

Modernizing the Visual Stack

The Business Case for Adopting an AI-Powered Visual Solution

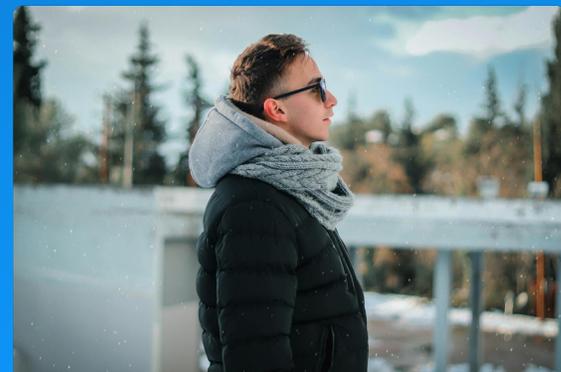
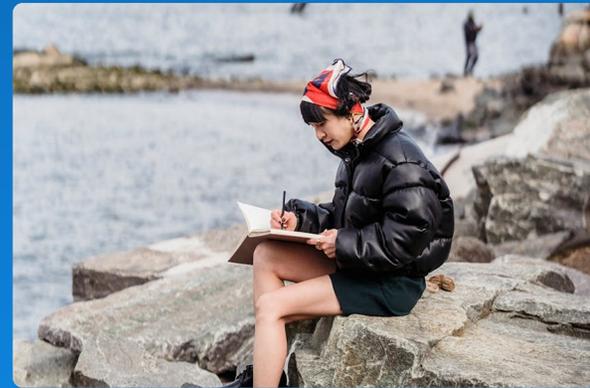
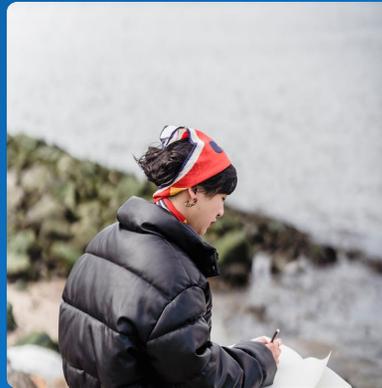


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Introduction

As you plan for the upcoming year, you may find yourself evaluating the technology that supports your business. Though your current image and video tools may be adequate, encouraging long-term growth means looking ahead to new and developing technologies that support your teams, brand, and bottom line.

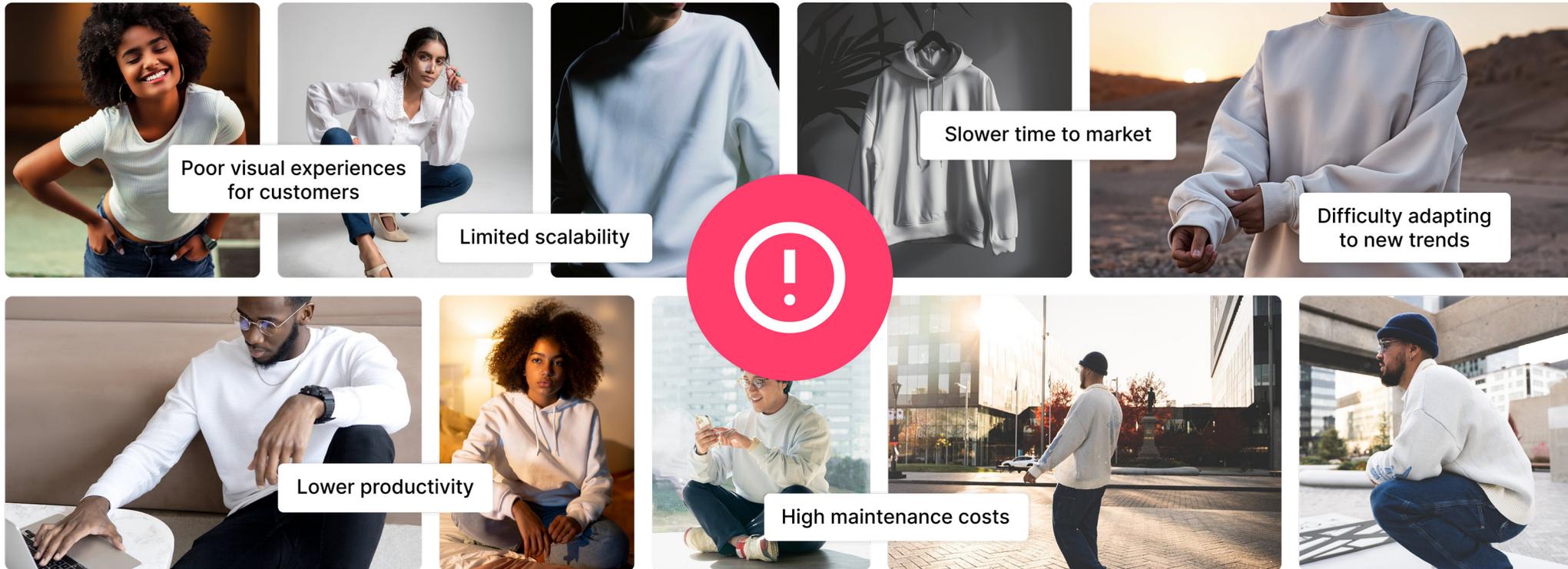
But the prospect of switching platforms can be daunting. Budget limitations, migration complexities, training requirements, security risks, and adoption hurdles all stand in the way.

