Digital Asset Management:

It's about the components, not a single off-the-shelf system

About this eBook

We believe implementing Digital Asset Management is 70% educating people and aligning process, and 30% technology. But, we believe a traditional off-the-shelf DAM technology is only one piece of the puzzle. So what's missing?

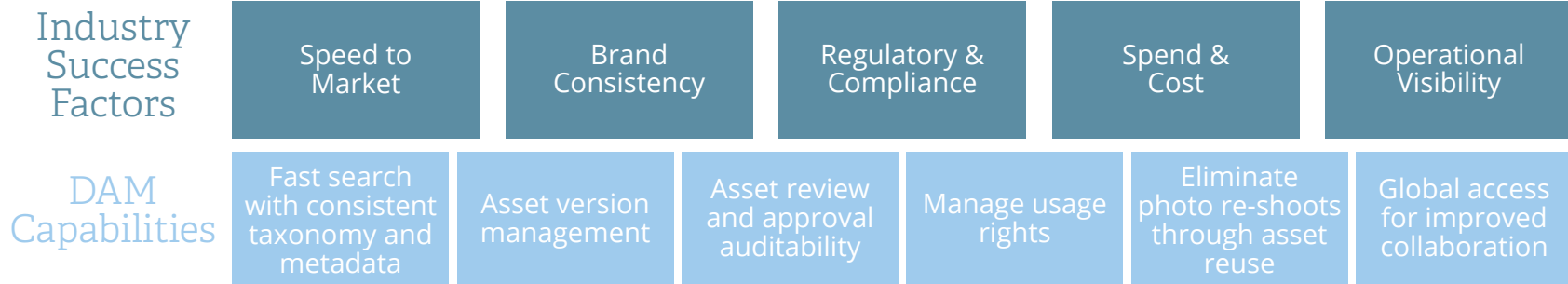*See page 15 for DAM component use case*

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The new digital environment requires a thoughtful approach to Digital Asset Management. The complex mix of teams, brands, processes, and technologies that marketing and creative leaders navigate is at the heart of DAM challenges. Asset volumes are increasing along with the pace of competition. Combine this with the variety of assets required to reach your audience, and you wind up in an environment where your team copes with overly complicated and fragmented solutions.

Few marketing organizations have taken a step back from day-to-day survival to improve. This Zee Jay Digital eBook discusses an approach to taming the bear that is Digital Asset Management.

DAM is more than a repository - it's marketing's product

In many industries, marketing's use of Digital Asset Management directly relates (or should) to a company's ability to compete. You could go as far as to claim that in Consumer Tech, CPG, Apparel, Retail ecommerce, and other hypercompetitive consumer industries, marketing organizations are in the digital asset business. As such, managing the creation and flow of assets — and data that describes them — should be a well-oiled machine. Nevertheless, it's typically not.

Digital Asset Management supports success factors across industries

Industry Success Factors	Speed to Market	Brand Consistency	Regulatory & Compliance		Spend & Cost	Operational Visibility
DAM Capabilities	Fast search with consistent taxonomy and metadata	Asset version management	Asset review and approval auditability	Manage usage rights	Eliminate photo re-shoots through asset reuse	Global access for improved collaboration

As per usual, it starts with customer

Marketing's customers require DAM provide the ability to search for digital assets that are "trusted." Trust is the confidence that the asset is what it is supposed to be, in brand, production-ready, and approved for use.

Beyond the the customer's needs, those responsible for creating the asset require DAM to provide relief from as much low value work as possible – with automated resizing, Adobe CS integration, and omni-channel delivery capabilities.

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As the textbook says: "focus on process"

Delivering searchable and trusted assets is not without pre-work; and as the textbook says, the pre-work is process.

Historically many DAM implementations focus on the asset fulfillment process.

But to fully enable creative and marketing needs, DAM designers should reach further back into asset creation processes, formulating metadata and asset types as executions are planned. Properly planned, these underlying structures help avoid manual and repetitive data entry as assets are created.

Each company will need to study its own, unique end-to-end process (see Figure 1). From inception of product or campaign concepts through asset creation, to distribution to storage, one or more systems will be part of the sought automation, and depth of design in the creation process is central to end-to-end, omni-channel automation.

