



Adobe Creative Cloud for teams

Survive today and thrive tomorrow.

How to set your creative team up for lasting success.

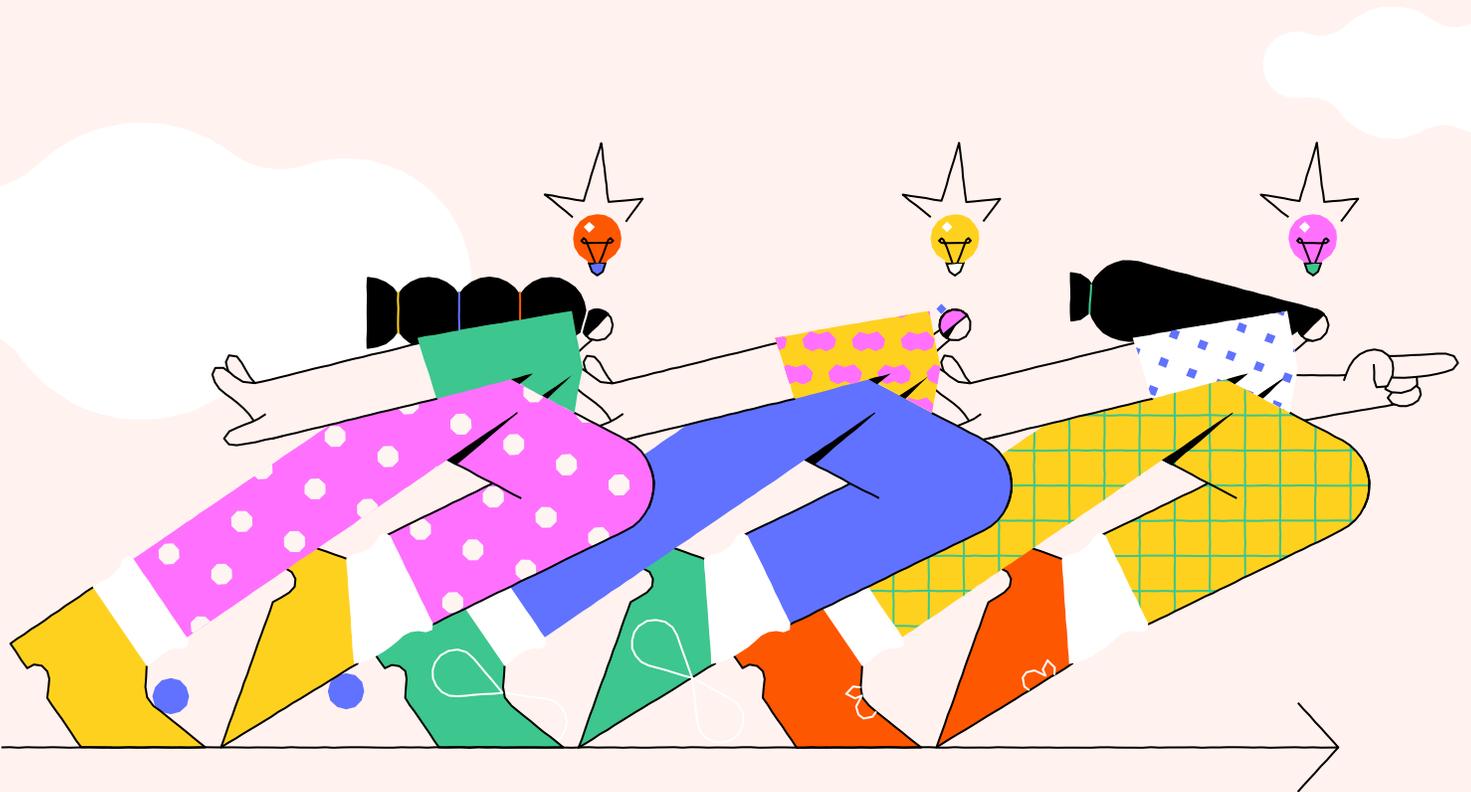


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Evolve your brand even as problems arise.

