

# Delighting Readership, Advertisers and Your Bottom Line

**WORLD-CLASS DESIGN**

**NEW REVENUE STREAMS**

**INCREASED EFFICIENCIES**

**SCALABLE UPON DEMAND**

**RADICALLY REDUCED COSTS**

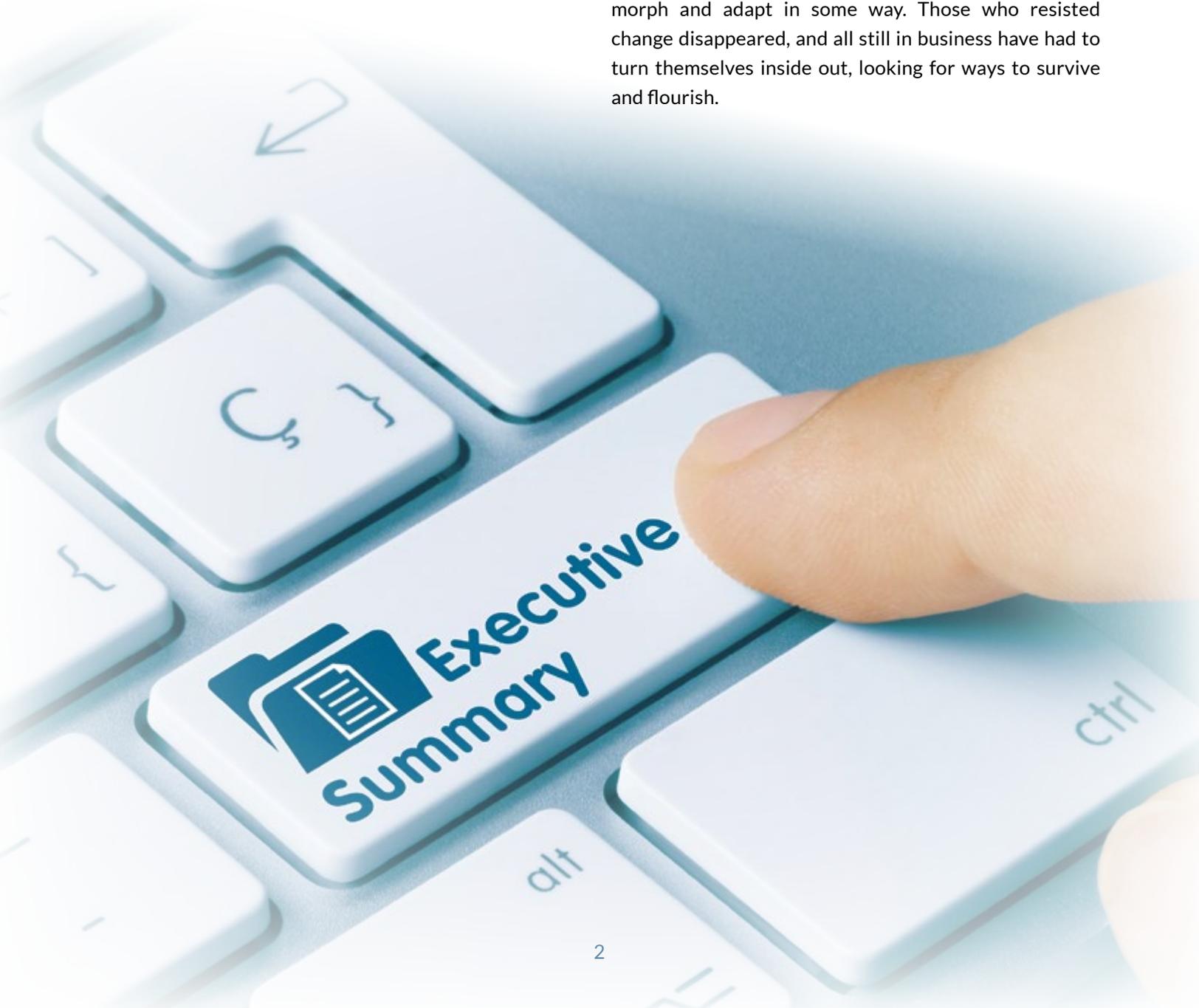


**N**ot exactly “breaking news” that the newspaper and publishing industry is under siege. As a yardstick, 8,891 newspapers existed in 2005, with approximately 6,377 remaining.

The implications for communities across America, resulting from “news deserts,” are alarming if the downward trend in numbers continues. Far more than just “news,” newspapers often bind a community together to provide a sense of geographic identity. Frequently newspapers are the only source for in-depth reporting on issues impacting local communities and decision-making.

The multitude of factors contributing to the declining numbers of newspapers are well known within the industry and too numerous to explore here in detail. In short, stagnant markets, increasing competition from other media for audience and attention, utilization by progressively smaller portions of the population, and changes in advertisers’ media choices have created an ongoing challenging business environment.

