

Stock assets along with GenAI empower creative and marketing teams with content creation at scale. Employing GenAI tools along with stock assets will improve content quality, production efficiency, and help contain costs.

Driving Creative Efficiency and Quality Using GenAI and Stock

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The Balance Between Creative Efficiency and Quality

Traditionally, with any creative endeavor, there has been a tension between quality and efficiency in the creative process — high quality takes time and isn't necessarily efficient but is often seen as a primary driver of customer and market engagement and outcomes. But changes in the market and in customers have driven companies to need more efficient methods and tools that still create high-quality content, which positively impacts the bottom line.

To better understand the balance between creative efficiency and quality, back in 1937, Walt Disney Productions brought its first feature-length animated movie, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, to the screen in a process that reportedly took over three years and thousands of person hours to accomplish. In 1994, Disney released another full-length animated movie called *The Lion King*. Once again, the process from concept to screen is reportedly to have taken over three years. The quality of the output changed significantly, as anyone can attest to, but it still took the same amount of time. And though technology has improved significantly from 1937 to 1994, the creative process of moving from an idea to a finished product can be seen as inefficient by companies that rely on quarterly earnings.

In the modern world of multiple channels across numerous devices where appealing content has shifted to become more visual to the point of almost being tactile, companies need to shift their content style and production to create a marketing message that sticks. And creating this type of content takes time and resources. But when we asked companies that were deep into the creative process as a core of their marketing and content efforts, 57% said that creative teams spend too much time on repetitive tasks like aligning with brand guidelines or resizing images or graphics for a specific channel or format instead of the high-value activities around creating appealing content. For example, creating content for today's high-resolution screens with modern creative technologies takes significant time and resources. In IDC's July 2024 *CCT Research Survey 2024* (n = 2,011), 51% of respondents said that it takes time to produce creative content and that makes it hard to respond to the market.

AT A GLANCE

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- » The demand for high-quality content continues to increase proportionally to the number of different places customers can receive that content.
- » Companies are facing the seemingly difficult choice between being efficient in production and creating high-quality content.
- » Stock and GenAI can help companies produce high-quality consumable content in an efficient manner.

This will only become more of an issue. As we continue to see the proliferation of channels and formats that content is consumed on, the necessity of providing high-quality content across multiple formats in a faster manner will only increase. And businesses need to balance the challenges of creating high-quality content with efficiency and the bottom line.

Benefits of Stock and Generative AI

The quality of any modern creative endeavor is a function of tools creators have available, from paper and a drafting pencil to modern digital tools. And these tools can enable creators to create incredible high-quality content. But what happens when the timeline is reduced or market shifts force the need for new content immediately? We are left with the age-old question of how to create high-quality content efficiently and quickly, which has been the bane of many creatives.

One of the keys to being more efficient in the creative process is not starting from a blank sheet of paper if it can be avoided, and that is where stock comes in. Many modern creatives start with stock. Stock is one of the primary places that creatives turn to get inspired, and it serves as a source to accelerate ideation and creation. Stock assets are creative assets that someone else has already created that can either support or replace the creation of another asset as part of the creative process. Using stock instead of creating completely new assets can be more efficient. However, it can be hard to find stock assets that work for your project and that enable you to create content that is on-brand and authentic to your audience. To overcome the inauthenticity, creators can change and create new content from stock — essentially building on what has come before. However, that can be an intensive process and could result in licensing and royalty issues.

The other key tool is generative AI (GenAI), and we have reached a new era in creative content with the proliferation of GenAI tools and data and content that they can draw from. But some creators are hesitant to change and shift to the new sources and tools in this new era because they are locked into their established processes and not sure of the legitimacy of these innovations, especially GenAI. In our research, we found that 54% of respondents to our survey said they either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I am not confident in using GenAI in content creation due to IP concerns" (source: IDC's *CCT Research Survey 2024*, July 2024; n = 2,011).

For companies, the desire to find a balance between quality and efficiency is paramount, and stock and GenAI help move their creative staff toward that balance. For example, one of the key benefits of employing stock assets is the potential reduction in costs while being more productive. Having new background and product photos shot for a marketing campaign can be an expensive proposition. Imagine having to send a team to Iceland with an off-road vehicle just to be able to get some photos of the vehicle with the exploding volcanos of Iceland in the background. That could potentially be a very expensive photoshoot and would take a long time to do. Instead, if that same company took photos of the vehicle and were able to use GenAI to place the vehicle into a stock photo of the volcanic fields, that would likely cost significantly less and take less time — making it more efficient and still providing high-quality content while saving money.

