



EBOOK

7 Marketing Project Management Challenges and the Keys to Solving Them

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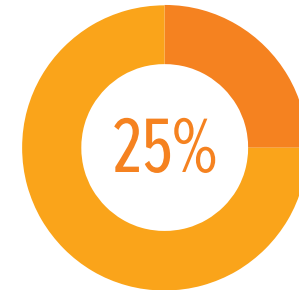
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Introduction

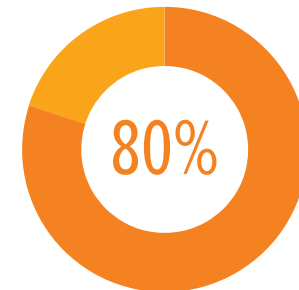
For most marketers, questions like “What’s the drop-dead deadline?” or “Is that the final-final version?” will elicit knowing nods and familiar cringes. Many marketers believe the chaos is inevitable and the dues you pay to be part of the marketing club. In fact, a quarter of marketers indicate that they are “overly stressed” or “stressed to the max.”¹

Marketers have a lot to manage. When surveyed, 80 percent of marketers reported being overloaded with work but lacking enough staff to handle it.² Marketing teams may need more resources or to simplify management of the work itself. Oftentimes, they need both, but they lack the structure and visibility to fix their problems, so they continue to lose control of work and deadlines. This results in more stress and frustration, falling farther behind on tasks and projects, and increasing chaos in the workplace.

There are numerous ways to manage heavy and complicated workloads, but finding the right solutions for your marketing team requires that we first understand the true sources of all that marketing work chaos. Read on to learn seven of the most common challenges marketers face and what you can do to fix them.



25% of marketers are overly stressed or stressed to the max.¹

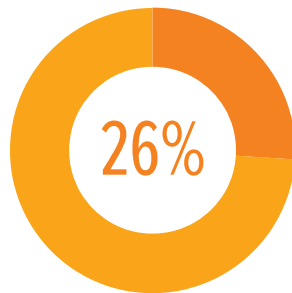


80% of marketers are overloaded with work, but lack staff to handle it.²

① Requests Come in All Forms and Through Any Avenue

If your team has no consistent way to receive work requests, there is bound to be confusion about who wanted what when, and that confusion can affect the entire project, from beginning to end. Your team may currently receive requests—whether ad-hoc or planned—in the form of email, voicemail, instant message, or with a pat on the shoulder as someone stops by your office. But without a central repository for requests, teams will miss, misunderstand, or misplace some of them.

Even when requests get to the right person, they may not understand how to prioritize them, possibly increasing response and completion times. Some team members may complete work based on their personal preference or relationship with the requestor, or some projects may sit in limbo because no one knows which resources are available to work on them. Once work starts, the team may not have details on the goals or scope of the project. The result is disappointed stakeholders requesting excessive rework, causing project delays and taking resources from other projects. Such rework is a common aggravation, with more than a fourth (26 percent) of marketers blaming productivity loss on unexpected projects or rework.³



26% of marketers blame productivity loss on unexpected projects or rework.³

Solution: Streamline the Request Route

To curb the inconsistency and unpredictability of requests, develop an intake system with a single location for all work requests. Make sure all requests go to a central location like an email address, a virtual bulletin board, a Google form, or the like. Then, decide on a method to prioritize work as it comes in. Use a scorecard or manually rank requests based on pre-determined criteria, like urgency, value, and requestor. You may choose to prioritize requests as “high,” “urgent,” or “executive urgent,” but it’s important to select the method that works best for your department.

Next, develop a standardized brief, ensuring all requests include the information you need to accurately fulfill the request. Whether stakeholders submit an online form or someone on your team walks them through the questions, a brief ensures that every project goes to the right person every time. And when you have all the information you need from the start, you save time over the course of the project. One marketing company that was managing 700 projects a year had 36,000 requests in that time period. Since moving all requests to a central location, they have increased on-time delivery to 98 percent.⁴

Free Request Options



Email address: Create a single email address like requests@[yourcompany].com. Provide departments with a template for all the information they should include in every request, including a note regarding what to attach. This method works best when there is a single assigner.



