



WHITE PAPER

Getting Started with Digital Asset Management

Start planning your DAM initiative today to ensure that the system you get will be perfect for your organization



A successful digital asset management (DAM) initiative is about:

- Understanding user needs and expectations so that what you offer is what they want
- Working with professionals who can help you transform your needs and ideas into a functional system
- Effective change management that ensures the benefits of your DAM system are fully realized

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You Matter More Than Software

Software undoubtedly plays an important role in a successful digital asset management system, but without a solid understanding of what you need from your DAM-system, you might not make the right software choice for your organization. This paper aims to guide you through steps you can take right now –

before you make your software choice – to ensure your DAM system is a success.

Armed with this knowledge, you'll be better prepared to work with service professionals who can help you plan and deploy your system, and you'll know the questions you need

to ask of DAM vendors to ensure you get the answers you need.

Understand User Needs



It's a good idea to first educate users, IT administrators and senior managers about the benefits and ROI digital asset management provides. All of these players typically have some stake in a DAM system, and they each have questions and concerns you'll need to address.

Some of the resistance you might encounter from users includes:

- How is this better than the file system?
- Why don't we just use Google to find things?
- I don't want to have to learn something new!

IT administrator concerns are more typically workload and security focused:

- We don't have the time or staff to start up a new initiative like this.
- No software is going onto our networks un-

til we can verify it's safe, secure and reliable.

Senior managers tend to focus on the business benefits and ROI:

- Why do we need this and why now?
- What will this enable us to do that we can't do now?

In order to address these (and other) concerns, your best first step is to start a conversation.

Talk to the users

more means of soliciting user feedback might be useful. In-person or phone interviews, surveys or even a general email messages might provide you with a good first round of information. In addition, based on the responses you get, you'll be able to identify those in your organization who are likely to become key allies in your DAM initiative.

[Gain a comprehensive understanding of user needs and expectations through interviews, surveys, email or other channels.](#)

Identifying those users who are most likely be the major users of your new DAM system is one of your goals at this stage.

These users will be photographers, designers, marketing and sales professionals and, depending on your organization's business, even your customers.

Meeting the needs and expectations of these users is paramount to the success of your DAM project. If they don't use the system, others won't. And if they're not on board with your efforts to set up your systems, you won't

benefit from the assistance and guidances they can offer.

Once you identify these key players, collect information about their digital asset use and workflow requirements.

Discover what digital assets they currently have, how they manage them now, what assets they expect to use in the future and what they'll need to do with them.

Talk to the IT gurus

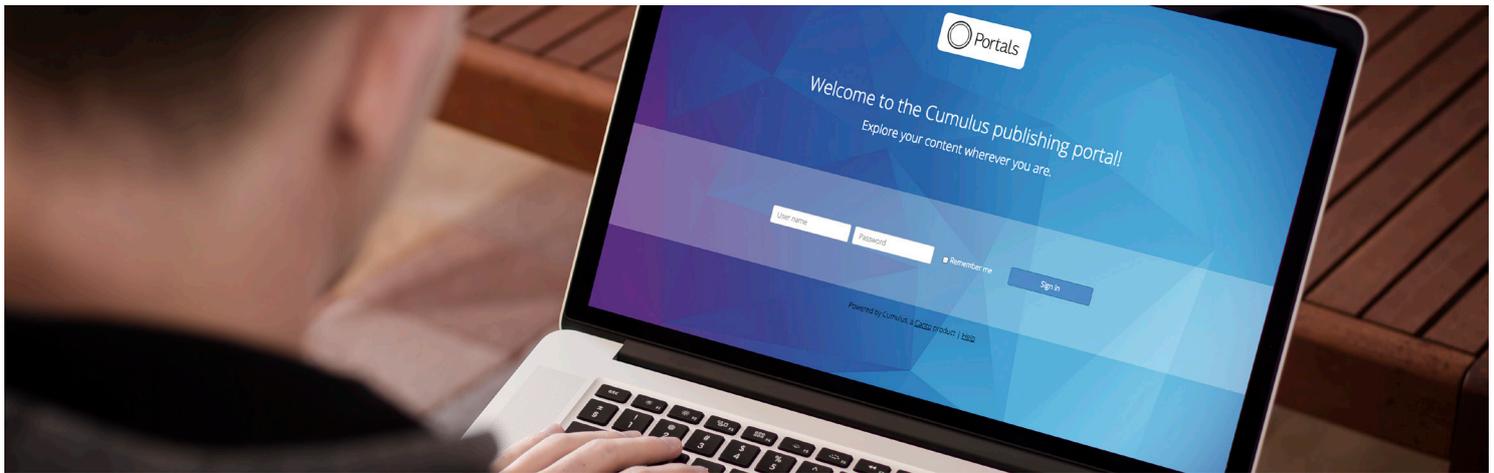
Your allies in IT can help you gather the information you'll need, such as the level of security required by the system and policies regarding backups, governmental or institutional regulations that might affect where and how data can be stored.

