

Creative Transformation Drives Customer Experience

How DAM solutions help marketers work smarter
and faster in today's dynamic digital landscape

Digital transformations are changing how businesses operate and deliver value to customers amid changing market requirements. They're uprooting out-of-date processes and helping companies put the customer at the center of everything they do.

Businesses today need to know as much as possible about who their customers are and where they are in their journey to purchase. And they need to use that knowledge to deliver an experience that is coherent, consistent, and relevant to those customers at every point of contact. That means every piece of marketing communication has to be tailored not only to the customer in question, but also to the device, channel, or platform they're using at that moment. If it isn't, it will only take that prospective customer a moment to click away to the competition. It's a massive task.

Though it sometimes feels like technology has changed marketing beyond recognition, in other ways marketing hasn't changed at all. It's still about getting the right message to the right person at the right time, and while technology can increasingly handle the latter two elements, getting the message right is still the preserve of human beings. Artificial intelligence (AI)-driven predictive analytics may offer the ability to deliver the "best next action" to move a customer on to the next stage of their journey, but it can't come up with that action itself; it's still choosing from a set of actions that a person came up with previously.

What this means is that 21st century marketing is a combination of creativity and technology. Indeed, research by Walker Sands Communications in 2018 found that 56% of marketers believe marketing requires an equal mix of the two elements.¹

However, these digital transformations are putting pressure on creative teams like never before. The rise of personalization and the proliferation of touchpoints mean a significant increase in the amount of content that needs to be created, and the number of variations on that content that are required. At the same time, the importance of building and maintaining customer trust means brand consistency is more important than ever.

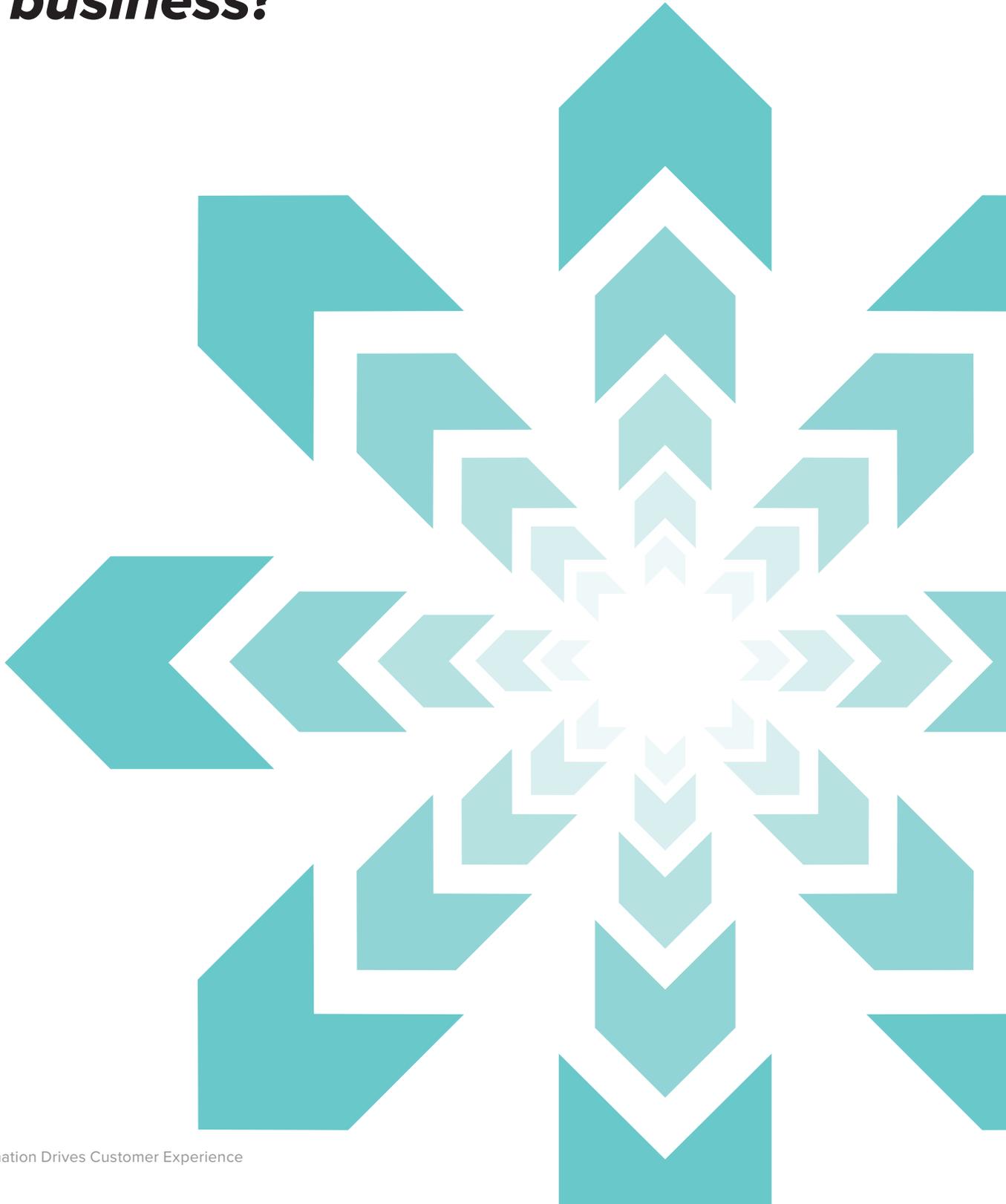
The effects of this pressure are three-fold:

