The State of Digital Asset Management

2018 Survey Results
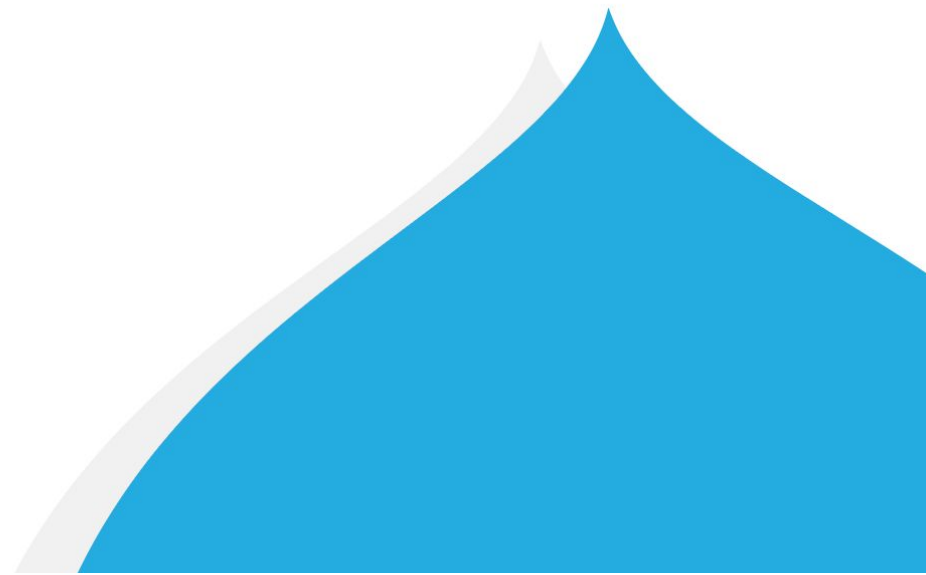
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Why Do a Digital Asset Management (DAM) Survey?

Digital marketing has been on the rise for more than a decade and with that, the need to manage digital assets -- photos, videos, PDFs, logos, creative templates and so on -- has increased. Digital asset management (DAM) is not a new concept by any means but the world of DAM has been evolving. In the early days, the choices for DAM were large (dedicated servers and storage racks sitting in the corporate data center), expensive, enterprise systems that took months to install and program to make useful. These systems were mostly used for things like digital forms and specialized digital files like scanned faxes; essentially digital versions of what had previously been done on paper (think insurance claims).

Fast forward to today where digital (or creative) files are the heart of engaging digital experiences. Today's customers expect their digital interactions with an organization to be met with a visual, graphical and image-rich experience; it's not a "nice to have," it's a "need to have" to compete and stay relevant.

Luckily, today's technology makes these kinds of experiences a reality. The low cost of producing and the high speed of transmitting these rich experiences on Wi-Fi and/or cell signals has created the modern day, explosive challenge for marketers. Organizations have the responsibility of creating, storing, organizing, finding, and repurposing digital assets every day. Not surprisingly, 100 percent of the survey respondents are using creative digital assets for their businesses today.

When it comes to DAM, we're at an interesting inflection point. Although some of those legacy DAM systems are still being used, modern, cloud-based DAM solutions are providing new choices. DAMs have come to the cloud; a far cry from then behemoth DAMs of yesterday. Today they are "instant on" like many other cloud services being used by organizations. Yet, as we've seen from this survey, a large percentage of organizations are trying to make non-DAM specific tools work as a do-it-yourself (DIY) DAM with limited success. Some try to use both.

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Methodology

The Survey

This survey was created using an online survey tool and was promoted via email, LinkedIn, and Twitter. Anyone was invited to take the survey once. There were 12 questions. Respondents were asked questions about specific types of files defined as "creative files," which include photos, stock images, drawings, logos, PDFs, and videos to be used for websites, social, advertising, mobile apps, product labels, brand elements, etc. This survey was designed to help understand how companies are using creative files today, how they are organizing them and some of the challenges and concerns they have.

Industries

A total of 738 professionals from organizations in publishing, energy and utilities, telecommunications, pharmaceuticals, food and beverage, travel and transportation, retail, consumer goods / electronics, health care, government - federal, government - state / local, manufacturing / engineering, business services, financial services, media and entertainment, nonprofit, high-tech software / services, and education from around the world responded to the survey.

