.

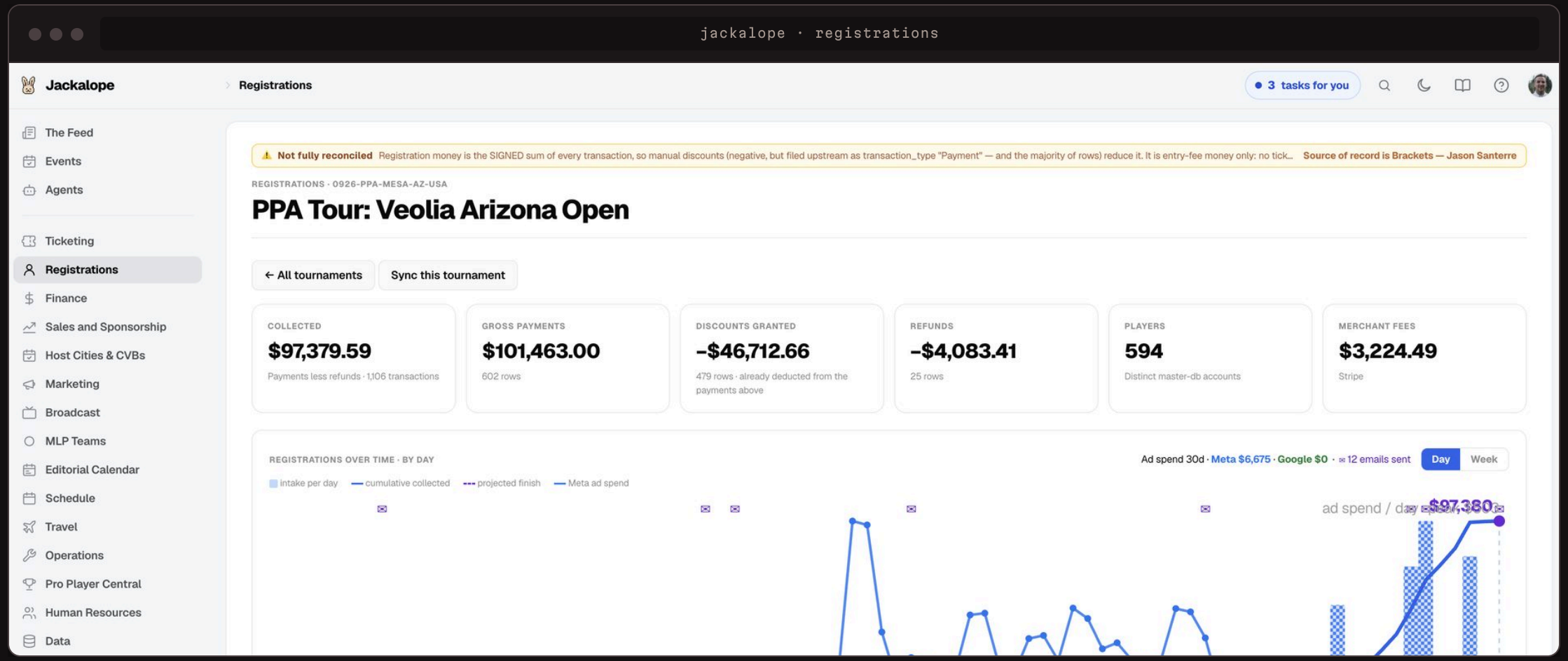
JACKALOPE · WHAT A SEASON LOOKS LIKE



Every ticket, every tour, against last year.
Nobody exports anything.

