

IN-HOUSE CREATIVE MANAGEMENT REPORT

2020

“

If marketing were a science we would have figured out the perfect formula by now. The reality is that people make decisions based on emotion. Tapping into that emotion and using it to drive business outcomes is the creative superpower.

- Adam Morgan, Executive Creative Director, Adobe

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Ben Hartmere

CEO, inMotionNow

When we first partnered with InSource to produce the In-House Creative Management Report three years ago, we wanted to help position creative teams to better serve as strategic partners throughout their companies. Demand for creative work was accelerating as businesses developed a deeper understanding of the profound impact that creative has on the bottom line. However, at that time, seeing creatives functioning as strategic partners was rare.

As we produce this year's Creative Management Report, I could not be more excited about the trajectory of in-house creative teams. In-house teams dominate creative work, handling over 75% of their organization's creative needs. Almost 90% of creatives feel that their work is a valuable contribution to business objectives, and 67% are expanding their role within the organization by taking on more strategic and leadership positions. To keep up with demand and accommodate these new responsibilities, in-house teams can turn to freelancers and agencies to form collaborative partnerships and expand bandwidth and skillsets. In-house teams are also evaluating how to strengthen key metrics to track both their own operational metrics and the performance of their work in contributing to business goals.

The theme for in-house creative teams in 2020 is "partnership". Partnership with the business, partnership with agency talent, and partnership with clients. In-house teams planning for this year and beyond should be consistently asking themselves "how can we be better partners?" We hope that this report provides readers with strong, data-driven insights on areas of potential focus.



Andy Brenits

President, Board of Directors,
InSource

For more than 20 years, in-house creative teams have been working hard to get a seat at the table. For the last several years, we have seen that become a reality for more and more teams who are taking on a unique role as strategic partners to the business.

In the three years since we began publishing the In-House Creative Management Report, we have seen business leaders increasingly understand the value of the creative team not just for their design work, but also for their talent as creative problem solvers.

While this acknowledgment for - and of - creative teams is excellent, it ironically causes more of the challenges that creative teams have always dealt with: Bandwidth to handle the volume of requests for our services. The solutions to this challenge are partnering with outside resources and increased operational efficiency.

We're finally breaking with the old ways of thinking the work needs to be done by either the in-house team or an outside agency. Instead, we're seeing the rise of genuinely great partnerships and collaboration between the two.

This increased ownership of the entire creative process leads to the need for being metrics-driven. Understanding, tracking, and analyzing the key performance indicators that measure the efficiency of their operations is essential both to make in-house teams more effective and also to be accountable partners to their business.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Organizations are becoming increasingly aware of the power creative has to drive business results, leading them to bring more creative work in-house and give the creative team a more prominent role in the organization.

72% of in-house creative teams handle →

75%+ of the organization's creative work.

89% of survey respondents say creative work is important to meeting business objectives.

The increased importance of the in-house creative team has broadened the scope of the creative role.



2/3 of creative teams report taking on new responsibilities outside of traditional creative roles.

These roles indicate the increasingly strategic partnership that creative teams have with the business including driving company culture, contributing to marketing strategy, and owning customer experience.

Top Challenges for Creative Teams in 2020

72% of creatives struggle to keep up with the **high volume of content**.

73% of in-house creative teams report being **challenged by the speed** at which they are expected to complete work.

63% of creative teams are **not able to focus on being a strategic contributor** to the business because they are busy keeping up with demands for volume and speed of work.

47% of creatives **spend a full day each week** on admin tasks.



55% of creative teams rarely or never get quantitative feedback on the performance of their work, and only half feel that their team does a good job tracking internal operational metrics.



The final piece for in-house creative teams to cement their role as strategic partners to the business is data and key metrics that support their process and demonstrate their value to the business.

In 2020, creative teams will continue to build on the successful partnerships they have established with the business.

MEET THE CONTRIBUTORS

Each year we are excited to include industry thought leaders in the report to shed light on the survey findings, as well as provide insights and best practices to creative teams.



Adam Morgan

Executive Creative Director, Adobe



Adam Morgan has 23 years of experience in creativity, strategy, and storytelling. He's a keynote speaker and author of "Sorry Spock, Emotions Drive Business." Before Adobe, he was a creative director at several international ad agencies, delivering award-winning campaigns. He was named a 40 under 40 business leader by Utah Business Magazine. To read one of his articles on data-driven creativity, visit him at adamWmorgan.com.



Ilise Benun

Speaker, Author and Business
Coach for Creative Professionals,
Marketing Mentor



Ilise Benun is the founder of Marketing-Mentor.com, where she offers business coaching to creative professionals. She is also a national speaker and author of 7 books and 3 online courses. She hosts the Marketing Mentor Podcast and is a "Business Coach" for the Savannah College of Art & Design. Follow her at [@ilisebenun](https://twitter.com/ilisebenun).



Justin Ahrens
Chief Evangelist, Rule29



Justin is the founder and principal of Rule29 where he lives by the philosophy of Making Creative Matter. Justin is an international speaker at design and business conferences about creative inspiration, leadership, culture, story, and design strategy. He has authored several books and online courses, including “Grow Your Business” and “Life Kerning.”



Kim Conder
Brand Marketing Consultant

Kim Conder is a strategic in-house design agency leader and branding expert with more than 10 years’ experience leading teams. She specializes in optimizing the creative process and maximizing the business potential behind memorable brand experiences.



Sam Harrison
Speaker and author on creativity-related topics and on presentation skills

Sam Harrison is an in-demand speaker and popular author on creativity-related topics and on presentation skills. Before becoming a speaker and coach, Sam worked on all sides of creative communications, marketing and branding, including corporate and agency, freelance and academic. He’s the author of “IdeaSpotting,” “IdeaSelling” and his recently released book, “Creative Zing! Spark Your Creativity & Powerfully Present Your Ideas.” Reach him at www.zingzone.com.