Given these challenges, it can be tempting to stick with what you have and “make it work.” But is that truly the best long-term strategy? Or is it time to embrace change and invest in the future?

This guide explores the hidden costs of maintaining outdated systems and highlights the remarkable ROI of adopting an AI-powered visual API platform, equipping you with the insights you need to make the right decision for sustainable growth.

CHAPTER 1

The Costs of Doing Nothing



What happens if you decide to do nothing? If you keep your legacy image and video systems in place and simply adjust your processes to keep them afloat? On the surface, it may seem easier to stick with what you know. But beneath that comfort lies a host of costly risks that can quietly erode your business over time.

- **Lower productivity.** Legacy platforms rely heavily on manual, repetitive tasks that are slow, error-prone, and resource-intensive. Every hour spent on processes that could be automated is an hour stolen from strategic, revenue-driving initiatives.
- **Poor visual experiences for customers.** Outdated systems often struggle to deliver fast, high-quality visuals, leading to clunky user experiences and weakening brand perception.
- **Slower time to market.** Inefficient workflows drag out launches of new products and features, making it harder to respond to competitors and market opportunities.
- **Difficulty adapting to new trends.** As customer expectations and technology evolve, old systems prevent you from taking advantage of emerging innovations.
- **High maintenance costs.** Supporting legacy infrastructure can quickly become more expensive than the technology itself, tying up budget that could be invested in growth.
- **Limited scalability.** Older systems simply weren't built for the pace and scale of today's business demands, creating bottlenecks as your needs expand.

The reality is that sticking with outdated systems isn't the "safe" choice. It's the costliest one.

CHAPTER 2

Benefits of Making the Right Change

Imagine replacing the outdated systems holding back your teams with a platform designed for speed, scale, and intelligence. The right AI-powered visual solution doesn't just streamline workflows. It delivers real business impact and powerful ROI.

Improved Productivity

For years, the process of creating, adapting, and managing image and video assets has weighed heavily on teams. Every adjustment, whether resizing, reformatting, or enhancing for different platforms, requires manual effort that's slow, repetitive, and prone to errors. These tasks not only consume valuable hours but also divert focus away from innovation and growth.

An AI-powered image and video platform eliminates these bottlenecks by automating the entire workflow. Assets are transformed quickly, accurately, and at scale, freeing teams from tedious production cycles. This shift unlocks measurable efficiencies: lower operating costs, faster turnaround times, and more resources dedicated to initiatives that drive revenue and deliver greater business impact.

Key capabilities that make this possible include:

- **Dynamic resizing and cropping.** Automatically generate the right dimensions, aspect ratios, and focal points for any channel, device, or layout without manual editing.
- **Automated format conversion.** Instantly deliver images and videos in the most efficient format based on user context.
- **AI-driven background removal and replacement.** Eliminate tedious editing steps by programmatically isolating or swapping backgrounds at scale.
- **Smart overlays and watermarking.** Apply branding, captions, or product details consistently across thousands of assets with universal transformation rules.
- **Batch transformations at scale.** Create entire sets of asset variations (e.g., sizes, styles, thumbnails, and previews) from a single master file with one command.

With these capabilities, teams spend less time on production drudgery and more time on innovation, strategy, and creating experiences that differentiate the brand.

