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2025 Agency AdOps Benchmark Report

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How top agencies are achieving efficiency, profitability, and client growth

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Introduction

Welcome to the 2025 AdOps benchmark report.

The following pages are a deep dive into critical pain points that digital advertising agencies face today and how your agency can overcome them.

This report provides a baseline understanding of how independent agencies and in-house teams approach advertising operations today. It also provides detailed insight into how (and why) top teams are turning to automation to meet the challenges of the future.

This report's themes and results reflect data compiled from a composite study of more than 75 independent advertising teams across Fluency's user base before adopting automation solutions.

This report will equip you with the right strategies and technologies to position your agency for sustainable, competitive growth in 2025 and beyond.

Key takeaways

1. A rise in multi-channel complexity is straining your team's capacity to deliver stellar results. **Over 64% of ad strategists now manage campaigns across multiple channels, with 80% of them managing three or more platforms**.

2. Manual workflows dominate daily tasks. AdOps teams need an average of 76 hours to launch accounts and spend **46 hours monthly (over 25% of their time) making campaign changes**.

3. Nearly **70% of agencies want to reduce errors across all workflows**, indicating that teams struggle to sustain high-quality work with their current processes.

4. Budgeting is one of the most fragmented workflows managed by AdOps teams, with **40% of respondents relying on multiple tools for budgeting tasks**. The most common pacing methods are manual processes (55%) and spreadsheets (42%), both of which perpetuate human-generated errors.

5. **One in four agencies needs more than one week to launch a new campaign**. This slow time-to-market hinders your team's ability to deliver timely campaigns for customers, which can hinder agency growth.

Paving a path to profitable, scalable growth

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The trends and benchmarks shaping agency operations

CHAPTER 1

Paving a path to profitable, scalable growth

Our data indicates that agencies want to integrate multiple aspects of their operational workflows, ranging from channels and teams. They also want to reduce the number of systems their teams need to successfully operate.

Ultimately, agencies want to position themselves for scale and resilience. Winning and growing new accounts shouldn't require a race to hire or reshuffle talent, cumbersome data aggregation, or ramp-up time that erodes profitability and introduces business risk.

This chapter examines the rise of three strategic agency goals:

Achieving optimal client ratios

Effectively managing multi-channel workflows

Closing the technology-performance gap

Achieving optimal client ratios

If you want to bring in more clients today, you often have no choice but to hire more staff. This is a costly and resource-intensive solution.

But why does this remain the primary way to grow alongside new customer acquisition? Your human workforce can only do so much in a day. The tools and workflows they've used for years have proven incapable of giving them the capacity to support greater client loads.

And yet, every respondent in our data set says they want to increase client loads for their account managers. Currently, account managers oversee an average of 35 accounts. However, survey respondents indicate that their goal is to nearly double this number and assign 64 accounts per account manager.

Agencies seek to decouple headcount from portfolio size

Average accounts per strategist:

35
accounts

Desired accounts per strategist:

64
accounts

Average goal:

83%
increase in portfolio size

Effectively managing multi-channel workflows

Agencies are increasingly adapting their operational models to align with the evolving digital advertising landscape and customer demands. Our data shows a clear shift toward holistic cross-channel management.

In fact, 64% of ad strategists now manage campaigns across multiple channels instead of specializing in a single channel (like search or Facebook).

The transition to cross-channel ad strategies brings significant operational challenges because your strategists must possess omnichannel expertise. They need to build ads, QA multiple creative formats, and allocate budgets accurately across platforms.

Compounding this issue is the fact that 80% of strategists reported that they manage three or more platforms, with 43% handling four or more.

This increased complexity overwhelms teams, leading 35% of respondents to admit they struggle with multi-channel campaign management. Current workflows exacerbate these issues, with one in four agencies needing more than a week to launch new campaigns—slowing operations and hampering growth.

Without adequate tools to overcome these multi-channel (and multi-faceted) demands, your strategists will struggle managing such complex workloads efficiently.

