Digital Intelligence Briefing

Econsultancy

Adobe

# 2018 Digital Trends for Creative and Design Leaders

Bē
Prateek Vatash

# Digital Intelligence Briefing: 2018 Digital Trends for Creative and Design Leaders

# Foreword by Adobe

**Ashley Still**
VP/GM, Creative Cloud for enterprise and Document Cloud
Adobe

We are delighted to partner with Econsultancy on our first Digital Trends report that looks at the priorities and challenges ahead purely from the perspective of design and creative leaders.

For the first time our annual survey of digital professionals had specific questions for this cohort of respondents, to help us understand in more detail their opportunities and pain points.

Building on the findings of the main 2018 Digital Trends report[1], the research backs up our fundamental belief that design-driven organisations outperform other businesses. A design-centric approach is essential for businesses striving to create world-class customer experiences with the aim of achieving a competitive advantage.

An important trend discussed in the report is the increased demand on creative and design teams for high-quality content and digital assets, driven by the more personalised approach to marketing and customer experience that many companies are adopting. Like other digital professionals, those working in creative and design roles see real-time personalisation as the most exciting medium-term opportunity.

With more pressure on teams to deliver, the research makes clear that companies must ensure that they have the right processes and workflows in place to operate as efficiently as possible.

Another trend highlighted in this report is the growing role that artificial intelligence can play in more effective marketing and customer experience programmes. We are hugely excited about the potential of Adobe Sensei to harness AI and machine learning to dramatically improve the design and delivery of digital experiences. Please get in touch if you want to know more.

1. https://www.adobe.com/uk/modal-offers/econsultancy_digital_trends_2018_report.html

# Executive summary

The **2018 Digital Trends for Creative and Design Leaders** report is based on a sample of almost 2,700 senior creative and design professionals (manager level or above[2]) who were among around 13,000 digital professionals taking part in the annual Digital Trends survey carried out at the end of 2017 and start of 2018.

The research, conducted by Econsultancy in partnership with Adobe, explores the priorities, opportunities and challenges through the lens of creative and design leaders. Below are some of the key findings of the report.

### Design-driven companies are outperforming their peers

- The front-end experience is becoming increasingly important in a world of digital disruption and lower consumer tolerance for poorly designed products, services and experiences. More than a quarter (26%) of senior creative and design professionals surveyed for this report regard their organisations as 'definitely' being design-driven, while a further 41% say this is 'somewhat' the case.
- The business value of design is widely acknowledged: the Design Management Institute revealed that design-led companies have maintained significant stock market advantage, outperforming the S&P by an impressive 211%. Effective design transcends product teams and stems from a great design culture that permeates the whole organisation. A design-centric culture can help organisations differentiate themselves from competitors and create world-class experiences for their customers.
- Our research supports this view, showing that design-driven companies are almost twice as likely as other companies to be significantly outperforming their competitors (32% vs. 17%). This comes after the main 2018 Digital Trends report[3] found that design-driven companies are 69% more likely than their peers to have surpassed their business goals last year by a significant margin (22% vs. 13%).

### Real-time personalisation is seen as the most exciting opportunity

- The most exciting opportunity for creative and design leaders in the medium term is delivering personalised experiences in real time, voted for by 31% of client-side and 39% of agency respondents. These percentages put this significantly ahead of other technological trends such as artificial intelligence, virtual and augmented reality, the Internet of Things, payment technologies and voice interfaces.
- The potential for companies to deliver one-to-one marketing at scale is growing all the time, with more sophisticated marketing and data platforms facilitating a more personalised approach based on both implicit and explicit data. As user expectations continue to rise, and organisations get more proficient at targeting customers through one-to-one marketing at scale, creative and design teams are coming under increasing pressure to adapt traditional ways of working so they can produce a new level of output.

2. The 2,665 creative and design respondents who took part in the 2018 Digital Trends survey were among a total of nearly 13,000 marketing, creative and technology professionals in the digital industry from all sectors who participated, from countries across EMEA, North America and Asia Pacific.

3. https://www.econsultancy.com/reports/digital-intelligence-briefing-2018-digital-trends

## Poor processes and workflows are slowing down creative and design leaders

- Without the right processes and collaborative workflows in place, it is extremely difficult for companies to differentiate themselves through the design of great experiences and the content that underpins truly personalised and compelling experiences. Design-driven companies are 79% more likely than their peers to have the processes and collaborative workflows to achieve a design advantage (68% vs. 38%).
- Achieving consistency and streamlined processes in an increasingly complex environment is crucial for companies that want to succeed in the face of increased demand for content. Four in ten (40%) client-side creative and design leaders report that outdated workflows are a major internal barrier.

## Companies are reaping the benefits of AI

- Artificial intelligence (AI) is revolutionising the ability to deliver one-to-one marketing in real time, through the ability to produce content at scale, and to make it as relevant as possible through analysis of data based on machine learning. Technology now makes it possible to do in a split-second what it could previously take marketers and creative professionals hours or even a lifetime to achieve.
- When asked what their organisations are using AI for, the most likely application is analysis of data, cited by 54% of client-side and 45% of agency respondents. For most other use cases, agency respondents are more likely than their client-side counterparts to indicate usage of AI, including for email marketing (40% vs. 29%), programmatic advertising (34% vs. 24%), on-site personalisation (36% vs. 22%), content creation (34% vs. 22%) and automated campaigns (36% vs. 22%).

## Creative and design talent is in short supply

- The responses to our 2018 Digital Trends survey accentuate that creative and design talent is increasingly at a premium. More than a third (36%) of in-house practitioners cite access to creative talent as a key external challenge, while a similar percentage (37%) cite recruitment and retention of the right people with the right skills as a major internal barrier.
- The vast majority of company respondents (79%) and agency staff (74%) report they will invest in digital skills and education during 2018.

# 3. Design-driven companies are outperforming competitors

2017 was a year in which the spotlight continued to fall on design as a core organisational capability, with a continuation of the M&A activity that has seen design companies being swallowed up by leading brands, advertising giants and consultancy behemoths. According to the Design in Tech Report 2017[4], more than 70 design firms have been acquired since 2004, with around half of these acquisitions taking place since 2015. Examples from last year included the acquisitions of digital strategy and experience design company Idean and Dublin-based innovation consultancy Red Planet, by Capgemini and Deloitte Ireland respectively.

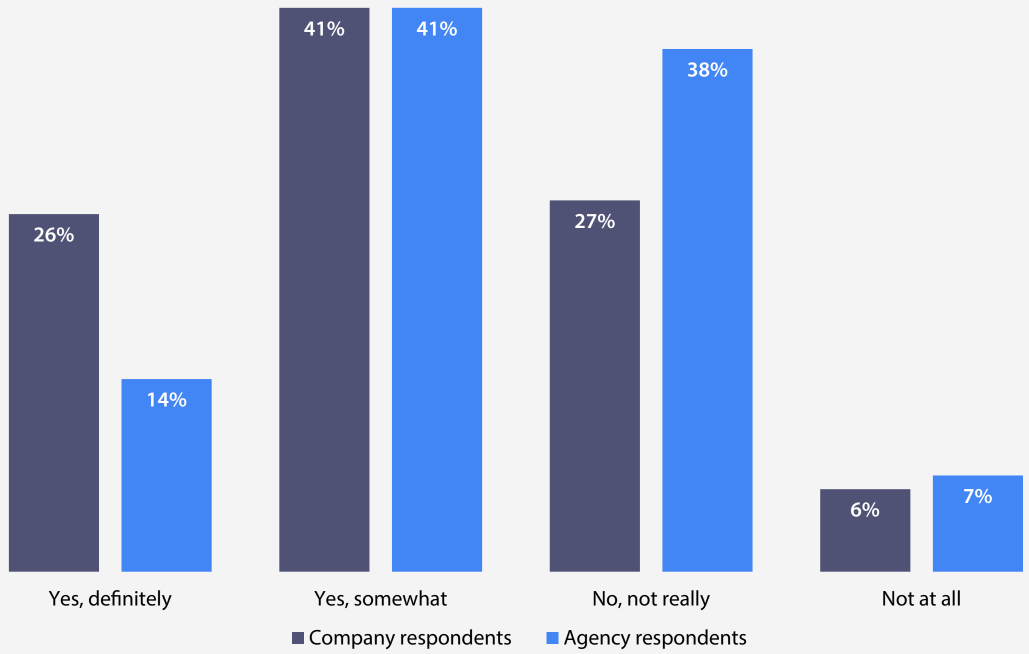
The eagerness to harness these skills reflects the growing strategic importance of the front-end experience as companies offering anything less than first-class customer experiences are floundering in a world of digital disruption and lower consumer tolerance for poorly designed products, services and experiences.

As part of this research we have sought to understand the extent to which companies regard themselves as design-led. More than a quarter (26%) of senior creative and design professionals surveyed for this report regard their organisations as 'definitely' being design-driven, while a further 41% say this is 'somewhat' the case (*Figure 1*).

26% of senior creative and design professionals surveyed for this report **regard their organisations as 'definitely' being design-driven**

4. https://designintech.report/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/dit-2017-1-0-7-compressed.pdf

**FIGURE 1: WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR COMPANY (OR YOUR CLIENTS) AS DESIGN-DRIVEN?**




Company respondents: 499
Agency respondents: 1,198

Creative and design respondents are significantly more likely than those working in other business functions to describe their organisations as design-driven. As revealed in the main 2018 Digital Trends[5] report, only 17% of all research participants (including data from all 13,000 survey respondents globally rather than just creative and design professionals) describe their companies as definitely being design-centric.

