PfeifferReport

Adobe Express: Pervasive Creativity for the Enterprise

About this Research

This report presents the findings of a market-specific research project conducted by Pfeiffer Consulting for Adobe. The main aim of the research was to **document the efficiency and productivity gains of Adobe Express in the context of enterprise content production**, compared to workflows that rely exclusively on professional creative applications.

Benchmarks were executed using *Pfeiffer Consulting's Methodology for Productivity Benchmarking*, which has been fine-tuned over more than a decade, and measures the time experienced operators take to execute specific tasks. Please refer to the Methodology section on the last page of this document for more information.

About Adobe Express

Adobe Express is an online application geared towards easy content production and distribution for a variety of media types. While Adobe Express is ideal for users who may not have experience with professional-level apps such as Photoshop, it can also offer even seasoned professionals ways of being more productive.

Recent additions to the Adobe Express feature set have extended the program in a way that can provide significant productivity gains in an enterprise creative environment. In addition, features such as template locking make **it possible for creative professionals and non-designers in an enterprise to collaborate on content adaptation while ensuring that the produced collateral is always on brand**. This research examines the potential productivity impact of these features in the enterprise.

Key Benchmark Results: Average of 20 Workflow Benchmarks

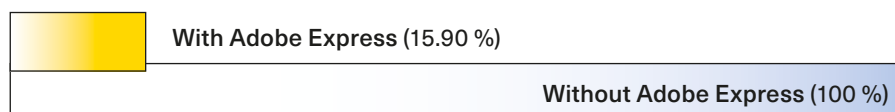With Adobe Express (15.90 %)

Without Adobe Express (100 %)

Chart based on the average of 20 different sets of workflow benchmarks.
Reference value: Average time when working with other workflows. **Shorter is better.**

Executive Summary

- This reports presents analysis and data from a research project that focused on the **productivity impact of integrating Adobe Express** in the enterprise creative workflow.

- Adobe Express comprises a wide range of easy to use creative tools that can **increase the productivity of creative work significantly** for non-designers as well as for creative professionals.

- The integration of Adobe Express into the creative workflow **enables pervasive creativity in the enterprise**, allowing creative professionals and non-designers to collaborate and co-create in an efficient way.

- The implementation of template locking, style guides and branding elements **ensures that content produced with Adobe Express is always on brand.**

- In benchmarks of 20 different workflow scenarios conducted for this research, **Adobe Express was on average over six times faster** than relying only on pro-level applications.

Challenges and Bottlenecks of the Enterprise Creative Workflow

A Complex Network of Competencies

While the importance of creativity in the enterprise is widely recognized, the complexity of implementing efficient creative workflows can easily be underestimated. The reason for this is that **creativity happens on many levels, and takes many different forms**. This in turn means that for collective creativity to produce the desired outcomes, it is essential that **all these different forms of creativity interconnect in a meaningful way**, and that different team members need to be able to use their individual creativity in a productive way—without negatively impacting the creativity of others.

To be more concrete, let's look at a typical enterprise framework, and how the different levels of creativity need to function together. On the upper echelons, product vision, strategic goals, brand identity and communication strategies need to be fleshed out. These then need to be communicated to the creative team, which has to give tangible shape to these aspects, and needs to establish the right framework for brand identity through tools such as style guides, indispensable to ensure that every visual item produced by the

Major Points

- Creativity in the enterprise happens on many different levels. **Interconnection between these different forms of creativity is essential.**

- The creative team in an enterprise needs to **define style and brand guidelines that ensure all produced content is on brand.**

- **Adobe Express allows brand consistency to be ensured** even when non-designers participate in creative tasks, such as the adaptation of content to local requirements.

The Complexities of the Enterprise Creative Workflow

	Strategic Management	Marketing and Communication	Creative Team	Users
Actions	• Define business strategy • Define marketing and communication goals and targets • Work with marketing team to validate brand strategies	• Define target audience(s) • Define brand strategies • Define key messaging strategy • Define deliverables in collaboration with the creative team	• Create style guides • Create hero content • Create and select assets • Create deliverables • Adapt deliverables to required output channels	• Use existing deliverables according to style and usage guidelines. • Drive local adaptations of deliverables by requesting required changes from creative team.
Collaboration		Strategic management and the marketing department need to **validate a communications strategy** that is in line with strategic imperatives, marketing strategies and available creative capacity.	The marketing department and the creative team need to **elaborate a creative strategy** that is on brand, supports strategic imperatives and can be delivered on schedule, as well as easily adapted.	The creative team needs to produce style guides, usage instructions and collateral that **ensure that any document produced by the different teams in the enterprise is always on brand.**

enterprise is always on brand. Things get more complicated, though, when these rules for styling content need to be applied downstream, for instance when a piece of 'hero-content' needs to be adapted to local requirements, such as a different use case, region or language.

