

The Business Case for Online Proofing



Introduction

Online proofing is fairly unique in the marketing technology landscape in that it can demonstrate, almost immediately, tangible cost savings and immediate ROI for increasing the effectiveness of review and approval processes, as it relates to marketing content. Acting as a consolidated presentation for feedback, an online proofing system reduces the time (and costs) associated with delivering content while improving the quality of the content being delivered.

The costly nature of many marketing technologies has often meant that they have been available only to the biggest brands and global enterprises. Online proofing on the other hand, when offered as a best of breed standalone offering, is accessible to organizations of all sizes - and has proven to be one of the most cost-effective components of the marketing technology stack. It's been called the "quickest win in MarTech". Let's see why.



Three Core Benefits of Online Proofing



1. Faster Project Delivery



2. Cost Savings



3. Simplifies Compliance



1. Faster Project Delivery

According to Gartner¹, “Companies are finding they need to more effectively manage their marketing resources, partly due to the growing complexity of their marketing organizations and partly to promote greater agility across the marketing mix”. Said another way, the proliferation of digital marketing channels has resulted in an explosion of demand for content from marketing teams. At the same time marketing cycles have shortened dramatically, so marketers need to produce more content in less time - but with the quality required to create strong engagement with end their target market.

There are several aspects of online proofing which allow it to serve as a force multiplier - expanding the capacity of team members to execute more, in the same or less time, compared to the status quo. The status quo often manifesting itself as ad-hoc processes such as email, printouts or hard copy printouts.

Example	Status Quo	With Online Proofing	Increased Capacity
Collection of feedback	Team members are emailed copies of proofs and feedback trickles in, or team members must be chased to provide feedback	Team members are provided a link to a centrally stored online proof where all feedback is collaborative and viewed in real-time	Avoid delays created by decentralized sources of feedback (email, hallway conversations, paper, etc.)
Management of Revisions	New versions are created for each piece of feedback provided via email or printouts, due to the uncertainty of when new feedback might arrive	Team members are able to see feedback and decisions in real time, which clearly communicates progress and the end of the review cycle.	Fewer revisions result in faster project completion, which frees up team members to work on additional projects
Managing Team Resources for Review	Assets often are reviewed serially, slowing down project timelines	Teams can review assets simultaneously and collectively in real time	New projects can be initiated while existing projects are submitted for approval



2. Cost Savings

As stated in our introduction, online proofing is unique in the marketing technology landscape - it's one of the few technologies that can demonstrate immediate cost savings over the status quo. This is true for savings related to the reduction of contract personnel to handle job spikes, but also the avoidance of unnecessary costs, such as rework that may arise due to errors and poor quality control, as well as tactical costs such as printing costs.

The most significant portion of any creative organization's budget will always be personnel, both full time, employees, as well as part-time contractors. According to the recent In-House Creative Industry Report, 86% of creative leaders surveyed planned to at least maintain, if not grow, their freelancer hiring budgets². 60% indicated that there were no term limits in place for freelancers. Could a portion of these costs be avoided or better managed, through the use of online proofing?

Example	Status Quo	With Online Proofing	Cost Savings
Hiring of freelancers	Unable to meet timelines for committed projects, many organizations turn to freelancers	Increased capacity of in-house team members allows project timelines to remain intact and open up schedules for more projects to be taken on	In-house teams are able to manage their workload more effectively, obviating the need for outside contractors, or by keeping freelancer terms more favorable to the company
Rework	Rework forced by missed feedback or errors in production, the cost of which is often unrecoverable and/or unbillable	Collaborative feedback cuts down on errors; review groups with clear approval roles ensures assets are released properly	Rework costs avoided, allowing for budget directed in more useful directions, such as employee development
Printing	Full-color assets are printed off for stakeholders to review and markup, repeated for each revision	All reviews are done online, with native markup and commenting tools, as well as pixel-level comparison modes.	Printing infrastructure (ink, paper, machine maintenance) costs are reduced every day, often paying for the online proofing system in comparison



3. Simplifies Compliance

Within the marketing resource management landscape, Gartner attributes the majority of their client inquiries to requests for creative production management³. This is mainly due to interest in the following: the compliance review process; managing and tracking collaborative reviews and approvals with annotations in one system. This is often driven by both internal and external compliance requirements.

For many industries, marketing content needs to meet strict compliance requirements and can include, but not be limited to the following:

- Financial claims and disclosures
- Regulatory (FDA, FTC, etc.) requirements
- Privacy guidelines, such as GDPR
- Brand compliance

- Comparative claims
- Special offers
- Substantiation
- Sweepstakes and contests
- Marketing to children
- Collection and use of marketing data

The risks of noncompliance can be significant - lost customer confidence, financial penalties, and legal liabilities to name a few. This is all before any re-work, often an unrecoverable cost in the agency world is, required.

Online proofing can help drive stronger internal controls and processes in a fairly lightweight, pain-free manner. Examples include:

Example	Status Quo	With Online Proofing	Improved Controls and Processes
Collaboration	Using email attachments and printouts for reviewing and feedback is inefficient and error-prone	Teams are able to collaboratively comment and engage with the content being reviewed	Improved visibility into what is being reviewed, the feedback provided and the decisions being made
Version Control	New versions are emailed or shared via links to file shares.	New versions can automatically be compared with previous versions	Previous versions and their feedback are saved directly on the proof
Compliance Sign-offs	Compliance stakeholders are copied on emails, tacit approval often accepted	Review groups are created with reviewer and approval roles clearly identified	Stakeholders can easily see, and document, who made comments and decisions and when.
Change, Approval Auditing	Email threads must be archived, not always easily searchable or discoverable	All comments, change requests are saved to each proof, indefinitely.	Approval decisions are recorded and available for auditing

Conclusion

When considering the core benefits from implementing an online proofing solution, it's important to also factor in the impact of the status quo. The impact of leaving inefficient processes unchecked can have significant opportunity costs associated with them. It's not just processes that can be improved. Leaving unnecessary costs to continue can stunt growth over the long-term.

Online proofing has been called “the quickest win in marketing technology”, mainly due to the ease of implementation and internal adoption of focused, best-of-breed offerings. As discussed herein, there are also long-term, tangible benefits to driving greater efficiency in marketing organizations.

Suggested Reading

- [What is Online Proofing?](#)
- [Five Signs Your Marketing Team Needs Online Proofing](#)
- [Online Proofing Best Practices](#)

Footnotes:

1. 2016 Gartner Magic Quadrant, Marketing Resource Management, p 25
2. Ibid
3. 2017 In House Creative Report, pages 24, 25

Ziflow online proofing was used for the review and approval of this ebook.

Our proofing scorecard:

-  3 versions shared with 6 total team members
 -  36 comments, 3 attachments to comments, 26 replies and 12 upvotes  to comments
 -  1 changes required decision, 3 approval decisions
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About Ziflow

Ziflow is an online proofing application for marketers, which streamlines the review and approval of creative content to deliver marketing projects faster. We do this by improving collaboration, centralizing feedback and eliminating manual steps through automated workflow. Ziflow replaces email, printouts and other ad-hoc methods for reviewing creative content with an enterprise-ready, pure-play online proofing solution.



For more information, please visit www.ziflow.com