With consumer expectations for seamless customer experiences greater than ever, the evidence is mounting that design-driven companies are more successful than their peers. According to the Design Management Institute's Design Value Index[6], design-driven companies outperformed the S&P by 211% between 2005 and 2015.

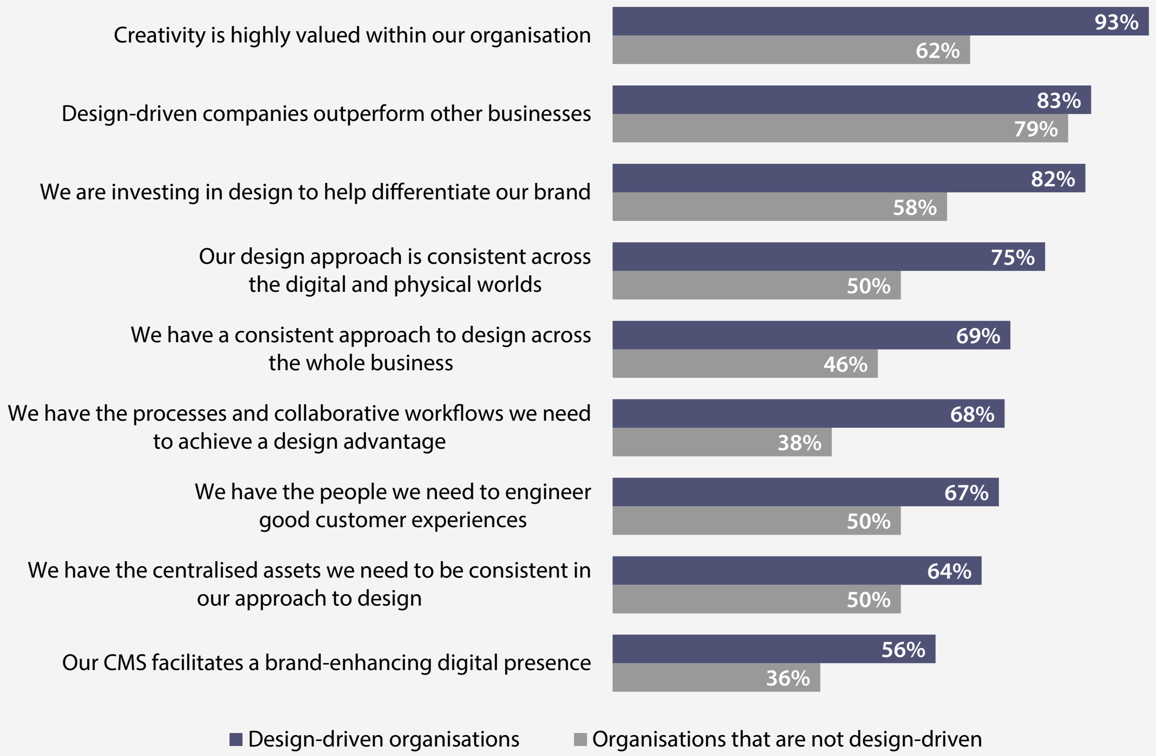
Our analysis of data from all Digital Trends survey respondents found that design-driven companies are 69% more likely than their peers to have surpassed their business goals last year by a significant margin (22% vs. 13%). Just as compellingly, based on data from client-side creative and digital professionals (*Figure 2*), design-driven companies are almost twice as likely to be significantly outperforming their competitors (32% vs. 17%).

5. https://www.econsultancy.com/reports/digital-intelligence-briefing-2018-digital-trends
6. http://www.dmi.org/?page=2015DVIandOTW

**COMPANY RESPONDENTS**
**FIGURE 2: OVERALL, HOW DO YOU BELIEVE YOUR ORGANISATION IS PERFORMING AGAINST ITS COMPETITORS?**


Respondents: 707

**FIGURE 3: PROPORTION OF COMPANY RESPONDENTS AGREEING ('STRONGLY' OR 'SOMEWHAT') WITH THESE STATEMENTS**




Respondents: 497

*Figure 3* shows that design-driven companies are significantly more likely to have a range of attributes and qualities that distinguish them from their counterparts. Respondents at design-focused companies are much more likely to agree that '*creativity is highly valued*' within their organisation (93% vs. 62%), and that they are '*investing in design to help differentiate*' their brands (82% vs. 58%).

The largest gap between design-driven companies and their peers is the 79% difference in the proportions of respondents agreeing they '*have the processes and collaborative workflows [needed] to achieve a design advantage*' (68% vs. 38%).

The explosion of design and content production work within global brands and agencies was apparent from a separate survey carried out by Adobe last year on the State of Creativity in Business[7]. Nearly two-thirds (65%) of creatives surveyed said they created more content than they did five years previously. The research described how the increased demand for new and personalised digital experiences for customers across a plethora of channels is adding to the workload of content creators.

7. https://www.slideshare.net/adobe/state-of-creativity-in-business-2017

Without the right processes and collaborative workflows in place, it is extremely difficult for companies to differentiate themselves through the design of great experiences and the content that underpins truly personalised and compelling engagement.

The same Adobe State of Creativity in Business research found that 69% of creative professionals were using a wider range of tools than five years previously, while 37% said their workflows had become more complex. Achieving consistency in this more complex environment is crucial for companies that want to succeed.

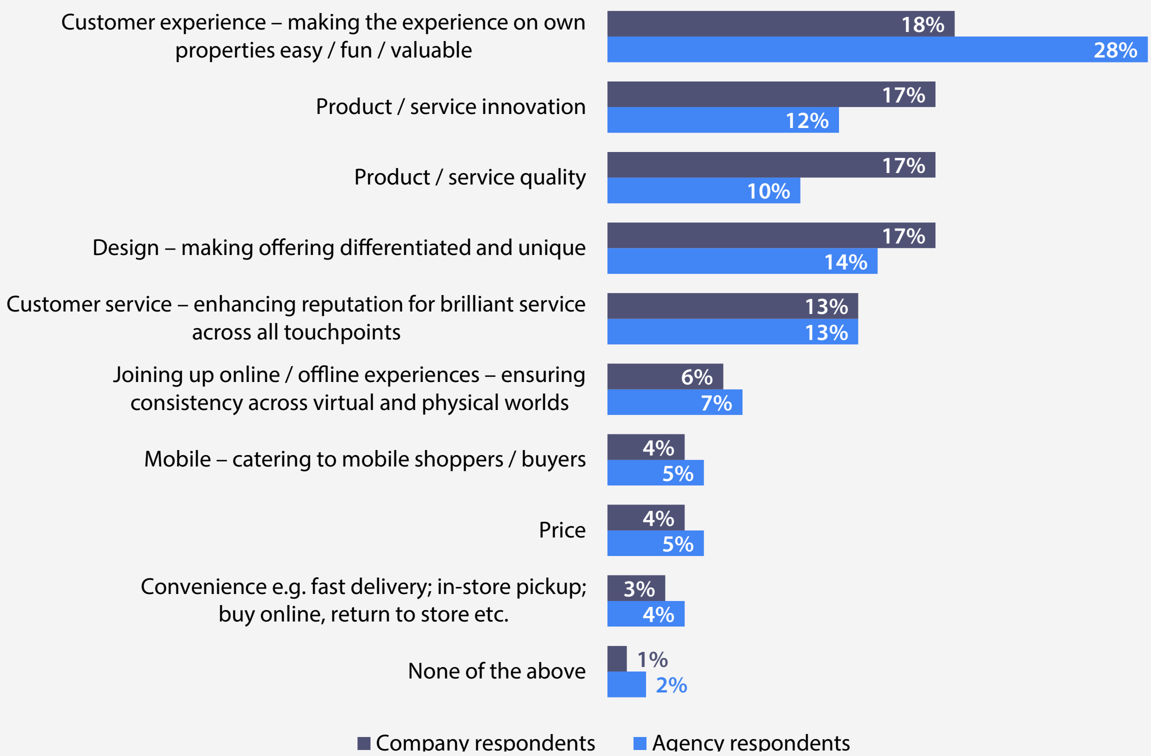
According to our Digital Trends research (*Figure 3*), three-quarters (75%) of creativity and design professionals at design-driven companies agree that their '*design approach is consistent across the digital and physical worlds*', compared to only half (50%) at organisations that are not design-driven. Similarly, more than two-thirds (69%) of respondents at design-driven companies say they '*have a consistent approach to design across the whole business*', compared to less than half (46%) for less design-focused businesses.

*Figure 4* shows where respondents believe that their organisations – or, in the case of agency respondents, their clients – should focus over the next five years if they want to differentiate themselves from competitors.

Supply-side creative professionals are much more likely than their client-side counterparts to emphasise the *customer experience*, i.e. making the experience on their properties *easy, fun and valuable*. More than a quarter (28%) of agency respondents single this out as the most important means of differentiation, double the proportion for the next most popular option which is *design* (14%).

For client-side respondents, it is a four-horse race, with customer experience (18%) marginally ahead of *product/service innovation*, *product/service quality* and *design*, all level-pegging at 17%. The reality is that there is a significant degree of overlap between these options, with world-class customer experience very much the sum of different parts, including high-quality products and services, as well as innovative service design.

**FIGURE 4: OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, WHAT IS THE PRIMARY WAY YOUR ORGANISATION (OR CLIENTS) WILL SEEK TO DIFFERENTIATE ITSELF (OR THEMSELVES) FROM COMPETITORS?**




Company respondents: 373
Agency respondents: 773

# 4. Top priorities and opportunities

The growing imperative for great design should be seen in the context of a range of digital marketing and ecommerce tactics which organisations are trying to master as part of their commercial endeavours.