1. Creative teams are finding it hard to craft the “right message” because so much of their time is being taken up on non-creative tasks, such as recreating files that already exist and producing and saving multiple file formats. Last year, 71% of creative leaders told The BOSS Group and Cella Consulting that their greatest challenge was having too many revisions and not enough time to complete creative work in a quality manner.²
2. Too much admin work can also mean that creative teams are short of time, making them slow to respond to changes in customer or competitor behavior.
3. The more content there is, the more chance there is of something being wrong. Using the wrong image could mean fines or even lawsuits, while incorrect brand elements can confuse and alienate customers, leading to lost sales and even damage to your brand.

That’s why digital asset management (DAM) systems are often seen as central to modern marketing operations — and regularly included in many digital transformations. By making sure that everyone is using the right assets, a DAM platform can free your creative team from admin nightmares, giving them time back for the creative part of their work and helping you take advantage of sudden changes in market conditions. It can prevent the use of out-of-date assets, or those that you no longer have permission to use, removing the risk of fines and liabilities. And it can make sure that your brand is applied consistently throughout all your communications, across all touchpoints, which is one of the fundamentals of great customer experience.

This [whitepaper](#) will look at what DAM systems are and what they can do for a business. It will help you build a business case for investing in DAM, and how to approach integrating one into the business. Finally, it will suggest some questions you should ask DAM vendors to make sure you buy a system that will meet your needs, now and in the future.

What is a DAM system and what can it do for your business?



A digital storage facility

A DAM system essentially does two things. Firstly, it is a tool teams use to store and organize your company's digital assets, for example images, videos, logos, documents, and audio files. Importantly, it does this from a central repository, so that everyone in the organization can source the assets they need from the same place. A central repository also means that the person in charge of the company's assets can ensure the right ones are there for their colleagues to use. And because the DAM platform's search functionality uses the assets' metadata as well as things like title and description, finding the assets you want is easy and intuitive.

An assets management tool

That's the storage part, but a DAM system goes further than that. It also includes controls that allow the management of assets out in the wilds of the company. These controls include tools that:

- Track and manage all versions of assets
- Allow you to schedule release dates for new assets and expiration dates for old ones
- Allow you to remotely update an asset across every use in the business to match any changes made in the DAM system's master file

Transformational business benefits

The benefits a DAM platform brings to a marketing organization fall into three main categories: reducing costs, increasing revenue, and mitigating risk.



Reducing costs

A DAM tool reduces costs in a number of ways. The most obvious is by streamlining workflows and making them more efficient. Primarily this will be in the creative department, but other parts of the organization will benefit too. For example, a DAM system can provide templates for regional marketing teams to create their own messaging, taking account of local language and culture, while locking in brand-critical elements such as typefaces, logos, and colors. And using the right assets the first time cuts down the number of times each piece of content needs to be reworked. DAM software can also provide self-service conversion of files into other formats, taking another admin task off the creative team's shoulders.

By making assets easier to find, a DAM system also makes them easier to reuse. A great example here is the rise of personalized sales videos. Salespeople are increasingly making one-to-one videos to build relationships with prospects and answer their questions without the need for a call or a meeting. But many of these questions will be the same, so rather than making a new video every time, the salesperson could easily find an appropriate existing video via the DAM system and reuse it with their own personalized introduction, saving time and ensuring consistency.

Increasing revenues

The same features that allow a DAM system to reduce costs also help improve the performance of the business. Perhaps the most important issue here is brand consistency. One of the crucial ideas of digital marketing is that brands are built step-by-step, at every point at which the business interacts with the consumer. Any inconsistency in the way the brand is presented will undermine its value.

