8 BEST PRACTICES

for a glitch-free DAM implementation process

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INTRODUCTION

Implementing any enterprise-wide IT software can be challenging. It can get complex, cause disruption, face resistance, or overrun its timeframe or cost. A primary research advisory organization, The Standish Group[1], reports that nearly 84% of IT projects fail[2].

If you are looking at implementing a DAM system in your organization without running the risk of failure, you must follow certain best practices that promise the best outcomes. Select a DAM that is intuitive and easy to use, and you can implement it independently without depending on any external partner.

But first, prepare a pre-implementation plan

Most on-premise DAMs require technical interference before they can be used. Cloud-based DAM, however, is fairly easy-to-use and requires no technical intervention. However, an implementation plan will help move digital assets to the system faster and without mishaps. In any DAM implementation project, typically, the business may not have a view or understanding of the various features of the DAM. More so if they have never used one.

It is safe to begin the implementation with minimum viable features to ensure your first batch of users see immediate value in the product and act as champions, encouraging other colleagues to accept the changes. The minimum viable features must be based on the organization's immediate needs. Once you have defined your needs, you can begin your implementation project by following eight key steps, the last of which is to measure the impact of the changes. It can help determine the success of your DAM implementation project.

This eBook aims to help you identify and follow those steps that will result in a glitch-free DAM implementation.

1. CHOOSING THE RIGHT DAM

Understanding which DAM would be best suited for your organization requires taking stock of your existing infrastructure and asset management capabilities.

Follow these pointers to make the right choice:

✅ **Audit your digital assets**

Audit your digital assets, understand the workflows around them, and study your users' behavior and their needs. You will be able to identify the digital assets you want to migrate and the workflows and processes you want to streamline.

✅ **Understand your organization**

Get to know the organization's IT policies and protocols to determine the steps you need to take to ensure the DAM adheres to it.

✅ **Decide whether to buy or own**

Weigh your preference to own versus outsource the management of your system to external vendors. This becomes relevant when choosing between a cloud-based or software-as-a-service (SaaS) DAM or an on-premise solution.

> A cloud-based DAM requires low investment and shorter implementation cycles. It can also scale up pretty quickly as your business grows.

💡 **Why opting for a cloud-based DAM is recommended**

A cloud-based DAM vendor typically handles the management, saving your time and effort while you focus on more strategic aspects of your business. An on-premise system allows customization with more ownership, but one needs a mature IT function within the organization to run and maintain the system, making it more expensive and difficult to scale.

Once you evaluate your options and make a purchasing decision, creating a team that can own the entire nine yards of implementing the strategy and executing it in tandem with stakeholder requirements.

👉 Related reading : *Why Digital asset management in the cloud is the right way*

2. ESTABLISH A DAM IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE

Form a team that not only ensures the technical success of the implementation but also synchronizes the needs of the various stakeholders in the project. Typically, these would be the users, the IT department, and the business heads.

The team must believe in the value they create through the DAM implementation and champion its successful adoption across the company.

Choose a team leader who understands the operations involved, brings in the best use cases, and has the insight to know what would work for the users.

Some pointers to keep in mind while establishing a DAM implementation task force:

- ✅ Clearly **define the scope** and **objectives** of the task force to ensure all members understand their roles and responsibilities.

- ✅ **Identify key stakeholders** and ensure their participation in the task force to ensure buy-in and support for the implementation.

- ✅ **Develop a detailed project plan** outlining the steps and milestones for the implementation.

- ✅ **Check if all stakeholders possess the skills** and resources necessary for the implementation.

- ✅ **Establish clear communication channels and protocols** to ensure smooth and efficient collaboration among team members.

