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Social platform creator growth drivers

Elevating the creator experience (part 1)

Introduction

As disruptions in digital media continue to mature—as outlined in our 2024 Digital Media Trends report, and as the expectations of social platforms' key stakeholders (i.e., users, creators, and advertisers) evolve, social platforms should create and maximize value exchange opportunities with their stakeholder groups. While platforms may measure and report on growth differently, the notion of daily active users (DAUs) is a metric used in some capacity by all. Introduced in our earlier perspective, our platform growth equation breaks down DAU growth into direct growth drivers that elevate the user experience and indirect growth drivers that elevate the creator and advertiser experience.
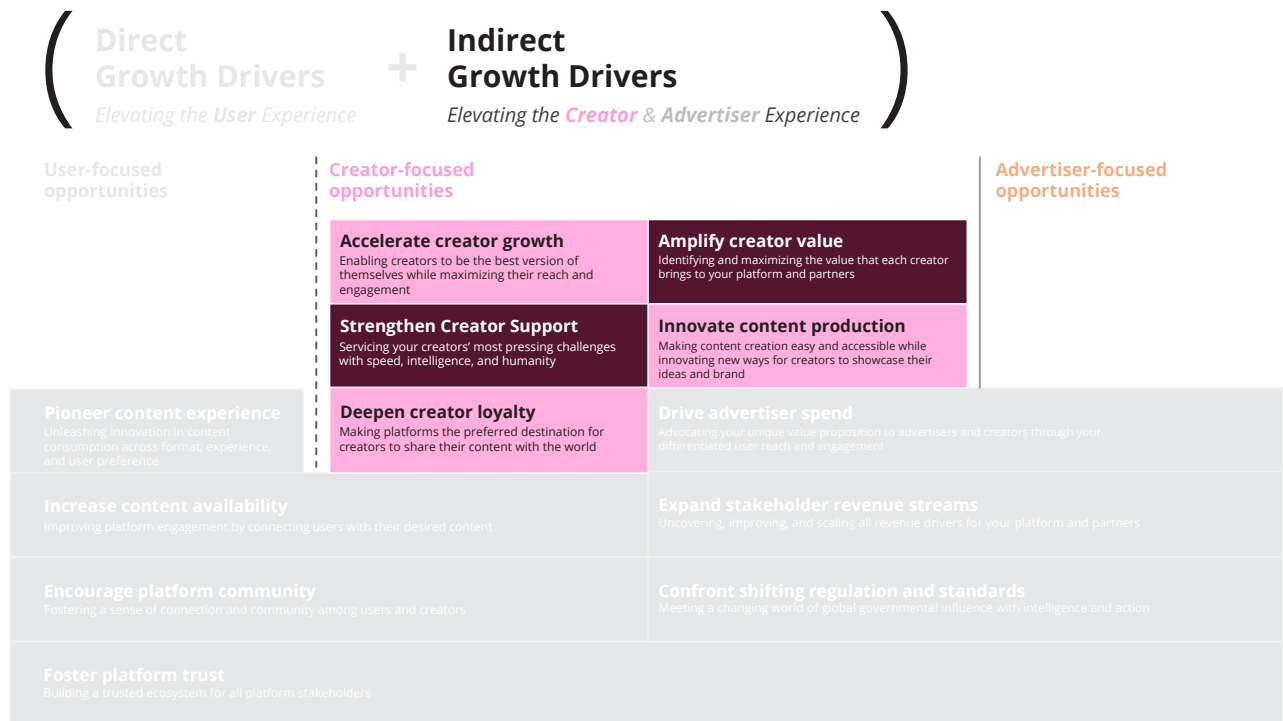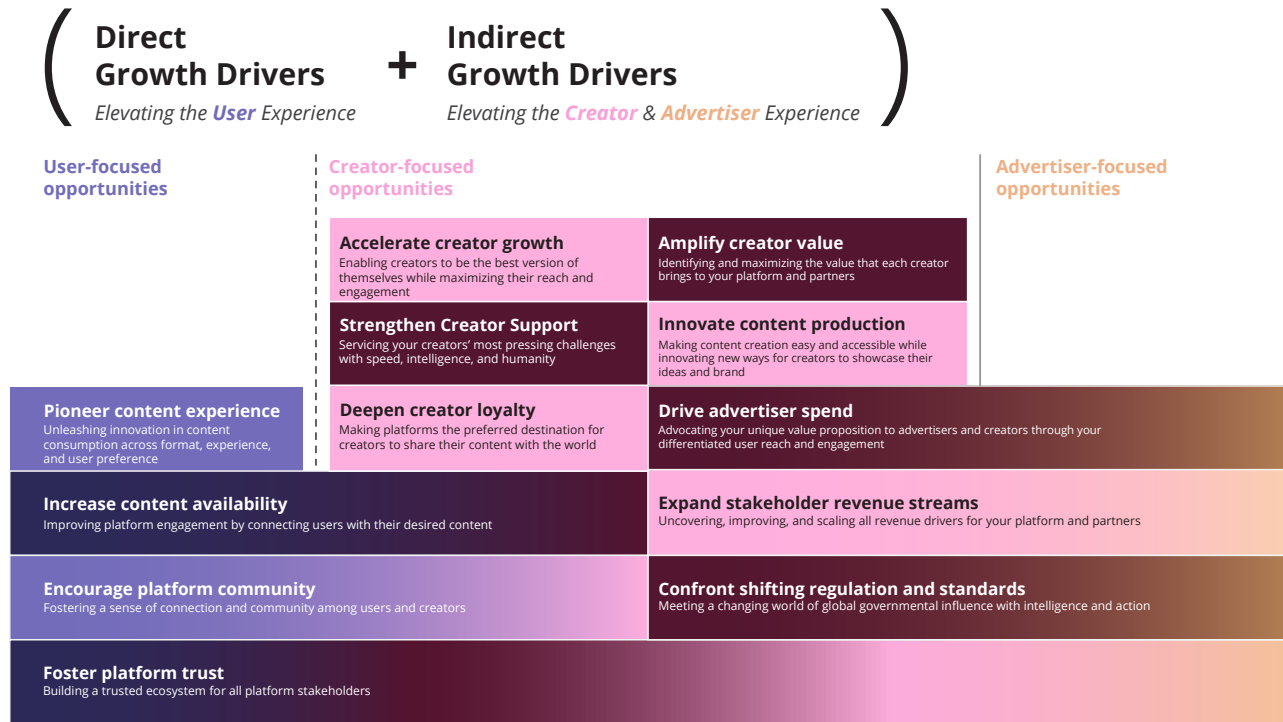
$$\text{DAU Growth} = \left(\begin{array}{c} \textbf{Direct Growth Drivers} \\ \textit{Elevating the } \textbf{User} \textit{ Experience} \end{array} + \begin{array}{c} \textbf{Indirect Growth Drivers} \\ \textit{Elevating the } \textbf{Creator} \textit{ & } \textbf{Advertiser} \textit{ Experience} \end{array} \right)$$

