

Digital Asset Management (DAM):

A Foundation for Digital Transformation

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The decision to implement a Digital Asset Management (DAM) system is the right step in the right direction to gaining operational and intellectual control of your digital assets and is to be taken very seriously.

DAM brings with it great responsibility for how the organization's assets will be efficiently and effectively managed in its daily operations and is essential to growth. Any successful DAM implementation requires more than just new technology; it requires a foundation for digital strategy. Creating the whole DAM solution – and connecting it throughout your ecosystem – means that your assets can generate revenue, increase efficiencies, and enhance your ability to meet new and emerging market opportunities. Optimity Advisors understands this imperative and has both the strategic offerings and the resources required to successfully define your DAM strategy.

A wise friend and educator once proclaimed that there is, "a place for everything and everything in its place." This is not only true but an absolute necessity in the rich media world we live in today. There are images, video, graphics, 3D models and more that were either born digital or transformed to digital and that are all competing for attention and use within a multi-distribution channel framework. We need to take an asset and be able to change it into different formats, and then deliver it to television, mobile, print and social media in very different ways and with various degrees of accompanying metadata about the asset.

Managing your digital assets achieves operational control of your organization's information and intellectual property. Manage these assets well, discover their inherent potential, and measure their use for growth - DAM may enhance other mission critical systems such as e-commerce and online shopping experiences. DAM serves as the single source of truth for all assets within an organization and must be supported by effective metadata, taxonomy and robust search.

What is Digital Asset Management (DAM)?

DAM consists of the management tasks and technological functionality designed to enhance the inventory, control and distribution of digital assets (rich media such as photographs, videos, graphics, logos, marketing collateral) surrounding the ingestion, annotation, cataloguing, storage, retrieval and distribution of digital assets for use and reuse in marketing and / or business operations. By definition, a digital asset is any form of content and/or media that has been formatted into a binary source and includes the right to use it.

DAM systems may be developed to house different forms of rich media including audio, image, and video files and some amount of descriptive data about the asset. A DAM system aims to improve workflow efficiency through the automation of tasks such as ingest, metadata creation, and authenticated access. In addition, DAM involves not only the stewardship of digital assets -- their every day care and feeding, plus their long-term preservation -- but also managing the people and activities that interact with those assets. From IT staff to all users (past & present), keeping a record of what's happened to the assets and how they were used will help plan for their future use.

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Every strategy needs to start with a foundation, that solid base upon which some form of structure rests and where meaning may be established. There are many structures to building the "House of DAM" that deserve attention and preparedness for the roadmap of work to be done. More importantly, these are all structures to review and discuss well before any technology has been purchased, let alone considered. **It's commonly known but worth repeating: technology should never lead the decision making process for DAM demands - the business sets the foundation for strategy first.** Technology is incredibly important and the vendor review and selection process is a critical step in all this, but that step must follow the business requirements and digital strategy. The following sections outline the major structures of DAM that create the foundation for an effective digital strategy:

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DAM is a Foundation for Digital Health

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Foundation #1 – Metadata & Taxonomy

Metadata, simply stated, is information that describes other data; data about data. It is the descriptive, administrative, and textual terms, it allows for robust search from multiple directions. **Metadata development is a strategic imperative in the endeavor to effectively manage and exploit a company's knowledge.** The successful implementation of any content-related strategy – for data, digital assets or text—requires implementation of a holistic metadata schema that is supported by technology, people and process. Metadata increases the return on investment of a content system by unlocking the potential to ingest, discover, share and distribute assets by applying systematic organization. Metadata is the best way to protect and defend digital assets from content clutter and mismanagement. Invest the time, energy, and resources to identify, define and organize assets for discovery. There are three types of Metadata:

