



Econsultancy

TIME TO CREATE

ADOPTING CREATIVE
AUTOMATION TO PLUG
THE CONTENT GAP

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



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FOREWORD



Andrew Hally

Bynder
CMO

THE TIME TO CREATE IS NOW.

The creative process has remained linear and manual for longer than I can remember, characterized by very talented, skilled individuals creating assets one at a time in an essentially waterfall-like process. But the creative output from this way of working results in a trickle, not a waterfall, of assets. It's simply not enough content to support the highly automated digital marketing execution today's marketing calls for.

This creative output gap, this content crunch, if you will, has knocked modern marketing out of balance. But it's a very solvable problem if we reframe the content crunch and think about it differently. It's not some brilliant insight. It's common sense. 95% of assets are 95% the same. You don't need a unique, hand-made, snowflake asset for every touch, but you do need variations.

That's where the demand stems from. These simple variations are repetitive, highly constrained, yet also extremely time-consuming to produce. It's a perfect use case for automation, and coincidentally enough, the upstream creative process is just about the last place we've seen brands prioritize automation. It's as if some don't believe marketers can automate ANY part of the creative process. And that's not true. There's repetitive, manual work in just about every job function in marketing. Creative is no exception.

The creative process is the next great frontier of potential for automation opportunities. And I hope you'll join me in the shared thinking that the time is now for marketers to embrace automation across the entire marketing function.

INTRODUCTION

Finding the time to be creative is more important than ever but marketers are faced with a dilemma. Time is short, resources are limited but the demands on brands to keep the conversation going are almost limitless.

We all know you can't get away with blanketing channels with one-size-fits-all messaging but there just aren't enough hours in the day to manually finesse creative that'll land for every customer.

Brands need a way to deliver timely, creative and targeted communications without breaking the bank - or the team.

With the pressure to deliver executions for the multitude of channels and platforms, **compromises are being made**. Without immediate access to quality assets, marketers and their creative teams often have to settle for second-best – and this is increasingly leading to the 'blandification of brands'. Over-reliance on stock photography, falling into over-used tropes and limited risk-taking make it unsurprising that there is a world of digital sameness.

Marketers are also wary of the suggestion that technology can provide the answer to the creative quandary. According to recent research from Bynder, marketers reckoned automation would lead to job losses or dull the creative output¹. In a bitter irony, executives believe using tech would create 'brand sameness', when – as we're going to find out – it's the pressure today on creatives' time and resources that is already doing just that.

It's important to define what creative automation actually is – and what it's not:

- Creative automation is not pouring data into artificial intelligence and taking whatever comes out. It's not taking creativity out of the hands of the creatives and pushing it through a campaign sausage-maker.
- Instead, it takes on board the more process-driven aspects of creativity – locating assets, building variants for personalisation, localisation and testing - and creates a single source of truth to drive operational efficiency and more.

The end result is a liberation of the true creative engines – talented, inspired, skilled people – from the more tedious aspects of the creative process and giving them the tools to be their best, creative selves.

This paper explores the main challenges creative teams face when trying to keep up with content demands: how to move away from 'analogue' thinking, the key deliverables of creative automation and ultimately, how to liberate creatives and help them plug the content gap.

¹ <https://www.bynder.com/en/state-of-branding/>

MIND THE CONTENT GAP

“Creativity is one of your most powerful tools to futureproof your organisation.” This quote, from Opher Yom-Tov, chief design officer, ANZ Bank, is no idle observation². This doesn’t just mean those epoch-defining pieces of creative like Honda’s ‘Cog’, Dove’s ‘Real Beauty’ or Sony Bravia’s ‘Balls’, though they certainly help.

Creativity is a brand’s most powerful tool for everyday communication. Whether you’re connecting with a customer over email, chat, website or social feed, brand messaging is part of the hum of everyday life. The skill is in making it stand out from the rest of the background noise.

That means being personal, relevant, targeted and timely. All these approaches are great in theory, and they are all a tremendous challenge to execute.

In normal times, keeping up with channels’ insatiable demand for content - paid, owned and earned - means marketers must struggle to make the most of their campaign assets. Instead of being able to squeeze every last drop of effectiveness from what they have, they’re forced to reinvent the wheel, recreate campaigns and waste valuable time that could be spent finding new audiences, building more messaging and yes, carving out time for that next big idea.

“Creativity is one of your most powerful tools to futureproof your organisation.”

Opher Yom-Tov,
Chief design officer,
ANZ Bank

² <https://www.thedrum.com/news/2020/08/12/can-creativity-help-businesses-recover-the-covid-19-pandemic>

And then, life gets in the way.

Reactive marketing provides one of the most challenging environments for marketers and it's one where creative automation plays a vital role. Some brands are clearly well ahead of the game in terms of joined-up thinking and systems. When Elon Musk released concept art for the Tesla Truck prototype in November 2019, LEGO was hot on its heels...

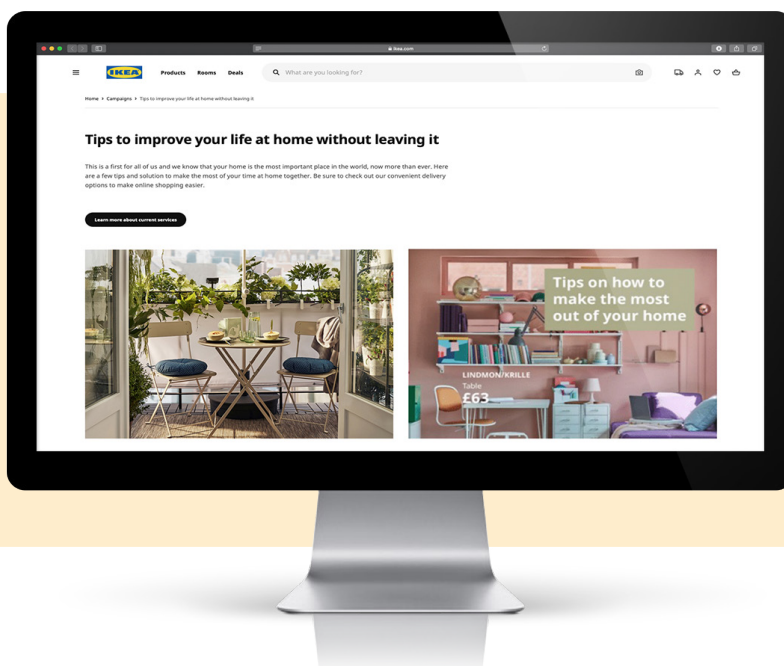
The world is fraught with changing realities to which brands don't just have to adapt, but need to excel at. This includes the huge shift from bricks and mortar, accelerated by the pandemic. The result has seen a drift away from traditional media channels to chat and social commerce. It's also been accompanied by the rise of EOD – everything on demand – from groceries to entertainment, healthcare and beyond.

