



DIGITAL AGENCY
NETWORK



The Future of Digital Agencies



In Partnership With 

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Representative at Productive



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Director of Customer
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at AREA 17



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Sr. Content Lead
at Arnold Street Media



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at AVX Digital



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Co-founder
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Marketing Coordinator
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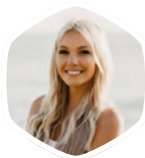
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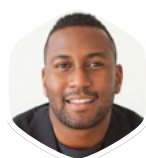
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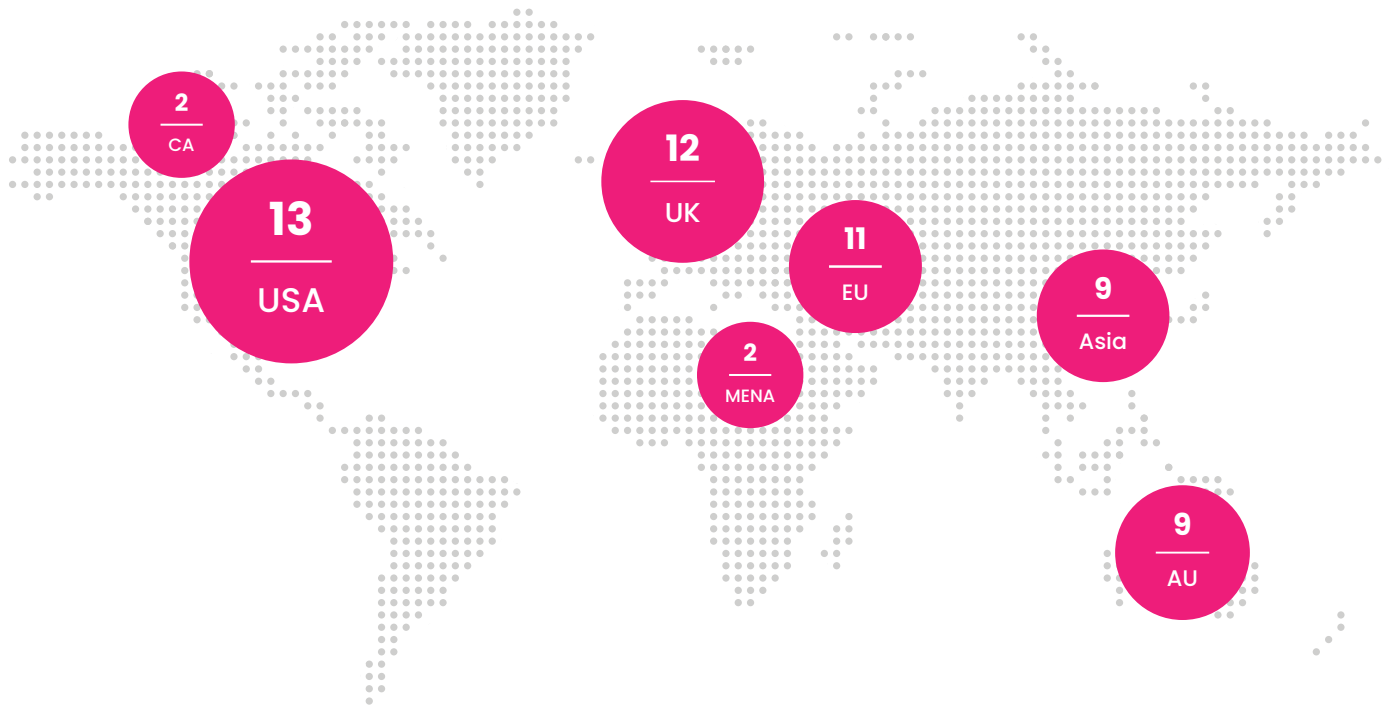


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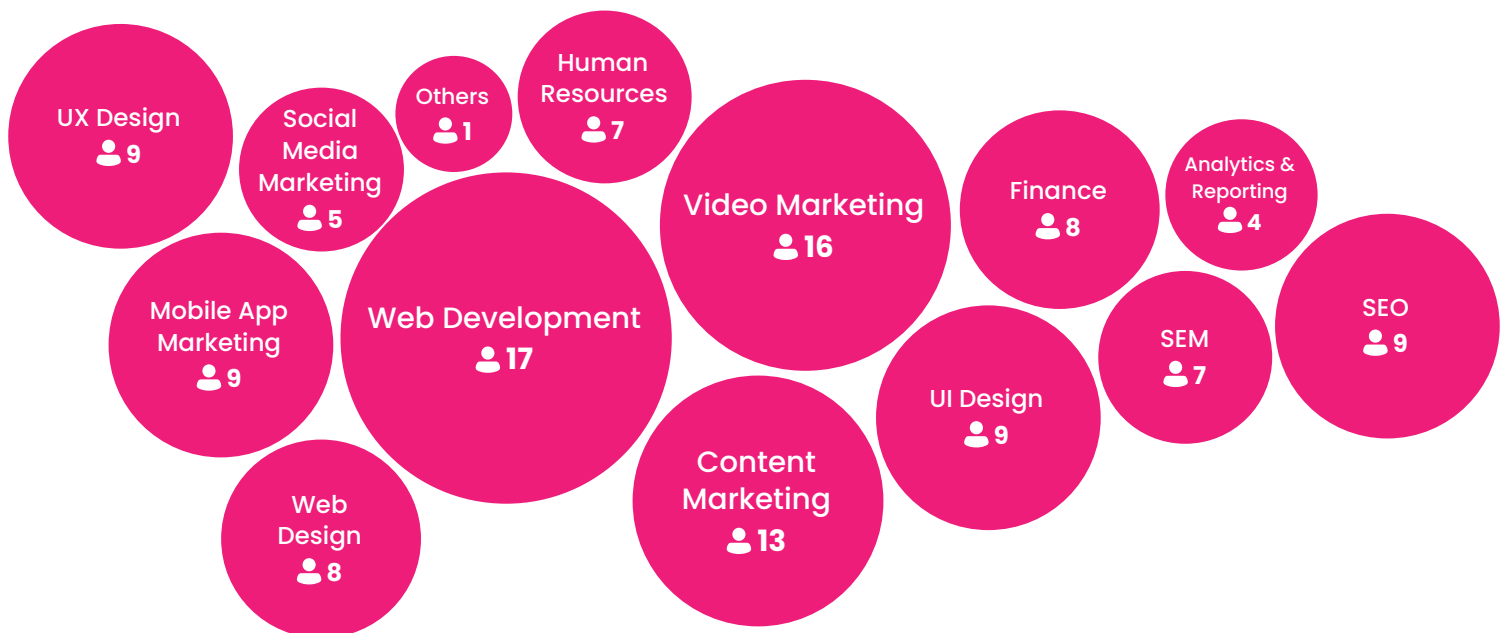
Executive Summary

We would like to take this chance to thank each and every one of the participants. We're honored to gather insights from 36 digital agency leaders from around the world. Let's check what they have to say about the future of digital agencies.

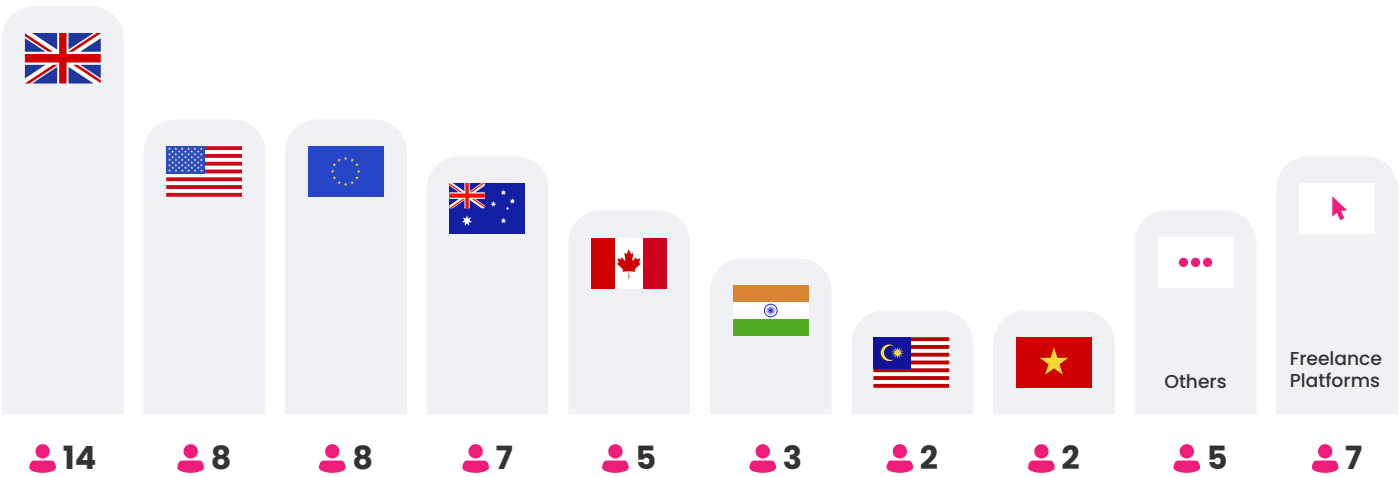
Where are your offices located?



