Adobe

Brand intelligence for an AI-native world.

A study on brand value, trust, and consistency for 2027 and beyond.

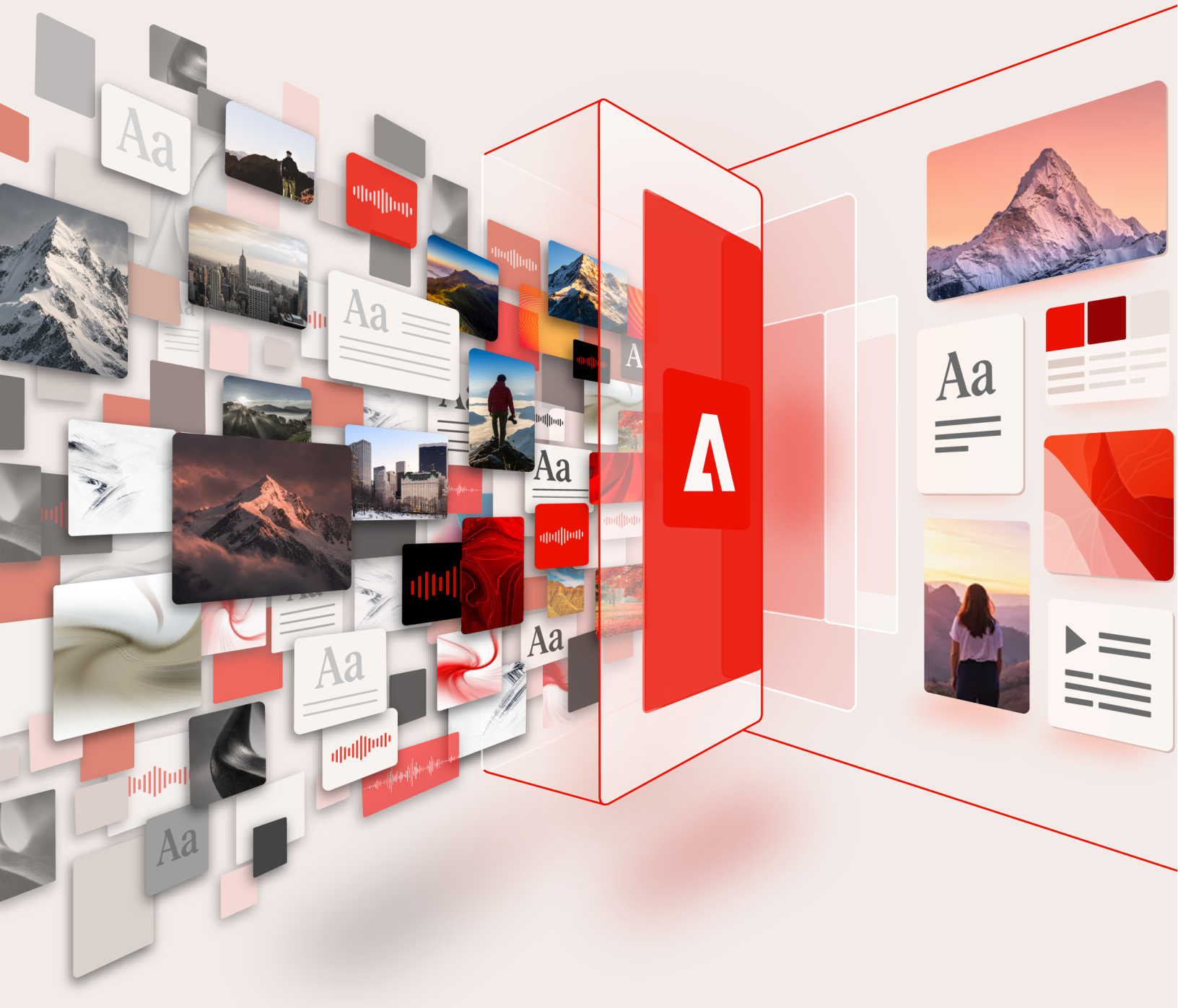


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Foreword

As enterprise leaders settle into the agentic era, some are reasonably asking: **In a world where AI takes the lead, will the concept of "brand" even matter?**

The answer to this question is unequivocally yes; **87% of enterprise marketing and creative leaders** expect the role of trusted brands to grow as AI increases in ubiquity, and consumers and B2B buyers alike echo that sentiment. As such, investments in AI that help solidify, elevate, and strengthen your enterprise brand should be viewed as critical.