Molly Clark
Director of Marketing,
inMotionNow

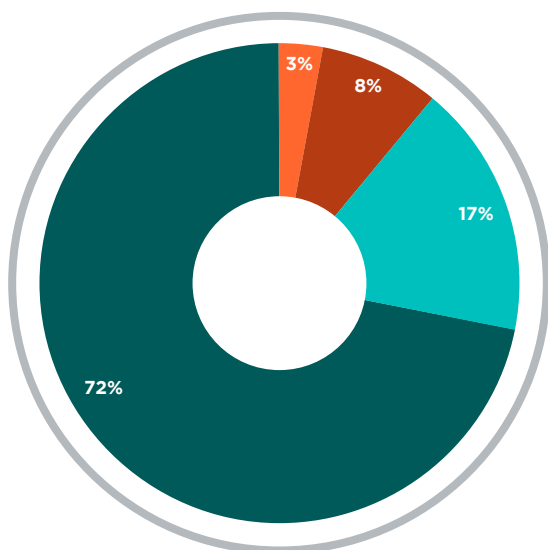


Molly Clark is the Director of Marketing at inMotionNow. With over 10 years of marketing experience, Molly has focused her career on marketing operations, branding, and cross-departmental collaboration. Though she is on the marketing side of the house, Molly still pretends she is a creative, much to the dismay of the designer of this report.

BUSINESSES CONTINUE TO INVEST IN IN-HOUSE CREATIVE TEAMS

The creative industry has seen a growing trend of organizations bringing creative work in-house. Now we are seeing these teams mature and grow in importance to the business. This is due to the unique value that in-house creative teams offer the organization.

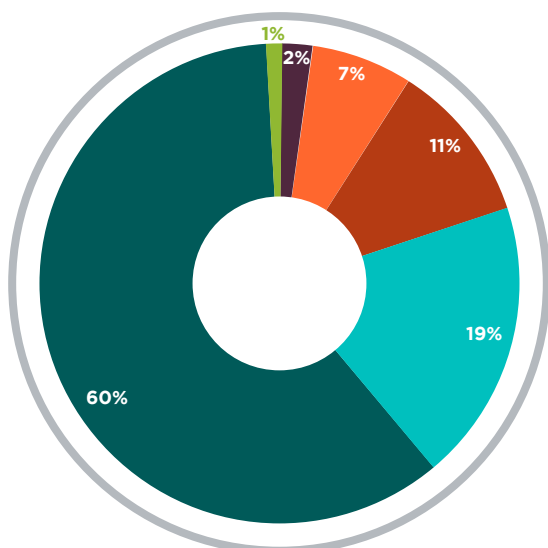
What percentage of your organization's creative work is produced in-house?



72% of creatives report that their **in-house team handles over 75% of their creative needs.**

- 1% to 25%
- 26% to 50%
- 51% to 75%
- More than 75%

How long has your organization had an in-house creative team?



60% of survey respondents report that they've **had an in-house team for 10 years or longer.**

- Less than 1 year
- 1-3 years
- 3-5 years
- 5-10 years
- More than 10 years
- n/a



“Being a part of the business itself is one of the best competitive advantages anyone can have in the creative services field. You have the benefit of talking to your stakeholders everyday, seeing their wins and losses, how they are evaluated, and what the business’s biggest challenges are. **As an in-house agency you have ability and the responsibility to go directly to your stakeholders and say ‘how can I help?’**”

– Kim Conder



“As an in-house team you are in that ecosystem, and it is your responsibility to help communicate, connect, and grow the brand. **The more you can understand what the pressure points and goals of the business are, the more value you can add.**”

– Justin Ahrens



“Design is more valued in general. **People are starting to be able to distinguish between higher and lower quality design.** Because there are so many messages and products to choose from, and so much visual marketing, it’s incumbent upon the design to make the sale.”

– Ilise Benun



“**Designers and other creative thinkers find new, broader ways of looking at problems and exploring solutions.** That’s essential to any business.”

– Sam Harrison



“Over the past three years of this report we have seen a steady trend of organizations bringing more and more creative work in-house. **This is really a testament to not just the importance of creative work, but also the unique ability in-house creative teams have to provide strategic value to the business.**”

– Molly Clark

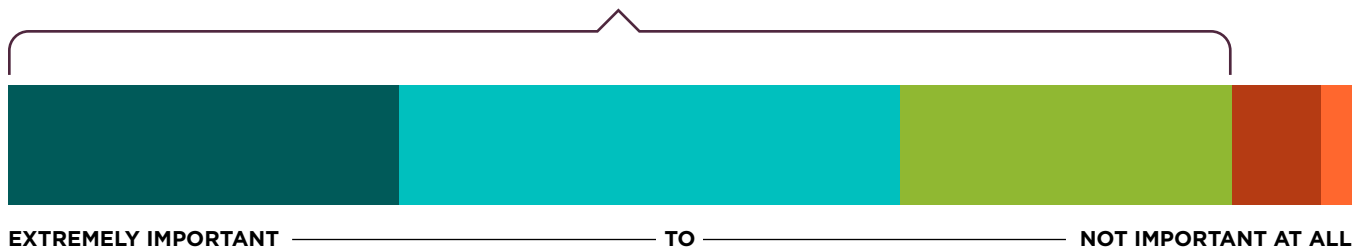


CREATIVE WORK DRIVES BUSINESS OBJECTIVES

One of the most exciting results from the survey was the positive trend in the recognition of the value of creativity. To capitalize on that trend, creatives should continue striving to better understand the business and demonstrate their value to business leaders.