Stating the obvious or listing all the headwinds that make for a challenging business environment serves no purpose. Industry predecessors only had radio, television, and billboards for competition; today, newspapers have the ever-evolving Internet. From big-city marquee mastheads to the lesser-known in smaller markets, every newspaper has had to morph and adapt in some way. Those who resisted change disappeared, and all still in business have had to turn themselves inside out, looking for ways to survive and flourish.





# DOING MORE WITH LESS

Long before the “doing more with less” mantra arrived for other industries, newspaper management teams were living and breathing it. Amid that reality came the pandemic, supply chain issues, runaway fuel costs, an inflationary spiral at a 40-year high, and an extremely tight labor market. At this point, within the newspaper industry, a “do more with less” mandate is almost laughable. Despite the hype surrounding AI, ChatGPT, etc. — doing all our work for us in the not-too-distant future — that day has not yet arrived. In the meantime, you have a newspaper to run!

With Gallup reporting a continued two-year decline in employee engagement, plummeting to 32% in 2022, getting increased production within current creative team payrolls is problematic. With compensation across the board expected to rise an average of 4% in 2023, even higher within creative teams, paying more for less is the reality. On top of that, creative teams were experiencing a 25% turnover rate before the pandemic; now, the rate is soaring even higher. The reality is that “doing more with less” will not happen within current operating schemes and budgets.

When you add it all up, delivering a profit appears almost impossible. There has been a lot of emphasis and effort on addressing the revenue side — means, methods, frequency, and presentation, but those efforts are now bumping against a ceiling. In turn, greater efforts are now required to seek

out even more ways to innovate and trim costs in every area possible. When reviewed holistically, the significant costs of creative compensation now demand far more scrutiny.

It’s not just about salaries and benefits; the perpetual hardware/software and IT costs required for the creative function never disappear.

In reviewing these costs, the strategic imperative of appeal must override any initiatives to trim the expenditure. Vibrant, outstanding design, both print and digital, must be maintained and improved upon to keep advertisers happy and readership returning for more. Print and digital ads, pagination/design, websites, and social media must be vibrant, alluring, and attractive to deliver value for advertisers and readers alike. At present, talented staff on payroll and constant technology investments, including hardware, design software, and IT support, may seem like an intractable commitment.

The cost of that seemingly intractable commitment is enormous when you break down compensation holistically in addition to the constant hardware and software investments. Most especially when you carry it out in 5- and 10-year increments. Breaking out all those costs to examine them can be complex. The following exploration is a starting point, but every operation is obviously different, so geographic variables, operational scope, etc., will come into play

# CONTENTS

Compensation, a Holistic View .....	05
The Almost Incalculable Cost of Turnover.....	06
Perpetual Hardware/Software Costs .....	07
The Math = Only One Inevitable Conclusion.....	08
A Global Design World Beckons .....	10
A World-Class Design Partner.....	11
Unrivalled State-of-the-Art Design Center .....	12
Overview of Services for Newspaper/Publishing World .....	13
Proprietary Platforms for Speed and Efficiency.....	14
Formidable Value Proposition with Enormous Value .....	17
Let's Have a Conversation and See Where it Leads .....	18
About Adroitsquare .....	19

# COMPENSATION, A HOLISTIC VIEW

Payroll is a major part of the operations budget for nearly every type of business, with virtually no industry exempt. With newspapers, a talented design team with their fingers on a mouse ever-ready to facilitate publishing via ads, page design, and websites is a significant cost, especially throughout 5- and 10-year spans.

These days, however, talent can be almost impossible to find. With turnover in the graphic design world averaging 25% per year before the pandemic, now amid the “great resignation,” every newspaper is even more pressed to find talent within budget constraints. It’s

an employee’s market where creative team members are not relegated to just the newspaper industry; therefore, salaries and benefits must match or exceed what the marketplace is paying.

Via compensation [salary and benefits], newspapers must always compete to keep existing talent while recruiting new talent to combat the turnover revolving door. Once on board, the actual costs for existing personnel, not accounting for 401K plans, paid and unpaid leave, etc., run 1.25 to 1.4 times their salary for HC, FICA, FUTA, workers comp, etc.

