



# From Chaos to Compliance

What Creative Marketing Teams  
Are Struggling With Today

 **ziflow**

## Introduction

There is no question that marketing teams are being challenged to produce more, in less time, with the same (or fewer) resources than ever before.

Marketing tactics and channels have multiplied in recent years, where we see hyper-segmentation and personalization as new normals, driving the need for more creative content.

On top of this requirement for more content, campaigns need to be delivered to market faster than ever before, requiring marketers of all disciplines (creatives, production, management, etc.) to work as efficiently as possible throughout the creative process.

Additionally, marketers are increasingly being asked to demonstrate controls over their processes, especially those related to the review and approval of customer facing assets. This has added a new challenge in the quest to deliver quality work as fast as possible.

Towards the end of 2017, we surveyed over 500 marketing professionals to find out what was potentially holding them back from delivering a high volume of work on tight schedules, in other words, attaining the “escape velocity” required for high performance.

We found that increased volumes of work are indeed the new normal, while at the same time, most organizations are taking a brute-force approach to collaboration and delivery - they're getting done, but not as efficiently as possible.

## Key Takeaways

### 1. The (Project Overload) Struggle is Real

The majority of marketers surveyed are managing more than four unique projects on a weekly basis, with a third managing more than six.

### 2. Creative Review and Approval Processes Are Still Lacking

Many marketing teams have not yet fully leveraged the benefits of applying processes to the review of creative content. Mainstays such as email, printouts and sticky notes are still prevalent.

### 3. A Creative Project's Achilles Heel - The Feedback Cycle

The feedback cycle is, unsurprisingly, identified as a timeline killer; the lack of processes is highlighted as non-specialized tools are used to gather and share feedback, which in most cases, complicates the process.

### 4. Marketing Compliance - The New Normal

Compliance now affects the vast majority of marketers.

Whether it is regulatory requirements or brand guidelines, there is a need to demonstrate control over the processes that involve reviews, revisions and approvals. The marketing team that doesn't have to account for compliance as part of the creative process is now the exception, not the rule.

# Survey Results

# 01 The (Project Overload) Struggle is Real

A majority (60%) of respondents reported managing more than four (4) unique projects on a weekly basis. There's a more significant challenge for 1/3 (33%) of respondents who say they're handling six (6) or more a week.

**60%** Manage 4 or more projects weekly

**33%** Manage 6 or more projects weekly

As the number of marketing projects increase, so too does the combination of stakeholders, contributors, resources and "customers" - those who will benefit from the output of the project for their own particular needs and uses.

Thankfully, the combination of technology and processes allow teams to manage more projects simultaneously. That is, of course, if technologies and processes are implemented, which, as you'll read later on, isn't always the case.

# 02 Creative Review and Approval Processes Are Still Lacking

As part of the survey, we were particularly interested to understand how marketing teams were dealing with the review and approval of creative content (advertisements, artwork, collaterals, designs, etc.). The timespan between concept (the original idea) to execution (the finished, customer-facing work) is increasingly a key performance indicator (KPI) for marketing teams today.

## 53%

admitted to **not having a consistent process for the review and approval of creative content.**



Consistent processes are still lacking in the creative review and approval process. Surprisingly, over half (53%) admitted to not having a consistent process for the review and approval of creative content. As a standalone issue, this is problematic. When combined with the increasing workloads of marketing teams, the absence of consistent creative review and approval processes could be disastrous - to both quality and timelines.

### Looking a little deeper

Only 10% of those surveyed indicated they use an online proofing software to manage review and approval of creative content. Of those that do use online proofing software, 75% reported they do in fact have processes in place. Clearly there is a direct correlation between the adoption of online proofing software and the consistency of the review and approval process.



## 03

# A Creative Project's Achilles Heel - The Feedback Cycle

Feedback is an essential piece of the creative process. There are several key elements that make feedback effective, such as specificity, timeliness and medium, that have a direct impact on the success of projects.

As part of the survey, we wanted to see if gathering feedback was an issue, and if so, why. We also set out to discover which technologies and processes were being utilized to solicit and manage feedback.

79% of those surveyed indicated they encounter regular issues with gathering feedback on their creative projects. Half (55%) point to vague, or non-actionable feedback as the challenge, while almost a quarter (24%) identify the key stakeholders in a project as the role most frequently holding up the feedback cycle.

## 79%

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## 55%

point to vague, or non-actionable feedback as the challenge

## 24%

identify the key stakeholders in a project as the role most frequently holding up the feedback cycle

We've already identified that lack of process (especially when combined with the volume of projects) is a potential landmine in the creative review and approval process. What about the tools being used to harness feedback?

More than a third surveyed (35%) are using out of date methods for providing feedback on creative content - emails, hard copy printouts, sticky notes, etc.

Given the pain associated with scanning email threads for actionable feedback, even though it's a digital medium, it has little advantage over its analog counterparts.

Interestingly, 20% of those surveyed say they use project management software for the review and approval process. Yet the overwhelming majority of those marketers (80%) still rely on email as well!

The key takeaway here is that non-specialized tools, such as general purpose email and project management exacerbate the problem of gathering and sharing feedback, as opposed to helping solve the challenge.

## 04

# Marketing Compliance - The New Normal

Marketing compliance has evolved beyond trademark attribution and copyright designations. For many years, regulated industries such as tobacco, alcohol and pharmaceuticals have all required disclaimers, warnings and proper usage notations on marketing materials. That was the extent of compliance requirements for the few that were affected by it.

## 78%

their work was subject to at least one type of compliance

Today, however, marketing compliance has become obligatory for many organizations. In fact, 78% of those surveyed said their work was subject to at least one type of compliance (brand, regulatory, industry, etc.).

When cross-referencing these respondents, we find that 46% of those subject to compliance requirements still rely on feedback channels that are typically problematic for compliance auditing - email, hard copy printouts, sticky notes, etc.

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An important point to clarify - it's not merely the need to comply - **it's also the capacity to comply**. There appears to be a massive disconnect between the compliance requirements and the tools that have been chosen to help them manage control over their processes and output.

**This Needs  
to Get Fixed.**

**N**  **W**

# Survey Results Speak For Themselves - Online Proofing Helps Drive Process

The delivery of creative projects isn't going to get any easier. Combining the increased volume of creative work with the added layer of compliance poses a real challenge for delivery schedules.

The survey results show that those organizations which utilize online proofing software benefit from improved processes.

75% of those surveyed who use online proofing say they have a consistent process for reviewing all types of creative content (designs, video, web, etc.)

For organizations reporting lack of feedback/weak feedback, only ~1% of those are using online proofing

10%

Of those surveyed use online proofing.

75%

Of those that do use online proofing, 75% say have a consistent process for reviewing all types of creative content.

1%

Conversely, of those organisations reporting lack of feedback/weak feedback, only ~1% of those are using online proofing.

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## Additional reading and resources:

[What is online proofing?](#)

[Online Proofing Best Practices](#)

[Five Signs Your Marketing Team Needs Online Proofing](#)

**Ziflow online proofing was used for the review and approval of this ebook.**

**In total, it encompassed:**



3 versions shared with 6 total team members



24 comments, 4 attachments to comments, 16 replies and 6 upvotes to comments



1 changes required decision, 3 approval decisions

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## **About Ziflow**

Ziflow is an online proofing application for marketers, which streamlines the review and approval of creative content to deliver marketing projects faster. We do this by improving collaboration, centralizing feedback and eliminating manual steps through automated workflow. Ziflow replaces email, printouts and other ad-hoc methods for reviewing creative content with an enterprise-ready, pure-play online proofing solution.



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