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Figure 1 - Digital Asset Lifecycle
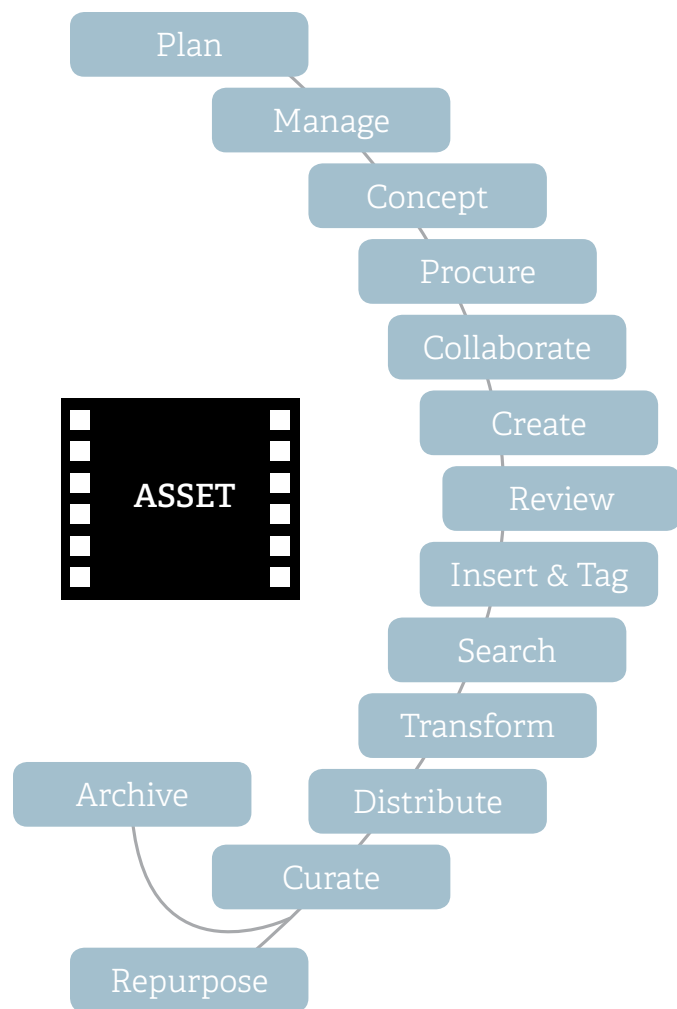
Plan: The ability to plan the effort that the asset will be created for.

Manage: The ability to manage the resources and processes needed to create an asset.

Concept: The ability to develop the idea that becomes the asset.

Procure: The ability to purchase asset creation services.

Collaborate: The ability to share files and ideas to create the final marketing asset.

Create: The ability to create all pieces of the asset in a sequential and logical supply chain.

Review: The ability to verify, annotate, suggest, correct and update of an asset.

Ingest & Tag: The ability to load assets into a hierarchical and logical classification and tag with metadata and security parameters in the most efficient, complete way.

Search: The ability to search and find the asset you're looking for.

Transform: The ability to create derivative formats from one master file.

Distribution: The ability to send assets to anyone, anywhere, anytime.

Curate: The ability to perform ongoing processes of ensuring the continued usability of asset collection management.

Repurpose: The ability to maximize asset reuse to increase ROI.

Archive: The ability to retire assets and store at the end of its use life.

The resulting process and nomenclature creates a human-centric solution of extended and integrated capabilities...

Marketing and asset creators should look into the planning and specification of work to answer:

- Who is involved in the conception of a product and campaign?

- What are units of planning (campaigns, jobs, concepts, etc.)? In addition, how do they relate to one another?

- At what level does creative direction enter the picture? Program? Campaign? Component?

- At what levels do budgets and creative approval occur?

- What is the cadence of asset creation? How does cadence relate to business planning?

- What is the lowest level of tracking work and has unique process?

- How do agencies and vendors regard their work? At what level do they track/bill?

