GCM 460: Asset Management for Graphic Communications

DAM Creative

Blog Post: User Experience (UX) Design in DAM

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December 09, 2024

Link to blog

Introduction

With rapid technological advancements occurring globally, industries are beginning to adopt digital assets in their internal and external operations.
Consequently, organizations are implementing digital asset management (DAM) systems into their workflows (HIVO, n.d.).

As these systems have a growing presence in today's technology-focused climate, we should first ask what is digital asset management and why give a DAM about it?

What is DAM?

Digital Asset Management (DAM) involves the practices used to maintain assets for long-term preservation and archiving, often achieved through a DAM system. With centralized storing, commenting, sharing, and metadata tagging capabilities, these systems offer users enhanced searchability and improved productivity (HIVO, n.d.).

DAM technology significantly contributes to a system's effectiveness. However, organizations must recognize that a successful DAM integration occurs when designing a system that prioritizes user experience (Carner, 2019, 359).

DAM & UX

User Experience (UX) within the scope of DAM refers to the ease of use when completing tasks on DAM systems. UX design is a significant factor in the success of a DAM system as it determines whether users will accept the technology and integrate it into their daily routines (HIVO, n.d.). DAM administrators who seek to understand UX work towards creating a system that is simple to navigate and helps users perform tasks such as searching, retrieving, previewing, and annotating assets. On the other hand, neglecting user experience may result in an interface that creates confusion and hinders workflows, leading to resistance toward DAM adoption (Currans & Lopez, 2023, 106).

Examples

Example 01 - Acceptance

An organization is adopting a DAM system into its marketing department's workflow and asks a designer to provide feedback for their ideal interface.

The designer who often faces issues searching for assets on a cloud storage platform seeks systems with a simple interface and easy-to-follow navigation. In addition, she provides the DAM managers with common words she uses to search for assets. The organization listens and applies the designer's input to its DAM system, creating an interface with minimal graphical elements and tagged assets.

During the second testing round, the designer interacted with the prototype DAM system and was pleasantly surprised to see her suggestions come in place. She attempts to search for a specific branding asset and it appears in seconds.

Conclusion: The designer is happy with the new DAM system and looks forward to its implementation into her workflow.

Example 02 - Rejection

An organization notified its staff members about an upcoming training session on a DAM system. During the training session, staff members found it challenging to use the DAM interface due to its complex design, particularly the asset library, which consists of several irrelevant asset categories. In addition, when attempting to search for assets, the staff's desired assets did not appear.

During discussions with DAM managers, the staff's feedback was overlooked and neglected. As a result, the staff are hesitant to attend additional training sessions and are reluctant to integrate the DAM system into their daily routine.

Methods to Improve DAM System User Interface (UI) & User Experience (UX)

1. Conducting User Research

Conducting user research involves collecting data on user behaviors and preferences, allowing researchers to understand user interactions with assets and build a DAM system that caters to their needs (Currans & Lopez, 2023, 107). A method to determine a DAM system's effectiveness based on user experience is to track their interaction with the interface. For instance, collecting information on daily logins, downloads, and searching habits (Katner, 2021). These metrics offer insight into the usability of a DAM system, with higher login and download rates signifying higher searchability results. In addition, user research creates the opportunity to identify the strengths and areas for improvement of a DAM system before officially adopting it into an organization's workflow (Currans & Lopez, 2023, 108). In doing so, there is less potential for unforeseen challenges such as user resistance and confusion, reducing the time and resources spent on training.

2. Collaborating with stakeholders to create effective taxonomy

In DAM systems, taxonomy refers to the organizational structure of assets and their respective categories. By involving internal and external stakeholders in the creation of the taxonomy, DAM administrators can develop a comprehensive asset library and interface that incorporates commonly used metadata and keywords among current staff members (Currans & Lopez, 2023, 110). This approach will be beneficial for end-users, as their existing knowledge will help them quickly familiarize themselves with the system and achieve effective search results.

3. Offering collaboration and communication features

Incorporating collaboration and communication features such as direct commenting, version controls, and an instant notification system can greatly enhance workflow efficiency. The ability to preview, edit, and annotate assets within a centralized system benefits users involved in the asset revision and approval process as it minimizes the time spent communicating and sharing information, which is often done through the use of various platforms like e-mail (Currans & Lopez, 2023, 110). By developing an interface with these capabilities, users will be able to lessen their workload and become more receptive to integrating DAM systems.

4. User-Friendly interface

A user-friendly, simplified interface enables users to learn and integrate a DAM system into their existing workflows. It is recommended to incorporate graphical elements that users are already familiar with, such as organizing asset categories in a similar style to a sidebar menu commonly found on online shopping websites. These features enable users to easily identify the functionality of an interface without needing to participate in multiple training sessions or contact customer support services for assistance (Currans & Lopez, 2023, 103). In addition, a minimally designed interface helps users to navigate the system more efficiently, reducing the number of clicks needed to navigate through multiple items and tabs, lessening the time spent on a task.

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