

99 PROBLEMS CURRENTLY PLAGUING ENTERPRISE CONTENT PRODUCTION PROS

October 2023

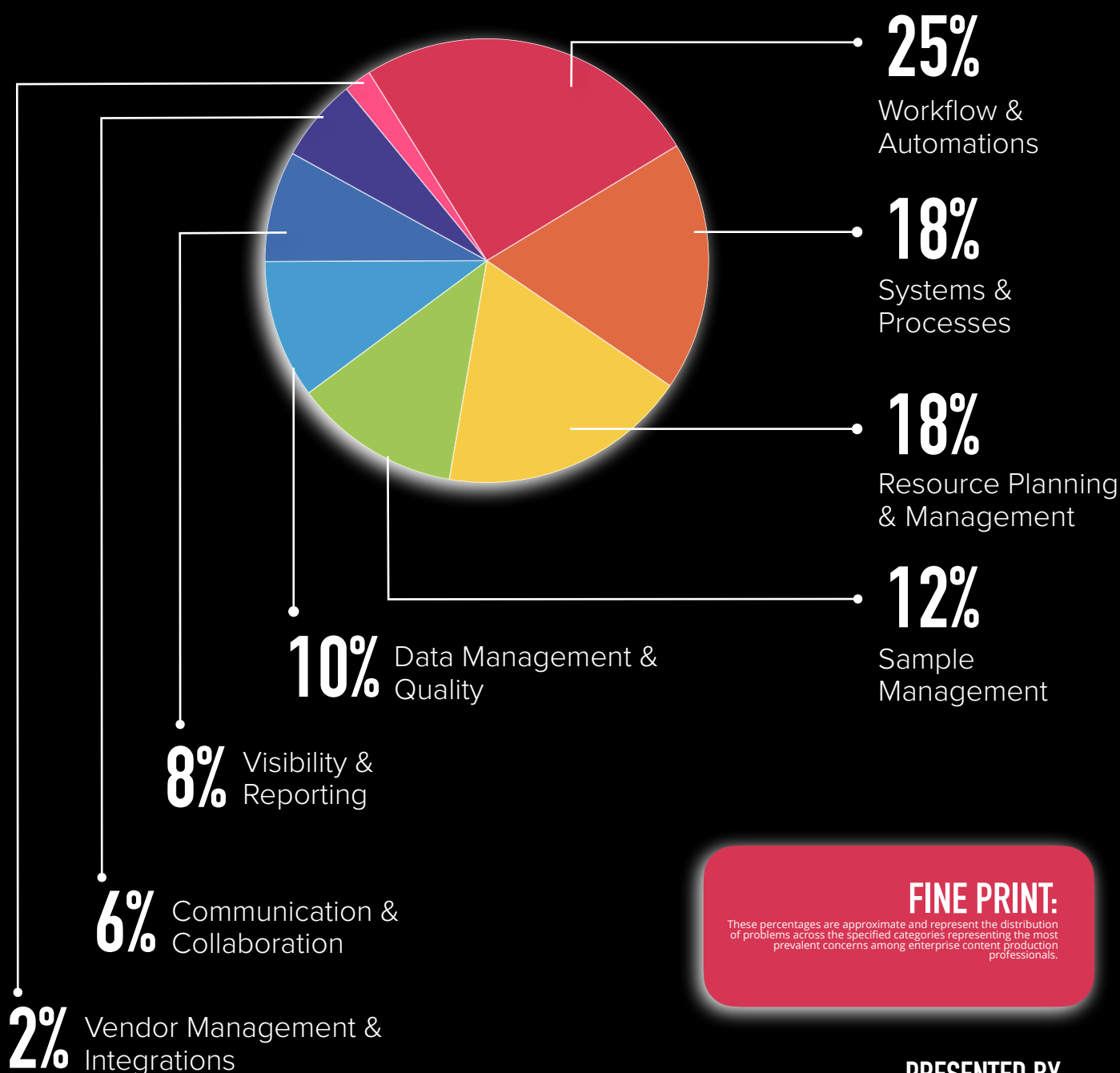


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SHOTFLOW

OVERVIEW

During a recent industry research project, ShotFlow brought together enterprise content production leaders to collate a catalog of 99 common challenges experienced within their respective organizations. The results were presented and discussed during several panels at ShotFlow Summit 2023.



FINE PRINT:

These percentages are approximate and represent the distribution of problems across the specified categories representing the most prevalent concerns among enterprise content production professionals.