Naturally, the pandemic has provided the highest volume of reactive marketing in recent decades. Many brands rushed to get their own messaging out to match the mood of the nation. IKEA, for example, quickly reprioritised its campaigns to fit the work from home edict. Rather than just focus on its home office set-ups, it provided content to help customers make the most of life at home, given the reality of lockdowns:



SSOURCE: ECONSULTANCY³

SOURCE: ZELST.CO.UK⁴



3 <https://econsultancy.com/reactive-marketing-benefits-risks-best-practice-examples/>
4 <https://www.zelst.co.uk/blog/10-effective-reactive-marketing-examples/>

But even companies with deep pockets found that keeping up with the pace of change in a world suddenly turned upside down is a Sisyphean task. Unilever cut, diverted and altered the focus of its media spend during the pandemic, shifting some messaging to more relevant creative around 'summer staycation' and 'stay inspired', and adding more purposeful messaging on hygiene for brands like Lifebuoy and Domestos⁵.

This shift paid dividends for the FMCG giant, which announced sales growth in February 2021 of 1.9% despite cutting its ad spend by nearly a third in the first half of 2020⁶. Not everyone fared so well. A range of brands from Apple to U-Haul took a hit from a three-minute, 40 second YouTube video called Every Covid-19 Commercial Is Exactly the Same⁷. And they were.

It's one thing to acknowledge a sign of the times, but quite another to fall into a sea of sameness because of it. Speaking of the 'we're here for you – rinse, repeat' ads, Dan Cullen-Shute, CEO of Creature ad agency said: "Advertising's always been the uninvited guest at the party, and if you're going to turn up uninvited, bring champagne: it's time for us to bring the champagne"⁸.

That champagne is relative, of course. To one customer, it's a once-in-a-lifetime offer, or the latest shock and awe viral video. Or it could simply be showing up with the right product, at the right time and at the right price.

Pressure maintaining levels of content and creativity

There is no question that marketers feel the pressure to maintain the expected high levels of content and creativity. According to Forrester Research, 70% of digital advertising decision makers said their firms are devoting more time to advertising content creation than they would prefer, and just 44% agree that their current processes are effective⁹. Localisation – so important for brands looking to make authentic connections with a global audience – is also straining advertisers, with nearly half finding it difficult. Creativity is being pulled in too many directions at once, it seems.

There is no shortage of evidence to demonstrate why great, timely content matters, but for it to work the structure supporting creative activity must be in place. All too often it is not.

"There is no question that marketers feel the pressure to maintain the expected high levels of content and creativity."

5 <https://www.marketingweek.com/unilever-invest-marketing-lockdown-ease/>
6 <https://www.unilever.com/news/press-releases/2021/strong-full-year-results-demonstrate-unilevers-resilience-and-agility.html>
7 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vM3J9jDoaTA&t=3s&ab_channel=MicrosoftSam
8 <https://mediacatmagazine.co.uk/locked-down-and-uninspired/>
9 https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/6376340/Celtra-OSnap_final.pdf?utm_medium=email&_hsmt=84249879&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-5ZILfFUBWX_wc8vPt8gyf8oT7NU9E9kXFBFZYpelcOuUXWUrdwyadtbcD79M6YtjVsT5G59dlMTztUDcPV8Vm6e0wpw&utm_content=84249879&utm_source=hs_automation

One brand that has prioritised creativity is Nike, demonstrating time and again its ability to react to world events in a timely and authentic way.

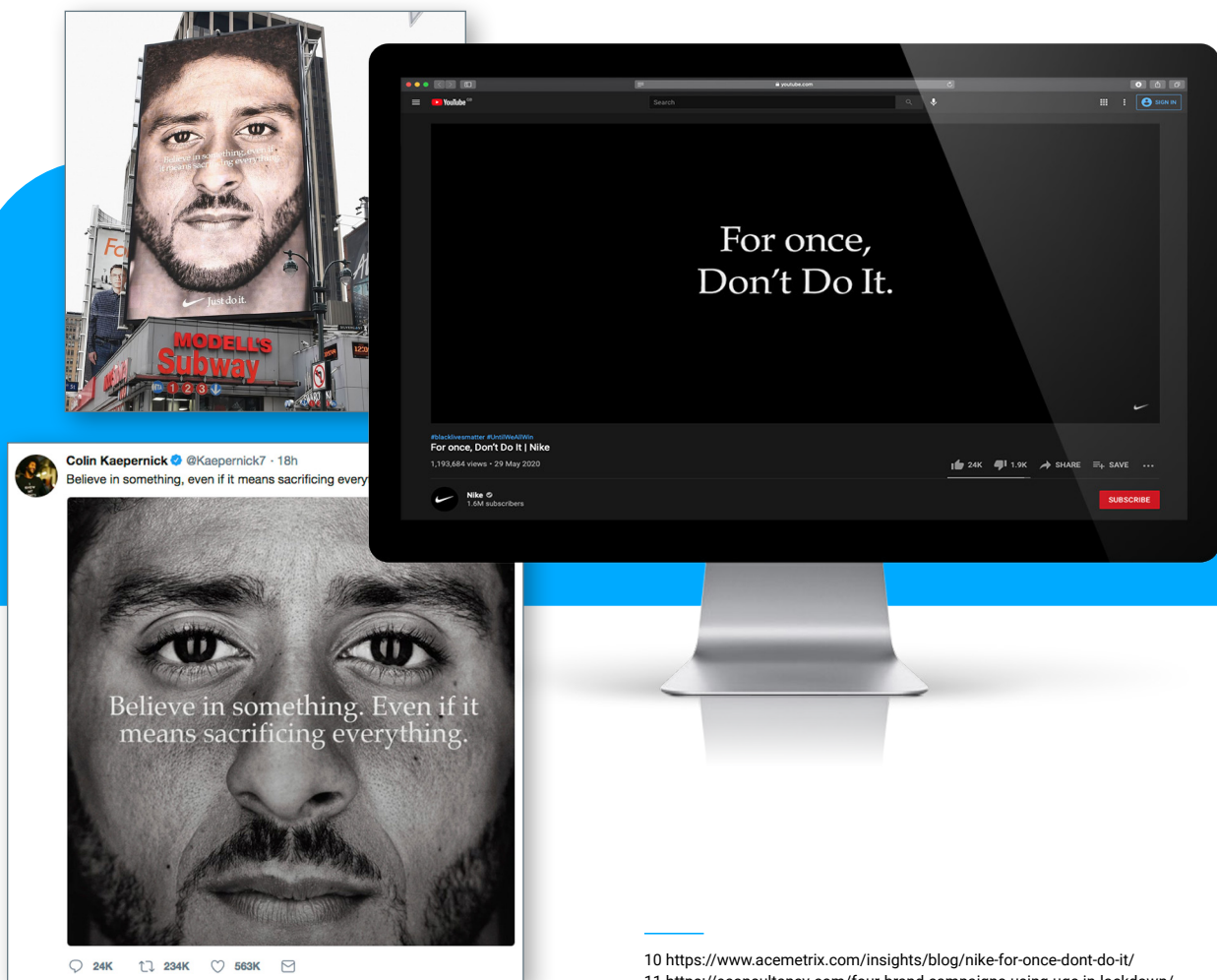
Two years following on from its controversial but very successful collaboration with former NFL player, Colin Kaepernick, Nike voiced its support of the Black Lives Matter movement. During May of last year, at the height of the BLM protests, under the campaign hashtag #UntilWeAllWin, the sports brand launched a 60-second “For Once, Don’t Do It” ad spot. It was so powerful that even competitor Adidas retweeted it.