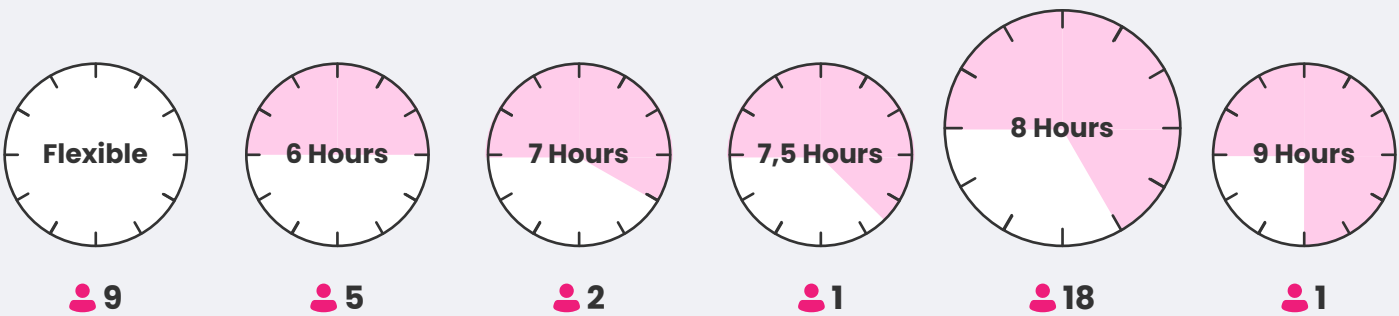
Which jobs are you more likely to outsource in the near future?



Where do you plan to outsource the jobs you specified in the previous question?



What will be your team’s average number of working hours per day in the near future?



What will be the breakdown of your team members in the near future?

10 of 36 agencies that participated in this survey plan to increase the number of their outsourced employees whereas only one of them wants to decrease it. 25 of 36 agencies want to keep the breakdown the same in the near future.

	100%	90%	80%	70%	60%	50%	40%	30%	20%	10%	0%
IN-HOUSE	5	10	13	2	2	0	1	1	1	1	0
OUTSOURCED	0	1	1	1	1	0	2	2	13	10	5

How often does your team go to the office?

	Never	1 day a week	2 days a week	3 days a week	4 days a week	5 days a week	Whenever they want
NOW	👤 12	👤 1	👤 2	👤 4	👤 1	👤 3	👤 13
IN THE NEAR FUTURE	👤 3	👤 1	👤 6	👤 6	👤 1	👤 5	👤 14

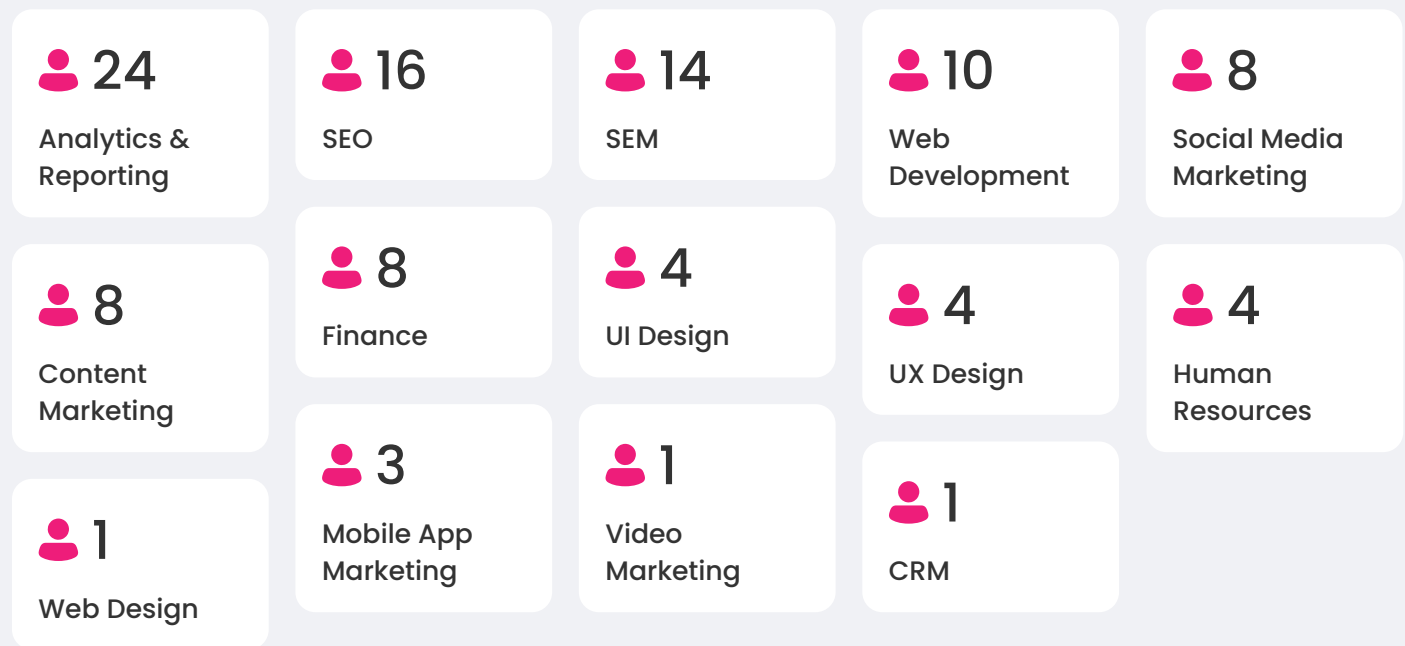
Which of the following applies to your agency or will apply in the near future?

	It has been happening for the last few years	It has started after the pandemic	I don't believe this will ever happen	I think it will happen in 5 years	I think it will happen in 10 years
We don't need an office	👤 6	👤 5	👤 22	👤 3	👤 0
We accept payments in crypto currency	👤 2	👤 2	👤 11	👤 15	👤 6
We have a sustainability pledge	👤 17	👤 5	👤 3	👤 11	👤 0
We have a diversity & inclusion pledge	👤 28	👤 2	👤 1	👤 5	👤 0

For the near future, are you interested in



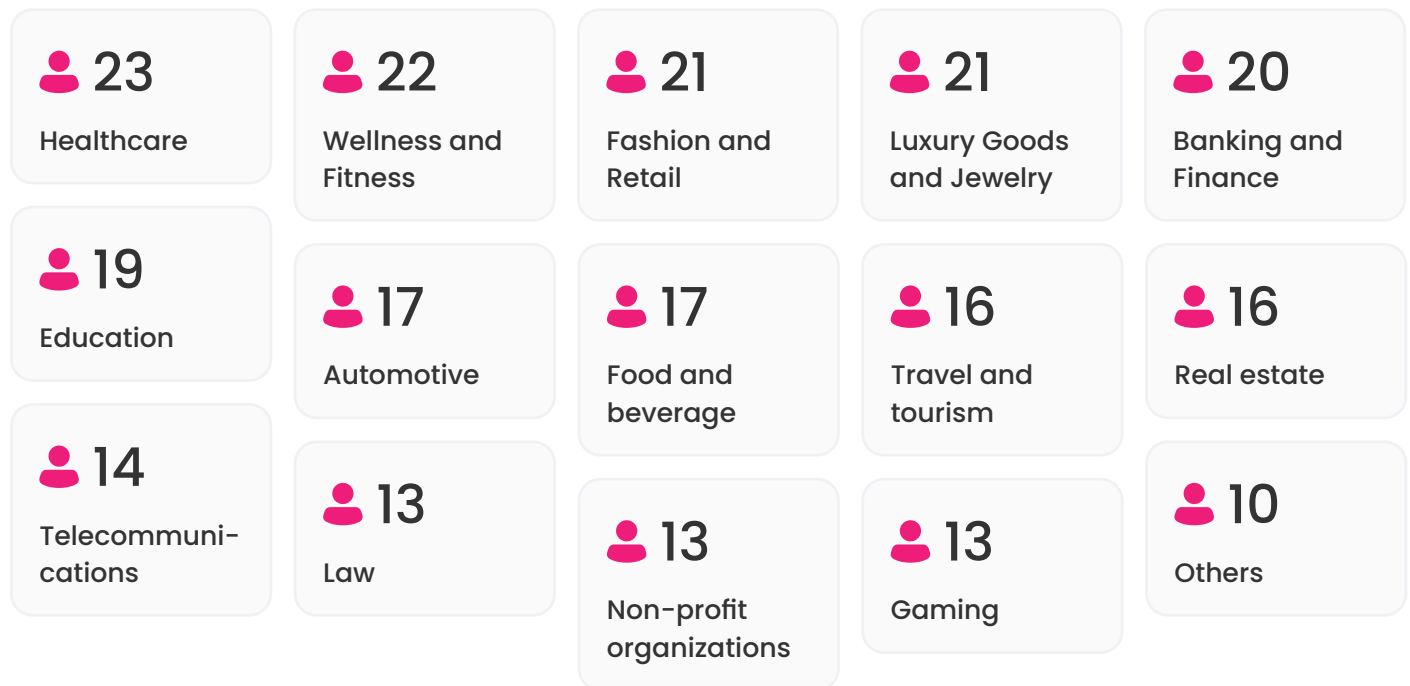
Which jobs do you think are more likely to be displaced by automation?



