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SECURITY

Building a Digital Asset Management Framework: Blueprint for Success

The growing amounts of digital and rich media content being created by organizations can easily spin out of control or get lost in corporate systems. Digital asset management systems can help keep things in order—if they're designed and implemented properly.

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Digital Asset Management Ratchets Up Content Controls

AN ORGANIZATION'S DIGITAL content should be among its most valuable assets, particularly when it comes to engaging with customers, prospects and business partners. And today, with corporate websites playing such a central role in helping promote products and brands, being able to effectively manage collections of videos, images, audio files and other forms of digital media is a key element in business success.

That's where digital asset management (DAM) technology comes in. DAM systems automate the process of indexing, maintaining and managing multimedia content. In the past, they primarily were the province of publishing and media companies with vast stockpiles of rich media content. But that's no longer the case: Organizations in various industries stand to benefit from well-planned DAM strategies that give them tighter control over their multimedia assets and make it easier

for business users to find items in corporate systems.

This three-part guide explores the value proposition of using DAM tools and provides practical advice on how to build the framework for a successful implementation. First, we dig into the key issues involved in [developing a rich media management strategy](#). Next, the managers of TV One's search for the right Web content management system discuss why the cable television network's choice hinged on finding software that offered both [DAM and digital rights management capabilities](#). We close by cataloging tips on [how to justify investments in DAM initiatives](#) to corporate executives. ■

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Rich Media Flood Pushes Digital Asset Management to Forefront

TRYING TO LOCATE a specific video or JPEG from among more than 100,000 digital assets spread across 17,000 electronic folders can easily become an exercise in frustration. That was a common occurrence at Messer Construction Co. before it implemented a digital asset management strategy in 2010.

Although digital content such as photographs, drawings and videos were playing an increasingly key role in Messer's marketing efforts, the Cincinnati company retained a basic approach to storing that material: Divide it up into folders stored on a single network drive.

Marketers and designers uploaded content to that shared drive, and other users could then dig around to find what they wanted and download it to their own computers.

But as rich media files proliferated on the drive, it became difficult to find the right content. As a result, users often grabbed old versions of content by mistake or ended up reusing items they had earlier copied to their hard drives.

"Using a search function to look within 100,000 files for text on a network drive takes a long, long time," said Sean Davis, a marketing specialist at Messer. "Searching only the file name might be more efficient, but that

means you're relying on 100,000 assets being named as you would have named them."

Also, the available network bandwidth didn't support rapid access to large video files. And after a while, the network drive could no longer accommodate all the files being created by users.

KEEP 'EM SEPARATED?

But when Messer decided to buy a [digital asset management](#) (DAM) system for its marketing collateral materials, it faced another decision: whether to store all of its digital assets on that system or also continue with an existing document management application that was part of a construction management software suite being used by other parts of the company. In the end, officials elected to keep the marketing content separated from the other information.

Messer's situation is an example of how a DAM strategy can become necessary for companies with rich media assets but gets complicated when the requirements of multiple departments are factored into the equation.

"Think of all the ways you can use a single photo,"



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said Seth Earley, CEO of Earley & Associates Inc., a content management consulting firm in Carlisle, Mass. “In marketing, for store signage, on the e-commerce site, published in a catalog, as a product label—each may require different functionality.”

Some organizations might find they don't need a full-fledged DAM product. If the digital assets reside mainly in a specific department, such as project management or marketing, it might be better to deploy an application tailored for that department's requirements. Project management or product information management applications often include some DAM features, Earley said; the same goes for marketing resource management, Web content management (WCM) and enterprise content management software. But those features might not have the same depth as the ones in a DAM system.

The first step in developing a digital asset management strategy is to identify the main [use cases for DAM](#) in the organization, advised Dan Taylor, director of delivery services at Earley & Associates. “With those use cases, you can flesh out the requirements for the DAM implementation,” he said.