- ✅ **Regularly review progress**, identify and address any issues or obstacles that arise, and adjust the plan as needed.
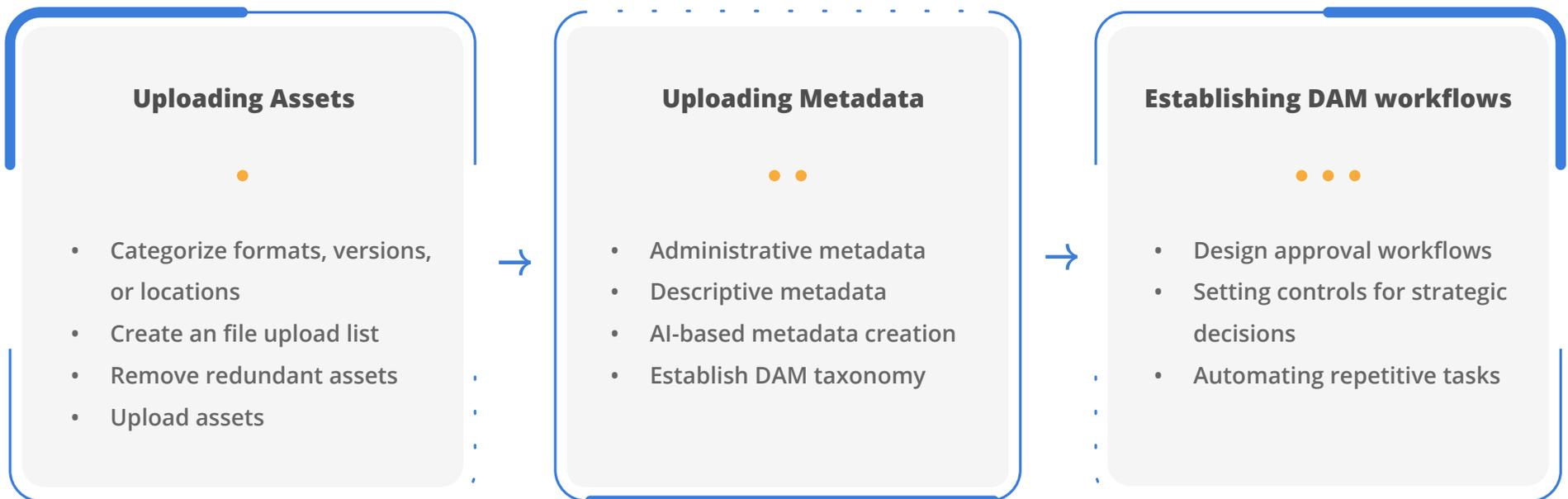
3. PRIORITIZE THE FIRST ASSET MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Before beginning the project, you need to work on two key ideas - what are those critical challenges that must be addressed? Secondly, who are those users who will benefit the most or believe that a DAM can ease their work? This will get you some quick wins and mitigate risks.

You can move on to expanding the scope of the implementation in the next phase and include other departments as you achieve maturity.

List out the different dimensions of the implementations that need prioritization – choosing the internal systems that need to be integrated or the data models/sets that must be migrated. Run past your ideas with your stakeholders. They will help you separate the needs from the wants and prioritize the activities that need immediate implementation.

Most often, the initial set of asset management activities will involve:

Uploading Assets

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- Categorize formats, versions, or locations
- Create an file upload list
- Remove redundant assets
- Upload assets

Uploading Metadata

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- Administrative metadata
- Descriptive metadata
- AI-based metadata creation
- Establish DAM taxonomy

Establishing DAM workflows

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- Design approval workflows
- Setting controls for strategic decisions
- Automating repetitive tasks

Understanding the asset management activities in detail :

Uploading assets

For uploading assets, you will first need to find where your existing content sits and who owns and manages them. Digital assets are most likely to exist in multiple formats, versions, or locations. You will have to work with your stakeholders to identify those assets that need to be migrated and create an inventory. Once listed, document the different types of file formats to be stored in your media library and determine the data attributes for each category of assets.

Find out the functionalities available for exporting the assets from the incumbent system to the new DAM. This is also an opportunity to clean up your digital assets, enhance and standardize them. Follow an agile methodology to incrementally extract, transform, and load assets so that you can test the success of every small change by taking feedback.

Updating metadata

Once you have migrated your assets, you will have to update the metadata to ensure these assets can be found easily. Defining the metadata primarily means designing how your assets will be cataloged and indexed so that users can easily find, access, edit, and share the assets. This is known as the metadata schema.

Metadata can be of several kinds:

- The most basic one is administrative metadata, where you note facts like the date of creation, last date of access or edit, and more.

- Descriptive metadata includes keywords or descriptive data to help you identify the asset. Further, you can add details around copyrights or licensing, which would be the rights management metadata. These are a list of fields that you would like to maintain.

