

There is a **market shift** **for agencies** serving retail brands – and creative tech is taking center stage

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Executive Summary

Agency work is in upheaval. Retailers now have access to massive amounts of valuable customer data, and they are bringing agency work in-house to sell data-driven POS advertising to brands.

This shift is part of a deeper trend towards providing personalized and localized offers and campaigns through multichannel output. Brands are willing to pay top dollar to see their products highlighted in this way.

Agencies need to turn this shift into an opportunity. If not, it could spell disaster for them. But, if they can integrate data and design better and faster than the retailers' in-house agencies can, they are going to prosper by selling the full turn-key solution.

We call these innovators Design+Tech Agencies. They are the ones embracing traditional agency work plus Creative Automation technology to integrate data-driven, hyper-speed marketing collateral production engines.

The core technology on which these agencies are building their solutions is already in place. It's a rock-solid SaaS MarTech foundation that enables agencies to develop completely new and innovative digital, social and print solutions. ***Design + Tech solutions are the new frontier.***



PART 1

Agencies today

01

A new era for agencies serving retail brands

For retailers, brands, and agencies – a major restructuring is underway

A global shift is taking place in the long-established relationships between agencies and the retailers and brands they serve.

Technology has enabled retailers to gather unprecedented amounts of data on their customers. Many are already using this data to serve more marketing content, get it to market faster, and make it more personalized and localized than ever before.

A sleeping giant is awakening in the retail sector.

As a result, a new force is emerging in retail sector agency work. Major retailers – like Macy's and Walmart – have grasped the power of their data, and many have already created internal agencies to exploit it. They're working to hyper-localize and hyperpersonalize customer experience in everything from digital communication to Point-of-Sale (POS) displays. And selling advertising to the tune of \$101 million in ad revenue for Macy's last year.¹

Access to data is causing a relationship shift that could become a rift for agencies. Yet also an opportunity.

The way customer data is collected, stored, shared, and viewed by retailers is putting them in a powerful position. Agencies need to find ways to get on board or get left behind.



For innovative agencies, seeking opportunities to benefit from this brave new world, one thing is clear: to keep the cash register running at full tilt with purchases of products they represent, they must rethink how their promotions get to market. And hiring more people isn't the answer.

“Retailers know that agility and resilience for survival will come only through a bold once-in-a-lifetime proactive internal disruption.”

Gartner March 2022, Retail Digital Transformation and Innovation Trends You Need to Know²

Three key observations to grasp the changing retail landscape

- 1** Retailers now own a lot of customer data that brands are eager to access. Some retailers – like Macy's and Walmart are **taking their agency work in-house, developing Retail Media Networks and selling ads and to retail brands who want to sell into their department stores.** These internal agencies are seeking to develop or deploy powerful tech stacks that enable them to serve personalized offers at hyper-speed.
- 2** **The sheer volume of customer and product data** presents opportunities for personalizing content in ways marketers are hard-pressed to keep up with. Without investing in the technology that can automate and serve this content quickly, accurately and on-brand, agencies and brands will fall by the wayside.
- 3** **The marketplace requires high-volume, multi-channel, localized output for both online and in-store experiences.** Customers want to be served with personalized experiences right where they are. It's a hyper-speed market and it's evolving just as fast. If you're going to add value, you need to find ways to keep up with the volume of demand for creative and production services.

Existential questions facing agencies

- 1** If your agency's work includes serving retailers and brands, how can you create new value in a world where retailers are taking control of customer data, graphic design, and production, as well as seeking to serve promotions at lightning speed?
- 2** If you're representing brands sold through retailers, how can you compete to get your customer's brands in front of shoppers?

It all boils down to the same thing: how can you exploit data and technology to produce high-quality collateral at hyper-speed? What is the best strategy to achieve this and keep customers – retailers and brands – coming back to your agency?

The answer is Creative Automation.

PART 2

Challenges for agencies serving retail brands

The sleeping giant has awakened – creative tech is taking center stage

In recent years, there has been a huge push to get branded campaigns to market faster than ever before.

And massive bottlenecks have been discovered on the journey.

From managing creative assets right through to production output, the speed and volume required for personalized, localized, and multichannel content has been too high to meet using yesterday's methods.

Creative Automation, creative tech, and retail tech were invented to meet this challenge. They've been working quietly in the wings for the best part of a decade, but with the explosion of usable customer data now available they are today taking center stage.



“Companies with a strong creative tech foundation that adopt Creative Automation can take full advantage, while those stuck with legacy tools will fall behind the curve”

Kevin Goeminne, CEO CHILI publish

While Gartner and Forrester don't have official categories for these technologies yet, you can count on them coming soon. The market in creative tech is suddenly maturing at an extraordinarily rapid rate.

Creative technologies are now the main actors in the MarTech stack.

For forward-thinking agencies and retail brands this is great news. Those that embrace and adapt this technology today will get a jump on the trend. **And those that don't will need to watch where this new giant's feet land.**

New contenders in the agency space

The agency space is now a highly competitive arena with many new players vying for dominance. **Retailers are becoming agencies; brands are becoming agencies; even printers are becoming agencies**, and so are digital consulting companies. And every type of agency, old and new, is scrambling to find the tech solutions that will help their customer-base scale up in a way that promises a bright future.

Some of these new players have already designed proprietary retail tech software and have added a Creative Automation engine and self-serve end-user portals. SaaS has shown itself to be the most viable tech foundation in this space just as it is in many others. And the adoption rate is rapidly rising as agencies and brands realize they need this technology to thrive and survive.