A study by ad effectiveness insight specialist Ace Metrix noted that the Kaepernick ad generated a 31% sales spike in 2018 and, given the purchase intent surveyed, “For Once, Don’t Do It” repeated this

success¹⁰. Nike’s ability to tap into the zeitgeist without being universally accused of bandwagon-jumping like so many of the Covid-related ads mentioned earlier can only be down to the value the organisation places on creativity, and the space it is given to breathe. Indeed, a verbatim taken from the same study stated:

“This is exactly the kind of ad that is needed right now and I wish more companies would stand up and take a stance like this. Not that I’m surprised as they were also the same company that stood behind Kaepernick. This moved me to tears and I sincerely hope it airs and people are touched like I was. This is so important and now is the time. No more silence!”

Female, 21-35



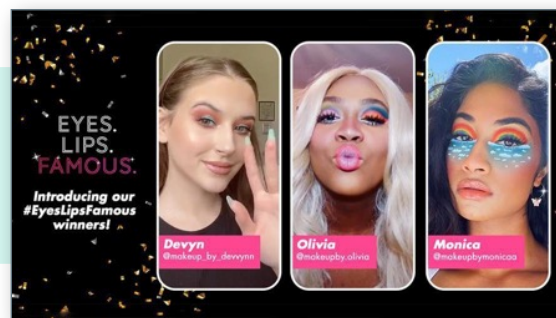
10 <https://www.acemetrix.com/insights/blog/nike-for-once-dont-do-it/>

11 <https://econsultancy.com/four-brand-campaigns-using-ugc-in-lockdown/>

Brands are maximising investments in user-generated content

Responding to events is just one example where content delivers for the brand. Harnessing digital platforms is more important than ever given the rapid expansion of online interactions across 2020. Look at the power of user-generated content, or UGC. According to a report from Yotpo, more than a quarter of respondents (27%) believe that UGC will be the most cost-effective form of marketing in 10 years' time, trailing only projected social media advertising (67%)¹¹.

UGC is not just cost-effective, it's effective. Full stop. For example, even without the track record of more established networks, and having faced a potential ban in the US, branded activity on TikTok is driving tangible sales hikes.



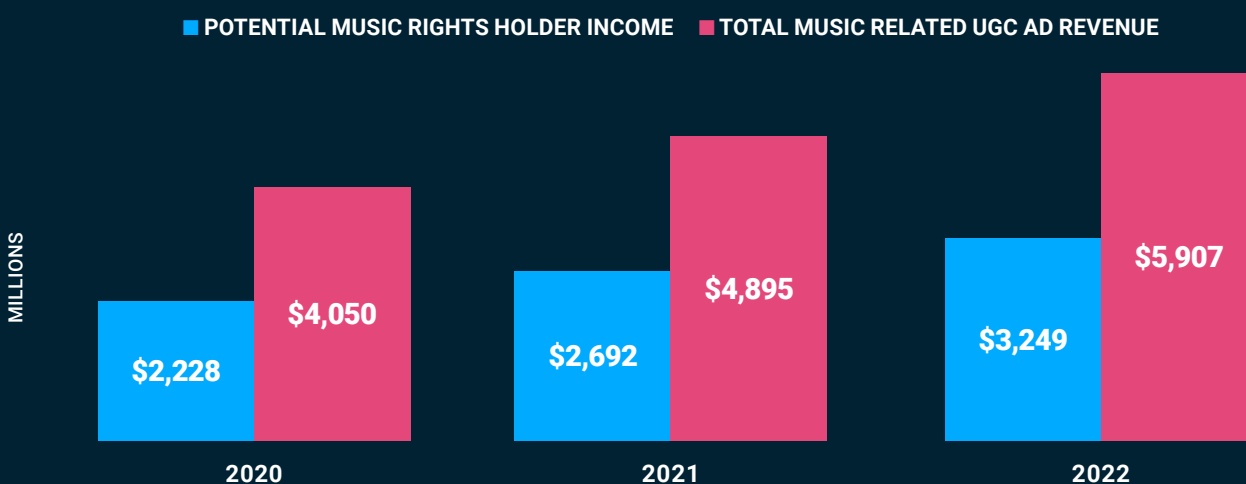
Elf Cosmetics' "Eyes, Lips, Face" challenge was the fastest TikTok campaign to hit one billion views in only six days. As of November 2020 it had reached six billion views, generating more than five million user-generated videos from the challenge. In 18 months, the company climbed four places from sixth to second highest-rated teen beauty brand¹².