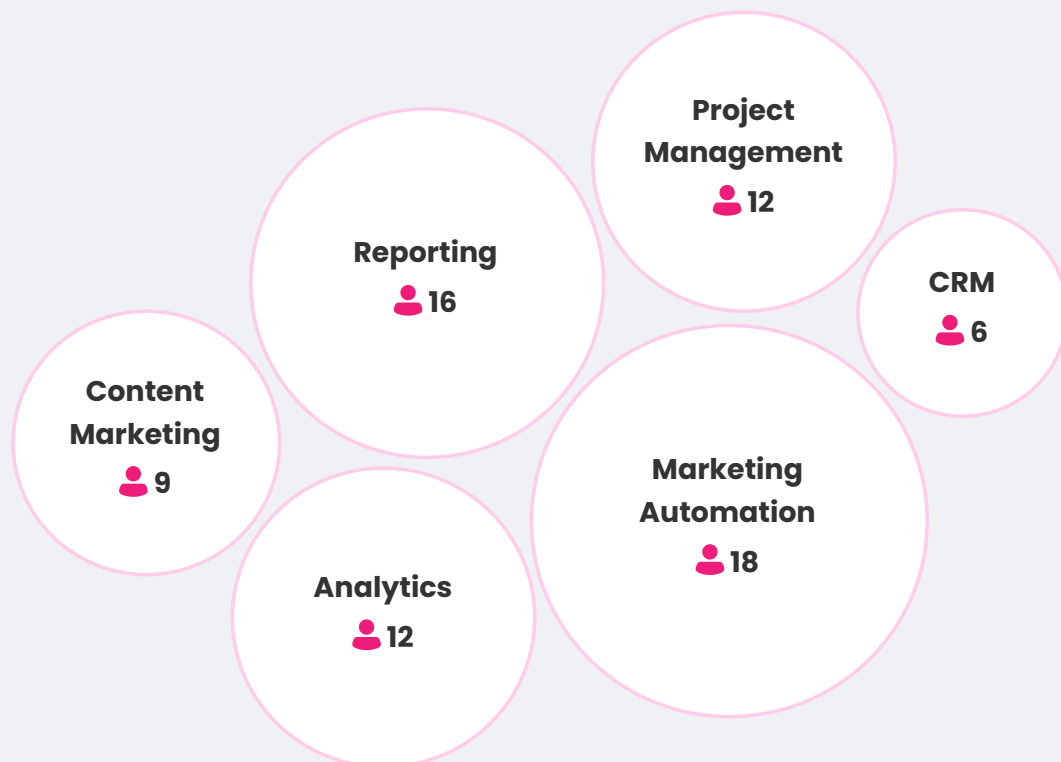
If you want your agency to focus on more niche services in the future, which ones will they be?



Which sectors do you plan to focus on and get customers from in the near future?



Which categories of SaaS tools do you think are insufficient and will need more variety in the future?



In the near future, which services do you think will be;

	PPC	Content Marketing	Seo	Voice Search	Gen Z Marketing	Chatbots	Inclusive And Equitable Marketing
LESS POPULAR	👤 14	👤 4	👤 11	👤 6	👤 8	👤 13	👤 3
MORE TRENDY	👤 13	👤 24	👤 9	👤 22	👤 22	👤 15	👤 27

We also asked the participants which new titles they think that we will see at the agencies in the future that we are not familiar with today. Here are our favorite ones:

- **Cryptocurrency-related titles:** Marketing & Cryptocurrency Group Lead, Cryptocurrency Coordinator, Web3 Strategist, Crypto Lead, Crypto Developer
- **AI-related titles:** AI Designer, AI campaign monitoring, AI Wizard/Manager, AI Content Manager, AI Automation Lead, Head of AI Resources
- **Sustainability-related titles:** Sustainability Strategist, Sustainability Group Leader
- **Experience-related titles:** Experience Director, Experience Strategist, Chief Experience Officer
- **Happy staff-related titles:** CHO – Chief Happiness Officer, Staff Engagement Manager, Work-life Coach, Desktimer/Remote Work Coordinator
- **DEI-related titles:** Diversity Officer, Integration – Personalization Developer
- **Others:** CAO – Chief Automation Officer, Chief Bot Tamer, Human-Technology Integration Specialist, Chief Innovation Officer, Chef de cuisine, PHP Author, Digital Prophet (i.e. Technology Forecaster), Consumer Psychologist, Growth Hacker



Gabriijela Bosnjak

Sr. Business Development Representative at Productive

DAN TOOLS MEMBER



In which ways do you think Productive contributes to the business operations of digital agencies?

Sales, Resource Planning, and Reporting in Productive are crucial for agency operations management. Those key features give operations managers insight into their most important agency metrics. The Sales funnel can help with revenue forecasting and resource allocation for upcoming months. Scheduling helps operations managers visualize capacity and balance teammates' workloads.

With placeholders, managers can create hiring scenarios and book upcoming work. Productive's Insights Library offers over 50 pre-built, agency-focused reports. Managers can check utilization rates, profit margins, revenue, and similar KPIs in real-time. They can also create custom reports for the specific data they need. Streamlined project management and Billing in Productive also amplify efficiency and data-driven decision-making.

How do you think Productive can help with the future of digital agencies?

Productive helps agencies make better business decisions, based on data. With all agency metrics in one core tool, managers can notice gaps and patterns that influence efficiency. Time tracking linked to services and budgets is automatically visible in Insights. This helps managers reallocate resources or communicate changes towards teams and clients.

The future of digital agencies relies on understanding revenue and profit forecasting. Productive gives answers to agency-specific questions. What is the profitability of a project or client? What is the projected revenue? What are the utilization rates? That entire set of key metrics gives management a basis to move forward and steer the growth of their agency.





Shape Your Agency's Future

- ✓ **Consolidate all your data** in one agency management system
- ✓ Run projects **from prospect to payment** and everything in between
- ✓ A **single source of truth** for all your financial data, leads, budgets, and communication

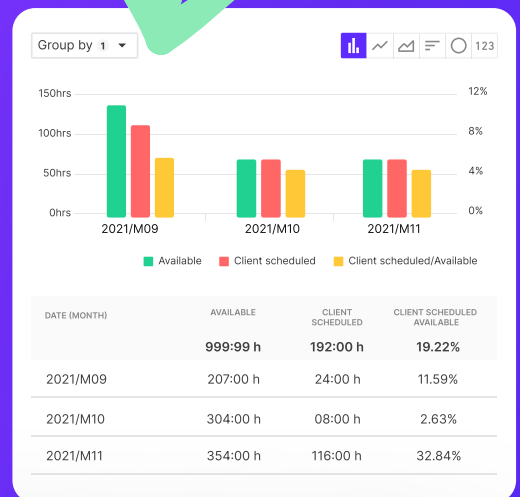
TASK LIST
Shortlist

ASSIGNEE
Marian Q.

DUE DATE
Mar 1, 2017 x

TAGS
design x ux x

SUBSCRIBERS



October 2021	Oct W42	Oct W43
Marilyn Siphron 40h per week	ABD Bank: Project management 4h/day for 5 days Cupcake Project: Website	PewPew: Sale
Marianne Levin 40h per week	ABC Project 8h/day for 5 days	Vacation 8h/day for 5 days

Resource planning

Project Management

Time Tracking

Reporting

Budgeting

Billing

Sales

Book a Demo

Try Productive →

Holly Shackleton

Director of Customer Operations at Adtrak



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Digital agencies have had a bizarre 2 years. This industry however has always been one of the most progressive, naturally through the ever-expanding world of digital.