The central image shows a man and a woman in winter jackets, with the text "ONYX & LINEN" overlaid. Surrounding this image are several UI panels for image transformation tools:

- Global CDN:** A panel with a cloud icon and the text "Global CDN".
- Encoding Profiles:** A panel with a refresh icon and the text "Encoding Profiles". It shows two thumbnails: "JPEG XL 3MB" and "WebP 6MB".
- Watermark:** A panel with a document icon and the text "Watermark". It includes controls for "Image" (a logo with "ONYX & LINEN"), "Repeat" (a toggle switch), "Placement" (a grid of dots), and "Opacity" (a slider).
- Generative AI Refiner:** A panel with a plus icon and the text "Generative AI Refiner". It includes a "Prompt: Replace background with outdoors" and two thumbnails showing the original image and the result with an outdoor background.
- Batch Transformations:** A panel with a refresh icon and the text "Batch Transformations". It shows four thumbnails representing different transformations of the main image.

Higher-Quality Visual Experiences

The financial impact of optimized visual experiences can't be overstated. The right image and video API platform can deliver quick-loading pages, resulting in reduced bounce rates, increased user engagement, and higher conversion rates.

These quantifiable gains in efficiency translate directly into improved profitability. Beyond the bottom line, optimized visual experiences offer intrinsic benefits like better customer experience and brand loyalty, fostering long-term revenue growth. Customers are more likely to return to a website that offers a buffer-free, visually appealing experience, creating a steady stream of repeat business.

To achieve this, an AI-powered visual solution should provide:

- **Quality-aware media optimization.** Automatically adjust image and video compression to the lowest possible file size while maintaining perceptual quality, ensuring faster load times without sacrificing experience.
- **Smart format delivery.** Detect the end user's device and browser, then serve the optimal format (e.g., WebP, AVIF, HEIC, MP4, or adaptive streaming) for maximum efficiency.
- **Global multi-CDN delivery.** Route media requests across a worldwide, multi-CDN network to minimize latency and deliver consistently fast performance anywhere in the world.

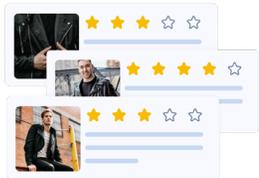
- **Adaptive bandwidth handling.** Dynamically serve the right resolution and bitrate based on the user's connection speed, preventing stalls or buffering on slower networks.
- **Edge caching and transformations.** Leverage edge servers to cache and transform media on the fly, reducing round-trips and accelerating time-to-pixel.

Brands are already prioritizing these kinds of optimizations. [Among retailers](#), 67% dynamically adjust content for language, currency, browser, and device; 65% tailor for geographic location; and 50% optimize quality based on bandwidth. These efforts show just how central seamless visual experiences have become to competitive differentiation.

Better Brand Integrity

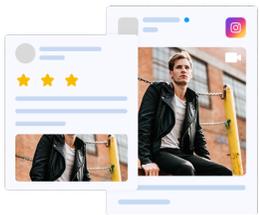
Customers make decisions based on what they see, but not all visuals inspire confidence. Blurry images, misleading angles, or unverified content can slow purchase decisions, while rich, authentic, and verifiable visuals build trust instantly.

According to a Cloudinary shopper survey, user-generated content (UGC) plays a powerful role here:



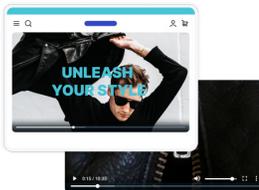
47%

of customers who bought from unfamiliar brands say image-based reviews influenced their choice.



37%

consider product videos from other users a top priority.



25%

say product videos from other users are a must-have.

Yet because UGC is created in uncontrolled environments, its quality often varies depending on the user, their device, and their setting. Without proper oversight, the content meant to establish authenticity can just as easily erode it.

AI-powered platforms address this challenge by automatically moderating UGC submissions — filtering out low-quality or off-brand visuals and applying enhancements like cropping, background cleanup, or color adjustments. This ensures that the authentic voices of customers shine through while keeping brand presentation consistent and trustworthy.

But quality UGC isn't enough. As AI-generated visuals become more common, shoppers also want proof that what they see is genuine. That's where support for open standards like C2PA comes in.

By embedding provenance data directly into images and videos during upload or transformation, an AI-powered visual solution can preserve a verifiable record of every change an asset has undergone. This makes compliance easier for teams, gives creative leaders visibility into their workflows, and offers customers the assurance that the visuals they see are authentic and aligned with brand standards.

Together, automated UGC moderation and C2PA-backed provenance give businesses a twofold advantage: authentic content that feels real, and verifiable proof that it is — helping reduce hesitation, reinforce credibility, and build shopper trust.