Number of channels managed by Ad Strategists

64%
multiple channels managed

36%
single channels managed

Number of platforms managed by multi-channel strategists

43%
4+ platforms

37%
3 platforms

20%
2 platforms

80% manage three or more platforms

35% struggle with multi-channel campaign management

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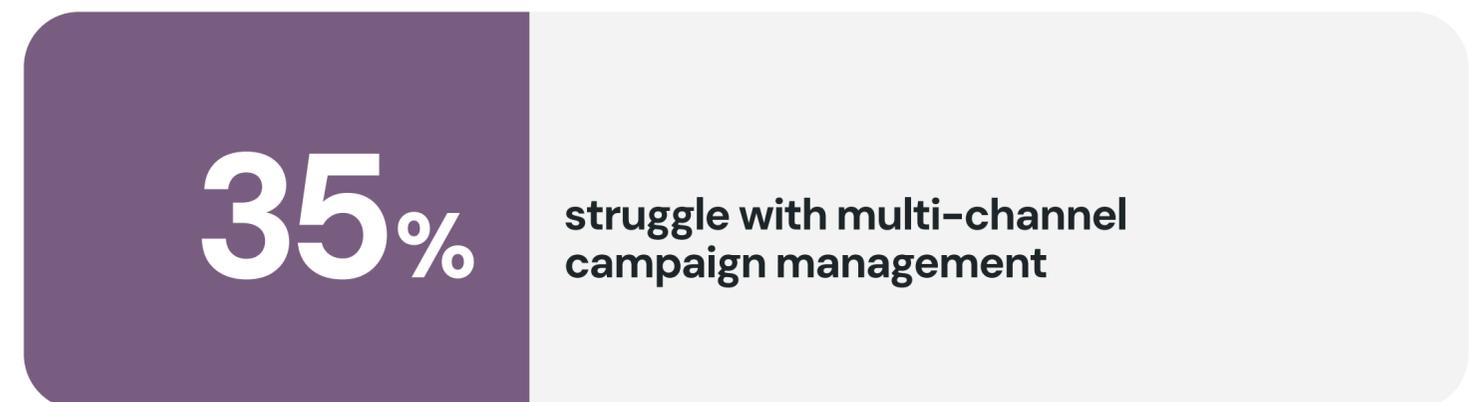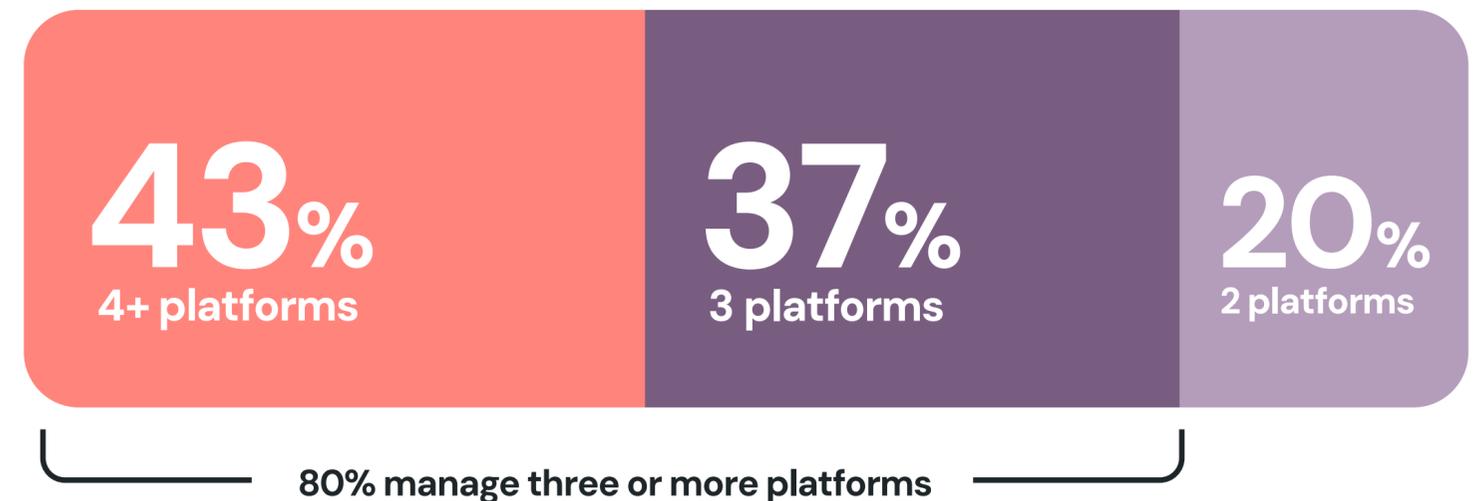
Closing the technology–performance gap

The rise of multi–channel advertising coincides with a troubling reliance on overly manual workflows and a range of niche tools.