Response to these questions allows the solution to be built on foundational processes and critical hierarchies of information — understanding how marketing and creative think of assets (i.e., how one job relates to another job). Further, these responses manifest in the study and design of the processes that surround asset-level (see Figures 2 and 3) creation and distribution, creating context for information exchanges with those teams adjacent to marketing content creation, such as Product Development, Insights, and Brand Management. The resulting process and nomenclature creates a human-centric solution of extended and integrated capabilities that, done right, helps to avoid rework for future initiatives beyond the immediate DAM solution.

Figure 2 - Approach to Process Requirements

At the highest level marketing process (level 0), marketing plans and executes programs and campaigns to achieve business goals in orchestration with adjacent business units and external vendors. Focusing on the creation of photos and of components (level 1), the process areas related to DAM become apparent. Delving deeper, the steps required to create photos and components (level 2) become apparent. The level 2 processes create high quality DAM requirements.

Marketing Level 0	1.0 Integrated Marketing Planning	2.0 Campaign/ Program Planning	3.0 Campaign/ Program Development	4.0 Production and Logistics

Marketing Level 1		3.1 Photo Content Creation	3.2 Component Creation

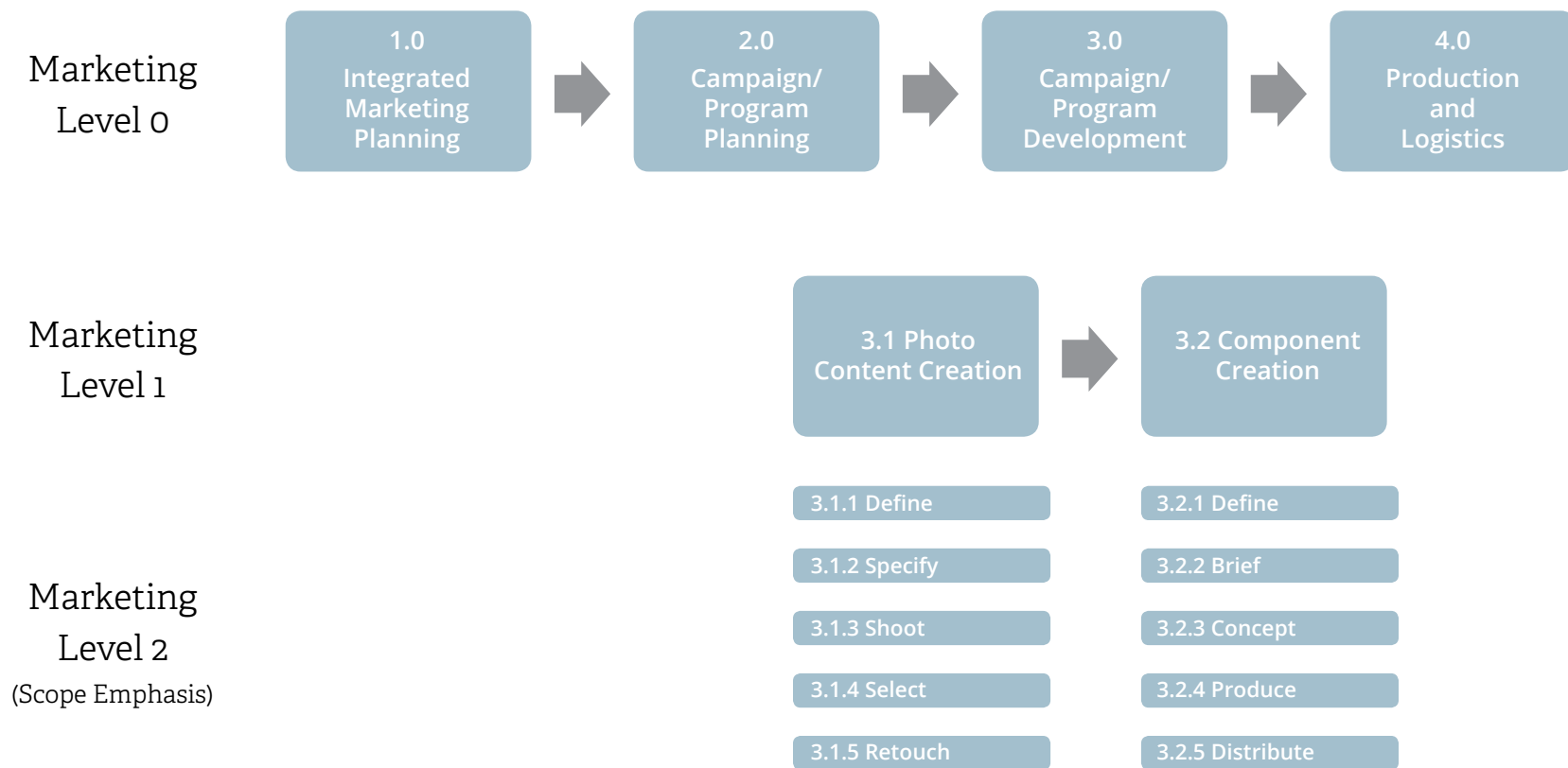| Marketing Level 2 (Scope Emphasis)	3.1.1 Define	3.2.1 Define
	3.1.2 Specify	3.2.2 Brief
	3.1.3 Shoot	3.2.3 Concept
	3.1.4 Select	3.2.4 Produce
	3.1.5 Retouch	3.2.5 Distribute