Virtual bulletin board: Use a virtual bulletin board to share virtual notebooks with requestors. They can provide request details as well as upload related images. The assigner can then email the information directly to team members.



Google Form: Requestors can fill out a customized Google Form with relevant images and videos included. You can collect and organize info online, as well as email the form.

② You Plan Projects Without Insight into Necessary Resources, Work, and Scope Details

Without visibility into resources—who is working on what—as well as each team member’s capacity to take on new work, you may overburden some team members while leaving others to twiddle their thumbs. Additionally, if you don’t use templates for each project type, you may not understand the scope of work you assign. For example, when building a landing page, it’s easy to forget a step when assigning copy, reviews, design, etc. Adding those steps later in the process derails schedules in a way that has a domino effect on other projects, even killing some tasks.

Are you overburdening some team members
while leaving others with too little to do?



Solution: Adopt a Method to See What's on Everyone's Plate

A full view of resource workloads prevents team members from becoming overworked and overwhelmed. It also prevents those with too little to do from feeling undervalued. When making assignments, it's important to consider availability, but also job roles, strengths, and preferences. One way to see into everyone's workload when assigning tasks is to make sure all team members share their calendars with the scheduler. The key to making this method successful is to make sure everyone adds all of their schedules and deadlines to their calendars.

Using templates also makes it easier and faster to reproduce work. Many types of work, from emails to eBooks to landing pages, are repeatable for different stakeholders and projects. Templates, therefore, simplify future work because all steps are listed—no one misses steps or wastes time determining what needs to be done. Organizations that perform at a high level are three times more likely than a low-performing organization to use standardized management practices across the organization.⁵



Project Templates

Marketing teams can save time by using templates when doing repeatable work. Templates make it quick and easy to assign work based on tasks and job roles.

③ You Cannot Keep Up with a Rapidly Changing Market and Ever-Evolving Work Requests

Marketing growth, digitalization, and day-to-day chaos all mean your team may struggle with efficiency. No one has real visibility into workloads or project status, and deadlines keep slipping away. Task management has become just keeping your head above water. You want to manage projects, but you may not even have a defined project management style or method. You may have heard about Agile project management, but haven't been able to get enough of a breather to look into how to implement it. New requests and changing priorities keep you from getting caught up, and stress continues to build.

