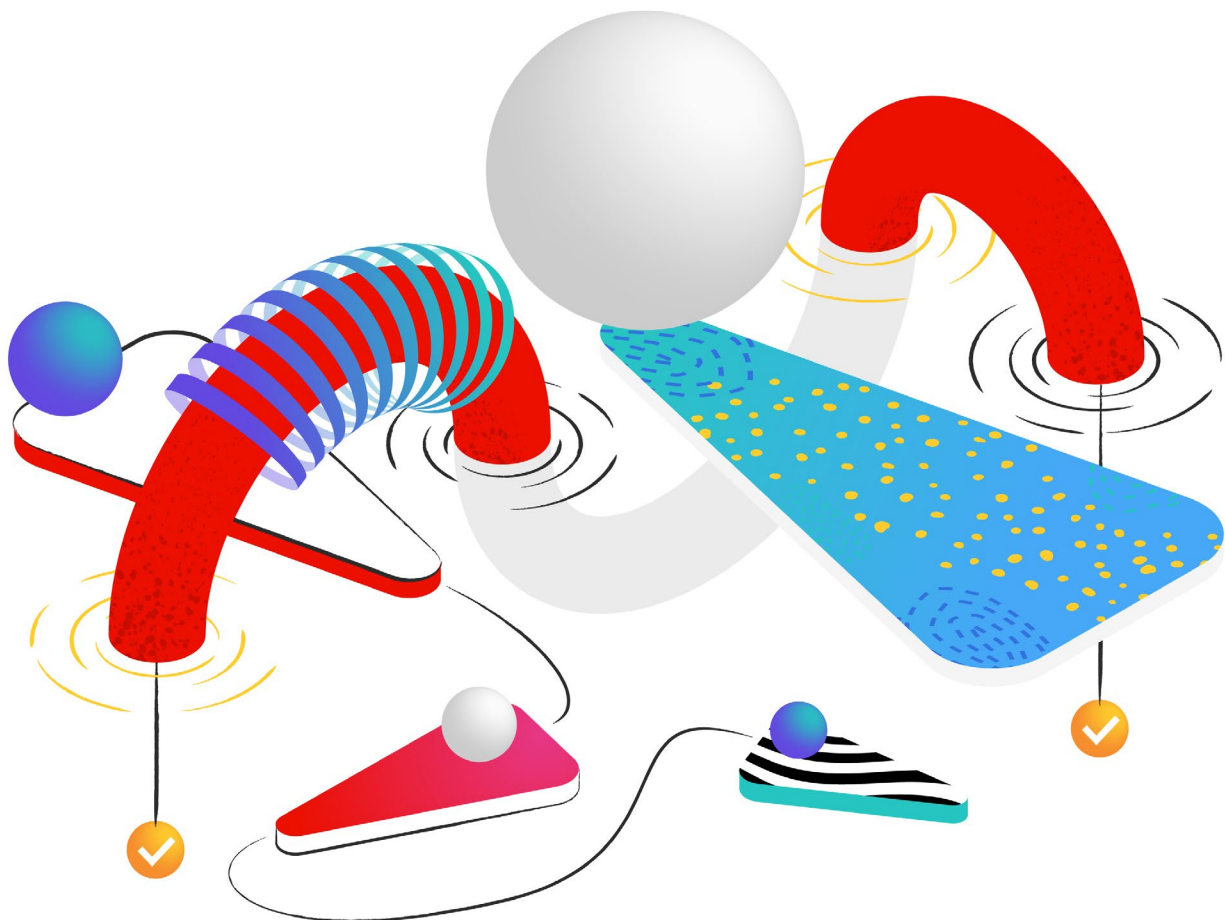**Adobe Workfront**

Adobe

EXECUTIVE BRIEF

How to manage compliance workflows and mitigate risk.

Streamline compliance processes to protect your brand and avoid fines or lawsuits.

Contents

Introduction.