1. **Descriptive** metadata describes a resource for purposes such as discovery and identification (i.e., information you would use in a search). It can include elements such as title, creator, author, and keywords
2. **Structural** metadata indicates how compound objects are put together, for example, how a digital image is configured as provided in EXIF data, or how pages are ordered to form chapters (e.g. file format, file dimension, and file length)
3. **Administrative** metadata provides information that helps manage an asset. Two common subsets of administrative data are rights management metadata (which deals with intellectual property rights) and preservation metadata (which contains information needed to archive and preserve a resource)



And yet, metadata is an “asset” unto itself—and an important one, at that. It provides the foundation and structure needed to make your assets more discoverable, accessible and, therefore, more valuable. In other words: Metadata makes them “smart assets.” Simply digitizing video, audio, graphic files and more only scratches the surface of their value as digital assets. Their full potential is realized only by their use, and they can only be used if they can be found. The robustness and relevance of the metadata associated with an asset is what makes it findable, and therefore usable.

Taxonomy is the classification of information into groups or classes that share similar characteristics. It is a way to organize information to best solve a business problem based on user needs by exposing relationships between subjects. A well-designed taxonomy brings business processes into alignment that allows users to intuitively navigate to the “right” content. The best reason for creating and implementing a single, standard taxonomy across the enterprise is that it provides good business value. But more than that, it enhances and improves enterprise search and enables quick information discovery.

Taxonomy provides the consistent and controlled vocabulary that can power the single source of truth as expressed in a DAM. It is a key enabler for organizing any large body of content. It is required for meaningful information management and critical to effective “findability.”

Foundation #2 – Workflow

The key to good workflow is understanding what are the issues involved in identifying, capturing and ingesting assets within a DAM system and then making them accessible and available for retrieval.

DAM is a workflow device to assist in the marketing operations critical to your organization’s needs.

DAM can serve not only as the central source of truth for your assets, but can also serve as the infrastructure of the DAM house, the workflow or source of connectivity, upon which assets may be moved around from creation, use and distribution. Now is the time to identify and map out the workflow process of your department, and/or organization. In many situations, companies tell the vendor, “here is our process, automate it,” and not look at the integrity of the process. The search for right solution should also look ahead to emerging business goals so the system supports anticipated growth. If the process is flawed and cumbersome, you do not want that to be automated, as the end result will be disastrous. In addition, documenting the workflow is another opportunity to build better relationships with internal teams

and partners. The result of this documentation serves as part of the foundation for your DAM solution and the people, and processes connected along the way. To determine how a DAM will accommodate your project, it is important to think how and when, data is created and modified in your projects, and then think how this data moves through the projects.

Foundation #3 - Digital Rights Management

The question to be asked here is, “what can we do with the digital assets we have – from a legal or intellectual property point of view?”

Rights Management enables organizations the to track the rights for content it owns, for content it has licensed or the rights to the content it has given to a licensee.

There must be serious consideration of any licensing / legal issues associated with your assets, and it demands an understanding of what your assets are and knowledge of how they may be used. No technology will purely solve digital rights management; it’s up to the business to ask the right questions. The more rights management is based on efficient information flow and integration, the faster and more effective the company will be in protecting and monetizing the content it has sold, bought or licensed. In addition, on the other side of the rights issue is the construction of permissions, users’ roles and security for the DAM that will guide and direct your users to a more successful DAM experience. It is never too early to start working on the business rules and practices around access to content. In one instance, a comprehensive metadata model with fields specific to rights usage and management will be critical for your users’ interest in use and reuse. And, in another, the application of security protocols in and around your digital assets will protect you for the future.roadmap and no evidence to substantiate the immediate and continuous savings that are needed for the investment to pay for itself in one year.

Foundation #4 - Digital Preservation

In regards to archival and / or preservationist sentiments, the question most often asked is, “are some of your assets worth preserving beyond the workflow cycles currently underway?” In essence, the question is based on the notion that...

...digital assets are either for a work in progress (WIP) or for a longer-term notion of storage in a repository.

This is critical in terms of looking ahead with a view from behind. There may well be sound reason to identify, organize, and centralize your brand assets in a separate location for digital preservation of some kind, whether that is short to mid-



term or a much longer-term vision. If indeed a “preservation” problem needs to be solved, then talk to your DAM vendor about this and discern what may be done. In some instances, there are many good examples of using archival assets as a means of procuring new monetization and revenue streams.