Considering Adobe Stock and Adobe Firefly

Though there are a number of different potential sources of both stock and GenAI tools, Adobe has been an early leader in creating both stock and GenAI tools specifically targeted at the creative aspects of the enterprise. Specifically, through the Creative Cloud Pro Edition, Adobe Stock offers a collection of 400+ million royalty-free stock assets and images

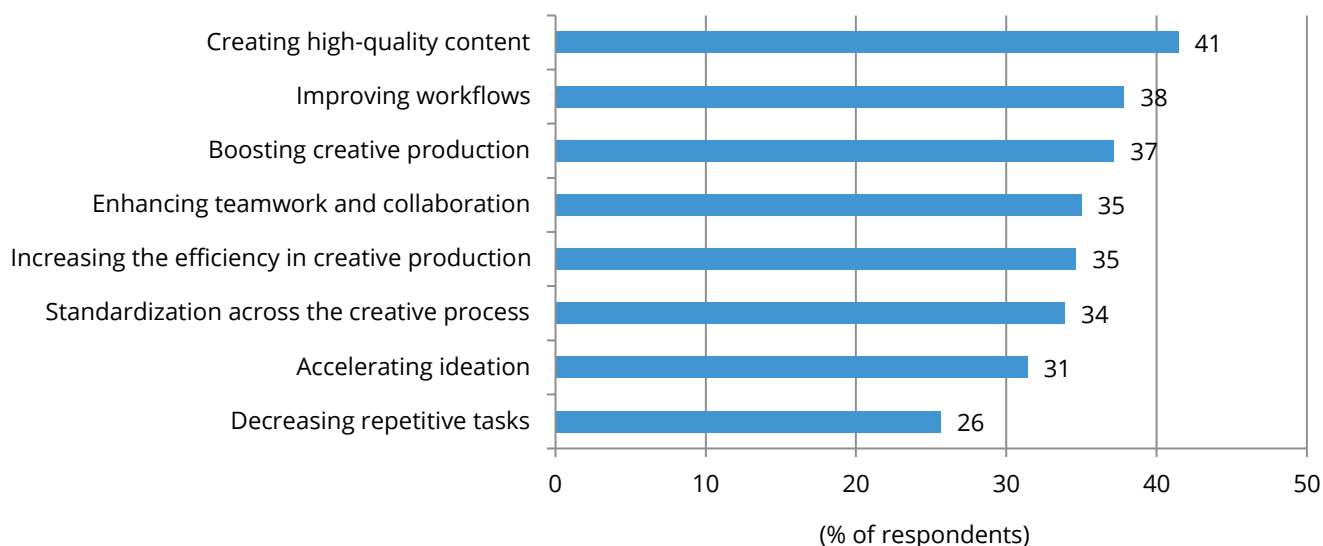
created by third-party professionals that are downloadable and indemnified and can be used within the Adobe ecosystem of creative applications.

Adobe Firefly is Adobe's generative AI tool for creatives that is not only embedded within many of the Adobe creative applications such as Illustrator and Photoshop but also functions as a standalone application. Firefly has multiple uses, including the ability to generate an image or video from a text prompt, generate a background or seamlessly extend an image, and create image and color variations.

Focusing on the critical issues for both a creative professional and another professional who needs to be creative part of the time, both the quality of the creative output and efficiency in its creation are important. Improving both quality and efficiency can be accomplished through the adoption of tools like Adobe Stock and Adobe Firefly. For example, the top reasons companies have adopted Adobe Creative Cloud were to create high-quality content (41%), improve workflows (38%), and boost creative production (37%) (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1: **Primary Drivers for Adopting Adobe Creative Cloud**

Q What were the three primary drivers for the adoption of Adobe Creative Cloud?



n = 2,011

Source: IDC's CCT Research Survey 2024, July 2024

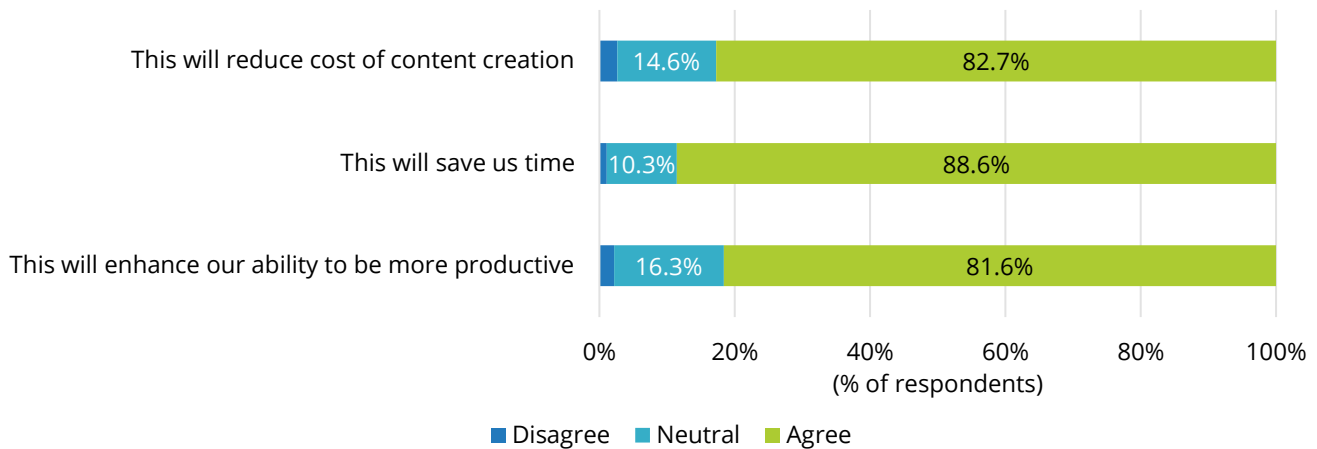
But what does that mean for Adobe Stock? Survey respondents indicated that using Adobe Stock can help reduce costs and help balance those two seemingly opposite goals. Respondents in the same survey noted that using Adobe Stock would reduce costs (82%), improve productivity (81%), and save time (81%). The other benefit of Adobe Stock is how integrated it is with the Adobe ecosystem such as Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator. This reduces friction, saves ideation time, and improves productivity by making workflows efficient.