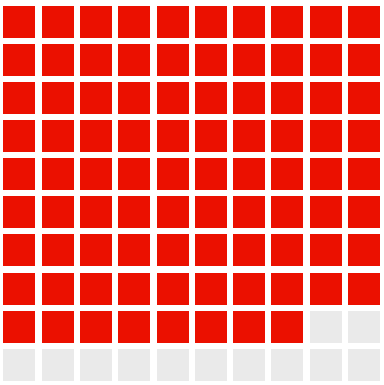
One of the strongest trust signals marketers can control is a consistent brand expression (who the brand is, what it stands for, and how it is expressed), yet consistency breaks as content is generated faster than it can be reviewed. The question now becomes: How can enterprises achieve content velocity at scale without sacrificing quality and brand adherence?

Our research, which surveyed 1,400+ customers, as well as 600+ verified marketing, creative, and brand professionals in large enterprises, explores this challenge deeply. It also examines new approaches and capabilities that help solve it and are delivering enterprise value today.

The hidden link: brand identity, trust, and loyalty

Trust is built on brand consistency

As mentioned in the foreword, enterprises and customers expect trusted brands to increase in importance as AI usage grows. A consistent brand expression is one of the most powerful trust signals marketing and creative teams can control: **83%** of consumers say that a brand consistently looking, sounding, and showing up the same way drives trust. In fact, not doing so can cost brands even more, with **88%** of customers saying an inconsistent brand expression decreases trust[1]:



88%

of customers say an inconsistent brand expression decreases trust

> **"Consistency matters because it is the only thing a customer can check quickly.** If the thing in front of them looks like the thing they remember, they stop checking. And if it does not, they go and look somewhere else."
>
> VP Brand and Marketing (Retail Co.)

Loyalty is built on trust

Trust in brands influences behaviors beyond those tied to a single journey, driving advocacy, loyalty and even forgiveness. **90%** of customers say they'll recommend a brand they trust to others, and **82%** say they'll stay with a brand they trust **even after a bad experience**.

Whereas brand consistency may be the domain of marketers, getting it wrong has far-reaching business implications. In fact, **75%** of survey respondents reported that their organizations have suffered meaningful business consequences that can be directly traced to content being off-brand.

[1] *Source: Adobe Brand Intelligence study; B2C customer respondents. The corresponding figures for B2B respondents are 89% and 86%, respectively.*

The off-brand problem

Off-brand content is extremely widespread

Just under three-quarters of enterprise content approvers we surveyed admit that they have signed off on off-brand content.[2] While assets created by humans have never been perfect, the rise in AI-generated content and the ever-accelerating pace of enterprise marketing have undoubtedly contributed to this alarming statistic.

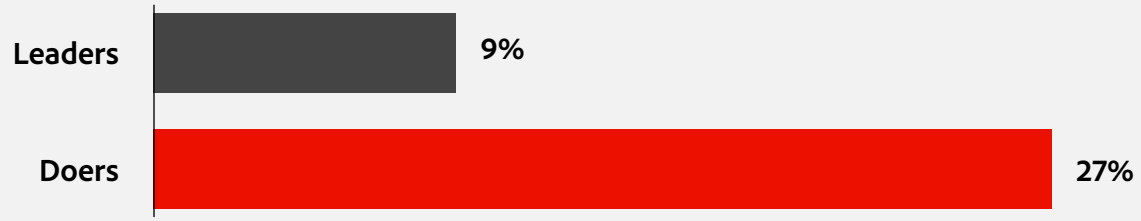
74%

of approvers have signed off on off-brand content

The problem is ~3X larger than leaders think

There is a clear misalignment between leaders and practitioners on the size of the problem. Those closer to the work (who we affectionately call "doers") say that **27%** of their organization's public-facing content is off-brand, compared to a **9%** estimate from leaders:

Q: What % of your organization's public-facing content is off-brand?[3]



This misalignment may stem from several drivers, such as unequal visibility into the work or differing opinions on what is "off-brand". While we are not here to decide who is right or wrong, reaching a common view of the problem is a prerequisite to getting it addressed. The longer the misalignment persists, the longer the business benefits of greater brand integrity go unrealized.

