It's Time for Marketing Asset Management.

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Marketers have been doing more with less for years. Being understaffed is the "new normal" in marketing departments, and money for new tools is scarce and money for staff is non-existent. Unfortunately, what *is* growing is the number of things for which marketers have responsibility. Marketing has to deliver traditional programs – such as creating and updating marketing collateral, launching new products, and managing tradeshows – plus more recent duties such as analyzing web traffic, tweeting and blogging, and posting to social media sites.

And there is providing support for salespeople and sales channels. This too is a hotspot of growth and change as companies pursue global strategies, acquire complementary products, and target new markets. Marketing is expected to meet the information needs of new and expanding channels, and to coordinate with global colleagues, without adding staff.

The results are obvious: inefficiency, stress and turnover within the marketing department, along with a culture of constant firefighting. Marketers say they are stretched so thin that planning, investment, and infrastructure suffer – and this impacts effectiveness.

The Importance of Good Infrastructure

Marketers need infrastructure, and that means systems. This is critical for all areas of marketing responsibility. But when it comes to supporting salespeople and sales channels, a system that manages, controls, tracks and distributes the company's marketing materials, sales tools, and creative assets is essential.

Many marketers may consider a file server or an intranet site to be a system. Neither of these is a system, nor does either address all the unique needs of marketers. A system is one that is especially designed for managing marketing assets and that serves as a customized online portal that assists marketers by providing access to a company's entire asset library for internal staff, sales teams, channel partners and vendors. A Marketing Asset Management (MAM) system allows for all marketing resources, including PDFs, presentations, logos, images, artwork, videos, etc. to be logically organized, easily searched, accessed, and updated. The MAM system then distributes, emails, or fulfills on demand.

Signs that You Need Marketing Asset Management

How does a marketing department know that it is time to move to a Marketing Asset Management system? Here are the signs:

1) **Salespeople complain it is difficult to find the materials they need.** With salespeople utilizing a range of marketing materials, including digital, print and physical, making the right materials available to the salespeople requesting them when and where they need them ranks high on the list of marketers' challenges. It also can lead to sales staff "doing their own thing" and using materials that might not be up to par because marketing can't respond quickly enough to suit them. Salespeople rely on current, 24x7 availability of marketing materials. Marketers must provide this or face the wrath of their sales teams.

   ### How MAM Helps

   A MAM system enables salespeople to efficiently search for and easily access the specific materials they need, wherever the salesperson is located, and regardless of

time zones. This is a dramatic improvement over the time-consuming process of requesting items from marketing and waiting for a response. To make it as easy as possible for sales to quickly find what they need, assets that reside in the MAM system can be categorized. Assets can be found by menus, keywords, and full text searches, with thumbnail views providing a visual ID and snapshot of each item.

Search time can be reduced even more because leading MAM systems allow marketers to personalize views for sales team members based on their job function, geography, departments, sales groups, product line, or other criteria. This puts the most relevant/most requested items front and center for each salesperson.

2) **Marketers have to update multiple locations and sites with the same items.** Companies with multiple offices and channels need to have all of them supplied with brand assets, marketing materials, sales tools, and creative materials. Corporate marketers often struggle to effectively coordinate and distribute all of these assets to a company's many locations in an efficient and timely way. This drains marketers' energy and productivity.

How MAM Helps

A MAM system has notification functions directly integrated within the system. When a new item is added or an item gets changed, marketers specify exactly who (individuals, groups, departments, etc.) is notified and when (immediately, at a specific time, end of day, etc.). Weekly marketing updates can be automatically distributed via email blasts or the web to the field. A built-in tracking feature lets marketers see who has accessed emails, while email recipients can directly connect from email notifications to the targeted assets, saving time and avoiding confusion.

3) **Too much time responding to requests from the field.** It becomes virtually impossible to respond to every request from every salesperson in as timely a fashion as the he or she would like, especially when the burden falls on the lean staff in the marketing department. Handling such requests on a case-by-case basis by email or phone is inefficient and wastes a tremendous amount of marketers' time.

How MAM Helps

A MAM system eliminates the marketer's need to respond to individual requests. Within a MAM system there is a shopping cart, an order manager, and a fulfillment manager. Users add or delete print or physical items to the cart as they search and browse, select their desired delivery location, specify order quantities, review the contents of the cart, then click "checkout" to submit their order. It's simple and fast.

For digital assets, users can download individual items or kits of items, or email them directly from the system.

4) **Limited visibility into which materials actually are being used, and which aren't.** Are the product brochures being handed out to customers by sales or sitting in the trunk of a car? Has the company wasted money on printing full-fledged brochures when more simple

and to-the-point data sheets would do? When collateral is depleted or becomes outdated, how many of each piece is needed to supply to sales next time? It's almost impossible to answer questions like these without an automated system that tracks asset utilization, effectiveness, and inventory.

How MAM Helps

A MAM system provides marketers with deep insight into where and how often marketing assets are being used, as well as how they are performing. It tracks material usage, orders, downloads, and visitor inquiries. An integrated order manager tracks and displays orders for physical (hardcopy) and electronic (emailed) materials, allowing marketers to accurately manage inventories. It provides a real-time view of order history and status, item history, and inventory levels, and highlights items that fall below the specified re-order point. A marketer will know exactly what needs replacement, saving countless dollars on printing and shipping, and streamlining the reordering of depleted assets.