“There’s no doubt that the retail space is undergoing a revolution. And it’s not just among platform providers. Customers want better, more personalized experiences”

Florian Payri, CEO Aristid Retail Technology

How have we progressed on the content automation journey?

DAMs, PIMs and CRMs are now established tools for organizing brand, image, product and customer data. Other automated platforms have emerged to deliver personalized communications.

But until recently, there was one automation platform missing.

Producing print and digital (or ‘phygital’!) personalization at scale had created a bottleneck for marketers and graphic production teams.

What was needed was a solution that could remove human intervention in the aggregation of all those brand, product, and customer variables. Brands wanted to deliver personalized, localized, and multichannel content at the volume and speed they knew was possible, if only a technology platform existed capable of delivering.

That missing platform is waiting in the wings no longer. We’ve spoken about it already. ***Its name is Creative Automation.***

02 The data-driven, hyper-speed retail reality

Retailers own a huge amount of rich customer data. Brands are keen to gain access to customers. How are traditional agencies finding opportunities in this new reality?

Retailers recently got to asking, why not sell advertising along with in-store POS space to retail brands? To do so, they created an ad agency in-house.

Brands are keen to gain access to large-format retailer consumers. So, it seems like a win for retailers and retail brands. But what about for traditional agencies?

If it sounds like a dead end, there's good news. Savvy agencies have already learned how to up their game. They've understood they can both tap into data and provide better automated, creative tech solutions.

In other words, if you can't join 'em, beat 'em!



The online / offline challenge

Outputting personalized variants for a multichannel online/offline world is a Herculean task. In the modern retail marketing world, there can be multiple vendors and a huge amount of manual work involved. If your end-customers are retail brands with both online and physical stores, they're going to want to get in on the Creative Automation game. It doesn't just save time; it makes new ways of marketing possible.

Print and digital output to drive and motivate customers both online and in-store is critical to meet customers where they like to purchase and shop. And multi-channel automated QR code assignment is possible now from one platform.

Deliver these solutions, and you'll become a sought-after innovator providing ever more advanced technology to your customers, getting them to market faster, while optimizing your bottom line. And you'll also make a contribution to an eco-system that's a competitive advantage for brands.



Link offline with online retail via QR code for exceptional customer experiences

The search for talent is real

In the highly competitive environment faced by agencies, recruiting the best talent for creative work is critical to staying ahead in the market.

But hiring more people isn't always the answer to solve some of the most pressing challenges to remain competitive.

The need for personalized, multichannel output has created a mountain of repetitive work. And, given the proliferation of new data sources, it's often not even possible to manually produce content based on this data.

Automation removes repetitive tasks, creates new possibilities, and is far more accurate at creating data-driven variants than manual solutions. Trying to use talent to fulfill this need is a waste of valuable resources. **Automation is the answer.**

“81% of in house agencies are planning to hire more resources in 2022.”

Cella, In-house Creative Industry Report 2022.

PART 3

Opportunities for agencies

Up your Martech game – deploy your own Creative Automation Micro-SaaS platform

Remove the bottleneck, and get branded campaigns to market at hyper-speed.

Agencies today are on the brink of a massive breakthrough that will redefine how they work for years to come.

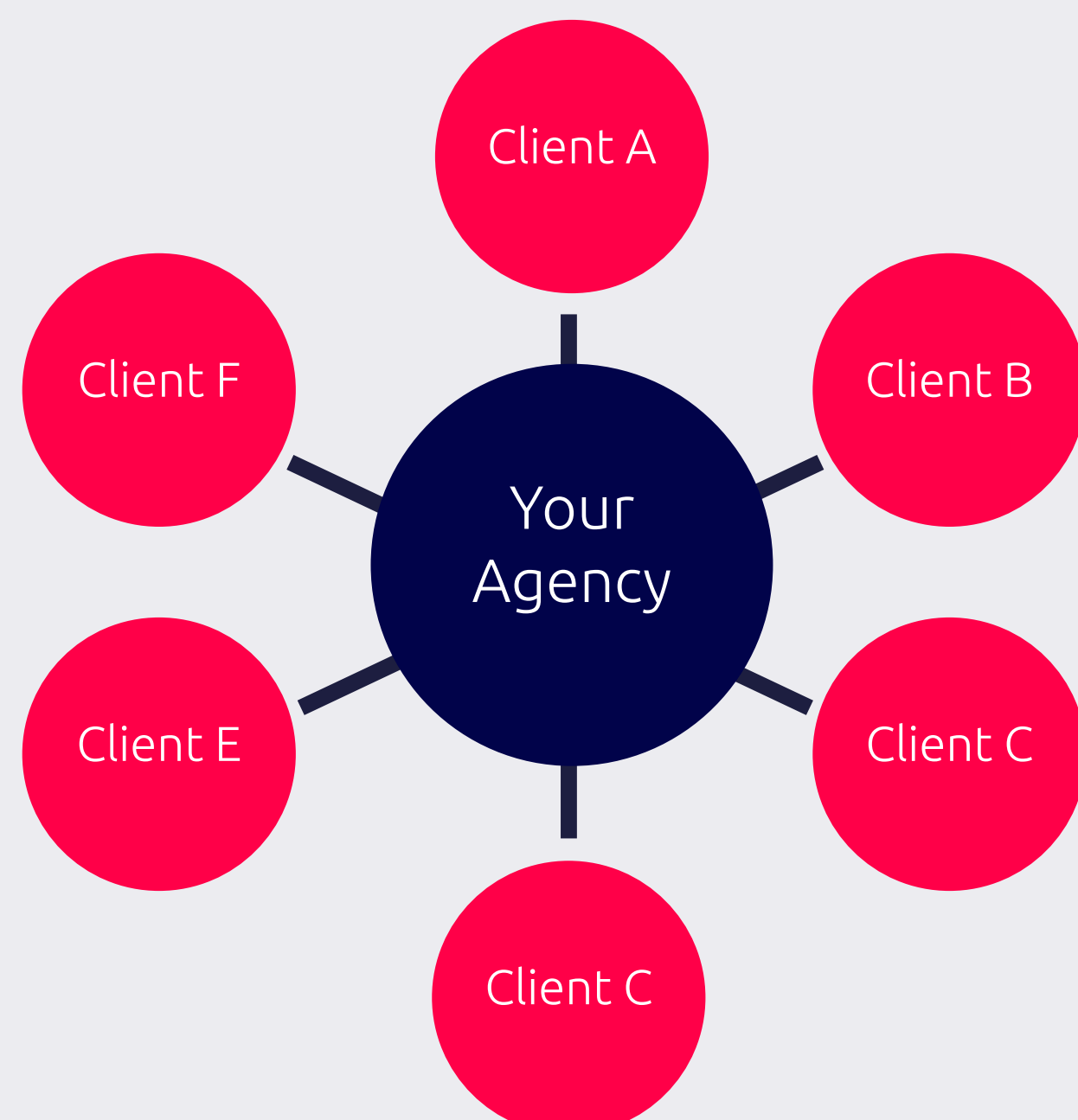
Marketing and branding are no longer exclusively creative domains.
Technology must underpin creativity to deliver high-value solutions.

