

MAY 2012

10 Steps to a Successful Digital Asset Management Implementation

Strategies and Best Practices

Implementing and deploying enterprise solutions across the organization can be complex, involving many strategic and technical decisions. This paper discusses lessons learned and best practices for a successful implementation and adoption of Digital Asset Management (DAM) in your enterprise. **BY SRIKANTH RAGHAVAN, DIRECTOR, PRODUCT MANAGEMENT**

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Introduction

Rich media and digital content is pervasive in organizations and continues to grow exponentially. Coupled with today's challenging economic environment, enterprises are focusing on operational excellence, cost-cutting, and Return On Investment (ROI) to help maintain profitability. Digital Asset Management (DAM) is rapidly evolving from a departmental tool for archive and library management to an enterprise-wide solution for workflow and collaboration. Industry-leading organizations consider DAM solutions as key strategic components of a broader creative and intellectual property initiative that is capable of:

- Becoming a revenue stream by leveraging digital assets across multiple distribution and communication channels
- Reducing total cost of ownership by reusing and repurposing rich media assets
- Delivering greater operational efficiency with easy access and interaction to information and content
- Achieving operational effectiveness through collaboration, workflow, and process automation
- Meeting and maintaining compliance and legal standards with audit trails and reports

Explosive growth in the DAM marketplace and many different products, platforms, and capabilities challenge organizations' knowledge of what will work best and how to proactively align programs with the company's strategy for managing digital content, branding, video, and marketing content. It's not just a list of features and functions. Considerations of implementation, extensibility, vendor strategy, and commitment are important when evaluating which particular product or solutions will be the best for your organization.

Implementing and deploying enterprise solutions for internal and external users is a complex art and involves many strategic and technical decisions. Organizations make significant investments to ensure the solution they deploy meets the needs of their business community and stakeholders. These 10 steps are a collection of lessons learned from the many different implementations of OpenText Media Management for a variety of customers and industries. It provides guidelines to ensure a smooth, successful implementation and greater user adoption of DAM in your enterprise.

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1. Identify the Right Product for Your Organization

Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) or enterprise. There is an increasing trend to cloud-based systems as solutions are offered by some DAM vendors. In addition, open source solutions from consultants and system integrators offer custom products and implementations to customers. Deciding to go with these products versus an enterprise solution depends on many factors. One key area is the organization's available infrastructure and IT management capabilities and the inclination to outsource such operations outside the company. It also depends on the storage and usage needs of the DAM system, the network capacity, and the distribution of users. The SaaS model, cloud-based storage, and security of content are maturing. The relatively low upfront investment, faster implementation cycle, and outsourced IT should be compared to the ability to customize and extend the system based on the organization's strategic goals.

Hosting or on-premise. Again, this decision is primarily based on the internal IT capabilities of the organization. Some companies have a fully functional IT organization and infrastructure and prefer to "own" their systems, while others like to delegate the management of the infrastructure and products to external sources. Customers should evaluate both options and decide based on their use cases and internal IT policies and procedures.

Understand IT rules, policies, and constraints. Many organizations have strict policies around their IT infrastructure, including access to external sources, firewalls, and data transfer rules. The project team should understand the IT policies so that the system can be built to adhere to internal standards. For example, companies have very strict policies concerning external user access to File Transfer Protocol (FTP) sites or to provide an unsecured HTTP access to internal applications, typically requiring users to be authenticated via a VPN or a Portal. While designing the system, such policies should be considered in order to eliminate issues in the future.

2. Get Leadership Buy-In

Leadership buy-in. Successful projects require leadership buy-in and an executive sponsor. This is key to getting the project up and running and to sustain future investment in maintaining a viable and effective DAM solution. Having the support and active participation of the executive team is necessary in getting the essential budget, resolving interdepartmental issues, and providing a sense of reassurance to the project team. It elevates the visibility of the project in the organization, impacting adoption and furthering the success of the project.