*Figure 5* shows the extent to which creative and design leaders believe their organisations are prioritising a range of digital-related disciplines. Like their counterparts in other parts of the business, creatives are most likely to mention *social media engagement* (31%) as a top-three priority for this year. Social media activity continues to be a major focal point for organisations seeking to capitalise on the continued, mobile-fuelled popularity of social properties such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

Successful engagement through organic and paid-for social activity relies on great ideas and content assets which are often conceived and designed by creative professionals. Social channels are increasingly fuelled by *video content*, an area which 28% of respondents cite as a top priority, making this the second biggest area of focus.

Creatives are most likely to mention **social media engagement** as a top-three priority for this year

**COMPANY RESPONDENTS**
**FIGURE 5: WHICH THREE DIGITAL-RELATED AREAS ARE THE TOP PRIORITIES FOR YOUR ORGANISATION IN 2018?**

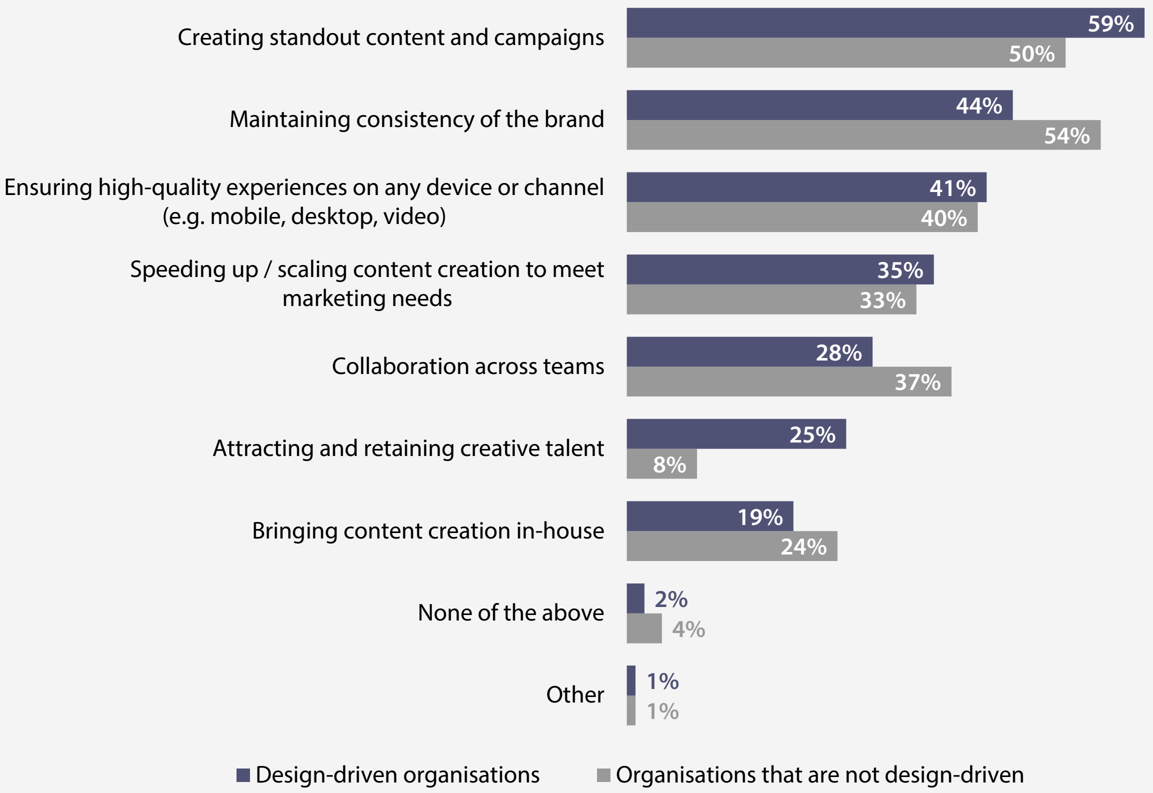

Respondents: 468

# Top of the agenda for design-driven organisations is **creating standout content and campaigns**

It is against this backdrop of multiple digital-related disciplines that creative professionals are prioritising their own activities. Top of the agenda for design-driven organisations (*Figure 6*) is *creating standout content and campaigns* (59%), a priority which straddles multiple digital and offline marketing channels. For companies further behind on the curve of design maturity, a bigger focus is simply *maintaining consistency of the brand*, cited as a priority by 54% of respondents at companies which are not design-driven, compared with only 44% of respondents at companies which are.

While those identified as design leaders strive primarily to produce the best possible content and campaigns, those companies lagging behind are mainly preoccupied with ensuring a joined-up approach across channels, something which is more likely to be 'business-as-usual' at design-centric organisations. In a similar vein, design-driven companies are less likely than their peers to be prioritising *collaboration across teams* (28% vs. 37%), because for many design-centric companies this is more likely to have already become embedded within the culture of the business.

**COMPANY RESPONDENTS**
**FIGURE 6: WHICH THREE PRIORITIES ARE KEY TO THE SUCCESS OF YOUR ORGANISATION IN 2018?**




Respondents: 576

*Figure 7* provides another lens through which to see how companies are prioritising their digital marketing activities 'over the next few years'. A key ingredient of a great customer experience is the ability to optimise the customer journey across multiple touchpoints.

Though a huge amount of the customer journey still happens in the offline world, what happens in the digital environment is crucial to shaping the experience and removing as much friction as possible.

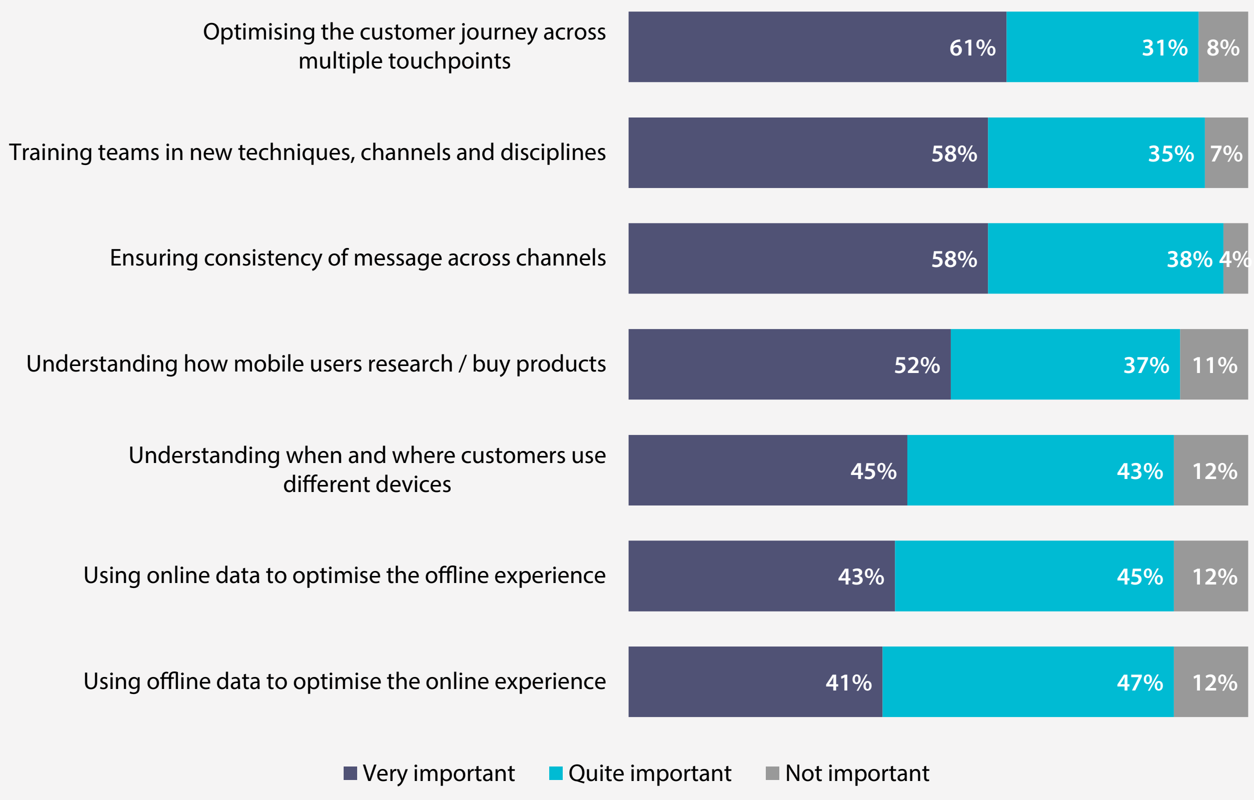
Optimisation of the customer journey relies on a combination of capabilities. The right technology platform and data infrastructure are required to ensure that prospects and customers are receiving the most relevant content and messaging at the right time. As can be seen in *Figure 7*, 43% of respondents say that *using online data to optimise the offline experience* is very important, while on the flipside a very similar proportion (41%) assign the same level of importance to the use of offline data usage to enhance the digital experience.

Customer journey optimisation also means ensuring that the overall experience is designed as seamlessly as possible across a growing number of interaction points, a process which involves the deployment of service design experts who can bring their experience and innovative thinking to the process.

A complicating factor is the increasingly non-linear nature of interactions which means that fewer customer journeys now conform strictly to the classic 'awareness, interest, desire, action' (AIDA) model.

An understanding of how customers are using mobile devices as part of the customer journey is crucial, though only 52% of respondents say this will be very important over the next few years. Even fewer respondents (45%) describe *understanding when and where customers use different devices* as very important, suggesting either that in many organisations this work has already been done or, as is more likely, that companies are often neglecting to build a proper understanding of how their customers are interacting with them.