Content Credentials

Date created	July 21, 2024
Produced by	Sebastian Ashton
Additional history	Yes

Inspect

Claims

SONY, ILCE-7M4	Photo taken July 21, 2024
Adobe	Edit contrast & saturation
Social Media	Composed text on top of image

More Accessible Visual Media

Accessibility is no longer optional — with the passing of the European Accessibility Act (EAA), it's now essential for any business operating in Europe. Nearly two billion people worldwide live with disabilities, and ensuring your visual content is inclusive expands both your audience and your impact.

Survey data shows that 62% of retailers are optimizing content for screen readers, 57% are adding alt text for images and videos, and 56% are providing closed captions. Forward-thinking businesses recognize accessibility as more than compliance; it's a driver of better customer experiences, stronger brand reputation, and long-term growth.

An effective AI-powered visual solution includes built-in accessibility features that can make images and videos available to all:

- **Text alternatives for visual and audio content.** AI-generated alt text for images, along with automated captions and transcripts for video and audio, ensure that all users — including those with visual or hearing impairments — can fully engage with your content.

- **Inclusive navigation and interaction.** Keyboard shortcuts, visual focus indicators, and screen reader-friendly structures make it possible for users of all abilities to browse and interact with digital experiences seamlessly.
- **Visual clarity and adaptability.** Built-in tools for contrast checking, colorblind simulation, and light/dark mode adjustments help make visuals perceivable to everyone, while flexible scaling ensures content is accessible across devices and contexts.
- **Global accessibility.** Automated translation and multilingual support extend content reach, ensuring users can consume experiences in their preferred language without added complexity.

By prioritizing these capabilities, organizations not only reduce compliance risks but also demonstrate a commitment to inclusivity. The payoff is clear: more engaging digital experiences, higher customer trust, and access to a global audience that increasingly expects brands to lead with accessibility in mind.





Cloudinary GenAI

Auto Crop

3D Spinset

Auto Quality

Auto Format

Deliver Anywhere



Quicker Time to Market

Time to market is a critical factor for business success. AI-powered image and video API platforms play a pivotal role in enabling faster time to market for new products and features by automating the transformation and delivery of visual assets. This accelerates product launches and keeps businesses agile in responding to market trends and customer demands.

Optimized visuals can significantly improve a company's SEO rankings, attracting more organic web traffic and freeing up marketing budget for targeted, paid campaigns. Because the platform's AI can deliver engaging visuals that resonate with customers, brands see higher conversion rates and increased revenue.

Better Personalization at Scale

Today's consumers don't just want to see your product in their preferred color, size, or style — they expect it. Personalization isn't a nice-to-have anymore; **88% of retailers see it as critical to their digital strategy**, and those leading the way report 50-400% better business outcomes.

Offering that variety gives customers the confidence they need to buy, helping reduce cart abandonment and product returns. With AI, you can instantly generate as many variations

of product media as your customers require, ensuring what they see online is exactly what arrives at their door.

Key features that enable personalization at scale include:

- **Automated product variations.** Generate unlimited combinations of colors, sizes, and angles from a single master asset to meet diverse customer preferences.
- **Dynamic overlays and customization.** Automatically apply localized pricing, language, or promotional elements to assets for different regions or audiences.
- **Context-aware cropping and framing.** Use AI to adjust focus points so products are always shown in the most relevant way — whether on mobile, desktop, or social channels.
- **Adaptive personalization rules.** Tailor asset delivery based on customer behavior, device type, or location, ensuring every user sees the most relevant version.

Flexibility and Future-Proofing

One of the key advantages of an AI-powered image and video API platform is its flexibility. The right solution should be able to adapt assets for different channels, devices, and user contexts, ensuring that visuals remain effective and engaging across a constantly evolving digital landscape.

Generative AI takes this flexibility even further. Instead of creating every variation from scratch, the right platform will allow teams to extend the life and value of existing assets by enhancing, updating, or repurposing them for new contexts. This eliminates the need for costly reshoots and dramatically reduces the time spent on manual post-production edits.

Forward-looking platforms are also beginning to offer more advanced GenAI features. Among the most impactful are refiners that go beyond on-click transformations, giving creative teams precise control over AI-generated visuals. They can fine-tune backgrounds, lighting, textures, or styles while still leveraging the speed and scale of automation. This balance of efficiency and creative oversight helps ensure that assets remain both on-brand and production-ready.

By investing in a platform with these capabilities, businesses can keep their visual libraries fresh, future-proof, and ready to meet customer expectations across whatever new channels and technologies emerge next.