Many of the problems that we have faced collectively have in turn created incredible solutions. Two things stick out to me.

The commitment to creating a positive and productive environment for staff. We had to learn, adapt and thrive working from home. And because of this, people are more aware and are prioritising their work / life balance for the better.

Client communication: I believe agencies are now truly understanding the power of consistent communication with their clients. Proactive comms has helped businesses get through tricky times and created stronger relationships as a result.



What does the phrase “agency of the future” mean to you?

An “agency of the future” is one that understands that it will always need to keep adapting. This industry does not stand still and you need to be ready to be progressive and advance through the good and the bad.


Agencies have a duty to pave the way for themselves, their staff and also their clients. There are industries out there who will need digital pioneers to help transition them into newer and more varied ways of working. The agencies of the future that will thrive, will be the ones that embrace new technologies and philosophies and actively look to pass these on to the people they work with.





George Eid

Co-founder & CEO at AREA 17

 USA, France



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In recent years, we've seen a significant number of digital agencies shifting their focus away from digital campaigns towards digital products. Simply put, a digital product is the delivery of the core services of an organization through digital channels. The work concerns itself with the usage of those services rather than their communication.

The shift towards digital products reflects an overall maturation of what digital means for organizations, which the pandemic accelerated. For many, being forced to conduct much of their business online has exposed existing frailties and unveiled new opportunities. For this reason, we've seen digital agencies identifying as and competing against consultancies.

What does the phrase “agency of the future” mean to you?

The agency-client relationship has evolved. Clients are looking for a co-creation: a genuine collaboration—between experts—to question, affirm, fortify, and give perspective. A welcome trend for several years, the line between agency and client team continues to blur.

As a single team with heightened comradery, clear priorities, and shared purpose, this two-sided team can increase their curiosity, creativity, and innovation in a time when prudence, efficiency, and conservation is the overwhelming sentiment.

The “agency of the future” is less a vision for the future and more of a rally for today. A call-to-action for today's agency leaders to fix their broken business and operating models, and improve their client and employee experiences.



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N. Beckett Pura

Sr. Content Lead at Arnold Street Media

 Canada

With the rise of the pandemic, stay-at-home orders created a stronger connection between consumers and their TV/e-commerce marketing. E-commerce was already experiencing growth, but the pandemic put it into hyperdrive. Also, as we attempt to navigate a recovery period, companies need to be super vigilant when budgeting, so making data-driven decisions will ensure that every dollar counts.

The commute to work was once a major to get print and billboard advertising in front of consumers — now that the commute is most likely from the kitchen to the home office, ad agencies must pivot and reallocate budgets in areas such as television, social media ads, and targeted search ads.

What does the phrase “agency of the future” mean to you?

People are tired. The pandemic has made people tired and they just want their lives to be easier.

The ad agency of the future must be able to position brands in a way that allows them to resonate with consumers and demonstrates the ways in which they will directly improve the lives of the consumer.

Mental health has taken precedence, with buzzwords like “self-care” trending on google and all over social media. One thing that has not changed about consumers, however, is the need for instant gratification, so the faster is always better.




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James Itkoff

Sr. Director of Strategy at AVX Digital

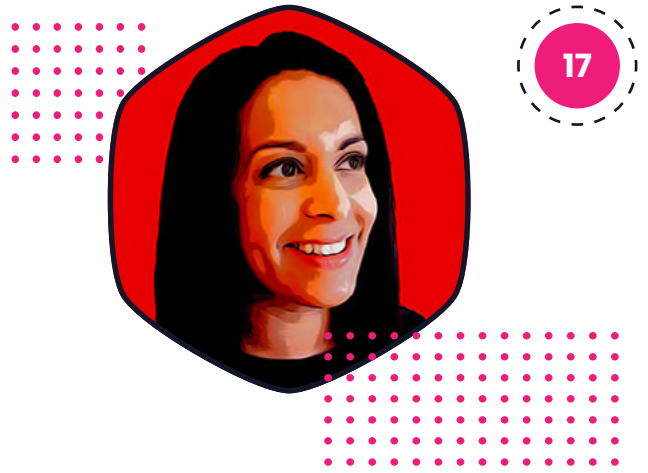
 USA, Netherlands, Morocco

Really digital agencies have become... marketing agencies. I obviously mean that somewhat sarcastically, but in reality, the lines of traditional marketing and digital advertising have completely blurred. On one hand, COVID-19 has forced brands to move online, while ios14 has crippled the industry, forcing people to find new channels. Really, this has caused marketing experts to abandoned what they knew, regardless of their specialty, and take holistic marketing knowledge and combine this into a new seamless plan!

What does the phrase “agency of the future” mean to you?

It means the agencies that have left custom convention and focused on the origins of advertising.

While critical, the technical nuances of marketing have returned to secondary position. The primary focus is developing a clear message to end consumers and THEN finding channels that best suit that message. Many focus on “Ok let me do the Big 3 – SEO, PPC, and Facebook Ads”. Between ios14 and changes to customer behavior, that outdated focus is all-to limiting.



Nargis Jafferali

Co-founder at blazon



The appetite for quality content has been increasing massively over the last 2 years, and digital agencies have had to respond by ensuring they're staying creative and competitive. Creating standout content for their clients that cuts through this increasingly noisy online environment is key, and crucial for their commercial success.

What does the phrase “agency of the future” mean to you?


To me, it refers to the need for agencies to stay on top of change.

Whether there are new social platforms being launched or whether it's algorithms of existing platforms that get updated, a digital agency needs to respond quickly and stay dynamic, in order to maintain a high standard of service to their clients.



Catherine Woodward

Marketing Coordinator at Brave Bison

 UK, Singapore



Agencies are becoming more agile and diverse than ever before. The nature of digital within its very existence means that agencies must be ever-evolving but the Covid-19 pandemic has presented a number of new challenges and exciting opportunities for businesses.

In order to stay relevant and generate new business in competitive markets, many digital agencies have expanded their service offerings and revenue streams to become more of a one-stop-shop agency. Diversifying revenue streams has been essential for digital agencies since March 2020 specifically. Many clients are adapting marketing strategies to focus on digital and social, where consumers are easily reached while spending increased amounts of time at home.



What does the phrase “agency of the future” mean to you?


An agency of the future will be bold, data-driven and adaptable. Agencies that survive the test of time will be the ones that are two-steps ahead of the very competitive landscape that digital and social has become. In order to stay relevant, agencies need to ensure they have bold ideas, strategies and activations that challenge the status quo and as much of a cliché as it is, think outside the box. The digital and social spaces are inundated with programmes, tools and platforms that inform decision making with highly relevant and useful data information.

An agency of the future will have a robust data-driven approach to all the work they deliver for clients while producing creative ideas that push boundaries and stay on-trend.



Andrew Whitehead

Creative & Managing Director at Devotion

 Australia

Digital agencies, like every industry, have had their challenges over the last two years. Agencies with the ability to generate rapid growth for clients through performance/growth marketing and eCommerce enablement have thrived. In contrast, agencies focused on large-scale digital implementations have potentially seen budgets reduced and decision-making timeframes stretched.

As business confidence returns, digital transformation projects will become central to organisations' strategic plans again, especially given the rapid adoption required with workforces and consumers now operating remotely. While this was forced on many organisations at the start of the pandemic, widespread acceptance of 'the new norm' means agencies capable of delivering strategic digital solutions continue to be well poised to succeed.

What does the phrase "agency of the future" mean to you?


An agency of the future can look like many things.

Still, I think agencies that truly understand business, have a seat at the decision-making table, and are not just about execution will succeed.

Agencies that build consumer and commercial understanding into each role will deliver value back to clients at every opportunity. They can remove layers of cost as each person acting on any account is invested and understands the business challenges. Gone are the days of layered account structures with a brief at the top and execution at the bottom.

Tony Ng

Founder and Creative Director at DigiSalad

 Hong Kong, Taiwan



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In the recent two years, most of the companies are starting to activate their plan of Digital Transformation and moving their business from offline to online due to the impact of Covid-19. Because of the high demand of digital transformation services, the role of Digital Agency is becoming vital in the market.

Based on our observation, some Digital Agencies that only focus on the production side are fading out and becoming less competitive in the market as they cannot provide the strategic planning to guide the client on how to drive the conversion in the digital world quickly.

What does the phrase “agency of the future” mean to you?

From my definition, “Agency of the future” means the new operation model of the agency. Previously, the so-called “Global Big Agencies” dominated the market after decades of acquiring smaller agencies.