Geographies

About two-thirds of respondents were from North America, with the rest from Asia-Pacific and Japan, Europe and South America.
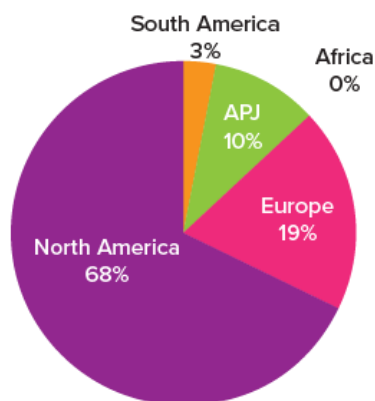
100 percent of the survey respondents are using creative digital assets for their businesses today.

Timeframe

The survey was open from Feb. 8-28, 2018.

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Key Findings

1. Companies care A LOT about their brands and brand consistency.

2. Over 50 percent of those surveyed worry about out of compliant image licensing.

3. Using images for printed items is equally as important to email campaigns and social media marketing. However, use on websites is the top priority.

4. Only 30 percent have a formal DAM in place (either on premises or cloud).

5. Of the companies with a DAM, 62 percent use a cloud-based DAM instead of an on-premises DAM.

6. Cloud storage solutions, such as Dropbox and Box, are practically ubiquitous with a 50 percent lead over local drives and network drives.

7. For companies using a DAM, cloud storage services is 22 percent lower.

8. 90 percent are creating some assets in house, although those with DAM are more likely to pay an agency or contractor to help create them.

9. Over 50 percent who don't use a DAM struggle with finding files.

10. Short videos are extremely important to marketing strategies today.

More than 50 percent who don't use a DAM struggle with finding files.

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Brand Consistency and Compliance

When it comes to brand consistency, 80% of 737 people surveyed indicated that it's either important or very important. The experience customers have with a company's brand is of major importance. From online experiences to physical world experiences to mobile apps, social channels and more, a consistent brand experience inspires buyer confidence, creates brand recognition, and helps people associate and identify with a brand.

Brand Importance
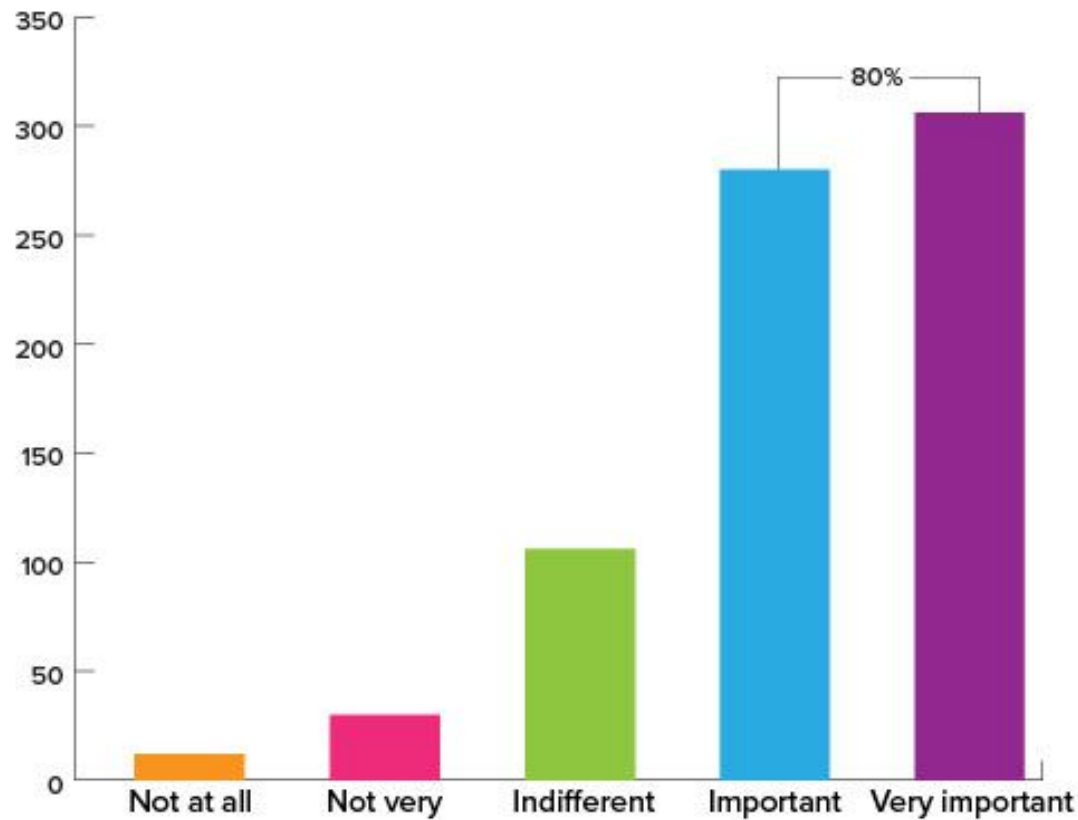
80 percent care a lot about their brand and 55 percent are concerned about compliance of licensing.