Perhaps unsurprisingly, brands are maximising their UGC exposure. According to Midia Research, social and sharing platforms had a gross total of 7.7bn users – TikTok alone passed one billion users in August 2020¹³. Entertainment, fashion, exercise and gaming are all sectors that have seen massive growth. Given the growth in the music sector alone, researchers identified huge potential for advertisers in UGC content (see *Figure 1*, below). ■

11 <https://econsultancy.com/four-brand-campaigns-using-ugc-in-lockdown/>
 12 <https://www.campaignlive.com/article/%E2%80%99Ceyes-lips-face%E2%80%99D-elf-cosmetics-built-its-brand-tiktok/1699297>
 13 <https://midiaresearch.com/reports/the-rising-power-of-ugc#overlay>
 14 <https://midiaresearch.com/reports/the-rising-power-of-ugc#:~:text=Audible%20Magic%20has%20commissioned%20MIDiA,and%20content%20put%20to%20purpose>

FIGURE 1

Potential UGC music-related revenues, 2020-2022, global



SOURCE: MIDIA, THE RISING POWER OF UGC¹⁴

BARRIERS HOLDING BACK DESIGN AND CONTENT PRACTITIONERS

Brands like Nike and Elf Cosmetics have led the way in harnessing digital platforms. But at the same time, they've set expectations that consumers expect other brands to match.

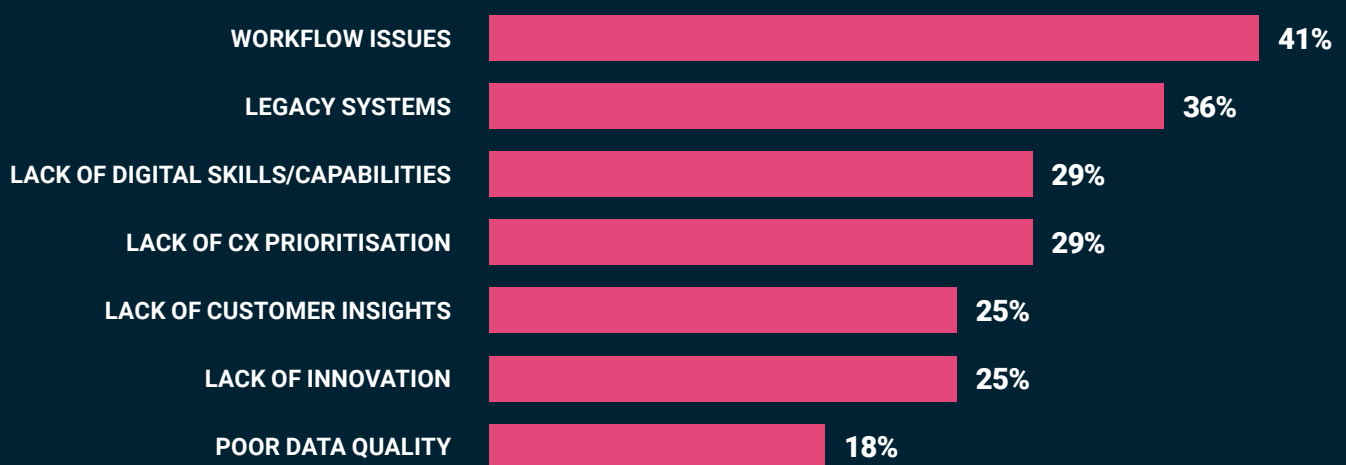
However, not all brands have the same well-oiled machinery at their disposal to meet audience needs in the moment. For example, research from Econsultancy's Digital Trends 2021 survey (illustrated in Figure 2) reveals a stark fact – 41% of design and content practitioners are so tied up in workflow issues they simply don't have the space to create.

Clearly faced with a fast and efficient technology-enabled pipeline – programmatic, email, social, web and more – primed and ready for distribution, marketers' efforts are being frustrated by the hurdles getting in the way of creative production. Marketers are currently in the grip of a content gap.

A content gap exists primarily because the rate of creative output doesn't match the speed of content distribution. Another Econsultancy study found that half of global executives say that their organisation finds it difficult to adequately address the volume of content needed across multiple personas and products¹⁵.

FIGURE 2

What is holding your marketing/customer experience organisation back, if anything?



NOTE: BASED ON A SURVEY OF 826 CLIENTSIDE DESIGN AND CONTENT PRACTITIONERS

SOURCE: ECONSULTANCY, DIGITAL TRENDS 2021 SURVEY

¹⁵ <https://www.sitecore.com/resources/index/analyst-reports/reinventing-commerce>

Slow processes hold back true creativity

Most organisations have embraced the technologies that allow for the downstream automation of creative execution. Programmatic ad buying, email distribution, scheduled social posting and more can all happen in milliseconds. But the upstream creative process needed to feed those campaigns is still linear and manual.

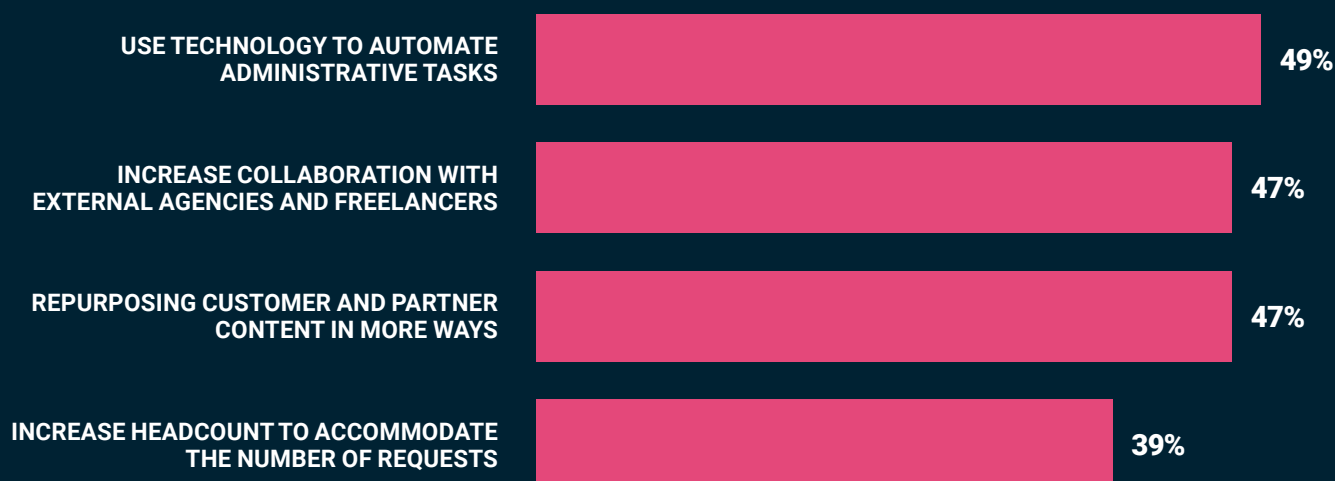
The State of Branding Report found that 47% of executives would increase their collaboration with

external agencies and freelancers to meet the demand for more content in 2020, while 39% would increase their headcount internally (*Figure 3*).

