

6 Opportunities for In-House Agencies to Excel

Maximizing the value in the growth
of in-house creative agencies



NUXEO

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Executive Summary

Today's in-house creative studios impact not just marketing, but the full idea-to-shelf lifecycle, from product design through customer experience. They are positioned to make a real impact on the business. This white paper, designed for creative directors and brand leadership, outlines six opportunities that will enable in-house agencies to excel and proactively position themselves for the future.

The steps outlined in this paper will strengthen an in-house agency's operations and provide the foundation for it to be a facilitator of business growth.

A strong in-house agency provides real value to an enterprise at every step of its operational lifecycle.



Introduction

The world of creative services has changed. And it's changed dramatically in a relatively short period of time. With 20% more companies establishing in-house agencies in just the last five years¹.

The original reasoning for bringing creative work in-house was for the efficiency savings and cost benefits, but in today's market, customer experience matters more than ever. Customer expectations are high, and competitive advantage rests with those companies that can deliver on those expectations faster than others in their market. This requires a new type of thinking to integrate creative in-house activities with the overall business objectives, drive brand consistency, and contribute to exceptional customer experiences.

In-house agencies need to move away from being primarily regarded as a cost-saver to being an essential part of growing the business. A renewed focus on brand and business alignment puts the in-house studio at the front and center of the content supply chain.

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The expansion of in-house agencies means great things for brand creatives' ability to work on important projects, but it comes at a price: increased workload. 90% of respondents to the ANA survey² reported an increased workload for their in-house studios, with 65% reporting that workloads had increased "a lot" primarily due to the impact of digital media.

¹ <https://www.ana.net/miccontent/show/id/rr-2018-in-house-agency>

² <https://www.ana.net/miccontent/show/id/rr-2018-in-house-agency>

Today's in-house agency goes way beyond traditional creative services, touching areas like:

- Analytics
- Content marketing
- Digital production
- Digital strategy
- Influencer marketing
- Media planning
- New channel development
- Observational studies
- Social media

Such rapid growth is an opportunity to introduce new ways of thinking. The right approach can empower the overworked in-house studio to excel in a way that will increase its worth to the enterprise even further.

This paper focuses on six ways to position your in-house agency for the future:

- 1 Gain situational awareness**
- 2 Build partnerships**
- 3 Drive business alignment**
- 4 Involve the business**
- 5 Protect IP**
- 6 Manage risk**

1. Gain situational awareness

Organizations need more content than ever before, and need it produced in the most cost efficient ways, which means balancing resources, budget, and priorities.

As a result, most in-house studios and agencies face the challenge of scaling to meet these new demands. In-house agencies see scalability challenges not just from the quantity of content, but the form it takes: the explosion of different media types and delivery channels created complex workflow and storage issues.

Opportunities

This is a great time for in-house studios. The business focus on content has never been stronger, and the rise of digital is the perfect opportunity to learn and develop new processes.

It's an exciting period to be involved in the creative process.

Ask the following questions to understand your agency's current state of scalability:

- 1.** What are your current processes? Go into detail, and get specific about why you do things the way you do. What's the end result you're trying to achieve, and what parts of your processes are relics of older requirements?
- 2.** What tasks can be automated? Think about the way you do things today: does the same process hold up with 10x more content to manage? 100x? 1000x?
- 3.** Measure time from brief to creation. Are manual handoffs limiting your efficiency at scale?
- 4.** Time to market is an essential part of competitive differentiation. How can the studio accelerate time to market?
- 5.** How much time is spent on the mechanics of the studio process rather than actual creative work? Where is work being duplicated?

It takes work to understand where you are today, but by investing the time to develop that understanding you will develop a baseline from which to iterate and measure your improvements against.

2. Build partnerships

In-house agencies and studios have become a standard feature for many enterprises, especially those with a focus on brand. In spite of that shift, external creative partners remain vital.

In the ANA report, nearly all respondents indicated that they also worked with external agencies, even if they have an in-house studio. On average, the total workload between in-house and external was split around 60/40

Opportunities

Coordination between the in-house and external agencies is essential to maximize ROI from both, and to optimize traffic for different areas of expertise and experience.