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Compliance in this instance refers to using unlicensed, expired licensed or unauthorized images. More than 55 percent surveyed were concerned or very concerned about compliance. Using out-of-compliance images or videos can result in huge fees depending on how long they are used for and their visibility. Stock photos, for example are often licensed for use for a certain period time. Once the contract for these images expire, they need to be taken down or risk heavy fines.

Eighty percent care a lot about their brand, and 55 percent are concerned about compliance of licensing.

Concern over being out-of-compliance with asset licensing



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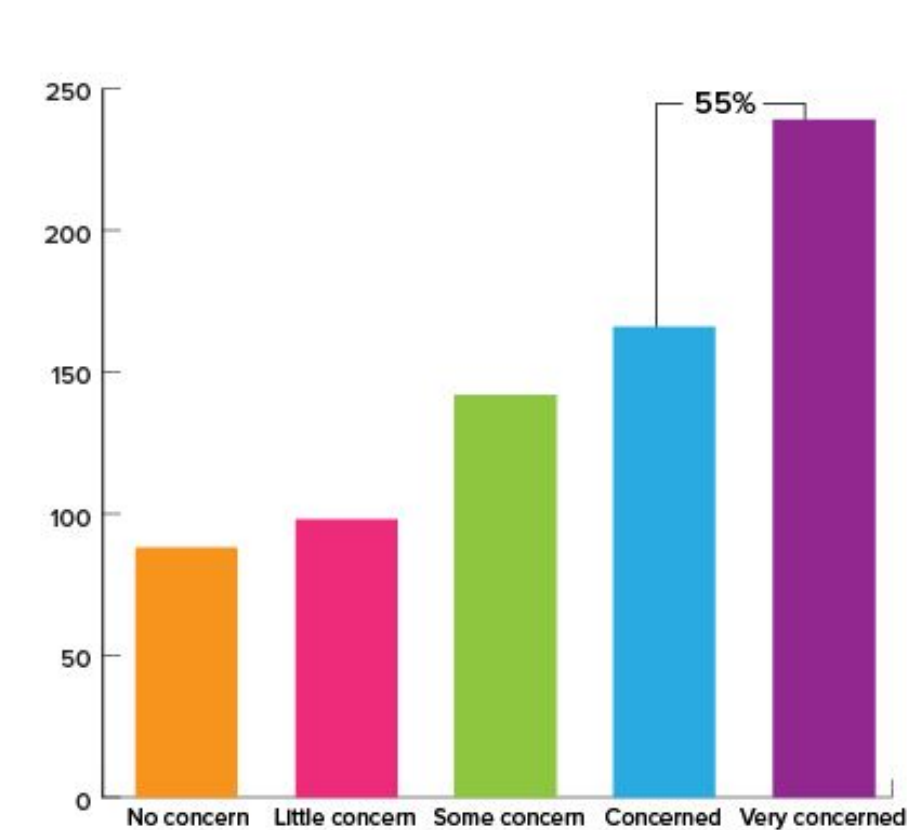
Where are Creative Files Being Used?

One of the core questions we wanted to understand is where are these creative files being used? Close to 90 percent of creative files are used for digital web experiences while printed material is still a top use case, tied for third place with email marketing and social media. Advertising, digital signs, ecommerce and product labeling are on the low end of the list.

It's no surprise that digital web experiences is the number one use case for creative files by a large margin. However it's interesting to see that printed materials is roughly in a three-way tie for second place. What can seem like "old school" in this digital day and age is still an active use case for creative images alongside email and social media.

We expect to see an increase in usage for ecommerce and digital signage over the next few years as resellers try to out-market each other with more engaging user experiences beyond simple static images.