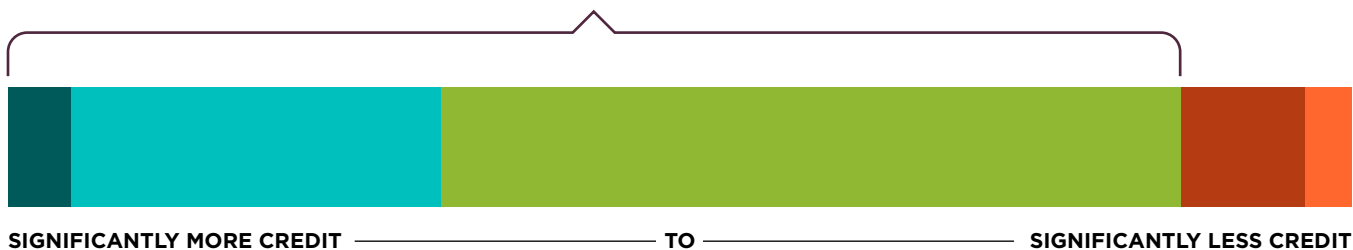
How important is creative work considered to the success of your organization's key objectives?

89% of survey respondents say that creative work is important for driving business objectives.



How much credit do you feel creative is given for your organization's results compared to a year ago?

87% of creatives report that they are getting the same or more credit for organizational results compared to a year ago.





“Creative teams need to learn to ‘speak khaki’ so they can have meaningful conversations with business leaders. **You have to earn your seat at the strategic table by speaking the right language**, demonstrating an understanding of how you add value, and showing that you have a vision.

If marketing were a science we would have figured out the perfect formula by now. **The reality is that people make decisions based on emotion.** Tapping into that emotion and using it to drive business outcomes is the creative superpower.”

– Adam Morgan



“I refuse to believe anymore that creative teams and design teams can’t get a seat at the table. **What’s missing for most teams is an understanding that what they provide is valuable and unique.**”

– Justin Ahrens



“The best creative teams are students of life, and this quality should stretch into the business. We can’t advance our ideas if we can’t speak the language of the business, and we can’t speak the language of the business unless we truly know the business.

One of the most audacious mantras creative people can have is ‘I don’t know’. **When creative team members focus on inquiry and ask more and more questions, they’ll instinctively become curious students of the business.**

My colleague, Brian Collins, says he pushes his creative teams to move from problem solving to problem seeking. **When we ask enough questions of the right people, we find answers that allow us to reframe problems.** And when that happens, the creative team’s value increases exponentially.”

– Sam Harrison



“**I propose that if creatives thought about business more creatively they could bring more value.** But it starts with understanding the business.”

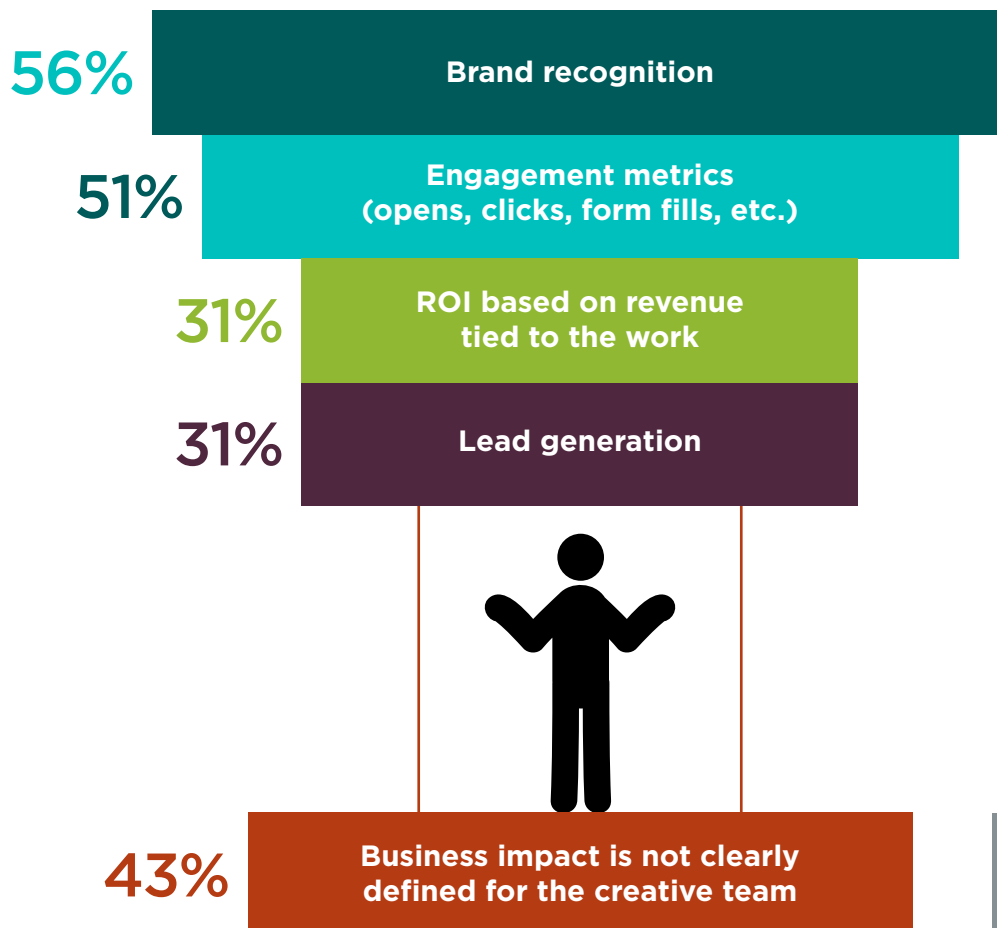
– Ilise Benun



CREATIVE IMPACTS THE ENTIRE CUSTOMER JOURNEY

Even though it's clear that creative work does add value to the business, most teams struggle to define that value in hard numbers. As our contributors point out, conveying the value of creativity to the business is less about finding a single marquee metric and more about creating visibility into the myriad ways that creative work impacts the entire customer journey.