Our approach

We conducted primary and secondary research to understand what users, creators, and advertisers are seeking from their social platforms as well as what these platforms are prioritizing to improve the experiences of these stakeholders. These research methods included:

- Interviews with former social platform business executives. These executives led teams across creator partnerships, content strategy, product marketing, shopping, mobile partnerships, content partnerships, creator monetization, and strategy and insights.

- Panel discussions with creators who produce and post content across the major social platforms. These creators educate and influence their viewers on topics such as beauty/makeup, fashion/apparel, food, lifestyle, travel, music, comedy, gaming, and more.

- Global surveys aimed at understanding how people cross-generationally are interacting with technology, media, and entertainment in their everyday lives as well as what their expectations are of these services. Additionally, these surveys capture how advertisers and brands are trying to reach their current—and future—consumers across these mediums. Select surveys include Deloitte's 2024 Digital Media Trends, Creator Economy in 3D, and TMT Predictions 2024.

- Publicly available data from platform companies, including investor-day presentations, 10-Ks, earnings reports, press releases, and other published information noting the strategies and investment areas across each platform.

We identified 12 primary growth drivers that help platforms elevate their stakeholders' experiences. While some drivers specifically address the needs of one stakeholder group, others may help elevate the experiences of two or more groups.

$$\left(\begin{array}{c} \textbf{Direct} \\ \textbf{Growth Drivers} \end{array} \right. + \left. \begin{array}{c} \textbf{Indirect} \\ \textbf{Growth Drivers} \end{array} \right)$$

Direct Growth Drivers
Elevating the User Experience

+

Indirect Growth Drivers
Elevating the Creator & Advertiser Experience

User-focused opportunities

Creator-focused opportunities

Advertiser-focused opportunities

Accelerate creator growth
Enabling creators to be the best version of themselves while maximizing their reach and engagement

Amplify creator value
Identifying and maximizing the value that each creator brings to your platform and partners

Strengthen Creator Support
Servicing your creators' most pressing challenges with speed, intelligence, and humanity

Innovate content production
Making content creation easy and accessible while innovating new ways for creators to showcase their ideas and brand

Pioneer content experience
Unleashing innovation in content consumption across format, experience, and user preference

Deepen creator loyalty
Making platforms the preferred destination for creators to share their content with the world

Drive advertiser spend
Advocating your unique value proposition to advertisers and creators through your differentiated user reach and engagement

Increase content availability
Improving platform engagement by connecting users with their desired content

Expand stakeholder revenue streams
Uncovering, improving, and scaling all revenue drivers for your platform and partners

Encourage platform community
Fostering a sense of connection and community among users and creators

Confront shifting regulation and standards
Meeting a changing world of global governmental influence with intelligence and action

Foster platform trust
Building a trusted ecosystem for all platform stakeholders

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In this perspective, we will highlight the five growth plays that are unique to the creator experience: **accelerate creator growth, strengthen creator support, deepen creator loyalty, amplify creator value, and innovate content production**. In subsequent perspectives, we will highlight how other growth plays can indirectly elevate the creator experience.

Overview of Growth Opportunities

Accelerate creator growth: Enabling creators to be the best version of themselves while maximizing their reach and engagement.

The creator landscape is filled with passion, potential, and... persistent challenges. Creators often dream to reach an intended audience and build a fulfilling career on a platform. Yet, for many aspiring creators, the path to success feels shrouded in uncertainty. For those who aim to supplement their income with creating content—or to be full-time content creators—the sobering reality is that it takes creators an average of 6.5 months to earn their first dollar.[1] For those who aim to maximize their reach and tell their story, it is also increasingly difficult to even grow at a sustainable rate—monthly growth rates across one of the major social channels is shown to be below 0.05%.[2] Every platform should aim to cultivate the potential in its creators, driving creator experience with the right tools, insights, and growth opportunities. Succeeding in accelerating individual growth can help promote platform engagement for all stakeholders.

Moving beyond generic creator solutions as a platform and truly understanding your creator's growth requires in-depth research methods and strategic product development. To seize this opportunity, platforms can map their current creator ecosystems (e.g., insight engines, support models, partnership experiences), analyze growth trends (e.g., content trends, user engagement trends, growth data), and build technology and strategy capabilities to enable creator solutions. With a strategic understanding of creator growth, platforms can implement tools and strategies that uncover the right insights for creators at the right times and empower them to build their brands and content on the platform in an authentic manner.

By helping maximize creators' impact and growth on the platform, creators will have increased satisfaction with the platform and will prioritize content and engagement, with surveyed creators stating that platforms that help them grow their business are their top priority.[3] In addition, creators having impactful self-service tools and insights could increase the number of high-performing creators on a platform. Is your platform arming creators with the right products, insights, and strategies to make the most of your platform and their reach?

Strengthen creator support: Servicing your creators' most pressing challenges with speed, intelligence, and humanity.

Leading platforms recognize the pivotal role of exceptional customer service in cultivating brand loyalty—a sentiment echoed by 78% of consumers agreeing that good customer service is critical to earning brand loyalty and generating business.[4] However, creator support often remains overlooked, with a mere 33% of creators expressing satisfaction with issue resolution on their primary platform.[5] Addressing support-related challenges faced by creators demands a proactive approach with speed, intelligence, and a human touch.

To seize this growth opportunity, platforms can identify creator pain points in the support journey, by engaging in creator interviews and surveys and by analyzing key metrics such as time-to-support and creator drop-off rates. With a clearer understanding of their creator support framework, platforms can identify the most impactful moments in the support journey where human intervention can be more effective. Furthermore, they can activate training materials to ensure that support employees are well-versed in optimal response actions. Platforms can leverage advancements in next-gen CRM and conversational artificial intelligence (AI) technology to optimize and enhance other points in the journey.