When a company shifts into survival mode — whether it's because of uncertain economic times, big changes in leadership or mission, or even a global pandemic — creative priorities can fall by the wayside.

Creative teams are suddenly asked to produce more, faster, and with fewer resources. Overloaded with projects, they may feel like they have to sacrifice long-term goals, like building a brand that makes an emotional connection with consumers, to meet short-term demands.

But it's possible to survive a crisis and lay a strong foundation for future growth at the same time. It's a matter of pivoting to projects that meet goals now, but also fit into the longer-term mission. And — of course — it means shifting your mindset and getting a little creative.



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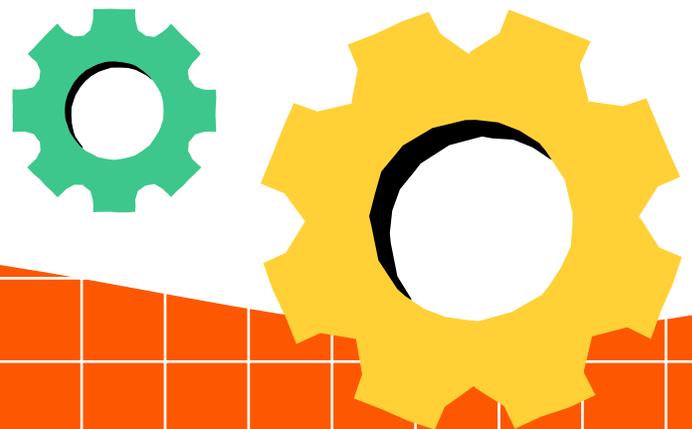
How to think your way out of short-termism.

Short-term thinking doesn't only happen in a crisis. Whether it's a company keeping up with investor demands and the pressure to meet quarterly growth targets or a small business trying to maintain a steady cash flow, businesses are constantly pushed to produce more, more quickly, and this takes a toll on future plans. Add a crisis, and the pressure intensifies. Businesses of all sizes, including smaller companies that aren't reporting their quarterly earnings to Wall Street, need to balance short-term and long-term goals.

For creative teams, short-termism tends to translate into more projects with quick turnaround times and campaigns that focus on immediate sales activation, instead of longer-term campaigns that nurture customer trust and loyalty.

But there's plenty of evidence that long-term thinking is the answer to profitable, long-lasting business success, even when it requires some up-front sacrifices. Consider [CVS](#), for example. When the company decided to rebrand itself as a truly health-focused business in 2014, they stopped selling cigarettes — at an initial cost of \$2 billion per year. But overall sales went up as their pharmacy and medical services businesses blossomed.

Unilever's CEO, Paul Polman, was so strongly opposed to short-termism that he stopped reporting quarterly earnings to investors. Instead, he committed more energy to the company's purpose and long-term growth. According to [Inc.](#), Polman explained, "We needed to remove the temptation to work only toward the next set of numbers...better decisions are being made."



Marketing consultant Peter Field argues that short-termism on the creative side of the business changes the essential nature of campaigns. Rather than focusing on deep connections and human stories that build an enduring brand, short-term campaigns tend to focus on rational nudges — like reasons to buy now. These campaigns may produce an immediate result, but they're fundamentally different from something like CVS's long-view plan to quit selling cigarettes — they don't continue to pay off in the future.

As Field wrote in an [IPA report](#), "Brand-building is the main driver of long-term growth and involves the creation of emotional memory structures that primes consumers to want to choose the brand, something creativity is very good at. These memory structures take time to create and reinforce — you cannot build a brand overnight — but they are very durable and their effects actually build over time."