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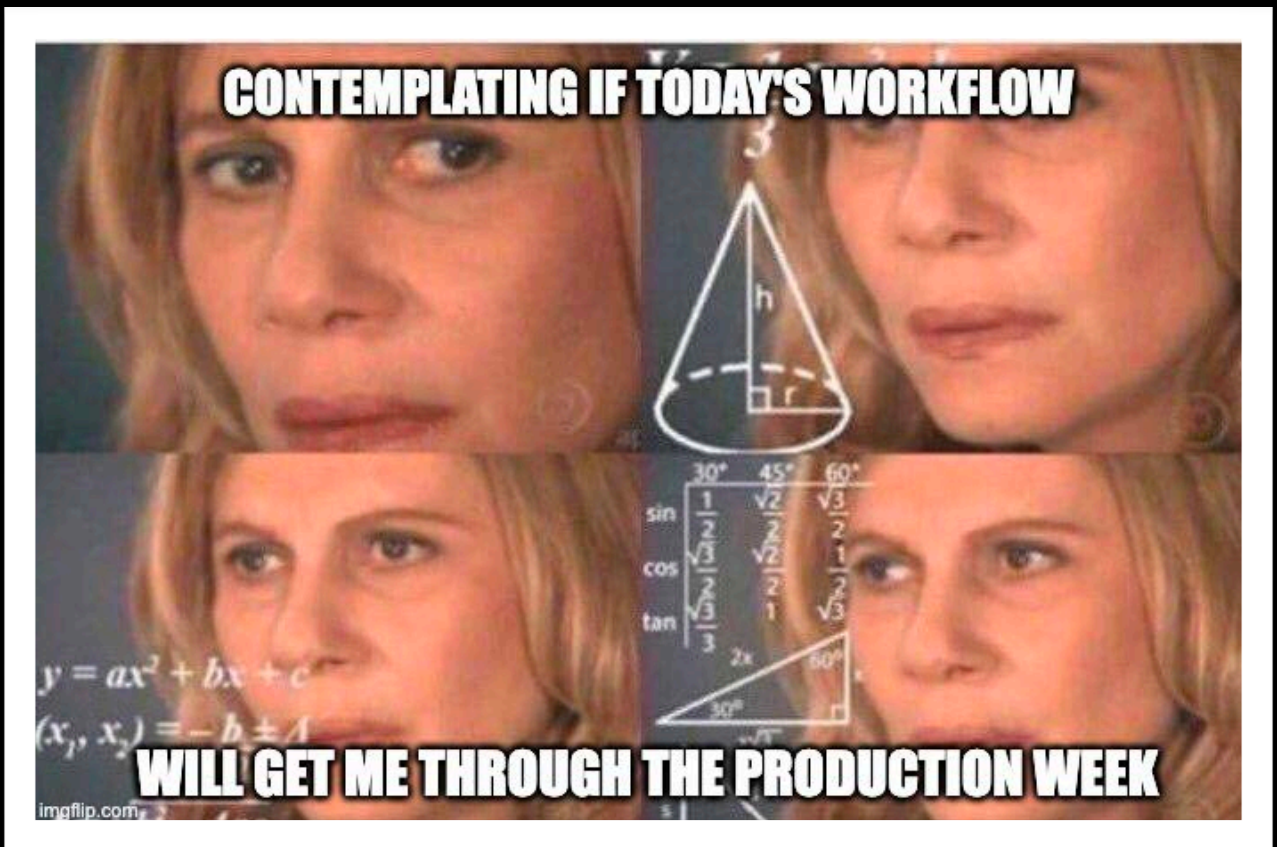


WORKFLOW & AUTOMATIONS

25%



25% of responses collected indicate chronic problems with workflow & automations for enterprise content production orgs at consumer brands, retailers, and studio services.



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WORKFLOW & AUTOMATIONS

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Automation streamlines manual steps, aiming to eliminate low-value tasks and boost efficiency. Implementing automation requires a deep understanding of the business rules, functional support in the systems, and deep understanding of underlying data. As a result, many workflows remain primarily manual, highlighting the complexity of achieving optimal automation.



ERIC FULMER, FOUNDER/CEO

The crux of automation lies in its definition—only what can be clearly defined can be automated effectively. As Eric pointed out, the challenge often arises during this defining phase. Enterprise studio workflows frequently tend to have a multitude of exceptions, making it difficult to create comprehensive rules. Consequently, efforts are diverted towards handling these exceptions, inhibiting efficient automation.



EMILY TAYLOR, DIRECTOR OF PRODUCT

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WORKFLOW & AUTOMATIONS

In the dynamic realm of enterprise content production, streamlining workflows and establishing automations is a paramount challenge. Scratching the surface of any workflow reveals a complex landscape of hurdles that professionals grapple with on a daily basis.

