

Canva Triples Cannes Spend to Court Big Brands

Three years after its debut at Cannes Lions, Canva is investing in its first official beach takeover at the festival as it continues to broaden its image from a consumer design platform to an enterprise tool.

The business will take over La Plage du Martinez from June 16 to 19 in a space designed by Jimmy Knowles, its global head of experiential marketing.

The colorful activation will offer networking areas and towel service, as well as a space for guests to create custom tote bags and ice pops after testing Canva's products.

The Canva Cabana will also host programming alongside Variety, including on-stage conversations with marketers and talent such as Hilton CMO Mark Weinstein; Disney Global Ad President Rita Ferro; and musician-turned-FYI.AI founder will.i.am.

Knowles told ADWEEK the brief for Canva's 2025 Cannes push was to engage marketers on the ground and inform them of its wider mission over the next 10 years to "empower every organization to design."

"That starts with the CXOs and the marketing teams," he added.

The space has been designed to show these execs how Canva has evolved from a tool that "can create wedding save-the-dates and birthday party invites," to one that can help teams collaborate and bridge the gap between "productivity and creativity," said Knowles.

While Canva declined to disclose its budget for the 2025 space, Knowles revealed the brand has tripled its investment in the festival since its first official

activation three years ago.

The space will be open to attendees who register. It's designed to be "inclusive and welcoming" with an approach of "open doors, not velvet rope," said Knowles.

Getting Down to Business

The activation follows Canva Create in Los Angeles, an event which drew 3,500 people for a day of keynotes, product demos, and more.

Canva has been to Cannes before, but never like this. For the past two years, the company and Variety have hosted attendees at a villa on the edge of the festival.

Its 2025 beach takeover sends a clear signal that while the Australian company, founded in 2013, might have a playful tone, it's no longer here to play.

For the last 18 months, the business has broadened its positioning with a series of campaigns designed to educate consumers and help it topple the crowns of more established rivals, such as Adobe.

Canva's "Design Against Dull" campaign, which debuted in the U.K. in October 2024, showed how it can inject creativity into the workplace. A follow-up U.S. push, "Love Your Work," doubled down on this idea by spotlighting the stories of real users.

Along with its creative approach, Canva has evolved its tools for an enterprise audience. In the last year alone, it has launched features including Magic Studio, an AI suite designed to rival Adobe Firefly, and rolled out new admin and governance capabilities squarely aimed at business buyers.

Per Canva's own data, its platform is used by 95% of Fortune 500 brands and its Canva Enterprise tool has been adopted by

companies including Reddit and Zoom.

Anecdotally, through the industry events he attends, Knowles is seeing the needle move on awareness, but said there's still work to do.

"Knowledge of Canva generally is wide, but it's shallow," he said, noting Cannes would be a place to gather feedback on how customers perceive and are using the platform.

More Than a Design Challenge

Adobe, has long invested in its presence on the Cannes Croisette. In 2025, it will be back with a space adjacent to the Palais des Festivals' iconic red steps.

This year, it's teaming up with Coca-Cola' to show how its tools powered the global 'Share a Coke' campaign. It's also targeting creators with an Adobe Express experience at LinkedIn's Studio.

Canva, with 220 million users, posted \$2.5 billion in revenue last year versus Adobe's \$21.5 billion. It still has a way to go to catch up to its rivals' full product suite and enterprise dominance.

However, for Adobe, Canva isn't just encroaching on its turf on the French Riviera. The latter's viral growth engine, simple UX, and investment business features could help it slip into clients' toolkits through the side door.

While experiential offers softer metrics than traditional marketing, at Cannes, Canva will be monitoring foot traffic, engagement, and sales leads. It will also look at how the activation resonated and inspired creativity.

"That's where the magic starts to come in, and where [we] can start to see a shift," said Knowles.

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