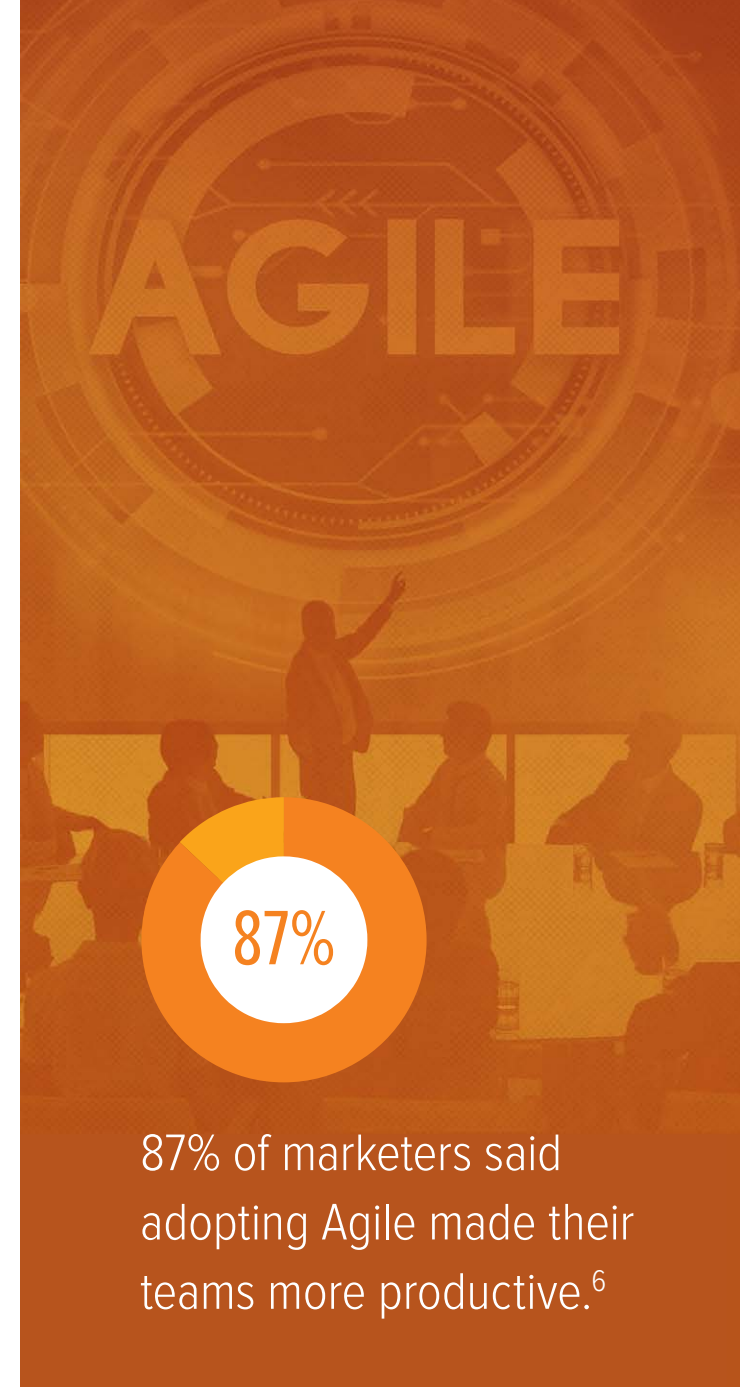
Do you have visibility into your team's workload? What about project status?



Solution: Adopt a Project Management Method that Reflects the Way You Want to Work

Take the time to define your work and project management style and methods. Whether you utilize Waterfall, Agile, a hybrid of both, or a custom method, you should plan and execute each project the same way. Agile methods can improve efficiency and visibility for marketing teams. In one survey, 87 percent of marketers said adopting Agile made their teams more productive.⁶ You don't need to convert your workflow to an all-Agile approach, but you can improve productivity and save time by adopting the aspects of Agile that make sense for your team. A hybrid approach also works for many marketers—allowing them to combine the best features of Agile with other project management methods.

You may want to plan daily stand-up meetings that last only 10 minutes to quickly assess the state of your projects, as well as who needs help. Consider assigning a scrum master, or someone who directs stand-up meetings, tracks progress, and manages team information and communication. Another Agile practice many marketers find useful is the sprint. It is a one- or two-week time period designated for work the team has committed to accomplishing. Whether the work is a group of tasks or a portion of a larger project, it is designed to focus the team and then allows for evaluation and improvement.

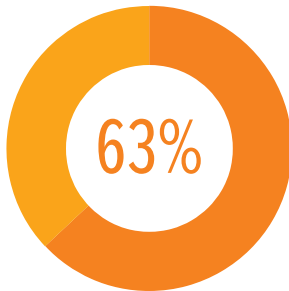


87% of marketers said adopting Agile made their teams more productive.⁶

④ Execution Takes More Time and Energy Than it Should

Your team is always busy, but a lot of that energy is spent chasing down approvers. You may also spend time hunting down the latest email regarding the status of approvals. Most marketers (63 percent) report spending three or more hours in email each day.⁷ On top of that, it takes an average of 16 minutes to refocus after handling incoming email.⁸

While searching for all feedback from all stakeholders at all phases of work, marketers waste a lot of time switching between checking emails, voicemails, instant messages, hard copies, and more. All that time and energy would be better spent actually executing the work. And you fall deeper into the abyss of wasted time if you actually miss one person's feedback and have to rework the project down the road.



