Digital Assets Should Be Agile, Not Fast

How agile teams, assets, and processes create collaborative content, better brands, and faster content marketing

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Welcome

Widen is excited to offer two great articles in association with esteemed content marketing strategist Robert Rose and the Content Marketing Institute (CMI).

Great Visual Storytelling Takes A Village
How four Cs—Collaborate, Customize, Communicate, and Connect—help the community of the business manage digital assets

-AND-

Digital Assets Should Be Agile, Not Fast
How agile teams, assets, and processes create collaborative content, better brands, and faster content marketing

Today's marketing and creative leaders consistently seek ways to create more engaging customer experiences, while also assembling the right combination of tools and processes to make their performance as agile as possible.

At Widen, we view digital asset management as a core component to the marketing technology ecosystem, just as visual content assets are a significant contributor to the content marketing process and customer experience.

These articles explore how smartly deployed digital asset management systems empower the modern creative and marketing operation to serve as the center for strategic differentiation within the enterprise.

We think you'll enjoy learning more about how Widen and CMI look at digital asset management today and we welcome your thoughts and feedback.

Introduction

Instead Of The Need For Speed, Marketers Need The Ability For Agility

Agile is a term that all the marketing kids are dancing to these days. But what often gets lost in translation is the distinction between being fast—and being truly agile.

Undoubtedly, the digital disruption has left many marketers struggling to rediscover the joy in the practice of marketing more broadly. An IBM C-suite study found that 66% of CMOs feel pressure from their CEO or board to prove that marketing has value, and 60% said that CEOs are "turning up the heat." [1]

As content marketing becomes an increasingly important part of the overall strategic mix, marketers are feeling their chairs warm up as they have to learn how to become mass producers of rich, digital media experiences. In a study that surveyed the Global 1000 businesses on how they were re-orienting their operations to manage the "modern, always-on and mobile shopper," 96% said that integrating digital media components has fundamentally affected their business. Sadly, a third of the marketers in these companies said that these shifts have "left them feeling 'under pressure and vulnerable'." [2]

These are keen observations. At Content Marketing Institute (CMI), we've also seen this frustration in businesses looking to develop more creative management processes while scaling their content marketing. The fear of moving too slowly is causing marketers to do foolish things and to develop more media and more experiences and more digital content at a faster and faster rate, rather than optimize a set of well-defined digital experiences in an agile way.

So, what's the answer? Well, high-performing brands are reorienting their digital media creation and management. They're finding that "more and faster" is the wrong focus and that they must step away from it. These marketers understand the difference between quick and fast—and have developed a better process for creating rich digital content experiences. Their new asset creation and management methodologies help their teams create and manage more impactful customer-centric experiences. As they evolve beyond old, stale hierarchies and "governance-oriented" digital asset management (DAM) processes, these companies are infusing these experiences intelligently into every part of the customer journey. Put simply, they are reorienting to agile asset management strategies, not fast strategies.

1 From Stretched To Strengthened - Insights from the Global Chief Marketing Officer Study Executive Summary http://www-01.ibm.com/common/ssi/cgi-bin/ssialias?infotype=PM&subtype=XB&htmlfid=GBE03433USEN
2 https://econsultancy.com/blog/65351-96-of-enterprise-businesses-feeling-the-pressure-of-digital-transformation#i.19dz5w915ufdfu

Organize For Agility, Not Speed

Quick is a measure of time; fast is a measure of speed.

One of the key challenges we see during our content marketing consulting engagements is that many marketing organizations are inheriting, and thus trying to modify, existing DAM processes and tools to manage today's new, disruptive environment. Many companies mistake today's DAM needs as just enhanced Web Content Management (WCM). Or, many companies will try to modify an existing Enterprise Content Management System (ECMS) that was implemented at a time when high levels of governance, rights management, and archival capabilities were needed.

To be clear, this has less to do (most of the time) with the capabilities of software, and more to do with what processes that software is meant to facilitate. However, in both of the examples above the companies are mistaking "fast" for "quick." In the former example (using a WCM or shared folder to do the job), the marketing department confuses expedience with capability. In other words, the marketing team may conclude that a "DAM Light" solution is the fastest way to help create a more collaborative workflow process for digital content marketing projects; therefore, the team works to simply use the WCM system or some shared network folder to get the work done.

In the latter example (modifying an existing ECMS/process), the team confuses capability with flexibility. In this case, the business looks at its existing investment in a big system that has helped it capably govern enterprise digital assets as a sunk cost. The team tries to do everything it can to modify this system for today's near real-time content marketing needs.

Both of these approaches often result in frustration and an inability for marketers to collaborate effectively to create impactful customer-centric, rich-media experiences.

Agile Assets, Teams, and Processes

Marketers need digital asset creation to be collaborative so that assets can be reused and repurposed efficiently across multiple channels. That collaboration is only possible with a process that is powered by the marketers themselves. This new, agile process must be focused on the creation, publishing, re-use, and measurement of rich media, as opposed to finding, limiting, governing, and archiving assets.

