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Adobe Creative Cloud for teams

13 questions IT leaders should ask when choosing a creative platform for business.

Consider your options.

Choosing a platform for creative teams is no easy task for IT managers, as Lance Kim, director of IT and DevOps for mobile games publisher MobilityWare, can attest. To tackle the challenge, Kim set out to understand all the tools his creative professionals used to do their jobs.

"We have freehand graphic artists who do a lot of drawing on tablets. Then we have technical artists who resize images and provide different types of resolution for mobile devices," Kim says. "We also have UI and UX who do technical layouts and a marketing artists team that does web graphics and some video shorts — but most of our images are static."

To learn what various creative applications do and how they work together, Kim talked to experienced artists who explained all the whys and wherefores. His philosophy is not to limit creative professionals' access to tools they need to do their best work — something he learned the hard way early in his career.

"You go through a couple of failed startups and become a little more self-reflective," he says. "What things could IT have done to allow the staff to execute better? What role did we have in limiting them? I'm trying to move to more of a servant mentality in supporting our creative staff."

The next challenge in selecting a creative platform was understanding the financial implications of the various alternatives and justifying a purchase. Though many creative software vendors offer online worksheets to help managers calculate ROI, Kim chose to develop his own method instead. "I'm a little more old-school and I want to be in control of those numbers," he says. His criteria include everything from how easy the software is to update, to the dollar value of the hours his creative team can save.

Kim's experience highlights just how many aspects of the business IT administrators need to consider when it comes to a creative platform. In addition to functionality and ROI, there's management, security, training, support capabilities — with so many dynamics involved, it can be easy to get overwhelmed and put off making a decision.

IT administrators have to consider myriad aspects of the business when it comes to choosing a creative platform, from ROI to functionality to security and support.

It can help to break down the decision-making process into three essential categories: user experience, ease of management, and financial implications. Below are lists of questions for each category that you can use to compare products. By the time you're done, your answers to these 13 questions will point you to the platform that works best for your creative team, your IT management team, and your budget.

User experience.

1 **How will the creative platform impact my creative team's collaboration, productivity, and work quality?**

Like members of DevOps teams, creative professionals function best when they can brainstorm, inspiring one another with quick, successive iterations and feedback as the energy flows. That means you need to provide them with a common set of applications and tools, ensuring that everyone is on the same page and isn't delayed by communication issues when software doesn't coordinate well.

Giving teams an integrated software solution also helps them increase productivity in today's multidisciplinary creative environment, where projects often evolve from static images and text to include video, animations, or interactive graphics, and artists need to move easily between apps.

Kim says he chose a platform — Adobe Creative Cloud for teams — that included all the applications MobilityWare artists might use, since you never know when they might need a certain app. "This allows them to collaborate with other people and departments much more easily," Kim says.

A disjointed user experience can also affect creatives' morale. "When people are disengaged, the product they come out with typically is not as good as when they're motivated and in a happier mood," Kim says — a human capital issue that can also impact the bottom line.

2 **Does the platform integrate with other technologies?**

To allow collaboration with outside clients, stakeholders, and partners, it's important for creative tools to work with communication and storage platforms like Microsoft Teams, Slack, and Dropbox — as well as other design applications.

"We sometimes get material from third parties who make ads for us, and our artists need to be able to work with them," Kim says.

Third-party integrations create simpler and faster workflows for everyone, allowing creative professionals to share their designs with clients and outside stakeholders who can weigh in with their own feedback in a seamless dialog. For clients, that smoother review process can be a selling point that leads to repeat business.

3 **Is the user interface intuitive and easy to learn? Does the platform provide any training?**

A creative platform with user-friendly design and training helps you avoid the time and expense of teaching workers new programs. "For smaller companies, it's key to have new hires hit the ground running," Kim says.

In today's fluid environment, even experienced creative professionals may take on tasks requiring them to learn new tools. Others may benefit from advanced training to hone their expertise. An intuitive user interface and comprehensive training eliminate learning frustrations and make workers productive sooner. Look for a platform that allows people to learn at their own pace so training won't interfere with project deadlines.

4 **Is the platform regularly updated to include the latest innovations?**

Creatives always want to stretch their wings with the latest, greatest software features. For faster access, look for a platform that automatically rolls out product updates as they're released. Giving your creatives early access to cool tools lets them produce art that stands out from the crowd, and clients will pay top dollar for it.

Giving your creatives early access to integrated software solutions lets them produce art that stands out from the crowd, and clients will pay top dollar for it.

5 **Can users access the technology from anywhere, anytime?**

The pandemic accelerated a remote work trend that's here to stay. According to [Gartner](#), 82 percent of business leaders now plan to allow employees to work remotely at least some of the time. Having a portion of your employees work remotely can save on costs, so make sure you have the technology in place to facilitate it.

When the creative team is scattered, it's more important than ever for them to have access to workflows and collaboration tools that operate without a hitch on desktop PCs, tablets, or mobile devices. Make sure the solution you select covers all the bases.

Managing the solution.

6 **How easy is it to manage applications and licenses?**

Creative professionals use many specialized applications, and as visual content becomes more complex, the number of apps required to produce it is growing. That can pose problems for IT.

"Bolt-on" applications and legacy business processes are significant barriers to growth, according to research by [IDC and SAP](#). The more apps you add, the more complicated management becomes. Licenses expire at different times, and every looming deadline requires IT to make a decision. You must also stay vigilant to ensure new applications don't conflict with other business software.

To reduce complexity, look for a creative platform that includes all types of creative applications and allows you to distribute and manage apps and licenses from one place.