> "What we make is on brand. **What our channel makes is a coin toss. And our channel makes most of it.** If you counted by the number of documents a customer might see, I would guess most of them never passed anybody here."
>
> SVP Creative (Manufacturing Co.)

[2] *Source: Adobe Brand Intelligence study; enterprise respondents who indicated they approve content before it goes live.*
[3] *Source: Adobe Brand Intelligence study; enterprise respondents. "Leaders" are defined as C-suite, SVP, and EVP, and "doers" as directors and below.*

The importance of judgment and context

Good content often pushes the brand into new directions or responds immediately to the current cultural or competitive environment. This inevitably means that, sometimes, rules are not enough.

Our research found this to be true. "Doers" claim that **24%** of marketing or campaign assets that reach a reviewer's queue require a judgment call, and **seven out of ten admit that they rely on institutional knowledge** to determine if content is on brand. This is significant because it tells you that even perfect guidelines would not solve the off-brand problem.

24%

of content approvals require human judgment

70%

rely on unwritten rules to determine what is on brand

Additionally, **89%** of "doers" say that when the guidelines do not cover a specific situation, the answer often lives with only a few people or a single team. This leaves groups subjected to the risks and downsides of organizational realities: **63%** say it usually takes over a week to get a definitive answer to a question when guidelines fall short.

This means that organizations are leaving the question of brand integrity up to the bottlenecks, flaws, and shenanigans of human operations (e.g., employees being out of the office, failing to see or respond to messages, hoarding information for power, etc.).

> "I occasionally approve or answer questions that aren't covered in the guidelines… There **may be three or four people** here who can settle them, and they **may not respond** to you if they don't feel like it!"
>
> Senior Brand Director (Retail Co.)

The drivers of off-brand content

Modern marketing demands content at a speed and scale that current brand governance approaches were not built for. There are multiple tension points preventing progress, and we've identified three root causes for organizations to address:

1. Brand guidelines are necessary, yet insufficient

Enterprises have long published expansive guideline documents to govern brand expression. Those close to the work report that master guidelines are on average **140 pages long**, with most organizations also publishing channel and campaign-specific versions.

In theory, these documents would provide teams ample information on brand standards and expectations. The challenge is, however, paradoxical in nature.

Rules-based systems, of which brand guideline PDFs are a stellar example, fail because they cannot account for every scenario, context, or edge case where a decision may be needed: They fail if they're too short, as they then don't provide enough instruction, but they also fail if they attempt to solve for every situation. In fact, **79%** of "doers" told us that brand guidelines are already "too long" to be useful.

Other feedback from "doers" on brand guidelines includes:

- **71%** report that there are too many separate brand documents.
- **67%** state it is hard to know whether they have the current version.
- **58%** say that different guideline documents tend to contradict each other.

2. Reviews are highly manual, creating bottlenecks

The top four of the six control tactics we evaluated to ensure content is on brand depend on manual, human-based review. The leading one, by a wide margin and across industries, is review by senior brand and creative leaders:

Tactics used to ensure brand adherence and consistency[4]



The organization's most reliable brand control and its scarcest resource are, quite literally, one and the same. That is an extremely fragile arrangement as content volume grows: Either more work flows through the same few reviewers, and the queues, backlogs, and bottlenecks grow with it, or more content moves forward without expert review, and more off-brand work reaches the market.

[4] *Source: Adobe Brand Intelligence study; enterprise "doers" only.*

> **"Everything goes past the same two leaders.** They are the 'creatives'; their taste matters… More like only their taste matters. Their review changes everything. **The review queue just gets stuck."**
>
> Director, Brand (Media and Entertainment Co.)

3. Current technology is not solving the problem

You may have noticed automated or AI-based brand-checking tools as the last tactic in the previous chart. Unfortunately, among those who have piloted these tools, **75%** have had a mixed or negative experience.

Failures on this front center on several themes: not adapting to specific brand standards, misunderstanding nuanced tone of voice, failing to manage multiple brands or sub-brands, and missing real violations while flagging false ones.

