

Rich Media Shines in the Era of Engagement:

Marketers Turn to Digital Asset Management

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Executive Summary

“How ya gonna keep ‘em down on the farm” asked the popular song in 1919, about American soldiers returning from continental Europe, “After they’ve seen Patee?” Today, a similar question torments marketers and customer engagement professionals. Now that consumers have tasted video, rich Internet applications, dynamic ads, and immersive mobile apps – how will they ever again be satisfied with text and static photos? The answer is that *they won’t be satisfied* – and that almost overnight it has become mandatory for enterprises to create, manage, and deliver massive amounts of rich media.

Tools for managing rich media – commonly called digital asset management solutions, or DAMs – have existed for many years. Today, the term DAM is applied to applications that can vary widely in terms of functional sophistication, cost, and integration with other applications. A DAM solution can range from lightweight tools for image manipulation and storage up to the powerful and costly systems for audio/video production, rights management, and distribution used by broadcasters. The result is confusion for DAM buyers and vendors alike.

Marketers and customer experience professionals can easily end up with a DAM platform that is either too small or too big. To avoid the “Goldilocks syndrome” and identify the solution that is *just right* for their specialized requirements, marketers should evaluate and select a DAM solution that:

- **Supports the creation of bundled marketing assets:** Marketers need to bundle individual rich media assets into *comprehensive marketing assets* that serve engagement scenarios and marketing strategies.
- **Enables collaborative production:** Marketers need a DAM solution that allows teams to *jointly work on assets* across firewalls and other boundaries while enforcing appropriate access controls.

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- **Facilitates multi-purpose distribution:** Teams may find that an *independent but well integrated* DAM solution offers more flexibility for distributing and reusing media assets across consumer touchpoints.
 - **Recognizes the need for “intelligence”:** Marketers should look for DAM solutions that *support the complete asset lifecycle* from creation through analysis and optimization.
 - **Allows IT to focus on strategic value:** Marketing should select a DAM solution that allows IT to be an advisor and enhancer and removes the burden of constant care and maintenance of the system.

Customers Embrace Rich Media

For much of its twenty-year history, the web was a relatively impoverished medium, dominated by text and static banners. Dial-up connections and slow processors meant that photographs were typically small and low resolution. Video and interactive elements were rare. Brands could differentiate and attract consumers by offering sites that simply functioned smoothly and enabled users to complete a task such as finding and purchasing a product.

Recently, faster networks, cheaper storage, and more powerful devices have combined to make rich media production and delivery possible on a large scale. It's no longer enough for sites and apps to be, as Forrester Research put it, "useful and usable" – now they need to be "desirable" as well.¹ Consumers relish – and increasingly demand – the engaging, immersive experiences enabled by rich media assets such as:

- **High resolution, large format photographs:** Whether it's a ski parka or a hotel room, consumers are hesitant to purchase something they can't inspect. Multiple, detailed photos can significantly reduce this buying barrier. In a 2010 study, Brandbank found that 50% of the people shopping for consumer electronics said they need multiple product images to make an informed buying decision.²
- **Rich Internet Applications:** RIAs – deploying

technologies like Flash, Silverlight, and, more recently, HTML5 – have fundamentally transformed websites into interactive and customizable user experiences. RIAs can create engagement, deliver richer information, and build brand affinity with functionality such as product configurators, data visualization, and faster, more dynamic sites. One study found that only 2% of the respondents felt that RIAs did not greatly enhance the web experience.³

- **Videos:** The mind-numbing popularity of YouTube – 72 hours of video uploaded every minute, and over 1 *trillion* views in 2011 – is only the most obvious testimony to the seductive power of video online.⁴ The impact on consumer behavior is equally astonishing. One study found that visitors to the site of home storage vendor Stacks and Stacks were 144% more likely to put an item into the shopping cart after viewing a video.⁵ Beyond eCommerce, blog posts with video attract up to three times as many inbound links,⁶ and well-placed video is 53 more times likely to generate a first page Google search ranking compared to traditional SEO methodology, according to a 2009 Forrester study.⁷
- **Dynamic and interactive advertising:** Less than optimal website copy or product images may linger for months. Advertising, in compari-