Brand consultancy Interbrand puts it another way in one of their 10 Brand Strength factors: “If a brand is a promise, then lack of consistency means breaking your promises.”³ This will inevitably have long-term consequences for the business.

The failure of trust caused by brand inconsistency can have more immediate consequences too. In an online world filled with scammers and spoofers, the slightest discrepancy in the way a brand is presented can raise a customer’s suspicions and send them off to a competitor site.

Consistency is also a key component of a high-quality customer experience, which is in turn crucial for commercial success. Econsultancy’s “2019 Digital Trends” report found that “those organizations classifying themselves as ‘very advanced’ at CX are almost three times more likely than their peers to have exceeded their top 2018 business goal by a significant margin (37% vs. 13%).”⁴

Another important way a DAM platform can grow revenue is by helping the creative team better support the sales function. For companies selling big ticket items – whether B2C or B2B – the role of the salesperson is increasingly to act as a trusted adviser, helping the potential customer make the best possible buying decision. Establishing that authority starts long before the sales team gets involved, with content designed to establish thought leadership in the company’s area of operations. Add to that the fact that customers are far better informed than ever before, and are making contact with potential suppliers much later in their journey to purchase. The result is that the creative team’s role in sales enablement is increasingly crucial.

A DAM system helps here in two ways:

- 1.** First, by freeing the creative team from non-creative tasks, it gives them more time to create the additional assets the sales and marketing team needs.
- 2.** Second, deploying templates and making it easier to reuse existing assets means salespeople can also create brand-consistent assets.

Reducing risk

The third area in which a DAM tool can help is in mitigating risk. Not only does it keep all your business-critical assets together in one place, allowing you to protect them from loss, it also allows you to keep control over those assets that have a limited shelf life. If, for example, you've licensed an image to use in a particular campaign, you can set the DAM system's controls to take that image out of use once your license has expired, removing the risk of fines or lawsuits from the copyright owner. Additionally, making it easy for people to find authorized assets means it's less likely they'll look elsewhere and use assets that are not approved, with all the risk that implies.

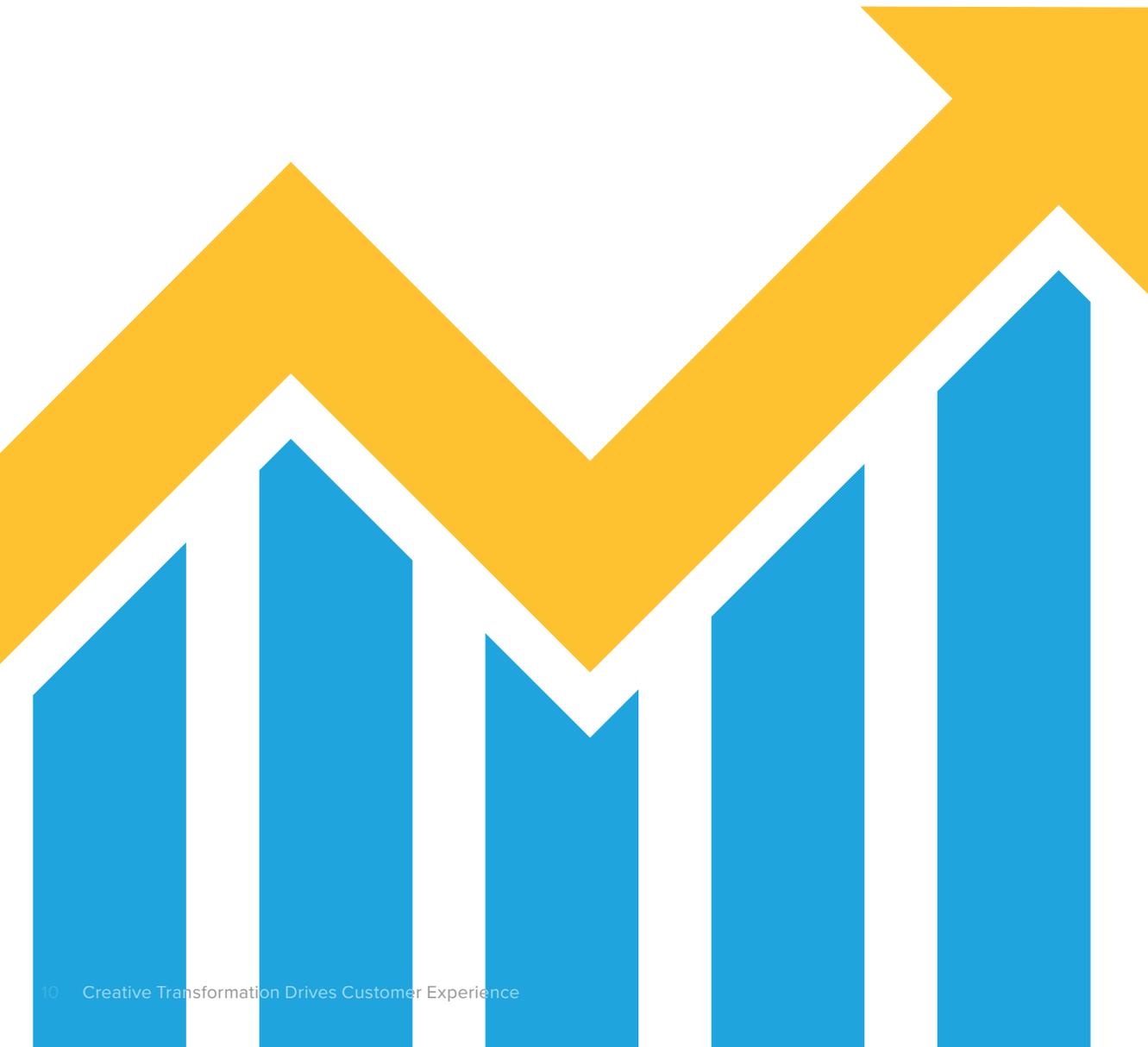
This level of control is particularly important for companies working with marketing teams across different regions who are creating content that won't be approved centrally before it's used. It also makes working with freelancers easier, more efficient, and less risky, since they can be given secure access to the DAM site rather than having to ask whoever commissioned them to provide the assets they need.