**COMPANY RESPONDENTS**
**FIGURE 7: HOW IMPORTANT WILL THE FOLLOWING BE FOR YOUR DIGITAL MARKETING OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS?**

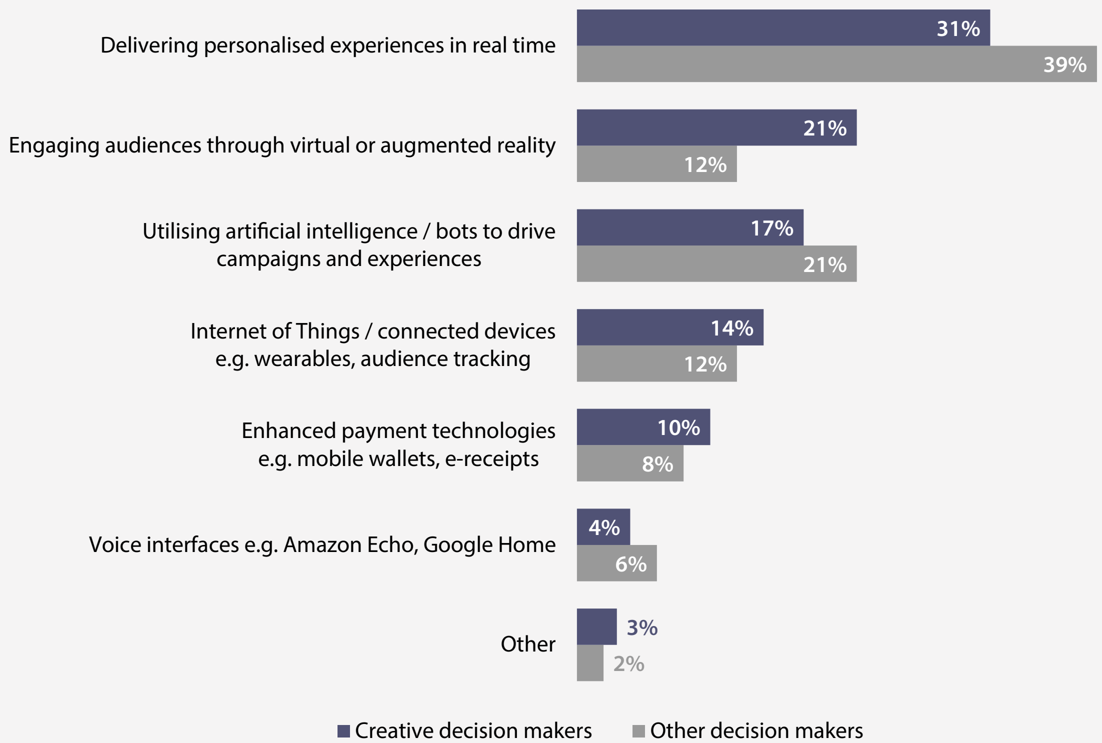



Respondents: 371

A key takeaway from *Figure 8* is that creativity and design professionals are almost twice as likely as other decision-makers within the business to see virtual and augmented reality (VR and AR) as the most exciting opportunity in a three-year timeframe (21% vs. 12%). The inherent opportunities for creativity afforded by these technologies make them a more obvious area of interest for creative professionals than for marketers and others within the business who might be struggling to take the leap of imagination to understand the applications for more engaging customer experiences.

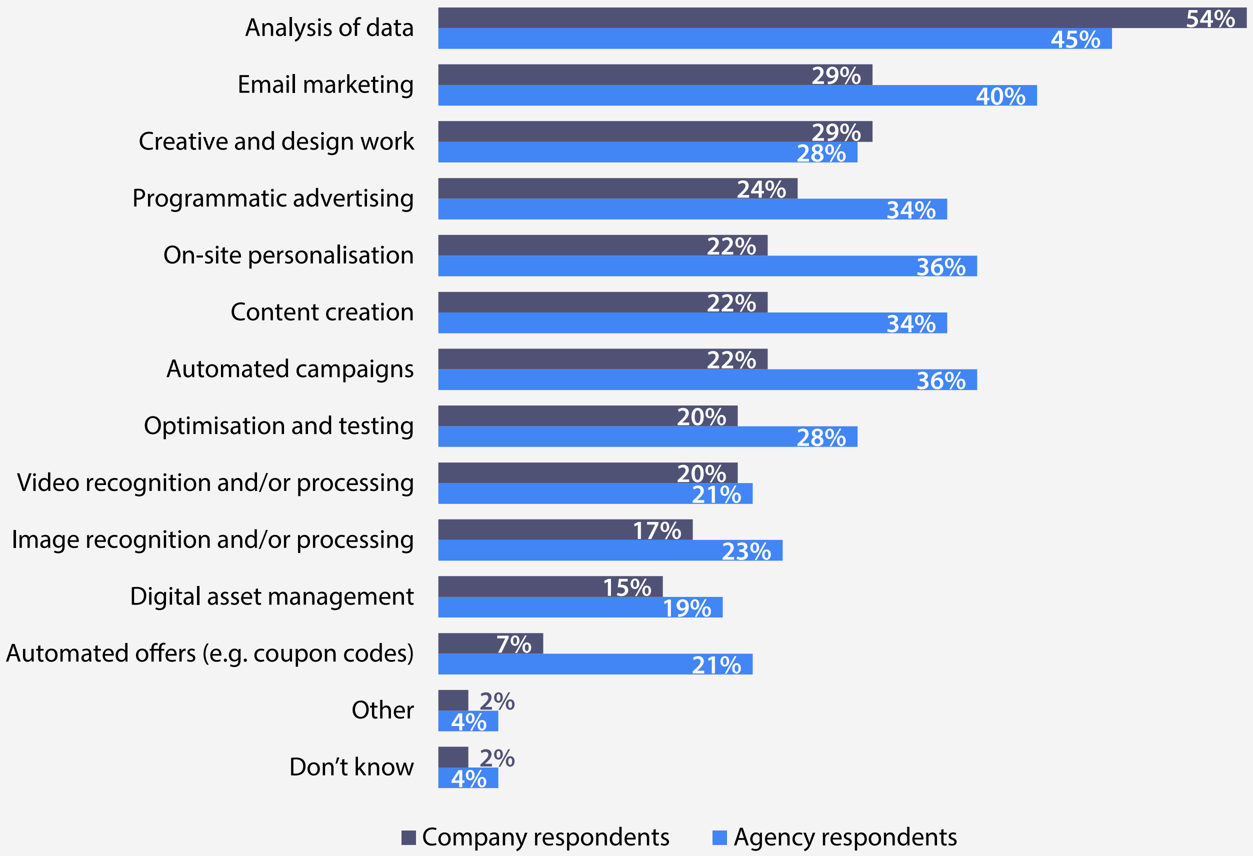
Despite the high level of anticipation for VR and AR among creatives, the most exciting prospect for this group is *delivering personalised experiences in real time*, voted for by 31% of respondents. While this percentage is not as high as for other decision-makers, it is still significantly ahead of other technological trends such as AI, VR and AR, the Internet of Things, payment technologies and voice interfaces.

**COMPANY RESPONDENTS**
**FIGURE 8: LOOKING AHEAD, WHICH OF THESE DO YOU REGARD AS THE MOST EXCITING PROSPECT IN THREE YEARS' TIME?**




Creative decision makers: 460
Other decision makers: 2,100

FIGURE 9: WHAT IS YOUR ORGANISATION (OR ARE YOUR CLIENTS) CURRENTLY USING AI FOR?




Company respondents: 41
Agency respondents: 47

The potential for companies to deliver one-to-one marketing at scale is growing all the time, with more sophisticated marketing and data platforms facilitating a more personalised approach based on both implicit and explicit data. Adobe's 2017 State of Creativity in Business research found that while the vast majority (70%) of creatives and marketers felt that it was important to personalise content and design across a customer's journey, only 28% felt that their company did an excellent job at personalising content.

For many companies, a truly personalised approach is something that looms tantalisingly out of reach on the horizon, rather than being immediately possible. These organisations need to catch up. AI is already revolutionising the ability to deliver one-to-one marketing in real time, through the ability to produce content at scale, and to make it as relevant as possible through analysis of data powered by machine learning.

Technology now makes it possible to do in a split-second what it could previously take marketers and creative professionals hours or even a lifetime to achieve. An example of cutting-edge AI technology is Adobe Sensei[8], which is a machine learning framework and set of intelligent services built into the Adobe Cloud Platform. Adobe Sensei leverages huge volumes of content and data assets to improve the design and delivery of digital experiences.

When asked what their organisations are using AI for, the most likely application is analysis of data, cited by 54% of client-side and 45% of agency respondents. For most other use cases, agency respondents are more likely than their client-side counterparts to indicate usage of AI, including for *email marketing* (40% vs. 29%), *programmatic advertising* (34% vs. 24%), *on-site personalisation* (36% vs. 22%), *content creation* (34% vs. 22%) and *automated campaigns* (36% vs. 22%).

When asked what their organisations are using AI for, **the most likely application is analysis of data**, cited by 54% of client-side and 45% of agency respondents

8. https://www.adobe.com/uk/sensei.html

# 5. Challenges

The increased emphasis many companies are placing on the quality of their digital content, often as part of customer experience (CX) improvements, has created challenges as well as opportunities for creative and design leaders. Many organisations have made progress in harnessing the science of data analytics to better understand their customers and to figure out when and where to target them. But the art of creating the right content to deliver to each individual at the right time, is something else entirely, and not something every organisation has mastered in the same way.