IT can also help you determine your more technical needs, such as preferred server platforms, network considerations, and integrations with other systems like Active Directory,

Open Directory (LDAP) or other enterprise systems.

Talk to senior managers

Actually, don't talk to your senior managers at this point – you're not quite ready. First, you'll need to build your team of allies that will help you make your case for DAM. The importance of this can't be overestimated because buy-in from the top will help your DAM initiative survive the long haul.



Build A Team



Recruiting committed stakeholders from multiple departments across your organization will help ensure your DAM initiative is a success. Even if you don't have a senior manager you need to impress, the input from others will help ensure you've considered everything that's important within your organization.

Make some calls

The 'usual suspects' who most likely to need and appreciate DAM are found in marketing, technical publications and design and photographic departments. Other departments, such as sales and accounting, will find the system useful once it's launched, but they're typically less likely to help lead the effort. If your organization includes a library or research division, knock on their doors first – DAM is a perfect fit for them, and they're likely to recognize its benefits right away.

Establish roles

With 'Team DAM' in place, determine which individuals and departments will be responsible for each aspect of the initiative.

There's no need to get too detailed at this stage, but you'll want to get a general idea of things like:

- Who will need to contribute to the system?
- Who should be able to make changes to the system, such as adding and editing meta-data?
- Who will be the technical contact for the system?
- Who will be the contact for users who have questions?

The 'ownership' of responsibility will help strengthen your team members' commitment to your initiative – and it lightens the workload for your DAM administrator!

Call in the experts

This is also a good time to discuss how to best integrate outside consultants to help drive your effort and keep it focused. Your DAM team will know what your organization needs and expects, but it might not know what's possible. Knowledgeable consultants will help you recognize the full potential of DAM.

[Knowledgeable consultants will help you recognize the full potential of DAM.](#)

DAM experts can be found online, and some DAM vendors provide professional services divisions that are trained to help customers even before their system purchase. When speaking to a DAM vendor, make sure they're willing to offer you a vendor-neutral needs assessment that's not a sales pitch for their products.



Design Your Perfection



With your DAM team in place, and your trusted consultant advisors by your side, it's time to get serious about your future DAM system's ultimate potential..

Share with your consultant what you learned from your user and IT interviews. Work together to plot out your current workflows and business processes in order to identify what you'll be able to enhance using DAM.

Consider and discuss things like:

- Where your digital assets come from
- Who needs access to them, and from where
- How you determine production status
- How you 'move' assets through your production pipeline
- How you communicate development progress
- What you do once a project is complete

It's important to get this all down on paper for review and discussion. Identify where improvement is needed, and design those improvements.

For example, if your productions are regularly delayed by communications breakdowns, or approvals that take too long, ask your consultant about ways in which your DAM system could be used to notify approvers in advance when something is about to hit their desk or

how the system could be used to alert users when edits or other actions are required.

This self-analysis process is critical because when inefficient workflows are replicated in DAM, you end up with inefficient DAM.

Once you've plotted your current workflows, and identified ways in which your new DAM system will improve things, identify obstacles that might hinder your team's ability to deploy the system.

When inefficient workflows are replicated in DAM, you end up with inefficient DAM.

Common hurdles include IT stonewalling, individual or organizational workloads, or even just the not-invented-here syndrome.

If your DAM team includes players from all involved departments – which it should – you'll likely find solutions to these issues pretty quickly. If, on the other hand, your self-assessment and consultant discussions have shed light on other potential obstacles, add to your team the people that can help you burst through those barriers.

Ice your cake

By this point, your DAM initiative includes:

- A team of involved players from around your organization
- A consultant who knows your needs and knows what's possible
- An assessment of current workflows and a plan for making things better via DAM
- A map to help you circumnavigate potential

obstacles your team has identified

It's a good start, but you can add value to your workflow assessment and obstacle avoidance plan through a long-term vision for your DAM system. You're understandably focused on making things better today but what about two years from now?