## WAGE TREND

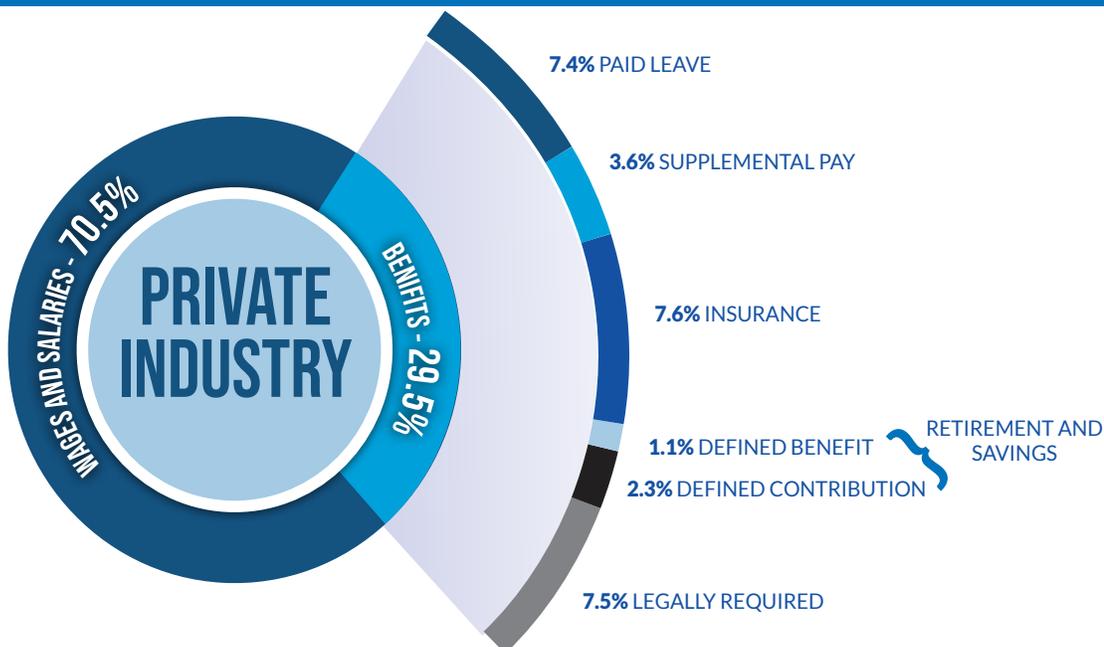
### INDIVIDUAL MEMBER: CREATIVE TEAM



Source: Company Estimates

### INDIVIDUAL MEMBER: TRUE COSTS RANGE

## RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF EMPLOYER COSTS FOR EMPLOYEE COMPENSATION



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics | Sept. 22

# THE ALMOST INCALCULABLE COST OF TURNOVER

These days; no sooner than you seem to have staffing solved and creative team operations running smoothly, another mass exodus occurs. Typically, due to “more money elsewhere.”

The resulting ongoing stress and headache for management pales in comparison to the true costs of turnover. Productivity may catch up in time, but role expertise and its value may take years to recover.

A seasoned member of the design team and a new hire are not interchangeable parts; humans have learning curves and need training which initially consumes their time and the time of management and staff to perform the training.

Productivity wanes for months, errors increase, and sometimes personalities conflict, leading to even more turnover costs. All the while, a quality product must go out the door no matter what!

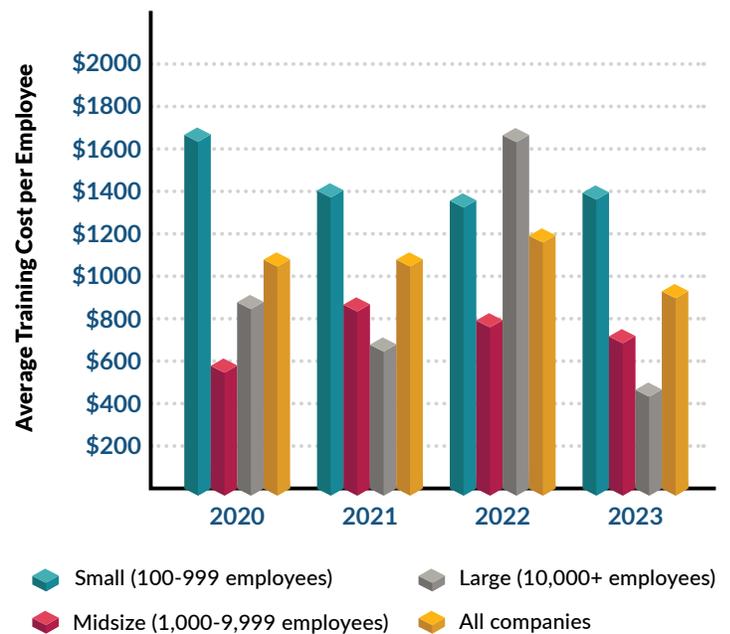
Turnover averages almost 25% within most creative teams, and commensurate with their salary, the costs of a new hire can run between \$4- and \$20 K. When you multiply those costs over 5- and 10-year increments, no matter the size of your creative team, those dollars add up to lost profits or revenue better invested elsewhere.

With recruiting costs skyrocketing like everything else, every time the turnover bug hits – it now costs even more. Due to the “great resignation,” the time window for recruiting has been greatly extended, resulting in ever-escalating costs. When, not if, the turnover bug hits, replacing talent is no small expenditure. HR and creative team management must utilize their limited time interviewing several candidates to determine the best fit. Then, there are the background checks and substance testing costs that must be repeated if a candidate fails scrutiny.

As noted, even though all these costs are almost incalculable, it is real money out of your bottom-line year after year. By reducing or largely eliminating the costs associated with turnover, those dollars can address other pressing issues or fuel bottom-line profits.