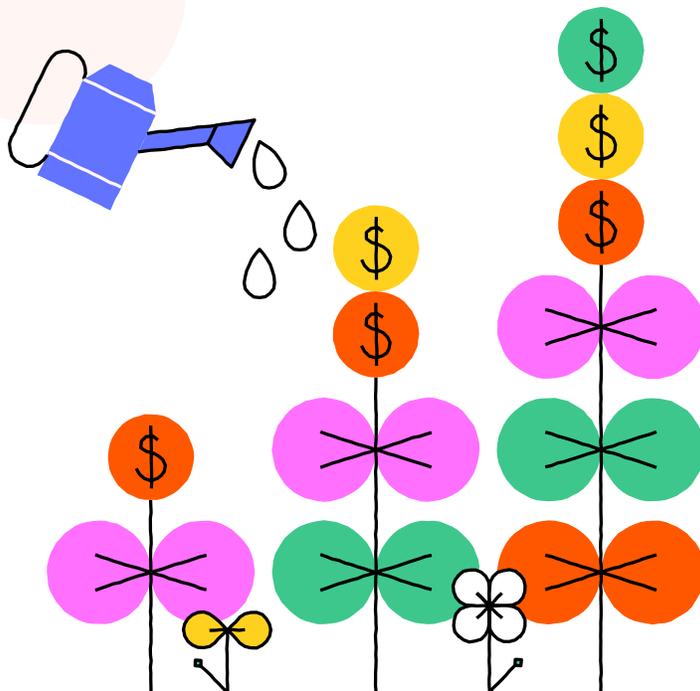
Enduring campaigns are the ones we know and love because they give brands their personality. Consider the long-running Snickers "You're not you when you're hungry" ads. Or Dove's decade-and-a-half Real Beauty campaign, which established the company's role in the body positivity movement and has an [overall ROI of over 400%](#).

Even though short-term demands are intense, long-term thinking is key to getting through a crisis and coming out ahead.

“ To plan for one year, grow sales.
To plan for three years, grow channels.
To plan for decades, grow a brand.”

Idris Mootee

Author of *60-Minute Brand Strategist*



4 ways for creative teams to survive today and set themselves up to thrive tomorrow.

Between an uncertain economy, working remotely, and so many canceled events, the COVID-19 pandemic was a rare, shared moment of business crisis. And there's a lot we can learn from how successful creative teams handled the pressure.

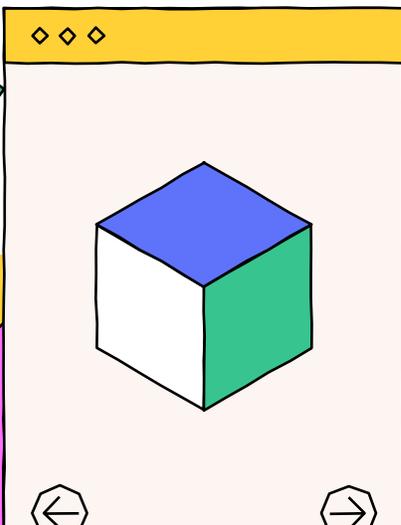
Zack Shubkagel, creative director at California-based Schipper Design, saw it all first-hand: "We had companies that were very focused on the short-term goal of getting customers in the door, especially because they couldn't have tradeshow or other events that they normally rely on. At the same time, we had a lot of clients who realized this was an opportunity to focus on brand-building."

While the solutions will be unique to each business, here are four of the most effective pivots that have helped companies get through a crisis and come out stronger on the other side.

1

Build the brand.

One way to make the most of a crisis moment is to establish or deepen your branding guidelines. Having clear guidelines builds a foundation for future creative work and maintains the brand's connection with consumers. It also helps stretch tight resources and keep a remote team on the same page.



Ben Child experienced this when he led the creative team at Workfront when the pandemic started. “One thing that really made a big difference for my team was building a complete visual guideline and design system so that we could scale really quickly,” he explains. “It wasn't like, ‘Oh, we've got another request from the campaign team. They want to push out two new campaigns this month. Let's start all over again and rethink this new creative direction.’ It was, ‘Okay, as part of our design system, we know that we have these elements that align to those audiences and we can just pull from that palette, produce the work, and then we're off and running and moving a lot faster.”

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Ben Child

VP, Brand, Quantum Metric

With guidelines in place, creative teams can think about how each campaign fits into the longer-term branding mission. Even projects with short-term goals can build on each other in interlocking campaigns. And once you've built up your brand equity, you'll be in a better position to ride out any future crisis.



