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Businesses that prioritise customer experience significantly outperform competitors, according to Adobe Digital Trends Report

- Almost half (45%) of businesses rank content and customer experience management as a top priority for 2018
- Brands taking cross-team, customer-centric approach nearly twice as likely to exceed their business goals
- Half of brands (46%) expect to adopt AI to support customer experience by the end of 2018, but many admit lacking required knowledge and resources to implement

LONDON, February 21, 2018 - Businesses that focus on customer experience have the capacity to significantly outpace their competitors, according to Adobe's Digital Trends 2018 report.

The report, published in association with Econsultancy, surveyed 13,000 marketing, creative and technology professionals in the US, APAC and EMEA to look at the most significant trends impacting digital strategies in the short term. This year's report also benchmarks businesses' 2017 performance against their goals and priorities, to uncover strategies and investment choices that lead to higher business performance.

The study found that content and customer experience management is becoming a top strategic priority for organisations in 2018. Almost half (45%) of companies surveyed rank this as one of their three most important priorities for the year ahead, with a fifth (20%) considering it their primary focus. Just under two-thirds (62%) of companies agree they now have "a cohesive plan, long-term view and executive support for the future of [their] customer".

Blurring the boundaries

Building outstanding customer experiences is not only the reserve of marketing departments – the study reveals that cross-collaboration between creative, content, marketing and web teams is increasingly critical to success.

Organisations implementing a cross-team, customer-centric approach to customer-led initiatives are nearly twice as likely to exceed their business goals, the study found. Those that employ tools that allow streamlining of workflows between different functions are 62% more likely to demonstrate better business performance.

Similarly, top-performing companies are almost four times as likely as their mainstream peers to have invested in a highly-integrated, Cloud-based technology stack that enables them to have a more comprehensive view of the full customer lifecycle, from acquisition through to retention. A

much greater number of respondents – 43% – admit that their technology set-up is fragmented, with inconsistent integration between technologies.

AI: The intelligent choice

The report found that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is becoming an important driver of customer experience execution. This is particularly true in larger enterprises, where 24% of respondents say they are already pushing forward with AI investments.

The survey also shows that AI adoption is increasingly being driven from the top: 57% of c-suite respondents say that their companies are already using, or planning to use, the technology. Meanwhile, organisations using AI tools to create real-time personalised experiences for their customers are 50% more likely to significantly exceed their business goals.

Tackling the skills gap

Businesses still face skills shortages in implementing AI and related customer analytics technologies, however. About 40% of businesses report that they lack the required knowledge of AI or the resources to implement it, or the required talent to engineer good customer experiences.

Meanwhile, investment in digital skills to support the marketing function continues to correlate strongly with high business performance. Three-quarters of respondents report that their companies are investing in these types of skills, with these companies twice as likely to surpass their business goals by a significant margin.

At the same time, almost three-quarters (73%) of respondents say their companies are investing in design capabilities to differentiate their brands and supplement investment in data-driven skills and technologies. The study found that organisations describing themselves as 'design-driven' are 69% more likely than their peers to have exceeded their 2017 business goals by a significant margin (22% vs. 13%).

John Watton, Senior Marketing Director, Adobe commented. "Digital means that customers now have more power to engage with brands in their own terms. This has changed the way companies interact with their customers, who expect great experiences as standard. For businesses that put the customer at the centre of everything they do, it's clear the investments are paying off. But customer experience cannot just be the remit of marketing or customer services; it must be driven through every function of the organisation, from marketing and IT to product development and design. By breaking down organisational silos and using data and AI to combine analytical insight with design and creative capabilities, brands can offer stand-out experiences across every interaction."

The full report can be accessed [here](#).

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