However, this old model is breaking as clients are seeking quality-driven and best-in-class agencies that can work across disciplines but are more cost effective.



Ko Leuk Ling Joyce

Digital Content Manager at Digital Business Lab

 Hong Kong, Singapore

In recent years, digital agencies have gradually evolved from “generalists” to “specialists.” Previously, it was about managing the entire digital journey of the audiences and consumers.

Nowadays, it is about optimising each part of the journey with specialised expertise. One acknowledging themselves as a digital expert does not mean anything as the digital journey covers different vital aspects.

Imagine the digital journey as a puzzle; it takes specialists working together to place all the missing pieces and complete the journey. The challenge now is not only about identifying the right skills and experts, but more importantly, on synchronisation between specialists.

What does the phrase “agency of the future” mean to you?

The future lies in partnership. We foresee the trend of collaborative agencies partnering up to achieve common goals and work next to one another.

The collaboration aims to make sure all the essentials of the digital marketing journey, such as social, content, SEO, UX/UI design, data, etc., are fully aligned together while leveraging each agencies’ specialties.

Brad Russell

Owner at Digital Hitmen



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With the introduction of a range of niche digital marketing services, more agencies are moving away from the traditional full-scale model, to specialising on a few core offerings.

There is no longer a scattergun approach. Agencies identify what they are good at, what they aren't, and focus on what drives the most value (and results) for their clients.

For example, unless you have a Google Ads specialist within your agency, it is no longer feasible to offer that service to businesses of varying sizes. As such, alternatives such as Facebook Ads, SEO, email marketing and so on may be offered.

What does the phrase “agency of the future” mean to you?

It is important for agencies to continually adapt to the changing digital marketing landscape. As we know, the use of technology is changing on a constant basis. What is popular today may not be in 6 months' time.

As such, agencies must be working to constantly hone their existing skills, improve their processes, and identify growing technologies.


Training is crucial for any agency. Without upskilling employees, a digital marketing agency will forever be stuck in the 'now'.

By offering regular training, encouraging curiosity and learning, and making it a core part of the business, an agency becomes one of the future.



Mark Nickson

Managing Partner at DIJGTAL

 USA, Canada, Australia

Everyone wants to start one! Unfortunately though, most don't really understand how to strategically differentiate their business model to help separate them from the pack.

The sheer influx of new "I can do it too" style agencies has created an unhealthy price comparison discussion, and one that often just results in apples being compared to oranges in terms of output qualities.

I guess the old adage of "you get what you pay for" stands true!

What does the phrase "agency of the future" mean to you?

I'm more of a 'keep one eye on the future' but maintain a whole team on the 'now' type of person. :)

It's important to look forward, but only if you're doing so from a solid base that promotes and supports your future growth.

Elena Krapcheva

Business Developer at eDesign Interactive

USA, Bulgaria



Our marketing team has been actively tracking consumer behavior in the last two year. As a result of the pandemic, there's a huge shift in the way people connect, work, order products, interact with brands, and consume information. This development has brought new challenges for digital agencies, but also exciting opportunities.

Understanding consumer trends, thinking strategically, and planning forward is something creative teams must focus on to stay competitive. Agencies, small and large, need to rethink how they approach and engage customers, and how they design the marketing messages of their clients. In the last couple of years, our workflow has adapted to include flexible video calls and creative sessions online. We are working harder than ever to help our clients build their business hubs online.

🕒 What does the phrase "agency of the future" mean to you?

For me, the digital agency of the future is a team of smart and creative people who understand consumer behavior and the power of human emotions.

The agency of the future creates eye-catching designs blended with influencer marketing. The team uses MarTech integration and data visualization to build personalized advertising. The agency of the future deploys AI-generated content to rank in Google buyer search, voice-powered marketing and chatbots to engage users to take action. Interactive campaigns are built with augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) features to enhance the fan experience. At eDesign, we are working on becoming the agency of the future. We love learning and experimenting with new technologies. Our goal is to be the best partner for our clients and bring the future to them today.



Ben Wheelhouse

Marketing Services Director at Emote Digital



I believe there is more of a demand for all encompassing digital agencies that can provide the transformation from start to finish through brand, website and marketing. Larger brands are moving away from agencies with linear offerings. Through COVID as everyone's general online presence has (had to) improve agencies have had to evolve and innovate even quicker than ever before to keep their clients ahead of the competition.

In addition we've seen ourselves, and other agencies expand their reach and work with clients globally. The borders have been broken down by remote work, and meant that it doesn't really matter where your agency is. We've worked with clients from the US, UK, Hong Kong, Portugal and more across the last 2 years. This kind of thing would have been much more rare in previous years.

What does the phrase "agency of the future" mean to you?

Agency of the future means an agency that can cater for all of a client's digital needs. Whether that is the more traditional digital marketing tactics, full-scale websites, or things in the future that we don't even know are here yet.


An agency of the future will be able to deliver everything from a new brand, through website, and marketing, and we expect new innovations to fill in the gaps. Things like AI and robotics are likely to become much more of a feature of future businesses, and who knows what kinds of integrations they will bring for the kind of work we do. The way businesses have pivoted during COVID has shown which businesses and agencies can survive whatever is thrown at them, and we think that this will be just as important as keeping ahead of the curve.





Shane Liuw

General Manager at First Page Digital SG

 Singapore

The world of digital marketing has evolved over time especially through Covid where there are more businesses going online from their traditional approach and business is brisk which means more digital agencies popping up to compete and get into the market where it's hot.

Successful digital agencies will have to evolve over time and improve on their solution offering and cannot stay status quo.

Taking First Page Digital, for example, we have invested in R&D on in-house developed tools and CRM to manage projects, tested new strategies on clients' campaigns which reaped significant rewards. Always have to stay one step ahead of the rest.

What does the phrase "agency of the future" mean to you?

To be able to cater to the latest digital trends and think ahead of time to strategize for clients to be ahead of the game.

No one size fit all "package" or solution but a custom tailored approach to clients' objectives and delivering results.



Shadab Rashid

CEO at Flynaut LLC

 USA, UAE

Over the years things have changed from banner ads in 1994 to Video, Voice-commands, AI, and VR in 2021. Personalized end-to-end customer experience in real-time has become a priority and the only thing that matters today. Agencies have transformed and seamlessly adopted these technologies to serve their clients.

The target audiences are getting narrowed and are more intelligent with evolving time and marketers have to be spot-on with their content and message. Agencies are taking massive actions and we see more content pushed through different social channels to attract and engage the prospects and consumers.

What does the phrase “agency of the future” mean to you?

As technology is changing every year, the agency that would have the expanded skillsets to embrace and solve brand problems with integrated solutions and creativity, I would say will be the agency to look out for. Today consumers need a world-class experience and those agencies who will put services in front of sales will be able to capture more attention and orchestrate brand loyalty and increase customers' lifetime value.

The agency that masters all the three phases of the marketing journey (before, during, and after) will be crowned as the agency of the future.



Hannah Kimuyu

Managing Director, Performance & SEO at Greenlight



UK



The past two years, for most digital agencies, have been more about survival than evolution. The key has been to focus on what they already do well and refine that in order to ensure growth and retention in key areas, as opposed to breaking into new spaces.

However, there are a handful of agencies that were thriving pre-COVID and that have managed to continue that growth pattern over the past 18 months. For those businesses, evolution has been focussed on the acquisition of agencies, services and people in order to bolster existing offerings. They've brought on big names in the industry to help align new businesses and service offerings and ensure everything can be pushed forward at the same pace.



What does the phrase "agency of the future" mean to you?

The agency of the future is people-focussed and data-driven. Data always needs to be the starting point, agencies should be basing activities on experience and insight, never opinion. Behind every great business is a team of people making it work and they are the ones we need to reach - we all know by now that faceless marketing is a terrible experience for the customer!

Connection will be key for the agency of the future. It's easy to get lost in ROI, we all need to think more about the experience we're trying to create and try to become more human.

Bethany Sharma

Head of Client Services at Hallam

 UK, Spain



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Digital agencies have seen huge disruption over the last 2 years. Many have had to go completely virtual, changing their fundamental business culture and how they collaborate with their clients.

We have seen a huge increase in demand for our services, bringing with it an incredibly competitive labour market with a specialist skills shortage. Only agencies with a strong culture, benefits and sense of purpose will continue to retain staff in the long term.

What does the phrase “agency of the future” mean to you?

To me, it means an agency willing and able to adapt rapidly to the plethora of changes their clients are experiencing and finding a way to make agency services increasingly relevant and valuable.