## Training Costs



Source: Company Estimates (2020-2023)



# PERPETUAL HARDWARE SOFTWARE COSTS

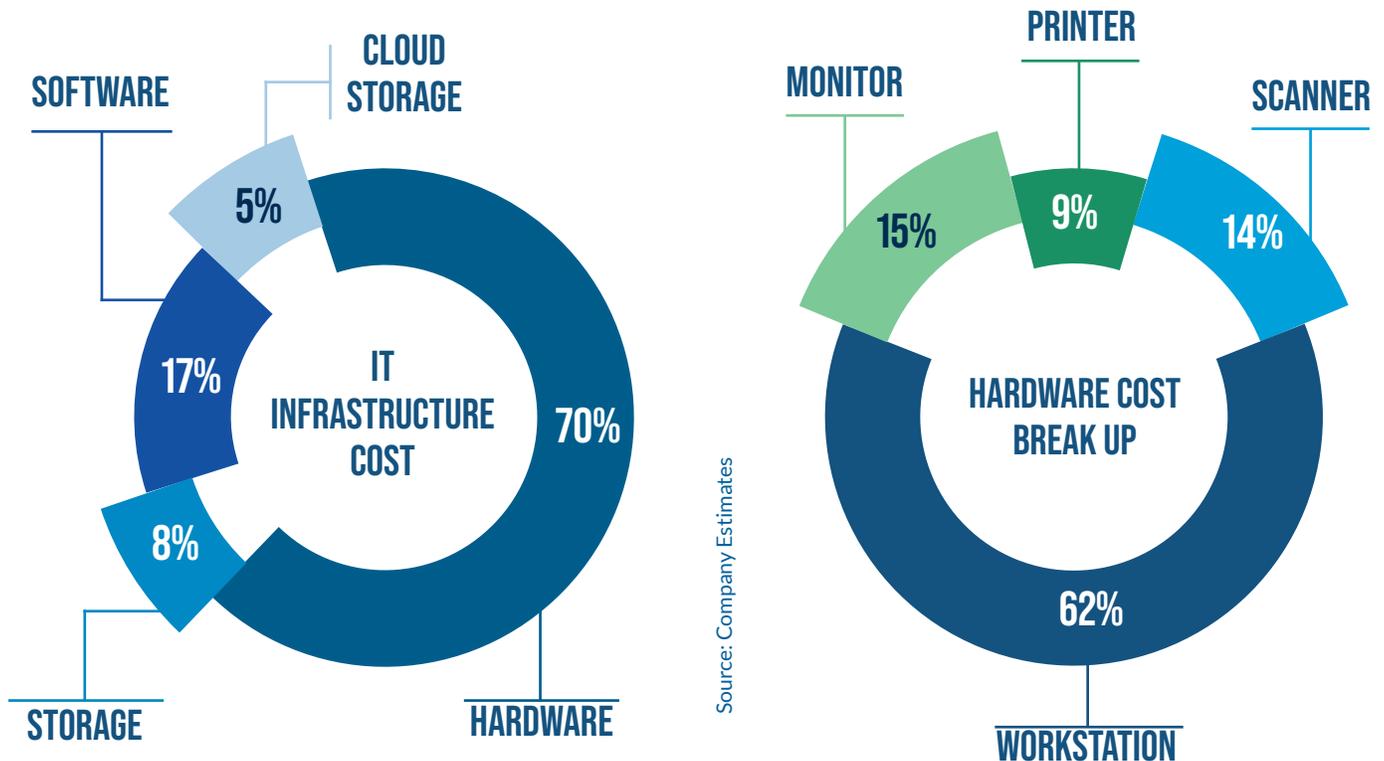
Whether your creative team works in a Mac-based environment or PC, design operations infrastructure requires relentless hardware and software expenditures. Going with a PC environment saves a little money over a Mac. Still, even so, the initial investment for a single workstation environment is close to \$5 K. It might outlast a 5-year depreciation schedule, but soon thereafter, it will have to be replaced entirely or significantly upgraded to stay current – as dictated by the pace of tech.

Software for a single designer work environment is predominately done via subscription. While there are less expensive alternatives to the Adobe Creative Suite, it is still the gold standard for anything and everything in graphic

design. A single subscription per workstation runs more than \$1 K per year, \$10 K over a decade, multiplied by the number of workstations or designers. Have 10, that is \$1 million or more. In addition, graphics files are a storage hog; paying to keep them backed up also has yearly costs. Finally, there are the IT support costs to keep all the design systems up and running. Having a tech on-site or outsourcing the function is yet another ongoing expense.

While nearly all of the industry soothsayers say investing in “tech” is critical to survival, regarding hardware/software/IT and storage costs for a creative team, it is not an “investment.” Instead, the dollars are an ongoing perpetual outlay of revenues that could be utilized elsewhere.

## Hardware/Software Costs – Minimum



Source: Company Estimates

# THE MATH = ONLY ONE INEVITABLE CONCLUSION

Let's consider a typical group of newspapers, assuming, for example, that there are 10 weekly newspapers with 10 design team members spread across 3 states. It can be assumed that these would spread across multiple counties and the staffing would be such that these papers have separate revenue streams and staffing costs associated with them. It can also be assumed that the associated staffing in all these disparate locations, just like any other business, would be faced with weather, seasonality, attrition, and availability.