Many organizations measure the value of creative in terms of business impact. In what ways does your organization define “business impact” for creative work?



Learn how to measure performance for digital assets with [the Creative's Handbook](#).



“Ultimately, the best measure of business impact is revenue. That’s why you’re in business, right? However, **it can be really difficult or even impossible to directly attribute X dollars to a specific design choice**, so you have to think about the entire funnel and show the impact that creative work and design has at each stage.”

– Kim Conder



“Creativity is not always tangible. The deliverables are tangible, you can see the website or hold a brochure, but you can’t see everything that went into making it. If you can’t see it, it is really difficult to value it. That’s called Absence Blindness. That means **it’s the job of the creative team to take the time and find the moments to show your work** – go into detail about how you got where you got with a particular project.”

– Ilise Benun



“Creative contributions often seem intangible to organizational leaders, so KPI measurements provide analytics directly tied to business outcomes—brand awareness metrics, lead metrics, customer retention metrics. At the same time, it’s critical to balance analytics with a powerful, consistent narrative. After all, **storytelling is as important for bolstering the creative team’s value as it is for boosting the organization’s brand**. Have a daily mission to become the creative authority and advisor for the organization. Show and tell. Educate and seek buy-in. Involve leaders in the journey of creativity. Develop cross-departmental participation and nurture organizational support. A scoreboard’s numbers are determined by the performance of players on the field but also by support of fans in the stands. Cheer for the team.”

– Sam Harrison



“We often want to know what single metric will show the impact of creative, but actually **the number one thing that we need to do is continue to educate the value of the entire funnel**. You have to understand and set reasonable goals for each level and make sure your stakeholders understand that the entire funnel, the entire customer experience, is important for driving the bottom line.”

– Justin Ahrens



CREATIVE TEAMS ARE TAKING ON NEW RESPONSIBILITIES

With great power comes great responsibility - As businesses gain a greater appreciation for the creative team, they are also starting to ask those creatives to take on new roles within the company. While this is a positive step towards creative teams becoming strategic partners, it should not come at the cost of creativity.

Do you feel that creatives in your organization are being asked to take on new responsibilities beyond traditional creative tasks (e.g. project management, client relations, etc.). If so, what are the responsibilities you see emerging?

YES

NO



2/3 of creative teams report that they are being asked to **take on new responsibilities.**

Some of these include: _____

Driving company culture

Marketing strategy

Strategic partnerships with clients

Project management

Analytics

Ideation

Vendor management

Employee engagement metrics

Customer experience

Emerging content types like gifs, memes, animation, and short form video

Strategic initiatives

Account management

Mediation for other teams

Process mapping

UI/UX research



“**Taking on new responsibilities is part and parcel of becoming a more strategic partner to the business.** This is a sign of maturity for in-house teams.”

– Kim Conder



“I see this as a huge indicator of awesome. **Being asked to take on new responsibilities means that in-house teams are getting more accountability and ownership.** This is happening because the business sees the value of the work the team is doing and is giving them more.”

– Adam Morgan



“You could say all this is new, but I would say is it, or is it a step we should always have been taking? **To be effective creative teams we have to be storytellers, we have to understand strategy.** We have to be able and willing to communicate both in writing and verbally. We need to spend time preparing presentations of our work to internal teams to build collaboration and enhance their understanding of the value we bring as creatives.”

– Justin Ahrens



“Yes, creative teams are assuming new responsibilities. And it’s a double-edged sword, isn’t it? **Added responsibilities signal that creative teams are being perceived as more than just feckless order-takers and are capable of broader responsibilities.** And this helps position a creative team as an integral part of the business. With these added responsibilities, creative managers must act as shepherds, protecting their teams from bureaucratic pressures and clearing ways around roadblocks. In the end, **it’s not about managing creativity—it’s about managing *for* creativity.**”

– Sam Harrison



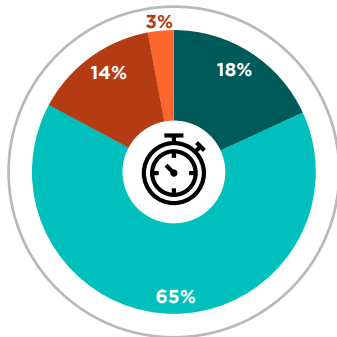
“It’s very interesting, but not surprising, to see some of the things on this list, like ‘driving company culture’, ‘customer experience’, and ‘strategic initiatives’. This really highlights the way creative teams are able to use their superpower to do more than ‘make things pretty’. **Creative teams have the unique skill set to do things like change culture, drive engagement, think strategically, and help everyone work better together.**”

– Molly Clark



OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES SLOW CREATIVE DOWN

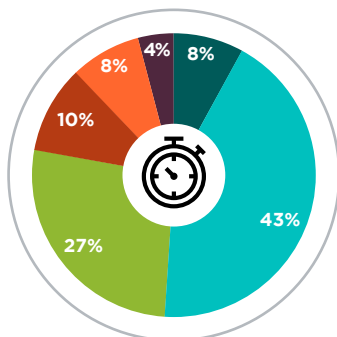
While teams are seeing year-over-year improvement in the speed of final approval on projects and proofs, in-house creative teams remain bogged down in administrative tasks.