A BROAD VIEW

For example, semiconductor manufacturer Intersil Corp., in Milpitas, Calif., needed a product that would provide a range of capabilities for managing digital assets, Web content, documents, marketing materials

and mobile content delivery. Intersil selected Adobe Systems Inc.'s CQ5 suite of WCM software because it offered all of that and was integrated with the Adobe Creative Suite—Intersil's main authoring and Web design tool.

If the digital assets reside mainly in a specific department, it might be better to deploy an application tailored for that department's requirements.

“That integration with Creative Suite, plus the digital asset management capabilities, makes it a more seamless experience for us,” said Robert Reneau, senior Web business manager at Intersil.

On the other hand, a content management system often lacks [advanced DAM features](#) and isn't suited to every organization's needs. “Content suites may not have some of the specialized areas of a pure digital asset management system, like watermarking of images or video support,” Taylor said.

Mark Gilbert, an analyst at Gartner Inc., in Stamford, Conn., also cited a lack of video editing and processing features in WCM systems. “Most of those platforms don't have an advanced environment for video, such as rendering to multiple platforms or tiling,” he said, referring to the process of breaking video graphics into tiles,



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or sections, so only those that change are refreshed, thus improving performance.

Messer Construction ultimately selected Widen Enterprises Inc.'s cloud-based DAM software for managing its marketing assets. The reason it decided not to build an enterprisewide system is that the digital media used in marketing has different characteristics and requirements than the content used by departments such as project management. Those operations generate project information, drawings, specifications and other lightweight content that's kept in a construction management system from Computer Methods International Corp.

Davis said the version control and content tagging capabilities of Widen's DAM tools make it easier for Messer's marketing workers to locate files. "Before, time was spent on looking for assets," he said. "Now it's spent on properly tagging and categorizing them so they can be more easily found." —*Sue Hildreth*



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AFTER SIX YEARS of using an increasingly inefficient homegrown content management system to maintain its Web presence, followed by a stint with the Joomla open source CMS, the TV One cable television network realized it needed to go in a different direction.

TV One has been steadily expanding its lineup of lifestyle and entertainment programs since its launch in 2004, adding original shows and concert performances to a collection of old sitcom favorites like *Good Times* and *The Jeffersons*. As programming expanded, so did its rich media management needs, and the homegrown CMS started falling short in many respects, especially in the realm of digital asset management (DAM).

The increasing [demands of DAM](#) and of associated digital rights management processes, which help automate notices of copyright protections and keep track of authorship and redistribution issues, were growing beyond the scope of the network's Web content management application. TV One initially turned to Joomla, but officials at the cable network quickly saw that the open source product required a heavy amount of development skills to use at a time when they wanted to simplify the process of posting content on TV One's website as part of an effort to increase the amount of

content offered there. It had become clear that the network couldn't continue to rely on already-overworked program producers to constantly create website landing pages, a regular task required to make the system work.

In addition to simplifying its Web publishing processes, TV One was looking to set up a more sophisticated site on a more stable platform, with higher-quality content and a process for making videos and other material available to a host of mobile devices. In 2011, TV One's leadership decided that it was time for a website relaunch and rebranding—and another CMS.

"Our strongest asset is video," said Allison Rand, vice president for digital media at TV One LLC in Silver Spring, Md. "We needed a website that displays those assets in the best possible way."

WATCHING THE COMPETITION

Rand joined TV One, which targets a primarily African-American audience, in November 2011 and helped guide the company through the process of [choosing a new CMS](#). She said the first step in figuring out a technology replacement that would solve TV One's multiple problems involved an "elaborate competitive analysis"



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designed to compare how other cable and media companies managed their digital presences.

“We looked at everything from open source to enterprise products,” she said. “I looked at every other cable company website, looked at every product, and we analyzed how each worked. We spent a lot of time looking at the competition.”

Rand helped put together a search team—drawing from all interested departments—that met regularly to hammer out a list of needs. The participants understood that the digital media team would be small, so any technology they settled on would have to be effective without requiring many hands to maintain.

“We had a pretty long list, given that we knew we wanted to do this fast and efficiently,” said Jay Schneider, executive vice president of operations at TV One.

