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The Insider's Guide to DAM

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Introduction

**Understanding Your Digital Assets and the
Challenges of Digital Asset Management**

The proliferation of digital assets has opened up new avenues of opportunity for businesses
eager to capitalize on the brand building and marketing potential of technology-based
assets and campaigns. But the management of digital assets at scale brings its own unique
set of challenges that, unless dealt with, can limit efficacy and erode a company's ROI.

In this eBook, we'll delve into the world of digital asset management (DAM) starting with a
look at the scope and nature of digital assets and the complexities of efficiently managing
them. We'll also explore the challenges solved by DAMs, the four main types of DAMs,
and the most advantageous ways to implement the right DAM for your business.

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Your digital assets – more than just your images

When people hear the term "digital asset" they often think of their logo and other marketing materials like branded images. And they're not wrong. These elements are definitely part of an organization's digital assets, but they are often far from the bulk of it.

The first step to realizing more value from your digital assets is to appreciate the enormity of the scope of items that make up your digital assets. In reality, digital assets are any file owned by your company, from marketing materials to emails. Your digital assets may include data in a range of formats, from video and audio to image files and documents. Any digital data that is proprietary to you, branded by you, or established by you as part of your internal operations, sales process, and customer outreach is a digital asset, so think branded photos, interviews, infographics, product descriptions, templates, quotes and proposals, copy for email campaigns, video clips of product demonstrations, and more.

The challenges of effectively using your digital assets

Having all of these elements available to you and your company's various teams is like having access to a goldmine. But even a goldmine is of little use if you can't get into it or find your way to the gold once you're there. Just creating and having digital assets doesn't guarantee that your business will be able to leverage them with optimal efficiency and to maximum benefit.

There are many challenges to the effective use of digital assets, but here are just a few of them:

Storage

The digital payload can be quite large, and even a relatively small number of images may require more space than traditional business storage solutions can offer. Networks and hard drives can get bogged down by storing and moving files, overtaxing the business system and making them difficult to view or retrieve. And while cloud-based solutions like Dropbox have expanded the capacity to store larger files, they often don't come with the kind of searching tagging and flexible organizational capacities that make it easier for everyone to find the right assets, nor the nuanced ability to set up customized access restrictions.

Security

Cyber security is a growing issue as malware, ransomware, and hackers become increasingly prevalent and sophisticated. The retrieval and sharing of digital assets by multiple users from an in-house network without a DAM system increases points of vulnerability and exposes an organization's network to a host of security risks.

Organization

Having a wealth of digital assets at your fingertips is useless if you can't pinpoint the ones you want and deliver them where needed. Organizing, correctly grouping, indexing, and labeling assets so that they can be identified quickly by whoever needs them is a major challenge for companies.
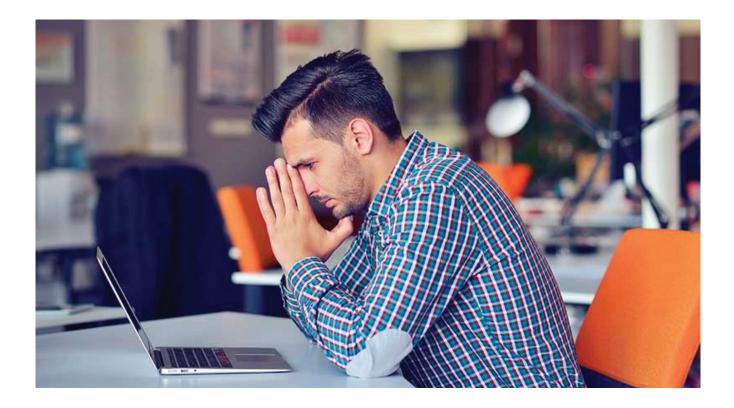
Consistency

If you have multiple versions of a digital asset, it's easy for one department or employee to find and use a completely different version than another finds and uses. Without a DAM system to ensure consistency, the process of updating, tracking, and sharing the most recent versions of files is fraught with difficulty and massive human effort to avoid error. Mistakes are common.

Access

Not every file is meant to be seen or accessed by every member of your organization. There may be regions, groups, sub-brands, partners and other groups who need to access different content. Absent a DAM system, it is difficult to safeguard more sensitive documents and restrict access or the timing of access so that only authorized users can view and retrieve certain files.

Liability and rights

When it comes to digital assets, there can also be legal ramifications. The first thing to consider is mitigating liability by making sure that team members have a safe and approved pool of resources to pull from, avoiding the inadvertent use of assets that are copyrighted or belong to other organizations. Beyond that, however, companies will also want to be sure that their rights to the data they own is properly documented, and the proper use of such data is spelled out and accessible to all who have access to use it.