- 1-2 rounds
- 3-5 rounds
- 6-10 rounds
- > 11 rounds

83% of creative projects are approved within **5 rounds of review.**

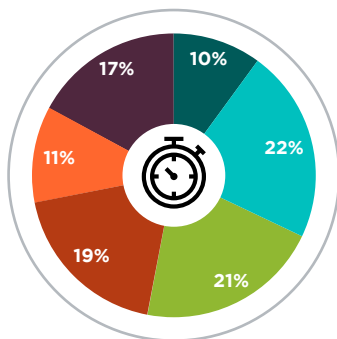
Improved from 77% in 2019



- 1 day
- 2-3 days
- 4-5 days
- 6-7 days
- 8-14 days
- > 2 weeks

78% of proofs are approved within a week.

Up from 65% in 2019



- 1-2 hours
- 3-4 hours
- 5-6 hours
- 7-8 hours
- 9-10 hours
- > 10 hours

47% of creatives spend a **full day a week** on administrative tasks.

Remained stagnant from 48% in 2019



“We often push creative teams too hard on speed and volume. There is the old adage that you can choose quality, speed, or cost, but not all three. Sometimes two, but never all three. So we say the most important thing is quality creative, but then we measure on speed and efficiency. **Creative teams need to start using metrics that show the quality of their work and their power as a strategic partner.**”

– Adam Morgan



“**A big challenge that creative teams have is that they are being asked to do so much that no one is stopping to think what success looks like for any given project.** That’s a huge problem. If we’re going to change that and give creative teams time to think about how to make a project successful for the business and do the best job, that change has to come from the top.”

– Ilise Benun



“**It’s really important for teams to track as much of their work in a system that is their single source of truth.** Once you start doing that, you’ll start to see patterns that you would never see if you weren’t tracking your work. When you have that data, it’s easier to start having conversations with your stakeholders about how long things take and how the process can be improved.”

– Kim Conder



“For creative teams dealing with growing demand for creative work plus new responsibilities, efficiency is key. For teams that need to turn around projects faster, the best approach is to work with your reviewers so they understand what you need from them and how a slow review will impact the timeline of the project. **For teams juggling many responsibilities that distract from creativity, prioritization is important.** It’s also useful to think about ways to expand your resources.”

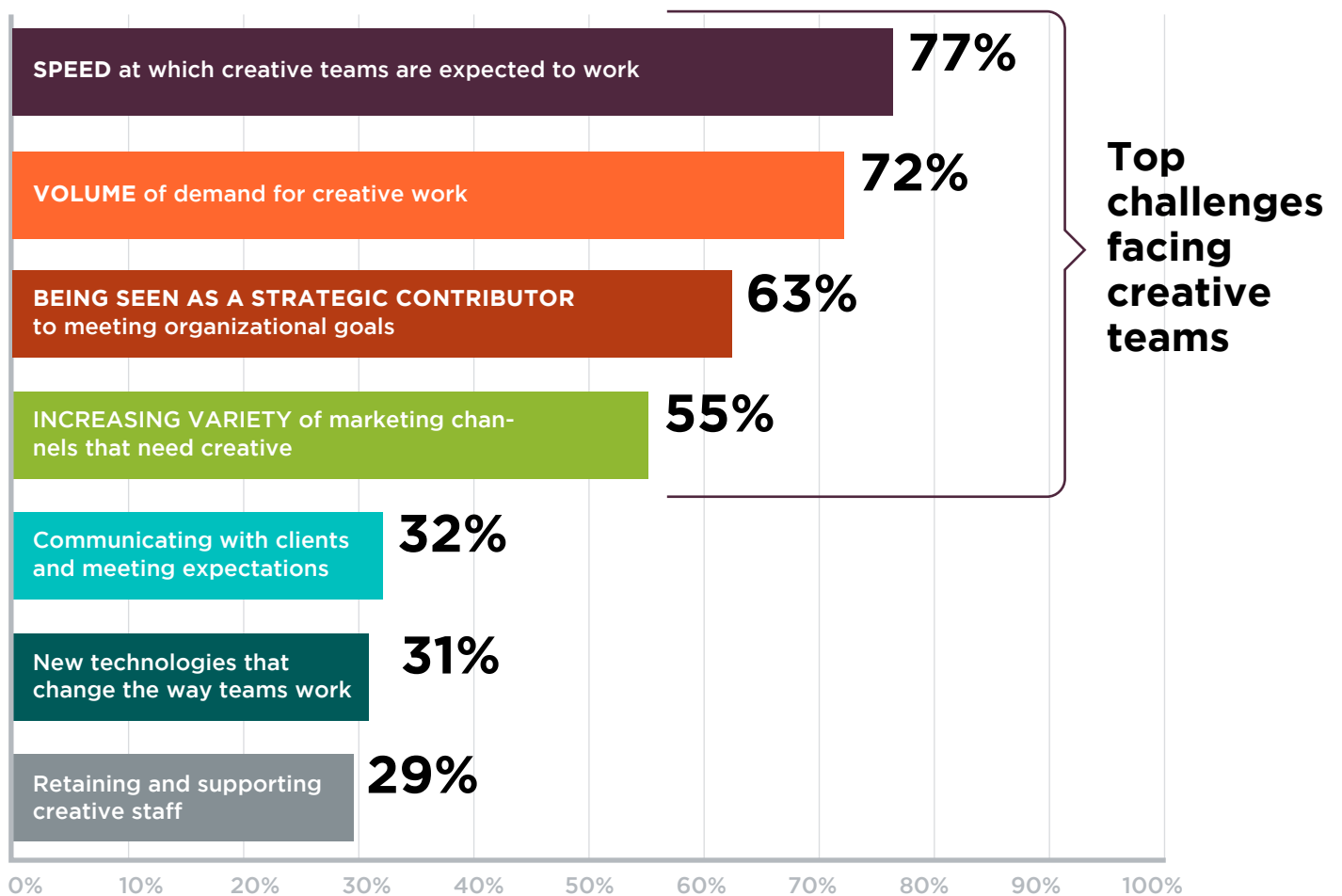
– Molly Clark



IN-HOUSE TEAMS CAN PARTNER WITH AGENCIES FOR CONTINUED GROWTH

As creative teams continue to grow as strategic partners, their breadth of responsibilities is also expanding. Creative teams can better meet speed and volume challenges and establish themselves as strategic partners to the business by turning to agency partners to bring additional bandwidth and skills.