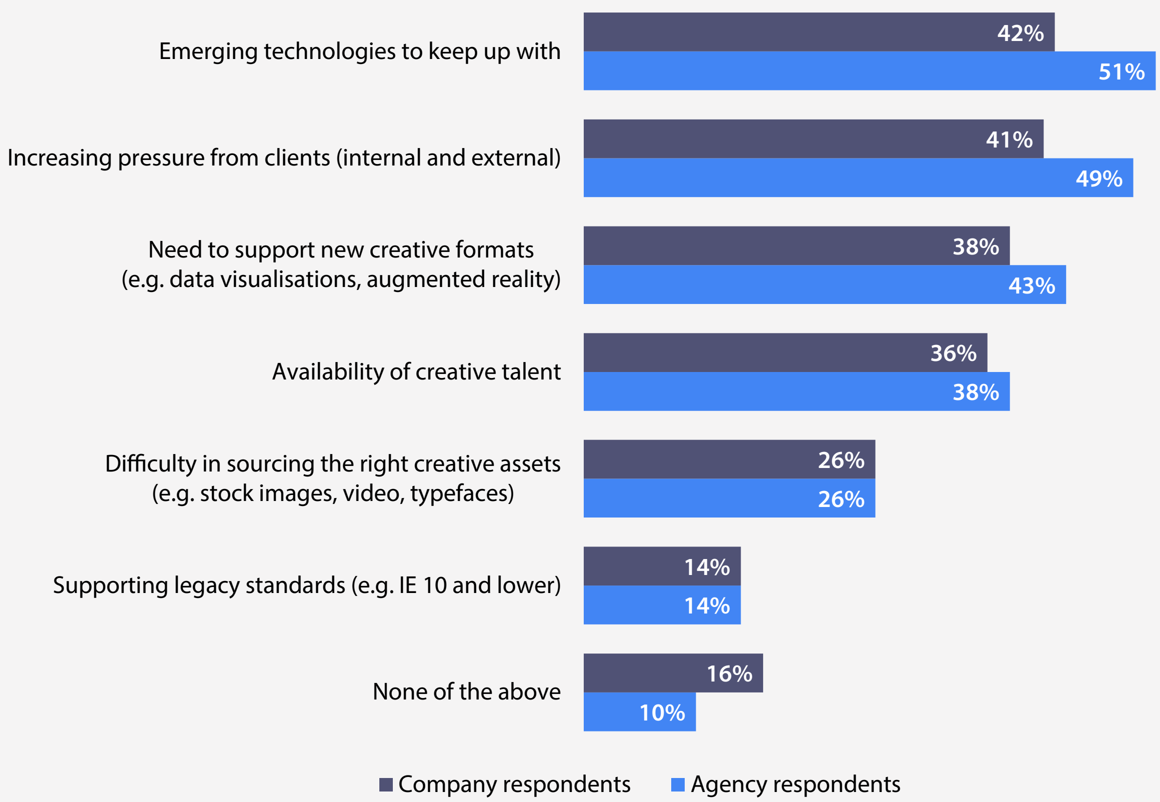
As user expectations continue to rise, and organisations get more proficient at targeting customers through one-to-one marketing at scale, creative and design teams are coming under increasing pressure to adapt traditional ways of working so they can produce a new level of output.

There has been much debate over the standards of creativity in marketing and advertising. Some see a decline as data-led marketing has risen, but others suggest that greater insight into customer behaviour is producing an uplift in creativity. Aviva's Head of Marketing, James Turner, told Marketing Week[9] in 2017 that "*some of the automation is definitely freeing up time for us to focus on being more genuinely creative and personalised with our activity rather than just cranking the handle to get stuff live.*"

More than four in ten respondents cite **increasing pressure from clients (internal and external)** as one of the top concerns keeping them awake at night

9. https://www.marketingweek.com/2017/03/06/future-creativity-automated-world/

**FIGURE 10: WHAT ARE THE TOP THREE EXTERNAL CHALLENGES YOU FACE WHICH ARE EFFECTIVELY KEEPING YOU AWAKE AT NIGHT?**




Company respondents: 521
Agency respondents: 1,313

The survey shows the rising workload demands that creative and design leaders are coming under. As seen in *Figure 10*, more than four in ten (41%) respondents cite *increasing pressure from clients* (*internal and external*) as one of the top concerns keeping them awake at night. This is particularly the case for agencies managing client relationships (49%). Also evident are the difficulties of maintaining a grip on the digital innovations that are fuelling demand for design capacity and making design tasks more and more complex. *Emerging technologies to keep up with* (42%) and the *need to support new creative formats* (38%) complete the set of top-three challenges faced by design and creative professionals in the digital era.

Internally, it is clear many organisations are still grappling with how to ensure they have the right design capacity and procedures to help meet these new demands (*Figure 11*). They remain only partially evolved to meet the challenges of modern-day marketing.

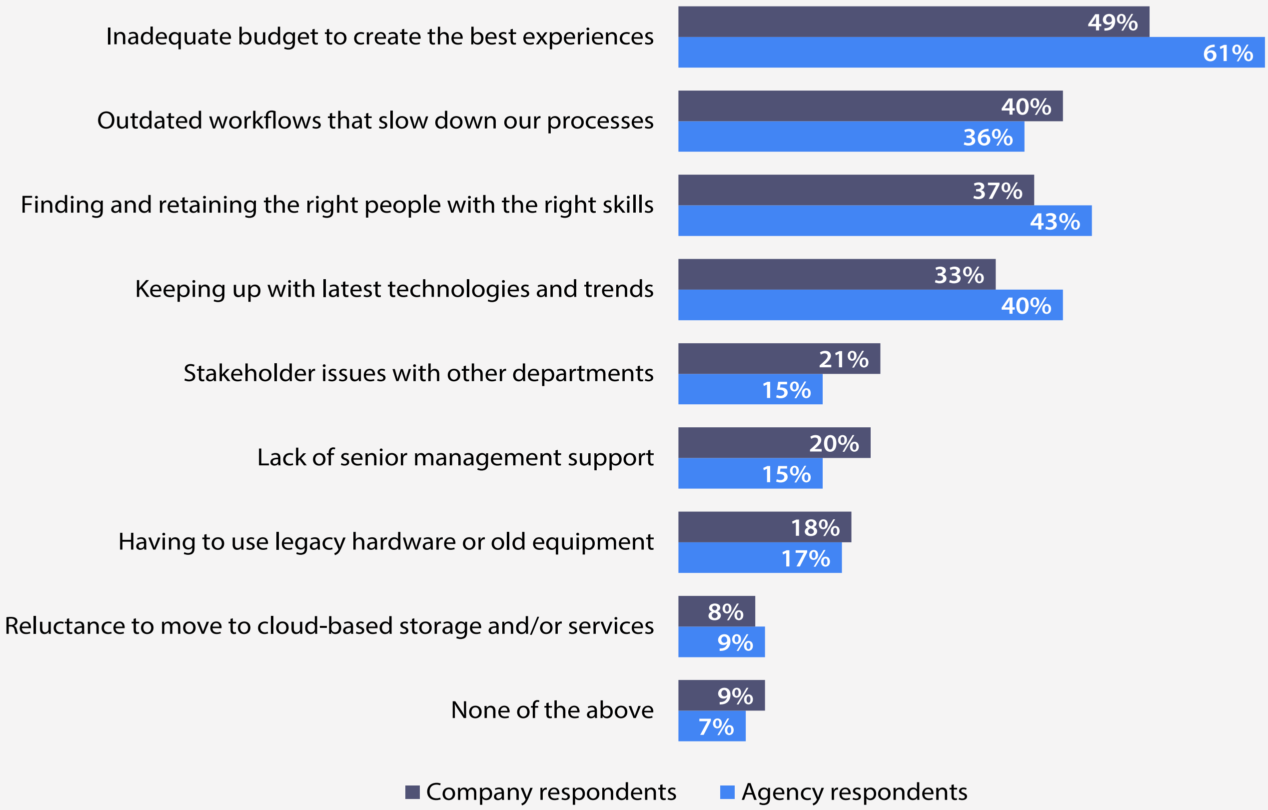
The way many creative and design leaders work requires a significant reboot as companies shift to the more agile, iterative and collaborative approaches associated with data-led, customer-centric communications.

Yet a high proportion of respondents – including four in ten in-house practitioners – report they remain bound by *outdated workflows that slow down their processes*. It is clear internal procedures remain a huge barrier for organisations at a time when they are battling to become much more responsive and nimble, and to ensure they continue to attract and retain customers.

Few departments would ever admit to being over-budgeted, but the proportion of design respondents citing financial constraints is striking. Nearly half (49%) of in-house practitioners report they are held back by *inadequate budget to create the best experiences* for customers, and this rises to more than six in ten (61%) among agency respondents.

More encouragingly, a relatively low level of respondents (20%) report a *lack of senior management support*. This might suggest that general fiscal pressures on the business are to blame for a lot of design professionals' frustration, rather than specific under-funding of design and creative teams.

**FIGURE 11: WHAT ARE THE TOP THREE INTERNAL BARRIERS TO SUCCESSFULLY CREATING DIGITAL EXPERIENCES WITHIN YOUR ORGANISATION?**




Company respondents: 521
Agency respondents: 1,315

Closely tied in with the financial and organisational challenges around ensuring design and creative teams are well set up to support CX improvement is the widely-cited shortage of talent in the sector.