1. How “done” are we? Project/task completion at the push of a button.
2. In ability to automate tracking product movement through floor sets/seasons.
3. Figuring out what you should shoot next and by when in order to not miss the delivery date for the assets.
4. No Scalable solution for requesting Photography - every department requests differently.
5. Ad hoc projects thrown into the workflow, questioning if small project tracking is pointless.
6. No standardized workflow to enable photo request changes that take place prior or during the shoot.
7. Reshoot workflow is always causing issues with data in the system for when things were originally shot.
8. Non-existent documentation for current processes.
9. Workflows are extremely out of date, teams operated in a silo, and no one knows which tasks are still necessary.

WORKFLOW & AUTOMATIONS (CONT'D)

10. People have best intentions to change a specific part of a workflow but don't understand the implications it would have on other steps.
11. Planning and forecasting from RFP - to - Full Production.
12. Approvals are manual and/or bottlenecked to one or two individuals who do not have the bandwidth.
13. Enforcing best practices vs "well we have always done it this way."
14. Pipedream Projects - Production is engaged late in the process, only to find there's no budget/time to execute the concept.
15. Where is my bottleneck?
16. Hero Worship - Our workflow revolves around one influential person's preferences and past experiences.
17. How to manage image retention needs for different photography types (fashion, home, jewelry, etc.)
18. The On Set team shooting the wrong (physical) product for the record we are populating.
19. Multiple cooks in the kitchen for photography approvals.



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WORKFLOW & AUTOMATIONS (CONT'D)

20. Lack of or limited access to workflow tools to manage the full aspects of a production operation - from what needs to get done, to how much is it costing...
21. Routing the correct files to the next step in our process, with the right data complete.
22. Wasted time to collect image assets through hard drives.
23. What's not a rush or top priority?
24. Unplanned photo shoots/one off shoots & opportunities resulting in chasing metadata after the fact to get it back on process.
25. The need to keep going back and do clean up on missed items/fell through the cracks.

SYSTEMS & PROCESSES NEXT >>

SYSTEMS & PROCESSES

18%



18% of responses collected indicate chronic problems with systems & processes for enterprise content production orgs at consumer brands, retailers, and studio services.



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SYSTEMS & PROCESSES

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A notable challenge arises from the attempt to integrate left-brain systems and processes, primarily handled by individuals who lean towards right-brain thinking. Bridging this cognitive gap is essential for successful implementation. The individuals responsible for tech integrations often lack the necessary production understanding and insight, hindering the adoption of truly beneficial systems. Additionally, effective communication between these creative or strategic thinkers and the IT department can be challenging due to a disparity in language and comprehension. This gap can impede ability to articulate needs to the IT team effectively. Closing this communication divide is crucial for iterating better systems and processes.

WILL RUTLEDGE, DIRECTOR OF SYSTEM SOLUTIONS



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SHOTFLOW

SYSTEMS & PROCESSES

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I can really relate to this situation because it's a bit like our own experience running ShotFlow. There isn't a single multitasking tool that fits all our requirements perfectly. So, when a specific need arises, we search for the best tool for the use cases within that team. I believe this scenario is common for many brands and their content production teams.



BEN EPPES, VP OF CLIENT SUCCESS

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~48

Fun fact-ish: ShotFlow uses approximately 48 different systems within our tech stack. This includes systems tailored to supporting the world's top brands and studios, including one tool dedicated to shared alignment on process and goals during implementation.

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SYSTEMS & PROCESSES

The realm of systems and processes presents a labyrinth of technical challenges. These problems shed light on the pervasive obstacles to understand and implement technology and effective integrations. Here are the problems within this category:

26. Not able to, or no interest in switching (modernizing) systems to improve workflows.
27. Not aware of, or not able to influence additional software that can solve their workflow issues.
28. Multiple spreadsheets for reporting and faux dashboards maintained manually and with the best intentions.
29. Getting Buy-In from the team to transition into a new system or process.
30. Team members want new software/equipment and thinks it will solve all their problems.
31. Getting everyone out of google sheets and the various other software tools used to manage the jobs.
32. Managing expectations of a new system or process.
33. System Overload - I've got 99 tools and a Source of Truth ain't one.
34. Deciphering people vs process issues.

SYSTEM & PROCESSES (CONT'D)

35. Symptom Addict - We only invest in Band-Aid solutions, rather than holistic solves.
36. Wanting a systemic realtime source of truth & breaking the hard copy printouts/reports habit.
37. Bottleneck Tech - Team performance is slowed down by sluggish servers, Wifi and IT infrastructure.
38. Tools Gold - we keep implementing new tools, expecting them to fix our process problems.
39. Being your own support team - dealing with the lack of specialized support (both computer systems and photo equipment).
40. Determining which system to use as our source of truth for both determining the business needs and reporting our performance.
41. Lack of local network for our company in the physical studio space, server, and limited internet speed.
42. Managing through the 'shiny object' syndrome.
43. Remote art direction efficiencies and inefficiencies.