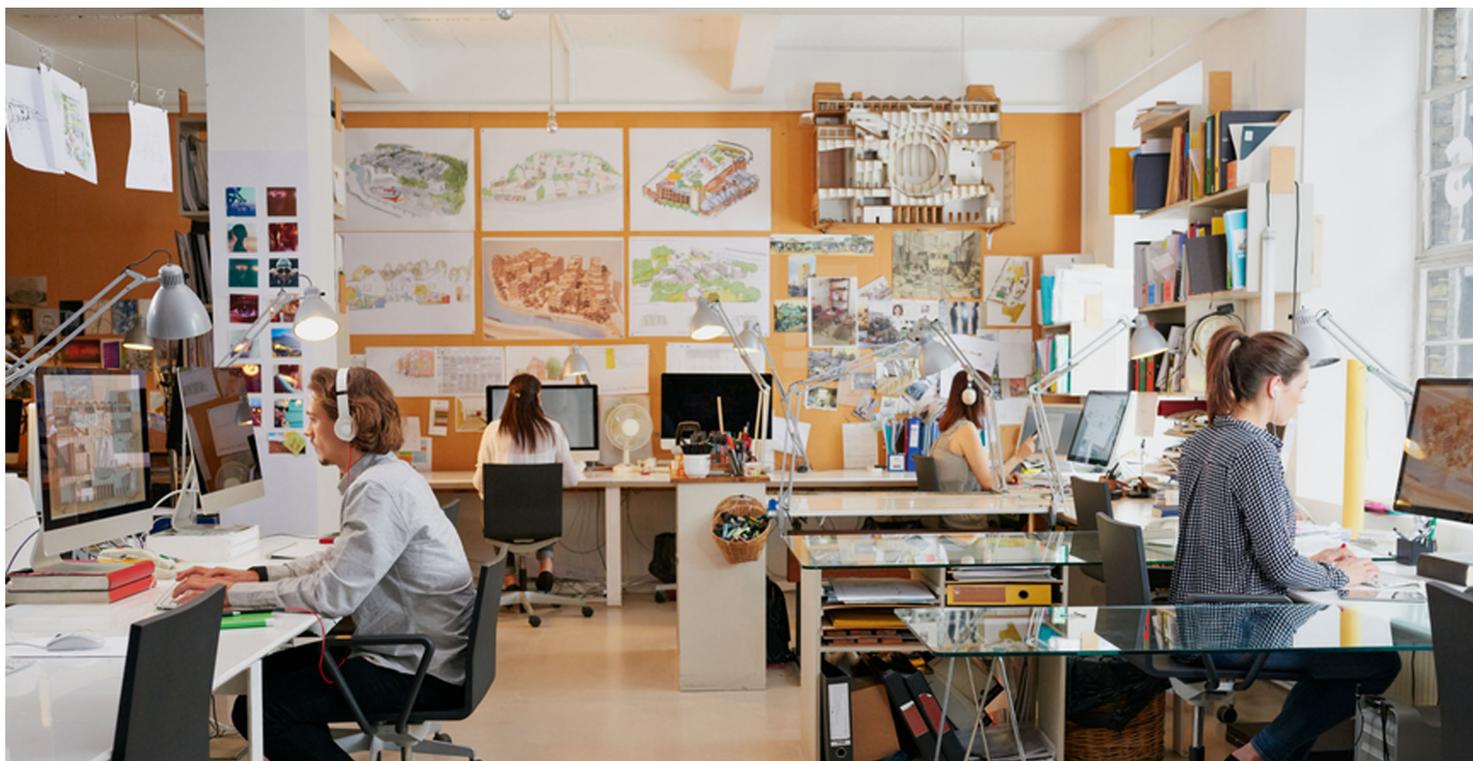
DAM systems that grow exponentially over time are the norm, not the exception.

You'll be ready to handle the increased demand for your system if you've chosen software that can easily be expanded and integrated with other systems.

DAM systems that grow exponentially over time are the norm, not the exception.

Would it be helpful to extend your DAM system to all your offices worldwide? Then plan for it. Would you increase your DAM system ROI by integrating it with systems, like product databases or marketing automation? If so, keep that in mind.

Keep in mind the long-term potential and benefits of the system because they'll matter more than ever for what comes next.



How do I plan a successful DAM project? – An Interview with Benedict Marck



Benedict Marck is Manager of Consulting EMEA at Canto and has already implemented many successful DAM projects. In this interview, he talks about typical scenarios and helpful tips for his own DAM.

What is the most important question I should ask before planning a DAM project?

For me, as a project manager, the most important thing is to make sure that I really know exactly what the customer wants to achieve with his DAM project and what the initial situation is. What are the objectives and requirements of my client? What is the timeframe of the customer and is this realistic? What is the customer's budget? All other questions arise from these three basic questions.

To what extent do I have to include the project environment? Who do I have to convince?