But adding human resource won't close the content gap on its own. This is because the processes involved in the creative journey still tend to be laborious, repetitive and fraught with the potential for error. While the pandemic may have thrown the challenges a newly distributed workforce faced into sharp relief, the reality is that creatives have long been frustrated by cumbersome systems and workflows.

FIGURE 3

How do you plan to address growing content demands?



NOTE: BASED ON A SURVEY OF 1,003 MARKETING AND BRANDING PROFESSIONALS IN THE US AND UK BETWEEN DECEMBER 17TH AND DECEMBER 27TH, 2019

SOURCE: BYNDER, THE STATE OF BRANDING REPORT 2020

Sequential workflows create bottlenecks

Take the approvals process for example. A guide to the programmatic ad process from Google Marketing Platform (GMP - formerly DoubleClick) (*Figure 4*) suggested the make-up of the ideal team behind a single programmatic campaign¹⁶. Between the brand, media agency, creative and production agencies, there were 14 people involved. Across those stakeholders, a single campaign generated some 60 different action points across five phases. Taken sequentially – as many creative workflows still are – this automatically creates a long, drawn-out process.

The guide also highlighted how a degree of automation helped liberate the workflow around a campaign for Vichy sunscreen products by L’Oreal. With one product for women, the other for children, ads had to show relevant imagery without time-consuming asset duplication.

Using dynamic creative templates, localisation by nearest store and a test campaign built around using a gift as an incentive to click through, the company’s agencies created dynamic content that could automatically be repurposed as needed to serve the different customer segments.

FIGURE 4

Team planning before you get started with a programmatic campaign



BRAND

- Brand manager
- Digital marketer



CREATIVE AGENCY

- Strategist
- Copywriter
- Designer
- Account manager



MEDIA AGENCY

- Planner/buyer
- Account manager
- Analyst
- Ad ops team



PRODUCTION AGENCY

- Developer
- Tech lead
- Account manager
- Digital producer

SOURCE: GOOGLE MARKETING PLATFORM, THE CREATIVE PROCESS FOR PROGRAMMATIC

¹⁶ <https://iabeurope.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/The-creative-process-for-programmatic-A-guide-for-marketers.pdf>

TESCO CASE STUDY

Mapping out new routes to improved collaboration has been one of the few upsides of the pandemic, in so far as it forced companies to think – creatively – about creativity and their marketing strategies as a whole.

UK supermarket Tesco is a good example of a company that benefited from a more collaborative working culture during the pandemic¹⁷. According to its Chief Customer Officer Alessandra Bellini: “We changed the way we work together, and we changed the way we work with our agencies and partners and that’s a

huge benefit – the only benefit of the crisis. We really shortened the timeline and the chain of conversation and discussion from insight to brief to execution.”

This cultural change helped the grocer quickly assess which existing campaigns worked best against the emerging trends, such as its Food Loves Stories campaign (featuring real members of the public dedicating the food they love to the people they love) taking on greater resonance with the upsurge in home cooking and baking.



Disconnected systems derail brand consistency

The consistency of brand assets is critical for customer recognition, particularly in the online environment where attention spans are short and content often cluttered. Something as simple as brand colour has a dramatic impact on customer recognition, with a signature colour increasing brand recognition by up to 80%¹⁸.

It follows that companies want to protect the integrity of these important brand-building blocks but with multiple stakeholders interacting with assets at multiple points in the creative process, this isn’t always easy.

Econsultancy’s Digital Trends 2021 survey found that 36% of design and content practitioners used multiple technologies and vendors for marketing data without a unifying platform, one reason why workflows and legacy technologies are a challenge and contribute to issues with brand consistency.

¹⁷ <https://econsultancy.com/tesco-on-experience-and-purpose-during-a-pandemic/>
¹⁸ <https://www.rebootonline.com/blog/what-importance-colour-brand-recognition/>

Most organisations with any amount of history have grown organically. Their departments and roles are not always neatly defined, and systems have been added over time. Processes naturally evolve to accommodate incompatibilities. Before you know it, the company is looking at multiple different points of access for content assets, different ways of sharing those assets and different approaches to managing and approving them. All of which combine to create an ideal breeding ground for brand inconsistency.

Fruitless hunt for information

Inconsistencies don't just happen because multiple people work on multiple workflows without collaborating effectively. Organisations with numerous content silos make it time-consuming for creatives to find the precise asset they need.

Could the trend towards more remote working exacerbate difficulties in information sharing? It is possible that workers in the same physical location may find it less challenging. But, in reality,

if technologies and workflows are disorganised, researchers have found knowledge-sharing to be just as compromised in-person as when the workforce is remote, at least part-time¹⁹.

Information silos, disconnected workflows, multiple systems and poor asset taxonomy all turn locating assets into a difficult and time-consuming process, which has several unfortunate implications for the creative process.

Firstly, it makes it unnecessarily long. Several studies have pointed to the amount of time knowledge workers waste hunting down content, ranging from two hours a day to one day a week²⁰. Rather than hunt for an asset that they know is somewhere but not quite sure where in the organisation, creatives may decide it's simpler to reproduce it – or, they may be unaware it exists at all – adding to the already high cost of content (see the case study below).

THE FINANCIAL COST OF DISCONNECTED WORKFLOWS CASE STUDY

An FMCG executive who might be tempted to use an older packaging creative may be unaware, for example, that while the creative hasn't changed, the product formulation might have. Mislabelling might be a significant health risk to consumers and a

significant financial concern for the company. Deloitte estimates manufacturers can lose \$10m in wasted product, replacements and penalties and a publicly traded company could lose nearly a quarter of its value in the two weeks after a product recall²¹.