63% of marketers spend 3 or more hours in email each day.⁷

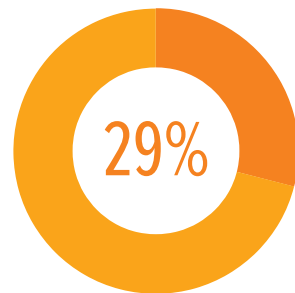


On average, it takes 16 minutes to refocus after handling incoming email.⁸

Solution: Adopt Streamlined Tools to Improve Review and Approval

Begin by consolidating tools—including work, proofing, communication, and management tools. Take an inventory of all the software and applications your team uses, then identify which are most useful, which can be consolidated, and where new solutions may replace a number of those in use. Evaluate which tools waste the most time, and eliminate them completely. Then determine which tools work the best for each task and inform your team that everyone should work the same way for consistency and optimal efficiency.

Next, consider an approval process that includes a digital proofing tool. Such a tool keeps proofing in a single location so everyone can be on the same page regarding any feedback and the asset's review status. Be sure to get stakeholder sign-off at every phase of the work to prevent extra time and expense down the road. Keep all comments, feedback, conversations, notes, and updates in a central location that any team member can view at any time. When all team members have access to all project information and communication, they can spend less time searching and reworking and more time actually executing work (the right way the first time). In fact, users of an online proofing tool reported that rework resulting from proof revisions was reduced by 29 percent—from 3.9 to 2.8 revisions.⁹

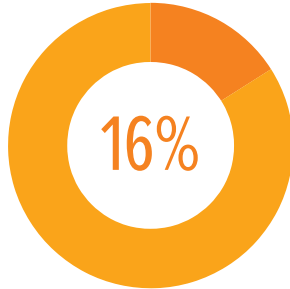


Users of an online proofing tool report rework is reduced by 29%.⁹

⑤ Work Fulfillment Is a Complicated, Disorganized Process

It is easy for marketers to lose track of which asset version is the most recent. They waste a lot of time searching emails and folders to make sure they have the right version. Marketers reportedly spend 16 percent of their time in emails.¹⁰ They also spend almost 20 percent of the workweek searching for internal information or tracking down colleagues to help with tasks.

Time wasted searching means the content might not make it to the channel in time or it gets published to too few channels. If the stakeholder doesn't receive the final version of an asset by their deadline, or they can't use it the way they planned, they may be dissatisfied.



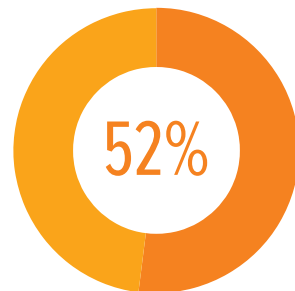
16% of a marketer's time is spent in email.¹⁰