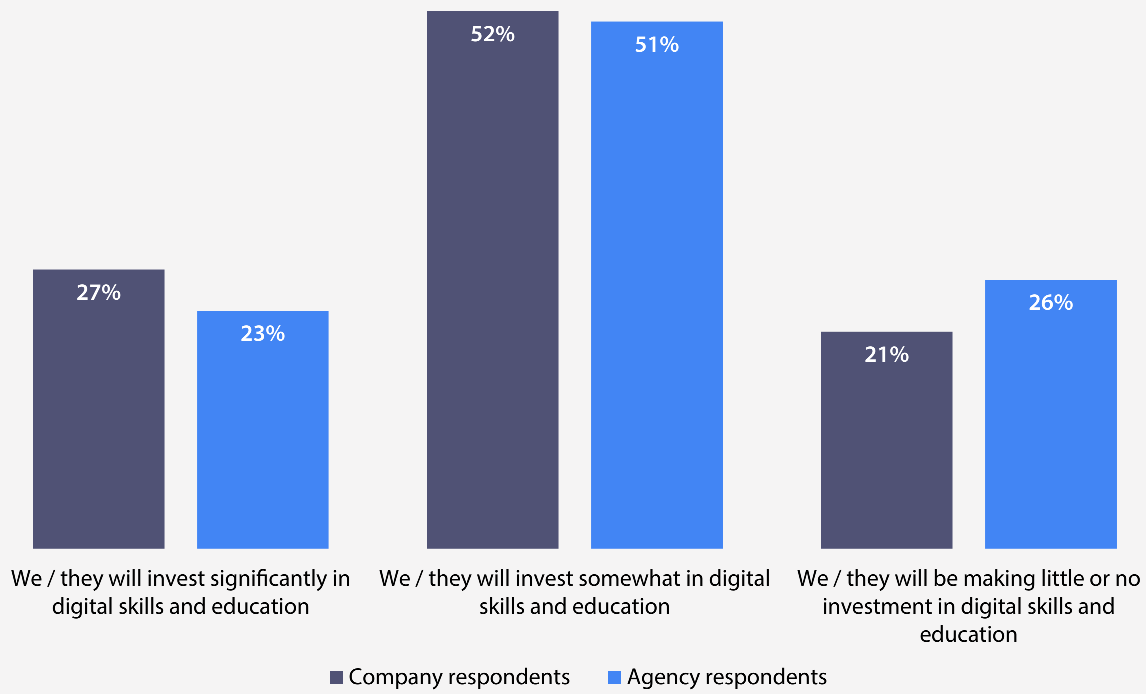
The UK's Creative Industries Federation, which covers sectors such as advertising, architecture, gaming and publishing, indicated in its 2017 Global Talent Report[10] that a majority (57%) of its members were facing skills shortages, and that gaps were particularly evident in jobs requiring a mix of creative and technical skills, as is of course common in the realms of digital.

The responses to our Digital Trends survey accentuate that creative and design talent is increasingly at a premium. More than a third (36%) of in-house practitioners cite *availability of creative talent* as a key external challenge (*Figure 10*), and *finding and retaining the right people with the right skills* (37%) as a major internal barrier (*Figure 11*).

Considering both this talent shortage, and budget restrictions, it is natural that many organisations are therefore concentrating on upskilling existing staff. The vast majority of company respondents (79%) and agency staff (74%) report they (or their clients) will *invest in digital skills and education during 2018* (*Figure 12*). However, this still leaves a considerable backlog of organisations that have not recognised the importance that creative and design skills play in digital communications and CX programmes.

10. https://www.creativeindustriesfederation.com/sites/default/files/2017-11/GlobalTalent_v16.pdf

**FIGURE 12: WHAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR ORGANISATION'S (OR YOUR CLIENTS') PLANS TO INVEST IN UPSKILLING ITS (OR THEIR) WORKFORCE IN 2018?**




Company respondents: 338
Agency respondents: 632

As noted previously in this section, keeping up with the latest technological and other developments in the industry is a key challenge for creative and design leaders in an age where innovation brings a new opportunity or threat on an almost daily basis.

*Figure 13* shows the broad mix of resources they utilise to keep up-to-speed and demonstrates that no single route is sufficient.

Third-party information providers remain prominent, particularly for agency staff that are evidently more strongly compelled than in-house peers to be fully abreast of industry developments. *Creative* (74%) and *tech* (56%) content sites are their resources of choice, while *webcasts and webinars* (43%), as well as *magazines* (37%), are also popular.

There is a clear sense that internal collaboration and knowledge sharing could be improved. Less than a third (32%) of client-side respondents indicate they remain connected to the latest technical and industry information via the *marketing team*, despite the latter having a front-seat view on digitisation. This drops to one in five, or fewer, when it comes to information flow from senior leadership. *Industry peers / competitors* are utilised for information much more widely (by 46% of company respondents).

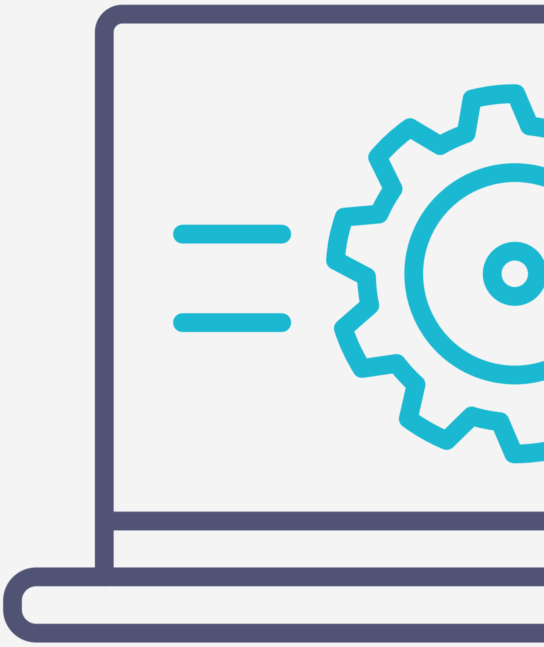


**FIGURE 13: IN ORDER TO KEEP AHEAD OF MAJOR TECHNOLOGY AND INDUSTRY CHANGES, HOW DO YOU STAY CONNECTED TO THE LATEST INFORMATION?**

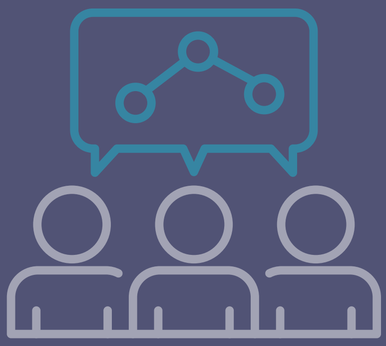

Company respondents: 577
Agency respondents: 1,477

# 6. Actionable tips to help future-proof your creative and design capabilities

## 1. Nurture a design culture

Organisations must recognise that good design must transcend product teams and permeate the whole business, including those working on more tactical graphic elements and basic branding, through to those more strategically involved in the development of compelling content, services and customer experiences. Design should be seen by leadership as a way for the business to differentiate itself from competitors, with key performance indicators in place to measure the quality of the customer experience and its impact on business performance. A design-centric culture will also help to attract the right talent to help your business excel.

## 2. Focus on collaborative processes and efficient workflows



Increased demand for content to drive personalised digital experiences means that workflows need to be optimised as much as possible, through better processes and use of technology that facilitates a smoother employee experience. Cross-functional collaboration and processes are essential for businesses aspiring to break out of a silo-based approach to become more design-oriented. Design champions should be identified within the organisation to advocate the need for creative excellence, and to lead effective cross-departmental teams. They can help to establish the formal processes and workflows that need to be put in place to ensure that creative and design-related demand within the business is being met.

## 3. Find the right balance between art and science

Providing compelling and personalised customer experiences involves the right blend of art and science. While data-driven marketing has rightly gained considerable traction, companies neglect the creative side of their programmes at their peril. A company can have the best technology platforms and data scientists in the world, but without the right creative input and ideas, their marketing and CX programmes will ultimately flounder. Notwithstanding the importance of data science and technology-driven benefits of automation and machine learning, there is no substitute for human creativity when it comes to ideas which can achieve cut-through. Companies should help their creatives embrace the opportunities for innovation afforded by the digital age.

## 4. Focus on training and mentorship

This research has found that finding creative talent and retaining people with the right skills are significant challenges for businesses. Meanwhile, separate research by Forrester Consulting, commissioned by Adobe[11], has found that companies that were design-led placed greater emphasis on training and mentorship. Companies must prioritise investment in people if they want to compete successfully in the creative arena. As well as making sure that creative professionals are up-to-speed with the latest tools and skillsets, companies must ensure that they have the internal capabilities to develop world-class customer experiences rooted in great design.