Rand worked with all departments in the midsize company to make sure everyone’s voice was heard. Marketing, programming, production and other concerns were considered, she said, with different executives spearheading various parts of the project.

SHARING THE LEAD ROLES

“The user experience, the design and how we create content is important to me,” she said. “And the IT stuff and how the site would work in our infrastructure are important to Jay.” In addition, TV One’s chief marketing officer focused on the [digital asset management issues](#).

The search team closely evaluated about a dozen

CMS products, including WordPress, OpenText’s Vignette and Autonomy’s TeamSite. After a three-month evaluation process, the group settled on Adobe Systems Inc.’s CQ5 product, citing the product’s ease of use when it comes to publishing content.

CQ5 also smoothed out managing digital rights and made it possible for content creators to publish “on the fly,” Rand said. It meant that producers would be freed up for more important tasks and editors and writers could take over the posting duties.

*“We looked at everything from open source to enterprise products.”
—ALLISON RAND,
vice president for digital media, TV One LLC*

After TV One settled on CQ5 and signed a contract with Adobe in March 2012, it hired Baker & Hill, a graphic design company in Washington, D.C., to create the new website’s look and navigation. To make sure its digital assets would work well with the design, TV One also contracted with Digital Primates, a development consulting firm in Chicago that had experience with Adobe CQ5.

“We spent hours and hours and hours on the user experience with Baker & Hill,” Rand said, explaining that the design firm built the wireframe schematics for the individual pages, and Digital Primates made sure they



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would translate properly in a production environment. The CQ5 technology also enabled the use of responsive design techniques, through which the HTML code for the site is automatically adjusted to display on different mobile devices.

TV One launched the new website in August 2012 concurrently with the premier of two new shows: *R&B Divas* and *The Rickey Smiley Show*. Rand said the site's video capabilities are "remarkably better" than what was supported by the original one. In addition, the DAM process is now much smoother, publishing to the site is easier and traffic has been climbing each month, according to Rand. "Everybody is incredibly happy with the site," she said.

AN EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

But Rand added that there have been some difficulties along the way. For one thing, TV One didn't foresee the amount of time it would need to migrate existing content and properly set up the DAM procedures in the new system. "One of the benefits to CQ5 is how fast you can build new content, but it has to be set up correctly," she said.

A couple of other valuable lessons also came out of TV One's experience.

"Choose your content management system before

you choose your redesign vendor," Rand said. As part of the request for proposal (RFP) process, Rand met with Web designers and asked them for recommendations on the CMS. Many of them, she said, recommended open source products despite the organization's lack of a development team. After its CMS search resulted in the choice of CQ5, TV One had to revise its RFP to specify designers with CQ5 experience.

The CQ5 technology enabled the use of responsive design techniques, through which the HTML code for the site is automatically adjusted to display on different mobile devices.

"If we had decided on CQ5 before we met with vendors, we would have saved a lot of time," Rand said.

Rand also thinks it's important to understand how a CMS works before writing page-template requirements. She said that if she had had a better sense of the way content posters could use CQ5, she would have been better able to list workable page needs. "We were lucky," Rand said, adding that consultants from Digital Primates "sat in on every call and really guided us. But nothing beats firsthand experience." —Jonathan Gourlay



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FEW THINGS ARE more frustrating than spending time and effort redoing work. And yet many business users end up doing just that because re-creating a file, a Word document or even an image that no one can locate often doesn't take as long as trying to find it in corporate systems.

But as more and more content is created and organizations collect and store it in an ever-expanding array of data types, it's becoming more critical to efficiently manage the process. That's especially true at companies where video and digital images and other types of rich media assets play an increasingly important role in marketing and other business uses across multiple channels. And it's not just about customer-facing assets: Corporate training videos are one example of internally focused content that needs to be kept track of.

"Most people aren't managing the content properly, and that has obvious consequences," said Anjali Yakkundi, an analyst at Forrester Research Inc. in Cambridge, Mass. "Content has to be refreshed across channels and regions, and it's kind of getting lost because content complexities are growing among organizations."