Take the following steps to build the partnerships you need:

- 1.** Where are people already efficient? Identify the particular strengths of the different groups, both in-house and external.
- 2.** What strengths are best applied to different parts of the creative process? Use that to help define who will do what.
- 3.** Are the various steps of the process known to all involved? Document specific guidelines for both strategy and execution.
- 4.** Is there visibility across the creative process? Set up common open communication channels so it is clear who is doing what, and when.
- 5.** Does everyone have access to the assets and tools they need at the time they need them? Set up shared repositories and workflow processes.

A well defined division of responsibilities among marketing groups, in-house studios, and external agencies will result in productive relationships where competition is replaced by cooperation aimed at improving creative work.

3. Drive business alignment

Creative content value multiplies when content is connected to data — especially when the two are connected to the relevant business process from design through customer experience. Assets produced by an in-house studio should be fully integrated into the product supply chain.

In many cases, these assets are still viewed as a stand-alone piece of content, disconnected from the rest of the business where they can add real value.

Opportunities

In-house agencies, with their inherent knowledge of the business, are ideally suited to build the connections between content and data that transforms assets into rich information.

Take the following actions to drive alignment of your assets across the business:

- 1.** Do you know who is using your assets? Conduct an audit to see where they are used across the business.
- 2.** Is that use reflected in the way that your assets are managed? Develop tagging and meta-data schemes for assets that relate to the business processes where they are used.
- 3.** Is the rest of the enterprise aware of what the in-house studio actually does? Develop regular internal communications strategy to internally market the services and output from the in-house studios.
- 4.** When can rich media assets add value to product development? Work with the product teams to build a joint understanding of where creative assets can be used across the product lifecycle.
- 5.** Are you measuring the true impact of the creative process on the business? Develop KPIs that align with business performance such as reductions on time-to-market through the availability of the right assets at the right time.

Today's in-house creative studios impact not just marketing, but the full idea-to-shelf lifecycle, from product design through to customer experience.

4. Involve the business

In-house agencies bring a lot of brand and institutional knowledge to the creative process, but it is inevitable that others across the organization will want to review and approve assets before they can be used. These reviewers are often located in different functional areas such as brand, product, marketing, legal and more. Such a cross functional review cycle can be difficult to manage and have a negative impact on the speed to market of a new, or revised, asset.

Managing the review process can also be complicated by location, culture, and different siloed systems.

Opportunities

The in-house studio is perfectly positioned to manage a common review process and ensure that those involved understand the business needs.

These steps will help define and develop a more efficient way of involving the business as part of the review process:

- 1.** Do you know who is approving your assets? Audit who is currently reviewing and approving creative assets across the enterprise. Remove steps where possible.
- 2.** When does the review process happen? If it's all at the end of the creative process, explore ways to bring the business units into the design and review process earlier.
- 3.** Do you know why people are reviewing your assets? Determine the reasons for the review, and make sure they are aligned with a business legal need.
- 4.** Are the right people reviewing the assets for the right reasons? Document review guidelines and specific areas of responsibility.
- 5.** How many review cycles do your assets go through? Does perfection get in the way of progress? Consolidate review cycles where possible.

The review process can be a complex, and at times political, one. The in-house studio is best situated to understand the needs of the brand and guide the development of an efficient review process.

5. Protect Intellectual Property

The intellectual property of a company is the lifeblood of an enterprise. Yet Intellectual Property (IP) management is often overlooked when creative activities are spread around an organization or across a partner network.

Entertainment companies want to ensure that their characters are used where they should be.

Licensing of IP to third parties needs to be managed.

The control and correct use of IP can have a significant business impact. Many major brands estimate the worth of IP in billions of dollars.

Opportunities

The creative studio of any company is often the central point where a lot of the IP comes together. The studio is perfectly positioned to be the operation that helps define the brand narrative and experience.