DAM systems as a solution

The challenges of storage, security, organization, consistency, access, and legal ramifications place digital asset management at the top of the priority list for any business seeking to leverage their assets safely, effectively, and to maximum benefit. To that end, DAM systems provide a vital mechanism for ensuring uniform, efficient, proper use of digital assets across an organization.

Whether your company is service or product based, your digital data is among your most valued assets, and its optimal use is critical to operational functionality and successful marketing efforts.

What is a DAM System?

A DAM system lets your enterprise streamline the use of digital content. This means that many people can access the same content and make changes without there having to be difficulties in sharing. Thus, people are connected through real-time access to the most up-to-date versions of digital assets. Essentially, it is a digital library that gives key stakeholders access to digital assets based on their access level.

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These are the traditional core capabilities of a DAM system:

- It helps the enterprise ingest its assets. The benefit of a DAM system is that this can be done individually or as part of a group. You can also easily apply metadata to photography and other types of digital assets.

- Your digital assets are kept safe with access controls, which gives specific permissions based on the level of access permitted.

- Chances are, your enterprise has a lot of digital assets and you need to retrieve them quickly. An effective DAM system lets you do that. Modern DAM systems let you store your assets on cloud platforms.

- You might need your assets in different formats based on your tasks. A DAM system allows you to convert your assets into the format you require, making it possible for you to achieve your objectives faster.

- Metadata is an important element of digital assets, particularly for the generation of information regarding how and when those assets are used. You can make this easier by using a DAM system.

- There may be a lot of versions of one asset. Using a DAM system makes it possible for you to monitor and trace these relationships and keep track of what's been changed.

- DAM systems implement a structure for working with assets wherein each step builds on the step that came before it.

- You can search for your assets in many different ways.

- If you don't need to download the asset or aren't sure if you've got the right one, DAM systems make it possible to preview them.

- You can link your files with other files and ensure seamless publishing of assets.

What are the key features of a DAM system?

Regardless of its capabilities, all DAM systems have common key features and each is important for different reasons. These are: organizing, searching, downloading, sharing, version control and history, and access control.

Organizing

DAM systems are most useful for organizing the assets of an enterprise in one library. This makes it easier for all people within the enterprise to find what they need. This isn't the only benefit of organizing digital assets though–it's also important for leveraging and maximizing the potential of those assets.

Searching

A DAM system helps make it easier to find what you're looking for in your assets through optimized searching elements such as keywords, attributes, and categories. This means that you don't have to know the exact name of your digital asset; as long as you have a general idea of what you're looking for, you can find it either by searching for an element (such as photographer's name) or by searching a category.

Downloading

DAM systems make it easy for you to get what you need, when you need it, and how you need it. This ties in to sharing and access control because formats and sizes can be changed if downloading permission is given, which means users can get digital assets quickly.

Sharing

One of the most important features of a DAM system is the ability to share digital assets with relevant parties. You can do this using email, lightboxes, or brand portals.

Version Control and History

This is important when there are multiple people working on the same project. When changes are made, you want to be sure you've edited the right version and that the most up-to-date version is used going forward. You also want to keep track of previous versions in case a mistake is made. DAM systems enable you to keep up with changes and store version histories.

Access Control

DAM systems support the security of your digital assets because you can control who has access to which files. This can be done through user groups that have specific levels of authorization, creating a systemized approach to data access that helps you protect the assets of the enterprise.

A DAM system is a great option for those enterprises that embrace technology and the digital world. They can help in the optimization process, which will make it easier for the enterprise to adapt to changing markets. Moreover, by capitalizing on the capabilities of a DAM system, you'll be able to create new standards for operations within the enterprise.

Evaluating the Core Capabilities of a DAM Solution for Your Enterprise

When seeking to develop more effective operations in your enterprise, a DAM system may be the best tool that you can adopt. After all, you want the company to grow and DAM systems can help you on the way to achieving that goal.

You may have continuing questions, though, about the capabilities of a DAM system and how it can help you. Ultimately, the capabilities offered through a DAM system allow you to capitalize on a streamlined and connected process that will allow you to meet your objectives. This overview will spell out the core functions and features of a DAM system so that you can accurately evaluate the immediate and long-term benefits of integrating this technology into your growing business.

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Why Choosing the Right DAM Can Speed Up Time-to-Market for New Products

Digital asset management (DAM) software is a must-have for any company responsible for delivering new products to the consumer and B2B markets. With the recent expansion of online shopping, direct-to-consumer (D2C) ecommerce and an accelerated restructuring of the retail sector, reaching the end-user with new products requires speed, precision, and focus. Having DAM software that is in tune with your product offerings can help you get your product in front of the right customers, in the right markets, at the right time. Here's how:

Connecting the Complete Product Lifecycle

Product lifecycle management is a critical function that, unfortunately, many companies are less than ideally equipped to effectively execute. The lifecycle of a product crosses many individual disciplines including product design, production, inventory management, marketing, sales, and distribution logistics.