Change is inevitable, agencies of the future need to be the ones pulling their clients into that future. Technology will continue to disrupt, it will be agencies who hold strategic relationships built on a foundation of trust and great ideas that will thrive.

IMPRESSION

Aaron Dicks

Performance Director at Impression



30



Many agencies have been fast to adopt hybrid/remote-first working practices. This approach to working has, in some ways, meant that contact with clients has increased as video calls have stepped up, replacing traditional phone calls and the need to travel for in person meetings.

It's been interesting to see some agencies niche down, and others go further towards full-service. At Impression, we've stayed somewhere in the middle and operate across all performance channels but don't stretch into more subjective disciplines like design. Different services have undergone their own changes, too, and many are getting way more competitive.



What does the phrase "agency of the future" mean to you?

Agencies of the future will have a bigger focus on client centricity in service delivery, utilising the skills from client service teams to create the best experiences for their clients.

As digital maturity continues to grow, we'll see an emphasis on multi-channel delivery for most agencies. We'll also see a more strategic approach to marketing, making use of data driven insights to provide integrated solutions.

Agencies will need to be capable of navigating advertising beyond the cookie dependency of current advertising.

After a highly volatile 18 months, remaining agile in the future will be key.



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Alex Mathias

Vice President at Isadora Agency



Digital Agencies continue to adapt to various client needs. This includes providing new services to supplement core offerings to keep long-term partners happy. Agencies with a clear and strong differentiation strategy attract clients with a stronger affinity. With our agency, it's a balance between remaining focused on what we do best while gradually adding supplemental services most often requested by clients. These complementary services range from new development languages to data analytics to even deeper UX research capabilities. As projects get larger and more complex, clients demand more of agencies. Clients are looking for one or two agencies that can address all business needs. Agencies that keep up will organically acquire a larger share of a client's digital spending.

What does the phrase "agency of the future" mean to you?

For us, it means continuing to pay close attention to what our partners are sharing with us.

We often receive feedback on our services, process, and our overall finished product post-launch. We also stay in close touch with partners for years after the initial engagement for continuous feedback on results and product performance. Feedback either confirms we are doing things correctly or provides insight into opportunities for improvement.

Agencies have evolved into critical digital partners often guiding clients through highly technical environments. It's not uncommon that such agencies are influencing how customers interact with brands and in some cases even helping to define business processes. Providing tools that meet or exceed business objectives is why these agencies will continue to be called upon.



Michael John

CEO and Creative Director at LOOP

USA, AU, Germany, Austria, Denmark



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The pandemic has pushed any kind of digital marketing efforts to the absolute forefront in the last year — a shift that was supposed to happen within the next 5–8 years for most bigger brands happened within just 1 year.

With that development, digital agencies have quickly made their way from specialised agencies to lead agencies on record of bigger brands, taking on responsibility from strategic brand and product thinking and merging this part with their executional, technology and data services they've built up in the last years.

Looking back to 2020, I'd definitely call this year an absolute boost for the digital industry.


What does the phrase “agency of the future” mean to you?

The agency of the future doesn't make a difference between the agency team and the client team anymore – it extends the client's teams with specialists and dedicated team members, builds together and decides together – for the best of the brand and product they're working on.

Instead of cooking for the client, agencies will start cooking together with the client — which brings exciting new ways of collaboration, need for new talent and market understanding.

Adam Griffith

Managing Director at Luminary

 AU, Indonesia



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The breadth of services that digital agencies are now performing have made the label of digital agency almost meaningless. “Digital agencies” are now doing everything from business strategy and service design, through to complex application development and DevOps.

This proliferation of service offerings is a good thing for most agencies that recognise this as an opportunity to specialise and not try to be everything to everyone.

The most successful agencies have crafted a strong niche where they can pull away from the red ocean of commoditised offerings, and actually deliver distinct and tangible value for their clients.

What does the phrase “agency of the future” mean to you?

The agency of the future is one that will continue to provide valuable services, outputs, and outcomes, that clients cannot produce internally.

This requires constant evolution as the skillsets we apply today, become in-sourced tomorrow. There will always be a place for specialist agencies that can make sense of the ever-changing world, and operate at a pace and with flexibility that other organisations, particularly large ones, just cannot match.



Rakefet Yacoby From

CMO at Mayple

 USA, UK, Israel



It is just incredible to see the moving forces and the change and need for change happening before our eyes.

We see how businesses are looking for something different and how they have lost faith in the current system.

Digital agencies have the power to come and change that and instill trust back into marketing efforts.



What does the phrase “agency of the future” mean to you?

The agency of the future in my eyes is actually a platform.

It will not have in-house employees, talent base will be distributed and it will focus on what customers need other than operational limitations.

Agencies will focus their offerings on one type of expertise rather than many to compete in the field, and if not, they will be lacking back and losing trust.

Danilo Sierra

Managing Director at mimosa

📍 Germany



The digital landscape has become increasingly demanding, and continues to evolve at a staggering pace. Organizations are competing not just with one another, but also the attention of an audience that is constantly plugged in, and highly distractible. Worse, their screens project a distant future that is apocalyptic or otherwise hopeless, while trying to tell them their near futures will be thrilling and fun. Standing out takes more today than simply projecting a sense of happiness or content.

We realized that part of maintaining constant growth for our portfolio of quality projects meant looking for clients who really interest us, and provide us with inspiration equal to our roster of enduring clients who love our collaborative flow.

🕒 What does the phrase “agency of the future” mean to you?

An agency that understands that the future of marketing relies on shared knowledge, collective intelligence, and customized digital agency teams.

We found that working collaboratively with clients always produces better solutions for their communications. For many customers, the goal is to optimize marketing efforts. We prefer to show clients how optimizing can mean far more than increased efficiency alone.

A great brand needs to express its core values as part and parcel with its brand’s marketing narrative, and it can only do that most effectively when it understands the unique quality of their brand’s team. Delivering that level of service requires personalized attention to delivery for both our clients and their target audiences, together, as holistic parts of their brand’s soul.



Miriam Kölešová

Digital Marketing Specialist at Pastilla Inc.



One fact to accept by now – the pandemic brought a massive awareness of the perks of digital marketing. Clients who, for some reason, were skeptical of online channels didn't have any other choice. With an increasing number of brands shifting online, agencies matured to be flexible, as a "one-fits-all" wasn't a way anymore.

Agencies started to understand the importance of clients' unique needs, so they now create unique strategies. We started to recognize the value of technology – we educated ourselves in marketing automation, integrated experiences, and building the whole package based on the client's business goal, with customers being a starting point and end goal.

Nowadays, the focus is more on the standardization of processes, and the delivered output needs to be more unique than ever.

What does the phrase "agency of the future" mean to you?

Agency of the future will (soon to) be an agency that masters its own internal processes to integrate its knowledge from not only specific areas (performance, UX/UI, branding, content, etc.) but will finally pursue the assignment from the big picture (offline strategies included!).

All marketing KPIs will translate into business KPIs, and the agency will use all necessary tools, incorporate big data, and work smart with all in-house and outsourced resources. I don't personally believe an agency can provide a high-quality service only with in-house resources, nor only using freelancers as the leading talent. Agency needs to know the client on various levels, and the client has to have trust in the agency's people.



Alex Neill

Director of Business Development at Power Digital



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Digital agencies have evolved from being service providers to become an essential piece of the technology stack for companies. With modern technology, digital agencies are now much closer to the business and deliver a much more strategic set of solutions than in previous years. They've moved away from a transaction-oriented sales model and towards a true partnership with their clients. We've seen a huge rise in cross-functional projects that require not only technical expertise but also significant organizational and process change, which often necessitates working with multiple teams across an organization. This requires a team to become embedded within a client organization and work closely with them on a daily basis over an extended period of time, shifting away from project-based towards value-based.

What does the phrase “agency of the future” mean to you?

Moving forward, digital agencies will be an integrated solution to the need for brands to be able to engage with consumers in a more meaningful and immersive way across all platforms and devices.

The “agency of the future” will combine the best skills and technologies from multiple disciplines, including data strategy and analytics, creative and content, mobile and apps, social and community, SEO, paid and owned media, web development, and so on.

They will have a complete portfolio of capabilities that spans traditional digital marketing services as well as brand strategy, management communications, social engagement, eCommerce solutions, and experiential activation. While this new breed of agency will look like a traditional agency or an ad-tech company, there will also be a lot that looks unrecognizable today.





Rebecca North

Digital Marketing Coordinator at Prototype Creative



UK



Remote working has becoming increasingly accepted. We have noticed that agencies are taking advantage of the opportunities to hire talent from multiple counties and giving their clients a dedicated, more local point of contact. We have noticed an influx of enquiries and clients from overseas, meaning that we are able to diversify our portfolio and widen our reach.