Agencies must embrace the current opportunities to deploy and customize MarTech solutions as a part of the services they offer their clients. This will free up creative time, turn repetitive repurposing work into new revenue streams, and – most importantly – transform their businesses into Design + Tech that offer expert Creative Services plus Creative Automation technology solutions.

The CHILI publish Micro-SaaS platform is the new player in the MarTech stack.

Offer customers a Creative Automation Micro-SaaS platform

- You host an environment to demo the platform to clients
- You sell to customers:
 - a branded environment
 - Designer seats
 - Renders
 - Template Creation services



Adopt a flexible and future-proofed MarTech foundation

Designed by professionals for professionals, we’ve built a solution that makes it easy straight out the gate.

- It lives in your MarTech stack but can source data from anywhere through a robust REST API.
- DAM, PIMS, CMS, CRM, etc. can all be accessed as data sources.
- The architecture enables you to go well beyond core integrations. You can, for example, build branded intranets allowing store managers to access designs and apply controlled localized content and/or pricing.
- Powerful Creative Automation tools make it possible to bridge the online and offline gap with data-driven, personalized design variants.
- Lights-out production is a natural with data-driven campaigns.

Providing data-to-production integrations is at the core of the solution. And as your in-house integration skills grow you will continue to innovate and add new-age features that make your agency current in the years to come.

And as any good SaaS platform should, your agency and customers continue to be more productive, agile and scalable.

Productivity	Agility	Scalability
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✦ Integrate with existing MarTech, using familiar tools and current brand assets.✦ Populate Smart Templates drawing from current data sources.✦ Automate repetitive tasks, freeing your creative teams to create.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✦ Distribute hyper-localized and personalized campaigns to high-value consumer segments.✦ Empower non-designers with intuitive, on-demand tools.✦ Flex from print to digital output from a single source.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✦ Manage exponential brand variants with accuracy and ease.✦ Deploy marketing messages to countless print mediums and digital platforms without error.✦ Extend global reach integrating regional and language variants.



Your tech with our tech – OEM potential

Combine creative automation with your tech.

Imagine earning recurring revenue from creative services and your own bleeding-edge creative tech SaaS solutions. It might sound like a dream, but agencies, big and small, are already there. And it's possible without the development overhead required to create and maintain such solutions from the ground up.

The competition for agencies is fierce. Retailers are entering the agency space. Printers are too, by putting together their own Martech stacks and front-end solution using automation tools.

Retail tech solutions are also making slow and steady breakthroughs. But many are still missing Creative Automation for marketing content creation.

The power of a Creative Automation engine:

- Build your solution on top of core CHILI publisher technology
- Productize your Micro-SaaS platform with your own identity
- Earn recurring subscription revenue
- Scale as your SaaS business grows
- Repurpose your solution for different clients
- Offer enterprise-level technology that delivers ISO-certified solutions

Micro-SaaS means you can create your own MarTech solution while CHILI publisher does the heavy automation lifting in the background. It stays well hidden behind your agency logo so you take the credit.

“SUBWAY™ combined the clever use of data and smart technology to deliver a customised per store, hyper-local offer using personalised and dynamic QR codes.” Gary Howard, Chief Digital Officer at Precision



03 Unleash the power of Smart Templates

Create variants at hyper-speed with brand guidelines locked in

Smart Templates deliver whole new opportunities for creative work to your marketing and design teams. As we've said, many agencies attempt to hire more people to get more repetitive work done. But that's not scalable, it's less profitable, and provides nothing new to your clients. Worst of all, it also eats into creative time and productivity – a key agency metric.

Creatives using Smart Templates can focus on high-value design work, and gain time-savings in workflows:

- Brand guidelines are easily accessed anywhere on the planet.
- No need for brand owners to hire local design and content teams.
- Generate multichannel content for online and offline with powerful production tools.
- Make late-in-process design changes in seconds, not hours.
- Upload designs created in InDesign® and Illustrator®.
- Scale, at speed, with accuracy and compliance.