File Usage

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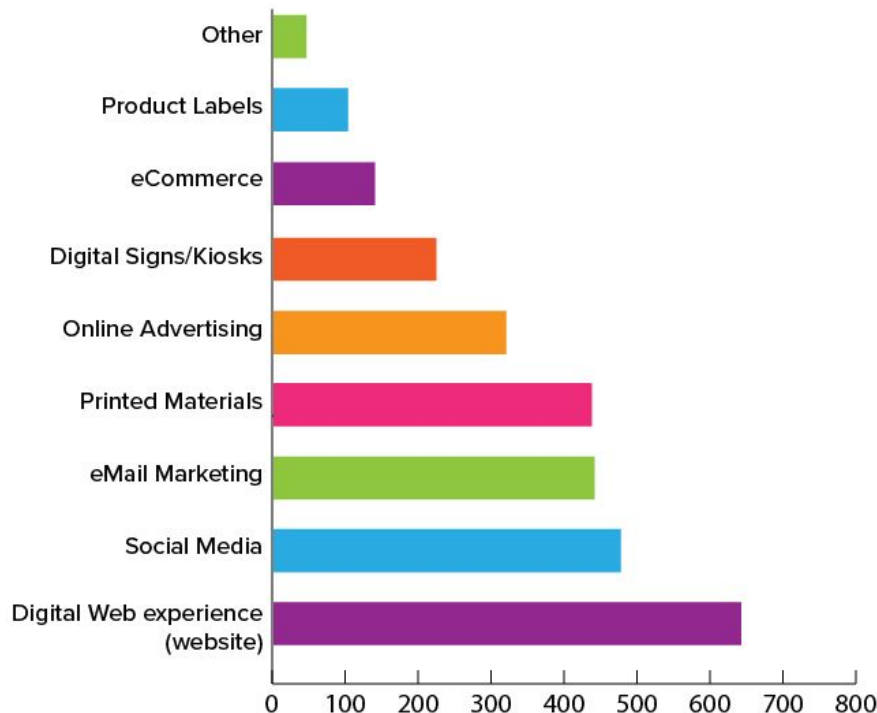
How Do Organizations Manage Creative Files?

Now that we know what creative files are being used for, how are they managed? Of the 737 people who responded to the survey, 63.5 percent are using some type of cloud-based drive service. Services like Dropbox, Google Drive, and Box won out by a wide margin even to local hard drives and internal internet drives (respondents could check more than one box so results will not add up to 100 percent).

Cloud drive tools have taken off to become ubiquitous in the workplace. They are easy to setup, easy to share files and are relatively low cost; this is what we call the "DIY approach" to digital asset management. The flip side is that they have no central management and are lacking in areas like structure and security. Very quickly, these type of tools can become an chaotic content environment with duplicate files, security leaks, and a general mess across the organization.

Current Management of Creative Files

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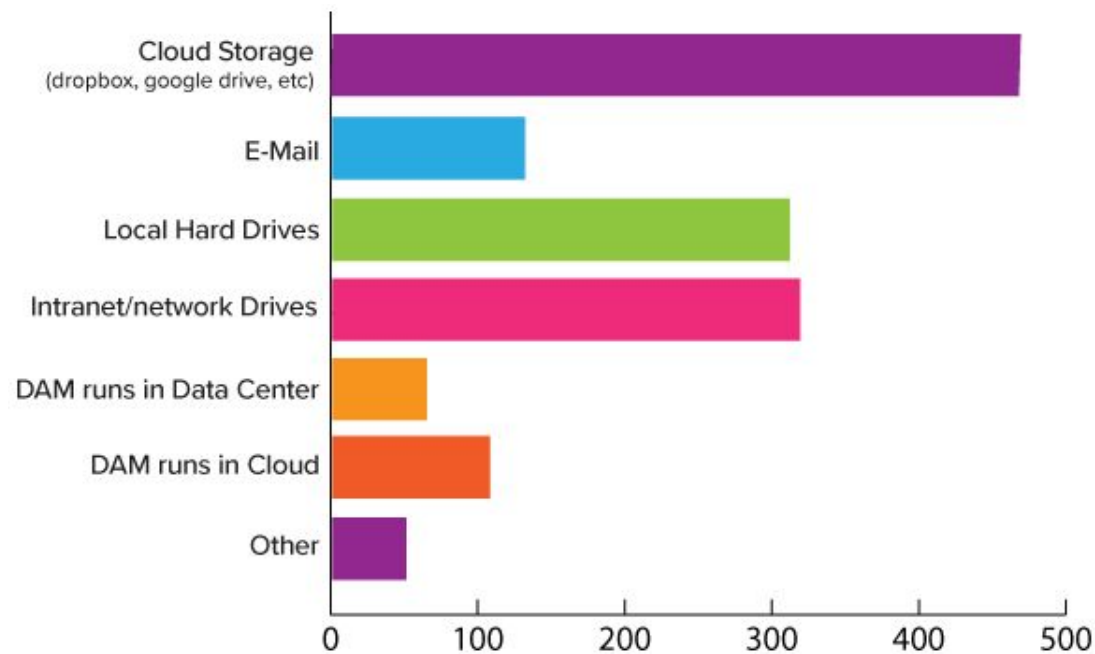
DAM Companies vs. Non-DAM Companies