The Importance of the Right Toolset

Usually, **only professional applications such as Photoshop, Illustrator or InDesign provide the necessary tools for properly applying the instructions comprised in a corporate style guide**. This in turn implies that any adaptation of an original design requires the creative team to step in, which not only significantly increases the workload of these creatives, but also constitutes a bottleneck for the production and delivery of adapted content. (See page 8 for a detailed discussion creative collaboration.)

With its latest installment, **Adobe Express significantly changes this situation.** While the program initially targeted non-designers who needed to quickly create professional output through the use of a vast library of templates, it now also offers features that allow it to be deployed in an enterprise setting, where it can provide significant productivity gains in the overall creative workflow.

To be more precise, Adobe Express not only allows the creative team to elaborate templates that non-designers in the enterprise can use, **it effectively provides an actionable implementation of the corporate style guide**. This means that non-designers can work with templates the creative team has provided, change certain texts, for instance, or replace an illustration, but only from assets that have been available by the creative team. This possibility effectively paves the way for what one could call **pervasive creativity in the enterprise**: the possibility fer everybody to be creative at their level of expertise, while ensuring that collateral is always on brand. This can increase overall productivity significantly, as our benchmarks show.

Adobe Firefly

While Adobe has been implementing AI-based functionality in applications such as Photoshop for many years, **Adobe Firefly, which is fully integrated into Adobe Express, takes generative AI to another level:** users can create complete images from text prompts, use generative fill to add or remove elements from a picture, or create very sophisticated text effects using a description of the desired effect.

But Adobe Firefly can also help the design process: **Adobe Express can create complete templates from a text description.** There can be little doubt that generative AI will profoundly transform the creative process.

Key Advantages of Adobe Express

	Without Adobe Express	**With Adobe Express**
Ease of Use	• Professional creative apps are powerful, but require a steep learning curve and considerable experience to use to their full potential, which limits their use to trained professionals.	• Adobe Express is easy to learn and can produce professional results without requiring extensive training and experience with design tasks.
Efficiency	• Professional creative apps focus on providing the most complete toolset and are not always the most efficient for frequently occurring simple tasks.	• Adobe Express has been optimized for efficiency and rapid throughput, and can complement professional apps for increased productivity. (See benchmarks.)
Collaboration	• Most professional creative apps have been conceived to provide the most complete feature set for a single user, but less for efficient collaboration in a team workflow.	• Adobe Express has been optimized for collaboration, allowing users to work on the same project concurrently. This means that creative professionals can collaborate efficiently with other team members.
Delegation	• When working exclusively with professional creative apps, creative tasks can only be delegated to users who already master these programs, limiting delegation to the creative team.	• With Adobe Express, creative tasks can be delegated to team-members who are not experienced creative professionals, while template locking and other features ensure that designs are always on brand.

Adobe has conceived Adobe Express not as a replacement for Creative Cloud, but as en extension to the pro-level applications that allows creative professionals to work faster, but also to collaborate more efficiently, and to delegate secondary creative tasks to non-designers, without running the risk of collateral not being on brand.

The Productivity Impact of Adobe Express

Productivity for All

It is quite natural for creative professionals who are fluent with key Creative Cloud applications such as Photoshop, Illustrator or Premiere Pro to assume that Adobe Express is not for them, since it lacks many of the sophisticated features that make these applications leaders in their field.

However, a closer look (as well as a host of dedicated benchmarks) show that **Adobe Express actually extends the reach and the productivity of professional creative workflows**, particularly during project phases that involve the adaptation and distribution of content created with the professional applications.

For this research, we analyzed 20 different workflow scenarios, ranging from video editing to adapting and distributing a social media campaign. These benchmarks underline that **integrating Adobe Express with Creative Cloud apps can provide very significant productivity gains** even for power-users. (See charts on the following pages.)

