

EXECUTIVE BRIEF

# How to Manage Digital Work Processes with Predictability and Speed

Bring product ideas, creative work, and content to market faster and more efficiently



## CONTENTS

It's a digital world	3
1. Your content is digital, but your workflow is still analog	4
2. You work all the time, but can't hit your deadlines	7
3. You're super busy, but not with the right kind of work	9
Manage Your Digital Work Processes with Workfront	12
Works Cited	13





# It's a digital world

In this era of digitization, everything moves at warp speed. To stay engaged with a brand, customers want quality digital content frequently and consistently. Given these demands, it's not surprising that 70 percent of marketers expect to produce more original content this year than in 2016.<sup>1</sup> But, as a team focused on digital projects, you know that delivering unique and engaging work is no easy task—and accelerating the time-to-market only makes it more difficult.

From initiation to publication, the challenge of digital projects occurs when there are several steps that must take place in the workflow—and those steps rarely seem to go as planned. Bottlenecks occur, priorities shift, and resources to get the work done are scarce. Whether your team's focus is on operations, lead generation, online paid promotion,

content marketing, creative design, or another type of digital project, it's likely you've experienced chaos and frustration with your digital workflow processes.

Read on and learn how you can improve the predictability and delivery speed of your projects. This brief will look at three primary challenges teams face when managing digital processes and how you can adapt your team's workflow to alleviate bottlenecks, gain more time for digital creation, and be more agile when faced with changes in priority.



85% of marketers attribute their organization's overall increase in success from the previous year to higher quality and more efficient content creation.



47% of marketers attribute their organization's decrease in overall success to a lack of efficient content creation.<sup>2</sup>



# 1. Your content is digital, but your workflow is still analog

If you're like most marketing and creative professionals, you're always considering what type of digital content will appeal to your audience, what messages you want to convey, and how you want it to look. Unfortunately, by the time you get your highly creative digital project completed and ready to publish, you've often missed your original deadline.

timelines or expectations—it's that workflows are either disorganized, or too rigid—stuck in a pre-digital era where things moved slowly and linearly. Priorities can shift daily, but many marketing teams may find that they don't currently have a way to easily adapt their workflow to these changes.

The truth is, getting digital projects out the door is hard—which is why only about half of marketers (58 percent) say they can deliver projects consistently.<sup>3</sup> Whether the projects are content marketing, design/creative, demand generation, product marketing, or other campaigns and programs, it always seems to take too long to get from initiation to publication. Much of the problem usually isn't



42% of marketers rarely or only sometimes deliver content consistently.<sup>4</sup>



Only 21.2% of marketers completely embrace an agile approach to managing work.<sup>5</sup>

# Solution: Increase time-to-market with the right work processes

To get your work processes out of analog mode and into the digital world, here are two strategies you can implement.

## Become more Agile

If you're still managing your digital work processes with a top-down Waterfall approach, you may find that it's difficult to deliver digital assets as fast as you need to. When the world demands agility—you need to become agile. Implementing Agile methodologies allows marketing teams to improve the speed, productivity, adaptability, and responsiveness of creative work—just what's needed in a digital age. Yet, despite all the benefits Agile can offer, only 14 percent of marketers say they are Agile enough to deliberately reorganize upcoming work based on feedback.<sup>6</sup>

**To implement Agile methods, consider the following strategies:**

- **Prioritize your backlog** – A backlog is similar to a to-do list. Tasks (known in Agile Methodology as stories) are prioritized based on a number of factors, including urgency, type of requester, and importance to organizational goals.
- **Structure your workflow in one- or two-week sprints** – This allows your team to shift priorities or respond to feedback within a short amount of time. It also allows you to think of your work in terms of more rapid iterations as opposed to lengthy milestones and timelines.

- **Hold daily stand-up meetings** – These short, 10-minute meetings allow your team to efficiently discuss and address any challenges or bottlenecks that are preventing work from moving forward and can eliminate longer status update meetings.