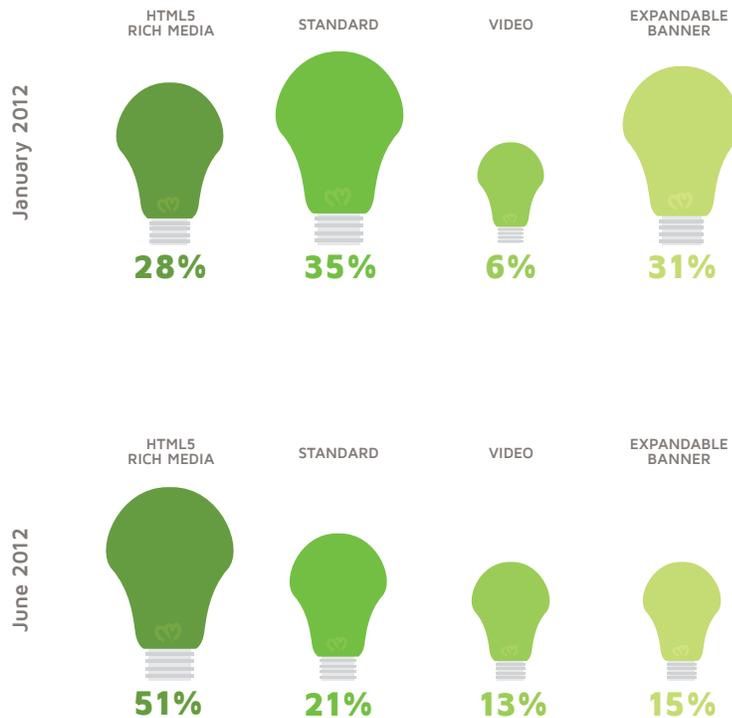
“ For much of its twenty-year history, the web was a relatively impoverished medium, dominated by text and static banners. ”

son, is a merciless “perform or go home” environment. It’s not surprising, then, that Internet advertising has pushed the extremes regarding dynamic rich media. Today, ads can change according to the weather, road traffic patterns, or geo-location inputs. Ads may dynamically respond to mouse-overs and interact with other ads on a page. In the area of mobile advertising alone, rich media and video advertising nearly doubled in the first six months of 2012, while standard and expandable banner ads correspondingly declined by almost 50%.⁸ (See Figure 1.)

In addition to eCommerce and direct consumer engagement scenarios, rich media is finding wider adoption for customer service and employee training. For example, iRobot, the manufacturer of the Roomba self-guided vacuum and other robot devices, uses videos on their support page to answer common questions and reduce calls to support staff.⁹

Figure 1

Rapid adoption of rich media advertising



Opera Software, The State of Mobile Advertising, Q2 2012

Marketers Turn to a New Breed of DAM

The shift to customer-centric strategies for the web and other touchpoints has seen marketers take on increasing responsibility for web content management (WCM) systems. The rising demand for rich media means that marketers should reevaluate their current web content and digital asset management solutions.

An evolving understanding of content

When web content management emerged as an enterprise software category in the mid-1990s, it did exactly what it said on the box – namely, enable the creation and management of the content that was published on websites. As websites (slowly) came to supplement text and simple photos with richer content such as Flash and video, vendors extended the WCM with DAM functionality to support the storage of large files and some basic manipulation such as adding and editing layers on an image. While a few WCM vendors offered robust DAM capabilities, most acknowledged the limitations of their digital asset support. Through the mid- to late-2000s, however, these “lightweight” DAM tools were sufficient for most enterprise sites.

A text-only corporate website is now unthinkable, and an eCommerce site without rich product imagery is doomed. In less than five years, rich media has become

a prerequisite for successful consumer engagement on websites as well as dedicated mobile apps and other channels. Lightweight built-in DAM tools are increasingly pushed beyond their limits. But when marketers search for more adequate support for rich media, they encounter a confusing and shifting DAM landscape.