Major Points

- **Adobe Express is a complement to Creative Cloud** apps, and is deeply integrated with them.
- **Adobe Express can provide significant productivity gains** even for creative professionals used to work with Creative Cloud apps.
- Our benchmarks show **very significant productivity gains for many common operations** in the creative workflow.

How Adobe Express Extends Creative Workflows

	Creation (Hero Content)	Adaptation	Distribution
Without Adobe Express	• **Required Applications:** Key Creative Cloud apps (Photoshop, Illustrator, Premiere Pro, After Effects, etc.)	• Adapting hero content for different media types and use cases usually **requires the creative team**.	• Preparing content for output to different media channels usually **requires the creative team**.
	• **Required Expertise:** Solid working knowledge and experience with key Creative Cloud applications.		
With Adobe Express	• Adobe Express can **increase productivity for creative pros** when rapid turnaround is essential. • **Required Expertise:** Solid design experience, **without the need for extensive application training.**	• **Productivity:** Adobe Express can significantly increase productivity when adapting hero content. • **Delegation:** Using template locking, **adaptation can be delegated** while assuring brand consistency.	• Adobe Express can **automate distribution to different media channels**, including automatic translation to many languages. • **No expertise with professional applications** is required.

There is no doubt that creative professionals need the most powerful tools to fully express their creativity and design experience. Nevertheless, during the life-cycle of a project, *there are many aspects that do not require all the bells and whistles of pro-level tools and can be achieved more efficiently with Adobe Express.*

How Adobe Express Speeds Up Creative Work: Key Benchmark Figures

Merge Video: This benchmark measured the time necessary to combine two video sequences, shorten them to five seconds each and to add a title slide. While these operations are straightforward using Premiere Pro, it involves several distinct steps. **Adobe Express streamlines the process significantly: the whole operation took just 30 seconds**, compared to over four minutes using Premiere Pro.

Adobe Express Benchmarks: Merge Video
Time-scale in seconds. All data are the average of 3 individual benchmarks.
Shorter is better.

	With Adobe Express	Without Adobe Express

Merge 2 video clips and add title frame
- 30 sec.
- 4 min. 24 sec.
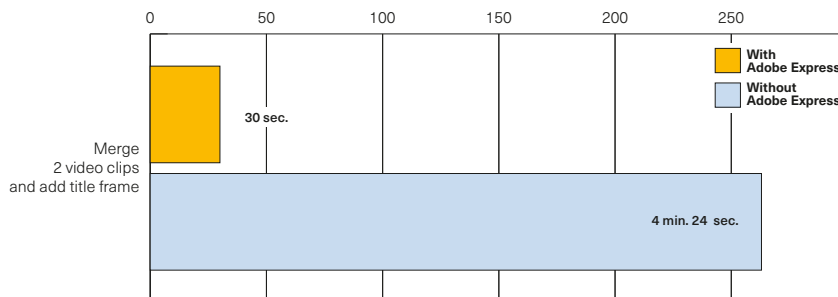
Crop Video: We measured the time necessary to crop a video to 16:9 aspect ratio, and to shorten it. Completing these tasks with Premiere Pro was significantly slower, requiring almost two minutes. **Using Adobe Express the whole operation took only 19 seconds**.

Adobe Express Benchmarks: Crop Video
Time-scale in seconds. All data are the average of 3 individual benchmar.ks
Shorter is better.

Crop and shorten video clip
- 19 sec.
- 1 min. 38 sec.
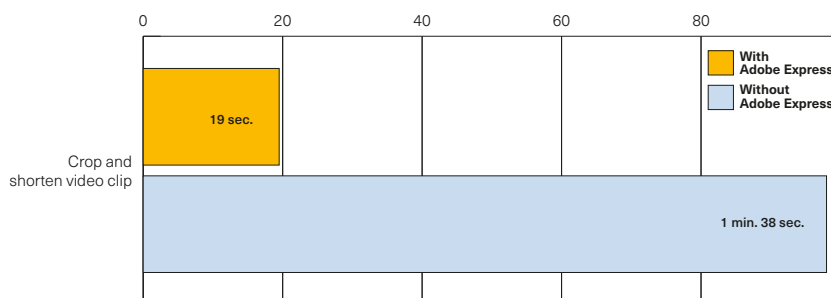
Animate Social Media Post: Creating simple animations for social media posts is extremely straightforward with Adobe Express: **animating a title easing in and out took just over one minute.** Creating a similar effect with pro-level apps is much more time-consuming and requires using programs such as After Effects or Premiere Pro. We used Premiere Pro, which could get the job done faster, but still took over twelve minutes (as well as some experience working with the program.)