Following compliance requirements can seem tedious, but it's necessary. In every industry, laws and regulations govern what you do and how you do it, and the rules can be difficult to track. In fact, 95 percent of large companies report they are only "somewhat aware" of legal regulations governing their industry.[1]

While it is difficult to understand what the relevant regulations are, what purpose they serve, and why they should be followed, being unaware of the compliance regulations in your industry won't protect you from the penalties for not following them, some of which can be steep. Violations of privacy regulations such as HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996) can reach more than $1 million per incident, and some regulatory violations can end in employment termination or even imprisonment. Considering that at least 10 percent of organizations have faced fines or litigation as a result of noncompliance,[2] it's safe to say that a lot of money is wasted because of simple neglect. The good news is that your team can escape compliance chaos. Compliance can sometimes feel like it's just "busy work," but it's essential to protecting your company, customers, and employees. What isn't essential is all the stress and confusion over the requirements. By developing more efficient compliance workflow processes, you can save
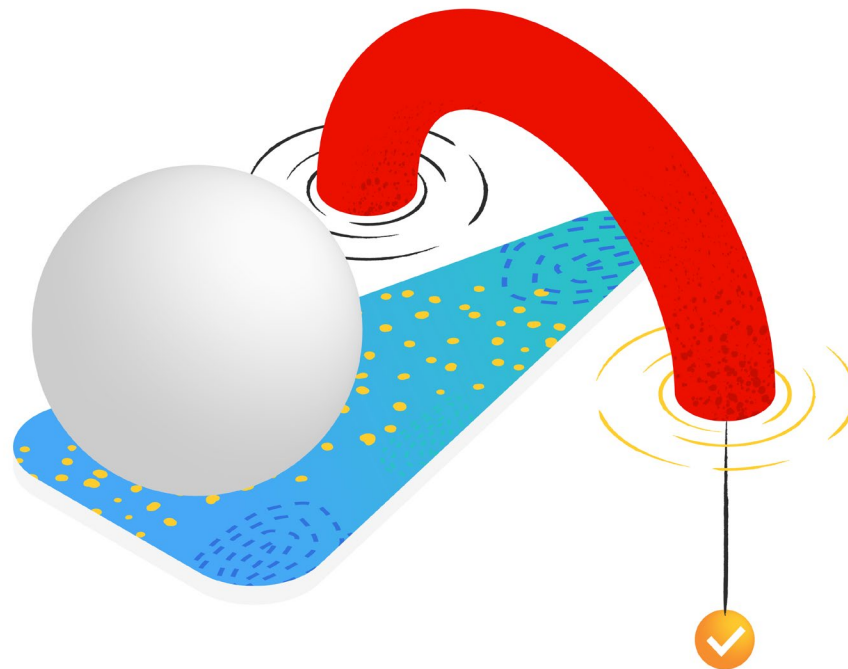
time and rest assured knowing your company is complying with laws and industry requirements. Read on to learn how to address the three top challenges companies face in creating and managing compliance workflows so you can:

- Feel confident in your compliance processes

- Reduce risk

- Protect your reputation

- Create better work.

2.65[+]

The average cost of non-compliance is 2.65 times higher than the cost of compliance.[3]

78%
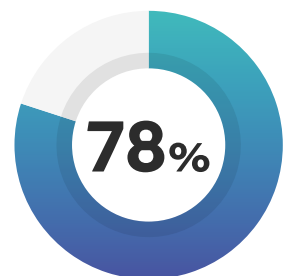
78% of marketers say half or more of their content is filtered through a compliance process.[4]

# Compliance processes are too complex—and no one follows them.

Compliance processes can be complicated, and the requirements themselves can be hard to understand. Almost every department in a company can play a part in forming the compliance pie, from sales and marketing teams to the finance team, the legal team, and everyone in between. With so many people involved, it's no surprise the steps can become confusing, especially if you don't have a standardized or centralized way to manage your process. When compliance processes become too complex and burdensome, employees might be tempted to skip the "roadblock" steps in the process or circumvent the process entirely, or they may become so confused, they simply miss steps by mistake. In fact, 23 percent of marketers report that "missed steps" are their top compliance related frustration.[5]

Legal and financial requirements can be especially complex and lengthy during the compliance process. Sales contracts, vendor contracts, and other binding agreements should go through a corporate counsel or legal team for review and approval. Finance departments are audited regularly and need a compliance process that creates audit trails, but recording and storing the necessary information adds steps and time, especially if your process is manual.