At CMI, we've identified three emerging trends among organizations looking to replace existing DAM processes and become more agile.

1. Agile Teams = Collaborative Content

Certainly it's not only content marketing that is driving the need for more collaborative DAM; it's the entire paid, owned, and earned media spectrum that is creating the need for a much more fluid approach. In fact, research has shown that as much as 62% of digital spending will now focus on rich-media creation across both paid sponsorships and digital advertising.[3]

Interestingly and ironically, though, even as businesses are creating more and more content, marketers consistently cite, year-over-year, "creating engaging content" and "creating enough content" as top challenges on the CMI annual content marketing survey. Is it any wonder, then, that on our most recent annual survey, 72% of B2B marketers cited "better internal communications, collaboration, operationalizing" as a priority over the next 12 months?

Many businesses still rely on their teams to create (and recreate) creative assets on their desktops. Most of these teams are still using email and shared network servers to collaborate on digital assets.

Successful businesses are starting to look beyond the classic functional silos, and more toward teams focused on customer experience. In other words, instead of looking at "brand" vs. "product marketing," these businesses are forming "awareness," "sales enablement," or "loyalty" teams that may be made up of many cross-functional members. These groups are using accessible and centralized platforms that can create a collaborative workspace for assets—from their first creative inception, all the way through to a multi-channel expression and measurement.

3   *Emarketer – Retail Industry Maintains Digital Ad Spend Lead. http://www.emarketer.com/Article/Retail-Industry-Maintains-Digital-Ad-Spend-Lead/1009942*

Some of the benefits of this approach include:

▶ **One Version of the Truth:** Using one platform for the process of digital asset collaboration means that, instead of some teams using email, others using Dropbox, and yet others using the WCM system, all of the customer-facing teams use a centralized platform.

▶ **Elimination of Duplication:** Establishing one platform for collaboration means that all contributors—be they external agencies or internal cross-functional teams—can depend on assets being available. This removes the inclination for marketers to create derivative assets on their own desktops or shared servers.

▶ **Encouraging Collaboration and Insight:** Because there is "one version of the truth" that tracks the asset from inception to archival (across its entire lifecycle), the team can see which assets are resonating and identify what is most important at each stage of the customer lifecycle.

2. Agile Assets = Better Brand Management

CMI's latest research on B2B marketers found that businesses are using, on average, 13 different communication channels including blogs, video platforms, articles, social media, mobile, microsites, and even print. [4]

One of the biggest challenges that brands have is that as assets are used, reused, and repurposed for all those channels, any one asset can go through that classic game of "telephone," where the real meaning (or power) of it can get lost as it continues from version to version. For example, that amazing ebook gets copied and cropped into a pretty good SlideShare presentation, which gets cropped and edited into a less meaningful infographic, which gets cropped and repurposed as a relatively boring banner ad. The creative connection gets lost, and each piece is treated as a separate digital asset.

Today, instant access to the latest and greatest asset is more than a "nice-to-have," it's a must in an agile content marketing organization. Digital assets need to be connected so that all their requisite parts can be managed, especially where more than one content type is used to assemble the ultimate asset. Within this set-up, marketers can always look to a multi-part digital asset and have access to the "original" parts that make up its totality.

This enables a much more connected set of content experiences with:

▶ **Insight into Assets:** By understanding all the different parts, and the usage of all assets, marketers can understand not only which assets provide the best results, but which PARTS of the assets are truly resonating. For example, maybe it's the animation of the infographic in a video that brings the idea to life and makes it perform well.

▶ **Optimized Display by Channel:** A great asset management tool provides automation for asset display across devices to create more efficient management and publishing. It can surface content that is optimized for a specific interface, without necessarily having to create different versions of that same asset. For example, a lower-resolution video can be made available for mobile or online display, vs. a high-definition version for desktops.

▶ **Better Brand Creative Management:** Marketers can focus on execution of content marketing programs, without having to constantly worry about and manage against stylebooks and brand guidelines.

4   http://www.slideshare.net/CMI/2015-b2b-content-marketing-benchmarks-budgets-and-trends-north-america-by-content-marketing-institute-and-marketingprofs?ref=http://contentmarketinginstitute.com/2014/10/2015-b2b-content-marketing-research/

3. Agile Processes = Faster Marketing

Moving faster doesn't mean you're agile. But, being more agile can absolutely help a marketer move faster.

One of the biggest opportunities in content marketing and social media strategies is having the ability to act and respond in near real-time to engage customers. In fact, 40% of consumer packaged goods companies believe that real-time marketing campaigns are the future.[5] But this huge opportunity comes with a challenge that is just as big. From tactics such as "newsjacking" to real-time social marketing opportunities, the most successful brands take advantage of these fast-moving opportunities in a thoughtful and considered way. What separates a huge #Fail from a viral hit in real-time marketing is not how fast the company can move, but rather the thought process that goes into each opportunity presented and how the company quickly and readily reacts to it.