Despite the importance of things like brand consistency, only about 30 percent of the companies surveyed are using either a cloud-based DAM or an on-premise DAM. With cloud solutions becoming more popular and acceptable by IT, cloud-based DAMs are almost twice as popular as on-premises DAM.

DAM vs. No DAM

On premise vs. Cloud DAM

DAM
30%

NO DAM
70%

On premise
DAM
38%

Cloud DAM
63%

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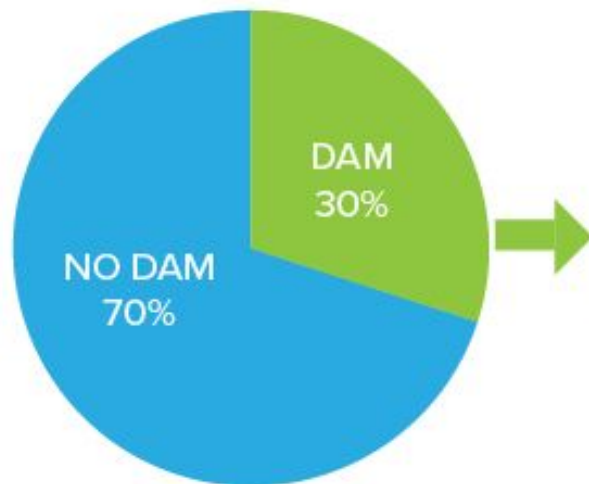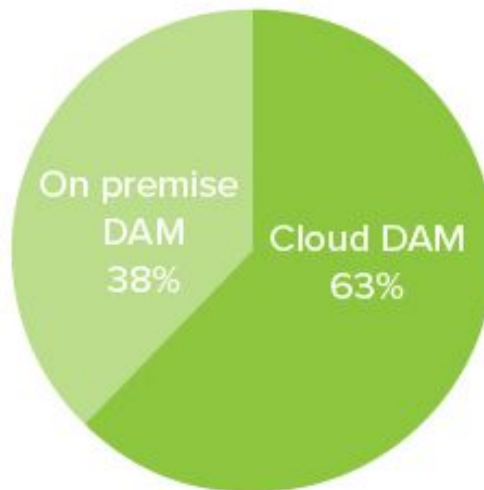
File Management System Usage for DAM vs No DAM

When we compare the use of cloud drives, local drives, network drives and email for managing creative files for organizations with a DAM in place vs. no DAM, the companies with DAMs consistently use these tools much less.

It's doubtful that tools like Dropbox or Google Drive will go away completely as they provide a quick and easy way to collaboratively create certain types of assets. However, when organizations invest in a DAM, their users start to see the benefits fairly quickly, reducing their usage on these alternative tools.

DAM vs. No DAM File Management Systems in Use
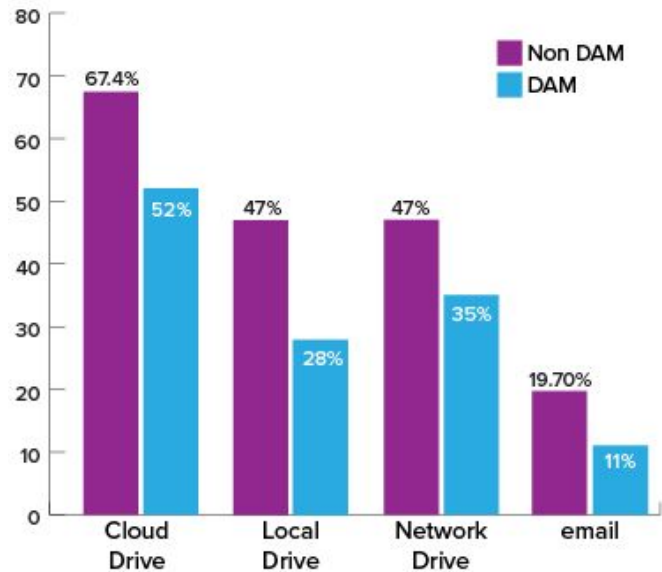
More than 50 percent of those not using a DAM struggle with finding files or finding the most recent version of a file.