And what happens to brand management as your product travels through all these departments? Usually, each department just focuses on their own requirements, so a unified approach to branding elements—such as voice, writing style, and design—fall by the wayside. While skipping internal compliance might seem like an easy way to save time in a long process, it not only risks additional fees but also risks a loss in customer base. Among millennials, 60 percent say they expect a brand to provide a consistent experience,[6] and 71 percent of company representatives say brand inconsistency creates confusion for customers.[7] Simplifying your compliance workflow can provide better protection to your company and the brand you've spent years building.

23%
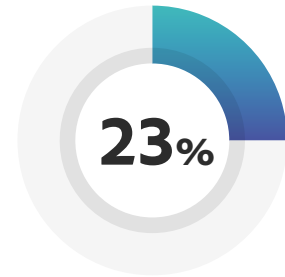
23% of marketers reported "missed steps as their top compliance-related frustration.[8]

23%
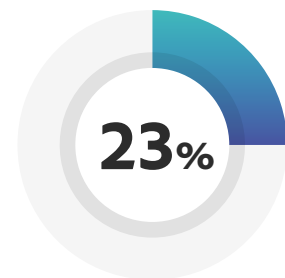
23% of participants in one survey estimated that brand inconsistency resulted in increased costs for the organization.[9]

Automate the process.

To stay on top of your compliance workflow, you need a detailed plan and efficient processes, including well-documented brand and compliance guidelines. Here are two steps to get you there:

1. **Designate a dedicated compliance team**. It is critical to include only the necessary reviewers in your compliance process—those who can focus solely on their part of the process. In fact, 27 percent of marketers listed "too many approvers" as a top compliance-related concern.[10] Clearly defined responsibilities help employees save time on compliance and better focus on their existing expertise and responsibilities.

   While a team of compliance experts is ideal for many organizations,if you don't have the resources, or the need, for a full compliance team, a dedicated compliance officer can often provide the same results. The important thing is to have one central person—or team—clearly identified and tasked with understanding the industry regulations for each department or team within your company and managing your compliance process.

2. **Prevent, don't repair**. Don't wait for something bad to happen—like a violation that results in fines or worse—to make an investment in compliance. If you streamline your processes now, you can avoid negative impacts later.

   Start by streamlining these two critical components in your compliance workflow:

   • Centralize requests and demand management—Designate a method for managing requests—whether it be through an online form or a single email address. Build creative briefs into the process so all information for the project is available from the start and in one place.

   • Standardize the review process—Distribute style and brand guides and applicable legal and industry regulations to all relevant teams. It's important that these departments are referenced during the creative, production, and promotion process. Digital proofing software can also help you here. It can consolidate all necessary guidelines and regulations, and is better suited than email to capture and consolidate multiple sets of feedback, ensuring a more smooth and efficient review and approval process.

53%
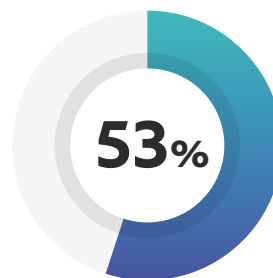
53% of survey respondents said emailing soft copies is their primary method of managing reviews.[11]

46%
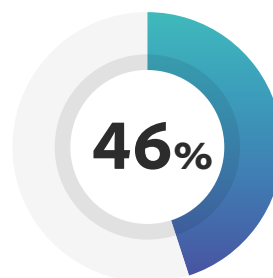
46% of marketers say a lack of standard processes is one of the biggest inefficiencies in getting work done.[12]

Reporting, collaboration, and requests aren't in real time.

From the initial request to project comments and the review and approval process, everyone must check back and forth between tools to get information. Too many steps in the compliance process are completed manually, making workflows slow and disconnected. Among polled workers, less than 5 percent of marketers report using digital proofing software as part of their compliance process.[13]

The use of multiple disparate tools like email, meetings, phone calls, and work management tools leads to needlessly depleted time just to communicate and gather information. More than half of marketers—a full 60 percent—report they use three or more separate tools to manage the review, revision, and compliance process, and 17 percent use six or more tools.[14]

60%

19%
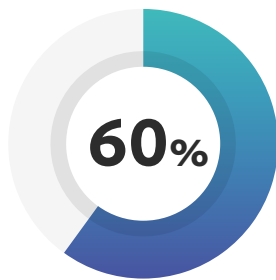
60% of marketers say they use three or more separate tools to manage the review, revision, and compliance process.[15]
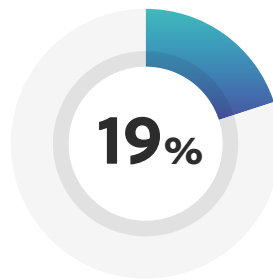
19% of marketers use offline methods, such as printed hard copies or face-to-face meetings as their primary way to get.[16]

Centralize and automate reviews.