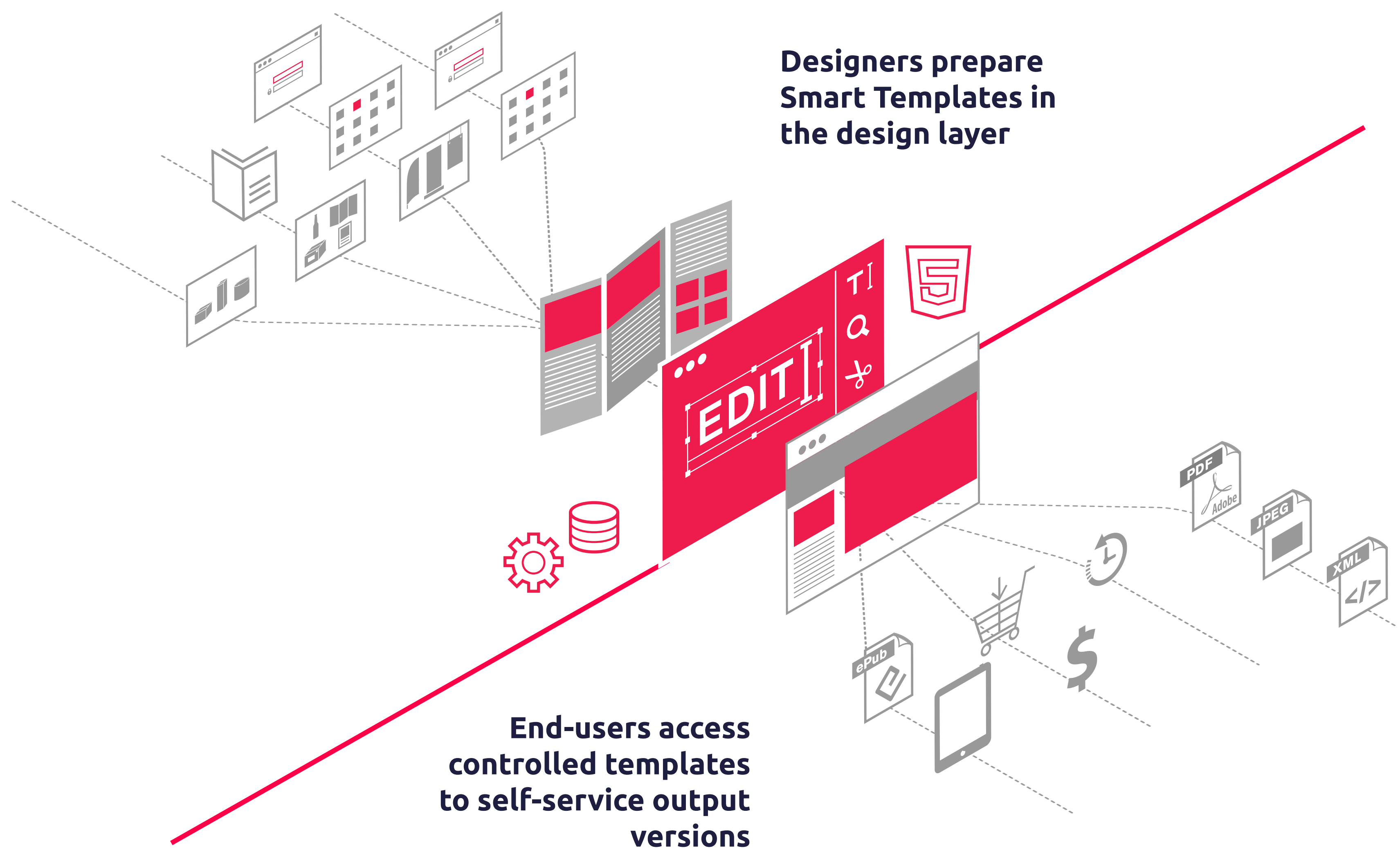
How it works:

- Customer, product and purchase data drives the overall design and outcomes potential of every Smart Template
- Graphic designers learn to prepare Smart Templates with two outcomes in mind:
 - A well-designed template allows for validation of important variables using drop down menus or open fields like language, pricing, image options, logo placement
 - An approach for end-users to access the templates and personalize globally with all the controls in place

Creative Automation removes repetitive steps in the production workflow. This means marketers and designers can design more and focus on customer experience. At the same time, Smart Templates make personalization and localization of marketing content easy while ensuring strict brand guidelines.

Go glocal – Binary Smart Templates spell the end of the creative silo

CHILI publisher's Binary Smart Templates deliver a primary design layer for graphic designers at Template Designer level, and a secondary portal layer of prepared templates for End-Users to access. Marketers and store owners, for example, can now create localized content in unique sizes, languages, products, and more while always staying within brand guidelines.