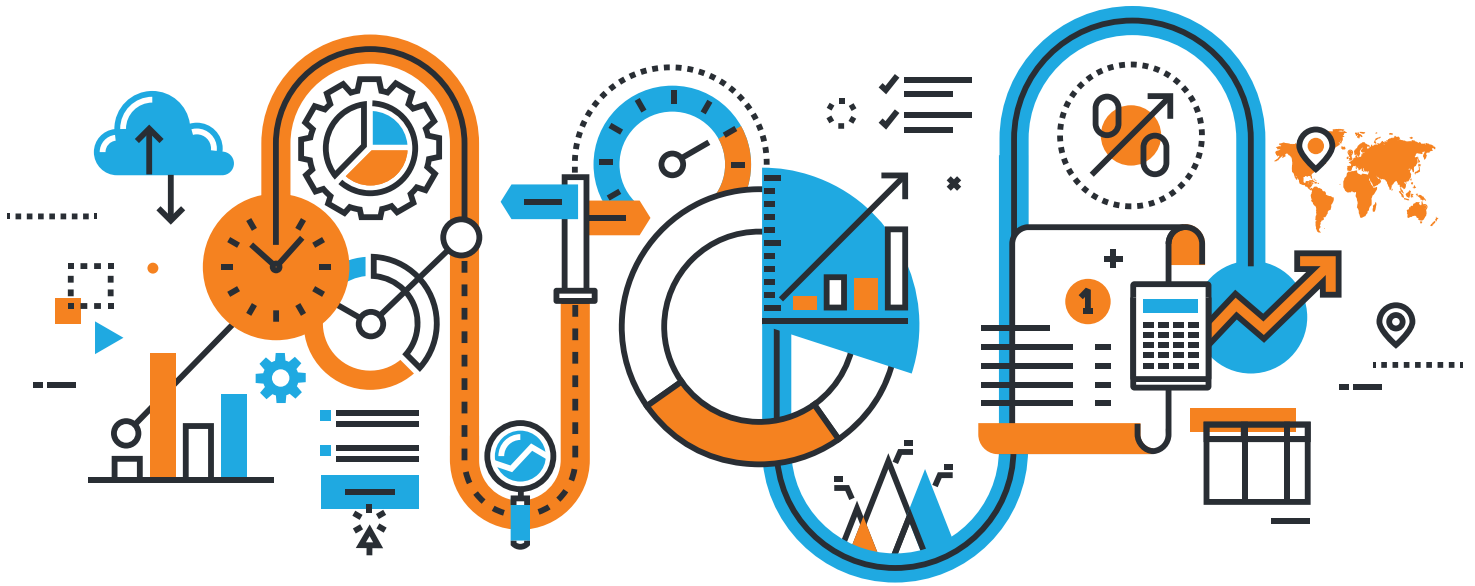
If you're not fully ready to embrace Agile—that's okay. A full 40 percent of marketers say they use a mix of Agile and Waterfall methods.<sup>7</sup> Taking a hybrid approach allows you to be more Agile where it is most needed, but also stick to traditional methods where it makes sense.

## Standardize processes

There's no need to continually reinvent the wheel. Even though the digital projects you produce will be original in their content or design, most of the steps from initiation to completion are the same. Every lead generation campaign, pay per click campaign, or creative design of an asset will have specific tasks that move it through the workflow lifecycle. By using templates to outline each step in the process, you ensure consistent, high-quality work and reduce the administrative time typically wasted on trying to figure out what needs to happen next.

The best workflow templates should address the





following questions, though they may change as processes evolve:

- What tasks does the project require for completion?
- What is the order of completion for each task?
- Who will complete each task?
- How much time will it take to complete each task?