One of the best ways to save time in the compliance process is to standardize and automate your processes and centralize all updates, feedback, and reviews in one location so you can collaborate in context. Real-time notifications throughout the process ensure you can respond quickly when it's time to move on to the next step.

1. **Build a standardized compliance review process into your project templates.** Once you have established a standardized process, codify it in your project templates. Templates automate repeatable steps, keeping everyone on the same page and quickly moving work with prompts or reminders for what step comes next, like an essential review or approval.

2. **Create audit trails**. An audit trail is a comprehensive record of who did what and when on a project so you can avoid the messy handwritten feedback on different hard copies of the same document, or responding with comments on different email chains. Today, half of marketers say that the lack of a single audit trail, missed steps, delays, or no visibility into progress are their main frustrations with their current compliance process.[17]

3. **Centralize collaboration and bring it into real time**. In many compliance processes, collaboration doesn't happen in real time because it takes place in too many different places. With collaboration in a central location, team members can forgo communicating over email, text messages, phone calls, or other tools. Rather than digging through a long email chain to find a comment, you can quickly access all feedback and be sure it's attached directly to the work.

4. **Use a dashboard to generate reports in real time**. Custom dashboards allow you to track as many—or as few—projects in the compliance pipeline as you need. Instead of spending weeks collecting and compiling data or tracking the progress of a particular asset manually, a dashboard can help you stay on top of your timeline and other key compliance metrics. A dashboard tool can allow you to export reports on demand about each asset's progress that you can share with everyone on your team—and the information will be accurate up to the moment.

5. **Clarify the chain of review and approval**. Create a workflow for every project type that identifies who should review and approve at each stage and eliminate time spent on emails, meetings, and other tracking efforts. This guarantees the right stakeholders sign off on the work, eliminating confusion over what feedback is most important to follow when contradictions or differences of opinion occur, and avoiding unnecessary or redundant reviewers.

16%
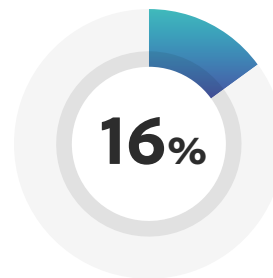
No visibility into progress" is a top compliance-related frustration for 16% of respondents.[18]

63%
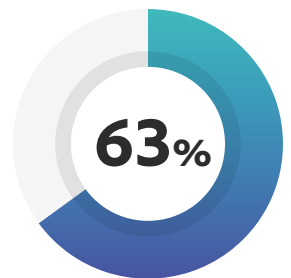
63% of marketers named an overflowing inbox as one of their top four work inefficiencies.[19]

# Your innovative company has an outdated review and approval process.

While your company has likely embraced a number of innovative technology solutions to improve other areas of work, you may not have considered ways technology can modernize compliance workflows. Your teams suffer through their outdated approach to compliance, using inefficient tools and hoping the right people perform their reviews and approvals in time. More than half of marketers report emailing soft copies as their primary method for managing reviews, and 20 percent report that face-to-face meetings and distributing hard copies are the methods they use most often.[20] Multiple reviewers working simultaneously on hard copy duplicates of the same document not only wastes time but creates confusion when their feedback conflicts.

This outdated review process also means that feedback arrives in different formats—through email, on hard copy, in instant messages, from hallway conversations, and on sticky notes. It becomes an added responsibility for the compliance point of contact to reconcile all the feedback and consolidate it into one document or product. That document then often has to be redistributed to the original reviewers so everyone can see all the changes, adding unnecessary rounds of review and approval.

Without a standardized process, approvals quickly bottleneck. If you just distribute PDFs or hard copies, reviewers don't necessarily know what to look for at each review stage of an asset or project, so it may not be properly reviewed.