Primary limitations of brand-checking tools used or evaluated[5]



The pattern should sound familiar: These tools only act on documented rules, so they inherit the same limitations as the guidelines themselves. Where the work calls for the kind of judgment a human brings to the table, the tools fall short.

> "We tried two. One worked but **only checked what can be written down as a rule.** The other tried to judge tone, and it **argued with our writers until they turned it off."**
>
> Senior Creative Technologist (High Tech Co.)

[5] *Source: Adobe Brand Intelligence study; enterprise "doers" only.*

Final thoughts on brand governance

The three factors we just reviewed have a compounding effect: Guidelines are hard to use and often require deep expertise to fill in the gaps. Those with this expertise are few, and their input often comes too late. And the tools designed to accelerate fail at multiple points.

In other words, the knowledge and discernment exist, yet they are simply not fully available when and where the work happens. For brand expression, an asset this important to trust and loyalty, the technology and operating models meant to protect it have to do far more than they do today.



A new way forward

Brand content has historically been created by humans. Increasingly, it will be created by agents, and enterprises must be ready. The question now is not how to make current brand governance methods work harder; it is how to make a radical shift in approach to meet the needs of the agentic era.

That shift is brand intelligence: a deep understanding of a brand's identity, intent, and context that can be applied seamlessly across teams and tools. It goes beyond static rules to contextualize and apply deep expertise on brands themselves, amplifying the knowledge currently held by only a few. Advancing in this capability will benefit from the four action items below:

A. **Make brand guidelines more useful to AI tools:** Feeding current guidelines into a brand intelligence engine is a great starting point. In our experience, slight adjustments to what already exists can boost their usefulness for both machines and humans. Practices to consider include:

- State requirements in clear, definitive language, as guidelines are less effective when they are subjective. Provide specificity to make them more actionable, which will remove the need for guesswork (e.g., "use as appropriate" → "use this logo version only on dark backgrounds").
- Focus equally on "dos" and "don'ts." Designers can usually infer boundaries of what not to do, but AI tools do not have the same ability. To minimize the need for interpretation, state brand rules alongside their explicit prohibitions (e.g., "use clear and decisive language" + "avoid hesitation and/or terms that convey doubt").
- Bridge the gap between guidelines and design systems. These are equally important artifacts to define a brand's expression, yet they are typically owned by separate teams. Eliminating inconsistencies between them will create a more complete body of context.

B. **Capture unwritten rules and net new decisions:** **74%** of professionals we surveyed stated they rely on institutional knowledge to determine what is on brand. We see this every day: A brand's real standards live in the judgment of its people, not just a brand book. Deep brand intelligence captures this, learning from choices, exceptions, and annotations. These include:

- Feedback from comments and conversations captured across tools like email, Slack, or Adobe Workfront, or left directly on PPT, PDF, or other file types.
- Patterns that can be inferred from visual review of assets that are approved, inclusive of instances where approved content contradicts guidelines.
- Similarly, patterns that can be inferred from rejected assets along with commentary explaining the rationale for the rejection.

Feeding these "decision traces" into your intelligence engine will help complete the picture of what the brand's ethos truly is. The more net new decisions are fed into the system, the more accurate a picture the system will have.

C. **Pivot from static rules to a deep reasoning approach:** Even with the above elements in place, gaps will exist. This is where deep reasoning capabilities come in, mimicking how humans infer the correct answer to specific scenarios by leveraging all available data to them, essentially solving for the challenges of a rules-based approach. These challenges include:

- Rules don't understand context. An advanced reasoning engine can weigh all available information (inclusive of briefs, metadata, campaign goals, and assets themselves) to optimize its decisions, mimicking human logic.
- Solving for every conceivable edge case is virtually impossible with a rules-based system. A reasoning engine understands the intent behind a rule and can apply it to infinite scenarios rather than requiring new rules to be written.
- Rules, at times, can be broken. Close to **60%** of "doers" reported getting direction from leaders that directly conflicts with brand guidelines. While counterintuitive, these calls are often the right ones, striking a balance between following documented rules and informed intuition. Deep reasoning learns from these decisions and selectively recommends exceptions.