As with this example, depending upon the size of operations, the costs can be significant, as noted in the table below. It is not until you multiply by staff numbers, workstations, IT support, and storage costs throughout 5- and 10-year spans that the numbers become staggering. On average, if a design team member has been on board for a while, salary, hardware, and software can approach \$56 K in actual costs per year. Based on the low-end average, a 10-member creative team costs the bottom line \$3+ million in just five years – \$6+ million over a decade.

As noted, every operation has differing economies of scale, compensation models, geographic variables, etc. Costs in your specific operations may be higher or lower, but either way, \$56 K per year on average per designer/ workstation, multiplied by the number on the creative team throughout 5- and 10-year spans, is a huge expenditure to outrun to return a profit. These numbers do not account for the costs of 401K contributions and many other hidden costs that make up "compensation" in total.

In an industry where all the big-ticket overhead expenses have already been cut or trimmed, these costs are extremely significant when eyeing profitability and staying afloat within an increasingly difficult business environment. For smaller operations, the cost savings may mean the difference between staying afloat or sinking. For more extensive operations, it equates to millions of dollars over 5- to 10-year spans for the bottom-line or other priorities.

#	# TEST CASE	Inhouse	Inhouse Additional costs in %
Direct Cost	Average Monthly salary, excluding benefits per employee	\$3,696	
	Average Monthly salary per employee, including benefits and attrition cost	\$4,546	23%
	<b>Total monthly wage cost for 10 employees</b>	<b>\$45,461</b>	
Indirect Cost	Training/Replacement cost per employee per month	\$111	3%
	License cost - Adobe etc. per employee per month	\$111	3%
	Infrastructure cost - Rent, computer, server hosting and internet	\$296	8%
	<b>Total indirect cost per employee per month</b>	<b>\$517</b>	
	<b>Total indirect cost per month for 10 employees</b>	<b>\$5,174</b>	
	Manager cost per month including benefits and indirect costs	\$6,000	
	Total monthly indirect cost including management cost	\$11,174	
Total Cost & Savings	<b>Total cost for AD operations/month</b>	<b>\$56,635</b>	
	<b>Total cost for AD operations/year</b>	<b>\$679,622</b>	
	<b>Total cost for AD operations/5 years</b>	<b>\$3,398,112</b>	Source: Company Estimates

## VALUE PROPOSITION CALCULATOR

Every newspaper operation differs significantly when it comes to creative team costs. Via our online value proposition calculator, newspaper management teams can more easily achieve an accurate picture of their unique costs. With those numbers in hand, the value proposition offered by partnering with Adroitsquare comes into clear view via a comparison.



**LET'S CHECK THE SAVINGS**

[Adroitsquare.com/vpc](https://Adroitsquare.com/vpc)





## A GLOBAL DESIGN WORLD BECKONS

As daunting as personnel, hardware, and software costs are, there is a world of potentially good news via alternatives that are now more viable than ever. As standards of living have risen offshore, so too has access to all the technology and design tools that were formerly cost-prohibitive. Now, the best and brightest up-and-coming designers worldwide are coming from all over the planet. Nowhere more so than with graphic design, layout for print, and digital graphics. Tapping into this rich, vibrant talent pool of designers for newspapers and publications offers unparalleled design expertise from a more comprehensive array of cultures and design influences.

Even though the talent exists in abundance, navigating online marketplaces on your own to vet talent, working across time zones, potential bidding wars, hiring, contracting, setting up

teams, and facilitating all the required technologies, etc. — is a massive, time-consuming headache filled with pitfalls and too many things that can go wrong.

It would require at least one dedicated creative team member to pull it all off, and the learning curve is steep. Such a personnel expenditure to navigate it all would largely defeat the financial benefits of outsourcing.

If, on the other hand, there was a liaison onshore who knew the ins and outs and had an existing world-renowned creative team already experienced in the newspaper industry — you could just utilize that option and come out way ahead. No matter the existing world-class design talent, having a stable and responsive team and an accountable point of contact overrides all other considerations.



## A WORLD-CLASS DESIGN PARTNER

Just such a stable and responsive world-class design team exists in the form of Adroitsquare. With U.S. operations based in Cary, NC, accessibility and responsiveness are guaranteed. In fact, partnering with newspapers to deliver unmatched creative design services is a core vertical upon which the company was built. Leveraging shared services to lower overall costs, we deliver digital/print ad design, pagination/ layout, turnkey specialty publications, redesigns, and website development/SEO.

By partnering with Adroitsquare, newspapers maintain their value to subscribers and advertisers while greatly reducing creative costs. The significant cost savings coupled with outstanding design expertise empower Adroitsquare clients to focus on optimizing operations, delighting readers, and delivering “the news.” Looking back, wasn’t delivering “the news” the original concept when the first newspaper rolled off the presses?

## WE MAKE DOING MORE WITH LESS A REALITY

Adroitsquare has been working with newspapers and publishers in the arena of design to make “doing more with less” a reality for almost a decade now. Relentless innovation and reinvention while delivering new revenue streams are essential to profits. Via proprietary platforms and slashed costs, typically between 40 to 60%, launching new revenue streams, either print or digital, become realistic once again. Scaling up or down overnight with complete flexibility removes the risks and costs of hiring. Ongoing issues with staffing and turnover no longer exist.