2

Shore up your infrastructure.

With conferences and tradeshows cancelled during the pandemic, companies leaned into the production of digital content. But new content only has an impact if people can find it. So, a second way creative teams can maximize their crisis efforts — with an eye to the future — is strengthening their digital infrastructure to better deliver content to customers. With the right infrastructure in place, you can quickly activate a variety of channels and expand your reach, while building deeper relationships with your existing customers.

“When the pandemic first started, we were fixing leaky faucets, just trying to keep things running,” says Shubkagel. “But now clients are realizing that the whole infrastructure may need to be replaced. They want to be able to share more content — from research reports, video, and infographics to data — so they need libraries and ways to search and store everything.”

3

Plan for tailored experiences.

Building a stronger infrastructure also means thinking about how to deliver more impactful customer experiences — which makes it a perfect moment to get serious about tailoring content to specific segments or individuals. Even before the pandemic, consumers were demanding more relevant content. Back in 2017, the marketing firm [Epsilon](#) found that 80% of consumers between 18-64 were more likely to do business with a company that offered personalized experiences.

As more and more interactions went online during the pandemic — a change that’s likely to stick around post-pandemic — customers will continue to expect highly relevant content.

So, another way to leverage digital content in a crisis moment, and set the stage for the future, is to find ways to weave a personal touch into your content-led experiences. Whether it’s timely, targeted emails, or a website that offers dynamic content tailored to different types of visitors, custom catering amplifies the value of creative campaigns.

4

Invest in video.

If you're looking for a creative asset that can meet an immediate, crisis-level need and still have versatility and staying power, nothing beats video. The marketing ROI on video tends to be high because of its flexibility, emotional power, and ability to garner attention. Video stands out among static images on a social feed, makes a compelling case on your homepage, and builds out your YouTube channel.

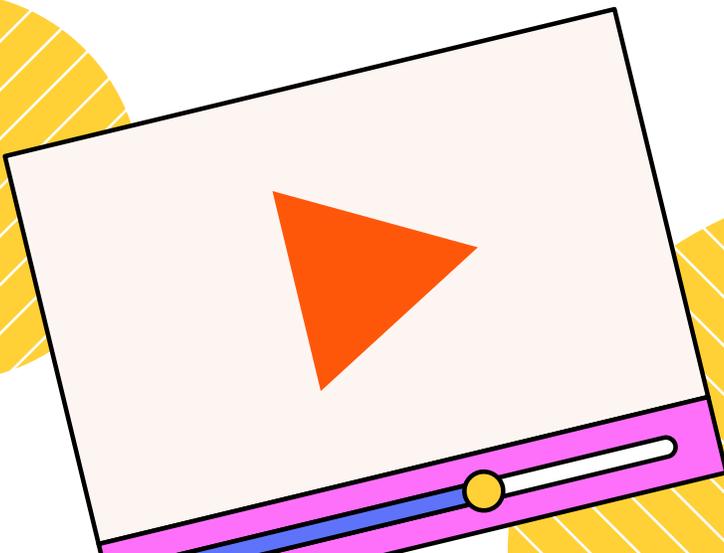
"Video has just become the nature of our world," says Child, who is now a VP of Brand at Quantum Metric. "Everyone expects a video now. It's got to be rich, it's got to be compelling, and it's got to be tastefully done. And make sure you have a good story that goes along with it too, so that people can learn something from it."

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While video dominates the internet — [YouTube viewership totals a billion hours each day](#) — the pandemic showed that it's also a tried and true crisis go-to. Creatives turned to webinars, video panel discussions, and virtual conferences to take the place of in-person events. In the process, they discovered that high-quality digital content reaches more people than a conference, at a fraction of the cost.