Figure 3 - Marketing Operatios Hierarchy

A common misstep marketing process designers encounter is not considering how the project hierarchy relates to the asset hierarchy. In this example, a combined project and asset hierarchy shows sample communication and financial information for each level.

	Hierarchy	Communication Info	Financial Info	Key Attributes
Strategy	**Plan**	• Channel Plan • Audience Characteristics	• Budget	• Programs • Channel • Audience
	Campaign	• Campaign Plan • Communication Plan • High Level Schedule • Audience Segmentation	• Budget • Forecast	• Campaign Type • Message • Channel • Theme • Audience • Products • Sub Audience
Planning & Execution	**Media Strategy**	• Project Plan • Creative Brief • Creative Review Presentation	• Budget • Forecast	• Project Owner • Product Attributes • Deliverables and Timing
	Component	• Creative Brief Check Form • Catalog Request Form • Package Request Form • Email Brief • POS Request Form	• Actuals	• Component Type • Component Specs • In Market Date
	Element	• Laydown Photo Shoot Request Form • Model Photo Shoot Request Form • Packaging Request Form	• Actuals	• Collection • Product Description • Style # • Setting Detail • Silhouette • Shot Type • Brand • Gender • Category • Shot Number • Fit • Season

Solution considerations

Think of the solution as an architecture that includes metadata capture, internal and external contributors, and approvals that enable WIP and finished-goods creation.

Formulating a DAM solution is more about drawing on the know-how of your marketing and IT teams, your process, and commitment to change management than it is about selecting a single technology. As you define a solution, consider:

- **Approach to technology.** The determination of technology is a combination of understanding a vision for what types of tools are needed to manage certain types of assets, what tools are available in-house to store specific types of assets, and disposition to buy or build. In many successful implementations, a DAM solution is comprised of asset creation-specific tools and repositories that allow assets to easily flow into downstream solutions with functionality to promote search ability and reuse of an expanded user base.

- **A DAM system is only part of the solution.** No one tool enables all process areas; therefore align solution capabilities to process and business requirements. Traditional DAM solutions are mature and robust enough to handle the largest and most complex organizations and assets, but do not mistake this for a one-stop-DAM-shop. Think of the solution as an architecture that includes metadata capture, internal and external contributors, and approvals that enable WIP and finished-goods creation.

- **Solution is living and breathing.** New roles, regions, compliance requirements, brands, products, asset types, will continually be part of business as we know it, and therefore processes, taxonomies, and technologies will evolve over time.

- **Assume 'Quality at the Source'.** If you want to realize the business benefits of the solution, those on the front line of asset creation and usage — those defining products, and customer

communications — need to be accountable for the data they create by formally capturing it. The people who trigger the work and create the asset are responsible for capturing and entering the correct metadata.

- **Change Management is critical.** Current state processes and metadata are likely to have room for more formality and rigor. The definition and implementation of process and metadata change, bringing new procedures and accountabilities to the surface. Managers must enforce the changes.