# UNRIVALED STATE-OF-THE-ART DESIGN CENTER

Adroitsquare is a one-stop technology-enabled service provider for all types of digital graphic design solutions, coupled with an ability to manage high-volume demand with aggressive turnaround times. Operating 24/7 with the sense of immediacy your operations deserve, supporting every platform – Adroitsquare delivers an unbeatable value proposition with high-end, cost-effective creative solutions for all print and digital needs associated with publications and newspaper production.

World-class designers, technicians, and specialists work around the clock to meet the design and production needs of companies and operations worldwide. Our team operates within a high-tech, state-of-the-art environment with the ongoing skill set training required for today's challenges

and potential future needs. When it comes to design, Adroitsquare is always on the cusp of tomorrow, enabling you to be more competitive, agile, and efficient in an ever more disruptive world.

Economies of scale enable Adroitsquare to efficiently deliver world-class design at light speed to meet any design need at any given time. For clients, hardware/software and IT support costs are offloaded going forward. The result is outstanding design and professional service at a cost that is saving millions of dollars for businesses worldwide. In sum, Adroitsquare provides a formidable long-term value proposition that enables sales and creative teams to be far more efficient and cost-competitive.

## SINCE DESIGN IS ALL WE DO WE HAVE TO BE GREAT AT IT!

That's why you will always receive something vibrant, unique, and exciting. No off-the-shelf, cookie-cutter templates "as viewed elsewhere" design work. We love this stuff, always training, pushing the envelope with out-of-the-box thinking, and dynamic execution with every project we undertake.

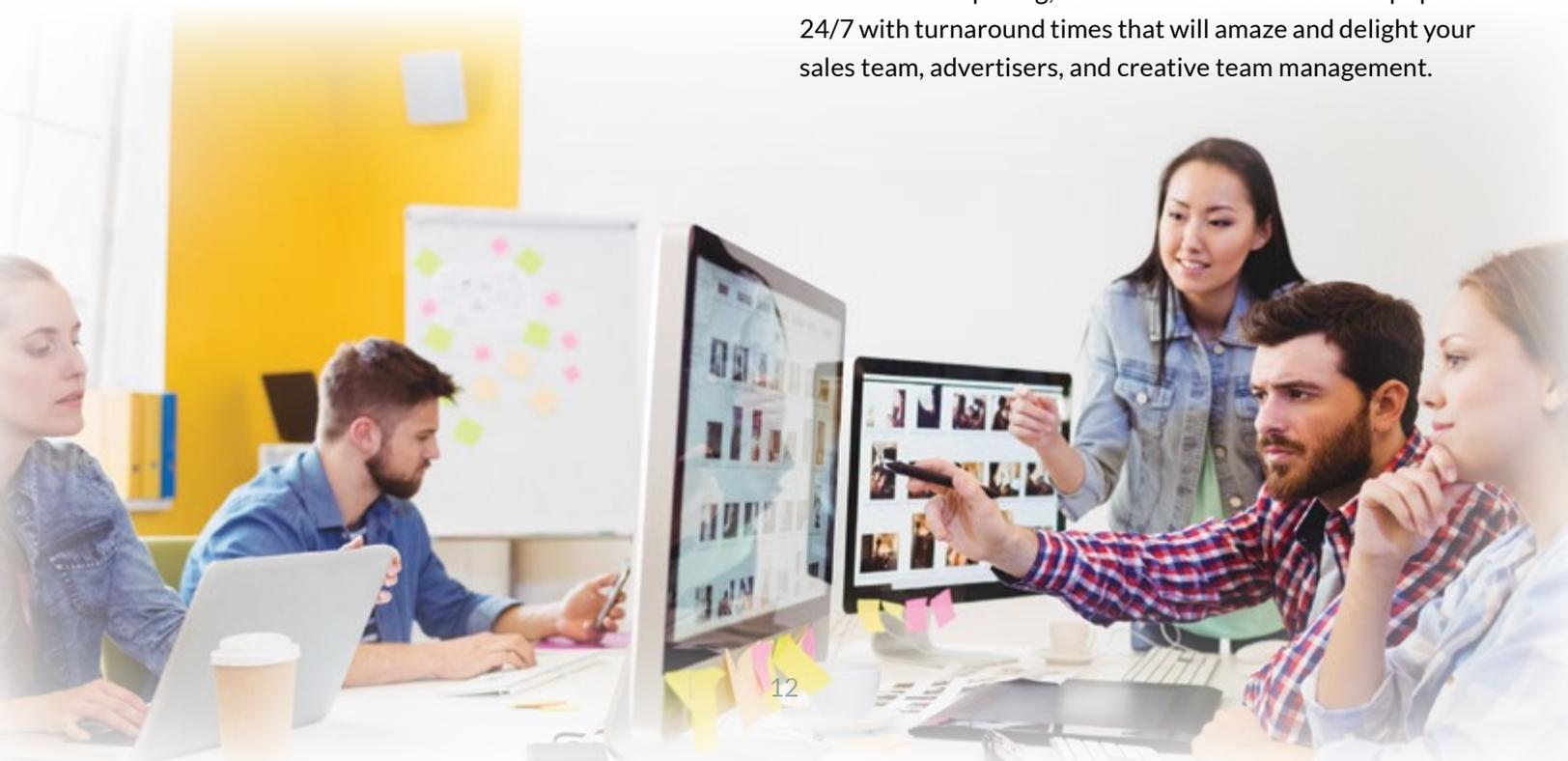
With multiple specializations within our design team, complete mastery of all major design software tools, and a focus on what's next and what's possible – we deliver! Whether it is ad production, pagination, design, redesigns,