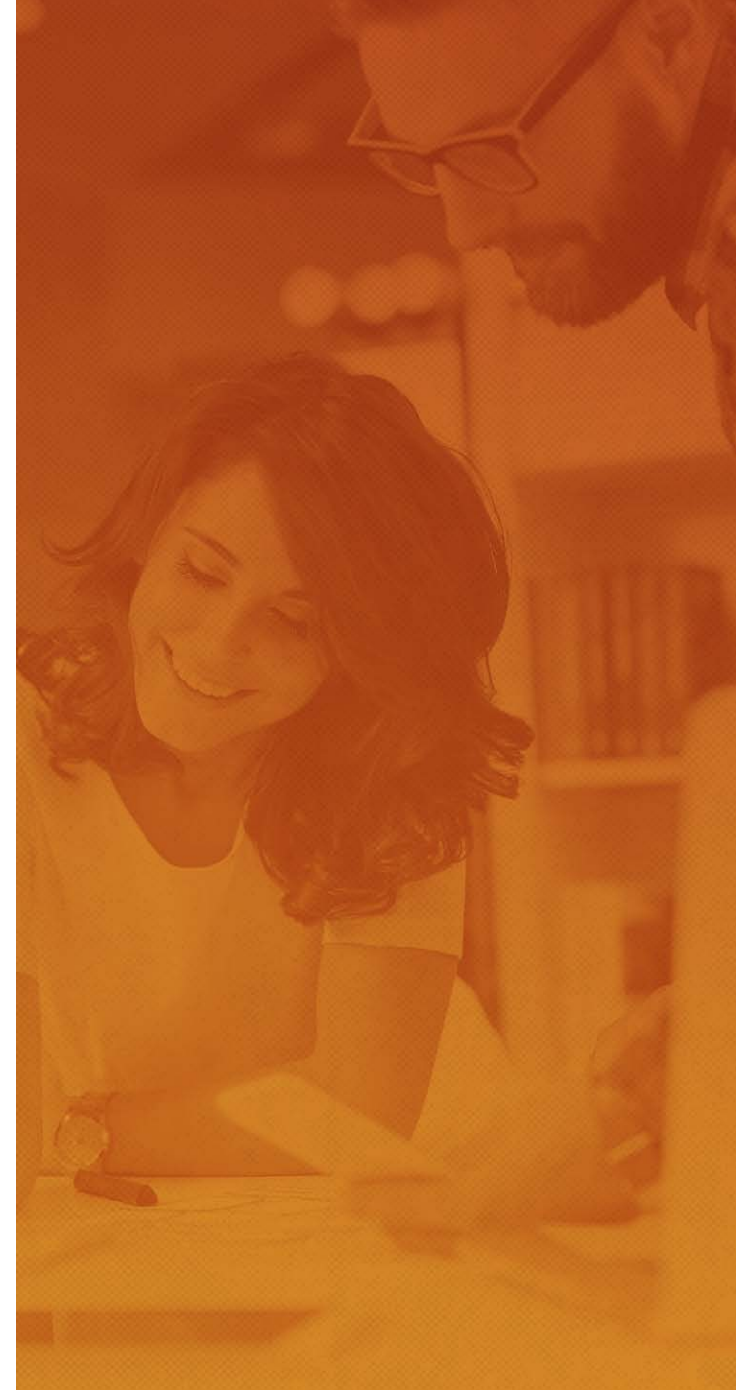
How do you know which version of an asset is the most recent?

Solution: Designate One Location for Final Assets

A project is only as good as the value it provides to the stakeholders. Set up a special folder or some other place to put finished work that you can share. A single location for final assets allows everyone to see if there is a final version, and stakeholders know where they can access it. You will also want to define the system for publishing content—whether manually or through a digital asset management tool (DAM) that enables easy publishing to multiple channels. Only 52 percent of creative departments use a DAM, meaning many marketers have the opportunity to easily overcome this challenge.¹² These tools save time and resources, and give you the opportunity to outperform the competition.



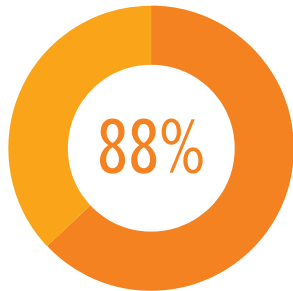
Only 52% of creative departments use a DAM.¹²



⑥ Collaboration Becomes a Full-time Job

Team members often miss critical communication because it's scattered in different tools like email and spreadsheets. Unfortunately, not only is it difficult to find the most recent version of a spreadsheet as well as any changes within it, but 88 percent of spreadsheets have errors.¹³ Even email exchanges are problematic because important stakeholders are often left out of threads. No one has complete, centralized visibility into what everyone is saying, making collaboration difficult.