Which of the following are the most significant challenges facing your creative team?





“Time is at a premium for in-house creative teams. It’s important to remember that as strategic partners, you can make the call for when to keep something in-house and when to outsource.”

– Molly Clark



“When it comes to balancing the workload between the in-house team and an agency or freelancer, it all comes down to partnership.

It’s important to be able to define what your in-house team does well and what you want to keep in-house. Agencies have a lot of specific skills that don’t necessarily make sense to invest in bringing in-house, so they are a great way to add skill and bandwidth for busy teams.”

– Kim Conder



“The trend I see is that the lines are blurring between who is inside and who is outside, and whether you need a full agency or a freelancer with a network. It’s truly case-by-case and specific to each team. **You have**

to understand the needs of your organization and the resources available and figure out what combination makes the most sense.”

– Ilise Benun



“Agencies and freelancers can augment and enhance the initiatives of in-house creative teams. For best results, the tenets of

collaboration apply. **Potent partnerships happen when everyone puts egos aside and sees the chance to create something great and learn something new.** And match-ups are important— ideal collaboration occurs

where the other person or team is doing something you can’t do (or maybe don’t want to do) as well.”

– Sam Harrison



“The magic of agencies is that they have created environments where creative ideas thrive. People can throw a whole bunch of ideas at the wall, react to them, get feedback, and keep pushing. **The secret for**

in-house agencies to tap into this magic is to be the owners of the relationship. They should be making the call on when to bring in outside

resources, not another department. When the creative team owns the agency relationship, they can focus on making it a collaborative partnership rather than a competition to get the ‘best’ jobs.”

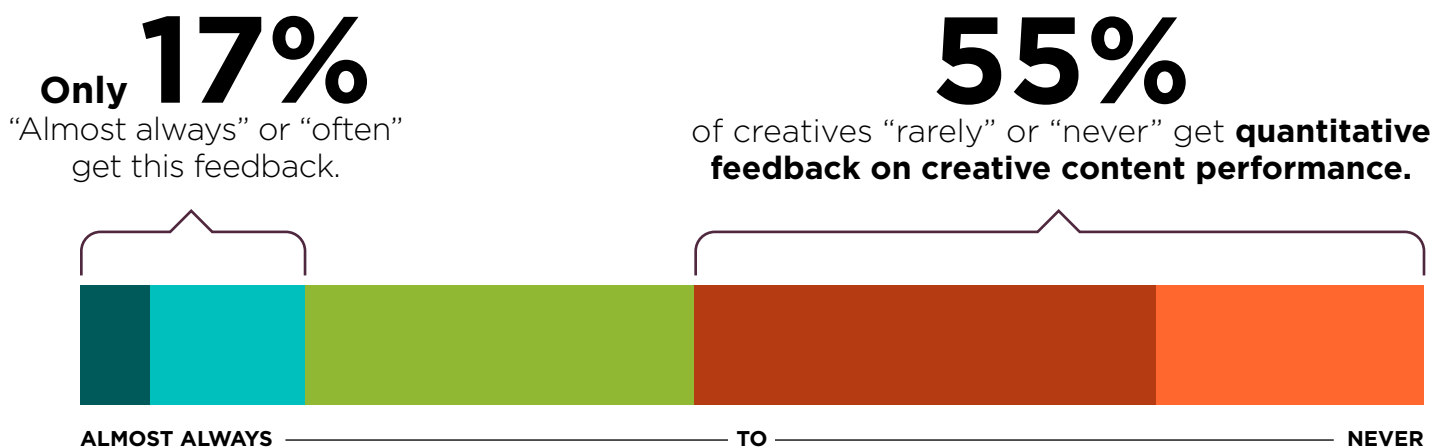
– Adam Morgan



PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT IS THE SECRET TO IMPROVEMENT

Getting data on the performance of creative work and tracking internal operating metrics is still an area creative teams need to improve. By becoming more data-centric, creative teams can establish and strengthen strategic partnerships.

How often does the marketing team provide the creative team with quantitative feedback on **creative content performance**?



My creative team has robust reporting on creative production.

(e.g. how many projects are completed a quarter, how many rounds of proofs are required for approval, etc.)

Creative teams are **inconsistent** with reporting on creative production.





“Two thoughts come to mind when you see creative teams not getting feedback on their work. First, does that data even exist? The marketing team might not be collecting it because they haven’t defined success metrics. Second, the marketing team has data, but they aren’t providing it. In that case the creative team has to make it easy for the marketing team to pass that data over. **Define what those metrics are at the beginning of the project, and then set up the project so that you can collect that information or have direct access to it at the end of the project.**”

– Ilise Benun



“In general, **teams that are earning their seat at the strategic table are probably also more connected to data.** But I don’t think that the creative department should get swamped down in endless metrics. Use this as an opportunity to build a strategic partnership with even more departments within the organization who are already focused on measuring performance.”

– Adam Morgan



“When you’re able to cite metrics and make suggestions based on data you are going to see a shift in the room towards a more strategic conversation.”

– Justin Ahrens



“When it comes to measuring your team’s performance, it is important to keep a pulse on the trends your team is seeing. So the metric could be volume of work, turnaround time, number of revisions, etc. But **the most important thing is identifying trends, so you can see if something is changing**, such as for seasonality, and modify your approach accordingly.”