or something web-based, our design team is dedicated to knocking it out of the park with the WOW factor in mind.

A dedicated design team member remains with your projects to ensure there are no headaches associated with repeatedly having to learn branding standards, unique cultural nuances, etc.

We are all about delighting your readership to keep them coming back for more and increasing the ROI for your advertisers to validate their repeated investments.

Even more compelling, we do all this and more at warp speed 24/7 with turnaround times that will amaze and delight your sales team, advertisers, and creative team management.



# OVERVIEW OF SERVICES FOR NEWSPAPER/PUBLISHING WORLD

Ad production  
print/digital

Animated ads

HTML5 Banner  
ad design and  
versioning

Image editing

Pagination  
layout/design

Pre-press  
solutions

Redesigns  
relaunches  
re-branding

Social media ads

Turnkey specialty  
publications  
magazines  
supplements

Video ads

Website & landing  
page design

# PROPRIETARY PLATFORMS FOR SPEED AND EFFICIENCY

Our proprietary cloud-based platforms have been developed for specific industries to address their unique workflow and business intelligence requirements. These are delivered over the Internet and run in any Web browser; therefore, our clients can access these applications remotely. Since no specific hardware or software is required, the platforms can be used immediately from day one. Based on client feedback, each resource is continuously upgraded to optimize processes further and improve efficiency.

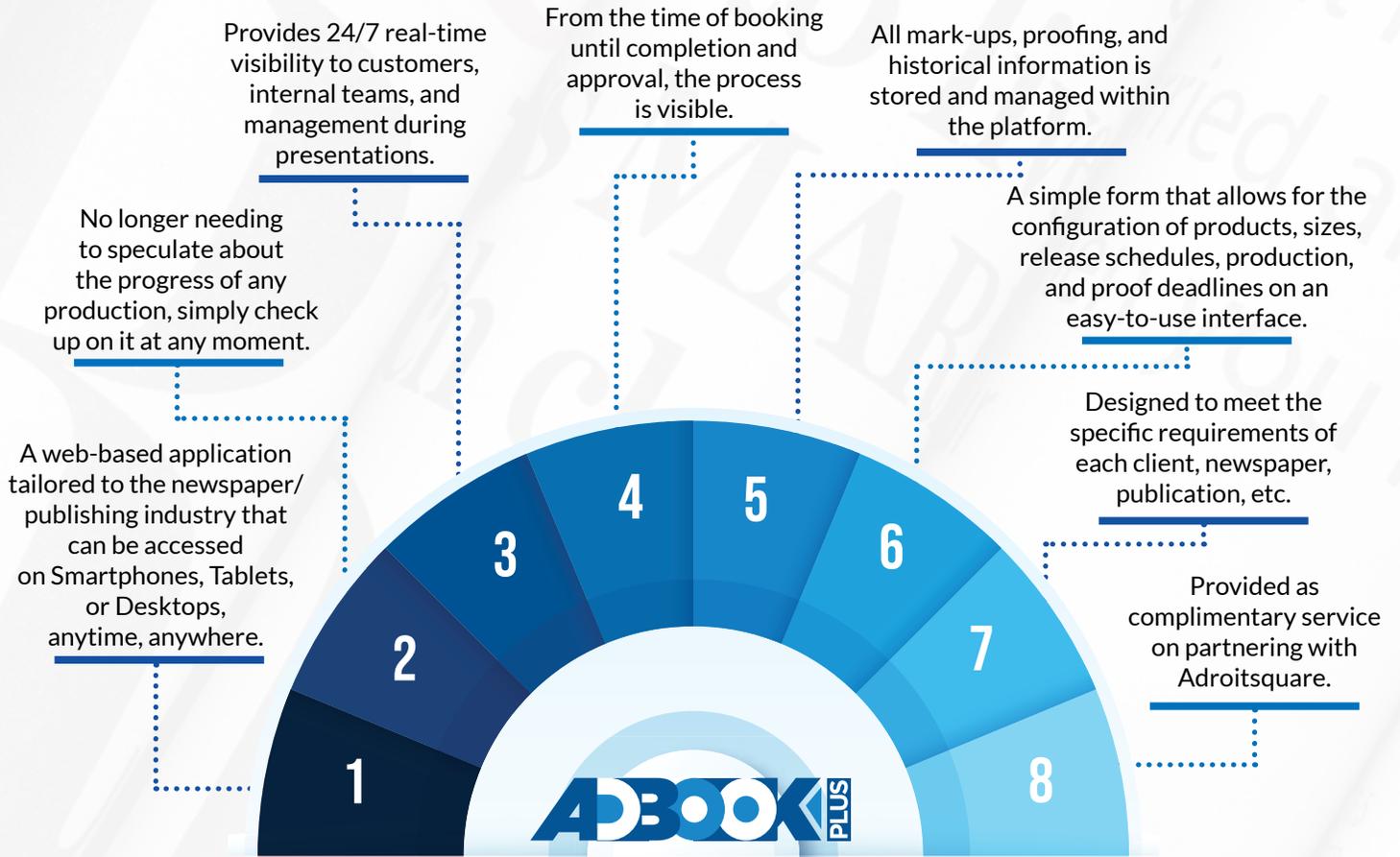
Our experience and exposure have helped us develop a world-class technology platform that delivers strategic value by addressing all operational requirements. We remain focused and committed to continually exploring and implementing innovative solutions that drive long-term value for our clients.