Streamlined Collaboration

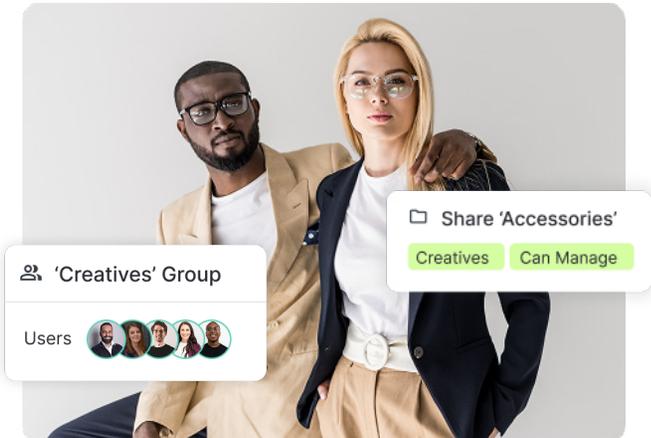
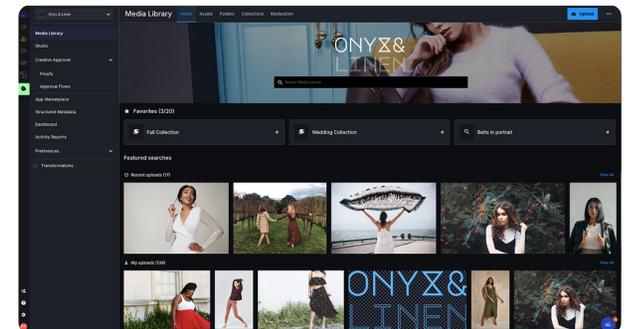
Managing visual assets across multiple teams, tools, and channels can quickly become chaotic. Files get duplicated, versions drift out of sync, and valuable time is lost searching for the “right” asset. An AI-powered image and video platform solves this problem by providing a single, centralized source of truth where every stakeholder — designers, marketers, developers, and external partners — can work together seamlessly.

Key benefits of centralized collaboration include:

- **One source of truth.** Assets live in a unified hub, so every team member works from the same up-to-date version, reducing errors and rework.
- **Role-based access.** Permissions and workflows ensure that the right people can upload, review, edit, or approve assets without bottlenecks.
- **Branded collaboration portals.** External partners, agencies, or distributors can securely access curated collections of approved assets — without gaining access to the full library — streamlining reviews and distribution.
- **Version control and updates.** Changes made to an asset at any stage of production automatically cascade across every channel where it’s published, ensuring consistency and speed.

- **Cross-team efficiency.** Marketing, creative, and engineering teams can align more easily, using the same platform to manage, transform, and deliver visuals at scale.

By centralizing workflows in one collaborative environment, businesses eliminate silos, accelerate approvals, and ensure that every published asset reflects the latest and best version of the brand.



Learn More About Switching to Cloudinary

By prioritizing AI investments for their creative workflows, companies can accelerate growth, increase conversions, and ensure sustainable innovation. The business impact is quantifiable in terms of improved efficiency and manifests in enhanced customer experiences, brand loyalty, and long-term revenue growth.

Cloudinary brings together all the capabilities outlined in this guide, such as automated transformations, optimization for speed and quality, personalization at scale, accessibility compliance, UGC moderation, provenance support through standards like C2PA, and centralized collaboration tools, into a single, unified platform.

For business leaders, that means not just solving today's challenges but preparing for tomorrow's. With Cloudinary as a trusted partner, teams can streamline their workflows, protect brand integrity, and deliver the fast, flawless, and trustworthy visual experiences customers expect, at scale and with confidence.

[Contact us today for a personalized Cloudinary demo.](#)

[CONTACT US](#)



Cloudinary is the image and video platform that enables the world's most engaging brands to deliver transformative visual experiences at a global scale. More than three million users and 11,000 customers, including Adidas, Etsy, Fiverr, Grubhub, Minted and Paul Smith rely on Cloudinary to bring their campaigns, apps and sites to life. Backed by an ecosystem of more than 300 partners, integrations and plug-ins, Cloudinary's AI-powered image and video solutions offer a single source of truth for brands to manage, transform, optimize, and deliver engaging visual content to anyone, anywhere. As a result, brands across all industries are seeing [up to a 203% ROI](#) with benefits including faster time to market, higher user satisfaction and increased engagement and conversions.

For more information, visit www.cloudinary.com.

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