Brandfolder
by smartsheet

Brace for Impact:
The Disconnect Costing
Creatives 520 Hours a Year

A BRANDFOLDER GUIDE

Brace for Impact:
The Disconnect Costing Creatives 520 Hours a Year

Demand for creative teams and their talents is steadily increasing as digital channels continue to multiply and visual mediums grow ever-more popular.

The pandemic accelerated this shift by forcing brands to increase their virtual presence and move nearly all consumer interactions online. And in a world where people work on 4K monitors and carry Super Retina XDR iPhones in their pockets, mediocre design is no longer an option.

Hiring top-notch creative teams has gone from "nice to have" to a business imperative. In fact, it's been proven that companies that foster creativity enjoy greater market share by a factor of 1.5 compared to less-creative brands.

We were curious about how this newfound esteem is reshaping creatives' day-to-day work lives and the impact they're able to make on their brands. So we surveyed 300 creative professionals about growing demands, how they spend their time, and the value the content they generate adds to their organizations.

What we uncovered is a surprising disconnect that's costing both brands and creatives. Read on for the results, as well as what creative teams need to reach their full potential and elevate their business impact.

Top Brands Where Creativity Takes Center Stage

Adobe

MOKUYOBI

airbnb

NETFLIX

Apple

Square

Chobani

virgin atlantic

invision

zendesk

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A Quick Note on Survey Methodology

Brandfolder commissioned Paradigm Sample, an online research company, to survey creative professionals about the overall nature, perception and impact of their work.

During the month of May 2022, 300 online interviews were conducted across four key segments, each with a quota of n=75:
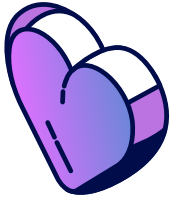
Small business: 1 - 100 employees
Middle market: 101 - 500 employees
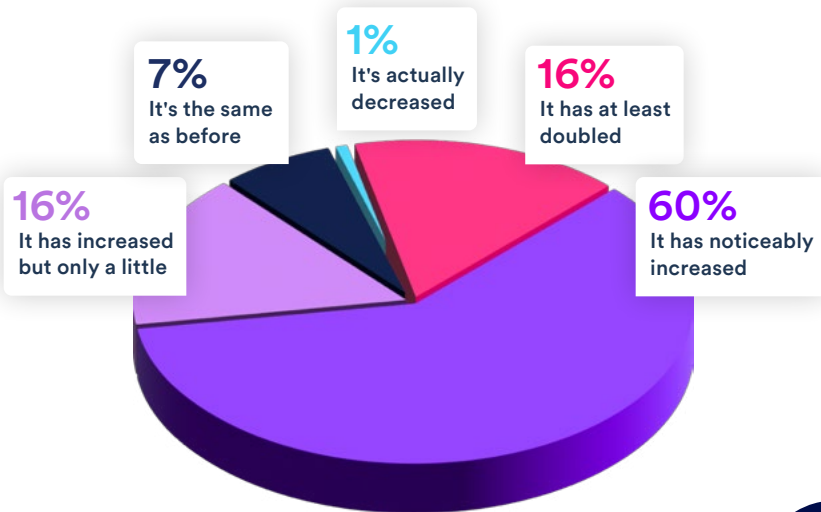Commercial: 501 - 1,000 employees
Enterprise: 1,001+ employees

The margin of error is ±5.7% at a confidence interval of .95. Please note that not all percentages may add up to 100% due to rounding.

Creatives Are Feeling the Love

When asked whether the visibility and importance of creative work at their organization had increased over the last 12-18 months, only 8% of survey respondents said it had not. Meanwhile, 76% reported a marked increase.

How much do you believe the visibility and importance of creative work have increased within your organization over the last 12-18 months?

7%
It's the same as before

1%
It's actually decreased

16%
It has at least doubled

16%
It has increased but only a little

60%
It has noticeably increased

Their elevated workplace status is evidenced by the fact that over 80% of creatives say they now have executive-level representation within their companies. This is impressive considering that the role of Chief Design Officer (CDO) just emerged at the beginning of the previous decade.

Does the creative team have executive presentatin within your organization (e.g., Chief Design or Creative Officer)?