Beyond these human issues, the fact that the DAM system can be integrated with the rest of your marketing technology (martech) stack means every system that delivers content to the consumer will automatically use the most up-to-date assets in those communications. These integrations ensure that the right assets can be used in the creative work and other communications that will be delivered to the consumer.

Of course, almost every business will have a system – or systems – for storing its digital assets. However, these are often difficult to search and equally difficult to manage. It can be hard to know whether the version of the logo you've just found is the right one to use. And if the assets are split across a number of systems the inefficiencies and the risk of getting it wrong increase significantly.

Building the business case for a DAM system

The first step in introducing any new technology into your organization is to prepare the business case. Every business is different, and will benefit from a DAM system in different ways, but the crucial areas to consider are its ability to reduce costs and business risk, increase revenue, and deliver a consistent experience across multiple touchpoints.



CMO as DAM champion

What is also crucial at this stage is to build a bridge between the people who will use the DAM system and the people who will sign off the budget to pay for it. According to Econsultancy research from 2018, the CMO is the most likely member of the C-suite to be given responsibility for building the business case for investment in digital marketing and developing the customer experience.⁵

However, the ultimate decision on such investments only sits with the CMO in 11% of the companies surveyed. Authorization is the responsibility of the CEO in 32% of cases, of the executive leadership team collectively in 21%, and of the CFO in 12%. So in order to secure financial backing for digital transformation, the CMO must win over other members of the C-suite or other company leaders almost 90% of the time.

This situation casts the CMO in the role of DAM champion, but it also means that they must translate the reasons why a DAM system is necessary from the language of the users to that of the boardroom.

Use C-suite, no brand manager metrics

Brand managers have five key goals in a modern business. They want to enhance the customer experience, drive revenue growth, develop new products and services, improve the company's speed to market, and help it expand into new markets.

In comparison, company leaders are focused on personalization at scale, the quality of the customer experience across all channels, global brand consistency, and global expansion. Although the two lists are similar, the way the topics are discussed and, more importantly, how they are measured, will differ significantly between the marketing department and the C-suite.

Brand marketers are still most likely to be measured on the results of their own department, although this is changing. Typical metrics are either brand-based (prompted and unprompted recall, propensity to purchase, etc.), output-based (volume of leads generated), or channel-based (views, likes, shares, etc.). The most important thing a marketer can do in making the case for a martech investment is to ditch those metrics and talk in terms of the impact on the overall business. The same Econsultancy research found ^{78%} of companies said the board's view of digital marketing as a tactical function rather than a strategic one was a "very" or "quite" significant challenge when setting martech budgets.⁶

So the brief to the CMO has to focus on numbers that the board can appreciate – how much cost and risk will be reduced, how much extra revenue can be generated – and how all this can be measured.