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Frustrations of Not Having a DAM

When a company doesn't have a centralized management tool like a DAM in place, there are a number challenges and frustrations:

- Difficult collaborating with designers
- Wasting time duplicating existing work
- Hard to get files into marketing campaigns and websites
- Hard to find creative files
- Can't find the most recent or approved version of a file

More than 50 percent of those not using a DAM struggle with finding files or finding the most recent version of a file. Although the DIY approach to managing creative files has proven popular with users to manage their own stash of files from any device, they generally have a distributed management and organizational system that makes difficult to search and find the right files. Over time, as people come and go, files begin to accumulate. In other cases, creative files can be lost forever when someone leaves a company and their computer or internal drive is wiped for the next person because IT was unaware of the content's value. A well-designed DAM eliminates these struggles saving a tremendous amount of time searching and using the latest files.

DAM companies are almost twice as likely to use an external agency or contractor to create their files.

Drawbacks of not having a DAM

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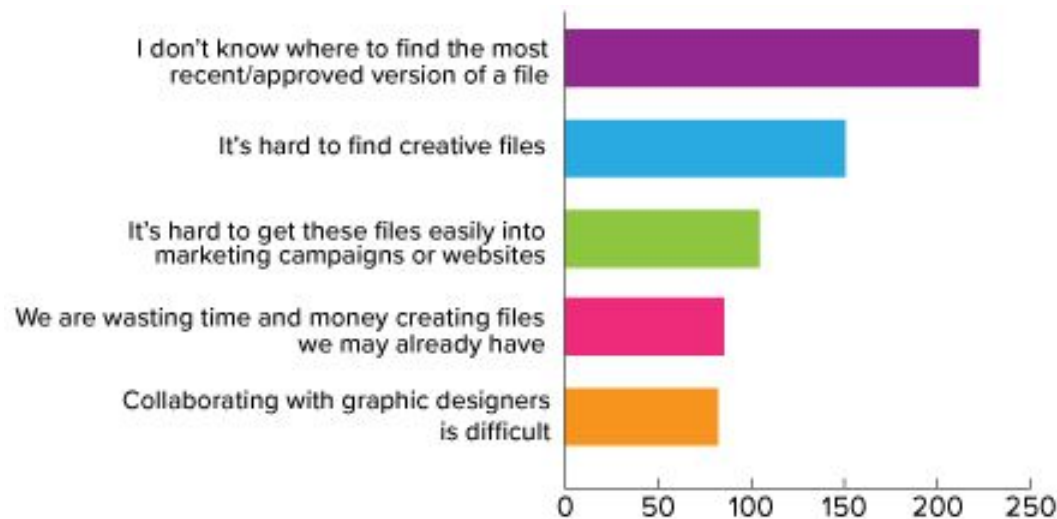
Who Produces Creative Files?

Ninety percent of those surveyed indicated that they produce at least some of their digital media assets internally, while less than 40 percent use contractors or agencies. But when you compare DAM vs non-DAM, the DAM companies are almost twice as likely to use an external agency or contractor to create their files.
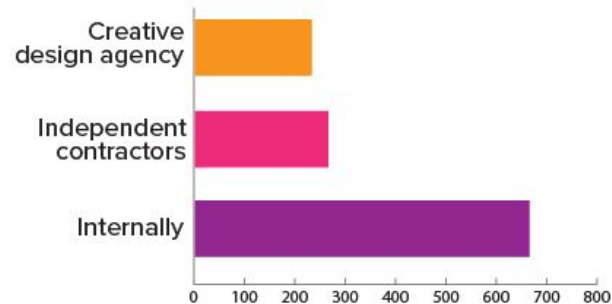
Video Production

Video has long been a favorite of consumers, and it has become an extremely important marketing tool for B2C and B2B companies. Over 60 percent of those surveyed said they are using short (up to a minute) and medium (2-5 minute) length videos. Ten percent of those surveyed are doing nothing with videos, and less than 10 percent are producing high-definition quality, 30-plus-minute videos

60 percent surveyed are producing small (5 minutes or less) videos for marketing purposes.