Adobe Express Benchmarks: Animate Social Media Post
Time-scale in seconds. All data are the average of 3 individual benchmarks.
Shorter is better.

Create simple animation for social media post
- 1 min. 5 sec.
- 12 min. 12 sec.
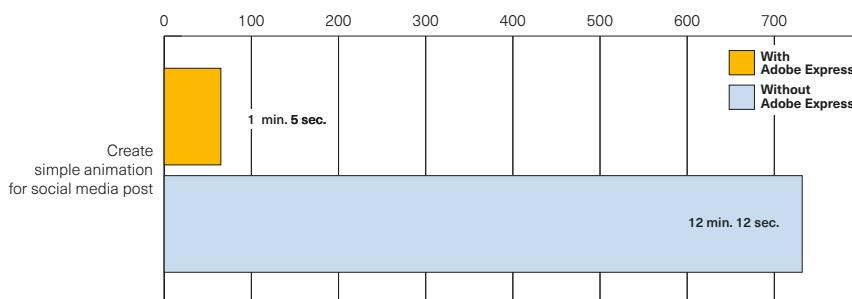
Export Multiple Media Campaign: For this benchmark, we measured the time necessary to create a simple flyer based on a template, and to adapt it to six different output formats, such as Facebook or Instagram. **Adobe Express automates this process using AI, allowing the whole operation to be completed in just over a minute.** Completing the same operation using Photoshop took almost six minutes.

Adobe Express Benchmarks: Adapt Multimedia Campaign
Time-scale in seconds. All data are the average of 3 individual benchmarks.
Shorter is better.

Adapt social media post to 7 different formats
- 1 min. 6 sec.
- 5 min. 56 sec.
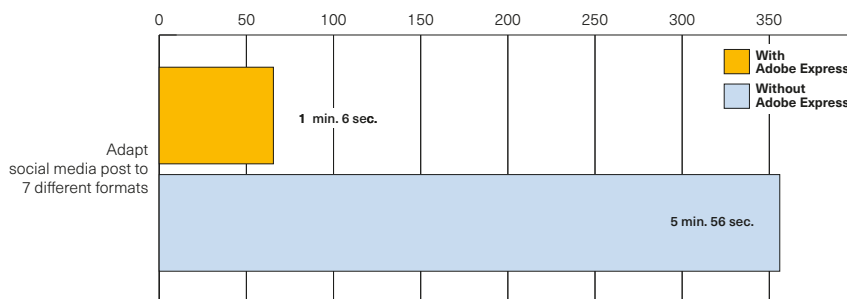
Implementing Pervasive Creativity in the Enterprise

Bottlenecks in the Creative Workflow

In the typical enterprise creative workflow, all except the most mundane creative tasks are the responsibility of members of the creative team: creative director, designer, imaging specialist, web-designer, to name but a few, who need to be solidly trained and experienced in their respective domains. **Delegation of tasks is usually only possible to another creative with the same skill-set.** Simpler tasks may be delegated to interns or junior members of the team, but the implication is that many repetitive or time consuming tasks are executed by professionals who could do more substantial work.

Let's look at a concrete example: the creative team has designed a flyer for an event that has been validated by senior executives and marketing. However, this flyer needs to be personalized for a branch in a different city, or to be adapted to local markets. Making these changes requires no design experience, but the fact that they can only be achieved by using a pro-level application means that only the creative team has the

Major Points

- Pervasive creativity **allows a wide range of users to collaborate on creative projects** at their level of expertise.

- **Adobe Express enables pervasive creativity in the enterprise**, by providing a toolset that non-designers can use.