Digital asset management (DAM) tools have the

potential to help simplify the creation, storage, retrieval and distribution of a wide variety of rich media content. But before IT or business managers can hope to [deploy a DAM system](#), they have to make the business case for adopting the technology.

That comes down to proving one or more of three key business arguments, said Beau Brewer, vice president of business development at Siteworx Inc., a consulting firm in Reston, Va. And which of those arguments—or use cases—will fit the bill “depends on the business problem you're trying to solve,” Brewer said.

CAN'T USE WHAT YOU CAN'T FIND

“No. 1 is the need to find digital assets so they don't have to be re-created,” Brewer said, explaining that the inability to do so is a common problem among media companies but increasingly is becoming a pain point at other organizations. If you can show how much time would be saved by being able to locate rich media content more easily, you can begin to build a strong business case for DAM.

The second avenue for justifying a DAM investment to the powers that be is how the technology can



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streamline the communication process between workers who create or use digital assets, according to Brewer. “Effective digital asset management avoids all the emails being passed back and forth,” he said, and that makes for easier and more efficient communication that then becomes part of structured business workflow processes.

“Effective digital asset management avoids all the emails being passed back and forth.”

*—BEAU BREWER,
vice president of business development,
Siteworx Inc.*

Third, he said, is the argument that DAM helps marketing and brand messaging: “It enables your digital presence to be kind of central in your go-to-market plans.” That can be big considering all the different channels through which organizations communicate with customers and business partners. An effective DAM implementation will support consistent branding and promotions “across digital channels, print campaigns, television and increasingly other offline channels,” Brewer said.

Building the DAM business case “is really about identifying the business problem,” Yakkundi said. Questions to ask: What content is getting lost? What’s

being remade unnecessarily? “There are a lot of rights issues also tied to all this,” she said, explaining that at some organizations losing track of what types of publishing rights are tied to certain images or videos could have expensive consequences.

Rich media content assets often must be shared across numerous channels; how people manage all those different renditions of content, keeping the brand consistent yet tailored to each channel, is key to demonstrating the need for a [DAM strategy](#), Yakkundi said.

It’s also important to secure an executive sponsor for the initiative, of course. But Yakkundi pointed out that in the case of managing rich media assets, “having champions among end users involved in the process” is especially important because a lot of organizations implement DAM systems to manage the content creation process.

USER VOICE NEEDS TO BE HEARD

End users of any DAM deployment will be key to building a business plan, agreed Matt Leopold, former director of customer experience at TE Connectivity Ltd., a manufacturer of communications switches based in Schaffhausen, Switzerland. Leopold, who has been involved in a couple of DAM initiatives, suggests bringing in the key users from departments such as marketing, sales and human resources to help develop the business case.

“I always think of sales and marketing first because



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that's the customer-facing side, and that's where you'll find the biggest impact," said Leopold, who now works in the U.S. offices of a consumer goods company based in Sweden.

Tim Walters, an analyst at Digital Clarity Group, a content management consultancy in New Hyde Park, N.Y., cited several other important considerations. "Zeroing in on the business process or problem you're hoping to solve with DAM both now and in the future is the main issue," he said. But beyond that, organizations must determine the types, formats and volumes of the assets they need to manage; what will be done with those assets and what role they'll play in customer interactions; the degree of DAM integration needed to support that role in a customer experience management strategy; and finally, whether the [rich media management product](#) will be installed in-house or as a cloud application.

"These are all aspects of the business case," said

Individual users are almost always on board when someone explains what an effective DAM system will do for them.

Walters, "and will help determine how critical the management of your digital assets are and what value they hold."

While the business case must be made to the people holding the organization's purse strings, it's not much of an issue to sell it to the end users the way it is for other technology deployments. Individual users are almost always on board when someone explains what an effective DAM system will do for them.

"They're not motivated by financials," Brewer said. "They're motivated by the idea of their jobs getting easier." —Jonathan Gourlay



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