Take the following steps to position your studio as the center of excellence for IP protection:

- 1.** Do you know where all the enterprise's assets are? Make sure that all rich media assets that the enterprise owns are stored in a management system where use can be tracked.
- 2.** Assets that contain elements of the enterprise IP are particularly valuable. Are they being used correctly? Audit where, and how, IP driven assets are used.
- 3.** Can people who want to use an IP driven asset find out where and how they can use it? Develop tagging or metadata schemes to flag usage restrictions.
- 4.** Do you know who can use IP driven assets? Are they open to everyone in the company? Should they be? Control access to IP driven assets
- 5.** Are you sure that the correct version of IP assets is used in the right circumstance? Make sure the review and approval process take account of brand guidelines.

Creative is the role that can help ensure a brand's IP is used correctly and presents a consistent experience across all aspects of the customer's interaction.

6. Manage Risk

Misuse of assets isn't only about protecting the brand, it can lead to appearances in court, fines, or even jail time for officers of the company. No one wants to be the person who costs the company millions of dollars in fines because they posted the wrong image in the wrong place.

Examples of this include:

- An image being placed in a position on a deliverable that it implies consent or makes an implied claim about a product
- An image being used in the wrong market where it causes offense due to cultural differences
- An asset that includes a person who hasn't signed a release

Opportunities

Not everyone in an organization, or even with the in-house studio, can know all about an asset.

The following steps can help in developing a proactive process for the use of assets that manage risk rather than react to it.

1. Do you know which assets have contracts and other legal obligations connected to them? Work with company legal teams to understand contractual obligations around the issue of media assets.
2. Are there standards and rules in your industry around the way that images are created or used? Work with regulatory review teams, if applicable, to understand industry standards and guidelines for use.
3. Are your images used globally? Work with localization teams, and regional offices, to check on the cultural impact of media assets.
4. If an issue arises can you track why a certain asset ended up where it did? Ensure that images are stored in a management system that can track usage.
5. Are legal and regulatory restrictions noted as part of the asset information? Develop tagging or metadata schemes to flag usage guidelines and restrictions.

The in-house studio can take the lead with a visual content strategy around the use of rich media assets to reduce risk by ensuring that images, videos, etc are used correctly.

Summary

The converging trends of in-house agency expansion and the growth in new types of media present a perfect opportunity for the in-house agency to be proactive and set its own agenda. Taking the steps outlined in this paper will position in-house agencies as an engine for growth, and a foundational part of the companies product supply-chain that influences all aspects of its operations from design, through marketing, and communications, to the end customer experience.

The Nuxeo Platform provides the foundation for the process to position in-house agencies to leverage their expertise in creating, archiving, managing, finding, and connecting rich media assets to the business process.

It is ideally suited to provide solutions that can impact the areas of opportunity outlined in this white paper.

Key Takeaways



Gain situational awareness

The Nuxeo Platform's infinitely scalable storage means that you can manage your existing archives from one common source and at the same time be ready to take on more assets as demand increases.

Build relationships

Communication is a key to building and maintaining partnerships. The use of the Nuxeo Platform web enabled access, along with shared content models, tagging schemes are essential to efficient communication and effective coordination

Drive business alignment

Developing an efficient digital archive based on the Nuxeo Platform, with a content model that reflects the way the enterprise works, complemented by rich tagging, or metadata, connected to a powerful search capability can connect the business to the creative process.

Involve the business

The use of a common platform to store, manage, find, and retrieve assets combined with a powerful cross functional workflow can improve review processes and make them more efficient.

Protect intellectual property

Building a rich archive and asset tracking process can open up the findability of assets across the enterprise eliminating duplication of effort, and encouraging reuse and brand consistency.

Manage risk

The Nuxeo platform allows the addition of business information and multiple detailed metadata tags to be assigned to assets. Aligned with sophisticated workflow and access controls down to the object level we can help ensure that only the right assets are used by the right people in the right way.

As part of the overall digital supply chain strategy, the Nuxeo Platform enables companies to leverage their creative assets to gain operational efficiencies and reduce time-to-market, having a positive impact on revenue generation.

With industry leading digital asset management functionality aligned with infinitely scalable storage, powerful federated search capabilities to find assets wherever they are stored, sophisticated metadata management, artificial intelligence driven tagging and content recognition, and a low code approach to connecting to other business systems, **Nuxeo can be the solution to transform your challenges into opportunities.**