RESOURCE PLANNING NEXT >>

RESOURCE PLANNING & MANAGEMENT

18%



18% of responses collected indicate chronic problems with resource planning & management for enterprise content production orgs at consumer brands, retailers, and studio services.



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RESOURCE PLANNING & MANAGEMENT

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Content creation resource planning revolves around time. Everything in this process is time-bound, from shooting a rack on a specific set, to date-driven deliverables. Essentially, planning is about aligning work and inputs with specific timeframes and connecting them to desired outputs.

However, the real challenge stems from the intricate complexity and numerous variables in this process that we've discussed before. The sheer volume of factors at play makes it difficult to accurately predict how much time a task will take. For instance, introducing a third set and booking more models can significantly decrease the time needed to complete content, while dramatically increasing the budget. It's a daunting task to project this accurately, given the multitude of influencing variables.

In essence, effective planning is the ultimate goal. These complexities make it somewhat of a 'holy grail' in content creation.

ERIC FULMER, FOUNDER/CEO



RESOURCE PLANNING & MANAGEMENT

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Another factor to consider is **freelancing**. When it comes to managing your workforce effectively, scaling up or down is crucial. This results in individuals with varying levels of tool and process knowledge. The challenge lies in seamlessly integrating these individuals into specific workflows when they lack the context or familiarity with the tools and brand rules.

The goal is to onboard them quickly, enabling them to contribute value without causing delays or requiring extensive training. Striking this balance and managing these diverse needs is a critical aspect of resource management.



EMILY TAYLOR, DIRECTOR OF PRODUCT

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RESOURCE PLANNING & MANAGEMENT

Enterprise content production is a business of space, people, and time. These problems bring to light the ongoing visibility and planning issues that professionals struggle with in the allocation and utilization of resources.

44. End to end capacity planning for the exponential set-to-post scale of assets needed.
45. New temporary freelance support unable to learn or navigate the system we use to manage our workflow.
46. Currently debating if AI is our friend/enemy or just another resource with a 20% fee?
47. Having multiple people approve color/retouching on the same photography.
48. Intangible Costs - My team never misses a delivery deadline, but we have to work weekends and pull favors to make the impossible happen.
49. Heads or Fails - I know the team I need to hire but I can't get approval for headcount.
50. Knowing if my team has bandwidth to handle an extra project.
51. Space - either not enough of it, or not the right kind.
52. Keeping up team moral in the face of volume.

RESOURCE PLANNING & MGMT (CONT'D)

53. Limited budgets - stretching what you have while still delivering your best.
54. Not enough resources to support volume of assets.
55. Carving out time for creative research and development.
56. Utilization. How do we get team members into the tool and using it correctly when they're resistant to process changes.
57. Contending with inevitable user error.
58. Overcoming the "they can't do it" attitude.
59. Remotes teams and Freelancer access. How do we get people off site or non-employees to access local systems?
60. Bucketing images together. Holding or releasing groups of images based on other images they're related to.
61. Finding and developing talent.