This cross-disciplinary process can create significant barriers to smooth and timely market entry and is where most breakdowns in data and communication can cause time-to-market expansion. Quite simply, the company finds itself stuck within a series of bottlenecks each time there is a cross-functional handoff. While there is no silver-bullet system that does it all, there are optimal combinations and each company can and should build their best stack of solutions to smooth the go-to-market process. When you have to create many new SKUs and each process to bring products to market requires precision, then a common digital language can greatly accelerate things and streamline bottlenecks.

While you can add manpower and dedicate more bodies towards optimizing these individual processes, it won't necessarily get you closer to the goal of a smooth and speedy overall flow. Turning toward advancements in DAM and PIM can transform the ability of your business to compete effectively.

Understanding the True Power of DAM

The solution in many cases is implementing a single source of truth, for which many turn toward implementing DAM software. New technology in DAM represents a huge innovation because it allows the whole lifecycle of the product to be connected. This should come as no surprise since most companies are centered around either the introduction and marketing of new products, or the production and distribution of them.

Overcoming Challenges to Content Throughput

The use of a DAM doesn't necessarily lead to instant success but configured correctly, it can dramatically improve

content throughput. Enterprise systems are needed for the effective alignment and acceleration of product lifecycles, but it takes a commitment to a clean critical path to achieve time-to-market impact.

One reason a DAM can be so powerful in that regard is that it can use automation, asset tagging, and in some cases even artificial intelligence to configure incoming assets for use in multiple downstream applications.

For example, a designer can upload files for a new product and expect that the DAM will prepare and flow each asset type to the appropriate downstream resource. In other words, product information can go to the manufacturing and distributions teams while pricing and SKU data can go to the eCommerce team and images for marketing can be formatted and presented to the retail operations team. DAM software allows for a shift in process because content throughput is historically a bottleneck, and the right DAM system can directly eliminate many of the root causes of these difficulties.

Leading the Way to Market Acceleration

One strategic advantage of modern DAM software is that it can help companies shift their thinking from piecemeal, functional silos toward pursuing streamlined solutions. This will help them increase their efficiency and effectiveness. It also means that a DAM implementation needs to be led by internal champions with the authority and vision to tighten linkages between functions, whether they be internal departments or a combination of internal and external functions.

By using an effective DAM solution, companies that are largely product-driven are empowered to create libraries for their materials that make it easier and faster to complete downstream stages. For example, more consistent and instantly available product information or design resources enable faster prototyping, which in turn leads to more effective design-for-production and manufacturing engineering.

When product design reconfigured the shape of the product case, they didn't understand that the new shape could require a different configuration for the injection molding dies or a switch to a different thermoplastic with the necessary structural properties. With DAM providing seamless cross-functional access in real-time, the end result is a more responsive design cycle, which helps make better products. Modern DAM software gives you control over relevant data on materials and products, making it possible to reduce the amount of rework required by your design or production teams.

All of these factors can lead to your products achieving shorter time-to-market while providing you with ongoing improvements in the agility and efficiency of your processes. This, in turn, can lead to improved revenue and profitability.

Buyer's Checklist for Choosing the Right DAM Solution

If you have the task of selecting the right Digital Asset Management solution for your firm, it can be helpful to have a strategy in place for selecting, purchasing, and deploying the DAM.

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Businesses find themselves shopping for a new DAM solution for multiple reasons, but some of the most common include:

- Acquiring a DAM for the first time for your business.

- Replacing a DAM that is outdated and has outlived its usefulness.

- Upgrading an up-to-date DAM to meet new enterprise requirements.

Whatever the reason for considering the purchase of a new DAM, it's important to leave nothing to chance. So how do you wade through the options and evaluate available DAM solutions to find the one that fits your firm? The following checklist should help you select the right DAM for your organization.

Step 1: Initiate the DAM selection process

There are two types of DAM solutions to choose from: basic and enterprise. The two vary in their usability, capabilities, scalability, extent of customizability, and cost. Their deployment mechanisms are also different. For example, some are cloud-native offerings while others occur as a Software as a Service (SaaS)

If you want a more friendly and easy to use solution, you could go for a basic DAM. It uses a simple classification and categorization scheme to organize all digital assets. It is also generally more economical, and some even offer a free trial version. Keep in mind, however, that free trials have limited ability to handle an organization's diverse needs.

You may consider purchasing an enterprise DAM if you wish to solve most of the complex issues that a large global organization needs to address. It can engage with emerging technologies, optimize processes, and even apply Artificial Intelligence. You can host it on-site but can also move it to the cloud.

Step 2: Ensure the DAM aligns with your people and organization

Whether you go for a basic or enterprise DAM solution, ensure it aligns with your people and organization. The technology you employ is only part of the picture; your end users are the other. Before buying your preferred DAM, consider:

- The cultural language used for communication in the company.