- Template locking and style guides in Adobe Express **ensure that collateral produced by non-designers is always on brand.**

How Adobe Express Enables Pervasive Creativity in the Enterprise

	Without Adobe Express	**With Adobe Express**
Collaboration	• Creative tasks, such as adapting a template for local requirements, require access to pro-level tools, as well as solid design experience and knowledge of corporate style guides and branding guidelines.	• Adobe Express allows the creative team to collaborate with non-designers. • Non-designers can contribute to the adaptation of content without requiring access to pro-level tools.
Co-Creation	• Collaboration on creative tasks can only happen between users who have full access to the pro-level tools and applications.	• Adobe Express lets non-designers participate in the creative process necessary for creating local adaptations of existing hero content.
Brand Consistency	• Implementing style guides and corporate branding strategies is the sole responsibility of creative professionals and requires solid design experience, as well as knowledge of branding guidelines.	• Adobe Express supports style and branding constraints, as well as choice of approved assets. • This ensures that non-designers cannot inadvertently create content that is not on brand.
Productivity	• Dealing with local requests for adaptation of existing templates for content such as flyers, posters or social media content results in loss of productivity and longer production times. (See pages 8 and 9.)	• Adobe Express can significantly increase productivity for the creative team as well as for non-designers. (See benchmarks page 5.)

tools and the experience to make those changes, **while there might be non-designers in local offices who would be happy to help but are in no position to do so.**

Enabling Pervasive Creativity

The problem mentioned above is not directly related to the personal capacity of users, but to **access to the right tools that enable pervasive creativity, without requiring a steep learning curve**. This means that parallel to pro-level applications, there needs to be a more accessible level of creative tools that are designed to tightly integrate with the professional tools. **Once this is in place, it becomes possible for non-designers to play an active part in the overall creative workflow:** they can adapt and localize content created by the creative team, change copy where the need arises, and so forth.

As we have noted before, however, this can only work provided the necessary guardrails are in place to ensure that all content produced by the enterprise is always on brand.

In it's latest iteration, **Adobe Express provides exactly this additional level of tools for the creative enterprise workflow.** We have already mentioned the templating feature, and the implementation of style guides and branding elements. Equally important is collaboration: **Adobe Express allows several users to collaborate on the same project in real time.** This means that not only can the designer hand off a project for adaptation, but that designers and non-designers can work together without having to send comments and files back and forth. This makes it for instance possible for a non-designer to automatically generate variants of a design for a multimedia campaign, and for the designer to make final adjustments in real time if necessary.

To sum things up, there is little doubt that properly implemented, **pervasive creativity in the enterprise is not only possible, but can provide significant productivity gains** as well as accelerated throughput for creative content.

The Importance of Being on Brand

Being on brand is one of the most important aspects of marketing and corporate communications. There are obvious aspects to this, such as the usage of the corporate logo, corporate typefaces and corporate colors, but the devil is in the details. What constitutes being on brand is usually defined in a corporate style guide, a sizeable document that covers a wide variety of possible use cases: which specific logo to use on a dark background, or in black and white, which type size to use for a headline or a sidebar, and so forth.

Adobe Express makes it possible to implement these guidelines and branding elements in a way that even a non-designer can access and use them very easily, an essential step for implementing pervasive creativity in the enterprise, while ensuring that all content produced is on brand.

Adobe Express Benchmarks: Translate Flyer (2 Languages)
Time-scale in seconds. All data are the average of 3 individual benchmarks
Shorter is better.