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Example: photo intensive environment

DAM teams can coexist within marketing. In some parts of the organization, the work may focus on the creation of product photography; in other parts, work may focus on creating marketing materials.

Image creation in an intensive photo environment involves a series of steps: planning the images to be captured in a shoot, identifying selects, and retouching (then they are applied to layouts through their useful life). Without an effective solution, common challenges throughout this process are:

- Creative team managing the shoot must look for critical metadata from those required to define it
- Creative team spending significant time searching for existing assets
- Cumbersome transfer to vendors and partners
- Losing assets (requiring recreation, rework)
- Difficulty finding the correct assets or working on outdated versions of assets
- Potential to violate usage rights
- Inconsistent identification of assets (inconsistent metadata and taxonomy strategies)
- Poor/no policies for storage/retention/deletion of assets (huge/growing file volumes)
- Previous efforts to satisfy DAM needs have been costly and have not addressed people, process, and strategic alignment issues (heavy focus on function/feature)
- No overarching and sustainable strategy for the management of digital assets– no lifecycle process

To solve the problem, we can first break down the process into granular process steps, and map best-suite technology to each step (see Figure 4). Then define how people and metadata flow

across the solution (see Figure 5). In this example, the DAM system holds work-in-progress and final production assets. High-resolution RAW photo shoot images are stored in yearly volumes by project number. Photo Edit & Approval System transports high-resolution RAW images.

Figure 4 - DAM Solution Components by Process Area

Process Area	Project Mgt. System	Photo Shoot Mgt.	Shoot Approval System	Filer Server	Project Mgt. System	Work In Progress (WIP)	Finished Goods
3.1 Photo Element Creation	3.1.1 Define	3.1.2 Specify / 3.1.3 Shoot	3.1.4 Select / 3.1.5 Retouch				3.1.5 Retouch
3.2 Marketing Component Creation				3.2.1 Define / 3.2.2 Brief		3.2.3 Concept / 3.2.4 Produce	3.2.5 Distribute
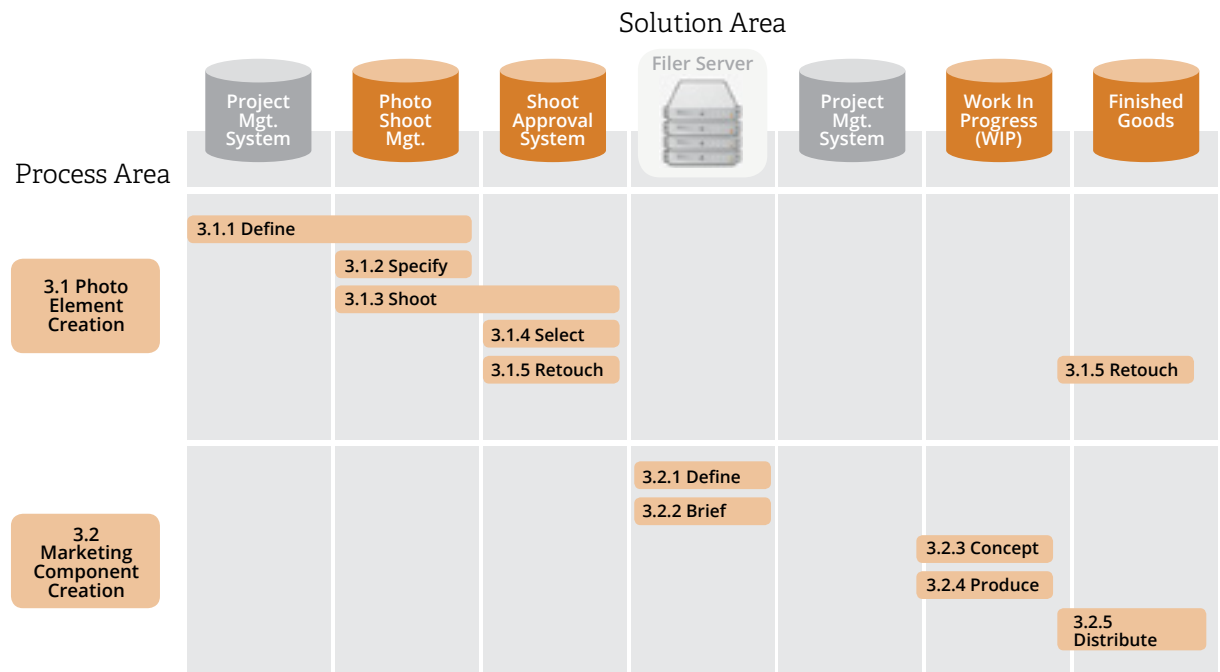
Figure 5 - Metadata and responsibilities by DAM Solution Component