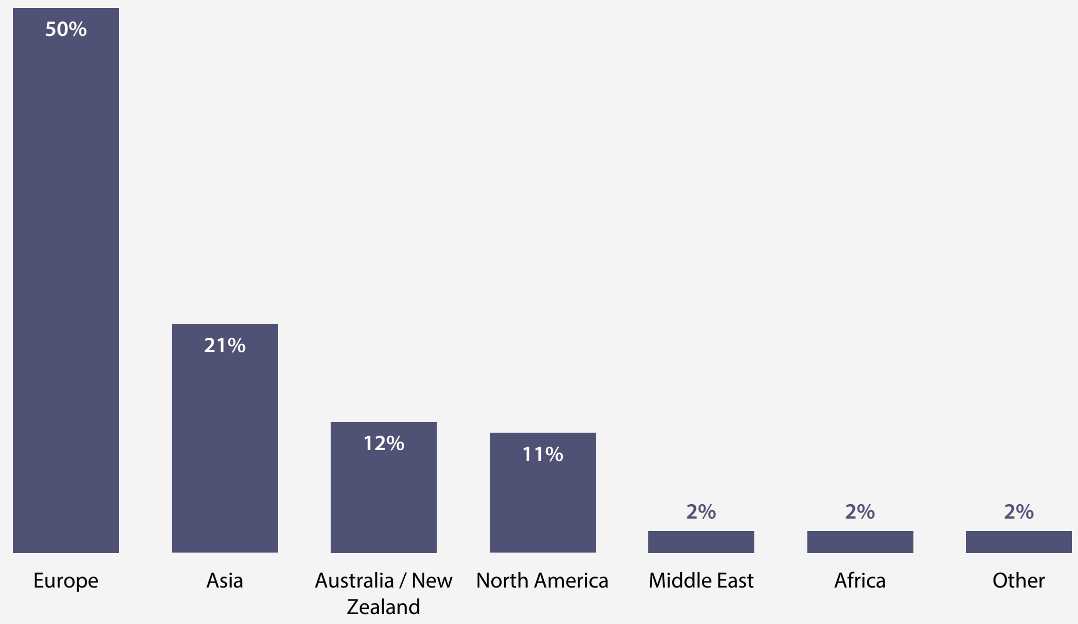
## 5. Embrace technology

As this research shows, many companies are struggling with outdated workflows and difficulty sourcing the right creative assets. The technology is out there to help make the life of creative and design leaders much easier. At a team level, the right customer experience technology will help you allocate roles and manage tasks effectively, so that your processes are fully optimised. Best-of-breed technology can also make it much easier to manage an array of digital assets, boosting productivity and the employee experience. Companies also need to ensure they are benefiting from the opportunities afforded by AI and machine learning.

11. https://landing.adobe.com/dam/downloads/whitepapers/305222.en.forrester.design-led-firms-advantage.pdf

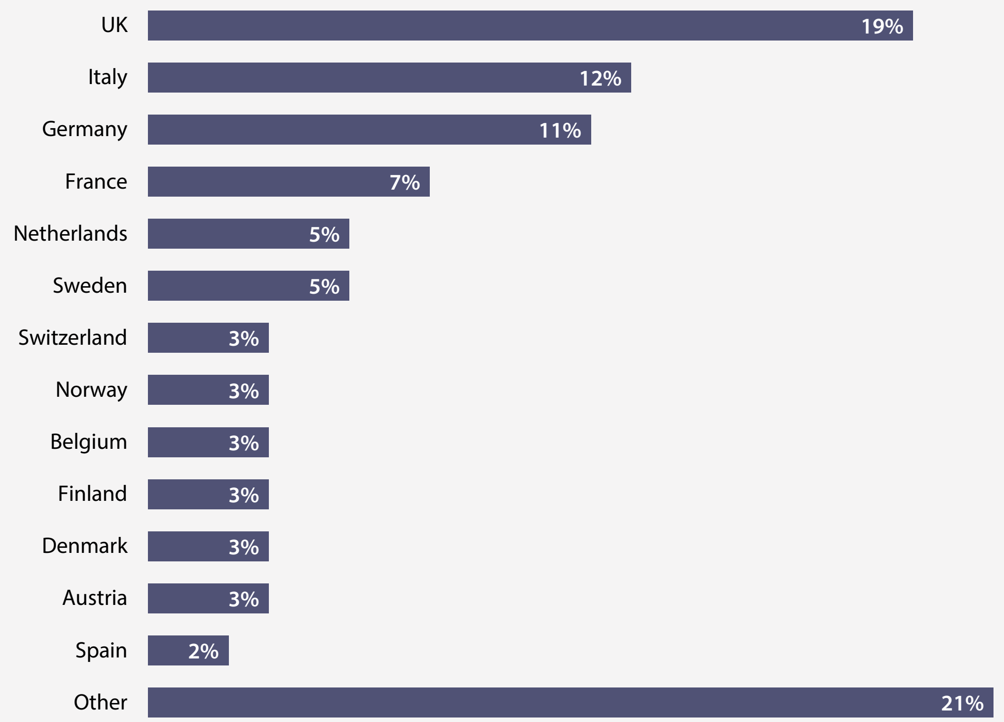
# 7. Appendix: respondent profiles

FIGURE 14: IN WHICH REGION ARE YOU BASED?



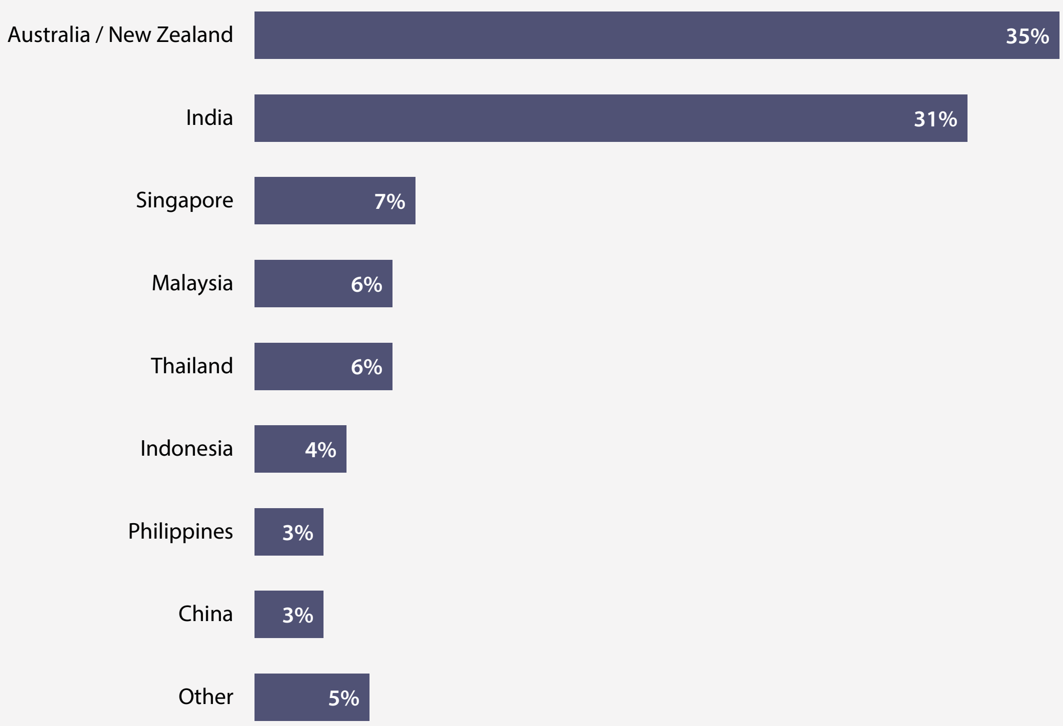

Respondents: 2,665

RESPONDENTS BASED IN EUROPE
FIGURE 15: IN WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING COUNTRIES ARE YOU BASED?



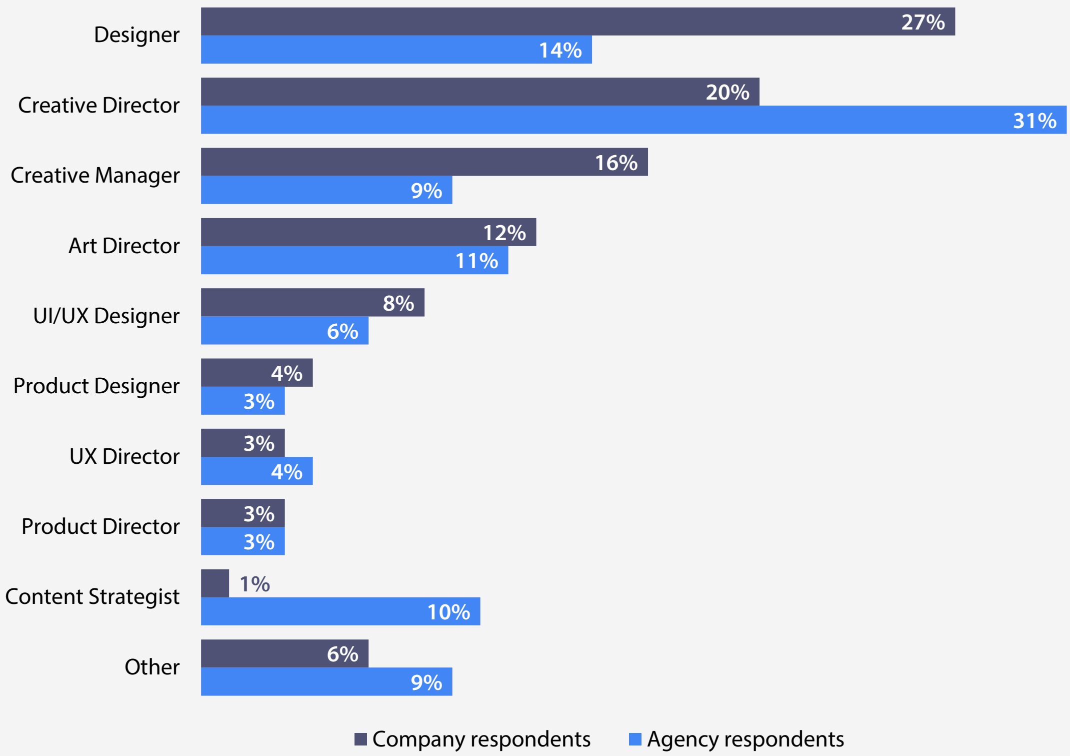

Respondents: 1,328

RESPONDENTS BASED IN ASIA PACIFIC
FIGURE 16: IN WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING COUNTRIES ARE YOU BASED?