– Kim Conder



“It’s important to remember that operational metrics are key to showing the impact creative work has on the business. Creatives can collaborate cross-departmentally to align on metrics that measure success. Creatives will strengthen their relationship with the business by becoming analytical creatives - the best combination of data-driven and creative.”

– Molly Clark





WHAT ONE CHANGE WOULD YOU MAKE?

TEAM

“**Team building** within the creative team to help create a more trusting environment and help boost morale.”

“Team building exercises with **stakeholders.**”

“More **cross-training** across roles and departments.”

“**Dedicated leadership** for the creative department to establish expectations, best practices, and help us gain respect as experts in our field.”

“**Align sub-teams** to specific business areas to increase subject-matter expertise.”

FEEDBACK AND MEASUREMENT

“Define **success metrics** at the beginning of a project so we know what to measure and what success looks like.”

“**Results** of campaigns - did they impact sales?”

“Constant **data feedback** to gauge performance.”

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

“Align **creative work** to organizational goals.”

“More **collaboration** with the entire marketing department.”

“A **strategic partnership** with clients to align the creative team with the c-suite and their organizational goals.”

“**Showcase to leadership** the strategic importance and value that the creative team can bring to the table to solve more complex organizational issues.”

PROCESS

“More **pre-planning** on projects and setting realistic timeframes.”

“Better **project management**.”

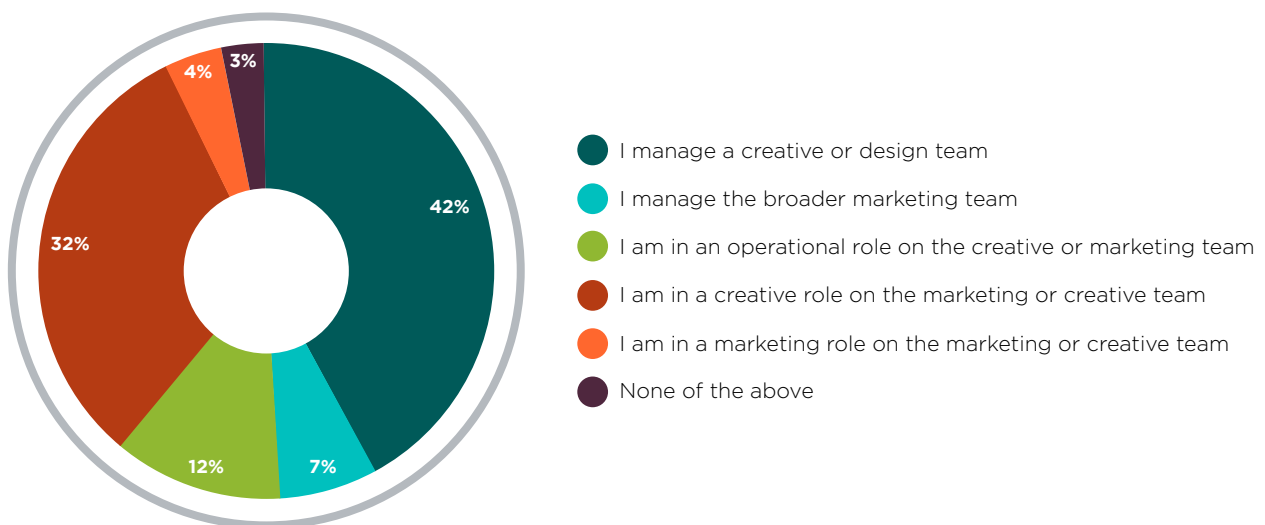
“Formalize and **standardize the review process** on both the creative and client end to make sure the right people sign off on projects.”

“Consistent use of **creative briefs**.”

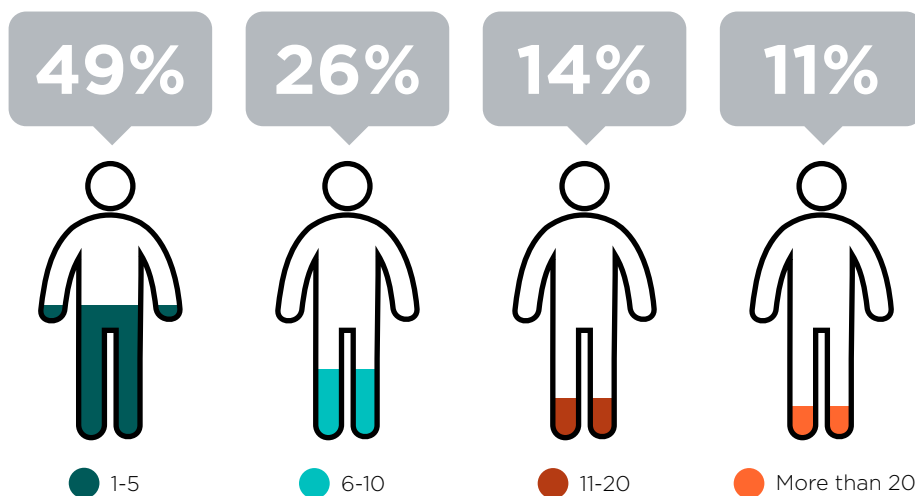
DEMOGRAPHICS

The survey collected responses from over 600 respondents that work in creative and marketing roles. More than 70% of respondents hold creative roles and 42% stem from managerial positions. Respondents work on teams of varying sizes and for a diversity of organizations.