While it might not seem significant at first, consider this: one in four agencies needs more than a week to launch a new campaign. Now imagine doing that same level of work for additional channels and customers. It's easy to see why AdOps teams don't have room in their schedule for optimizations, team development, or strategic work.

Further complicating these inefficiencies is the fact that advertising publishers offer little relief. Nearly every platform requires your AdOps teams to submit daily budgets even though customers tend to provide monthly budgets. This discrepancy between agency needs and platform requirements creates yet another inefficiency gap. Teams are forced to work harder just to maintain the status quo.

Additionally, your teams must continuously adapt to platform and industry updates. From new ad types to user interface changes, teams must modify workflows every time a publisher changes something. If you rely on outdated tools, like static playbooks, you may find it difficult to train new hires or adapt seasoned employees to evolving demands. This further delays your path to scalability.

Our data indicates that agencies know they must restructure workflows and tools to overcome these challenges. By streamlining operations, fully integrating channels, and reducing dependence on inefficient systems, you can position your business for profitable and sustainable growth.
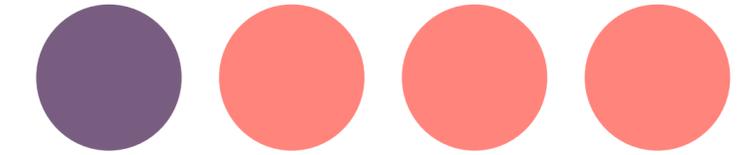
1 in 4 agencies need more than one week to launch a new campaign

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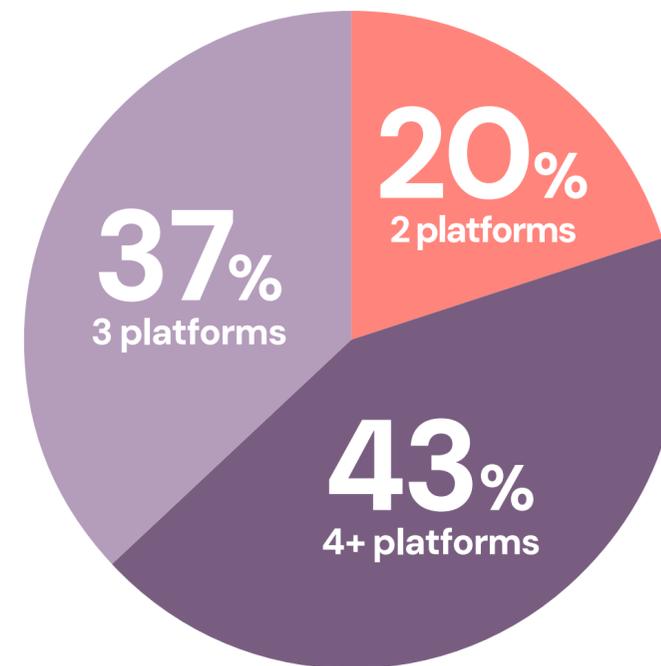
3.18 days
average time needed
to launch a new campaign
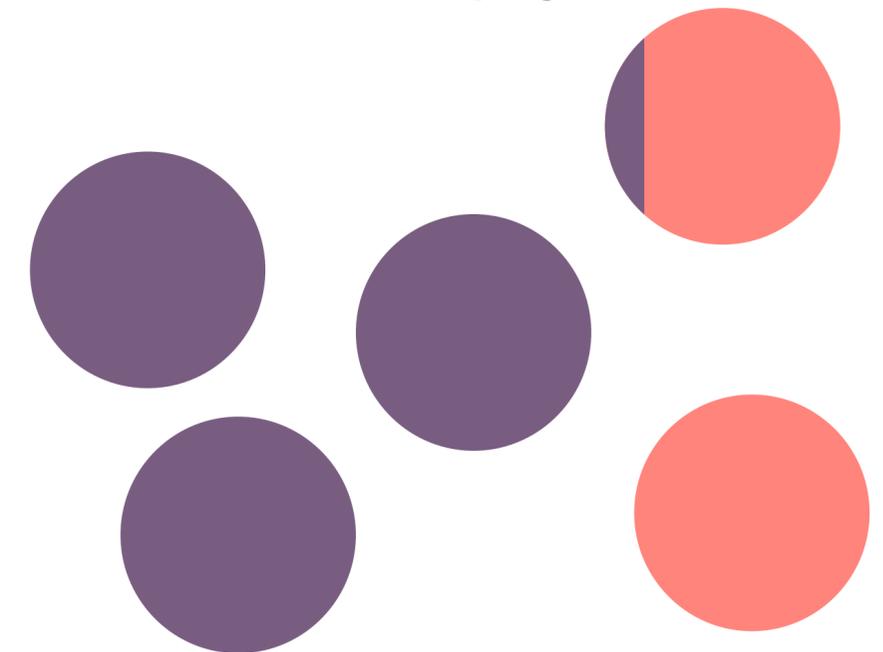
Roadblocks to scalability