By successfully enhancing creator support and finding the optimal balance of self-service and high-touch support, platforms can anticipate cost reductions in support operations and expedited creator issue resolution. Moreover, a well-supported creator is more inclined to favor a particular platform. If creators feel more supported, they are more likely to make your platform the one they prefer.[6] By making your platform best in class for creator support, can it become and remain the preferred platform for your current—and future—creators?

Deepen creator loyalty: Making platforms the preferred destination for creators to share their content with the world.

The fragmentation of the creator ecosystem across channels, formats, and—most importantly—platforms means creators are extending their reach across the internet to generate income and engagement. Creators on average use two or more platforms to generate income.[7] This overextension, while allowing creators to meet their desired compensation or audience, is also affecting burnout and creator experience—with this type of burnout leading to a 75% reduction in content created.[8] Showcasing platforms' unique creator value proposition is key to sustainable growth and creator satisfaction.

Standing out in today's environment starts with defining loyalty as an implicit or explicit agreement between a creator and platform. Platforms must deeply understand the value exchanges that motivate different creators to contribute content and engage on one platform over another. By conducting qualitative and quantitative research via a creator-segmented approach, platforms can understand the different levers and drivers for different types of creators, as loyalty is often achieved through a wide range of interventions such as compensation, community, and support. Improving creator loyalty is about understanding the full end-to-end platform experience and identifying the moments that matter that can house high-impact loyalty benefits (tangible and intangible). Implementing creator programs is a constant and iterative process. Platforms must build in creator feedback loops to utilize data-driven analytics to evaluate their progress, track creator sentiment over time, and adjust their products and offerings as needed.

With the right loyalty strategies, platforms can retain their most valued creators and attract new creators to the platform. Emerging creators often prioritize platforms that offer them networking possibilities, while experienced creators look to engage with platforms with more "white glove" services.[9] With the right balance and stronger partnership models, platforms can drive creator satisfaction and brand reputation while being known as the preferred destination to share content in the social platform landscape. When you think about how you structure your creator engagement, are you differentiated in the market, are you actively building creator commitment to your brand?

Amplify creator value: Identifying and maximizing the value that each creator brings to your platform and partners.

A core objective of a social platform is to connect creators with users, a goal particularly applicable in the era of hyper-niche content and audiences. The relevance of hyper-niche content can be exemplified by 69% of marketers and advertisers indicating that they prefer to partner with smaller influencers.[10] Additionally, finding creators that produce engageable content is becoming a paramount concern to marketers, with 33% of marketers reporting that engagement rates are the most important performance metric for influencer marketing campaigns.[11] With these trends in mind, platforms can optimally segment creators and provide them with the right resources, strategies, and brand opportunities to amplify each creator's unique value on the platform.

Platforms should first set their own definition of creator lifetime value (i.e., CLTV)—the value generated for the platform over the course of creator engagement with the platform, driven by creator monetization streams. In defining their own CLTV, platforms can measure and articulate the value that different creators provide to their platforms. Platforms can then use this knowledge to optimally segment various clusters of creators and pair them with the most relevant tools and models. For example, a platform could facilitate brand partnerships with a certain creator set or enable campaign-trend matching with another.[12] Deloitte's developed CLTV solutions can help activate such opportunities—through enabling higher creator lifetime value—and reduce creator churn by leveraging outside-in signals (1P and 3P data) and providing personalized offers.

Social platforms that treat creators as business partners (e.g., facilitating brand partnerships, enabling campaign-trend matching, monitoring key performance indicators, developing audience insights, providing AI-enabled support and educational resources) are most suited to maximize CLTV and have the most potential to be a creator's preferred platform.[13] Moreover, this growth opportunity may provide platforms with strategic insights into creator investments that result in a higher return on investment. Which creator segments on your platform possess the most significant impact to support your different values and propositions?

Innovate content production: Making content creation easy and accessible while innovating new ways for creators to showcase their ideas and brand.