Adobe Express Benchmarks: Translate and Adapt Flyer
Time-scale in seconds. All data are the average of 3 individual benchmarks
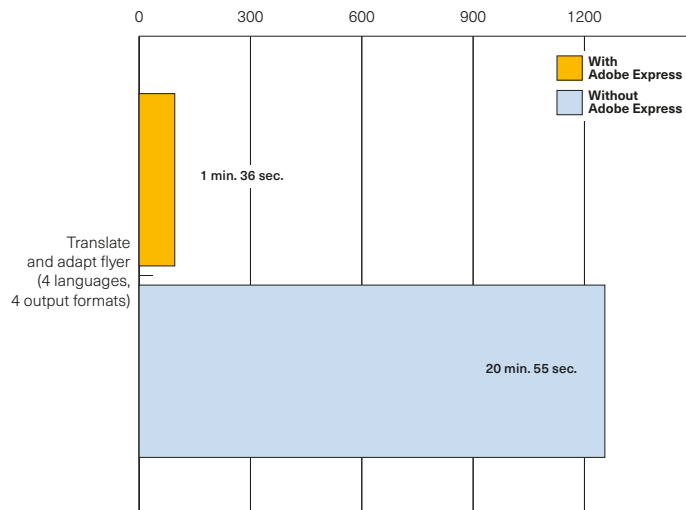Shorter is better.
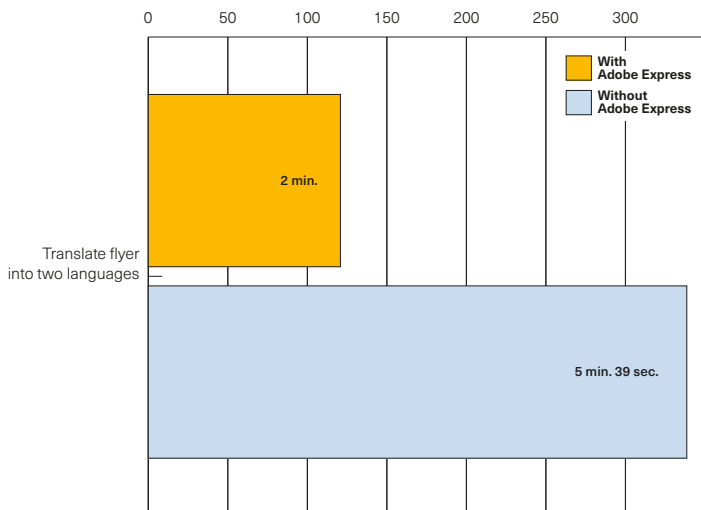
We compared the automatic translation feature of Adobe Express to cutting and pasting the translated text from Google Translate. The chart on the left shows the times necessary to translate a flyer into two languages and to apply some local *formatting to portions of the text; the second benchmark (chart on the right) measured the time to automatically translate a flyer into four different languages, and each language version into four different formats, but without manual editing.*

The Impact of Adobe Express on Creative Team Collaboration

A Story of Bottlenecks

While collaboration with office software has progressed significantly over the years, the situation is somewhat more complicated when creative workflows are concerned. To start with, unlike in an office environment, it is usually not possible to simply share the original of a design; rather, the designer needs to generate a PDF of the design, and subsequently share it, usually by e-mailing the file or by copying it to a shared server volume.

   Next, whoever needs to adapt the design usually has to download that PDF, view it, then communicate the requested changes in an e-mail or a chat message. Last but not least, consolidating requests from several stakeholders can be an added complication, and can make implementing requested changes time-consuming for the designer. **Even a simple workflow sequence results in significant loss of productivity**, as our benchmarks show. (See chart below.)

The Impact of Adobe Express on Creative Team Collaboration

Adobe Express speeds up creative collaboration in the enterprise in two distinct ways. The first one is by providing a platform that allows non-designers to create adaptations and localized versions of content

Major Points

- Creative collaboration in the enterprise is complex and **can create unnecessary bottlenecks** that result in loss of productivity.

- **Adobe Express can significantly speed up creative collaboration** by providing the necessary framework for allowing non-designers to take over some creative tasks while ensuring that documents are always on brand.

- **Productivity gains linked to collaborating with Adobe Express can scale significantly** as team size and number of operation increases.

Adobe Express Team Creativity Workflow Benchmarks
Time-scale in seconds. All data are the average of 3 individual benchmarks.
Shorter is better.
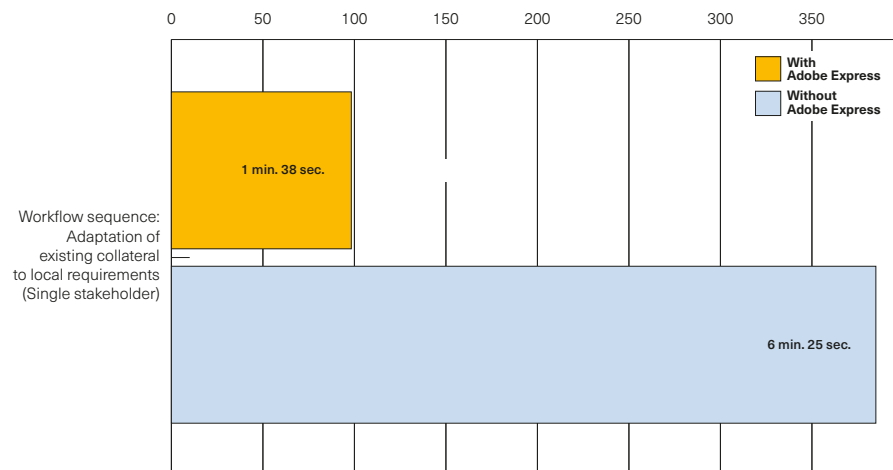
This benchmark measured the time for a single, very simple workflow sequence: the time spent adapting existing collateral to local requirements.