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The top operational challenges limiting agency growth

Roadblocks to scalability

The trends discussed thus far don't exist in isolation. They directly impact the mounting pressures on AdOps teams.

Now that we've established how agencies are shifting their operations to meet new demands, let's look at how they define the four biggest challenges their AdOps teams face today.

Our research revealed that agencies want to overcome four key operational hurdles:

Risk–prone workflows

Stagnant profit margins

Too many manual processes

Siloed data systems

"

We need an automated system that can help us balance budgets between ad platforms on a per client basis.

—

1. Excessive risk from fragmented workflows

More than half of respondents (56%) want technology solutions that mitigate risk across two key workstreams: budgeting and campaign management. Both of these workstreams show how fragmented tools expose agencies to financial and operational setbacks.

Budget management is a critical area of concern for agencies. Where money goes, risk follows. One respondent called out budgeting errors specifically when explaining why they are pursuing automation: **"I want to reduce the amount of mistakes, especially for budgets."**

Why is budget management so difficult? Consider this: 40% of respondents rely on multiple tools for budget pacing.

The most common pacing methods cited by respondents — manual processes (55%) or spreadsheets (42%) — are highly error-prone because they rely on humans. These tools also fragment visibility across channels, increasing the risk of over- or under-spending.

Campaign management is another source of risk because the **"set-up of new campaigns is very labor intensive and sensitive to error,"** according to a respondent. Additionally, platform-specific workflows hinder a holistic view of campaigns, making it difficult to develop comprehensive strategies.

By adopting tools that reduce workflow complexities, agencies aim to mitigate financial and operational risks while enabling cohesive strategies across platforms.

56%
want to mitigate risk for budgeting and campaign management workflows

40%
use more than one budget pacing tool/process

Budget pacing tools used by agencies:
Note: Respondents can choose more than one answer

55% manually

42% spreadsheets

21% third-party software

11% internal tools/software

Respondents say:

"There is no one place where we can **see all notifications/issues.**"

"We need an automated system that can help us **balance budgets between ad platforms on a per client basis.**"

"Pacing accounts (specifically, individual campaigns within accounts) is a **manual and time-consuming process.**"

> **"We have waves of mass onboards of clients that can cause an overage in bandwidth.**

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SURVEY RESPONSE, WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE AGENCY'S GOALS

2. Flatlined capacity limits restrict profit margins

We all have capacity limits. This is why even your best-performing team members can't take on more accounts. At the same time, expanding your team alongside client growth means constricted profit margins that hinder profitability.

This is the challenge that 44% of respondents struggle to address: they want to scale their team's capacity (and their agency's profits) without adding more staff. One respondent noted that **"digital team members have historically scaled with revenue growth,"** but that their overall goal is **"to slow down the scaling of our team members as we grow."**

Put simply by one respondent: **"I would love to not need to hire each time we get a new client."**

Just how drastic of a change do agencies want to see in employee workloads? Our data indicates that account managers oversee an average of 35 clients. These same respondents reported an ideal state of each manager overseeing 64 accounts: an 83% increase in client load.

As the pressure mounts to do more with less, agencies are increasingly looking for technologies that can dramatically increase team productivity without expanding headcount.

