

Make some time to give a DAM.

How to identify your requirements and choose a
Digital Asset Management system.

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What is a digital asset management system?

As our digital work rapidly increases, so does a business' needs to store their digital content in an effective manner. It is therefore no wonder that in 2022, the global DAM market is expected to be worth \$5.7 billion.

With quite literally 100's of DAM systems available with varying degrees of functionality, it can be a minefield choosing the right DAM technology for your organisation.

In this paper, we are going to

1. Look at how to go about choosing a DAM system
2. Talk about some common pitfalls to avoid when evaluating a DAM
3. Talk about some common pitfalls to avoid when evaluating a DAM

How to choose a Digital Asset Management system.

The first step in choosing any technology platform is to clarify what you want the system to do.

Technology is a tool, not a solution. Time and time again we see organisations believe that by implementing a new shiny tool, all of their problems will go away and this is almost never the case. Technology is only as good as the processes that surround it, and processes are only as good as the people who execute them.

To make sure that you are going to pick the right tool for your organisation, start by answering these simple questions:

Why do I need a DAM?

The starting point of any tool selection should start with a simple question – Why do I need a DAM, or What problem do I need to solve?

This isn't a technical question. It is a question aimed at your future DAM users, the people that administer, produce or consume digital content within your organisation. Think about what it is that you are trying to change, or what it is that you are trying to improve. What are the outcomes that you want to achieve?

Who will be using the DAM?

You need to understand who your DAM solution is for, and what their needs are. Modern DAM systems can come with various features over and above providing a simple library of content. Understanding your user base and how they will interact with the system will help you find a product that is fit for purpose.

Typically, there are three core user groups of any DAM system:

1. Users who administrate and govern the system and its contents
2. Users who add content to the system
3. Users who take content out of the system

You need to make sure you understand all these user groups and engage them early to establish requirements and to get them on board.

Make sure you know the following about your DAM users:

- Who's uploading new documents to your DAM
- Who's using assets from your DAM, and why
- How both these processes work now, and why
- What they like/don't like about the current process

What assets will be managed?

Before selecting any DAM platform, make sure you are clear on what digital assets you need to manage. Most organisations have different silos of users, all storing their own content or data in their own way.

For example, marketing may have a repository of video's, JPEG's and more, however your legal or compliance teams might have numerous PDF or word documents. Will you be using your DAM organisation wide? If so, who are the users? What do they need to store and in what format?

A clear understanding of what assets you're managing will give you a better idea of how to manage them. It will also give you a better understanding of what features to look for when selecting a new tool.

How will the DAM meet those needs?

Once you have established the Who, What and Why, you can start to think about How your new DAM system will meet these needs.

Having answered the previous questions, you will have a clear idea of the functionality and features needed to meet your requirements to enable you to start assessing potential DAM tools.

Typically you would want to assess your business requirements against the following features:

- How will my users access the DAM platform and does the tool support this? i.e. Does the system support single sign on? Should people be able to access the system via mobile?
- What access controls and permissions management are needed?
- What will the user experience be like for my users? i.e. is the platform compatible with PC and Mac? Are all browsers supported? Does the platform support drag and drop? How friendly is the User Interface?
- How will the platform architecture meet my business needs? i.e. Does the platform need to be cloud based or locally hosted? Is API connectivity supported? Will the platform be compatible with my tech stack and how easy is it to integrate?
- How will the search capabilities of the DAM ensure that users can find what they need quickly and easily? i.e. Does the tool support key word search? Does the tool support custom meta-data? Can the tool conduct in-document searches?
- How will the tool support cross collaboration for my users? i.e. Does the tool support workflow management? Can users add comments to assets? Does the tool have approval functionality?
- Does the tool support all file formats used by my user base? i.e. Are all your file formats compatible with the DAM tool? Can the tool transform assets into other file formats or versions, while maintaining the originals?
- How will the tool support the sharing, distribution or publishing of content? i.e. Does the tool support secure file transfer? Does the tool provide download links? Does the tool support web or social media publishing?
- How will the DAM vendor support my user base? i.e. What training materials are available? What does the support package look like? What are the support SLA's?

DAM mistakes to avoid.

Do not underestimate the importance of metadata.

Picking any new technology platform can be overwhelming and, in the rush to consider big-picture strategy, user experience, deployment and functionality, it's easy to overlook metadata. If you are buying a DAM for the first time, you might not even think about metadata.

In reality, metadata is the most important part of your DAM. Having a clear and structured metadata schema will ensure that assets can be found easily and governed efficiently. Every DAM will have some way of managing metadata, but different solutions will manage metadata in a different way. Make sure the DAM you choose has a metadata structure that will work and scale with your organisation, or can customise metadata structure to your own needs.

- How will the DAM vendor support my user base? i.e. What training materials are available? What does the support package look like? What are the support SLA's?

Do not underestimate the total cost of ownership (TCO).

Most DAMs will be priced / licenses based on one of two things: storage or users (or both).

- Storage-based pricing means that an organisation pays for the space that their assets require, regardless of the number of users accessing them.
- User-based pricing means that you are charged based on the number of users that have access to assets stored in the DAM.

When evaluating the pricing model of your DAM, do not only consider how many assets will be stored or how many users will need access right now, but also think about potential future requirements and scalability and what impact this could have on your costs. While many DAM implementations start as a solution for a single department with a limited number of users, they often get extended to others. Also remember that licensing

is only part of your cost. Your full price also needs to include:

- Implementation costs
- Ongoing support or training costs
- Any custom configuration or integration costs

Altogether, this makes up your total cost of ownership and this should be the figure you look at when you're evaluating different quotes from different DAM vendors.

Do not underestimate the importance of adoption.

User adoption is the single most important aspect of any technology implementation and often overlooked by even the most established of organisations. You could spend hundreds of thousands of pounds on a system and take months or even years getting it set up and optimised, but all of this would be worthless if the system is not used.

Think about how you are going to get your users on board, how will you get them excited about the platform, how will you make the system easy to access and use and how will you make sure that it is used properly? Will you have a large launch and comms plan to share your strategy? Will your users require detailed training to understand how to use the system effectively? And, will you do all of this using internal resources or will you need the help of an expert supplier to support you through this integral process?

Up to 46% of technology implementations fail due to poor user adoption. It is crucial you ensure yours does not.



In conclusion.

A DAM can be a huge time-saver and necessary tool for both your digital asset production teams and your digital asset users. Whether you're trying to drive collaboration and distribution of the latest content or just trying to connect globally disconnected teams with the right collateral, a DAM can help in a big way.

But before making a DAM purchase make sure you do your due diligence for what you need your DAM to do and who you need it to serve. Establish why you need DAM in the first place and what problems you are trying to solve.

Always start by identifying your people (DAM administrators, creators and consumers), who will be the users of your DAM system and what are their needs and expectations? Ask them how they access digital assets today, what's good about it and what doesn't work. What does the creative process look like, how do departments cross collaborate in the

creation of assets and how is content stored now?

Then consider what processes needed to support the user needs and what features could be required from a DAM system. Map out the big, key steps involved in the creation, storing and consumption of digital content and review these with your stakeholders.

Ensure that they're aware of what's expected from them and let them guide you with regards to possible gaps and issues.

With your people and processes in place, you can now look at which DAM technologies will support them. Assess your DAM vendors against how they can meet the requirements you have already identified by engaging your people and understanding the processes required, and don't forget to watch out for common mistakes!