The discussions around this are made more complex with the ever-growing number of digital assets – and further conundrums such as “is my version of this asset as it is used on the iPad a separate asset?” Related to this, the organization’s records management and records retentions policies are directly impacted by DAM. It is worth the effort to explore new ways of repurposing assets as well as the long tail usage of assets for potential repurposing in the future. And if the demand is more for a WIP solution, then that too affects the business decisions around the existing workflow solutions in place. With these answers, you can then identify what functionality the software requires.

Foundation #5 – Governance

Governance helps us define the rules of the DAM road - this provides a framework to ensure that program goals are met both during implementation and for the future. Ultimately, it is the only way to manage and mitigate risk. Governance can begin with a roadmap and measurement tools to ensure success of implementation during the first iteration and may then grow to become formalized in to an Operating Model for the business. These include the regular suspects of a project charter, working committee, and timelines so that governance is an ongoing practice transitioning into an operating model. And beyond the delivery of an effective ROI, active governance delivers innovation and sustained success by building collaborative opportunities and participation from all levels of the organization. The success you have in getting big names involved in the big decisions and keep them talking about DAM and making this a regular, operational discussion (not just for project approval or yearly budget reviews), the greater the benefits from DAM your organization will have.

The best way to plan for future change is to apply an effective layer of governance to your DAM program.

There is more to maintaining the DAM than just maintaining the technology implementation – **you must manage the change, and the change is ongoing. DAM is not a project it is a program.** By definition, a project has a finite beginning and end and a DAM requires considerable attention and governance at all stages and by all stakeholders. In this way, governance is the process, which helps you to ensure that when the initial phases of the DAM initiative are accomplished, you’ll have the opportunity to seek further capital and share the next generation of business valuation with executives. Assessing health in governance is one of the most telling indicators and

accurate predictors of enterprise DAM success. A best practice in governance is maintaining close alliance with key users and the content steward deployed to operationalize your DAM.

Foundation #6 – User Experience (UX)

People prefer simplicity – the simpler path is the far more attractive path.

Value + Simplicity + Design = Love

Think about the digital experience for users and ensuring they identify, discover, and experience brand the way in which it was intended. It is a necessary defense. Integrity of information means it can be trusted as authentic and current. If we define an asset as something that has value to the organization, then it is clear we should place controls on access. Having a Librarian part of this effort to assess your assets to determine what is appropriate and what is not is an effective method for managing content, removing the clutter and finding joy in your DAM.

Access is everything. Classification is meaningful. Action is needed now for the volume of digital assets on our desktops, storage drives, shared drives, collaborative spaces and content repositories throughout the corporate structures created to manage content.

Foundation #7 – Building the Business Case for DAM

So, you think you need a DAM? But why? Now is the time to step back and receive a good perspective of the “Who, What, When and Where” of your digital assets and what it is you are trying to achieve. Consider the following examples of what a DAM can do:

1. Support Strategic Organizational Initiatives
 - a. Reduce Costs
 - b. Generate new revenue opportunities
2. Improve Collaboration and Streamline Creative Workflow
3. Provide Better Brand Management (perception and / or competitiveness)
4. Enable Marketing Agility and Operational Excellence

Brand and market position – and the technologies to support the ever-changing meaning to brand success – are essential to any organizations’ growth. The growth curve of demand on the use and purpose of digital assets has outstripped the ability of the internal development team to provide the support required for contemporary enterprise DAM. In order to be successful, leadership will need (and



want) to initiate and socialize a process that starts slow and then works towards a bigger, and larger end state. Ultimately, this can have direct influence in workflows from packaging to engineering to licensing to social media to focus groups with full realization of the DAM serving as the key repository, the single source of truth for your assets. Technology adoption can be overly complex and challenging at times, but that does not need to be the case.