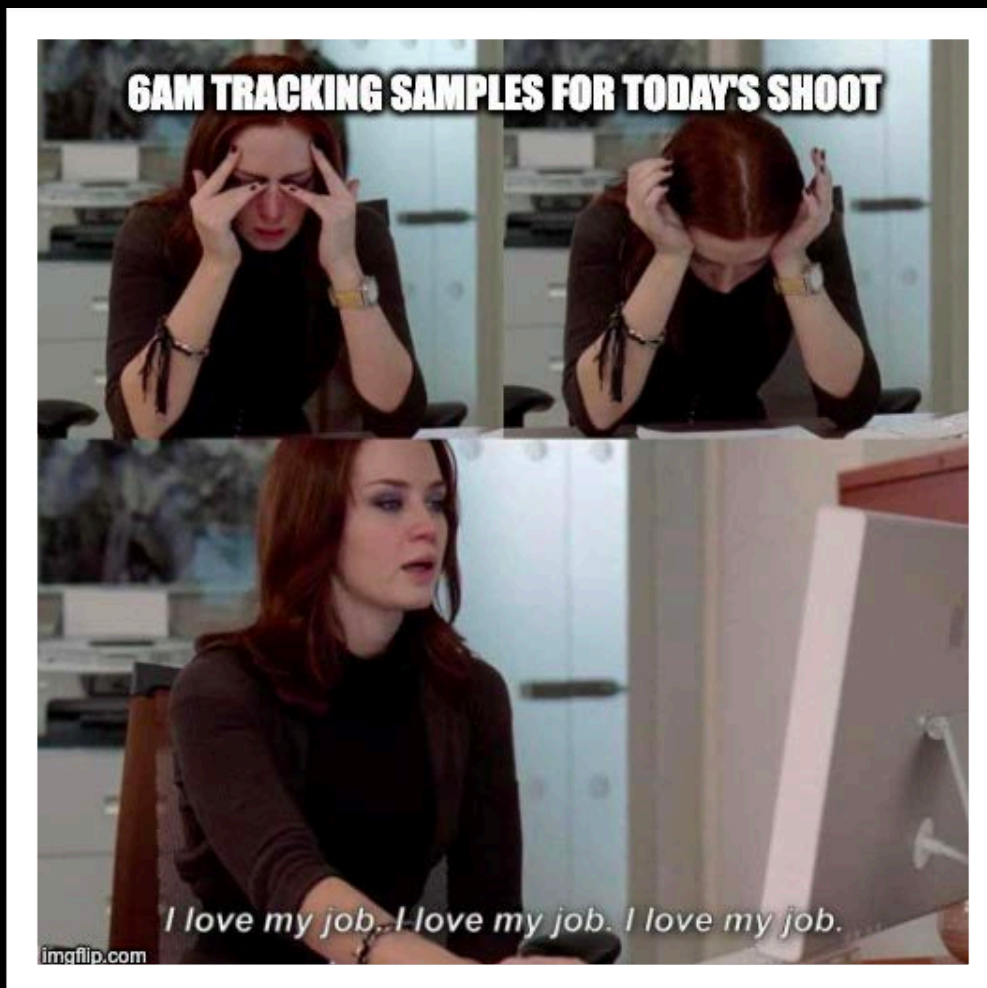
SAMPLE MANAGEMENT NEXT >>

SAMPLE MANAGEMENT

12%



12% of responses collected indicate chronic problems with sample management for enterprise content production orgs at consumer brands, retailers, and studio services.



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SAMPLE MANAGEMENT

Managing third-party dependencies is a big part of the sample challenge. Coordinating with vendors and ensuring timely deliveries is crucial. On top of that, there's the complexity of shipping, carriers, and facilities all required to meet specific deadlines.

Within this timeframe, there are **three critical dates** to consider— sample arrival date, shoot date, and go-live date. The main hurdle is securing the sample from the vendor on time. If that's not possible, adjustments need to be made either to the shoot schedule or even the content itself. Sometimes, it's necessary to adapt and feature a different product due to delays in sample procurement.



TONI EAGER, TECHNICAL ACCOUNT MANAGER

TOP PROBLEM: Samples Arrive without proper identification - re-labeling is a separate process outside of our sample management tool.



ASH'S TAKE: This is a huge problem. Depending on the sample's source. Is it a vendor? Internal resources? Is there *any* identification on the item? Is it even the correct product? I've experienced the process is chaotic when it comes to receiving samples and determining "proper" identification.

ASHLEY SNARSKI, TECHNICAL ACCOUNT MANAGER



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SAMPLE MANAGEMENT

In the domain of enterprise content production organizations, effective sample management plays a pivotal role in streamlining workflows and ensuring seamless processes. Yet, it continues to be a challenge due to lack of control in the pre-studio stage of the process. The current problems are sample management include:

62. Samples Arrive without proper identification - re-labeling is a separate process outside of our sample management tool.
63. No internal system to track samples within their environment.
64. Duplicate samples sometimes cause quite the cluster when checked in if another sample is already in the workflow.
65. Not having samples available for color corrections in a timely manner after a photo shoot has been completed.
66. Ability to answer at any time - Do you know where the sample is?
67. Late samples needed for photo shoots due to changes in Marketing.
68. Managing when a single sample is needed for multiple shoots.

SAMPLE MANAGEMENT (CONT'D)

69. Coordinating and organizing large volumes of samples for photography for .com.
70. Delays in external photo shoots due to samples being held up with a shipping company (UPS, Fed-Ex, etc.)
71. Getting samples correctly re-tagged after photo shoots are completed and returned to sample teams to place back into Inventory.
72. Late/incorrect samples.
73. Complicated matrix to prepare and track samples for multiple photo shoots.