Parallel to the benefits of Adobe Stock is the GenAI tool Adobe Firefly. Generative AI is on the verge of transforming so many of the normal work and creative processes including all forms of content creation. Companies are turning to it to

create all forms of content, and creatives see the benefits. Our survey research found that respondents believe that using Adobe Firefly would reduce costs (82%), improve productivity (81%), and save time (81%) (see Figure 2).

FIGURE 2: **Cost Containment Is an Expected Benefit of the Features of Generative AI**

Q Adobe Creative Cloud offers the ability to automate mundane and repetitive retouching and editing tasks using GenAI features like Generative Fill and Generative Expand in Photoshop. Based on your experience, what is your level of agreement with the following statements when having the above features?



n = 2,011

Source: IDC's CCT Research Survey 2024, July 2024

What makes Adobe Firefly different from the other GenAI tools out there is how integrated it is within the core creative applications in Adobe Creative Cloud. Users do not have to export their files elsewhere to make edits using GenAI tools and then reimport them. Instead, Adobe provides these features within its existing workflows in a way that's designed to accelerate parts of the creative workflow and not replace the creative process, thus giving them the power of GenAI while trying to make it easier for them to adopt and leverage these features without having to leave or interrupt their creative workflow.

No discussion of GenAI for creatives is complete without a discussion of indemnification. Early forms of GenAI used almost whatever content was accessible to train the models. The problem was that the foundational content was created by someone else who owned the rights to it and not all GenAI efforts made sure those original creatives were properly compensated.

Adobe has addressed that issue by using data that has been approved for training and is safe — along with providing the necessary guardrails for copyright issues. It has also provided indemnification as a last line of defense for the use of Adobe Firefly. Our survey research found that using Adobe Firefly with indemnification for the output through Creative Cloud increases the confidence in using the GenAI content (60%) and the likelihood that users will adopt the tool as part of their creative process (62%).

Adobe Stock and Adobe Firefly are two creative tools integrated that together with the rest of the Adobe Creative Cloud suite of tools, improve efficiency and content quality while still maintaining the creative process. Together, Stock and Firefly extend the value of Creative Cloud by giving creatives the most up-to-date sources for content and the tools to create through native integration to share content.

Challenges

The largest challenge that Adobe Stock and Adobe Firefly face is being adopted by experienced creatives who "have always done it this way" and are resistant to change. The two tools in combination with the rest of the Adobe Creative tools offer significant value for improving the quality of content, improving the rate of workflow and processes, and increasing efficiency. But that requires Adobe to continue to educate creatives and decision-makers of the benefits while staying on top of perceived issues like indemnification.

Conclusion

Content is the lifeblood of a business as it establishes the initial and ongoing relationship with customers, partners, and the market. The proliferation of channels used by customers means that businesses need to create more and more content to fill the demand in those channels. What worked yesterday in content creation won't necessarily work today or tomorrow. That is why employing modern creative tools is so critical and should be an important business consideration for any organization's marketing and customer experience strategy.

Adobe Stock and Adobe Firefly are two powerful creative tools that improve creative efficiency and content quality.

About the Analyst



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Alan Webber is program vice president for IDC's Customer Experience and Digital Platform research areas. In this role, Mr. Webber looks at the products and processes that companies employ to connect with and build better experiences for customers.

MESSAGE FROM THE SPONSOR

Adobe Creative Cloud for business with Firefly and Adobe Express solves your content production needs by bringing together best-in-class creative solutions on an integrated platform for all creative work. With groundbreaking generative AI capabilities, designed to be safe for commercial use, integrated into over 20 creative apps and powerful add-ons, Creative Cloud offers an unprecedented opportunity to reimagine creativity and stay competitive in this content-hungry market. Plus, with Adobe Stock integrated into the platform, you can find the high-quality content you need to accelerate your projects. Every new idea, every project, every step of the workflow, covered.

Learn more here — <https://www.adobe.com/creativecloud/business.html>.



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