Ordinarily, a new DAM will auto-populate the various fields associated with an asset at the time of ingestion. However, in cases, where you have defined new or additional fields, you may want to define the default values.

Once the metadata fields are defined, establish a taxonomy for the DAM. A taxonomy is a set of conventions for naming fields to ensure standardization. Appoint a 'gatekeeper' to ensure future changes and developments align with the established taxonomy.

Establishing DAM workflows

Many of the existing workflows in an organization are manual, and sometimes, only a handful of employees are aware of the end-to-end processes. Automating the most repetitive or laborious tasks will free employees to focus on more strategic work. You might have to look at the adjoining workflows on related systems, such as design software or editing tools, and see how you can integrate them for better efficiency and value.

The synchronization of systems also allows DAM to manage digital assets that are work-in-progress. Users can continue to work in applications relevant to their job roles, yet that piece of work and the related workflow can be synced with DAM. Take, for example, a graphic designer can create a logo using design software, which can be reviewed on DAM by the marketer, who can then leave annotations that will be notified to the designer when he opens the file on the design tool

4. DEFINE DAM USER ROLES

The success of your DAM implementation project depends to a very large extent on the users. DAM must meet the user goals; hence, you need to define the user roles, responsibilities, and privileges. When documenting the users, their rights, and their responsibilities, you will need to determine the permission level required for each user and their requirements. *User access management* ensures that each stakeholder has the necessary access to perform their duties using the DAM.

Administrators have maximum control over access and management functions like account, billing, and users' access as per their roles and rights.

Digital assets managers act as librarians and are responsible for approving assets uploads, organizing them, and managing the metadata.

Contributors are the designers who create, access, preview, or download assets. These could be external stakeholders such as media agencies, freelance photographers, content creators, or internal stakeholders like the content marketing team.

Users are other employees, usually marketers, sales teams, product teams, brand teams, and other organizational functions who need to use digital assets.

Guests include clients, vendors, or other professionals who may need access to DAM for providing an opinion or sharing approvals. These users are restricted to 'view only' access.

5. PLAN FOR SYSTEMATIC INTEGRATION OF OTHER TOOLS

DAM serves as the single source of truth for all digital assets in an organization. Thus, integrating DAM with other systems that process or use these digital assets is essential. There are three major categories of systems that deal with digital assets. Systems that Create (graphic designing software), Process or enhance (product information management system), and Distribute (web content management system). The five systems that are commonly used for working on digital content are:

Content management system (CMS)

Integrating DAM with CMS allows web managers to pull images and videos directly from the DAM media library for plugging into web pages without worrying if they are the latest approved versions.

Cloud storage

Cloud storage platforms like Amazon S3 Bucket, S3-compatible storages, Azure Blog Storage, Firebase, Akeneo, etc. can be integrated with the DAM system to make media files accessible on a real-time basis. Also, any transformation required can be done on the file directly from the DAM system.

eCommerce and digital experience platforms

Retailers need high-resolution images and rich-media digital assets on their eCommerce websites to create a superior digital experience. Digital experience platforms offer a plethora of services for better customer service and personalization.

Product information management (PIM)

A PIM stores and manages product information such as SKUs, and product descriptions. Integrating PIM with DAM makes it easy for users to get an across-the-board view of the product information including the corresponding marketing assets.

6. PROVIDE EMPLOYEE TRAINING

When implementing any new software, change management is an integral part of the process for better adoption of the new ways of working that a new system brings. The company must make a list of the changes required at each department level and provide the necessary support and training to people who have to be part of this change.

Some other pointers to help with employee training for DAM implementation include

- **Leverage vendor's product demo or training videos**
  Most DAM vendors have their own set of standard training materials to onboard users. They also have support teams that can evaluate the success of each stage of implementation and provide the learning required as per need.

- **Create a learning course for all DAM users**
  Use a Learning Management System or create a thread of training videos that are custom-built with specific use cases related to your business.

- **Identify DAM power users who need advanced training**
  Users who are expected to use DAM extensively for their day jobs will need advanced training to help them familiarize themselves with the technicalities of the system.

- **Create internal DAM forums**
  Creating internal forums that can act as a learning platform for DAM users. They can use the platform to discuss challenges, solutions, updates to the system, etc in day-to-day operations.

