



The DAM Guidebook

Issue 01 • Apr 2021

by Afrah Idrees • April 6, 2021

Planning For DAM

A Beginner's Guide to Digital Asset Management  est. 5 mins



: Ola Dapo via Pexels

Have you ever felt as though you had countless assets in your possession, but no way to organize them? This is a situation that many people working in the graphic communications industry find themselves in, and at times, it can feel quite daunting. Luckily, there is a method of navigating this process, known as DAM, or, Digital Asset Management. Knowledge and implementation of DAM can truly elevate company operations. But what goes into planning for DAM?

Getting Started

In order to begin to implement DAM software into an organization, it is crucial to first understand what DAM is. Digital Asset Management refers to all of the operations associated with digital media, including but not limited to accessing, tracking, ingesting, recording, describing, and repurposing assets.

Company Objectives

When planning for DAM, a crucial step in the implementation process is to establish the DAM's objectives as a company. This conversation should include all stakeholders and future users of the DAM to understand how and where the DAM will benefit users ("Digital Asset Management," 2019). Will it increase design efficiency? Will it make locating assets easier? Is it an immediate or long-term plan? These questions must all be discussed and solidified before proceeding further.

COPE

A foundational concept in the world of DAM is to create once and publish everywhere, also known as COPE. This idea is a guiding principle for those interested in increasing company efficiency, as it creates a central location from which all team members can access the same files. When planning for DAM, a key consideration relating to COPE may be deciding whether or not to make use of embed codes, which allow content to be inserted into webpages and updated automatically when changed within the DAM (Roe, 2020).

**“create once,
publish everywhere.”**

Governance

When introducing DAM into a company, a system of governance must be planned out to ensure that all operations run smoothly. This area specifically surrounds the rules regarding how assets will be shared amongst the company, as well as who is granted permissions to certain areas of the DAM (Roe, 2020).

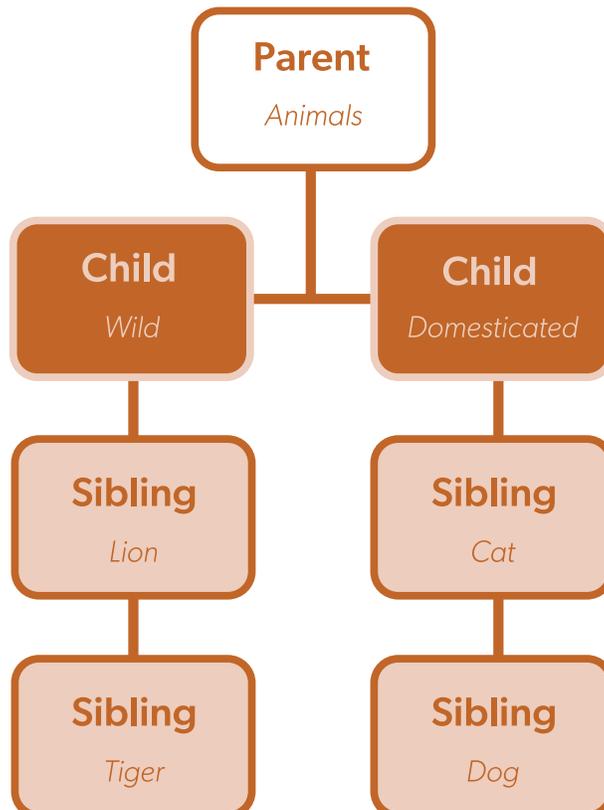
Taxonomy

Known as the classification system of assets, a taxonomy is the gateway to establishing a management plan, as it organizes and categorizes assets based on pre-determined variables. A taxonomy should be scalable but should never fundamentally change (El Asaleh, 2021). With this in mind, it is important that the taxonomy is planned out thoroughly before it is implemented.

The most commonly used taxonomy type within DAM is the Hierarchical Structure, which takes on a familial relationship. As depicted below, this structure functions with a broad “parent” at the top of the hierarchy, from which more narrow and specific “children” and “siblings” emerge. These offspring allow users to categorize assets in more detail, and may be organized by type of asset, department, product, or any other relevant classification (Roe, 2020).

Naming Convention

After establishing a basis of a taxonomy, a naming convention must also be determined for the assets within it. This should be universally applied across the organization and include the company name, a data-base style date, and only characters that are accepted by the DAM server (El Asaleh, 2021).



Metadata

Working hand-in-hand with taxonomy, metadata is a crucial aspect of any DAM as it provides “data about data,” essentially indicating key information about assets to users (Roe, 2020). The use of metadata allows all users of the DAM to locate assets based on detailed criterons that are unique to the asset itself. Examples of metadata may include photographic information such as ISO and aperture, or general information about the file such as copyright information.

Keywords

One type of metadata that is particularly important to consider is “keywords.” Apart from the technical aspects of an image, keywords allow users to locate assets based on visual aspects and appearance. Often inputted manually by the uploader, keywords may include qualitative descriptors such as “girl,” “pink dress,” and “dancing.” Each of these contribute to search optimization for all users of the DAM, who can now easily find niche and detailed assets that may have otherwise been difficult to locate.



Software

When planning for DAM, one of the most important decisions surrounds the software to use, which varies based on the company’s goals. Is the DAM system scalable for future expansion? Can it be customized? Will the integration be seamless with existing IT infrastructure? (“16 tips,” 2021). Companies should also review hosting options, including whether to elect for SaaS (System as a Service) which offers cloud-based DAM, or ASP (Application Service Providers), in which software is hosted by a third party (Babych, n.d.).

Implementation

After all foundational concepts have been established, the last step in planning for DAM is determining how roll-out will operate. It is highly recommended to start out slowly, planning training sessions for employees as they begin to work with the DAM. After developed use, companies should evaluate the results to plan for future steps (“The Crawl,” 2020). All in all, there is no sure-fire secret to planning for DAM... except for the realization that planning never truly ends!