For example, cosmetics company L'Oreal recently launched an enormous real-time effort during the 2015 Golden Globe Awards. The company set up a digital content hub, which featured a "shoppable social commerce center," and along with its agency published social content live during the show's broadcast. As Megan Trinidad, the creative director at R/GA (the agency working with L'Oreal) said, "*We have a huge amount of work that we've already done, but our primary thing is that we want to be flexible and capture those special moments throughout the night.*"[6]

It's the first part of that quote—about the huge amount of work already completed—that is most important. Successful real-time marketers are creating an agile process with teams that utilize a centralized, capable, and well thought-out method of managing digital assets, enabling speed as a side benefit. A good process can help in a number of ways:

▶ **Assets are Easier to Find:** Empowering a dispersed team to create and find assets in near real-time is an essential piece of this strategy. This means that there needs to be a very fast indexing of assets across a large organization.

▶ **Assets can be Automatically Delivered in Numerous Formats:** Teams need to be able to capture assets in native formats (e.g., on a mobile device, or from a specific social channel) and then quickly migrate them to other formats and platforms. A "reporter" can catch a red-carpet moment (photo, video, audio interview) on a phone, but then needs the capability to transform and publish it quickly to a microsite or content news hub.

▶ **Metadata is Automatically Assigned:** In order to make assets findable and enable real-time collaboration, it's crucial to automate as much of the metadata around the asset as possible. Rights usage, format, and even automated tagging structures help teams move quickly to get assets to their optimal destination.

But the key is that each of the benefits described above must be planned and established in a system that is "battle tested" well before any real-time opportunities are exploited.

The "social conversations" and "real-time" experiences being created today should not be an unrelenting "have you heard us yet?" and then three seconds later, "we SAID, have you heard us yet?" Rather, the goal for high-performing organizations should be a permanent state of agility … of "we'll be there when YOU need/want us to be." In other words, it's not how fast the push notification can be sent during the live event. It's more about having the ability to quickly send that perfect piece of media WHEN the time is right.

A great agile process is like the difference between two guests at a party. Your business can be the person who's really fast with a comment, but who often insults the other guests. Or, your business can be the whip-smart friend who always has a good anecdote or story, but saves it for just the right moment.

5   http://m.accenture.com/us-en/Pages/insight-stats-cgs-forty-percent-cps-cmos-think-real-time-marketing.aspx
6   http://www.adweek.com/news/technology/loreal-plans-paint-golden-globes-red-carpet-real-time-gifs-162240

Conclusion

This new focus on agility over speed requires that management of digital assets be made real in the organization. Creation of rich media can no longer be everyone's job and no one's job. **The creation, collaboration, management, publishing, and promotion of content-driven experiences must be an actual strategic function in the business.**

To accomplish this, new processes must be created and new technologies considered. And then, possibly, new roles should be created to facilitate those processes. This is an approach or methodology that focuses on the creation of content-driven experiences as a separate asset. It has as much potential value as a product and could potentially even have revenue possibilities.

And it's, candidly, how we're seeing marketers rediscover the joy in marketing more broadly and cool off that hot seat.

About Content Marketing Institute

Content Marketing Institute (CMI) is the leading global content marketing education and training organization. CMI teaches enterprise brands how to attract and retain customers through compelling, multi-channel storytelling. CMI's Content Marketing World event, the largest content marketing-focused event, is held every September, and Content Marketing World Sydney, every March. CMI also produces the quarterly magazine *Chief Content Officer*, and provides strategic consulting and content marketing research for some of the best-known brands in the world. CMI is a 2012, 2013, and 2014 Inc. 500 company.

To learn more about CMI, go to www.contentmarketinginstitute.com.

About Widen

Widen is a marketing technology company that powers the content that builds your brand. Widen delivers software services that help capture, organize, share, and analyze marketing content. One of those services is a cloud-based digital asset management solution helping marketing and creative teams easily store, search, distribute, share, track, and archive popular marketing content, such as images, logos, videos, graphics, brochures, and other marketing collateral.

Organizations of all sizes use the Widen Media Collective to streamline their workflows and make their content work harder. Widen is relied upon by hundreds of thousands of users worldwide across various industries. Organizations leveraging existing brand equity alongside organizations beginning to build brand equity trust Widen to help connect their marketing content. These include organizations such as the United Nations, Bain, Army National Guard, Mayo, Remington, LG, Roche, Trek, Cornell University, New Orleans Tourism Marketing, Atlanta Falcons, Spotify, Red Gold Tomatoes, GE Aviation, Kohler, and Yankee Candle.

To learn more about Widen, go to www.widen.com.