Create a business plan. A formal business plan outlines what the DAM system will accomplish—its value to the organization—quantifies it, and then justifies the investment. The starting point is documenting the way things are done now and what it costs in terms of time, effort, and resources. With this as a baseline, you can project any cost-savings in time, effort, and resources when the DAM system is deployed. A business plan maps out where you're at, where you're going, and the plan to get there, and serves as a blueprint for the entire project.

The key to successful projects are leadership buy-in and an executive sponsor.

3. Build a Project Team

Include business, IT, and users. A well-managed DAM implementation typically involves three main groups—business, IT, and user community. This ensures that all of them are in lock step agreement on what is being built and can also resolve issues as they surface. Building a system in isolation will result in poor adoption by the users (a sense of thrusting it down their throats) and eventually will lead to failure of the project.

Become a champion of the DAM cause. Implementing a DAM system requires a culture change in an organization. Change management and adoption is usually the greatest obstacle in a successful DAM project. The fact is that most are resistant to change, being accustomed to manual processes, home-grown solutions, and familiar creation and management practices of digital content. The project team has to be the champion and cheerleader to help people discover the productivity and quality improvements DAM offers. It is important to get the user community involved early, listen to their worries and concerns, and ensure they are heard and addressed. Remember that this project will fundamentally change the way people work in the organization, so the rollout should be carefully planned, communicated, and executed.

Create a Digital Asset Manager role. During the initial stages of the implementation and rollout, someone should “own” the system and become the point of contact for issues and plan training for users to ensure that assets are being ingested and tagged properly. This role is critically important to the implementation and ongoing success of the project.

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4. Implement in Phases

Leverage and address lessons learned. An agile approach to implementation means smoother rollout and the ability to test feature based on the valuable feedback provided by users during the process. DAM implementations are complex and include integrations with internal systems, data models, product master data sets, naming conventions, and existing processes. A phased implementation allows you to mitigate project risks.

Roll out to new groups in phases. If you are considering a system for ten or more groups within your organization, identify the three or four departments that include quick adopters and have a mix of simple and complex requirements. This will allow you to establish some quick wins and then expand the deployment to the other departments using the first phase to assist in the follow-on training.

5. Use the Right Implementation Partner

Leverage a vendor or partner with credible experience in implementation. Typically, vendors have extensive experience in designing, implementing, and deploying their products. For example, the OpenText Media Management professional services team has performed a wide range of DAM implementations for more than 14 years and has extensive experience working with a large variety of companies and customers. We also work with our partner channels and have many successful implementations, continuously improving and enhancing our partners' abilities to build and deploy our solutions.

Build a team that can eventually take ownership of DAM. DAM solutions are dynamic and flexible, meaning they don't remain static. Build a team that knows your operation and where it plans to go, and build use cases to apply to the DAM solution. This team should be technically savvy in order to understand and customize the system. Look for ways to streamline and automate processes, integrate and share data with other systems, and provide users with advanced tools such as advanced search templates and casual browse/download capabilities. Consider security, compliance, and reporting that will be needed for the future.

6. Understand the Vendor Roadmap and Interact Regularly

Know the product roadmap and provide feedback on new features and trends and technology. Vendors often provide periodic briefings on the product roadmap through interactive forums such as customer advisory boards, webinars, and social groups. At OpenText, we have private and sponsored user groups for our Media Management solution and regular roadmap webinars to share current product development plans. We also have an active Customer Advisory Board as our listening post to the DAM community to direct feedback on new trends in the market, changes to business processes, and pain points. All these activities help drive new features in upcoming releases. Customers who continue to be involved and interact with the vendor product team are in a better position to know what is coming, plan for it, and achieve success in the long run.

At OpenText, we have private and sponsored user groups for our Media Management solution and regular roadmap webinars to share current product development plans. We also have an active Customer Advisory Board as our listening post to the DAM community to direct feedback on new trends in the market, changes to business processes, and pain points.