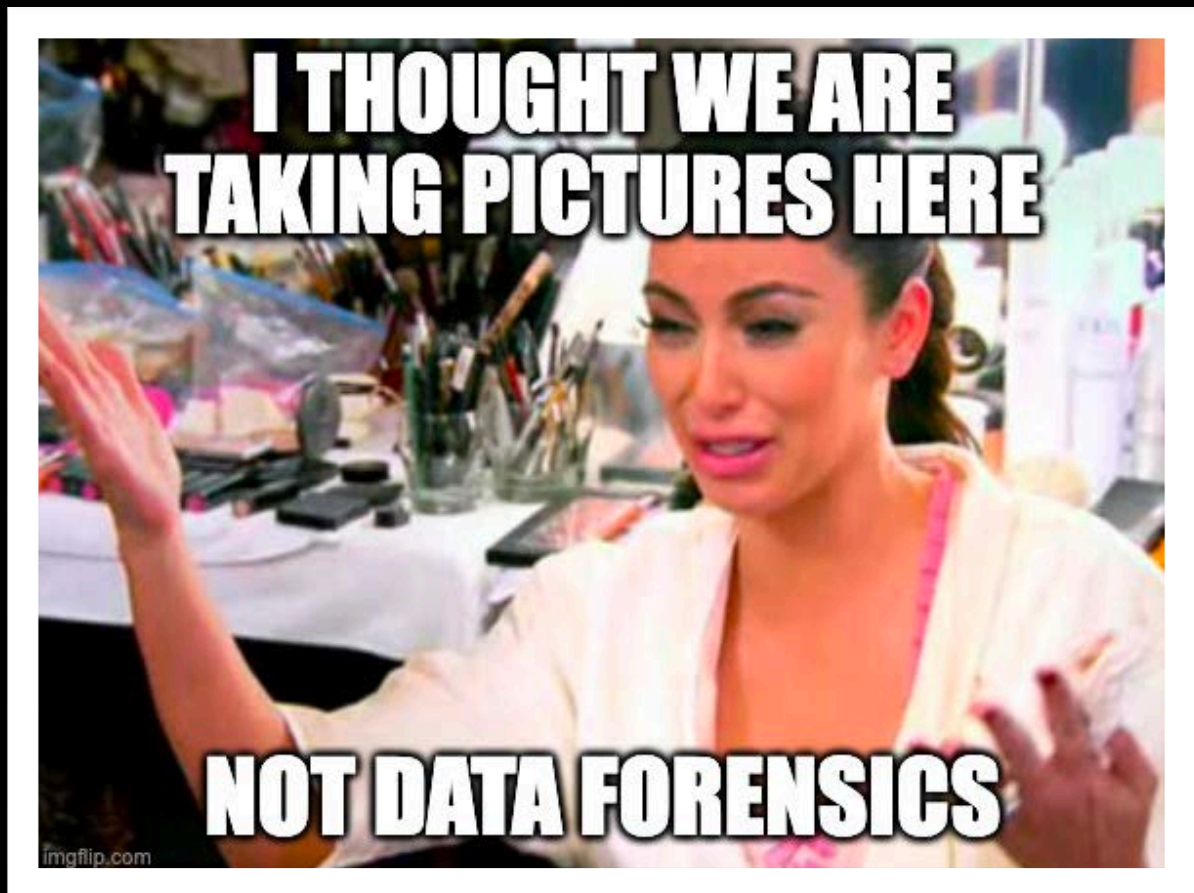
DATA MGMT & QUALITY NEXT >>

DATA MANAGEMENT & QUALITY

10%



10% of responses collected indicate chronic problems with data management and quality for enterprise content production orgs at consumer brands, retailers, and studio services.



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DATA MANAGEMENT & QUALITY

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The problems listed throughout this report are often the result of underlying issues, especially related to data management and data quality. Data issues often hide beneath the surface and can lead to a cascade of other problems. The repercussions of poor data quality manifest as various challenges throughout the workflow.

A big thing about **data-related issues** is that they are not immediately visible to production users. Yet, they significantly impact the efficiency of the entire process. When data is inaccessible or unreliable, it disrupts the smooth flow of operations.

WILL RUTLEDGE, DIRECTOR OF SYSTEM SOLUTIONS



DATA MANAGEMENT & QUALITY

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Many organizations have operated for so long without reliable data that they've grown accustomed to relying on internal knowledge. The tenured roles often manage tasks based on their personal understanding of what's needed, bypassing reliance on data. For instance, they might instinctively know specific shot requirements for different departments or products.

However, this heavy reliance on individual knowledge has adverse effects downstream. Those who need the assets later might never find them due to lack of critical metadata and context. Additionally, the absence of accurate data often leads to reshoots. Without proper guidance, errors in product presentation or styling become costly and potentially embarrassing issues for the brand.

These scenarios and many others underscore a critical issue: over-dependence on individual expertise masks larger data problems that will prevent scaling of your visual content process.

ERIC FULMER, FOUNDER/CEO



DATA MANAGEMENT & QUALITY

In today's rapidly evolving landscape of enterprise content production, data management and quality have emerged as critical challenges that demand careful attention and strategic solutions. Our research, aimed at addressing the specific needs of content production professionals, underscores a recurring set of obstacles that industry practitioners grapple with on a day-to-day basis.

74. "Massaging" incomplete or non-conformed data from client to our internal system.
75. Lack of, or unable to connect to an accessible data source.
76. Making sure the data is up to date and understanding what might have changed since the last time you were in it.
77. Digital tech or stylist assistants having to input metadata is time consuming on set or sometimes gets missed.
78. Updating existing metadata on legacy assets as Marketing data changes.
79. Access to metrics for performance without a bunch of data dumps and/or spreadsheets.
80. "Bad" data or missing data coming into our system and creating and incorrect records, deadlines, etc.