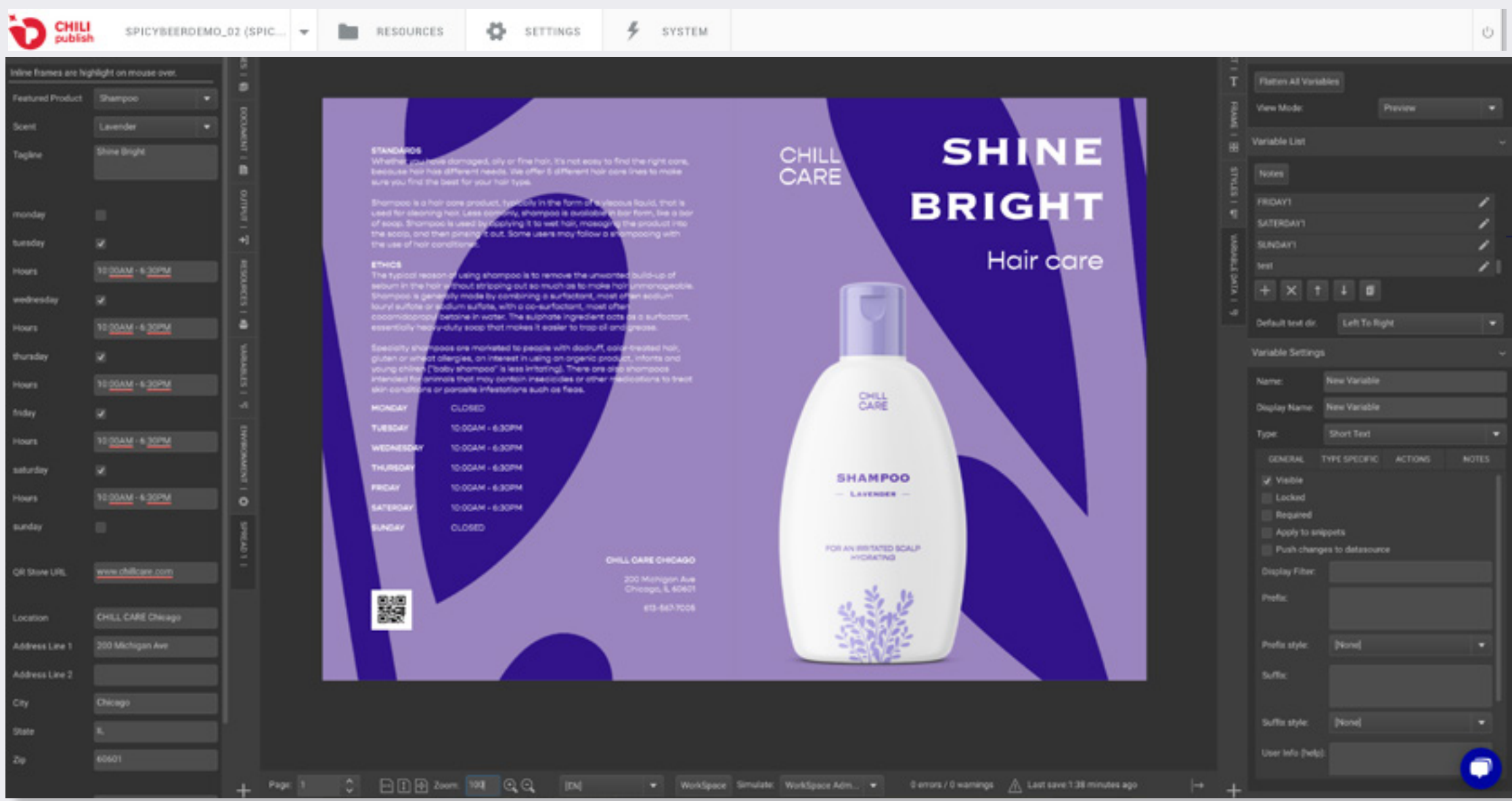


Benefits of Binary Smart Templates

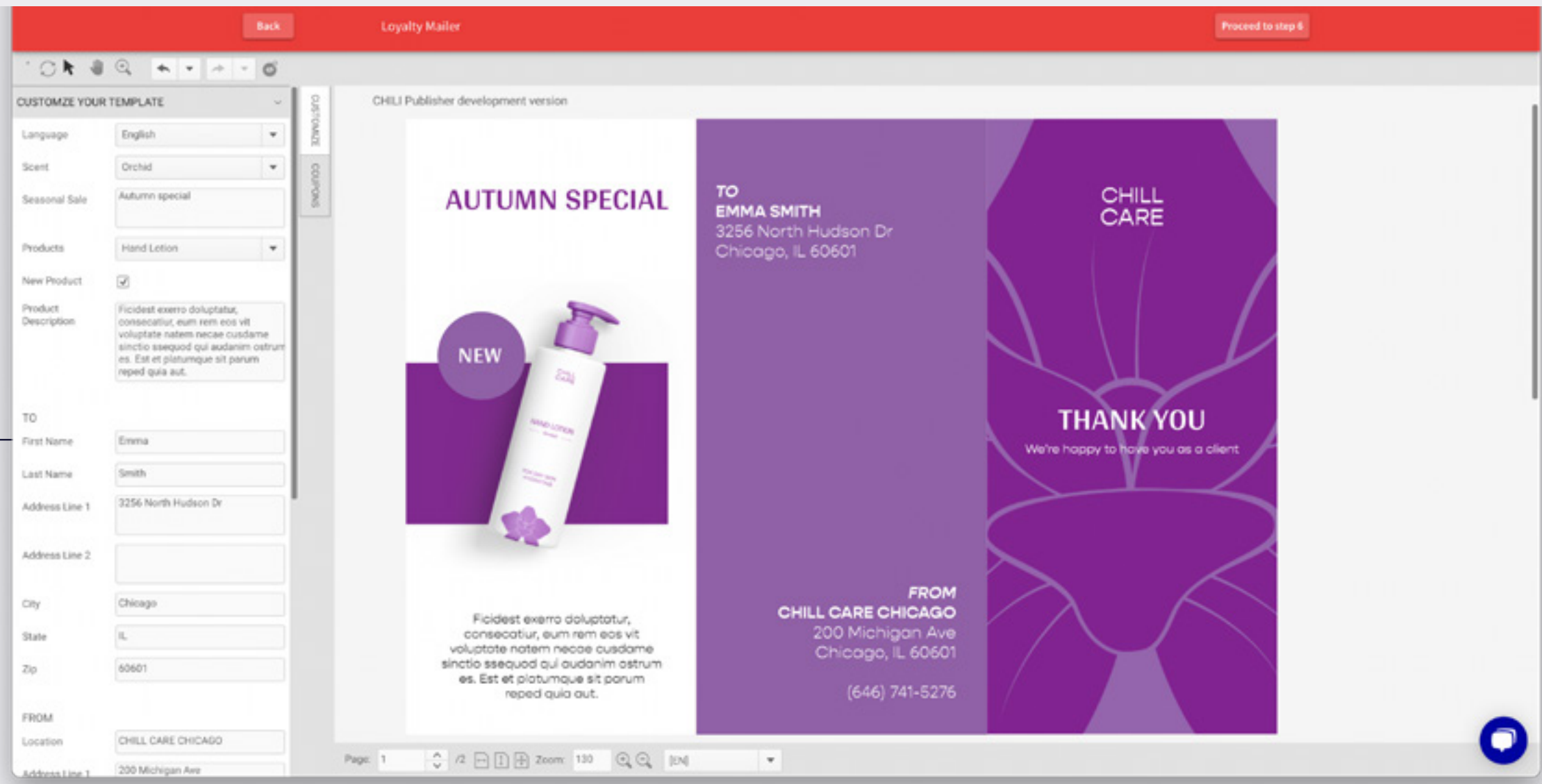
- Once end-users like marketers and store managers can access rules based Smart Templates, it reduces the number of requests to the design team to make size or language variants so designers can focus on design.
- Smart template automation reduces repetitive tasks by sending DAM, PIM, and customer data to assemble variants in a single template.
- Repurpose the same templates every month for monthly promotions, lights-out production or even business card requests.