7 How secure is the platform?

Maintaining security in the face of increasingly sophisticated threats is a multi-pronged endeavor. First, a must-do task is keeping on top of application updates. Because they often plug security gaps, installing these updates soon after release is essential. But manual updates are time-consuming.

"If we have to do updates on all the software creatives use, it's a loss of productivity not only for IT, but for the creative staff, because they can't use the tools while we're updating them," Kim says. "That can start weighing on people, especially if they're in a crunch and need to get a product out."

Some creative professionals manage their own software updates, but IT must stay in touch with them to make sure security is maintained, which can cause friction. "The last thing creatives want to hear is an IT guy telling them they have to update their software," Kim says.

You can save time with a platform that automates updates, making application security effortless for both IT and creative teams.

Another important aspect of security is protecting your confidential information. Make sure the platform you select provides encryption for data in transit and at rest.

It's also good for security to have a single sign-on (SSO) feature, which gives creative professionals access to all of their applications after logging on to just one of them. Since every new log-in creates the potential for a hack, SSO boosts security, in addition to making your teams more efficient.

Finally, you should consider how platforms deal with end-of-life applications. Applications eventually reach a stage where the developer stops providing support. While these programs still function, updates — including security updates — cease, creating an opportunity for cyber criminals to introduce new forms of malware less likely to be caught.

End-of-life applications are inherently dangerous. If you choose a platform with a central console, they will be easier to spot, helping you plan upgrades before they cause problems.

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>
> *Director of IT and DevOps, MobilityWare*

8   **Will the platform scale as my business grows?**

For small and midsize businesses, growth is unpredictable, making it difficult to anticipate resource needs. Individual applications may work fine for your creative team in the beginning, but as the business takes on more work, they may not keep up.

Look for a creative platform that allows you to easily add new user licenses as you expand — or reassign licenses as business needs shift in other ways.

Storage is another thorny issue for growing companies, especially when it comes to creative applications, which generate enormous volumes of data. Investigate a platform's cloud storage options and select one with a plan that fits your budget today, but allows you to expand to meet tomorrow's needs.

9   **What support is available?**

Creative applications are complicated. Find a platform that offers support — not just for installation, but whenever you need it. Help can take many forms, ranging from virtual assistants and online FAQs to human assistance and community forums. Make sure your solution provides comprehensive help so you can solve small problems before they become big headaches.

Costs and benefits.

10   **What's the cost of acquiring tools separately versus investing in a bundled solution?**

Uncertain of their future needs, many small businesses buy creative software on an ad hoc basis. As trends change and niche applications multiply, it's easy to lose track of spending.

Instead of guesstimating, gather all the information about your tools, add up costs, and keep the figures updated in a spreadsheet.

You may be surprised by what you learn. Typically, a bundled creative solution costs substantially less than acquiring tools piecemeal. Your costs will also be transparent and predictable, eliminating any nasty surprises at the end of a budget cycle.

11   **How will the platform impact administrative costs?**

Managing creative tools can take up a lot of time. But to understand the cost of that time, you need to translate it into dollars. Track the number of hours you spend on tasks such as updating applications, onboarding and offboarding users, and managing security, and multiply by the hourly rate of the people who perform these tasks.

It's not just IT time that's at stake. Ask your creative staff to track the time they spend switching among tools, including uploading their work and waiting for responses and feedback. Once again, what you learn may surprise you.

Kim's team did these calculations for an online mockup tool and learned it was taking staff much longer than previously to upload their material. Some of the features they had found useful were removed, and one key feature shifted to a pay-for-use model, causing a 60% increase in fees. "We were actually moving into a negative ROI," Kim says.

A creative platform should make you money, not cost you money. Before purchasing, translate your administrative costs into dollars to make sure your platform is cost-effective for both IT and your creative teams.

12   What are the opportunity costs?

Opportunity costs — the potential benefits a business loses by forgoing one platform in favor of another — are some of a company's most important financial considerations, Kim says. But many small and midsize businesses don't think to account for them when they're choosing a creative software solution.

Calculate the dollar value of the time IT and creative professionals spend on administrative tasks and down time that could be eliminated with a more comprehensive solution, and consider how they would spend that time otherwise. By doing professional work instead, they could add more value to the company, Kim says. Spending time on rote tasks and resolving administrative kinks can also be draining. "It causes a lot of stress and keeps people from doing the work they need to be doing," Kim says.

13   What's the total financial impact of the solution?

A broad-based platform with a common set of tools facilitates collaboration and allows creative professionals to produce their highest-quality work. "The whole push in the past 10 to 15 years has been about making people flexible and collaborative," Kim says.

But does improving collaboration pay off?

The answer is a resounding yes. Companies that promote collaborative work processes are five times more likely than others to be high-performing, a study by the Institute for Corporate Productivity and Babson College found. Other studies have reached similar conclusions.

When you're comparing platforms, remember that producing higher-quality work enhances your company's reputation, and an impressive, innovative portfolio will open the door to bigger opportunities. That's a capability well worth paying for.

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Director of IT and DevOps, MobilityWare

Get out there and ask questions.

Choosing the right platform for your creative team can be a daunting process, but asking the right questions will guide you to one that will fill your needs for years to come.
A good creative software solution will simplify management for you while providing creative professionals with the tools they need to produce higher quality work and get it done faster. That means happier customers, more referrals, and higher revenue as your business grows.

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+ desktop and mobile apps, Creative Cloud Libraries for keeping assets in sync across apps and devices, and 1TB of storage per user, this complete creative software 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

Find out how Adobe Creative Cloud for teams can help your business.
Call 800-915-9428 or request a consultation.

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