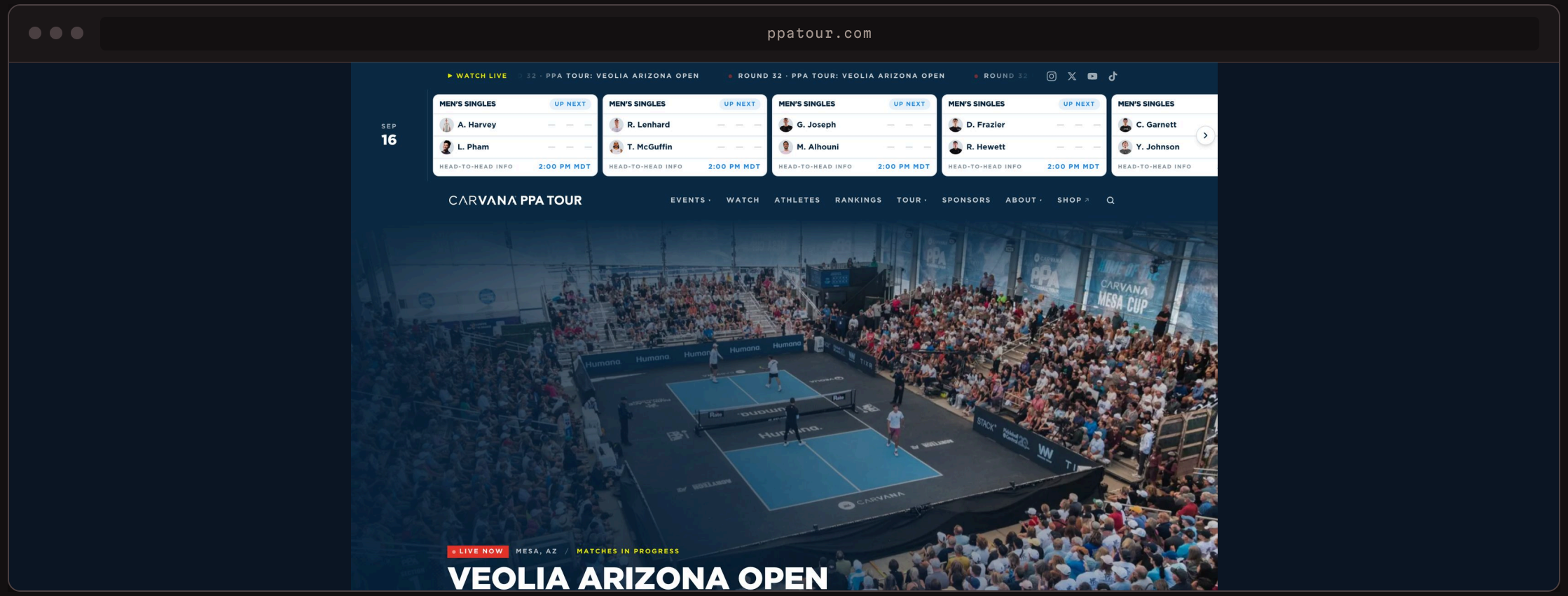


Marketing spend sitting inside the event's own financial record. **Budget against actual, while the event is still happening.**



Attribution used to be the hardest thing in marketing. **It just became the easiest.**

OUTSIDE THE COMPANY · THE SAME SOURCE



Live scores across the top, because it reads the same system. **Not a brochure somebody updates twice a year.**

OUTSIDE THE COMPANY · SIX
EPISODES ON PRIME VIDEO
Nobody is made to watch a documentary. They choose it.
That is marketing that grows the company, not marketing that describes it.
PARTNERS
INSIDE THE HIGH-STAKES WORLD OF PRO PICKLEBALL
EPISODE 1
WATCH NOW

WHAT THIS ACTUALLY LOOKS LIKE ON A TUESDAY

I do not run a marketing department.

I record every meeting with our CEO.
I prep the board meetings.
Every team gets support from me.

A decision used to die in the room it was made in.

WHERE THIS GOES NEXT

The same problem, in businesses that look nothing alike.

Not one is a sports company. Every one has four systems that disagree. That work lives at Walkthru Labs, and it is too fun to leave alone.

ONE MORE THING

A man posted on a board that he is frightened. He sells software, he is losing deal after deal, and he has a family.

> **Stop selling software and start selling AI.**

The tool is not the product. What it lets you finally do is.

That was somebody else's reply, not mine. Mine was worse.

WHAT I ACTUALLY THINK

A good CMO makes a good company president.

If they are willing to fill the gaps.

The pixelated logo. The pitch deck. The broadcast graphic. The travel. Eventually the payroll. Not one of them was my job.

HOW TO BE THE ONE THEY KEEP

Everything, and nothing. You do not get to choose which — but you do get to choose what you do about it.

POINT MARKETING INWARD FIRST

One. Get the company saying the same true thing internally. The external message is downstream and it never outruns the internal one.

Two. Find the two systems that disagree about your customer, and make them agree.

THEN PROVE IT OUTWARD

Three. Confirm a purchase event actually reaches your ad platform. Then ask an assistant what your best customer would ask, and see whether you are in the answer.

Fill the gaps nobody owns. That is the whole job, and it is how you stop being a cost.

THREE ASKS BEFORE YOU GO

We are hiring a CMO. Bring your brand into pickleball. And if you want to talk efficiency layers for your own company, that is Walkthru Labs.

THE CMO ROLE, OR SPONSORSHIP

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EVERYTHING ELSE

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Bryce Morgan

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