1%
Not sure

18%
No

81%
Yes
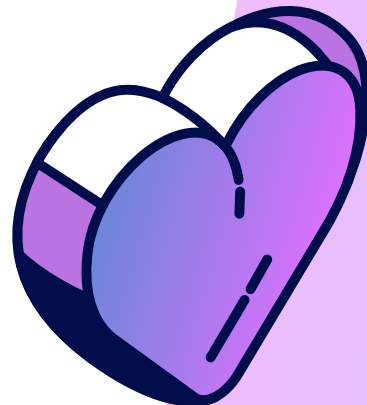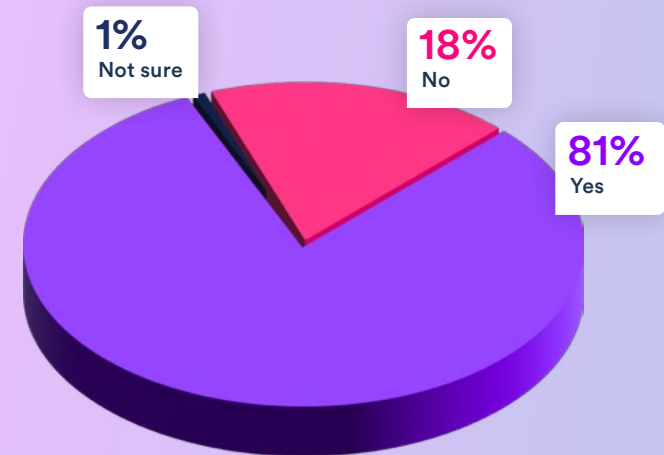
But They're Also Feeling the Squeeze

Of course, this newfound notability doesn't come without added responsibility. Nearly 90% of respondents said that the number of creative requests they receive had increased over the last 12-18 months.

A little over 50% said the volume had "noticeably" increased, while 16% said it had at least doubled. Respondents from enterprise companies (1,001+ employees) were most likely to say that the number of requests they take in had grown.

▌ How much has the number of creative requests you receive increased over the last 12-18 months?

13%
It's the same as before

1%
It's actually decreased

16%
It has at least doubled

19%
It has increased but only a little

51%
It has noticeably increased
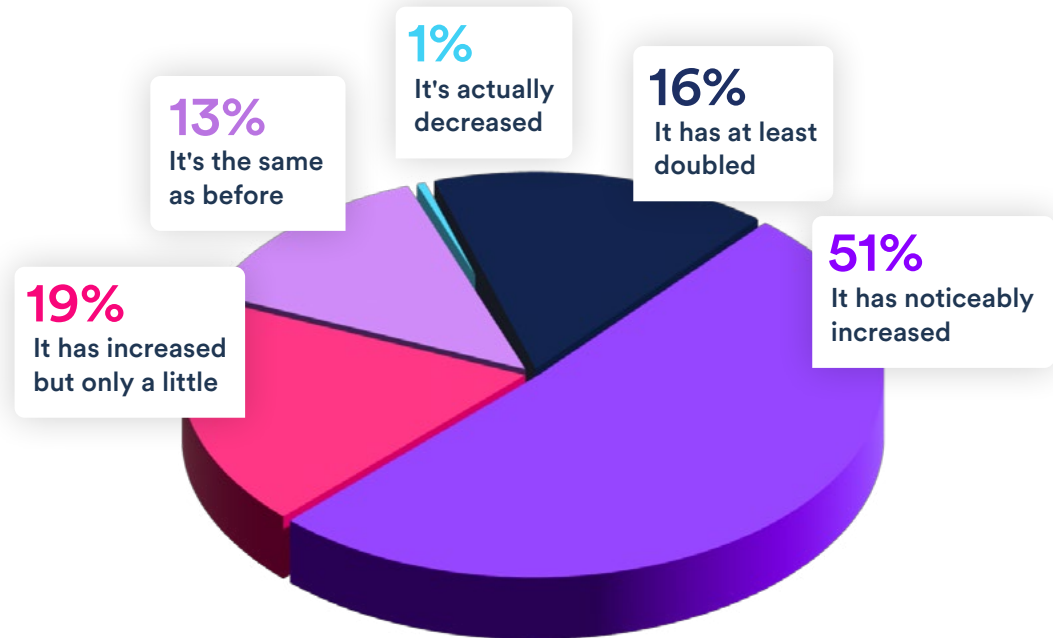
Is Talent More Respected Than Time?

Despite being asked to juggle so many more requests, creatives still spend a median of 10 hours per week on repetitive and administrative tasks such as resizing and reformatting images, emailing content to colleagues and searching for files. That's more than 520 hours each year!