The key to the success of a DAM project is the management of stakeholders and their project team. When I plan a DAM project, I need to know who I work with and what expectations the people around me have in me. For some people, a trustful relationship is often more

important than mere facts. Others want to have more details and information – a highly professional relationship. If I am planning a DAM project, I have to ask myself who actually decides on the project and who has influence on the project team and within the project team and so on.

What technical questions need to be clarified in advance?

In the case of DAM projects, technical issues typically concern resources for servers, storage systems and bandwidth. When we speak of more complex setups, the integration API is also important, which is important for systems such as CMS, ERP, or PIM. Such questions are usually clarified at the beginning of the project but at the latest until the beginning of the implementation phase

What, in your experience, is the most common mistake in implementing a DAM project and how can it be avoided?

As with any project, the most common and probably the most profound mistake one can make is without a clear objective. This makes it very difficult for me to implement the DAM project because it's difficult to effectively plan if I do not know exactly what should come out in the end.

What is the cost of implementing a digital asset management system?

This depends very much on the scenario in which you want to use your DAM system and which components belong to it. This, of course, depends on your requirements. And to ensure

that you've considered all the costs, think about licenses, maintenance, support and consulting for the system. Some manufacturers offer seemingly cheap prices and consider it acceptable not to inform their customers about the full costs of implementation. This is not our approach here at Canto.

How many DAM projects have you completed?

Honestly, I've stopped counting. I think I have implemented about 200 projects over the past five and a half years.

Additional information

[Download our free eBook «How to Manage a Successful DAM Project»](#)

[Watch our free webinar «Manage a DAM Project»](#)



Partner with the Power



Buy-in from senior management can be critical to the success of your DAM system – and not just because you need someone to write the check.

Some level of change management is required at the launch of any central business process system, like a DAM. And, as we all know, resistance to change can be problematic.

Your consultant should be able to help with (or even control) the change management

process, but a mandate from higher up can make all the difference.

[Change management is required at the launch of any central business process system like DAM.](#)

Move up the ranks in your organization as high as you can to find a champion for your initiative who can influence others in the organization. This executive should be a senior business decision maker who acts as the voice of the DAM effort and who is capable of

– and willing to – explain the major benefits of DAM to your organization.

If that executive is you, then make sure you've partnered with the users and IT personnel that can help explain the system's benefits at those levels.

Ultimately, the project should be viewed as an initiative that is officially endorsed by management. This not only encourages others to take the project more seriously, it means users will find time for trainings and other activities related to the initiative.

Thinking about Software

Don't overbuy and bust your budget



It's tempting to try to match budgets with price lists, but doing so can burn through your budget before you've added the value you need. Sure, stay within your financial limits, but software should never be the only cost you consider.

Total cost of ownership for a DAM system includes:

- **Services** – You're already in a beneficial relationship with your consultant/advisor, so you understand the benefits (and value) of expertise.
- **Hardware** – Will you need a new computer to run your DAM system? What about storage space? Plan for more than you think you'll need.
- **Staffing** – Do you plan to add a staff position devoted to the system, or will the workload

be shared among existing personnel?

- **Recurring fees** – Some DAM software vendors charge monthly recurring fees just for use, while others charge annually for maintenance, which might be optional.
- **Network bandwidth** – DAM systems that are deployed 'in the cloud' can be subject to network bandwidth costs. This typically isn't a consideration for systems that are deployed 'on-premise,' meaning on the hardware running on your network.

Your consultant will help you estimate all these costs, and also separate those associated with system start-up from those you'll need to bake into future budgets.

[If access to your system is dependant on monthly fees, what happens if your financial well runs dry?](#)

DAM software choices

As with many other classes of software, DAM software is available in various flavors, including on-premise, hosted, software-as-a-service (SaaS), open source, commercial, etc.

And, while it might appear at first as though you have many options, you might actually have fewer options than you think. This is because the software you choose must be compatible with your organizational requirements, which include:

- **Budgets** – Unless you can be absolutely certain that budgets won't be reduced or eliminated, don't enter into software agreements that require regular payments. If access to your system is dependant on monthly fees, what happens if your financial well runs dry?
- **Security and regulation** – Are you permitted to store data on systems shared with any number of other businesses and organiza-



tions? If your organization imposes no such limitations, your government might.

- *Platform requirements* – Your IT department likely has requirements with regard to which operating systems are used, and which application programming interfaces (APIs) must be available for system expansion and integration.
- *Network bandwidth* – Will your DAM system be used to manage larger files, like high-resolution Photoshop images, audio or video? If so, network bandwidth will matter, and ‘cloud’ deployment might not be a good idea.
- *Business policies* – Many organizations have requirements with regard to the business policies of vendors, such as the availability of support, liability limitations or network ‘uptime’ commitments.
- *Purchase policies* – Are you allowed to enter into open-ended purchase obligations that require recurring fees?