Product Information System

3 Product identifier syncs with PIM pulling additional product information into Photo Shoot Management System

2 Merchandiser enters product information into Shot DB at shot level. Shot ID is generated and product is labeled.

Project Management System

Photo Shoot Management

1 Project Manager creates "Photo" project

4 Shot list is generated and given to Photographer

5 Digital Tech names each shot with provided shot identifier and loads low and high res into Photo Editing & Approval System

Photo Editing and Approval System

7 Photo goes through review, approval, annotation process

8 Once shot is approved low and high res with instructions are sent to retoucher

9 Retoucher retouches image

Retouching

10 Retoucher uploads final asset to Production Asset repository

11 DAM syncs final asset with Photo Shoot Management record - updating metadata

File Server

6 High res files from Photo Edit & Approval System are stored in yearly volumes by project number in backed-up volumes once selects are made

Digital Asset Management

Marketing Assets - Work in Progress

Production Assets

12 Designers link Marketing asset files to Production assets. Work-In-Progress is stored in WIP catalog

Thus, the DAM system is set up to succeed with good information-in and good information-out, versus garbage-in, garbage-out. The mix of upstream databases and approval technologies support each process area with the best-suited solution.

Crawl, Walk, Run – don't do this all at once. Break apart the process and technology to phase in over time.

The mix of upstream databases and approval technologies support each process area with the best-suited option.

Where to start

No matter that your organization does not have a solution today and only relies on shared drives; or your organization already has a complex mix of multiple home-grown and purchased solutions. Knowing where to start your improvements is difficult.

To initiate broad and sustainable improvements, establish business leadership (i.e., a Steering Committee) and rely on a tried-and-true approach to system implementation. Initial (almost stifling) complexity may be overcome with assessment methodologies that rigorously review current tools and technologies, state of metadata, quantification of inefficiencies, and the content creation process. Our experience has helped our clients learn a few key lessons:

• DAM solutions, more than many others, critically rely on collaboration between asset creators/users (customers). DAM improvement initiatives will fail if all groups are not appropriately engaged.

• Understand digital asset management isn't just managing pictures and graphics, but lots of hard work developing specific standards, processes, taxonomies, and internal expertise. As the world has become more digital, the need to efficiently create, manage and deploy asset content across the globe has become critical to a company's success.

• Understand digital asset management and the important role it plays enabling the successful global company. Speed to market and the ability to quickly create and trans-create content at the speed of the marketplace is the secret many of the world's most successful companies employ to maintain and grow their market share.

- Look at the big picture and understand the asset lifecycle and the multiple technologies that interconnect it. DAM is part of a robust ecosystem that starts with the capture of product images and their important identifying data through to the deployment of carefully constructed marketing pieces.

- Recognize that successful DAM is more than technology. Whatever system (vendor) and implementation team you choose needs to understand the big picture of how it all fits together. They need to have a significant background in the creation and use of marketing assets and understand the unique needs of the creative and marketing community.

DAM implementation consultants have historically focused on technology, rather than on the full asset lifecycle. We believe that expanding the frame of the solution and focusing on process greatly maximizes the business value of technology investments over the long haul.

About Zee Jay Digital

Zee Jay Digital is focused on the transformation of marketing. We are built to address the industry's challenge to deploy marketing technology for benefits we believe now possible.

Our consultants have the broad experience needed to unify marketing disciplines — blending organization, marketing and technology strategies into vision and execution, while enhancing the customers' journey.