¹⁹ https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/8051-working-from-home-report_tcm18-84208.pdf

²⁰ <https://blog.xenit.eu/blog/do-workers-still-waste-time-searching-for-information>

²¹ <https://www.domino-printing.com/en-gb/blog/2020/how-to-eliminate-labelling-mistakes-from-your-production-line>

Alternatively, under time pressure they may cut corners, and repurpose an existing asset only to later find that it is an out-of-date version. At best, this contributes to brand inconsistencies, at worst it can have drastic, unpleasant consequences for the company.

Counting the creative cost

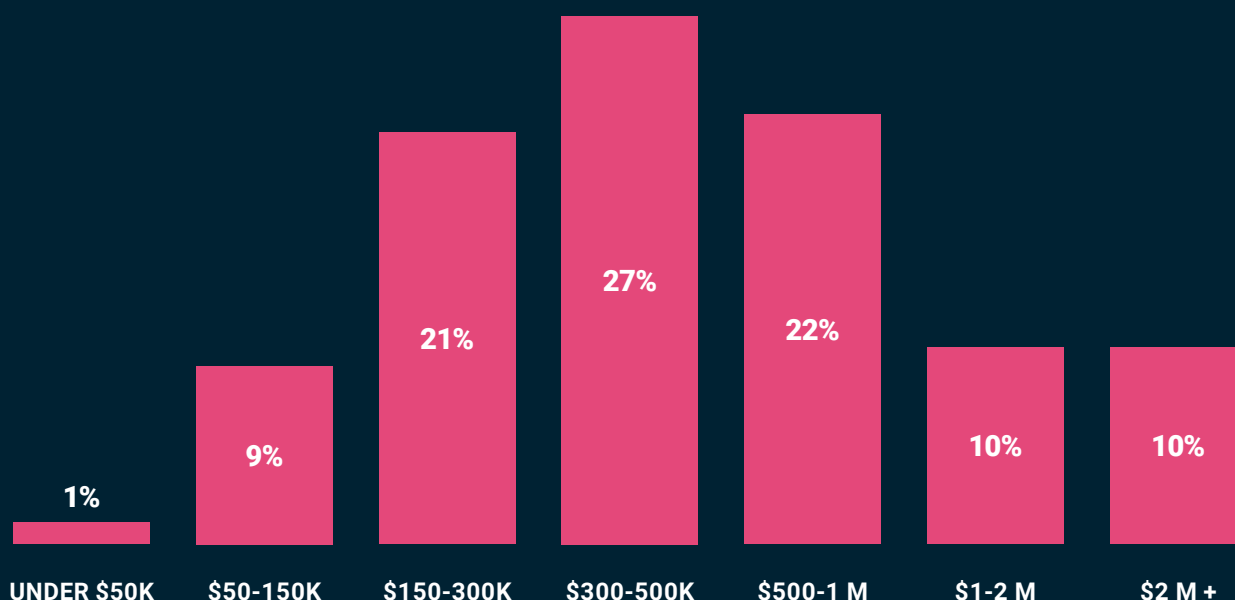
The creative process can be an expensive one from every angle. There is the macro cost of failing to stand out from the competition in the face of increasingly self-directed consumers. But there is also the question of operational cost, and indeed opportunity cost. By letting the cost of asset management run out of control, marketers have less available funds for investment in technology or initiatives that might contribute to brand differentiation or customer experience.

In a survey by Stackla²², 20% of B2C marketers spend over \$1m annually on content creation, with 42% spending over \$500,000 (*Figure 5*). This is unsurprising as the report also found that more than half of respondents sourced visuals via marketing agencies (57%) or in-house photography (53%).

Being expensive means there is added pressure to measure ROI as accurately as possible, while also avoiding taking unnecessary risks. A recent study from Kantar found that while marketers placed the importance of their media mix over that of creative quality, a related study into the driver of profit found that creative quality was second only to brand size when it came to marketing effectiveness²³. ■

FIGURE 5

How much marketers spend on average for content per year



NOTE: BASED ON A SURVEY OF 1,590 CONSUMERS AND 150 B2C MARKETERS FROM THE US, UK AND AUSTRALIA

SOURCE: STACKLA, BRIDGING THE GAP: CONSUMER & MARKETER PERSPECTIVES ON CONTENT IN THE DIGITAL AGE 2019

²² <https://stackla.com/resources/reports/bridging-the-gap-consumer-marketing-perspectives-on-content-in-the-digital-age/>

²³ <https://www.marketingweek.com/marketers-underestimate-creativity-marketing-effectiveness/>

USE CREATIVE AUTOMATION TO FIND TIME TO CREATE

The perception of the creative process needs to change. Viewed as entirely human-centric, laborious and the domain of people possessed of rare talent, it follows that marketers can be resistant to the idea of machine-assisted creativity.

In *The State of Branding 2020* (Figure 6), while 24% of marketers believed that automation and AI had the potential to positively impact branding, 21% stated it couldn't be automated, 22% believed it would contribute even more to that 'brand sameness', 20% said it would actively eliminate jobs and 13% believed it would diminish creativity. Yet nearly half of respondents had previously said in figure 3, above, that they would be happy to automate administrative tasks to address the growing content demands of their business.

Critically, marketers need to understand just what it means to 'automate creativity'. This means recognising what parts of the content generation process are genuinely creative, and what are simply asset management.

Creative automation is the combination of scalable design with flexible content definition and automated assembly. As noted above, moving over to a strategy of creative automation involves more than simply flipping a switch for brands. Many companies are dealing with legacy systems and workflows. But, by adapting the technologies and processes behind creative automation, they can quickly and effectively close that content gap.

FIGURE 6

Will AI & automation negatively impact your branding efforts?



NOTE: BASED ON A SURVEY OF 1,003 MARKETING AND BRANDING PROFESSIONALS CONDUCTED IN THE US AND UK BETWEEN DECEMBER 17TH AND DECEMBER 27TH, 2019
SOURCE: BYNDER, THE STATE OF BRANDING REPORT 2020

In terms of creative automation's ability to transform the creative process, there are three key areas:

1. *Shrink timelines & foster brand consistency*
2. *Personalisation/Localisation at speed and scale*
3. *Enhanced efficiency and cost-effectiveness*

Shrink timelines for effectiveness, agility and brand consistency

Time is the enemy when it comes to closing the content gap. While creative automation technologies may be able to create multiple different iterations of a single campaign in a matter of milliseconds, human timescales to build campaigns are still significantly longer. However, by using creative automation, marketers can significantly shorten the time it takes to bring campaigns to fruition. This is especially important when it comes to responding to market conditions, or even significant world events.