A DAM for today’s customer experience demands

Today, the term digital asset management is applied to a very wide range of software solutions, from rich media “vaults” with basic library services to high-end media production platforms. (See Figure 2.)

In today’s dynamic and rapidly changing environment, marketing assets need to be *produced quickly, deployed flexibly, and optimized constantly*. Beyond the features and capabilities of the DAM system, these three requirements dictate that a marketing-centric solution should be:

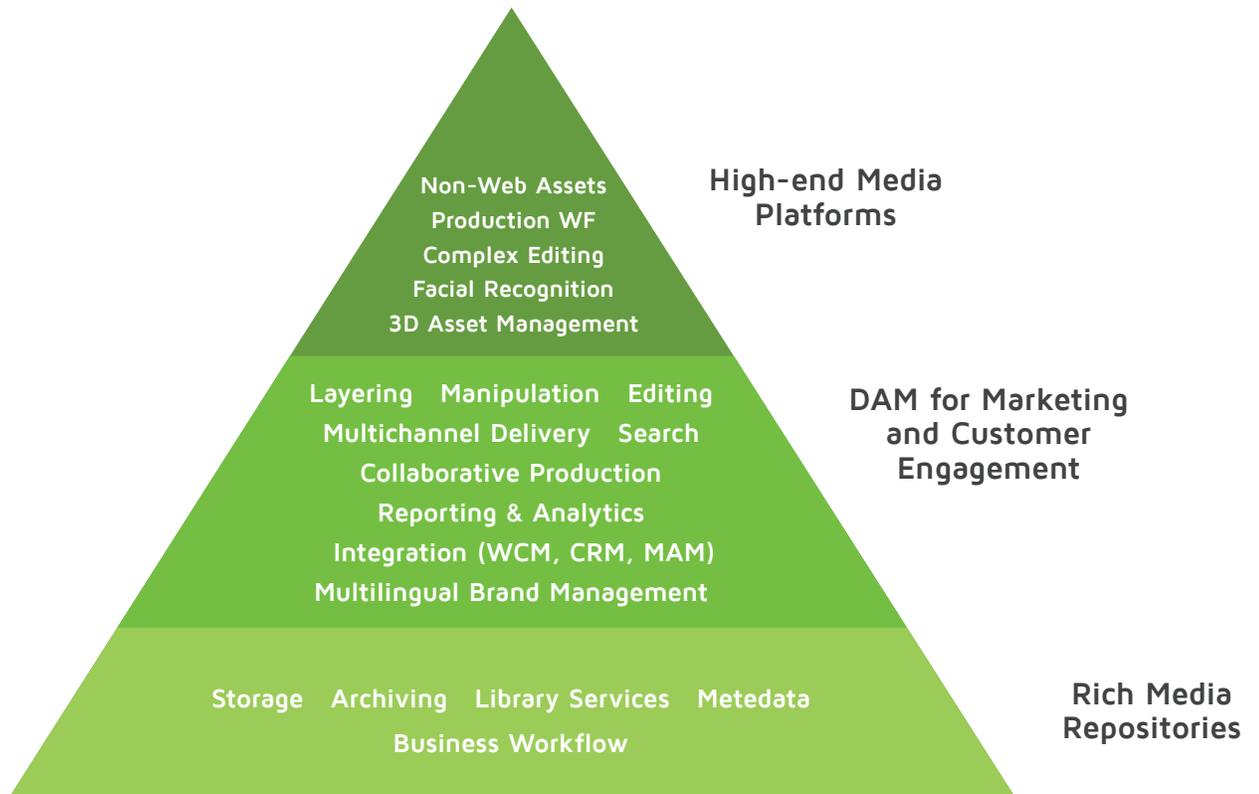
- **Integrated with enterprise systems:** For consumers, engagement often means relevance. Marketing assets need to be informed by CRM, marketing automation, and WCM in order to ensure that viewers are receiving the right information, offers, and ad behavior.

