



5 MAJOR TECH TRENDS TRANSFORMING THE CREATIVE EXPERIENCE IN 2022 AND BEYOND



The COVID-19 pandemic fundamentally altered how professionals live and work. Some changes were temporary, like lockdowns and social distancing. Others accelerated trends already underway due to rapidly changing technology. The result is a workplace that increasingly melds the physical and digital worlds. We meet face-to-face and online. We brainstorm in-person and using modern collaboration tools. We hold events with live audiences and people watching at home.

At the same time, consumer behavior continues to evolve. Today's consumers crave interactive online experiences. They expect to buy products promoted on social media with little friction. They demand quick delivery, even with supply chains stretched thin. In the future, they just might spend time (and money) in the virtual reality metaverse.

For creatives, these tectonic transformations mean big changes to how we work and what we create. Technology will reshape how we collaborate and how end users interact with creative products. To stay ahead, designers must understand as much as possible about their target audiences and how they will experience the things made by creatives. Will they be in person? Will they be engaged virtually? Will their experiences combine physical and virtual activations?

To help you better understand this paradigm, we're outlining the key tech trends we believe will redefine the creative experience as we enter 2022.

1. COLLABORATION TOOLS TAKE CENTER STAGE

Perhaps the single biggest change over the last two years has been the rise of remote and flexible work. Originally adopted to limit person-to-person contact at the height of COVID-19, remote work failed to fade even as vaccines became available and restrictions lifted. It's easy to understand why: People like flexibility, having no commute and working in pajamas. In fact, [45% of all full-time workers](#) in the United States work fully or partially remote, according to an October 2021 Gallup poll. Expect remote work to continue long after the pandemic ends.

With at least some part of the workforce operating outside the office indefinitely, the way creatives collaborate will continue to evolve. Digital collaboration tools will remain a staple in 2022 and beyond as creatives look for new ways to ideate, develop ideas and share work across different creative disciplines. Tools like Miro, MURAL and Stormboard allow teams to develop and share ideas in real time. Trello, Monday.com and Asana empower teams to organize and shape their workflows. Meanwhile, more conventional tools like video conferencing and Slack aren't going anywhere. In fact, they may even add richer, more immersive capabilities to their innovation roadmaps in order to better serve their users. Collaboration tools will continue to play a significant role in how creative and design work plays out — even for teams that spend part of their time in the office.





2. THE REIGN OF INTERACTIVITY

For better or worse, the coming year will find most people spending more time in front of screens. As a result of remote work, a lingering pandemic and the gradual shift of social life and entertainment into digital platforms, people will spend more time learning, shopping and being entertained online. As a result, designers and creatives will be called upon to find new ways to create novel digital experiences that keep people engaged. Interactivity will be the key tool to drive this movement forward.

In fact, [88% of marketers](#) say they plan to make at least 10% of their static content interactive in the coming year. That means designers can expect to leverage tools like Ceros, Ion and Turtl to create more interactive and immersive experiences.

Goodbye boring PDFs. Hello interactive web pages and sales decks with moving graphics and animated features.

These tools allow designers to quickly expand their existing repertoire of skills to create interactive assets, quizzes, motion graphics and other executions that keep users engaged. To stay ahead, familiarize yourself with a [range of tools](#) that enable you to create quick interactive modules like [calculators](#), [quizzes](#) and [fillable brackets](#). Also keep a close eye on what the work social platforms are doing to make their creator services more engaging. How will you need to adapt your designs and experiences to support user feedback and interactivity?

3. SOCIAL STAYS STRONG

Social commerce will continue to make gains in 2022. A whopping 72% of Americans [say they use some social media](#), while 84% of the key 18-29 demographic [are active on one or more social platforms](#). TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat and the old stalwart Facebook dominate culture and advertising — but the last few years have seen them double down on commerce. They have added features that empower users to [buy products directly](#) through the platform as well as new tools to allow influencers to [monetize their followings more directly through merchandise](#). The rise of social commerce, particularly on highly visual and interactive platforms like Instagram and TikTok, will be an opportunity for designers to flex their skills in new ways to drive sales.