With the rapid influx of available content and increased competition for users' attention, creators are under more pressure than ever to deliver quality, timely, and relevant content. With 27% of surveyed creators spending between five and 10 hours every week on video editing,[14] content production is an area where there is massive room for platforms to drive value to creators. Platforms should further tap into this opportunity and creator need as evidenced by the fact that nearly 80% of creators believe Generative AI (GenAI) will alleviate their workload, and 82% said it will accelerate their content creation process.[15]

To activate this growth opportunity, platforms must collaborate closely with creators to understand their unique production environments and continuously iterate on tools that seamlessly integrate into those environments. By creating adaptable and accessible journeys, platforms can effectively address pain points and enhance product design. When it comes to leveraging emerging tools such as GenAI, platforms should ensure that the value of the tools they provide exceeds the perceived risk creators have in using said tools. For example, Deloitte research on creators' views on GenAI found that creators are most willing to adopt GenAI enhancement in behind-the-scenes production activities, which could include helping creators generate content ideas based on trends found in their comment section or by cutting out "ums" and awkward pauses from creators' videos during the editing process. Moreover, adapting an agile approach to product development will enable platforms to swiftly react to both emerging technology and creator readiness, helping bridge the gap between creators and rapidly evolving content production.

By making content production easy and accessible for creators, social platforms will be equipped with best-in-class platform tools. Leveraging GenAI, platforms can help simplify creators' workflow and enhance their creative output. How can your platform leverage tools like GenAI to simplify, streamline, and enhance content production for creators?
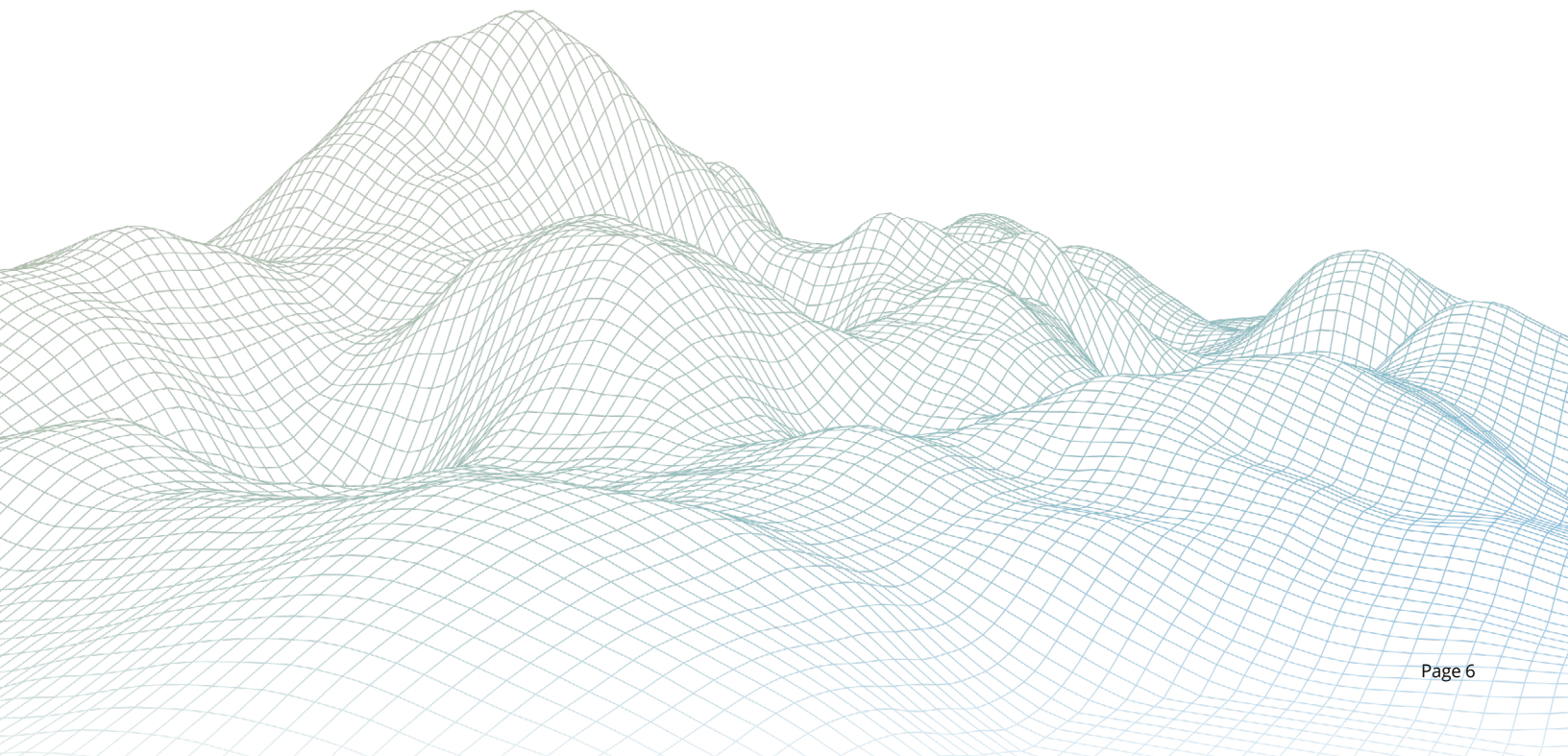
Conclusion