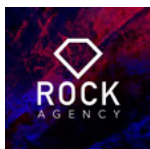


What does the phrase “agency of the future” mean to you?

An agency that doesn't stick to the norm, plans for emerging trends and trends embraces the challenges that the economic climate and wider consumer market throw at them.


It doesn't matter how things used to be done, or have always been done, what matters is what will work going forward. Future proof digital strategies are necessary to reduce the impact that global issues have on any organisation, so businesses need to work alongside agencies to realise and invest in these tactics.

An agency of the future will understand that the world is constantly change and change with it, adapting when necessary, while holding firm.



Cam Lee

Managing Director at Rock Agency

 Australia



Digital agencies have grown beyond the terminologies that defined us a few years ago. Digital now means more than online advertising or a blend of digital communication and design – it's more about connecting with audiences at a time when you don't know how your audience is going to receive your communication.

It requires constant iteration, which, in turn, has created an environment open to invention, change and creativity. I think the pandemic has really fast-tracked the importance of digital in all our lives.

Consequently, digital agencies have collectively grown in confidence, which encourages greater risk-taking, experimentation and innovation – it's an exciting space to be in, especially over the last two years.

What does the phrase “agency of the future” mean to you?

Honestly, I don't know. It's such a shifting landscape that I can't see that we'll ever land on a specific definition.

Maybe that's the point – the 'Agency of the Future' will be agile and flexible enough to adapt and evolve alongside technology and changing client and consumer behaviours.





Kassie Phillips

Head of Client Strategy at SLT Consulting



USA



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Digital agencies have to be more adaptable now than ever before. The last two years have been filled with uncertainty and major changes in consumer behaviors. As digital agencies, we have had to adjust everything from our communication style to our channels and tactics.



What does the phrase “agency of the future” mean to you?

An “agency of the future” is flexible and agile. At SLTC we are challenging the industry norm and encouraging collaboration because we believe the most successful strategies are those that allow us to be partners in the truest sense.

Progress is achieved through inventiveness, flexibility, and compassion.

An agency of the future should showcase diverse voices, encourage inclusiveness, and be more applicable to consumers of today and the future.



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Richard Heyes

Managing Director at Tecmark



The best agencies have had to focus ever more tightly on their specialist area or niche to stand out in a crowded market, it's never been more important to have a clear USP and really appeal to a smaller audience than try and offer too many services or appeal to everyone.

It has been clear that there is a talent shortage in some skilled roles, it's become more difficult to find people, and there is more competition for each candidate so these longer hiring lead times have had to be factored into growth plans, outsourcing is more important. Obviously, hybrid working is now commonplace and for many the office is now used more for collaboration rather than task based working.

What does the phrase “agency of the future” mean to you?


I believe it's a case of developing agencies with the right balance of creativity, client collaboration and expertise from people, plus accuracy, improved processes and efficiency from technology.

AI technology will undoubtedly play a big role in future processes, particularly in those tasks that require a scientific approach, but this needs to be balanced with creativity.

Agencies will always be people businesses and talent development must be at the forefront of all agency plans, all too often people are brought in and then left in a deliverable silo some doing tasks that may be replaced with technology, people must be given solid training and opportunity to collaborate better and add value with expertise and creativity.

Larry Kotch

Co-founder at The Brains

 UK, Bulgaria



As Martech has developed, the days of the 'low cost' agency are numbered. Technology is allowing SMEs to tap into more valuable services. The successful agencies either have established brands already on board and dominate the standard paid media channels and challenger agencies are going up the creative food chain, specialising in strategic and creative work that can't be replicated with technology.

Effectively I see a split coming where successful agencies will specialise in creativity and consumer psychology and content, using effective Martech and tools to reduce the emphasis on channel optimisation and management which is increasingly commoditised.

The alternative to this is to specialise by sector which is also a growing trend, generalist, paid media, SME focussed agencies are on the way out.

What does the phrase "agency of the future" mean to you?


An agency that uses technology and psychology to deadly effect while proving bottom-line return on investment.

The Agency of the future optimises campaigns using closed loop analytics, feeding decisions with profitability data directly from the client's accounting systems, tied back to the first click. The Agency of the future goes beyond 'standard content strategy' and uses psychology to motivate prospects on a deeply personal and emotional level and segments the audience with increasing granularity. The agency of the future also communicates and collaborates seamlessly, taking a global view of performance, not just single channel focus with agency siloes eradicated.

THE CHARLES

Aaron Edwards

CEO at The Charles

 USA, UK



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Digital agencies are starting to evolve into full service companies that use strategy to navigate through the digital ecosystem.

 **What does the phrase “agency of the future” mean to you?**

A company that acts as a consultancy from the perspective of understanding clients businesses and challenges from brand positioning all the way through to mar tech and analytics.



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Mattan Danino

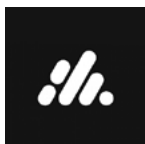
CEO at WEBITMD



There seems to be a natural split between the large enterprise and small SMB focused agencies. This opened up lots of opportunities in the middle market for agencies to thrive.


What does the phrase “agency of the future” mean to you?

I believe the combination of marketing, sales, and operations focused agencies will be strong into the next 3-5 years.



Scott Forrester

CEO at We Discover

 Australia



In the late 2000's we saw the rise of the digital agency as consumer confidence grew with spending more of their time and money online. Not too long after that big data and ecommerce accelerated the need for brands to put more of their marketing budget into digital advertising.

This momentum shift has meant that traditional agencies have had to adapt quickly or be left behind. Fast forward to the present day and the term digital agency is a thing of the past as digital is now part of every campaign, product, service and consumer experience. We now live in a digital age and therefore it is a given that all agencies must put digital first.

What does the phrase “agency of the future” mean to you?

Technology is changing at a rapid pace and consumer behaviours are changing just as fast.

For me the phrase “agency of the future” means agencies will need to move with the times by investing in the right talent and tools, be able to easily operate with a remote workforce, constantly be investing in training, have a design thinking mentality, support staff not just with their careers but also their personal growth and mental health and to top it off agencies will need to do good by actually doing good.

For me the phrase “agency of the future” means agencies will need to move with the times by investing in the right talent and tools, be able to easily operate with a remote workforce, constantly be investing in training, have a design thinking mentality, support staff not just with their careers but also their personal growth and mental health and to top it off agencies will need to do good by actually doing good.




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Arpad Maksay

Managing Director at WeThink Social

 Denmark

There is a move away from hyper-niche focused agencies towards agencies that have a clear understanding of communication principles, how to develop a coherent story and then execute effectively in today's digital context.

What does the phrase “agency of the future” mean to you?

To me this phrase means an agency that understands the tectonic shifts that are occurring across our global value chains.

An agency of the future is one that understands how value delivery can be extended through a more ethical approach to capitalism that aims for greater and more equitable distribution of wealth.

An agency of the future is also one that is developing an understanding of how the message itself (the ad) and its creators can generate value on its/their own.

Agata Kędzierska-Zawisza

Senior Marketing Manager at White Label Coders

 Poland



Our lives are now moving into the digital realm, and the virus has only helped make the bigger leap from analog to virtual reality. In the IT and Digital Agency industry, the behavior or needs of Buyer Persons have not changed fundamentally, but only intensified. More and more business is moving online, which results in a greater demand for our services.

What does the phrase “agency of the future” mean to you?

Trust is becoming more important in marketing activities. Customers are more likely to choose brands that they can entrust with new projects without fear. Therefore, I see a large role in the development of personalized communication to achieve better results.

The key is to improve the message based on the individual needs. Here, you need more than the knowledge of algorithms or remarketing techniques.

Pandemic has accelerated the trend where consumers want to spend money on brands that not only share their values, but also brands they trust. The year 21 and the following years may turn out to be the end of sales funnels.

The future is to maintain customer satisfaction and motivation, and build direct relationships.



Alex Minchin

Managing Director at Zest Digital



The shift to remote work has opened up agencies' hiring pools, allowing them access to a wider variety of talent. In the future, we expect digital to be more focused on next generation digital metrics such as return on investment (ROI), return on ad spend (ROAS) or cost per acquisition. Agencies will be held accountable for these metrics which ultimately determine the success of a campaign.

To be successful, agencies will need to make a conscious effort to become truly channel agnostic and not get stuck on any one platform or tactic. Gone are the days of focusing on SEO alone...

Businesses that adopt a channel agnostic approach will be able to target prospects throughout each stage of the buying cycle.



What does the phrase "agency of the future" mean to you?

In the future, agencies will need to be more transparent and accountable for their results.

Clients will require that they understand the campaign goals, and what we are trying to achieve together to gain total confidence.