D. **Provide access wherever and however the work happens:** Brand intelligence is most useful when it is embedded in creative and marketing teams' tools and workflows. That means surfacing it natively where designers, channel leads, reviewers, and external partners already work, and making it equally consumable by agents. Some best practices include:

- Embedding brand intelligence in your content supply chain, directly in creative tools, review and approval, or asset management systems.
- Exposing brand intelligence through open protocols like MCPs, so brand context can be understood and applied by a variety of AI tools, and outputs can be validated as routine steps of the production process.

FROM		TO
Brand rules that are open to interpretation	→	Guidelines that are AI (and human) ready
Reliance on institutional knowledge	→	Capturing unwritten rules and judgment
Static, rules-based brand governance	→	Deep reasoning tied to context and past actions
Broken access to brand knowledge	→	Intel embedded across the content supply chain

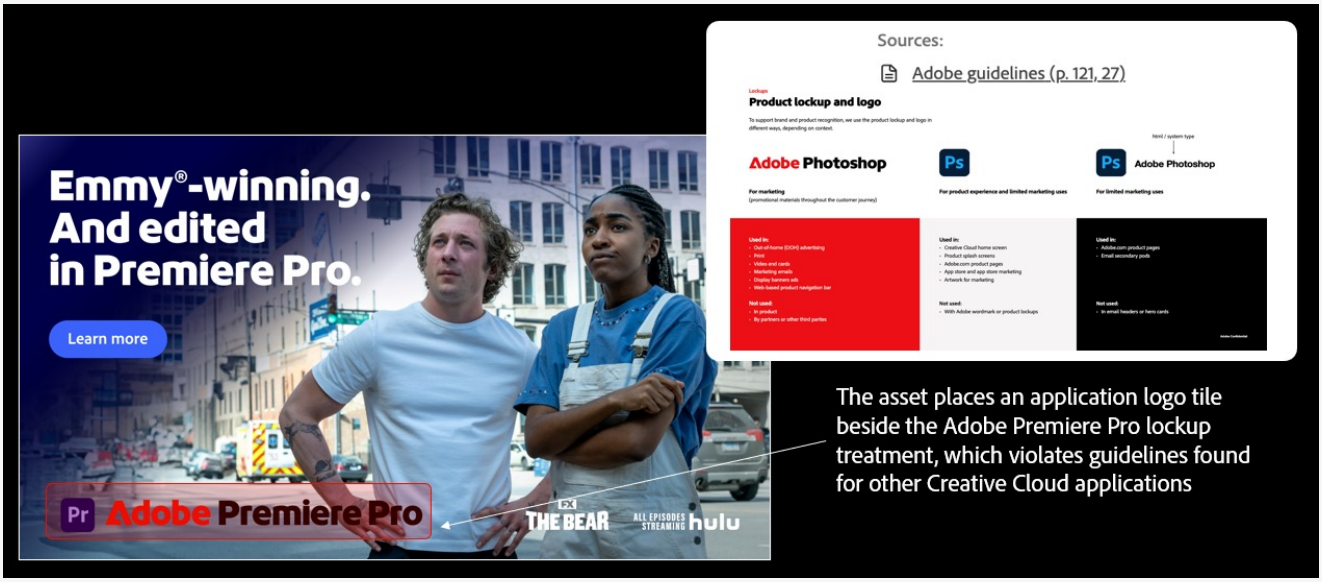
By following these four recommendations and embracing true AI-driven brand intelligence, enterprises can support the ever-growing needs of the business while upholding brand consistency, ultimately freeing up resources for higher-value work while driving customer trust and value.

Bringing it to life:

Helping Adobe teams create with greater confidence and consistency

Adobe's Global Marketing Organization delivers hundreds of campaigns each year across a wide set of products, audiences, and channels. As volume grows, so does the challenge of maintaining a consistent brand while giving creatives the freedom to move quickly, experiment, and produce great work.

To address this, the team began piloting Adobe Brand Intelligence. For a recent test on a Premiere Pro campaign asset, the solution identified potential inconsistencies by drawing on a broad set of documented guidelines, historical creative decisions, and patterns from approved content.