7. Establish Governance Policies

Bulk and ongoing consumption of assets. Customers are surprised at how challenging it is to get digital content into the system. During initial implementation, customers typically deal with multiple versions of digital content in various formats, distributed to one or more internal backup disks and network drives. In addition, content is also received from external agencies and partners, and this content needs to be processed and consumed. Establishing a well thought out plan to streamline and automate consumption is key part of implementation planning.

Tag assets with proper metadata. The phrase “garbage in, garbage out” applies to DAM systems. Metadata is a critical component to manage and find digital assets in the system. An asset ingested with bad metadata makes it challenging to find and correctly tag later. The governance policy should clearly define mandatory metadata and have a librarian or power user review incoming assets for consistency before the asset is released for consumption. This will ensure that the assets can be found by users accurately and metadata, taxonomy, and descriptions are normalized. The better the metadata definition, the easier it is to find assets and reduce user frustration.

Implement benchmarks, auditability, metrics, and reporting. Review the system periodically in the initial stages to make sure that it is being utilized by the user population. Some key metrics that would help in tracking user adoption are:

- Number of logins per day
- Number of searches conducted per day
- Number of assets downloaded
- Number of concurrent users in the system

8. Get Users on Board

Train users. Effective use of any software requires training. A comprehensive, quality training program results in higher user adoption. Even though DAM systems are intuitive, some level of training is needed to ensure users understand the feature sets, know how to do their day-to-day job in a DAM-enabled world, and can collaborate with other users. In cases where the system is customized, the training curriculum should also focus on the custom workflows and use cases so that users are familiar with the built system. Documenting your use cases, policies, and procedures helps train new users. To maximize your success, practice ongoing training.

Identify power users and empower them. Power users in different departments are the primary drivers of adoption in their group. Giving them responsibilities such as metadata validation, security management for their groups, and participation in internal meetings on the project get them involved and connected so that feedback from users is heard and addressed quickly. It also serves as an effective marketing tool for the company since they are in touch with the internal user community and can become a champion of the DAM effort within the organization.

Arrange periodic reviews with key users. In addition to identifying power users in various departments, management should hold periodic meetings with the key business users to hear their concerns and requirements. This maintains momentum for the initiative, allows issues to be identified and addressed early, and also looks for creative ways to expand adoption within the organization. In some cases, mandating adoption may be required.

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9. Integrate DAM with internal systems

Integrate DAM with business, operations, creative, and production teams. DAM systems offer more value to an organization when integrated with other systems, rather than just a standalone system. For instance, integrating DAM with a SAP® Customer Relationship Management (CRM) application provides a way to store product shots and repurpose them in the SAP portal, and for DAM, to acquire metadata from product master data systems in SAP. The synergies achieved allow for more effective brand control since the portal systems now have access to current, approved versions of brand assets and relevant metadata in DAM. Another key use case for integration is with creative systems. Several DAM vendors provide native integration with Adobe® Creative Suite® products and complex video editing programs. Such integrations facilitate users' ability to easily create, edit, and save content directly into a DAM system and also perform review and approval cycles seamlessly.

10. Establish a DAM community

DAM and social media. Social media in the enterprise facilitates improved collaboration and communication between diverse groups and geographically distributed employees. Several DAM vendors now provide social media tools as part of the DAM solution, which allows for greater collaboration, tagging, ability to view/comment on content residing in DAM, and a visually engaging interface that their users can use without any extensive training. Viewing, commenting, sharing, and interacting with people and content in real-time accelerates the production, packaging, and distribution of content.

Establish a viable DAM community. Creating a community using social media tools for DAM enhances and accelerates adoption of the application throughout the enterprise. Many users are already familiar with the social media tools for the web, and having an internal system allows users to interact and collaborate on content, helping to increase adoption.

A core strategic investment

From what started off as mainly an archival solution, DAM has taken center stage as a core strategic investment for large and small enterprises. DAM connects people, processes, and technology, amplifying workplace productivity and increasing the value of your digital media, your brand, and your organization. As technology continues to move forward, keeping up with the latest changes is difficult. Be diligent in your investigation and plans and you will reap great rewards from your investment with a successful DAM implementation.

ABOUT OPENTEXT

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