Growth Hacking agencies should take the lead on goal setting, tracking results and making recommendations for further improvements.

With this knowledge, they can then influence the strategy and have more commercial impact for their clients.



How do you think AI will affect your agency's workflow?

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Along with some agencies which mentioned that AI will not be involved in their workflow in the near future, there are a high number of agencies that are excited about embracing AI.

You can see some of the answers below:



James Itkoff

Sr. Director of Strategy at AVX Digital

Some things will be partially automated. Some things will be fully automated. I made mention of the focus on message development over targeting development. I believe AI will begin to overtake the need for manual targeting.



Andrew Whitehead

Creative & Managing Director at Devotion

We're investing heavily in AI, especially from a digital marketing perspective. We're an AI-first digital and growth marketing team. We talk about how our suite of AI assistants do the heavy lifting, so we have time to focus on our clients and their businesses.



Tony Ng

Founder and Creative Director at DigiSalad

Yes. We believe AI and Machine Learning will replace some of the jobs in the future. For example, AI can generate different kinds of Voice Over right now.



Mark Nickson

Managing Partner at DIJGTAL

Hopefully AI will help to streamline and enhance our current processes and systems, along with safeguarding the quality of our outputs,

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Ko Leuk Ling Joyce

Digital Content Manager at Digital Business Lab

In reality, AI has already arrived and is a key component of our daily lives on social media. For example, across all social media platforms and each social media post, an AI algorithm or machine learning system regulates how the content we create and the ads we buy are displayed to viewers. Insights from your brand's social media profiles and audience are delivered through an AI-powered social listening platform. This frequently entails deploying AI to scan large amounts of social data, decipher what's being said in them, and then extract actionable insights based on that data. Brands can use such a powerful characteristic to outperform their competitors. An extra layer of intelligence amplifies social media success and failure, promotes customization, expands possibilities to identify performance, and opens up new options for social media promotion.



Elena Krapcheva

Business Developer at eDesign Interactive

We are excited to use AI and incorporate its capabilities into our workflow.



Shane Liuw

General Manager at First Page Digital SG

It will complement and streamline work more effectively and efficiently saving cost and reducing human error.



Michael John

CEO and Creative Director at LOOP

AI will play a role in resource planning and forecasting, and hopefully help to make peak times predictable and work-life balance better due to more analytical planning options.



Adam Griffith

Managing Director at Luminary

AI will definitely support and augment the work we do in the future. It will improve the efficiency and efficacy of the work we do for our clients.



Rakefet Yacoby From

CMO at Mayple

We are all about AI. AI helps us match the perfect experts with brands and monitor campaigns to keep optimizing growth.



Danilo Sierra

Managing Director at mimosa

It will assist many processes in the mechanized areas, leaving us with more time to focus on some of the fun part: the heuristics, strategy, and decision-making.



Cam Lee

Managing Director at Rock Agency

At Rock Agency, we find digital execution is at its best when development doesn't come as an afterthought to design, but is conceived alongside design from the outset. Our design and dev teams are, therefore, always collaborating and there's a strong tech-focus to our work. But, with highly-tailored and advanced development comes time, so I can see AI really improving efficiency for our development team: streamlining how we set up test and deploy a project; automating repeatable tasks. SEO tools are also developing more in-depth metrics, enabling us to create better-performing content. As outlined earlier, we're embracing and agile when it comes to learning and integrating new tech into our workflow, but we try to always do it from a place of consciousness – asking first and foremost, if it's beneficial for our clients as well as us.



Rebecca North

Digital Marketing Coordinator at Prototype Creative

Currently, it has a heavy impact on our workflow, and we move forward with the expectation that we will only become more reliant on AI for our processes to be effective.



Richard Heyes

Managing Director at Tecmark

It will clearly provide more scalability and efficiency with some tasks particularly those tasks around analysing data, and understanding user behaviour.



Larry Kotch

Co-founder at The Brains

It will focus us on content and creative led work more. It's important to embrace AI and go up the value chain as AI itself still suffers from the 'Rubbish in, Rubbish out' syndrome.



Aaron Edwards

CEO at The Charles

It will help streamline creative and content production services especially with regards to performance of assets, re-cropping and resizing.

What kind of AI-based applications would you like to integrate into your workflow?



N. Beckett Pura

Sr. Content Lead at Arnold Street Media

Learning behaviours and ways we can streamline work for individual work habits



Nargis Jafferali

Co-founder at blazon

Anything that will make things more streamlined and the process more efficient. Specifically tools to facilitate social posting and analytics.



Ko Leuk Ling Joyce

Digital Content Manager at Digital Business Lab

We are looking forward to exploring and integrating AI-based applications for creative production at a social media agency. For instance, automated creative adjustments and visioning enable us to smartly scale for content, optimize for clients, and match our target audiences' preferences. Currently, the creative aspect is less supported by AI. Although some existing solutions are already relevant, more advanced and innovative applications are probably coming too.



James Itkoff

Sr. Director of Strategy at AVX Digital

Content recognition. Much of the focus on AI and machine learning has been on targeting, but the recent evolutions on content recognition and copywriting are exciting!



Andrew Whitehead

Creative & Managing Director at Devotion

Everything from AI-based content brief creation and copywriting to design specification and optimisation, and obviously things like data analytics and campaign optimisation.



Tony Ng

Founder and Creative Director at DigiSalad

Recently, some technical firms are developing a technology that can write the programming code after the System Analyst writes some high level command and basic code structure. In the future, AI may even do the programming after we give the guideline of the functionalities of mobile apps or websites.



Brad Russell

Owner at Digital Hitmen

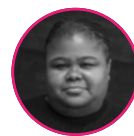
Social media monitoring and conversational live chat



Kassie Phillips

Head of Client Strategy at SLT Consulting

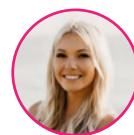
Ultra personalized web experiences, support with content creation as creative demands increase, and predictive analysis.



Hannah Kimuyu

MD, Performance & SEO at Greenlight

Machine learning written content.



Alex Neill

Dir. of Business Development at Power Digital

We've built SPRnova, a first-party data analysis tool and machine learning platform that can analyze any business's growth opportunities, build a plan to execute on them, and track progress across channels in a custom-to-user dashboard.



Michael John

CEO and Creative Director at LOOP

Resource planning, market analysis, audience recommendations.



Danilo Sierra

Managing Director at mimosa

Content creation AI for ads and short form text, as well as analytics



Adam Griffith

Managing Director at Luminary

Wherever there is an opportunity for automation and/or data-driven insights to be applied. Which is basically in everything we do!



Miriam Kölešová

Digital Marketing Specialist at Pastilla Inc.

Internal processes and resources traffic – human resources management tools.



Rakefet Yacoby From

CMO at Mayple

Improving the AI matching algorithm, implementing AI to identify best strategies and marketing budget split.



Kassie Phillips

Head of Client Strategy at SLT Consulting

Ultra personalized web experiences, support with content creation as creative demands increase, and predictive analysis.



Cam Lee

Managing Director at Rock Agency

—

This one's not in existence as far as I know, but we'd love a CROSS-PLATFORM MARKETING AGREGATOR. It'd be a time-saving tool providing a more accurate and full picture of marketing efforts across platforms (Facebook, LinkedIn, Google etc.). No copy and pasting as you pull data from each site, this would be instantaneous. But even more than pull data together, it analyses it too – maybe even makes recommendations. It would have the option to build custom reports – 'big picture' vs 'granular' – depending on what you require.



Alex Minchin

Managing Director at Zest Digital

—

Copy, design, retargeting, user research



Mattan Danino

CEO at WEBITMD

—

Project Management AI tools that allow us to be more efficient and effective with our workflow.



Richard Heyes

Managing Director at Tecmark

—

So much time would be saved if we had better technology for QA and Identifying bugs on website builds.



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Mattan Danino

Founder & CEO at WEBITMD

We've been partnered with DAN for 5+ years. It's been great to share content with the community, interact with DAN staff and be a part of the growing world of digital marketing & sales.

We love it and DAN is a leader in the space.



Danilo Sierra

Founder & Project Lead at Mimosa

We consider DAN one of our closest partners and best lifelines. We are extremely proud of collaborating with you since 2016 and definitely feel treated and respected like a family. Belonging to DAN is definitely a privilege.



Aaron Dicks

Managing Director at Impression

DAN is a trusted resource for brand-side marketers looking to partner with the best agencies out there, and we're proud to be listed and featured as one of them.



Rakefet Yacoby-From

CMO at Mayple

We love being a DAN member. It helps us bring our name to the most relevant businesses and be part of a community of highly successful digital agencies in each area.



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