Respondents say:

"I would love to **not need to hire each time** we get a new client."

"Our digital team members have historically scaled with revenue growth; I would like to **slow down the scaling of our team members as we grow.**"

"We have waves of mass onboards of clients that can cause an **overage in bandwidth.**"

44% of respondents want to scale their team's capacity without adding headcount

"

Need to make account launches, pacing, and execution tasks in ad platforms more efficient and scalable.

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3. Time-consuming manual workloads

An overwhelming majority of respondents (69%) want to reduce manual workloads and human errors.

For example, the survey data shows that teams spend more than one week every month (an average of 46 hours a month) making campaign changes across a variety of workstreams. Agencies are looking to make tasks **"more efficient and scalable"** so they can **"reinvest time into other parts of [the] workload."**

Capacity issues are typically all–encompassing rather than limited to a few key workflows. As one respondent put it, **"We currently are lacking efficiency in most departments."**

No matter where the work exists, teams want to streamline every facet of their AdOps processes to save time.

One respondent called this out as their biggest impediment to growth, saying they **"Need to make account launches, pacing, and execution tasks in ad platforms more efficient and scalable."**

This indicates that agencies want solutions that solve inefficiencies across the entire operational spectrum, not narrowed to niche workflows.

69%
want to reduce manual workloads and human error
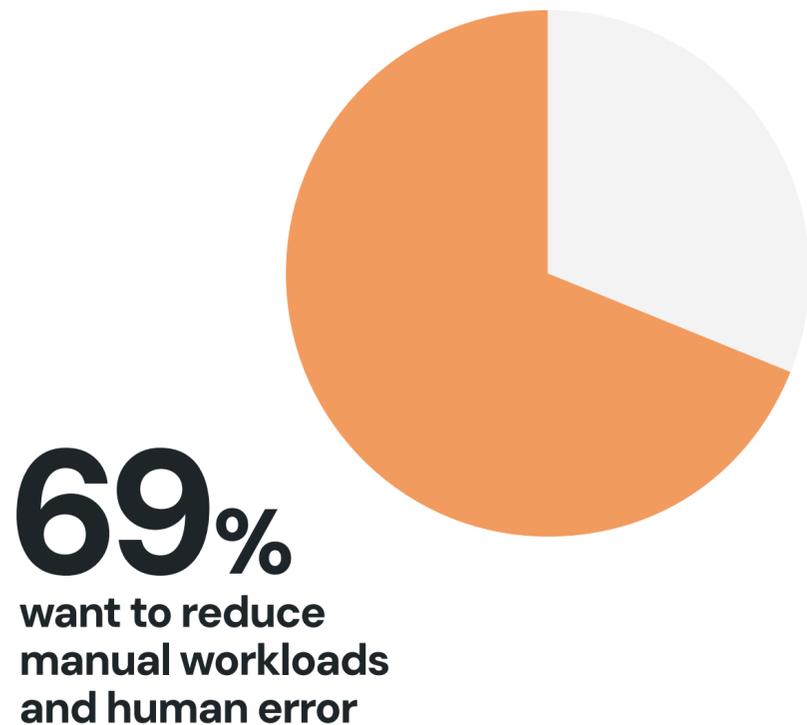
On average, teams spend **1 week every month** making changes for a single account (46 hours per month)

Respondents say:

"Saving time and having a **scalable, affordable option** is key."

"We seek to have time savings so that we can **reinvest time into other parts of our workload**."

"We currently are **lacking efficiency** in most departments."

"

It can be difficult to make strategic decisions based on data when they are split across a variety of platforms.

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SURVEY RESPONSE, WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE AGENCY'S GOALS

4. Disjointed data systems hinder strategy

More and more agencies are looking for tools that provide a comprehensive view into operations so they can **"see the performance of [their] portfolio as a whole."**

As one respondent stated, **"It can be difficult to make strategic decisions based on data when they are split across a variety of platforms and not pulled into one central view to optimize."**

In addition to cross–channel performance and reporting tools, survey respondents also said they want **"easier access to Google APIs"** and the ability to integrate **"performance data from ad platforms with performance data from our back-end lead management engine."**

These responses point toward a desire for solutions that can integrate multiple data sources for improved performance insights, streamlined operational workflows, and data–powered decisions.