The rush of economic activity on social media has fueled the rise of “creator tools” which make it easier for individuals and brands to create and publish high-quality content. The creator economy, [valued at roughly \\$104 billion in 2021](#), has seen a rush of investment from tech players. [A recent report](#) found that creator tools had soaked up more than \$2 billion in investor capital in the first half of 2021, meaning estimates for the full year will reach as high as \$5 billion.

Designers and creatives must keep social top of mind. The rise of social commerce will reshape many brands’ design needs, their content strategies and their product portfolios. Designers have been helping companies drive awareness and branding on social for years, but now they are called upon to create interactive, sales-driven content for 2022 and beyond. Stay aware of the latest trends and continue to hone your skills by tapping into the rising crop of creator tools for video and interactive content. You’ll be able to show the value you add to your current business and set yourself up for long-term success in these emerging marketplaces.





4. MEET THE METAVERSE

The metaverse is a concept long discussed by futurists and digital culture wonks. Now, it's finally taking center stage. While still largely undefined (or at least unbuilt), the idea of the metaverse is compelling for creatives. It holds that our digital environments will continue to become more immersive through technologies like virtual reality and augmented reality.

As the metaverse takes shape, expect people to spend more and more time working, socializing and shopping in fully digital spaces. The recent rise of NFTs, essentially collectible digital art made transactable via the blockchain, points to a future in which people are willing to pay real money in exchange for digital art and items. Businesses like [Facebook](#) and [Apple](#) are betting big on the concept of the metaverse, making large investments in immersive technology, virtual environments and digital goods. Facebook went so far as to change its name to Meta. Now that's an investment.

For creatives, blending the physical and digital worlds presents a huge opportunity. As people spend more of their social and professional time in digital environments, they'll have all kinds of needs that only creatives and designers can supply. Digital landscapes, work environments and art will need to be designed. People existing as avatars may wish to enhance their visual presentation with all sorts of digital items that designers can create. With heavy investment headed for speculative metaverse projects, [jobs for creatives in the space are likely to be plentiful](#) as start ups and tech giants alike explore this new frontier.

5. 3D PRINTING TO CURE SUPPLY CHAIN WOES

One of the biggest news stories of 2021 was the ongoing global supply chain crisis. Disruptions caused by the pandemic and ongoing labor shortages worldwide have led to serious breakdowns in global shipping and manufacturing. Goods that were once commonly available are now hard to find. Furniture takes months to ship. Automobile production has been delayed due to a lack of semiconductors. Cargo ships remain at sea for months. While the crisis is bad for consumers and traditional manufacturers, it is creating opportunities for new forms of manufacturing — including 3D printing.

Rather than produce goods at a central location and then wait for them to travel across lengthy supply lines to reach the end consumer or a retail outlet, 3D printing allows manufacturers to produce products on demand. Startups like [Model N°](#) use industrial 3D printing to produce home furnishings, reducing the risk of overstocks and the need to ship costly raw materials to a central facility in order to assemble inventory. Others use the technology to create component parts so they can bring supply chains closer to home.

For creatives, 3D printing will be another opportunity to merge the physical and digital worlds. Printing 3D goods relies on templates that are developed, maintained and customized by designers specializing in 3D goods. Developing these skills and familiarity with the tools used to create 3D-printed designs, including CAD and 3D modeling software, will enable creatives to play a vital role in this next phase of manufacturing and product design, which may soon bleed into apparel and other categories.





READY FOR 2022?

The last two years have seen massive upheaval in every area of the economy, and it's leading to incredible opportunities for designers and creatives. As 2022 takes shape, creatives that embrace new technologies and stay on the cutting edge of consumer behavior will thrive. Sure, the workflow will be different and collaboration might take place online rather than in person — but the chance to work on game-changing, world-impacting technologies will make the challenge worthwhile. Creatives have the chance to play an outsized role in how we experience the world over the next decade and beyond. Rising to the task starts now.

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