Since 2014, the ANA has surveyed our members to identify the marketing word of the year. The ANA staff identifies a list of finalists and then asks members to cast their votes to determine the winner. This year, voting was done online during the week of November 26. In total, 360 members participated. “Brand Purpose” was selected by ANA members as the ANA 2018 Marketing Word of the Year.

Representative verbatim comments from those who voted for Brand Purpose are:

- It drives a brand.
- “Purpose” takes the word “brand” to a whole new level. It creates a greater partnership between consumers and marketers to be responsible to each other, and shifts the focus from selling to engaging.
- Brand purpose represents an opportunity to ground ourselves in being relevant to customers. You need a reason or purpose to be in front of them, one that speaks directly to a customer need or a problem you will solve at a specific moment in time. We can’t be successful just by shouting the benefits of our brand and why they should buy. The bar is now higher.
- My company has been reorganizing around a brand purpose and I’ve seen other big brands doing the same. Consumers are aligning loyalty and wallets behind brands with purpose.
- In the polarizing world we are living in, many brands have stepped up and taken a risk and stance this year. Nike is a good example, and more recently TOMS (for pledging $5 million to organizations across the country committed to ending gun violence).

Nike, in fact, has been selected by Advertising Age as its Marketer of the Year.

A sterling example of purpose-driven marketing is Procter & Gamble’s “Love Over Bias.” The commercial depicts the impact of bias on peoples’ lives through the lens of a wide range of mothers who are shown encouraging and supporting their child athletes in a world that isn’t always accepting of them. The commercial was awarded Best in Show in the 2018 ANA Multicultural Excellence Awards competition.

The selection by ANA members of Brand Purpose as the 2018 Marketing Word of the Year aligns with other ANA initiatives.

The ANA recently established the ANA Center for Brand Purpose to fuel business growth by helping marketers create purpose-driven, strategic programs and solutions for their products and services. In creating the Center, the ANA defined “purpose” in the context of marketing as “a brand’s reason to exist beyond turning a profit.” Purpose is a long-term business strategy tied to a societal benefit that guides every strategic decision and action, from product development and customer/employee engagement to marketing and hiring. The Center will provide the content, tools, events, and professional development programs necessary for maximizing marketers’ understanding of purposeful marketing and its significance in driving brand growth.

Furthermore, brand purpose is one of the 12 leadership agenda items identified by the ANA’s CMO Masters Circle to help galvanize the CMO community and drive growth. The Center will work on purposeful marketing programs with the Masters Circle community and the newly formed Global CMO Growth Council, which includes among its five core priorities “Marketing for Society and Sustainability.”

Other top choices in the ANA 2018 Marketing Word of the Year voting were influencer, transparency (the 2016 ANA Marketing Word of the Year), and in-house.