Know your DAM profile

Work with your consultant to determine a ‘profile’ you can use as a guide. Here are some examples of common considerations:

We’ll be using large files – Even the fastest Internet connection is slower than a local network. For Photoshop files, video clips or other large assets, you’ll want an on-premise system. Slow Internet performance encour-

ages users to store local file copies, which reduces the efficacy of your DAM system because you lose the ability to manage access, versions and usage statistics.

Regulations govern our data – Increasingly, organizations find themselves faced with restrictions over what they can do with their own data. Some countries mandate that businesses store their data only on servers that exist within national borders.

Some organizations are forbidden from (or choose to avoid) storing data on servers owned by, or shared with, other companies because all ‘cloud’ software security breaches are malicious – many are entirely accidental, yet no less damaging. After all, how secure is data that you know others can access?

Not all ‘cloud’ software security breaches are malicious – many are entirely accidental, yet no less damaging.

We assume ‘cloud’ means less work. – With cloud deployment, you pay someone else to manage the system. This is an attractive idea for some organizations, but there are downsides.

First off, SaaS-based cloud vendors must accommodate the averaged needs of all customers. So the system you get can seem like a ‘lowest common denominator’ compromise. Your users might not like it and you won’t be able to change it. In addition, downtime

for maintenance isn’t scheduled at your convenience, and outages, of course, aren’t scheduled at all. You need to consider the effects of downtime on your productions.

But the most important thing to take into account before you choose a cloud deployment (hosted or SaaS), is the ongoing financial commitment – stop paying and you lose access. To ensure you offer yourself a parachute from the cloud, make sure the vendor offers an option to easily and affordably move to an on-premise solution that doesn’t require you to start from scratch.

The most important thing to take into account for cloud deployment – stop paying and you lose access.

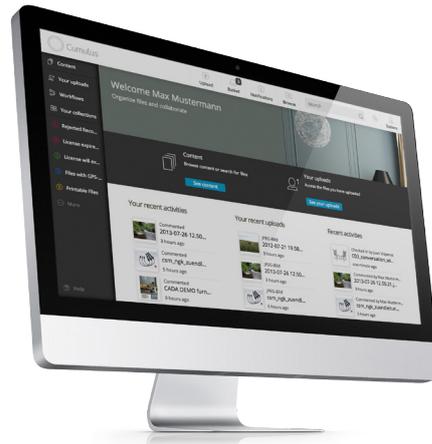
Budgets are tight, so cheap is good. – No ‘off the shelf’ software is perfect for every organization. Software services are what make a DAM system purr, so take advantage of professional services but remember to factor them into your total budget. This is important because if your DAM system doesn’t work the way you need it to work, your users won’t like it and the entire DAM initiative will be jeopardized.

Don’t skimp on the expertise of professionals! Also keep in mind that most ‘cloud’ hosts charge for network bandwidth, so if your system will be high-traffic, or be used to manage larger files, factor in those costs.

Next Steps

Once you and your DAM consultant have chosen the best software for your needs, you'll be ready to implement the system you co-designed. Because you planned on paper, and you thought through the workflows you need, you'll have your system up and running in far less time, and with much less fuss and expense.

Look for webinars and other white papers from Canto that offer more best-practice information to help you get the most from your digital asset management initiative.



Thomas Mockenhaupt

Canto – The Digital Asset Management Experts

If you have any questions regarding implementation of the best practices presented here, we will be glad to help you. Canto is one of the leading DAM providers with over 25 years of experience. More than 2,500 successful companies worldwide rely on DAM systems from Canto.

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About Canto

Canto is committed to innovation, with a focus on delivering digital asset management (DAM) and asset collaboration and engagement (ACE) software and services that solve customers' ongoing brand asset challenges and help promote brand awareness. Founded in 1990, Canto is an industry pioneer and leader with more than 2,500 customers worldwide. Canto's offerings include its flagship enterprise DAM technology, Cumulus, which allows customers to efficiently secure, repurpose and distribute brand assets, and the marketing solution Flight to facilitate asset collaboration and engagement. Supported by a global partner network, Canto is based in San Francisco (USA), Berlin and Giessen (Germany). For more information, visit canto.com.

About Cumulus

Cumulus allows companies to easily create, organize, find and repurpose digital content — on any platform. It helps customers protect their brand assets, ensure efficiency and improve their bottom line. Cumulus can be integrated with popular applications, and customized to support and streamline digital work flows. Cumulus X represents version 10 and introduces the neXt level of enterprise digital asset management, building on its long history of DAM customer success.