80%
of respondents integrate data from outside partners into their advertising

58%
of respondents use more than one source for audience data

The most common audience sources
Note: Respondents can select more than one answer

90% First–party data from Google or Facebook

34% Custom data sources

27% Third–party data integration

"[Our goal is] combining performance data from ad platforms with performance data from our back–end lead management engine."

Tech-enabling for success

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How agencies utilize automation for strategic and operational growth

CHAPTER 3

Tech–enabling for success

The challenges discussed thus far impact your team's daily work.

These challenges also drive agencies to automation and AI, as these tools are the most effective at addressing these operational bottlenecks.

Let's explore how agencies are strategically using automation to revolutionize their workflows:

Reducing costly budgeting errors

Scaling capabilities without increasing costs

Streamlining campaign management

Centralizing data systems for unified strategies

Reducing costly budgeting errors

Your AdOps teams are forced to manage channel-specific daily budgets across multiple platforms. Trying to maintain adequate pacing throughout the month by reconciling static spreadsheets with dynamic numbers on each channel is both complex and error-prone.

It's also incredibly cumbersome to manually move funds from a low-performing channel to a higher-performing one, hindering optimization opportunities.

Budget-related errors drive up costly credits and adjustments, making them a critical roadblock for your agency's profitability. The good news is that budget management tasks are ideally suited for automated processes.

The emphasis on reducing mistakes, particularly in budget management, underscores a broader industry shift toward systems that can provide both precision and peace of mind. This transition represents a significant evolution away from reactive, manual budgeting processes to proactive, automated systems.

Budgeting automation solutions

1

Automated pacing to hit key KPIs: Manage monthly budgets to the dollar and to your specific KPIs—whether that be awareness, clicks, or other key metrics.

2

Reporting and notifications: Automatically identify areas of risk (such as "zero spend" accounts that have budgets allocated but aren't turned on) and quickly address critical situations.

3

Underspend mitigation: Implement pre-set actions if underspend is detected for any budget in your portfolio, ensuring that spending targets are met for your entire customer base—automatically.

4

Automatically pause exhausted budgets: Eliminate overspend by automatically pausing campaigns (whether it's at the campaign, account, or company level) when a budget is exhausted.

5

Recommendations and forecasting: Develop a more strategic and predictable long-term approach to budget management by reducing time spent on redundant daily tasks.

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Scaling capabilities without increasing costs

You're managing capacity challenges on both ends of the spectrum: you need to meet client needs while also expanding your agency's capabilities and growth.

The labor costs to perform more complex or high–touch–point client work can't be understated, especially if these labor costs are a limiting factor to your agency's profitability. As one of our respondents pointed out, **"We may onboard some clients and not others based on complexity and cost."**

But what if every client you managed required the same effort, regardless of the number of channels, locations, or campaigns your team has to manage? That's the power of automation.

Automation levels the playing field by reducing complexity. This enables teams to perform an exponentially greater number of operational tasks without proportionally more work or people.

"Fluency has given us the time to focus on strategy and communication, rather than just day–to–day management," one of our agency customers said in a recent testimonial. **"The things that used to take us weeks to do now take us hours, maybe minutes. It has allowed me to train up the team and get them to where they need to be."**

When your team is doing more high–value work and learning to use advanced technologies, they're more likely to be invested in their work. Plus, focusing employee workloads on high–value, creative, or strategic tasks is a great way to attract top–tier talent in a competitive landscape.

> ❝ ❞
>
> We wanted to spend less time on the day–to–day management and spend more time on strategy and client communication.
>
> **Fluency helped us accomplish that.**
>
> —
> JARED DRAHONOVSKY
> GROUP MEDIA MANAGER AT JOHNSON GROUP
>
> **Read the full story →**

Effortless campaign management for improved performance

No matter how good your campaign playbooks are, mistakes can still be made. These little slip-ups, no matter how small, have a compounding effect on efficiency, productivity, and even revenue.

Automation can help across the entire spectrum of campaign management: planning, launching, optimizing, and reporting.

Automating repetitive tasks (especially those prone to errors) is the easiest and most efficient way to give teams capacity back in their day. Every minute saved on manual processes is a minute your team can put toward more high-value work.