By keeping designs brand- and price-controlled from your HQ and giving the rest of your regions access to the flexible variants they need to regionalize content, you’ve gone glocal – and removed the creative silo.

Smart Templates are not just for graphic designers anymore.



Template builder Workspace



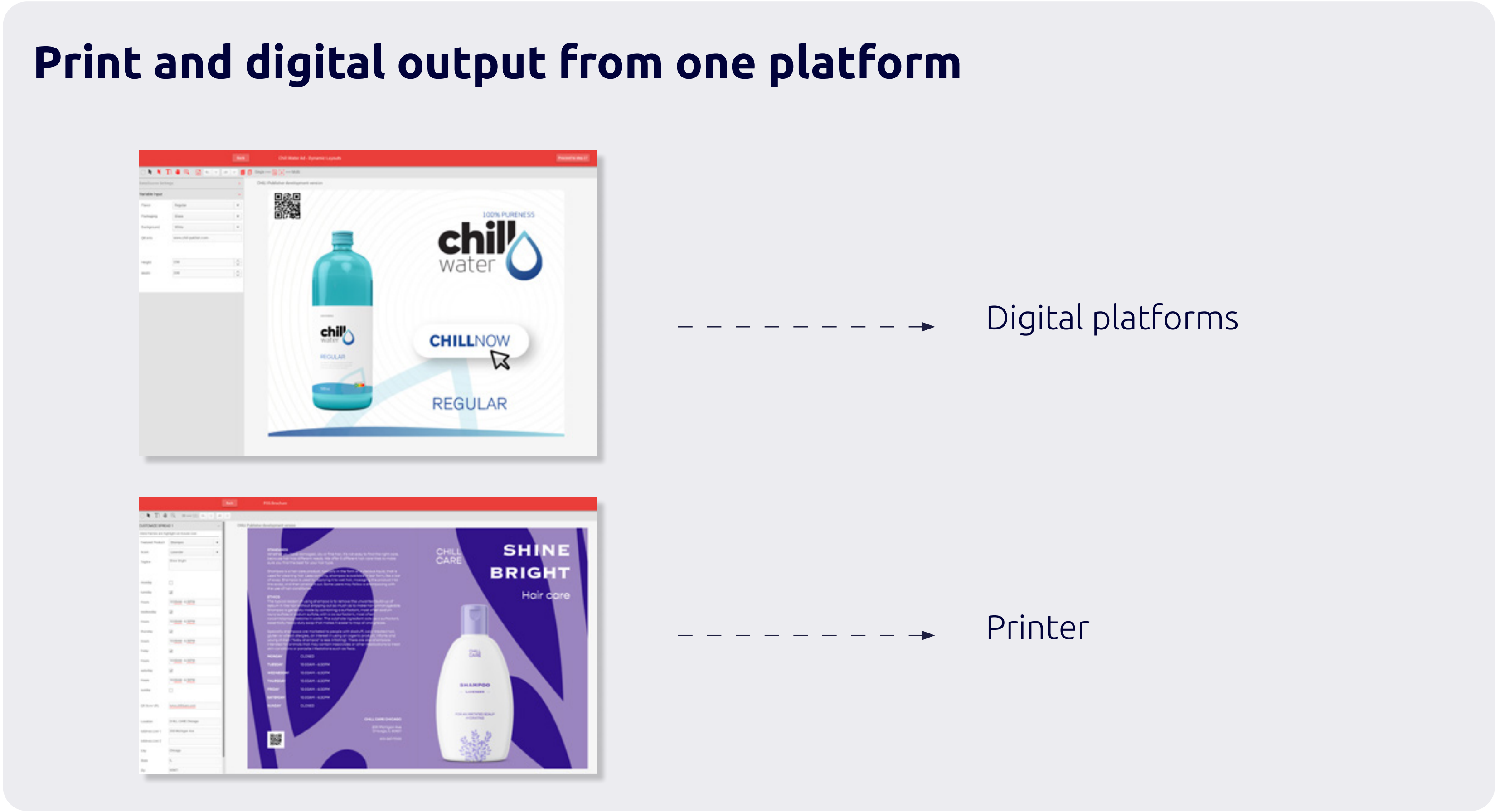
End user Portal

Q5

Get ‘phygital’ – print and digital output in one platform

CHILI publisher brings you both digital and print output from one platform. That’s no easy trick.

Imagine Smart Templates where designers can upload InDesign® and Illustrator® files to prepare print and packaging variants with all the printer settings baked in.



But now you can bring the offline and online together from one platform.

Global marketing teams can leverage the power of Smart Templates to prepare for multi-channel output from social e-commerce, to POS displays in multiple store formats, or signage with QR codes.

Shift from Design to Design+Tech Services

So how are forward-thinking agencies getting ahead?

They're marrying their traditionally strong skills in brand, creative design and communication with the emerging powerhouse of creative tech. Agencies offering turnkey Creative Automation services can scale graphic design and production to deliver personalization and localization at hyper speed.

And with growing client rosters, agencies providing these solutions are gaining unique insights and understanding into how to maximize the impact of the in-store advertising they are automating. Retailers and retail brands are ready to pay handsomely for this combination of market, tech and design know-how.