Last year, many brands that had been traditionally reliant on retail partners were forced to pivot quickly to direct-to-consumer, necessitating a raft of new creative linked to ecommerce. Heinz launched its Heinz to Home (D2C) proposition in April 2020, creating a fully-functioning – though initially limited range – ecommerce site in less than three weeks. In Q1, the campaign saw a 200% increase in sales and beat its impressions target by a factor of three within 48 hours²⁴.

According to a study by the Association of National Advertisers (ANA), 92% of businesses adjusted their marketing creative after the pandemic, with the contribution of in-house agencies and internal teams considered “very important”. Reusing assets was seen as the most effective way to get creative out of the door²⁵.

The ability to shrink timelines so dramatically is only possible with the help of creative automation, from finding assets easily in a centralised asset database, to moving them through the approvals process smoothly using non-destructive workflow and allocated permissions²⁶. A survey among 500 Bynder customers suggests 94% of clients are able to create assets faster, teams can find assets 49% faster and 77% of clients claim they have better collaboration with 71% faster approvals²⁷.

Personalised, localised and modular (at speed and scale)

The reuse of assets across platforms, formats and even campaigns is critical to an agile, modern organisation. Alongside the surge in ecommerce overall there has been a distinct uptick in personalised campaigns across all platforms. The need to personalise at scale is now more sophisticated and far beyond the ‘creepy’ surveillance marketing that Gartner predicted might destroy personalisation altogether²⁸.

“A survey among 500 Bynder customers suggests 94% of clients are able to create assets faster, teams can find assets 49% faster and 77% of clients claim they have better collaboration with 71% faster approvals.”

²⁴ <https://www.marketingweek.com/the-best-marketing-campaigns-of-2020-part-1/>

²⁵ <https://www.warc.com/newsandopinion/opinion/how-marketing-creative-is-evolving-in-the-covid-19-era/3538>

²⁶ Non-destructive makes it easy to return to the original asset without reverting to a backup; permissions prevent inexperienced or unauthorised users making unwanted changes to assets

²⁷ <https://www.bynder.com/en/dam-roi-report/>

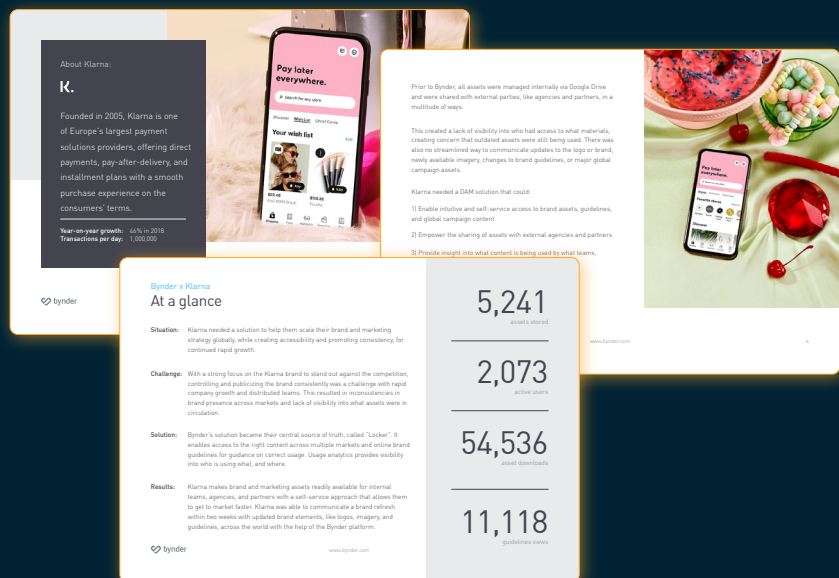
²⁸ <https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2019-12-02-gartner-predicts-80-of-marketers-will-abandon-person>

KLARNA²⁹ CASE STUDY

With 2,500 employees spread across 11 offices in Europe and North America, dozens of agency partners, and 130,000 merchants, Klarna needs to continue to move and grow quickly without sacrificing the brand value and identity it has built.

Klarna has a distinctive organizational structure, with 280 individual teams spread across 18 markets, each focused on solving a specific problem. Teams need to work autonomously and quickly, like mini start-ups. The 21-person Brand Studio team is tasked with producing core brand content like logos, imagery, marketing toolboxes for major campaigns, establishing brand guidelines, and promoting brand consistency across all touchpoints. They directly support the core marketing team, seven regional marketing teams, as well as the rest of the company's need for brand assets.

Prior to the pandemic, each team was sharing different assets with agencies and partners via Google Drive folders, with no overview of everything that has been shared, with whom, or in what market.



The team was unsure whether the content they were producing was making it to the right marketing channels and partners across all markets. These inefficiencies took time away from strategic work focused on growing the brand and business and created brand consistency issues across markets.

Now, the company uses a central asset source called 'Locker'. It gives access to the right content across multiple markets and online brand guidelines for guidance on correct usage. Usage analytics provides visibility into who is using what, and where.

Klarna makes brand and marketing assets readily available for internal teams, agencies, and partners with a self-service approach that allows them to get to market faster. Klarna was able to communicate a brand refresh within two weeks with updated brand elements, like logos, imagery, and guidelines, across the world.

"For me, leading a creative team, insights on what assets are being used and for what purpose, or seeing what's trending, gives us a good indication of what we should produce more of or explain further." Elin Svahn, Global Marketing Manager & Head of Brand Studio at Klarna.

McKinsey estimates that there is the potential for \$1.7-\$3 trillion in new value for organisations that can use personalisation well³⁰. The consultancy identifies the four cornerstones of successful personalisation: Data, Decisioning, Design and Distribution.

Marketers readily accept that Data, Distribution and even to a certain extent Decisioning can be automated but, as was seen earlier, struggle with the idea of automating the Design element. However, McKinsey also agrees that by taking a more customisable,

modular approach to building content, creatives can personalise, act quickly and yet still have the space and time to develop engaging and original campaigns.