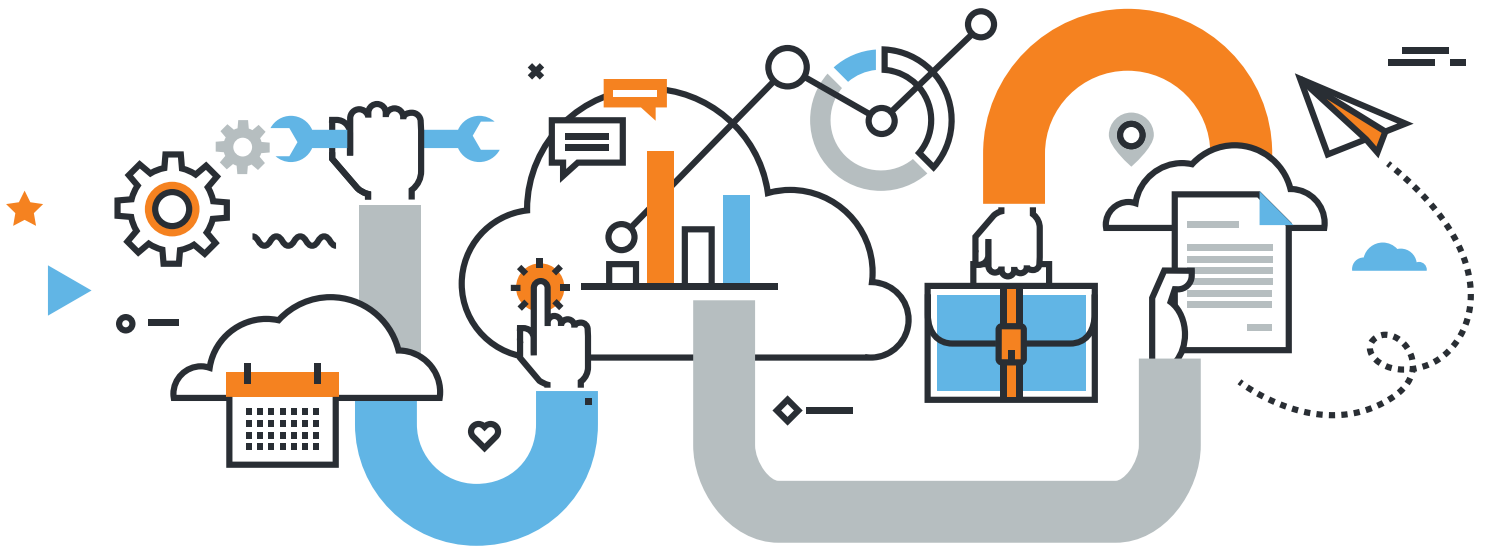
Templates make it easy to create consistent project workflows, enabling your team to focus on getting the work done, rather than figuring out “how” to do it. This means your resources have more time and that you can complete your digital projects more quickly.



46% of marketers say a lack of standard processes is one of the biggest inefficiencies to getting work done.<sup>8</sup>



22% of marketers say they are completely reactive or have no work management process at all.<sup>9</sup>



## 2. You work all the time, but can't hit your deadlines

Despite pulling long hours, you still find that your team frequently misses deadlines. Not only is this a source of conflict with other teams and departments, but it's demoralizing to work so hard only to always feel behind. One of the biggest deadline killers is the review and approval process. For the majority of marketers and creative teams (80-90 percent), every piece of written or designed content requires more than two approvals and sometimes as many as four or five.<sup>10</sup> And when approvers fall behind, your project falls behind as well.

Another common challenge is keeping track of project workflows from end-to-end when your own workload is overwhelming. With requests and revisions scattered in your email inbox and no way to quickly see the status of digital projects and no time to follow up, chaos rules. Conflicting feedback causes confusion and rework while some tasks fall off the radar completely, causing delays and missed deadlines.

**9 in 10** Nearly 9 in 10 marketing professionals say they log into work outside of standard business hours.<sup>11</sup>

**80%** 80-90% of written and designed content requires more than 2 approvals.

# Solution: Increase on-time delivery with an automated workflow and better communication

You can take a lot off your plate and make it easier to meet deadlines when you let technology help keep track of your end-to-end workflow.

## Automate your workflow

With the right work management solutions, you can automate the entirety of your digital work processes—from request to fulfillment. This will allow you to keep all work in one place, as well as provide visibility into where work is in the process and how it's progressing. It will even allow you to send automated notifications to reviewers and approvers to remind them to complete their step in the process. Additionally, when your work management system includes a digital proofing solution, it allows for real-time collaboration from a single location to eliminate confusion and conflicting feedback.