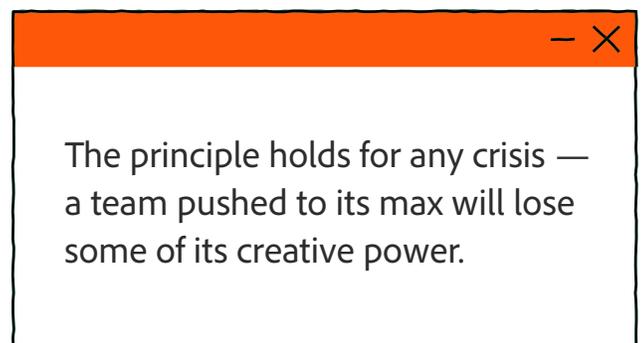


Nurturing creativity in a crisis, and beyond.

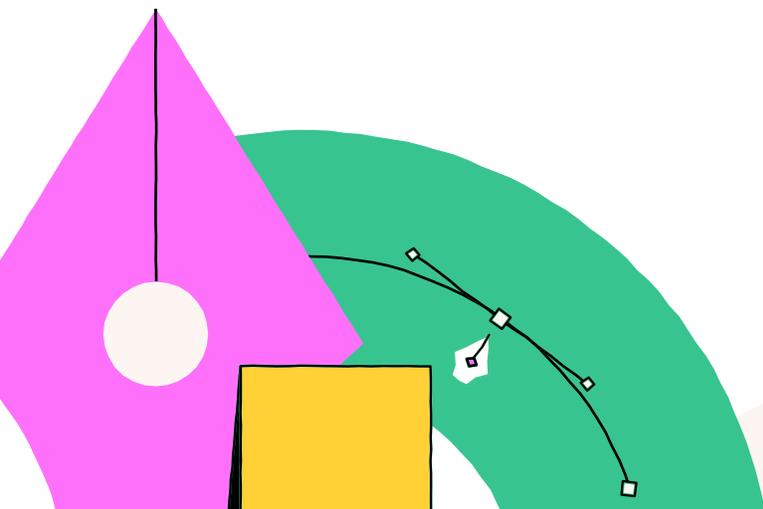
A crisis can mean smaller budgets, bigger demands, and less time to get it all done. In the midst of all that, it's critical to remember the people behind the creative.

“One thing I've learned as a leader is that you have to create a safe space for your people so creativity can really flourish — so they can do what they do best, which is ideate and create,” says Child. During the pandemic, he noticed that his team's creative capabilities ebbed and flowed with the stress of the situation. Sometimes, he had to ask the team to just pause, rest, and reset. “The epiphanies and the growth in the creative process happen when you least expect it. It's during a walk in the evening or when you're away from the computer that those great things happen.”

The principle holds for any crisis — a team pushed to its max will lose some of its creative power. Counterintuitive as it may feel, slowing down can be the best way to keep moving full speed ahead. And giving creatives the space to breathe and think can help ensure that the assets you produce now will be worth leveraging into the future.



The structure of a creative team can make a big difference, too. “I think every creative team has got to have that studio manager — the traffic cop — to help the creative operations process,” says Child. “It's someone who can facilitate intake, build relationships with partners and stakeholders, and allow the creatives, designers, and art directors to do what they do best, which is stay in the work, stay in the tools they love, and just be creative.”