7. ESTABLISH THE RULES AND STREAMLINE THE DETAILS

Define the metadata well to ensure your assets are easy to find. Write the governance policies that call out the taxonomy, and define the categories and the cluster of mandatory metadata that goes under each one. Establish a review process, and appoint a guardian who can ensure the digital assets are accurate and consistent before they are released.

The process of organizing digital assets varies from business to business and their priorities. However, having a broad process outlined will help run operations smoothly. These pointers will aid in keeping digital assets well-organized without losing their context.

- Begin by organizing assets using folders

- Use tags the right way to manage assets

- Reuse images to reduce clutter

- Control access across assets

- Classify images using metadata

8. OBSERVE. ANALYZE. IMPROVISE

The work on DAM does not stop with its implementation. Once in place, you must observe, analyze, and improvise. Further, Digital Asset Management is an ongoing activity. Using a DAM makes it easier.

To ensure the ongoing success of DAM, you need to continuously identify and measure those metrics that will tell you how well your system is functioning. It could be the number of users, the number of assets downloaded, or the number of searches made. Set the benchmarks you must meet, the dimensions you must audit, the numbers you must monitor and report. Periodical review of the system using DAM analytics will help you see what features users rely on the most and how *DAM workflows* can be better optimized to help improve their productivity.

Observe

- Most used features
- Friction in user adoption
- Workflow efficiencies
- Bottlenecks & delays

Analyze

- Average bandwidth consumption
- Redundant assets
- Recurring operations
- File quality and size optimizations

Improvise

- Automate approval workflows
- Streamline file organization
- Asset optimization and delivery

ABOUT IMAGEKIT

ImageKit is a modern media stack that streamlines how you work with images and videos on the web. Its offers real-time image and video optimizations, transformations, and digital asset management that will help developers, designers, and marketers deliver better visual experiences on the web. While ImageKit's automatic optimization engine ensures that images and videos are always delivered in the best possible format and are lighter in size, its 50+ real-time media transformations parameters ensure the delivery pixel perfect image every time with minimal effort.

The integrated digital asset management solution helps you to organize and manage your images, videos, and other digital assets in a central location. *The Media Library* is powered by an advanced search that combines multiple asset parameters, which speeds up asset search. Further, ImageKit ensures that the creative workflows are always aligned with features like

1. *AI-based auto-tagging*
2. *Custom metadata tagging*
3. *Asset versioning*
4. Commenting
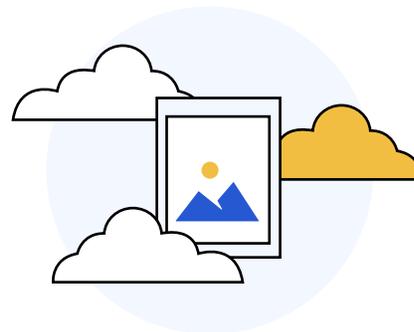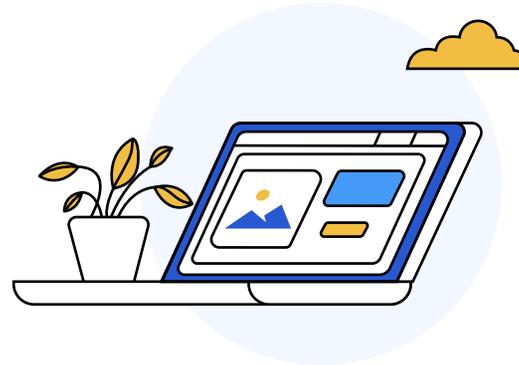
With the core goal of making digital asset delivery and management seamless, ImageKit offers no-code integration with existing cloud storage like AWS S3, Google Cloud, and more. This ensures that developers can easily integrate their existing infrastructure and deliver optimized images and videos in minutes.

Powered with a global CDN of 400+ nodes and a processing network in 6 locations across the globe, ImageKit has transformed the visual experience for 1500+ customers across 65+ countries.

Over 1,500 businesses and 100,000 developers trust imageKit with their images and videos on the web

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GetApp ★★★★★   Capterra ★★★★★   G2 CROWD ★★★★★

Want to deliver great visual experiences on the web and mobile?

ImageKit is the modern media stack you need.

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