### More Than Just a Pretty Face
Creatives bring so much more to the workforce than impeccable taste! They're also known and loved for being:

✦ INNOVATIVE ✦ PASSIONATE ✦

✦ SELF-SUFFICIENT ✦ CURIOUS ✦

✦ EMPATHETIC ✦

This low-value work costs 65% of creative folks a minimum of nine hours each week, while 15% said it takes up two out of every five workdays. For a small team of, say, three creatives, this adds up to a staggering 2,496 hours annually, which translates to nearly $105,000 a year based on the median hourly wage for designers in San Francisco, CA!

On average, how much time do you spend each week on repetitive and administrative tasks (e.g. sending assets to people, searching for files, resizing images, etc.)?

Time Spent (hours/week)

<2	6%
3-5	7%
6-8	22%
9-11	30%
12-15	20%
>15	15%
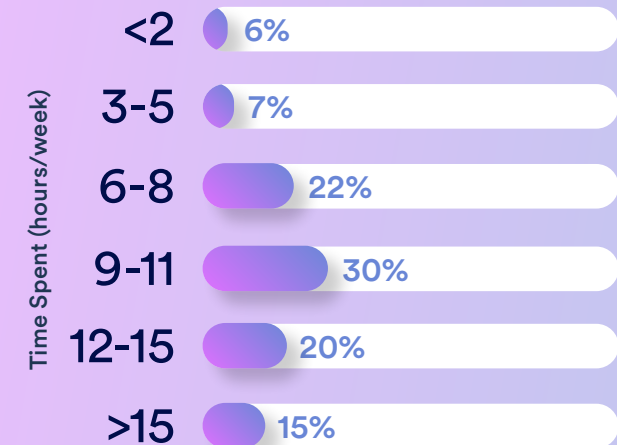
Actions Speak Louder Than Words

Similarly, although the majority (60%) of creatives claimed that the visibility and importance of their work had "noticeably" increased, 78% said that a minimum of 30% of the new assets they create either go unused or are used only once on average. A startling one-third of respondents (32%) said the same for up to 75% of new creative assets.

On average, what percentage of new creative assets either go unused or are used just once at your organization?

Percentage of new creative assets

<15%	9%
16-30%	12%
31-45%	18%
46-60%	21%
61-75%	32%
76-90%	6%
91-100%	1%
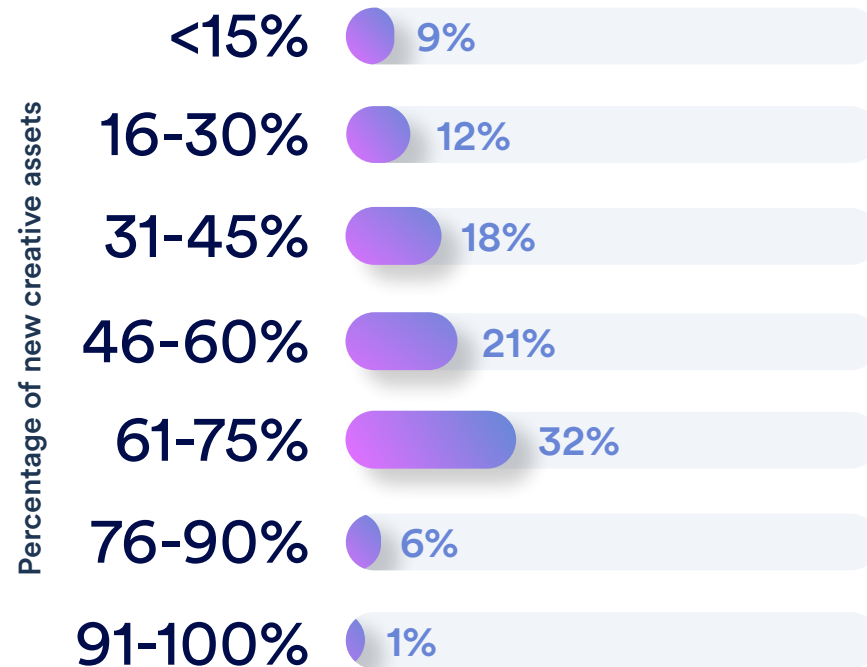
This begs the question:

How much more of an impact could creative teams have if brands made it a priority to elevate their day-to-day work and maximize usage of the content they create?
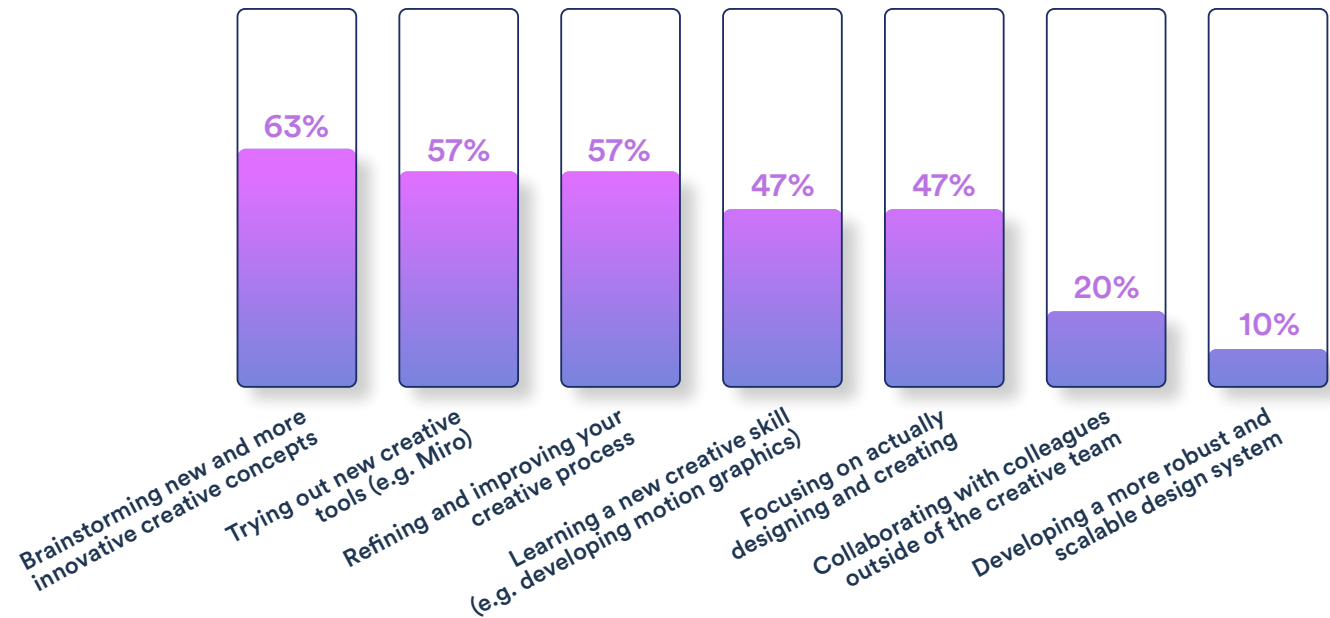
What Creative Teams Would Do With More Time

Creatives know exactly where they would focus their attention and improve their efforts if given the opportunity. When asked what they would do if they were given additional time to complete more meaningful work each day, 63% of respondents chose "brainstorm new and more innovative creative concepts."

"Try out new creative tools" and "refine and improve my creative process" tied for the second-most-popular answer at 57% each, while "learn a new creative skill" and "focus on actually designing and creating" tied for third at 47% each.

If you were given additional time to complete meaningful work each day, how would you spend it? Select your top 3 answers.

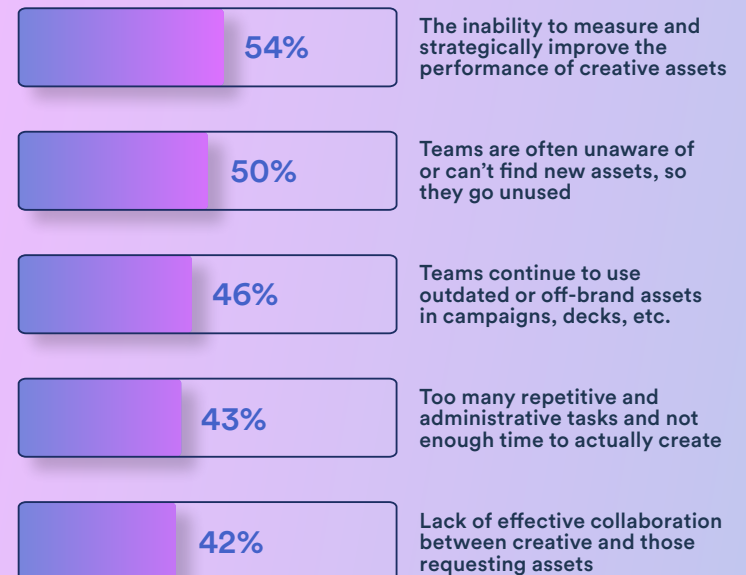| Brainstorming new and more innovative creative concepts	Trying out new creative tools (e.g. Miro)	Refining and improving your creative process	Learning a new creative skill (e.g. developing motion graphics)	Focusing on actually designing and creating	Collaborating with colleagues outside of the creative team	Developing a more robust and scalable design system
63%	57%	57%	47%	47%	20%	10%

So, What Exactly Is Stunting Creative Impact?