Increasing testing speed and accuracy

Saving time on manual processes

Why agencies are adopting automation

Streamlining ad production workflows between different departments

Activating AI recommendations for improved performance

Centralizing data for unified strategies and insights

With more and more customers looking for multi-channel and multi-location performance results, agencies are ditching fragmented tech stacks for streamlined solutions that integrate data from multiple sources.

Bringing in data from multiple sources— different channels, customer CRMs, even inventory databases—into one system unlocks a strategic advantage unheard of in today's advertising ecosystem.

For example, direct connections to a customer's CRM (alongside potential API integrations) can provide you seamless audience management capabilities, regardless of channel activation. Similarly, systems that automatically update dynamic ads based on real-time inventory deliver timely results that no human or manual optimization could ever match.

The right tech can enable your teams to go beyond traditional tactics like A/B testing. Instead, they can utilize advanced analytics and AI-discovered insights to inform strategic decisions.

For example, AI can provide additional keyword recommendations based on what's performing well, or advise teams on how to reallocate funds from an underperforming channel to a high-performing one.

Global aggregated data also makes it easier to identify optimization opportunities for quick performance tweaks that can yield big results. This enables you to generate comprehensive monthly reports in an instant rather than tediously pulling everything together for every client.

When your teams can see everything all at once, they can make data-powered decisions that move every account forward.

Your agency's future with automation

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How top agencies are winning with automation — and what you can expect for your agency

CHAPTER 4

Your agency's future with automation

Learning about automation and understanding its true value are two different things. Analyzing performance from high performing agencies of all sizes offers insight into how to build an automation strategy that delivers immediate and lasting performance and ROI.

Take a look at what high-performing agencies have accomplished with automation:

Short-term: three months with automation

Medium-term: six months with automation

Long-term: twelve months with automation

Three months with automation

What do top agencies accomplish with automation in three months? Agencies see a lot of quick wins when they first adopt automation. The biggest time savings typically come from automated budget management and bulk editing/launch tools.

Key improvements typically include:

- **Implement automated budget pacing and adjustments to align with customer sales cycles**

- **Automatically pause exhausted budgets, eliminating overspend across your entire customer portfolio**

- **Utilize notifications to automatically identify — and quickly address — critical areas of risk**

- **Automate more complex tasks across channels for holistic campaign management**

JOHNSONGROUP

Case study: Johnson Group

Specialty: Multi-location, national brand franchises.

Challenge: Time-intensive manual budget pacing hindered scalability and strategic growth.

Results: 90% reduction in budget pacing tasks; 50% decrease in cost per conversion.

Quick look: Johnson Group, a full-funnel brand and advertising firm for national brands, faced increasingly complex budgeting workflows. Managing 1,600 localized campaigns for a key client tested the team's capacity as the relationship grew.

Adopting automation, particularly for budgeting tasks, drove a 90% reduction in pacing tasks. The team also decreased QA time by 84%, enabling them to redirect time each week to strategic planning and client interactions. This strategic work drove a 35% increase in conversions and a 50% decrease in cost per conversion.

Read the full story →

Six months with automation

What do top agencies accomplish with automation in six months? Agencies commonly begin running data–powered campaigns as they become accustomed to the power of automated workflows. The efficiency gains enable strategists to adjust and optimize new approaches, test new channels, and work proactively with clients. The combination of automated campaigns and improved strategies drives performance improvements.

Key improvements typically include:

- **Scale workflows to rapidly develop individually tailored campaigns for both new and existing customers**

- **Begin integrating first-party and third-party data sets into ad campaigns**

- **Automate "best practice" playbooks to reduce repetitive manual tasks**

- **Optimize account structure and new client strategy to align with new automated workflows**

- **Simplify reporting workflows by automatically generating high-level month-end reports**

cybermark

Case study: CyberMark

Specialty: Multi-location franchises, emerging brands, and small-to-medium businesses.

Challenge: Complex campaign builds for clients with 100+ franchise locations.

Results: 80% reduction in campaign setup and execution time; 80% increase in conversions for a key client.

Quick look: CyberMark's team relied on time-consuming processes that limited scalability and increased operational challenges. Manual campaign builds and operational constraints limited their ability to deliver custom ad strategies while maintaining scalability and brand compliance.