DATA MANAGEMENT & QUALITY (CONT'D)

81. Internal partners providing bad/inconsistent data.
82. Combining various sources of data, and data tables together into one place to express, report, and power our workflow.
83. Tracking talent used, on and off camera for each shot and showing in our DAM.

I legit lol'd at "massaging" bad data reminiscing of times I spent hours before the production day reconciling various spreadsheets from the day prior just to gain any sort of peace in the maybe accurate visibility. Sigh.



SHARON JOSEPH, DIRECTOR OF BTS

VISIBILITY & REPORTING NEXT >>

VISIBILITY & REPORTING

8%



8% of responses collected indicate chronic problems with visibility and reporting for enterprise content production orgs at consumer brands, retailers, and studio services.



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VISIBILITY & REPORTING

A significant issue arises from incorrect data modeling. Without the right data model in place, accurate reporting becomes impossible. The challenge deepens when considering the specific data set to report on. Different levels within an organization require distinct views or slices of data, making reporting a complex puzzle.

Fundamentally, the effectiveness of reporting is 100% data dependent. In discussions with my team, we highlight the importance of the request object, a critical component missing in many studio tools. It's a foundational element for effectively reporting the difference between the need and the actual executional work.



BEN EPPES, VP OF CLIENT SUCCESS

"I want to see it all on one screen!" is Eric's favorite problem that comes up in demos.

SHARON JOSEPH, DIRECTOR OF BTS



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VISIBILITY & REPORTING

In the intricate landscape of enterprise content production organizations, achieving visibility and generating comprehensive reports stands as a paramount objective for efficient operations. This section of our research report delves into the multifaceted challenges experienced in navigating visibility and reporting, crucial aspects within these organizations.

84. Tracking re-do's, re-edits, and re-shoots... manually {sigh}.
85. Art Director misses making selects on a number of folders.
86. Daily through-put tracking – (How many “Things” did the set(s) or staff do today vs what is expected).
87. Delayed Gratification - Every time I ask my team for metrics or reporting it takes them weeks to get back to me.
88. I want to see it all on one screen!
89. Predicting future workload & if I need hire extra help for peak times.
90. Side Hustle - My manager needs reporting but it takes me forever to find all of the information across multiple systems, old emails, and sticky notes on my bathroom mirror.
91. Knowing when to say “no”.

COLLABORATION NEXT >>

COMMUNICATION & COLLABORATION

6%



6% of responses collected indicate chronic problems with communication and collaboration for enterprise content production orgs at consumer brands, retailers, and studio services.



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COMMUNICATION & COLLABORATION

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A common challenge is the innate desire to contribute their creative opinions in each decision-making process. While inclusivity and diverse perspectives are important, time constraints drive high-volume content production.

Finding the right balance is difficult—knowing when and how to involve various stakeholders without causing delays or making anyone feel left out is critical for workflow design. It's a delicate art to craft an efficient process that allows for collaboration from all relevant parties.

ERIC FULMER, FOUNDER/CEO



No matter the brand or studio, the process of high-volume digital commerce content production is a multi-faceted assembly line operated by creative professionals. The right roles at the right time need clear communications and task-based touch points to smooth the approval process.



SHARON JOSEPH, DIRECTOR OF BTS

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COMMUNICATION & COLLABORATION

Effective communication and collaboration is the lifeblood of every organization. But for the pre-pro, on-set, creative, post production, marketing, and merchandising teams within consumer brands and retail organizations, communication breaks down between these critical collaborators.

92. That moment when "Final Shot Lists" are actually NOT Final.
93. Name games – nomenclature (Product/Style/SKU/Item/ Article.. Oh my! Which is right and why is everyone worried about “shots”).
94. Lost in Translation - Procurement and Marketing don't understand the needs or realities of production.
95. When customers/associates are viewing a product in an uncontrolled lighting environment, how do you manage color correction expectations?
96. Lack of clear Creative Direction.
97. Marketing efforts creating retroactive/additional work.

POST VENDOR MGMT NEXT >>

POST VENDOR MANAGEMENT

2%



2% of responses collected indicate chronic problems with post vendor management for enterprise content production orgs at consumer brands, retailers, and studio services.



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POST VENDOR MANAGEMENT

In the realm of enterprise content production organizations, efficient post vendor management is a critical component in ensuring high-quality outputs within constrained timelines and budgets.

- 98. Finding good quality outside retouching vendors at an affordable price with a quick turnaround.
- 99. Prioritizing retouching with outside retouching vendors during peak times of the year.