Yet, there are still so many questions to ask ... is it a new DAM, or a replacement DAM? Is it for marketing operations?

To harness its full potential power, the right people need to be empowered to make change and align DAM with the strategic goals of the organization.

Web Content? Digital Preservation? And is it a singular installation or more expansive for a national audience? There may be many good reasons to implement a DAM system within your organization; not the least of which is identifying, centralizing, and making accessible valuable assets for use and reuse within an organization. And while that is a worthy and most formidable goal to assume, there must be the opportunity to stand back and ensure the problems are being solved with this particular DAM solution.

Vendor Considerations:

It's more than just kicking the tires, it's flipping the car upside down, filling it with gas, running it down the highway, opening it up and ensuring all the required parts are there from the beginning to the end! Play before you pay and ensure you have tested it the best that you can. Vendors expect it. And while you are at it, test-drive two DAMs instead of one, not only to determine which is the best match for you, but also to start the often-lengthy licensing negotiation as early as possible. Some capabilities of the DAM to start investigating early are:

1. Searching / Browsing assets
2. User Interface
3. Unique IDs for tracking and monitoring
4. Metadata Management & Cataloging
5. Digital Asset Processing – Ingestion, Asset Creation & Processing
6. Reporting & Analytics
7. Data Security
8. Customization Opportunities
9. Documentation, Training and User Groups
10. Availability of professional integration consultants

The path to success with DAM is known and can be achieved. It means driving strategic decisions organizationally and technically, and ultimately working with a vendor on

your technical implementation and beyond as you devise more innovative uses for your DAM investment. Our goal in working together is to look forward and define a framework and build out the capabilities now that will allow your organization to mature over time and achieve sustainable success.

Conclusion

DAM is both a process involving the management tasks and decisions, as well as a technological system, the ingestion, annotation, storage, retrieval and distribution, to manage digital assets. **Content drives brand.** Creative professionals and all those working in marketing, communications, operations, and other areas require content be provided as a cost of remaining competitive, and delivering what the consumer wants when and where they want it.

The decision to implement a DAM is the right step in the right direction to gaining operational and intellectual control of your digital assets.

DAM is by nature a complex undertaking when you consider the inputs, the connecting points, and the human element required to create and maintain the governance structure needed to flex and adapt to your growing and evolving business. DAM brings with it great responsibility as to how the organization's assets will be efficiently and effectively managed in its daily operations.

The opportunity in front of us is clear: we can invest in this effort. The benefits of DAM are within your reach. We can dedicate this investment—this effort—in our people, processes, and technology. We can work hard to make the complex simple.

DAM brings with it great responsibility for how the organization's assets will be efficiently and effectively managed in its daily operations and is essential to growth. DAM as a single source of truth in the organization helps quantify the value of digital assets, through their discovery, use and reuse in daily operations. Any successful DAM implementation requires more than just new technology; it requires a foundation for digital strategy. Using DAM effectively can deliver knowledge and measurable cost savings, time to market gains, and greater brand voice consistency—valuable and meaningful effects for your digital strategy foundation.



Meet the Author



John Horodyski is a Partner with Optimity Advisors with executive management strategy experience in Information Management and Consumer Brands including Digital Asset Management (DAM), Metadata and Taxonomy design, MarTech, Content Strategy, Governance and Rights Management. John is a world leading expert and has provided strategic direction and consulting for a variety of Fortune 50, 100 and 500 clients from Consumer Packaging Goods, to Media & Entertainment, and the Pharmaceutical industry. John is also an Adjunct Faculty at San Jose State University where he teaches a graduate course in Digital Asset Management. In addition to regular training and public speaking on digital media and metadata, John is a Board Member and Metadata Editor of the Journal Of Digital Media Management, and is a monthly DAM contributor to CMS Wire. John recently published in May 2016 the book, "Inform, Transform, Outperform: Digital Content Strategies to Optimize Your Business for Growth."

THANK YOU

Thank you for your valuable time. For further information, please contact:

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