



M&A in Technology, Media and Marketing

Ciesco Sector Spotlight

July 2026

AI-powered Creative Production: The Operating Model Is The Key Value Driver

Ciesco's Leadership Team for the **Creative, Media and Marketing** sectors



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Powering Creative Production with AI: The Operating Model Is The Key Value Driver

Over the last two years, the AI conversation in creative production has been dominated by tools: which model creates the best images, which platform generates and edits video fastest, and which AI assistant writes the strongest copy. The conversation has now shifted toward how AI can transform end-to-end creative workflows and reshape marketing operations across enterprise brands.

We, as specialist advisors in this sector, see the impact firsthand: agencies consolidating, in-house creative teams being restructured, and management teams reassessing whether their operating models are built for the future. The organisations leading the charge are not necessarily those investing the most in AI, but those structured to keep adapting as the technology evolves.

From Content Creation to Marketing Transformation: Silverside AI



Silverside AI founders at Ciesco Leadership Summit, February-26

Silverside AI, one of the pioneers in creative AI innovation, has scaled rapidly since its launch three years ago, pairing best in class creative talent with leading AI tools. Silverside has created transformational global campaigns for

an exceptional roster of brands including Coca-Cola, Hershey's, Amazon and Svedka.

Responding to growing demand, the team is now enabling brands to transform AI marketing internally, giving advertisers the control they want over this early-stage technology and how it represents their products.

“The biggest advantage isn't having the biggest AI investment. It's having the ability to adapt, experiment, and evolve at the pace the technology demands.”

PJ Pereira, Co-Founder of Silverside AI

Removing Friction, Preserving Craft: I Believe in Swordfish

Another innovative player we would highlight is a San Francisco based creative technology studio - **I Believe in Swordfish**. Rather than replacing the capabilities that clients such as Apple and Amazon value most, including strategy, creative thinking and judgement, the agency uses AI to remove friction from delivery and the operational processes that underpin profitability. The use of most up-to-date technologies and AI tools is embedded end-to-end across the production pipeline.

Swordfish is a prime example of how AI can improve efficiency across the business while preserving the central role of the creative team.



Swordfish's fully Gen-AI driven show opener for Confluent's event

What Cannes Lions 2026 Confirmed for AI-powered Creative Production

After a week on the Croisette at Cannes Lions 2026, the Ciesco team identified three key themes shaping the creative production industry:

1 From Experimentation to Transformation

AI agents are now integral to creative production, generating asset variations and accelerating delivery with far less manual effort. The teams creating the most value aren't using more AI but are combining it with strong creative direction, organised brand assets, and a clear vision of an impactful brand story.

2 The Age of Creative Judgement

Creative production cycles that once took weeks are now being completed in hours. Alongside that speed, new roles are emerging to oversee AI quality and governance. The teams getting ahead build oversight into the production process from the start, rather than adding it as an afterthought.

3 Human Creativity is the Competitive Edge

As AI becomes a powerful creative accelerator, the value of human creativity and craft will only increase. While AI can generate content at speed, it cannot replicate the lived experience, cultural intuition, and strategic thinking that shape truly distinctive brands. The brands that stand out will be those that combine AI with creative craft.

Recent M&A Activity

Target	Buyer	Date	Target Description	Investor Description
 Whalar	 accenture	Jun-26	Creator/social agency	Global consulting giant
 Archival	 HAVAS	Jun-26	Experiential agency	Global advertising holding network
 Topaz Labs	 Adobe	Jun-26	AI image/video enhancer	Creative software leader
 FABRIC	 PUBLICIS GROUPE	Apr-26	Social-first creative agency	Global advertising holding network
 adge	 PUBLICIS GROUPE	Mar-26	Predictive creative analytics	Global advertising holding network
 interpositive	 NETFLIX	Mar-26	AI post-production toolmaker	Streaming platform leader

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Select Teams We Have Worked With in Creative Production

SILVERSIDE

accenture

MCA

iBelieve
in
Swordfish

SERVICEPLAN E

Pereira
O'Dell
SF
NY

FILM SPARK.AI

R3

SPARK44

HAVAS

macaw

McCANN
WORLDGROUP

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