## Communicate in the context of work

With 34 percent of marketing professionals saying a lack of collaboration within their teams is one of the biggest work inefficiencies, it's clear there needs to be a better way to communicate. To improve collaboration, consider a work management solution with collaboration and audit trails built in, where you can communicate on the

project, task, or subtask level, as well as comment on and discuss documents. Having a single location for all communications can also free up time spent searching emails or holding meetings to get the same information—giving you more time back to get work done and meet your deadlines.



34% of marketing professionals say lack of collaboration within their team is a big work inefficiency.<sup>12</sup>



17% of marketers say missed deadlines is one of the biggest sources of conflict with other teams or departments.<sup>13</sup>





### 3. You're super busy, but not with the right kind of work

You spend your days rushing from one meeting to the next, responding to emails, and playing catch up on reports you should have delivered to your boss days ago. The pace is frantic and you're doing the best you can, but with so much of your time eaten up by meetings, email, and other administrative tasks, it's almost impossible to find the time to produce actual work.

Unfortunately, you're not alone. A full 93 percent of marketers say that wasteful meetings (64 percent) and excessive emails (61 percent) are the primary reasons it's difficult to get real work done.<sup>14</sup>



64% of marketers say wasteful meetings keep them from getting work done.



61% of marketers say excessive emails prohibit them from getting work done.

# Solution: Streamline processes to reclaim time for innovation and creativity

It may feel like you have no choice but to attend every meeting, produce reports, and answer email, but you may be able to eliminate a lot of busywork by working smarter, not harder.

Here are five tips for gaining more time for creative projects while still meeting your administrative obligations:

## 1. **Reduce administrative work like meetings and email**

There are better communication tools for things like project status updates than email and meetings. Consider using a social-media-like tool that allows you to communicate with your team and stakeholders in a real-time feed. Everyone can see what others are saying—keeping everyone in the loop, but eliminating the time-suck of reading unnecessary emails or attending long status update meetings.

## 2. **Centralize your request management process**

Collect and manage requests in one place, including ideation. When all requests come in to the same location, it makes it much easier and faster to manage than attempting to round up requests from different places and different team members.

## 3. **Track time**

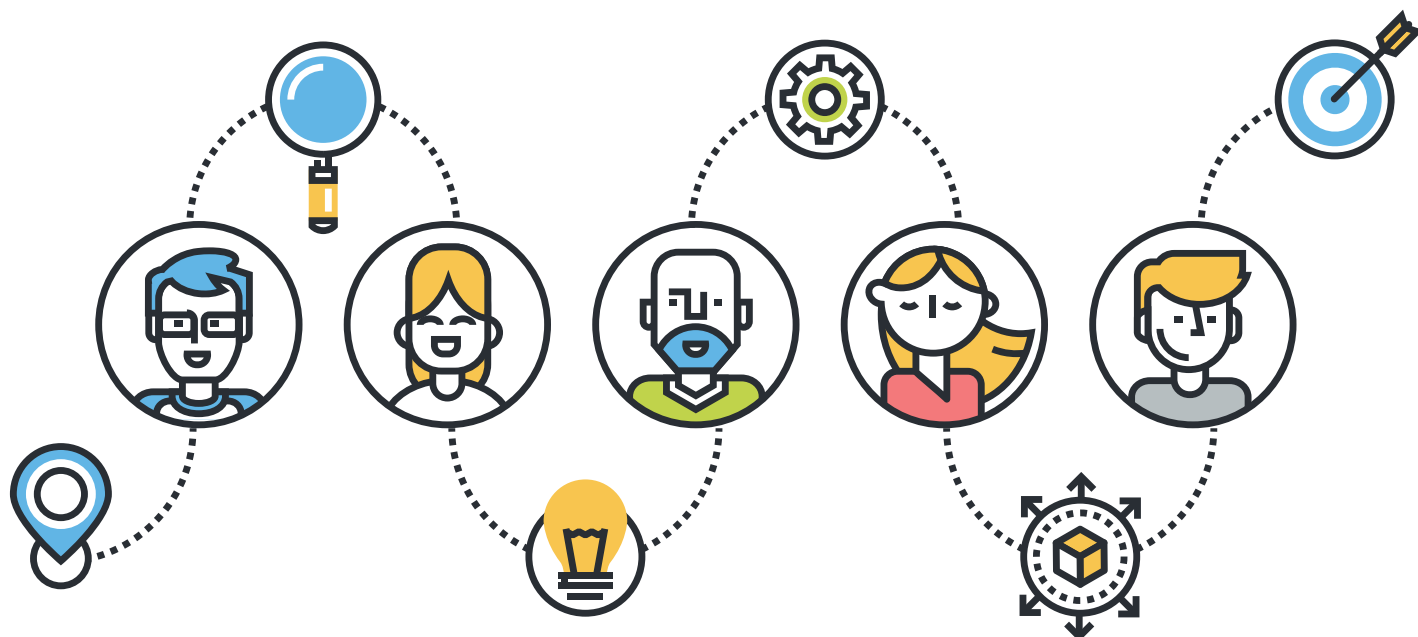
To know where you can gain more time, you first need insight into how you and your team are currently spending time. It's likely you will discover some surprising time sucks that can be eliminated. Time-tracking will also provide insight into how much time certain types of work take, so you can better align work assignments with resource capacity.