Explain in terms of business benefits, not just features

The other trap to avoid is talking about the technology itself. The Econsultancy research found that 80% of the companies interviewed felt that a lack of board-level understanding and sponsorship of digital marketing was either a “very” or “quite” significant challenge when setting the proper level of digital investment.

A CMO who focuses on the features of a DAM platform is likely to fail in their bid for investment. Again, concentrating on the overall business benefits is the winning approach.

Secure CTO endorsement

At this point the CMO’s greatest ally is the CTO or head of IT. Whoever has final authority for digital marketing investment – the CEO, CFO, or the entire leadership team – will want the CTO to okay the new technology based not just on its suitability for the job, but also in terms of how well it will integrate with the rest of the company’s martech stack and its broader IT infrastructure.

Endorsement from the CTO of a DAM system as the right solution for the business and a foundational element of digital transformation will be vital to win over less tech-savvy board members.

Four steps to a successful implementation

The successful launch of a new technology into a company is never just about the technology. A successful implementation requires executive sponsorship, project management to make sure it happens on time and on budget, and change management to make sure the technology is embraced by the teams intended to use it.



Widen has identified four key steps in a successful martech implementation:

- Building your team
- Developing a strategy
- Setting the steps on the roadmap
- Leading people through the change

1. Building your team. The first step is to work out which teams and departments will be affected by the new technology strategy, and to identify the key managers and leaders within them. These people will form the basis of your leadership coalition, but it has to be built from the bottom up, and it's important that it represents all the people who'll be affected. It's also important to be open with everyone about what you're trying to do, both immediately and in the longer term. Think big.

2. Developing the strategy. Strategy can be defined as knowing today why and how you are going to win tomorrow. So building a strategy starts with knowing where you are today, in terms of people, processes, and technologies. As well as knowing who is going to be affected by the changes being planned. You also need to know how ready (or otherwise) they are for change and who your internal evangelists will be. After that, understand who is going to be training and coaching the teams in the use of the new technologies.

From a process perspective, you need to know what your major inbound and outbound processes are, and how their efficiency and effectiveness are measured. Finally, you need to know which systems in your martech stack will interface with the DAM platform, and what current integrations are in place.

The second step in the development of the strategy is to imagine a better way of doing things. In their book "Playing To Win," A.G. Lafley and Roger L. Martin set out the five questions you need to ask yourself when defining your

strategy: What is our winning aspiration? Where will we play? How will we win? What capabilities do we need? What management systems do we need?⁷

3. Setting the roadmap. This is about moving from strategy to tactics. It means identifying which capabilities need action, and setting specific and attainable targets and timelines.

4. Leading people through the change. The Prosci ADKAR model is based on best practices in change management.⁸ The acronym ADKAR sums up the five elements of a successful change process:

- Awareness of the need for change, and the nature of the change itself
- Desire to support the change, to participate and engage with it
- Knowledge of how to change, and how to implement the new skills and behaviors
- Ability to implement the change
- Reinforcement to sustain the change and to build competences and a culture around it

***Let your DAM deliver
competitive advantage***



The role of a DAM platform is to help you store, manage, and control the use of your digital assets. It makes sure that every time one of those assets appears before a customer in your marketing communications, it's the right one. And as these communications are increasingly being delivered automatically, in real-time, with no opportunity for human checking, a DAM system becomes the foundation of an organization's martech stack.

But a DAM tool is also much more. Jonathan Knowles, CEO of Type 2 Consulting, suggested earlier this year that, as a rule of thumb, brand accounts for 20% of the value of businesses in the S&P 500.⁹ On top of this, the quality of a brand's customer experience is increasingly seen as a key determinant of competitive advantage, and one of the crucial building blocks of customer experience is consistency. The customer needs to know instantly that they are dealing with the same brand at every single touchpoint.

So a DAM platform is not just a way to manage digital assets. It's a way of protecting a huge chunk of the value of your business, and of helping to ensure its competitiveness in the future. It's no wonder that, according to Gartner, 52% of enterprise companies have fully deployed and are using a DAM system, and another 27% are currently deploying one.¹⁰

Notes

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9. Jonathan Knowles, “How Much of Enterprise Value is Brand?” LinkedIn, March 10, 2017. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-much-enterprise-value-brand-jonathan-knowles/>.
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Widen helps brands deliver content with confidence. Their cloud-based digital asset management (DAM) and product information management (PIM) software empowers marketers to bring content together, send it anywhere and automate in between.

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