- How employees and teams interact to execute deliverables.

- The agencies and vendors you work with.

- The marketing of your deliverables.

This step requires you to build the team that will be managing the DAM initiative. You can start by identifying the members who will be working with the DAM. The team will operate via a shared language to fulfill common goals, so understanding how users will be working with DAM is critical.

Step 3: Ensure alignment with your technology

The DAM you choose should also align with the technology employed in your business. This step will send you on a discovery mission to find out if the selected DAM can attend to your organization's needs from a technological perspective. Consider bringing consultants, internal SMEs, and professional support services onboard to help you stay firmly on the path to purchasing a functional DAM solution.

Start by assessing the state of your current technology and operations and how they relate to DAM. As you do so, take into account the DAM capabilities to ensure they are future-proof. In this stage you'll identify the features and capabilities that are deal-breakers and must-haves in the chosen DAM, like ensuring that the DAM is a cloud-native solution.

Step 4: Create a shortlist and pick out the front runners

Now it's time to narrow your list of potential candidate vendors to just three to five, assess their solution fit, and further trim the list to only one vendor and a backup. It is also essential to verify that your selected vendor has the necessary functional and technical resource expertise needed for your success. The vendor should then conduct a demo and

provide the technical assistance for launching and running the DAM successfully.

Step 5: Get buy-in for your vendor of choice

Having identified your vendor of choice, it is time to prepare your final recommendation for executive review, buy-in, and a possible sign-off. You will also need to convince the organization to go for an enterprise DAM solution to obtain budget approvals. This requires you to provide evidence that the DAM can deliver value. Showcase the immediate benefits of the DAM and provide the DAM ROI estimates.

Step 6: Initiate the purchase

Once your organization buys into your idea and approves the budget for a new enterprise DAM, you can initiate the purchase. Consider the following cost factors when negotiating the purchase:

- Software licensing, number of users, and other details.

- Cost of environments such as quality assurance, development and production, and support for disaster recovery.

- Whether you will need professional services or internal SME resources.

Step 7: Deploy the DAM solution

After purchasing the DAM solution, you need to prepare to launch it. This step requires a DAM strategy, an implementation plan, and a process for onboarding users and training them to use new features. The DAM should be relevant from the first day, complete with the right metadata options and assets. You should also consider how the DAM will evolve to meet future requirements.

It is not enough to have the resources to purchase DAM solutions for your organization—a carefully thought-out and implemented strategy is key. By following the steps outlined in this guide, you'll increase your organization's likelihood of finding and purchasing a DAM solution that will provide immediate and long-term benefits.

Amplifi.io offers a one-stop source for marketing assets and product information, thereby empowering the marketing, sales, and external partners of enterprises in enhancing their productivity and improving their ability to reach and engage with more customers. To facilitate this, Amplifi.io leverages artificial intelligence (AI) and simplified best practice that brings about smart and automated content organization that allow you to maximize your ROI.

After Implementation, Then What?

Implementation is only the beginning. For a DAM system to be successful and gain widespread usage, it must integrate with other software used within the organization. While most DAM systems come with built-in integrations, it is not possible to provide compatibility with every platform. In order to link digital assets with existing productivity and desktop solutions, a DAM system needs an accompanying Application Programming Interface (API).

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Additionally, regular maintenance and updating of your assets will ensure that your investment continues to pay dividends. Measure your effectiveness and the savings you realize, then make adjustments that will further enhance your data management processes.

Amplifi.io records massive data for you and provides some easy ways to view it. Media analytics provide valuable decision-assisting insights into the media and how it is consumed by your programs and partners. Dashboards in Amplifi.io provide activity graphs and some handy tools to see what is happening day by day. Amplifi.io analytics provide visibility into user (marketing, sales, partners, etc.) activities, media consumption activities, and usage trends. Integration with Google Analytics is also offered for custom, deep dive, and other advanced usages.

Digital Asset Management systems are an essential piece of your business strategy for protecting and maximizing the ROI on your valuable digital assets. When it's time to select a new Digital Asset Management solution for your firm, it can be helpful to have a strategy in place for identifying, purchasing, deploying and maintaining the right DAM solution for your business needs.

Manage Your Digital Assets With Amplifi.io

If you're looking for an advanced digital asset management solution that will help your business save time and money while optimizing organization, Amplifi can help. Our easy-to-use system helps increase productivity by quickly finding, managing and sharing assets from any device anytime, anywhere. With powerful search capabilities and automatic metadata tagging, our platform makes it simple to store information securely in one central location. Plus, our intuitive drag-and-drop interface allows you to easily upload, organize and share assets quickly with just a few clicks. Request a demo today and start taking advantage of our sophisticated digital asset management solution.

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