## 4. **Find a simple and intuitive way to manage resources**

What is each team member working on during any given day? Who is over-allocated? Who is under-allocated? How can you balance this workload to better manage your team's time? Whether it is a software solution or a whiteboard in the conference room that uses Agile-style columns and sticky notes to track work status, find a way to get more visibility into your team's work.

## 5. **Decrease the time you spend on reporting**

Given the technology available today, there is no reason to compile status reports manually. Choose a solution that will display real-time data on dashboards or produce automated reports. Making this switch allows you more visibility into the status of work so you can assign work faster and save time on manual processes



Your administrative duties will never completely disappear, but by improving how you manage these tasks and using technology where it makes sense to reduce or streamline workflow processes, you can reclaim time for the work that really matters.

### Embrace Modern Technology to Improve Your Digital Work Processes

Part of succeeding at delivering digital projects with quality and speed is improving your processes to increase standardization and allow more flexibility in responding to changes in priorities or feedback. But succeeding will also require embracing technology to help you do your job better. Technology has made digital projects the norm. Technology is also making it possible for marketers to get more done in less time.

With the right work management solution, managing digital work processes doesn't have to consume so much time that there's none left for real work. The value of an effective work management solution is that it increases visibility

into the status of work so teams can quickly shift priorities as needed; it allows for teams to communicate in context of the work in real time to avoid confusion and rework; it provides templates and standardized work requests to streamline the workflow; and it eliminates time-consuming manual processes such as collecting and updating work statuses or creating reports. This will make it easier to bring digital projects to life in less time and with more consistency.



22% of marketers say more efficient work processes would have the greatest impact on their overall productivity.<sup>15</sup>

# Manage Your Digital Work Processes with Workfront

Workfront is a Marketing Work Management solution that allows marketing and creative teams to manage digital work processes throughout the entire lifecycle of work with the following benefits:

- Increased visibility into work
- Automated workflows, including templates and approvals
- Better communication tools
- More flexibility to adapt to changes with Agile and Waterfall project management
- More time to focus on the right priorities

[workfront.com/marketing](https://workfront.com/marketing)



Work Management Australia is Workfront's Australian partner  
[www.workmanagement.com.au](http://www.workmanagement.com.au) Tel: 1300-006-322. Contact us for more information.

# Works Cited

1. "B2B Content Marketing 2017 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends—North America," Content Marketing Institute and Marketing Profs, 2017, [http://contentmarketinginstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/2017\\_B2B\\_Research\\_FINAL.pdf](http://contentmarketinginstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/2017_B2B_Research_FINAL.pdf).
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. "Workflows Improve with Agile Marketing," eMarketer, July 19, 2016, <https://www.emarketer.com/Article/Workflows-Improve-with-Agile-Marketing/1014223?ecid=NL1001>.
6. "I Would've Been an Agile Marketer, But...How Marketers are Using Agile, Waterfall and Everything in Between in 2016," Workfront, 2016.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. "2015 State of Marketing Workflows and Measurement Study," Percolate, 2015.
11. "State of Marketing Work," Workfront, 2015.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.



Copyright © 2016-2017 Workfront, Inc. All rights reserved.  
[workfront.com](http://workfront.com)