Efficiency and cost-effectiveness

Of course, the clear aim for successful creativity is, as Kantar reported above, being a driver of profit. And yet, in driving profit, creativity has to not only contribute to sales but also be a cost-effective part of the business.

²⁹ <https://www.bynder.com/en/customers/klarna/>

³⁰ <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/marketing-and-sales/our-insights/a-technology-blueprint-for-personalization-at-scale>

SCHRODERS CASE STUDY

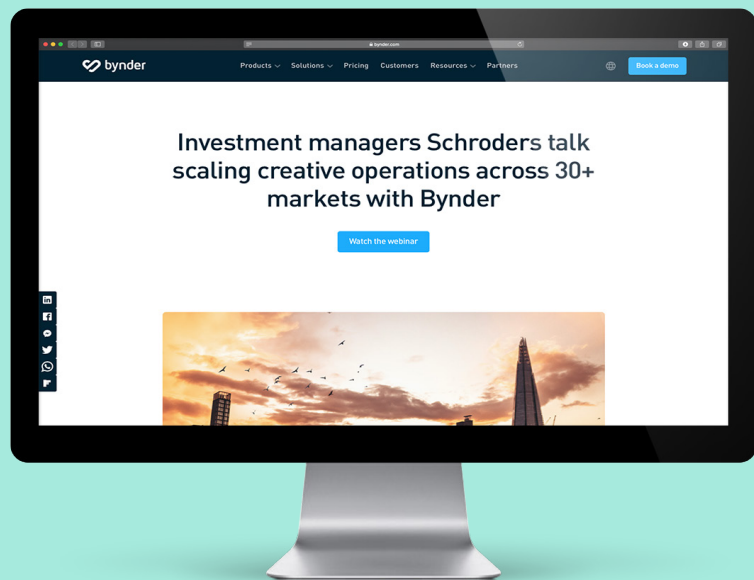
Schroders, a global investment manager responsible for over £525bn in assets across 37 locations. With more than 150 marketing colleagues and a further 5,000 employees, the company wanted to extend its creative production beyond the creative team of only eight in-house professionals³¹.

To help improve the brand consistency of its social media posts while also keeping up with demand, the company used Digital Brand Templates which locked in specific branding elements while simplifying the sign-off process. The creative team could then focus on the design for the templates while employees could build localised content that they could be certain was always

on-brand. Localisation is critical because, while 44% of exporters say the effort of localising website content hinders their growth, 72% of consumers spend the most time on websites in their own language and 82% of shoppers are more likely to buy if promotional material

is in their own language³².

Schroders closed the content gap by sharing the burden across the organisation, earning it a Best Use of Social Media award at Investment Week's Investment and Marketing Innovation Awards 2020.



All too often, companies find their creative processes wasteful and costly. Whether it is the time taken to locate assets, their accidental duplication or the use of images whose rights have expired, companies that are able to centralise their assets so there is a single source of truth are much more likely to generate higher ROI on creativity overall.

Building an efficient asset resource also opens the organisation up to what WPP terms 'the creativity of re'³³. This, the agency says, isn't "the creativity of the artist's blank canvas...it's about the appreciation of what a business has today, and how it can be redeployed for tomorrow." It goes on to talk about the enormous amount of value brands can extract by "thinking about adjacency rather than blue sky leaps of imagination".

Global healthcare company, Siemens Healthineers, had spread its assets across its 70 locations which meant it didn't have a single source of truth for its marketing content. In some circumstances, one

brochure would be stored in several locations, losing the company time and resources. By centralising its assets, the company estimates it has saved 15,000 hours searching for files, improved productivity by 200% and saved the company \$4 million.

Users of creative automation have seen up to an 80% increase in the reuse of existing assets, cutting the cost from generating afresh every time. The risk from using images with out-of-date rights is also lessened, with 51% of clients reporting reduced risk and 76% stating that their digital asset permissions and copyrights are more secure in a creative automation system³⁴. ■

31 <https://www.bynder.com/en/blog/schroders-finance-industry-digital-asset-management/>

32 https://marketfinder.thinkwithgoogle.com/intl/en_us/topic/localisation/

33 <https://www.wpp.com/wpp-iq/business-creativity-in-a-time-of-crisis>

34 <https://www.bynder.com/en/dam-roi-report/>

DO YOU NOW HAVE TIME TO CREATE?

Implementing technology to automate at least part of the creative process is no silver bullet. Creative automation is a tool that hands back some of the freedom creatives increasingly lack to allow them to make the most of their experience and talent.

The technologies themselves are increasingly cloud-based, making integration to existing tech stacks easier than ever before. But with that implementation comes a necessary culture change. As in the Schrodgers example, organisations have to be willing to hand at least some control over creativity to a wider range of employees. The burden must be shared.

Marketers often complain that it is difficult to attribute ROI to the creative process, yet organisations such as Kantar have created a strong link between companies' creative efforts and profit. While creative automation is not solely responsible for delivering quality creative executions, it too delivers proven cost savings and benefits to the organisation.

The volume of content that brands need to deliver is only going to grow, the number of platforms will continue to expand and customer expectations will rise even higher. Everything that can be done today to bolster the brand's creative power tomorrow is an investment in its future.

Actions for Time to Create

Linear to modular

Viewing a piece of creative as a finished item limits its usefulness. Instead, approach creativity as the product of a handful of modules, each able to be reused, repurposed and modified to suit new circumstances, allowing the organisation to create fresh content quickly, with no adverse impact on brand consistency.

Formalise collaboration

Effective collaboration needs to be designed to work properly. Too many organisations believe that simply connecting people and departments counts as collaboration when it can just lead to confusion. Defining roles, allocating tasks, building structure to collaborative activities is a much more fertile ground for collaboration.

Empower staff

Content demands will only get greater. Allowing more staff the freedom to work with creative assets reduces the burden on core teams, improves responsiveness while protecting asset integrity.

Rationalise technology

Organisations working across a stack featuring multiple vendors tend to be less effective than those with a slimmed-down system. Audit technologies, choose tech with the most democratic user experience/interface so the widest range of employees can use it and continue to review its effectiveness over time.

Go on an asset diet

Centralising assets creates a single source of truth that not only makes it easy to find the right asset for the right task, it removes complexity and cost from the organisation and feeds a culture of rapid but effective content creation. ■



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