Implementing automation enabled seamless growth and enhanced service delivery. Across their multi-location clients, they reduced campaign setup time by 80%, decreased errors by 99%, and improved client conversion rates by up to 80%.

Read the full story →

Twelve months with automation

What do top agencies accomplish with automation in one year? Often agencies see such significant labor savings and performance gains that they can bring on new accounts without adding headcount. They have the time to upskill their teams and expand the impact of their existing staff, all while proactively planning for strategic initiatives that help them deliver on their unique value propositions.

Key improvements typically include:

- **Begin scaling internal operations without hiring additional staff, driving improved staffing ratios**

- **Hands-off budgeting pacing and reallocation between channels for every customer in your portfolio**

- **Fully integrate AI-driven insights and advanced analytics for campaign optimization, strategic planning, and testing**

- **Collaborate seamlessly with customers through shared dashboards and increased touchpoints, strategic recommendations for stronger relationships**

- **Align team structure to support multi-channel efforts (e.g. merging capabilities of your search team and social team)**

- **Expand services to include new channels or customer offerings**

Dealer.com
by Cox Automotive

Case study: Dealer.com

Specialty: Top digital advertising agency for automotive, servicing over 10,000 dealerships in the USA.

Challenge: Wanted to utilize consumer data across thousands of diverse accounts nationwide.

Results: 208,000 labor hours saved by adopting automated processes; 300% conversion rate increase for a key account.

Quick look: Dealer.com, the leading digital marketing provider for the automotive industry, wanted to better utilize its industry-leading consumer data across thousands of large-scale, custom campaigns. They implemented **Fluency Blueprints** to scale and optimize their multi-channel campaigns, reducing manual efforts while delivering better client outcomes.

Partnering with Fluency enabled Dealer.com to save over 208,000 hours, achieve a 300% increase in click-through rates for a key account, and set a new standard for scalable, data-driven advertising in the automotive sector.

Read the full story →

The opportunity ahead

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Automation as your agency's growth engine

The opportunity ahead

The challenges we've outlined—increasing campaign complexity, time-consuming workflows, and fragmented operations—aren't going away. But neither are the opportunities they present.

Automation empowers agencies to shed inefficiencies, eliminate human errors and overspend, and free up time for strategic planning and growth. It's possible to create a world where your teams can stop manually pacing every campaign, sinking hours into monthly customer reports, or juggling endless spreadsheets.

Instead, they can focus on what truly matters. They can build stronger client relationships, deliver creative campaign solutions, and achieve unparalleled performance.

Reducing budgeting tasks by 90% or campaign setup time by 80% aren't hypothetical results: they're happening right now. These aren't just wins for operations, either. They're wins for your clients and, most importantly, your bottom line.

Agencies that act decisively to transform their operations will deliver exceptional results and secure their leadership in an increasingly competitive market. The decisions you make right now will determine whether you're staying ahead of the curve or playing catch-up.

This moment isn't a hurdle: it's a launchpad. Propel your agency forward with tools that equip teams to work smarter, deliver faster, and drive real results.

You'll want an experienced partner to help you successfully adopt automation. With billions in ad spend under management and an award-winning track record of automation innovation and client support, our team has the skills and passion to help you achieve your goals.

TALK TO AN EXPERT →

About Fluency

Fluency is the only digital advertising operating system engineered for organizations that run complex digital media portfolios. The first solution to combine purpose-built Robotic Process Automation for Advertising with integrated AI, Fluency addresses critical advertising operations challenges by streamlining resource-intensive tasks associated with digital advertising content generation, execution, management, and optimization. The result is an easily scalable system that has helped category-leading agencies and brands achieve transformational time savings, operational efficiency, and profitability.

Fluency manages over $1.3b in annual ad spend and routinely ranks #1 for performance and client support on G2. For more information, please visit www.fluency.inc

Survey demographics

Data is based on a survey of over 75 advertising organizations based in the United States.

Respondents hold a variety of positions including Agency Owner, Manager, Team Lead, and Ad Strategist. Eighty-one percent (81%) of respondents currently work for agencies. Nineteen percent (19%) of respondents currently work for brands.

Surveyed organizations represented both generalist agencies and vertical-specific agencies including real estate/multi-family, automotive, health and wellness, retail, cpg, heath and beauty, quick-serve-restaurants.