Agencies are discovering a whole new billable service through becoming expert Smart Template builders for clients. Some are also offering training services on how to create Smart Templates. When your agency starts offering great creative design plus Creative Automation it opens a world of new possibilities: Provide best-in-class, highly adaptable creative tech solutions to your clients.

07 Grow billable hours, deliver more, retain clients

Build solutions for sustainable growth that scale fast

It's been proven that agencies who adapt Design+Tech solutions gain, retain and scale their businesses. Agency overheads typically drop over a period of two years, and clients can measure and enjoy the same efficiencies and ROI.

Expand your business with new offerings like providing Smart Template building services, as well as training in how to create Smart Templates.

Deploying a SaaS creative automation solution offers a diversity of benefits,

- Reduce graphic production hours – enabling more time to design
- Create high-value Smart Template creation services to attract new clients
- Gain sustainable ROI
- See steadily growing revenue through pay-per-rendering
- Enforce brand guidelines across regions
- Give regional marketers and store managers self-serve
- Deploy multi-channel personalization at scale
- Get offers and promotions to market faster
- Make your agency more agile, productive, and scalable



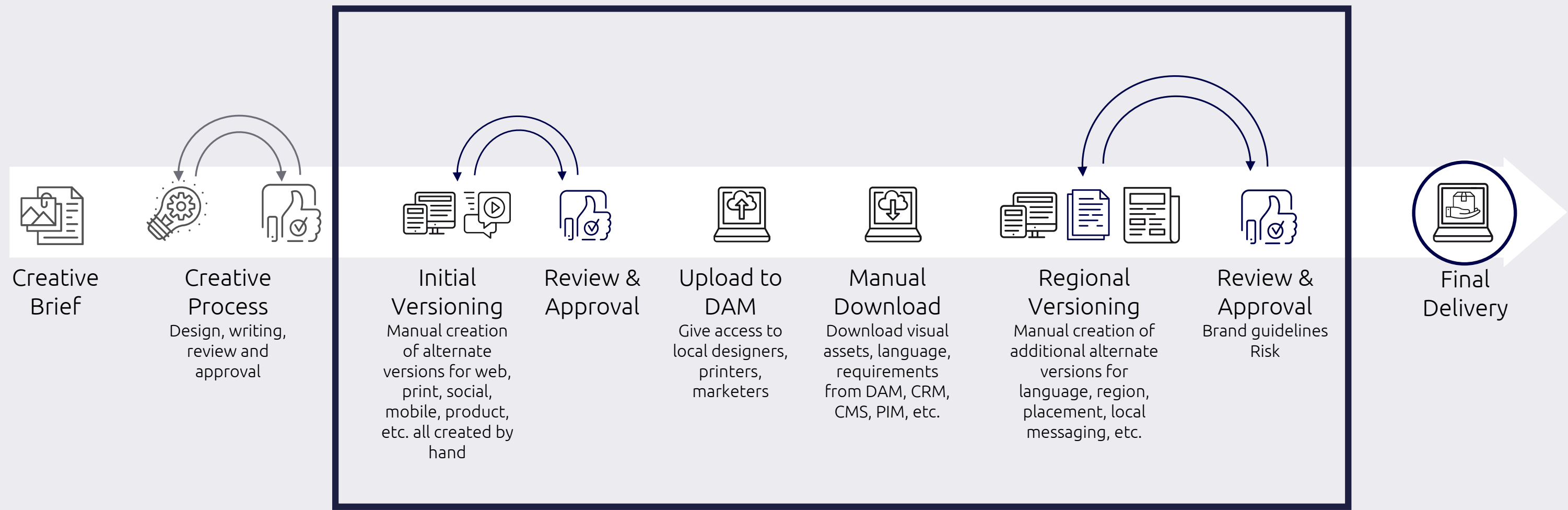
“Creative teams spend between 30-50% of their time managing the manual process of design adaptation. You can drastically reduce or even eliminate that with CHILI publisher Creative Automation.”