5) **Inconsistent presentation of products and programs across sales channels.** Preserving a company's brand standards across all channels and across all global offices requires diligent oversight of all marketing materials used in all regions. Without a way to centrally manage and review creative materials in a distributed marketing environment the danger always exists that something inappropriate or downright incorrect or damaging will slip through. Marketers are the brand guardians who need a way to enforce brand consistency throughout the organization, including local marketers who may be customizing sales tools and messaging for their local sales team, but not running them past headquarters' staff for compliance with guidelines.

How MAM Helps

Although self-service is a key benefit of MAM systems, to ensure brand consistency a MAM system enables marketers to approve all materials in the asset repository and make them available only to authorized users. The system allows marketers to build access control "partitions" for materials, so marketers can decide which groups have access to which materials for distribution. This feature ensures that only relevant information is presented to each distinct audience or sales channel. In addition, marketers can publish secure links to digital assets that can be referenced from websites, emails, documents and more. This option lets marketers manage one true "source" version of files, thus avoiding the creation of multiple unapproved versions.

6) **Duplication of efforts and wasted time across marketing operations.** When the headquarters office and the remote offices are developing similar marketing assets at the same time, not only does it waste everyone's time, but the potential to impact the company's branding is a big concern. It makes much more sense to create standardized processes for customizing collateral and, with the right creative tools, offer users dynamic templates to customize as needed, but with the security of marketing oversight.

How MAM Helps

Leading MAM systems give users the power to create marketing assets that can be tuned for maximum effectiveness. This is done with the use of digital templates which can be customized and personalized for specific customers or audiences. Marketers can create pre-approved content components (images or text) for users to mix-and-match as appropriate on the templates. Users can tailor the templates by inserting marketing-approved content and/or local and marketing-specific information, including contact information, logos, special pricing, images, and sales messages. It is a convenient and time-saving solution that allows marketers to maintain complete control over design and core content of assets, thus ensuring that all resulting collateral is brand-compliant.

7) **Security concerns regarding sensitive marketing assets and sales tools.** This certainly is one of the worries that keep marketers up at night. Are price lists getting into the hands of competitors? Are confidential product launch plans being accessed by former employees? Can hackers enter the system and alter documents or impact access to the marketing assets repository? Without a way to secure a company's sensitive and proprietary materials online, the potential for them to be compromised is very real.

How MAM Helps

Applications on a MAM system are password-protected so only specific individuals can administer the system, and individual access is strictly controlled. Administrators of the system decide who gets in and where they can go. MAM systems that are delivered as software-as-a-service from secure servers assure marketers that all digital materials are safely stored offsite, which eliminates worries about backup, file damage, disk space, and storage. The safety of a company's assets is guaranteed with backup redundancy and a service level guarantee.

8) **Poor traceability and accessibility of previously-created marketing assets.** When outdated materials continue to be used past their "use by" date, it creates a problem for both sales and marketers. Products may have been updated with new features and benefits, prices probably have changed, a revamped brand image may have been introduced since the last iteration of a marketing piece. It is important to determine where the outdated assets are and who might still be using them. If this information is not available to marketers, incorrect information may be out there that could impact sales.

How MAM Helps

Marketers can manage both components and finished goods within the same MAM system, tracking who is accessing which assets, being notified by the system when assets are becoming outdated or depleted, reconfiguring the system as needed for promotional programs, new product lines, new pricing, acquisitions and more. This provides marketers with peace of mind that all outdated assets are removed from the system when they expire and that only current assets are in circulation.

9) **Inability to provide updated sets of materials to mobile applications and other systems.** Marketers need to supply sales and customers with marketing assets on their mobile devices. Marketers must find a way to optimize mobile access (from smartphones and tablet) to their marketing materials or they risk complaints by sales, and customer dissatisfaction.

> *How MAM Helps*
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> Mobile access to all of a company's marketing assets is an essential function of any modern MAM system. With a MAM system, remote employees, sales teams, channel partners and customers can access marketing assets from tablets or smartphones via optimized data displays and can download, email, and order assets as needed.

10) **Sales frustration with outdated, irrelevant content.** Salespeople are under constant pressure to deliver results. When marketing assets don't address their customers' main areas of concern, aren't customized to support local needs, or are outdated, the job sales has to do becomes much more difficult. So it's no wonder that salespeople feel they have a right to demand that marketers deliver the best and most effective tools. Marketers take the hit when they don't do this, but it's often because marketers themselves don't have the right tools to do their jobs as well as they could.

> *How MAM Helps*
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> A MAM system presents marketing assets with descriptive metadata that helps users know when and how to use the assets. It also lets salespeople tag frequently-accessed items as "favorites" – for convenience. In addition, many MAM systems allow asset customization via templates, so salespeople can tailor materials to specific situations.

Life before the emergence of modern MAM systems might be compared to how it was for marketers before the advent of the personal computer. Both PCs and MAM technology provide marketers with the means to not only automate many of the manual tasks that once occupied much of their time, but also to communicate effectively with all their constituencies whoever and wherever they are.

Implementing a MAM system not only lifts tremendous burdens off marketers, but it also can delight marketing's key customer: salespeople!

When is it time for Marketing Asset Management? There's no better time than now.

About the Author

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