47%
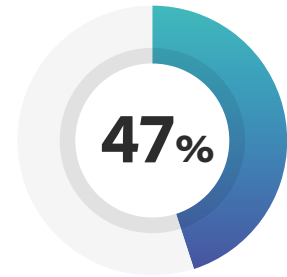
47% of marketers list "delays" as one of their top three review and approval challenges.[21]

59%
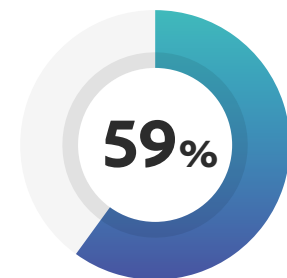
59% of marketers said their review process requires three or more rounds of review/approval.[22]
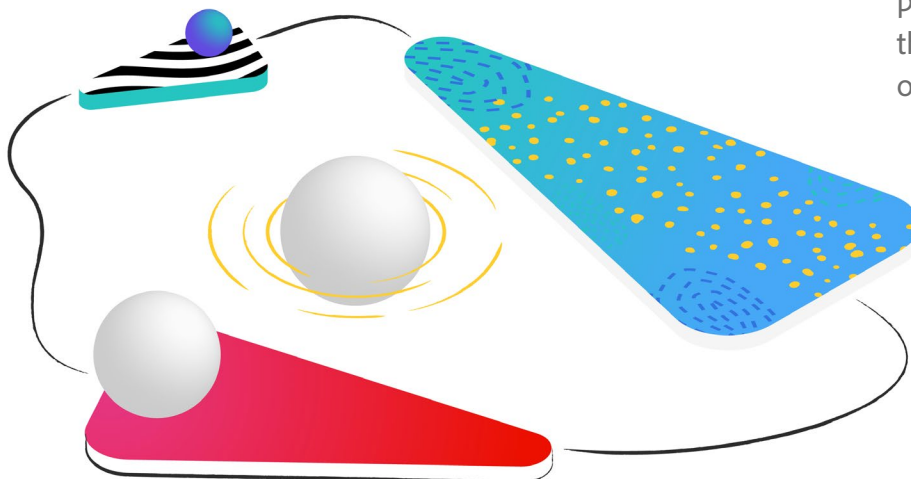
Modernize reviews and approvals.

Standardizing and automating your compliance process—the compliance review process in particular—is the best and fastest way to eliminate redundancy and delays. Outdated processes waste time and confuse and frustrate the people trying to follow them. Technologies can provide reviewers and approvers with access to template workflows and creative briefs so they have all the necessary information, including who the approvers are, what they need to do, when they need to do it, and how long they have to complete their tasks. Using standardize approval processes can help you create an audit trail by documenting the review and approval process. They can also help improve your workflow efficiency.

1. **Bring final approvers in at strategic times**. In your process timeline, make sure final approvers aren't brought in too soon. If they are, the asset might not be in its final form. If any changes are made subsequent to the "final" review, the whole process resets, resulting— again—in lost time and unnecessary extra work for the approver. On the other hand, if you bring in a final approver too late, you risk missing deadlines or release dates, especially if they request substantive changes. Including a timeline of review stages in your overall compliance workflow helps ensure the right people look at your assets at the right time.

2. **Find a review tool that can handle all types of asset files**. Most companies don't use digital proofing software even though it can help expedite and standardize compliance workflows. If your team regularly develops a variety of file types, using a tool that can handle all of them will save time and frustration with compliance reviews. Integrated digital proofing works directly in the context of your tasks, projects, and documents, allowing team members to leave comments and feedback in the context of work. Reviewers won't have to leave comments in the software for one type of project and on sticky notes for another type. And they can point to the exact area of concern within a file so there are no questions about what they meant to say.

3. **Embrace modern technology to improve your compliance.** Compliance is integral to organizational success, and it's becoming even more critical and complex every year. The right workflow management tool can help standardize and simplify your compliance review and approval process, helping you avoid missed steps that open you up to fines and litigation, and delays and wasted time that damage productivity and morale. An effective compliance workflow management solution can automate repeatable steps, standardize workflows, create and maintain audit trails for legal and regulatory protection, and manage review and approval timelines so the right people see the right asset at the right time.