With the emergence of **more complex content types**, outsourcing to post production partners that understand your brand standards has become a huge trend among forward-thinking content production orgs.

ASHLEY SNARSKI, TECHNICAL ACCOUNT MANAGER



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**ALL
RESPONSES
ENCLOSED.**



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FULL LIST OF 99 PROBLEMS

1. How “done” are we? Project/task completion at the push of a button.
2. In ability to automate tracking product movement through floor sets/seasons.
3. Figuring out what you should shoot next and by when in order to not miss the delivery date for the assets.
4. No Scalable solution for requesting Photography (every department requests differently).
5. Ad hoc projects thrown into the workflow, questioning if small project tracking is pointless.
6. No standardized workflow to enable photo request changes that take place prior or during the shoot.
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8. Non-existent documentation for current processes.
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10. People have best intentions to change a specific part of a workflow but don't understand the implications it would have on other steps.
11. Planning and forecasting from RFP - to - Full Production.

FULL LIST OF 99 PROBLEMS (CONT'D)

12. Approvals are manual and/or bottlenecked to one or two individuals who do not have the bandwidth.
13. Enforcing best practices vs "well we have always done it this way".
14. Pipedream Projects - Production is engaged late in the process, only to find there's no budget/time to execute the concept.
15. Where is my bottleneck?
16. Hero Worship - Our workflow revolves around one influential person's preferences and past experiences.
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20. Lack of or limited access to workflow tools to manage the full aspects of a production operation - from what needs to get done, to how much is it costing.
21. Routing the correct files to the next step in our process, with the right data complete.

FULL LIST OF 99 PROBLEMS (CONT'D)

22. Wasted time to collect image assets through hard drives.
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24. Unplanned photo shoots/one off shoots & opportunities resulting in chasing metadata after the fact to get it back on process.
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32. Managing expectations of a new system or process.



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SHOTFLOW

FULL LIST OF 99 PROBLEMS (CONT'D)

33. System Overload - I've got 99 tools and a Source of Truth ain't one.
34. Deciphering people vs process issues.
35. Symptom Addict - We only invest in Band-Aid solutions, rather than holistic solves.
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42. Managing through the 'shiny object' syndrome.

FULL LIST OF 99 PROBLEMS (CONT'D)

43. Remote art direction efficiencies and inefficiencies.
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51. Space - either not enough of it, or not the right kind.
52. Keeping up team moral in the face of volume.
53. Limited budgets - stretching what you have while still delivering your best.

FULL LIST OF 99 PROBLEMS (CONT'D)

54. Not enough resources to support volume of assets.
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56. Utilization. How do we get team members into the tool and using it correctly when they're resistant to process changes?
57. Contending with inevitable user error.
58. Overcoming the "they can't do it" attitude.
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66. Ability to answer at any time - Do you know where the sample is?



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FULL LIST OF 99 PROBLEMS (CONT'D)

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FULL LIST OF 99 PROBLEMS (CONT'D)

78. Updating existing metadata on legacy assets as Marketing data changes.
79. Access to metrics for performance without a bunch of data dumps and/or spreadsheets.
80. "Bad" data or missing data coming into our system and creating and incorrect records, deadlines, etc.
81. Internal partners providing bad/inconsistent data.
82. Combining various sources of data, and data tables together into one place to express, report, and power our workflow.
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FULL LIST OF 99 PROBLEMS (CONT'D)

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97. Marketing efforts creating retroactive/additional work.
98. Finding good quality outside retouching vendors at an affordable price with a quick turnaround.
99. Prioritizing retouching with outside retouching vendors during peak times of the year.



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SHOTFLOW

POWERED BY INDUSTRY PROS

FOUNDER/CEO ERIC FULMER **CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD/COO** DAVE GALLAGHER **INDEPENDENT DIRECTOR** LEN MIZUTOWICZ **CTO** SEAN NEWBY
DEV TEAM CESAR PEREZ, EVET KALCHEV, DAVID TOBON, JULIAN RODRIGUEZ, JUSTIN GUEDES, PABLO AGUDELO, RICK GAGARIN, SANTIAGO MURCIA, CADAVID **DIRECTOR OF PRODUCT** EMILY TAYLOR **VP OF CLIENT SUCCESS** BEN EPPES
CLIENT SUCCESS TEAM REBECCA DAVENPORT, ASHLEY SNARSKI, JOE KIMANI, KENDRA MALINOWSKI, MARK DELLERT, TAMMY SAMISCH, TIM GREY, TONI EAGER, WILL RUTLEDGE **DIRECTOR OF HR/ACCOUNTING** LEIGHANA NOVAK
DIRECTOR OF BIZ DEV/PARTNERSHIPS CHARLES BRICKEY **DIRECTOR OF BEHIND THE SCENES** SHARON JOSEPH