“ In today’s dynamic and rapidly changing environment, marketing assets need to be *produced quickly, deployed flexibly, and optimized constantly*. ”

- **Embedded in the production lifecycle:** Marketing assets are now “rich in both directions” – that is, their ability to offer a dense and immersive experience is the result of a sophisticated and often complex production workflow.
- **Adaptive and flexible:** The use of cloud-based and hybrid DAM solutions means that their support for rich media can easily fluctuate according to seasonal demand, campaign schedules, and unexpected market opportunities.

Figure 2

The Marketing DAM Sweet Spot



Conclusion

In truth, marketers don't need to "manage" digital assets. Rather, they need to engage consumers and create opportunities for an emotional connection with the brand. Digital assets are a means to that end, and the tools for digital asset management should not get in the way as marketers create and nurture customer relationships.

In order to cut through the confusing array of DAM solutions, marketers should think of DAM in terms of *MAD - marketing assets on demand*. This MAD perspective can help marketers evaluate and select a DAM solution that:

- **Supports the creation of marketing assets:** DAM vendors understandably highlight what the tools can do to and with rich media files of various types. But marketers need to weave individual rich media assets into comprehensive marketing assets that serve engagement scenarios and marketing strategies.
- **Enables collaborative production:** Marketing assets are increasingly the work of multiple teams, which may be located down the hall, around the world, or in partner firms and digital agencies. Marketers need a DAM solution that allows teams to jointly work on assets across firewalls and other boundaries while enforcing appropriate access controls.
- **Facilitates multi-purpose distribution:** Marketing assets often represent a large investment of time and money. This inherent value needs to be leveraged across widely ranging campaigns, geographies, and consumer touchpoints. Teams may find that an independent but well-integrated DAM offers more flexibility compared to DAM capabilities built into a web content management system.
- **Recognizes the need for "intelligence":** Marketers need to track the impact and performance of marketing assets in order to make informed decisions about content creation and delivery. Marketers should look for DAM solutions that support the complete asset lifecycle from creation through analysis and optimization.
- **Allows IT to focus on strategic value:** Today's complex systems for customer engagement require IT professionals to focus on innovation and strategic differentiation. Marketing should select a DAM solution that allows IT to be an advisor and enhancer and removes the burden of constant care and maintenance of the system.

“ In truth, marketers don't need to “manage” digital assets. Rather, they need to engage consumers and create opportunities for an emotional connection with the brand. ”

Endnotes

- 1 Forrester first articulated the notion of desirable websites in an August 2007 report, “Desirable Online Experiences: Taking Websites Beyond Useful and Usable.” The report is freely available at <http://babelteam.brinkster.net/Forrester/sites.pdf>.
- 2 This metric, and related findings about eCommerce product information, is available at <http://www.content26.com/product-descriptions/walmart-product-pages/>.
- 3 In a 2006 survey, Forrester found that the vast majority of respondents reported that RIAs enhanced their user experience, and only 2% disagreed. See the August 2007 report, “Desirable Online Experiences: Taking Websites Beyond Useful and Usable,” cited above.
- 4 For these and other YouTube statistics, see http://www.youtube.com/t/press_statistics.
- 5 The reference to the March 2011 Internet Retailer study covering Stacks and Stacks is at <http://www.invodo.com/html/resources/video-statistics/>.
- 6 Ibid, citing an October 2009 study by SEOMoz.
- 7 See http://blogs.forrester.com/interactive_marketing/2009/01/the-easiest-way.html. Note that the author’s caution about the date of the study in light of Goggle’s incessant modifications to the search algorithm does not diminish the power of video.
- 8 See Opera’s State of Mobile Marketing Report, Q2, 2012. Available at <http://www.opera.com/sma/2012/q2/>.
- 9 See the iRobot support center at <http://homesupport.irobot.com/app/answers/list/c/522>. For an overview of other firms using video for customer service, from apparel retailer Lands End to the Starwoods hotel chain, see <http://bit.ly/legP4y>.



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