Creators play a unique position in the equation of supporting DAU growth. Today's leading platforms are designing a range of tools and strategies to extend creator value and satisfaction. Centered in our platform growth equation, creators are growing their communities of viewers, while platforms are developing a more attractive product for advertisers. Creator solutions not only improve the platform experience but have extended impacts to content, brand, and partnerships—actively driving user engagement and ultimately revenue. As creators are finding themselves with increasing demands, shifting influencer environments, and balancing personal goals and aspirations, platform leaders may be posing questions such as, "How can we make our platform best in class for creator support?" or "How can we best structure our creator engagement?" By activating the creator-focused growth opportunities, platforms can provide their creators with a differentiated and measurable partnership experience that helps creators grow their business and reach with authenticity.

How Deloitte can help

Creator experience and platform partnerships are key to sustaining and growing a healthy ecosystem of content and daily active users. Deloitte has collaborated with leading social platforms to take creator-centric approaches to drive platform growth and product impact. Deloitte combines award-winning capabilities and cross-industry experience to help solve any creator-focused challenge. Whatever your creator-centric goals are, Deloitte is here to help.
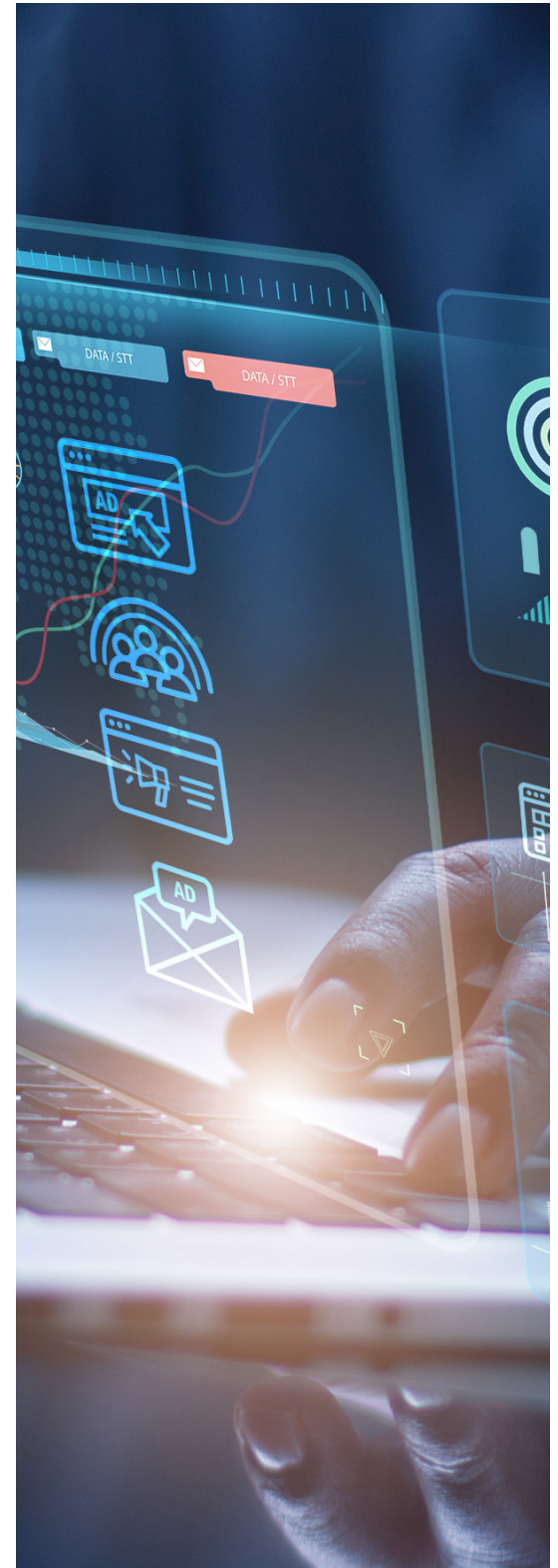
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