The example above on product logo and lockup treatments demonstrates three core capabilities:

a. **Reasoning across related brands:** The technology drew on Photoshop brand guidelines to identify considerations for Premiere Pro, even where equivalent rules were not explicitly stated in the latter's brand documentation.
b. **Learning from past decisions:** By analyzing previously approved assets, it identified patterns in how logos and lockups are typically used together, highlighting areas for further review.
c. **Understanding context:** The system used computer vision models to distinguish Adobe branding from third-party elements (Hulu and The Bear logos), focusing its analysis only on relevant elements.

These capabilities show how Brand Intelligence can help teams identify potential inconsistencies earlier, reduce repetitive review processes, and ensure greater brand adherence as content scales.

The opportunity, however, extends beyond brand validation: By making brand knowledge more accessible and useful, AI can help teams spend less time navigating documents and feedback loops, and more time developing the ideas, storytelling, and craft that make brands distinctive.

Ushering in a new era

The answer to our opening question is that, unequivocally, brand will matter more in the agentic era, not less. But AI has also changed what it takes to protect it, and with that change comes a significant opportunity for organizations to shift how they govern the brand, and ultimately drive loyalty.

Realizing that opportunity requires a new approach: one that can expand knowledge, judgment, and experience from a few leaders to virtually all relevant teams, tools, and partners. Organizations that get this right can make consistency possible at scale, turning every piece of content into an opportunity to build the brand, and each interaction into one that deepens trust.

Ready to get started?

Whether you are just beginning your AI-driven efforts or are looking to advance existing initiatives, Adobe is here to help you navigate complexities and deliver value. Contact an Adobe representative today to learn more about Adobe Brand Intelligence.

Contact us

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Appendix

Research approach:

Adobe partnered with Incisiv, a market research and industry insights firm specializing in the consumer and technology sectors, to design, field, and analyze this Brand Intelligence study. Incisiv conducts primary research and develops industry benchmarks to help organizations understand market shifts and transformation priorities.

The study comprised four components: a survey of brand, marketing, and creative professionals at large enterprises; a consumer survey; a business buyer survey; and a qualitative interview program across all groups. The three surveys were fielded in North America from July to August 2026.

How the surveys were fielded:

- **Sponsor blinding:** The surveys were run double-blind, meaning neither respondents nor interviewers were told which company commissioned the research.
- **Fielding:** The surveys were self-completed online and some through CATI (Computer Assisted Telephonic Interview).
- **Data quality:** Completed interviews were screened for speeding against the median completion time, straight-lining through grid questions, failed attention checks, and duplicate respondents. The bases reported are the records that survived that screening.
- **Instrument:** Answer options were rotated and grid items randomized to control for order effects, except where a scale had a natural order.

Who we surveyed:

1. **Brand, marketing, and creative professionals in large enterprises (enterprise survey):** 607 verified professionals at companies with $1B or more in annual revenue. Further targeting and sample sizes are listed below:
    a. **Functions:** Brand (189), core creative (118), marketing strategy and planning (94), marketing operations (85), creative operations (77), and creative technology (44).
    b. **Seniority:** C-level, EVP, and SVP (107), VP (103), Senior Director/Director (258), Manager (120), and individual contributors (19).
2. **Consumers:** 1,107 respondents aged 18 and older. Each answered questions on about two of twelve B2C categories, producing 2,214 category observations.
3. **Business buyers:** 304 respondents at organizations with 101+ employees, all involved in purchase decisions.

Statistical standards

- **Confidence and margin of error:**
    - Enterprise survey (n=607): 95% confidence with a margin of error of +/- 2.8%
    - Consumer survey (n=1,107): 95% confidence with a margin of error of +/- 1.7%
    - Business buyer survey (n=304): 95% confidence with a margin of error of +/- 3.8%
- **Minimum reporting base:** Results are not reported for any subgroup below n=30.

Qualitative interviews

Alongside the surveys, Incisiv ran a program of semi-structured depth interviews anchored by discussion guides.

- **Interviews completed:** 61 depth interviews in total: 14 with enterprise professionals, 32 with consumers, and 15 with B2B business buyers.
- **Sponsor blinding:** The interviews were also double-blind, with the sponsor and its products or capabilities not identified to participants.