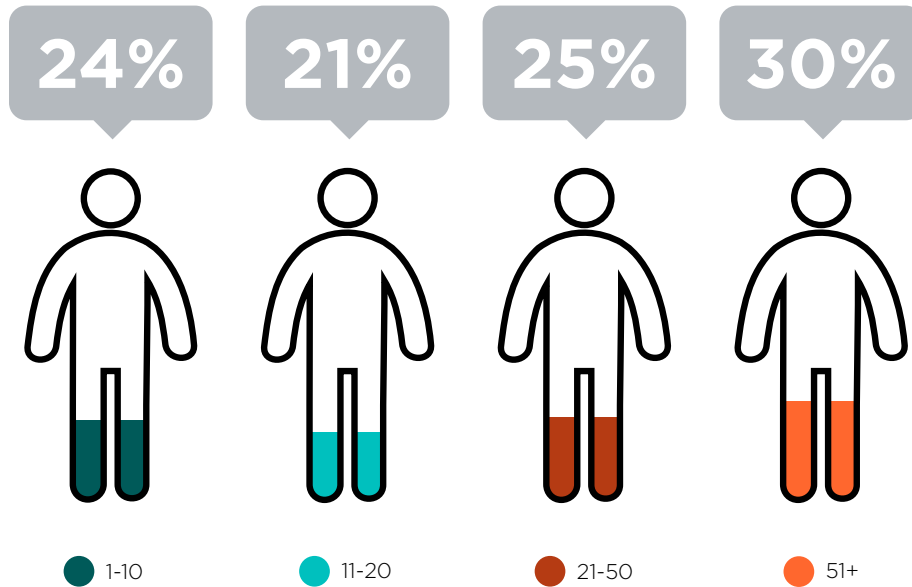
Which of the following best describes your primary responsibility as it relates to the creative/marketing team?



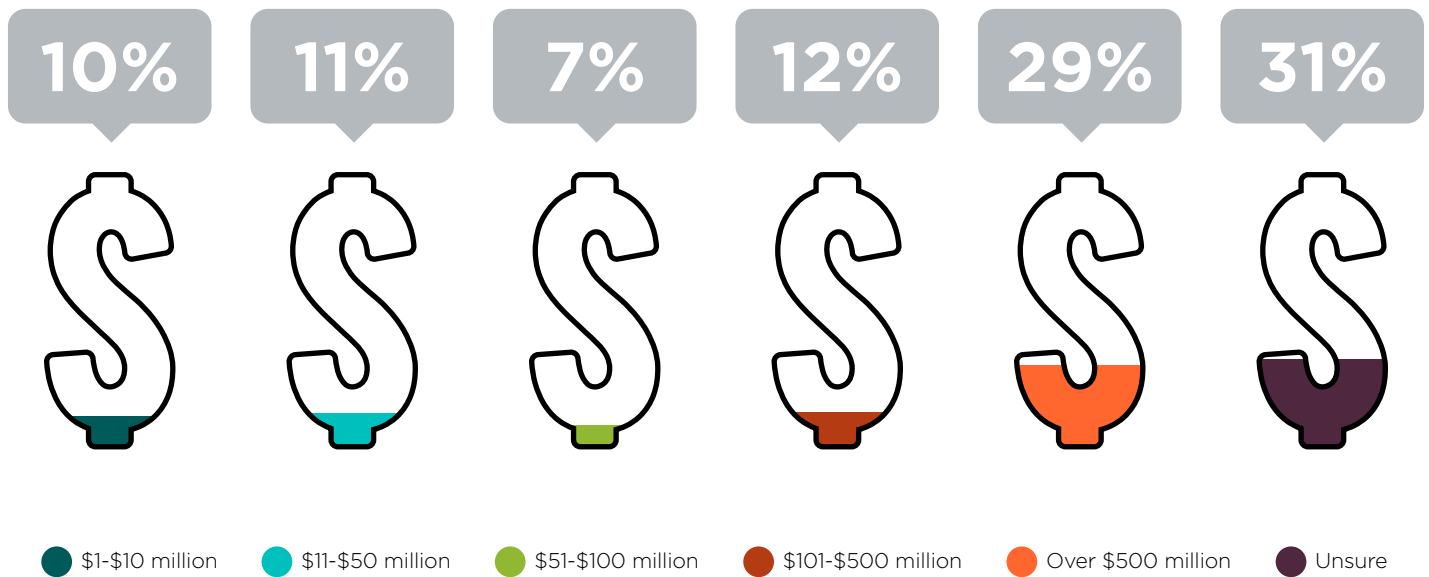
How many people are on your creative team (including creative leadership)?



On average, how many internal clients or stakeholders does your in-house team support?



What is your company's approximate annual revenue?



*There was no incentive offered to complete the survey.

InSource

In-house. Creative. Connected.

InSource is a non-profit professional trade association with a mission to provide resources, support, professional development, and advocacy for those in creative leadership positions within corporate in-house creative departments. With over 8,000 members in the U.S. and across the world, InSource is the largest network of in-house creative leaders anywhere. Since 2002, InSource has been leveraging the shared experiences and perspectives of in-house leaders – through events, books, and content – to help creatives manage their creative departments, and careers, to be the best that they can be.



inMotionNow is a leading provider of workflow management software for creative and marketing teams, facilitating efficiency and productivity from project kickoff to final approval. inMotion ignite, the company's flagship SaaS product, and the next generation of creative workflow, simplifies every phase of the creative production process, delivering measurable value to enterprise clients. The application allows project stakeholders to manage, track, and collaboratively review their print, video, and web projects in a centralized online environment that connects designers directly to Adobe with the inMotion Extension for Adobe Creative Cloud. With a user-friendly interface and dedicated customer success team, inMotionNow helps creative and marketing teams of every variety automate their workflow and do the work they love.

**Hindsight
is always
2020.**

**Be on the
lookout for
our 2021
survey this
fall!**



**IN-HOUSE
CREATIVE
MANAGEMENT
REPORT**