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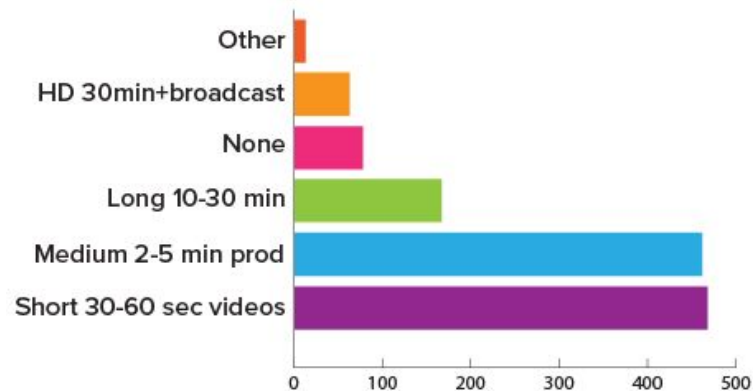
DAM Maturity Level Checklist

Whether your organization is contemplating if you need a digital asset management system or has been using one for years, it is productive to assess where you are in the DAM Maturity Model.

When it comes to managing creative files, the more streamlined, repeatable, and predictable you make it, the more efficient it becomes and the more value you'll derive from it. A common example of this is reducing the time people spend looking for specific files for a project saves countless hours. Being able to find the original art files used for a marketing campaign from last year for a similar campaign this year can save tens of thousands of dollars in rework.

We've simplified the DAM Maturity Model to a quick checklist here to get you on the road to DAM success faster (for the full evaluation, click here):

To get a quick 'snapshot' of your organization's DAM Maturity, rate each of the four dimensions on a scale from one to five.

1. Ad hoc (no DAM)
2. Incipient (initial stage)
3. Formative (early)
4. Operational
5. Optimal

Dimensions

People

The range of your organization's DAM maturity may range from having little to no exposure to a DAM technology or system all the way to having a deep understanding of DAM topics such as metadata and schemas and and can positively align across departments and globally on how to optimize a DAM. Rate how skilled the people in your organization are around managing assets.

Information

In this dimension, think about the physical files, metadata, reuse of assets, findability and how they are being used. This is where most companies that do not have any DAM solution have what we call a DIY model of managing assets. Files are spread everywhere, there is no organizational strategy or policies. Rate yourself a 1. On the other end of the scale (a 5), an optimized DAM environment will have assets that are prepared for multiple users across channels. Metadata schemas are well understood and embedded with files. The ability to discover assets easy, promoting reuse and repurposing across the organization.

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Systems

Organizations with DAM systems that are in the ad-hoc phase (1) of maturity have employees keeping assets on their own local systems or stored in siloed shared systems like Google Drive or personal Dropboxes. They have no security plan in place and usability is disjointed with employee frustration rates high.

Organizations that have optimized their DAM have aligned their company culture with their DAM and has become an integral part of their environment interconnected with other systems such as as PIM, ERP, CMS and marketing automation. Security is SSO-driven with enterprise credentials and the user interface is intuitive and inviting that little training is required.

Processes

DAM not only is made up of a centralized asset repository it also supports workflow, collaboration, and governance. An ad-hoc DAM environment will have few or no standardized procedures or notion of an asset lifecycle. Collaboration will most certainly be limited to email and passing files back and forth with disconnected notes within the email. Employees self-govern and easily leads to asset misuse and customers may experience an inconsistent brand experience.

In an optimized environment, work processes are continually reviewed and streamlined. Asset usage is also continually reviewed to inform the next iteration of creative assets.

To learn about Acquia DAM and how it can improve how you manage your digital assets, please contact us at DAMadvice@acquia.com

Quick DAM Maturity Assessment

DAM Maturity Dimension	Self Rating
People	(Ad-hoc) 1 2 3 4 5 (Optional)
Information	(Ad-hoc) 1 2 3 4 5 (Optional)
Systems	(Ad-hoc) 1 2 3 4 5 (Optional)
Process	(Ad-hoc) 1 2 3 4 5 (Optional)

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