Only the time spent generating and exchanging files and requests was measured, not the time actually working on the document, which underlines how much time is lost in unmanaged collaboration.

How Adobe Express Productivity Gains Scale with the Number of Stakeholders

Operation	Size of Team	Number of Occurrences (Time Saved)			
		1	5	10	20
Creative Team Workflow Sequence (See chart previous page.)	1	**4 min. 47 sec.**	23 min. 53 sec.	47 min. 46 sec.	1 h. 35 min.
	5	23 min. 53 sec.	1 h. 59 min.	3 h. 58 min.	7 h. 57 min.
	10	47 min. 46 sec.	3 h. 58 min.	7 h. 57 min.	15 h. 55 min.
	20	1 h. 35 min.	7 h. 57 min.	15 h. 55 min	**31 h. 50 min.**

It is important to note that collaborative productivity gains scale in a linear fashion. While productivity gains for an individual sequence (just under five minutes in this case) may seem negligeable, the cumulative time savings can be very important, as this table shows.

to their specific needs without having to engage with the creative team, while ensuring that content produced is always on brand. This eliminates the back-and-forth described above: a very simple workflow sequence can save significant time. **What is more important, however, is how relatively small time savings scale over time** as numbers of occurrences and team size increase. (See table above.)

On the other hand, **real-time collaboration can also significantly speed up creative team work**, both within the creative team and between designers and non-designers. Finally, as we have seen earlier in this report, Adobe Express can also significantly increase productivity of the creative team by speeding up common operations such as adapting and exporting content to a variety of platforms, as we have documented with our benchmarks: Based on 20 different workflow benchmarks conducted for this research, **Adobe Express was on average over six times faster** than using only professional applications.

The Intricacies of Creative Team Collaboration

	Without Adobe Express	With Adobe Express
Workflow	• Most pro-level applications are conceived with the single, experienced user in mind. Working collaboratively on a project requires files and comments to be shared in ways that can reduce productivity.	• Adobe Express is conceived for efficient collaboration. • Creative teams can invite non-designers to work concurrently in real time on the same project.
Commenting	• While many pro-level apps now integrate some form of commenting, this usually involves a multi-step process and communication between stakeholders that relies on e-mail or chat applications.	• Adobe Express supports real-time commenting, eliminating the need for e-mail or chat-exchanges • Adobe Express is web-based, meaning that no design files need to be exchanged between users.
Iterating	• Since being on brand is essential in corporate marketing, iterating an existing template is the responsibility of the creative team, which implies multiple exchanges between the creative team and the user who requests the adaptation.	• Adobe Express supports template-locking and style and branding guides. • Non-designers can iterate existing templates without running the risk of not being on brand.
Productivity	• The complexity of the iteration process results in significant loss of overall productivity. Most often, this is due not to the complexity of the requested modifications, but to the lack of efficiency in the communication process. (See chart previous page.)	• Adobe Express significantly increases productivity for creatives as well as for non-designers. • Collaborating with Adobe Express eliminates many productivity bottlenecks in the iteration process.

Enterprise collaboration is a complex subject in the best of circumstances. Once creative work is concerned, things become significantly more complicated, since it involves ensuring the respect of branding guidelines while adapting content to the requirements of local users without running the risk of not being on brand.

Methodology

This benchmark project was commissioned by Adobe and independently executed by Pfeiffer Consulting.

All the productivity measures presented in this document are based on real-world workflow examples, designed and executed by professionals with many years of experience with the programs and workflows involved.

How we measure productivity

The basic approach is simple: in order to assess productivity gains that a program or solution may (or may not) bring, we start by analyzing the minimum number of steps necessary to achieve a given result in each of the applications or workflows that have to be compared.

Once this list of actions has been clearly established, we start to execute the operation or workflow in each solution, with the help of seasoned professionals who have long-standing experience in the field and with the solutions that are tested.

Every set of steps is executed three times, the average of the three measures is used.

About Pfeiffer Consulting

Pfeiffer Consulting is an independent technology research and benchmarking operation focused on the needs of publishing, digital content production, and new media professionals.

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