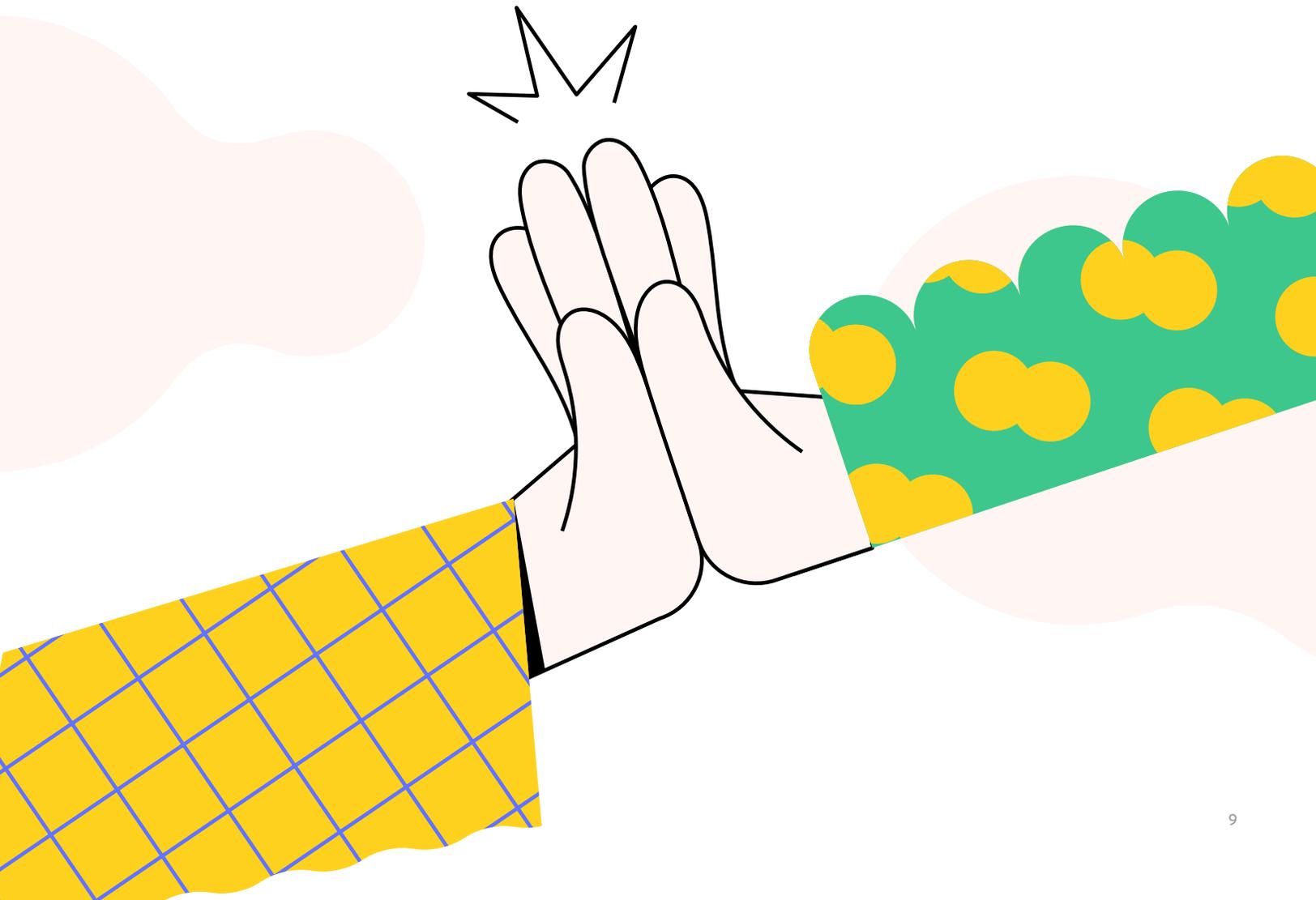


Coming out of the storm stronger.

A crisis can throw a company into short-term, panic thinking. And the stress can be especially intense for creative teams. Rather than sacrificing long-term branding strategies — the ones that build lasting connections with customers — in the name of right-now demands, focus on balancing short- and long-term goals and pursuing strategies that support both.

While no crisis is ever easy, each one is an opportunity. For creative leaders, crisis mode is a chance to lean into the brand's long-term vision, get creative about assets that can serve right now while also fitting into the larger mission, and pause often enough to keep creativity flourishing.

With some creative pivots, you can survive today and prepare your team — and your business — to thrive tomorrow.



Adobe can help.

Adobe Creative Cloud for teams gives you the world's best creative apps and services in a single, secure, integrated platform. With 20+ industry-leading apps, Creative Cloud Libraries for keeping assets in sync across apps and devices, and 1TB of storage per user, this complete creative solution is designed to support your business at every stage of growth. Plus, you can count on simplified license management and total control over your software to help your team stay focused on creating great work.

[Learn more](#) about how your team can boost productivity and creativity and work better together.



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