Ward De Langhe, CPO CHILI publish

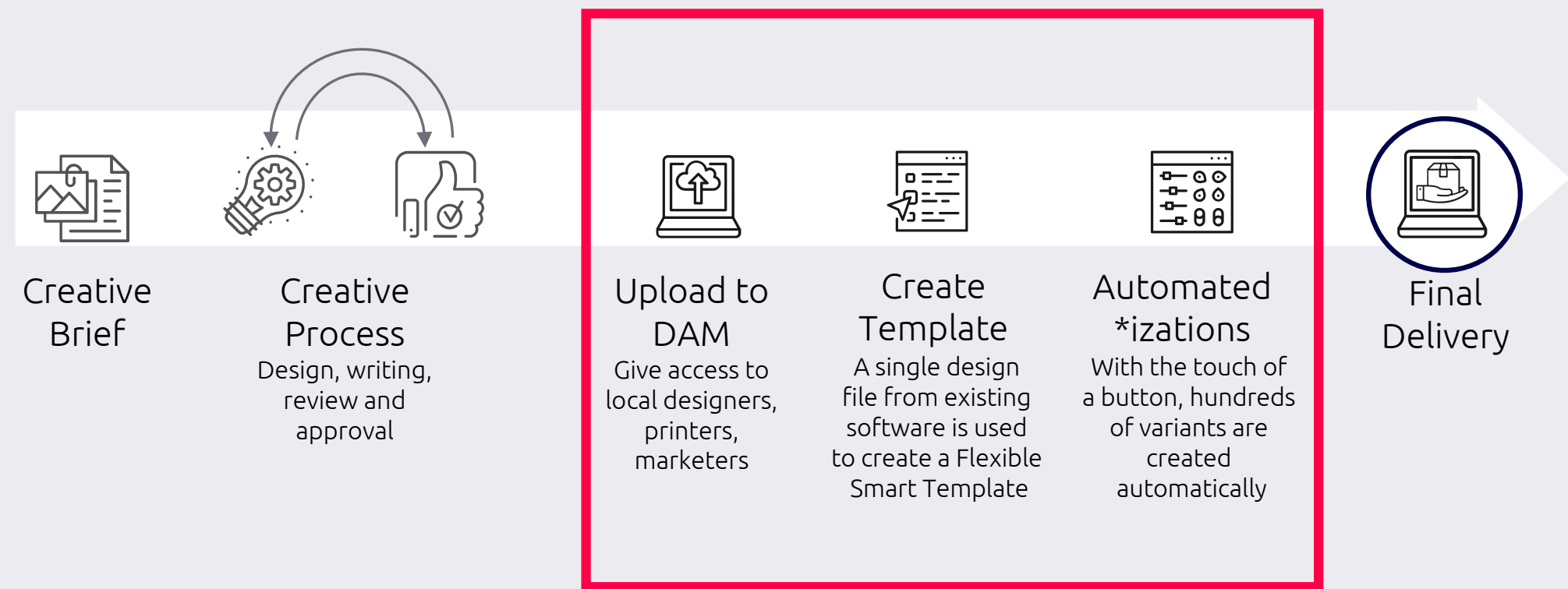
Delivering great design plus faster and scalable campaigns to market with a CHILI publisher Micro-SaaS solution delivers a highly viable future for agencies. It keeps you competitive in the rapidly changing world of retail marketing.

And by deploying a Creative Automation Micro-SaaS platform, you can be fully up to speed in a few months.

Today multiple iterations bottleneck the creative process



CHILI publisher changes that...



Using CHILI publisher you can harness the power of one source versioning to create and **deliver thousands of assets** while **maintaining brand consistency** and **a fraction of the time and cost**.

08 Shift to smarter spend

Pay-as-you-grow pricing model

Heavy upfront investment of time and money can appear like an insurmountable barrier to exploring new revenue streams. Agencies have concerns with heavy up front investment that the risk is too great, or worry about costs increasing over time.

But what is the cost of NOT embracing the future. Will you become a leader or laggard?

Pay-as-you-grow model for agencies

MarTech technology is only worth investing in if it will improve your bottom line over time. So, at CHILI publish, **we built our pricing around responding to our clients' need for sustainable growth.**

- Pricing plans from Starter to Enterprise mean you can scale your solution's size over time, always with an eye to maintaining profitability.
- Pay-per-render pricing enables you to create your own pricing scale that incorporates your costs and desired profit.

With the high barriers to entry into the MarTech space removed your agency can get started offering solutions in no time. At the same time, with pay-per-render pricing, you'll enjoy immediate and sustainable ROI and only pay-as-you-grow.

Conclusion

Agencies who adopt and couple creative services with Creative Automation will remain competitive. Those who don't will get left behind. By synergizing these two business streams, agencies can seize a huge opportunity for scalable revenue growth in the retail sector and beyond.

The fastest and most affordable way to get started providing these Creative Automation solutions is to deploy a Micro-SaaS platform built on CHILI publisher.

With a rock-solid Micro-SaaS MarTech foundation and a rapidly evolving toolkit, you'll be developing innovative digital and print solutions on CHILI publisher with a pricing model structured to encourage mutual growth. You can rely on CHILI publish to continue innovating in ways that increase your ROI and delight your clients well into the future.

Take control of your Design+Tech today, and let's grow the future of Creative Automation together.

Request a demo



Request a demo
www.chili-publish.com



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