When one person is getting feedback, updates, or change orders that not everyone on the team knows about, it's frustrating for both team members and stakeholders. One-third of workers say lack of communication or miscommunication is the biggest cause of conflict with other groups or teams.¹⁴



88% of spreadsheets
have errors.¹³



1/3 of workers say lack of communication
or miscommunication is the biggest
conflict with other teams.¹⁴

Solution: Break Down Silos with Social Solutions

Adopt a tool that keeps all communication in one place. When using a social tool that follows a format like Facebook, users can leave comments in threads in the same way they leave comments on social websites. This way, marketers avoid silos and ensure information is available to all stakeholders. Social apps let you share and keep notes with an entire team, while some chat and video apps let you save conversations.

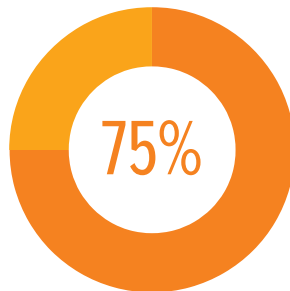
Additionally, establish a communication plan for each type of project. Decide how frequently team members need to meet or provide status updates through the central online location you select.



Keep all communication in one place.

⑦ Work Suffers Because There Is No Insight into Key Performance Indicators

Marketers gather and track data on the performance of their campaigns, but they rarely track the status of their own with the same granularity. Without the ability to measure and analyze output, work suffers. Teams miss deadlines repeatedly because they don't know how to fix poor or missing processes. Marketers who don't have data on past projects repeat mistakes, costing time and money. Additionally, you are unable to justify resources (head count, budget, tools, etc.) that produce work because you can't tie investment to results. Almost three-quarters of CEOs already think marketing teams lack business credibility because they can't demonstrate their business value.¹⁵ Without the right data, you can't demonstrate your marketing team's worth, dooming your team to remain understaffed and overworked.



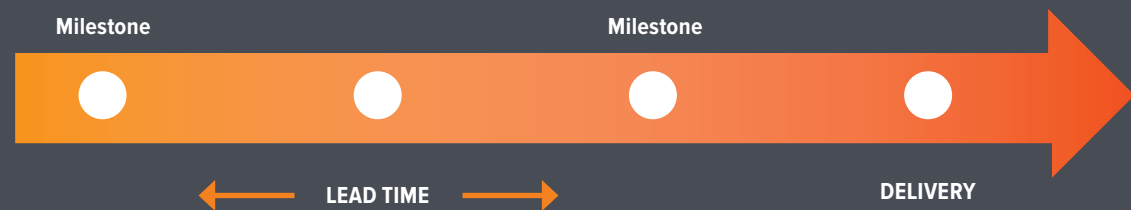
Nearly 75% of CEOs believe marketing teams lack business credibility because they can't demonstrate their business value.¹⁵

Solution: Track Wins, Losses, and Key Performance Indicators

Decide which metrics are most important to your company's goals and also consider the metrics used for external campaigns. Then set up tracking and reporting methods to gain insight into how to improve processes and future projects. Many teams choose to track lead time and on-time delivery rates, as well as milestones along the way. Track billable hours and how often you stay on budget as well as when you go over budget. You can see where to adjust for future projects or where to improve work efficiency.

It's also important to survey stakeholders for feedback and satisfaction levels to gauge team success and evaluate the work. More than half of creative services teams say they never survey their stakeholders for feedback, but it's a simple way to see areas for improvement.¹⁶

On-time Delivery Metrics



Tame Marketing Chaos with Workfront

Conquer marketing chaos with a Marketing Work Management solution like Workfront. Now, your team can solve the seven most common marketing project management challenges:

- Streamline incoming work requests
- Improve visibility into workflows
- Better manage deadlines
- Improve productivity and efficiency
- Easily publish content to a DAM
- Improve communication
- Gain visibility into data

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