Adroitsquare offers a web-based robust ad booking system and end-to-end production workflow management system, AdBookPlus. A well-designed booking system for the newspaper and publishing industries, with online proofing and mark-up, effectively automates the delivery process.

It allows your sales team, production manager, and our Adroitsquare studio team to connect, collaborate, and communicate through a single platform in real time. Whether it is a newspaper association, a group of publications, or a small community newspaper, AdBookPlus provides a hierarchical structure to configure various company types.

Amazingly efficient, your ad production status is visible from when it is booked until it gets designed and approved. No more wondering about the status of any ad production; simply take a look at any time.





The platform provides a very easy interface for configuring all your products, their sizes, release schedules, and production and proof deadlines using a simple form. Once your company and products are configured, you are all set to book and produce your ads utilizing AdBookPlus.

Your sales team can log in to the system using smartphones, tablets, or desktops. Giving your sales team the ability to manage their tasks online while they are selling, having a coffee, or when they are meeting a customer. Access various dashboards, online proofing systems, and reports anytime, anywhere.

We have an ongoing uptime of 99.9%, quick fail over capabilities, unlimited storage, and bandwidth. No licensing, maintenance, or training costs — partner with Adroitsquare for your design needs and get AdBookPlus as a complementary system to manage your ad production workflow.

A robust, reliable, and integrated solution for your sales and ad production process. It's quick, easy, and frees up time. Time savings that lead to greater productivity and profitability.



# ADBOOK PLUS

End-to-End  
Workflow  
Management  
System

Unlimited  
Storage

Complimentary  
Tool without any  
Licensing Cost

Efficient, Effective  
Ad Booking  
& Production  
Platform

Secured and  
Encrypted Logins  
to protect your  
privacy

99.9%  
Uptime

Available on the  
Go - Compatible  
with Smartphones,  
Tablets & all  
Workstations

Quick Access to  
overview daily/  
monthly and yearly  
trends

Readily available  
database  
to generate  
Customized MIS  
& Analytics

# FORMIDABLE VALUE PROPOSITION WITH ENORMOUS VALUE

While every operational environment, geography, and scale differs, Adroitsquare solutions typically slash current cost outlays by 40 to 60%. Offloading provides efficiencies and greater productivity for existing talent, who are freed up to focus their attention elsewhere. The cost savings and productivity gains fuel the bottom line for greater profitability or reinvestment into other operational priorities. Either way, the financial flexibility that didn't exist previously provides enormous value to operations. There are never any sticky contracts, just operational excellence with enormous benefits that include:

**On-demand  
world-class  
design team**

**New revenue  
streams to  
drive profits**

**Challenges  
with turnover  
disappear**

**Proprietary  
platforms  
to facilitate  
efficiency**

**Dramatically  
slashed costs  
between  
40 to 60%**



# LET'S HAVE A CONVERSATION AND SEE WHERE IT LEADS

As with anything new and untried within an organization, there will be skeptics, and rightfully so. AdroitSquare understands the internal challenges associated with delivering positive change to how things are currently being done. Grand claims of outstanding design, savings, and efficiencies are meaningless until they materialize within your operations.

After a brief discovery with your team, we'll run a liberal and extensive trial [at no cost] long enough to fully validate the cost savings, efficiencies, and world-class design talent. Then, you can crunch the numbers, evaluate the talent level, examine the efficiencies, get feedback from creative team management, and see what you think.

If, after your evaluation, you decide we are not a fit, at least you'll know. **At present, however, all you know is that an internal creative team of any significant size is costing several million dollars over the course of a decade.**





# ADROITSQUARE



919-653-8160



[hello@adroitsquare.com](mailto:hello@adroitsquare.com)



[adroitsquare.com/portfolio](https://adroitsquare.com/portfolio)



150 Preston Executive Dr., Suite 207, Cary, NC 27513



B2, Capital Plaza, DP Road, Hadapsar, Pune 411028





**ADROITSQUARE**

150 Preston Executive Dr., Suite 207, Cary, NC 27513 | [adroitsquare.com](http://adroitsquare.com)