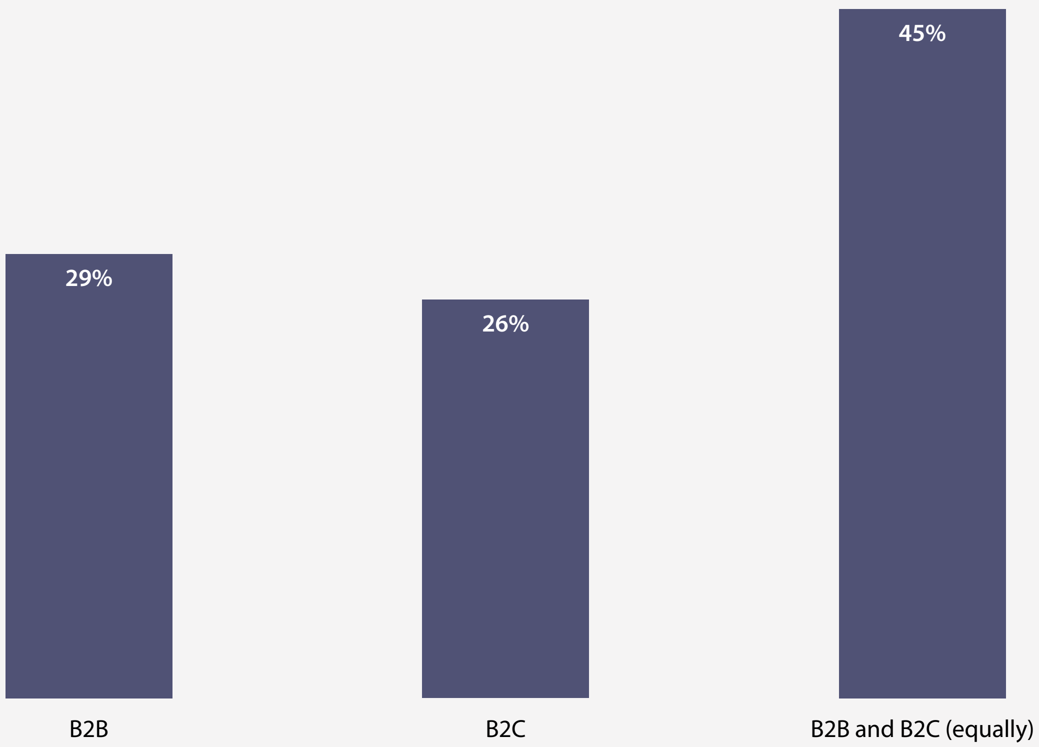

Respondents: 869

### FIGURE 17: WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING MOST ACCURATELY DESCRIBES YOUR JOB TITLE?




Company respondents: 834
Agency respondents: 1,829

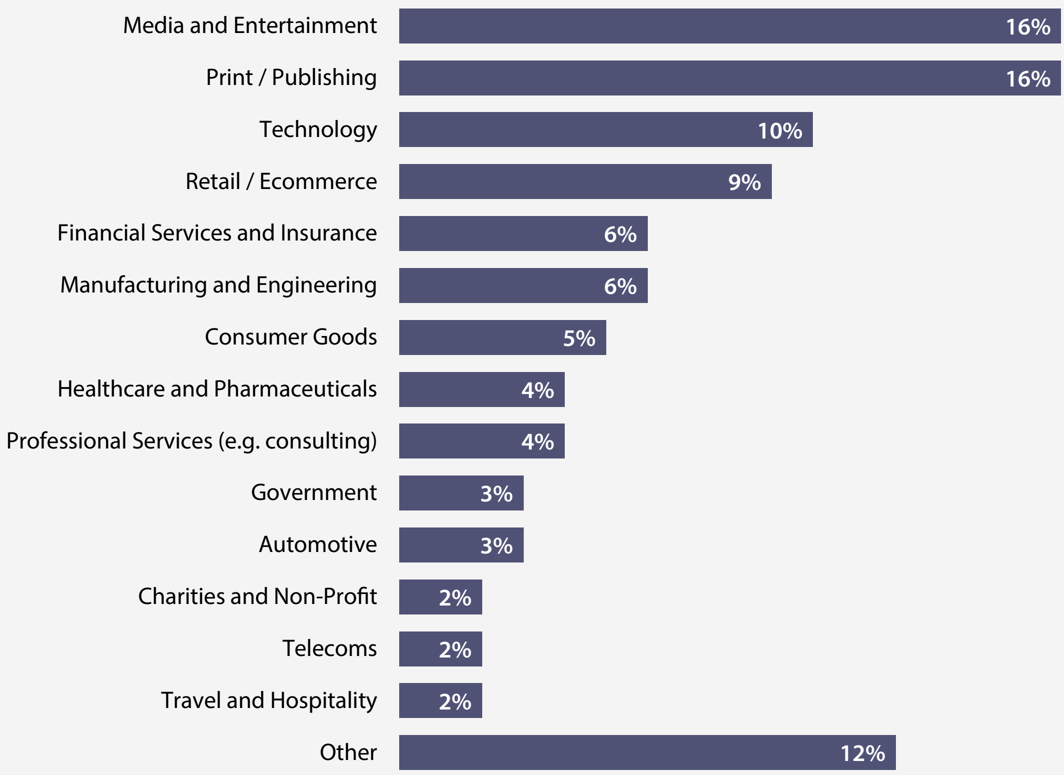
### COMPANY RESPONDENTS
### FIGURE 18: ARE YOU MORE FOCUSED ON B2B OR B2C AS A BUSINESS?




Respondents: 791

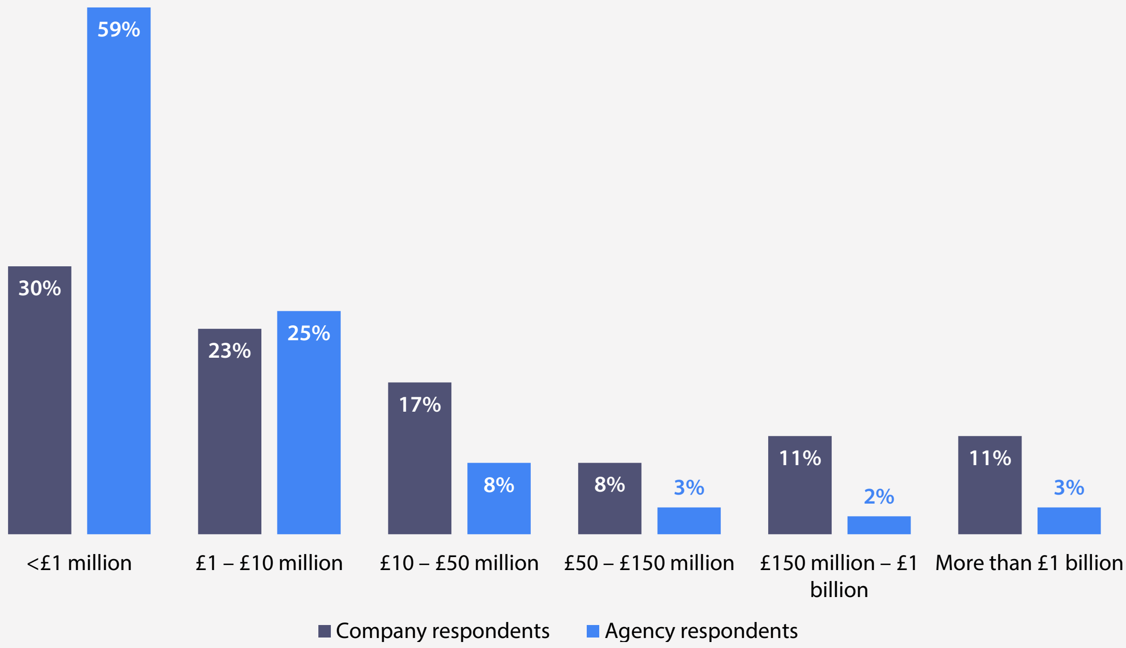
COMPANY RESPONDENTS

## FIGURE 19: IN WHICH BUSINESS SECTOR IS YOUR ORGANISATION?




Respondents: 792

## FIGURE 20: WHAT IS YOUR ANNUAL COMPANY REVENUE?




Respondents: 966

## About Econsultancy

Econsultancy's mission is to help its customers achieve excellence in digital business, marketing and ecommerce through research, training and events.

Founded in 1999, Econsultancy has offices in New York, London and Singapore.

Econsultancy is used by over 600,000 professionals every month. Subscribers get access to research, market data, best practice guides, case studies and elearning – all focused on helping individuals and enterprises get better at digital.

The subscription is supported by digital transformation services including digital capability programmes, training courses, skills assessments and audits. We train and develop thousands of professionals each year as well as running events and networking that bring the Econsultancy community together around the world.

Subscribe to Econsultancy today to accelerate your journey to digital excellence.

Call us to find out more:

- New York: +1 212 971 0630
- London: +44 207 269 1450
- Singapore: +65 6653 1911

## About Adobe Experience Cloud

Adobe Experience Cloud is a comprehensive set of cloud services designed to give enterprises everything needed to deliver exceptional customer experiences.

Comprised of Adobe Marketing Cloud, Adobe Advertising Cloud and Adobe Analytics Cloud, Experience Cloud is built on the Adobe Cloud Platform and integrated with Adobe Creative Cloud and Document Cloud.

Leveraging Adobe Sensei's machine learning and artificial intelligence capabilities, Adobe Experience Cloud combines world-class solutions, a complete extensive platform, comprehensive data and content systems, and a robust partner ecosystem that offer an unmatched expertise in experience delivery.

To learn more about Adobe Experience Cloud, visit http://www.adobe.com/uk/experience-cloud.html.