5%
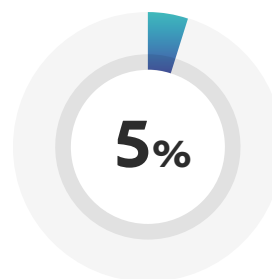
Only 5% of marketers report using digital proofing software for acquiring feedback or an approval.[23]

17%
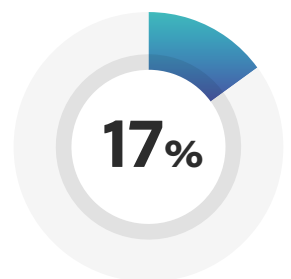
Only 17% of survey respondents said they use workflow or project management software to help manage the review and approval process.[24]

Manage your digital compliance processes.

Adobe Workfront is a cloud-based work management application that allows teams to:

- Standardize and simplify the review and approval process

- Reduce risk to their brands and customers

- Centralize feedback in a reliable audit trail

- Automate approval chains

- Deliver their best work on time

Learn more
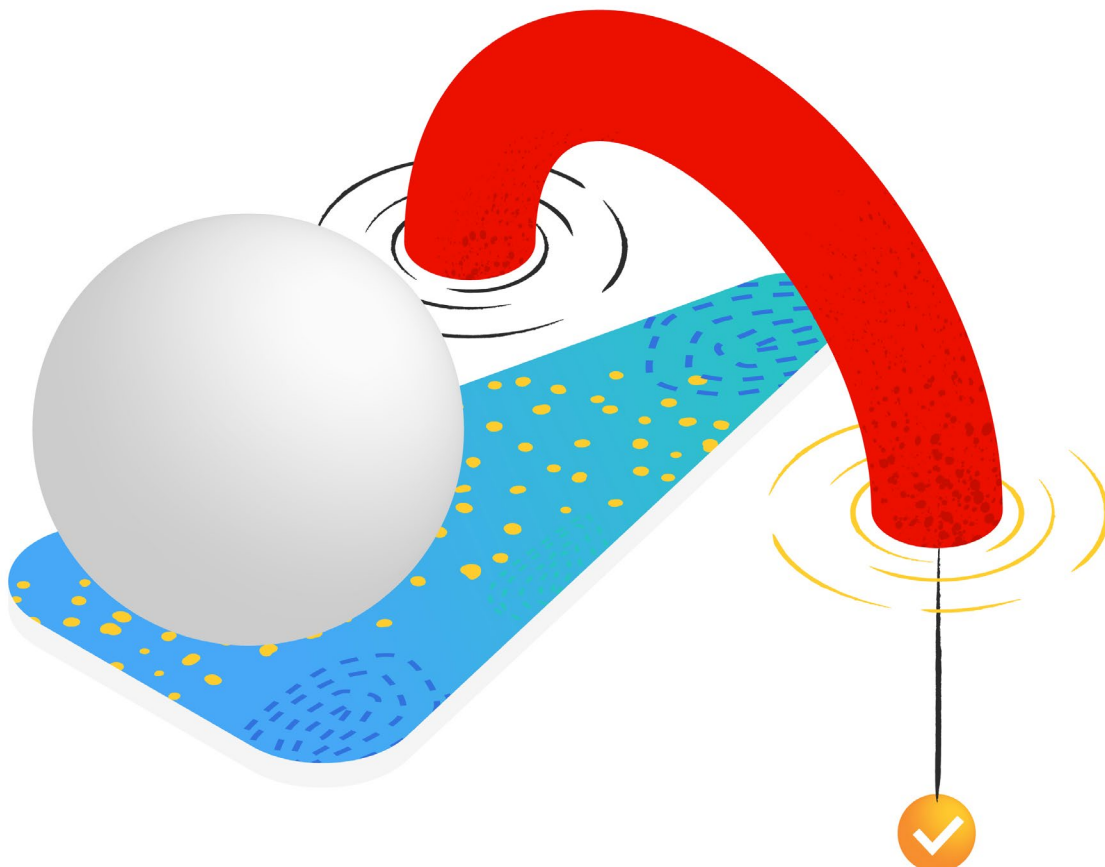
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