Despite the influx of requests and amount of time spent on administrative tasks, only 20% and 43% of creatives, respectively, ranked these issues among the top three roadblocks preventing them from making a more significant creative impact. Instead, respondents rated "the inability to measure and strategically improve the performance of creative assets" as their number-one challenge (54%).

The remaining top five roadblocks stunting creatives' brand impact involve cross-functional team members and their inability to effectively access, use or collaborate around content:

50% Teams are often unaware of or can't find new assets, so they go unused

46% Teams continue to use outdated or off-brand assets in campaigns, decks, etc.

42% Lack of effective collaboration between creative and those requesting assets

These results offer clear insight into why such a large percentage of new creative assets are used just once or not at all.

What is preventing you from making a more significant creative impact on your brand? Select your top 3 answers.

54% The inability to measure and strategically improve the performance of creative assets

50% Teams are often unaware of or can't find new assets, so they go unused

46% Teams continue to use outdated or off-brand assets in campaigns, decks, etc.

43% Too many repetitive and administrative tasks and not enough time to actually create

42% Lack of effective collaboration between creative and those requesting assets

How Brands Can Elevate and Empower Creatives

When asked which tools and capabilities would enable them to make a more significant creative impact on their brand, respondents chose the following as their top three:

1 — **50%**

Centralized asset management that integrates with popular creative and marketing tools

Keeping approved content in a shared workspace that teams can access directly from the tools they love amplifies content usage, brand consistency and creative impact. For example, some digital asset management (DAM) platforms integrate with marketing automation tools like HubSpot, which allows teams to find the right assets and add them to emails, landing pages and other campaign materials in just a few clicks.

2 — **48%**

Project/process management to streamline asset collaboration, reviews and approvals

Managing work-in-progress assets alongside creative briefs, inspiration, work status, assignees, proofing, and more keeps content-related communication in context and enhances cross-functional visibility. Project or work management solutions such as Smartsheet improve collaboration to streamline asset production and help creatives ensure that requesters get what they need when they need it.

3 — **45%**

A single source of truth for all creative assets with intuitive organization and version control

Maintaining a single source of truth for all videos, images, PDFs and other types of content leaves no doubt in teams' minds about where to go to find the latest and greatest brand materials. The best DAMs offer intuitive organization, AI-powered asset tagging and classification, and automatic version control tracking that make it fast and easy for teams to browse, search and discover content.
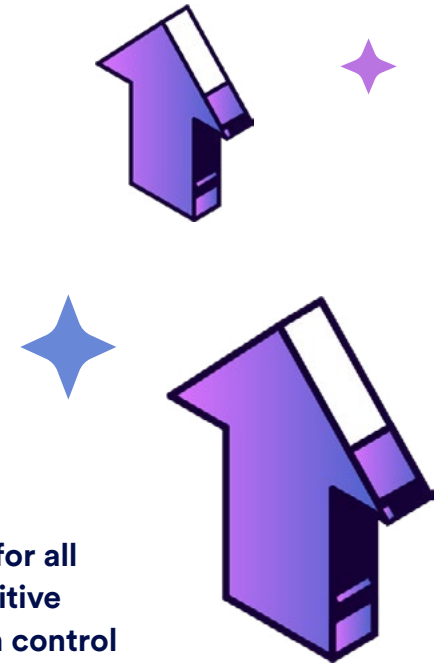
Advocate and Elevate

It's true: Creative teams are quickly rising through the ranks at brands today. As Brandfolder's own Director of Marketing Adam Figueroa stated in a recent AdAge interview, "During the last few years, creativity itself has really been put front and center."

However, as our survey results show, there is still a disconnect between brands' expectations of creatives and their growing responsibilities versus the resources and regard they receive on a daily basis. To maximize the business impact of their work, creatives must start advocating for what they need, and brands must start listening.

To learn how some of today's leading creatives have elevated their work, achieved maximum impact and secured their seats at the table, read our interview featuring experts from Spotify, Firehouse Agency, Industry Dive and more.

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